

# Teacher Biography and Teacher Development: considerations for development through dialogue

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## **Abstract**

The thesis addresses the importance of the biographical in questions relating to professional development arguing that biography illuminates how individuals acquire knowledge and how perspectives on development are formed. From a perspective of Developmental Systems Theory change and development for teaching is viewed as self-reflexivity – a more contextually relevant concept than self-understanding. In exploratory interviews, different temporal orientations between teachers emerge.

Extended, interpretative interviews take place employing an interview guide to test the link between biography, knowledge acquisition, practice and development. Five case studies are developed featuring teachers chosen for their diversity and interest and potential to contribute to an emergent theory. Respondents have been teaching colleagues for an average of ten years.

A major theme is a differentiated ability to integrate past and present. This also relates to the degree of self-reflexivity. In addition, it is associated with a more differentiated approach to the future and development. Those embracing the future are more inclined to work collaboratively, have a flexible student oriented approach to planning and practice and are likely to engage in critical reflection.

From this perspective, teacher development should emphasise goals of coherence and complexity. The process of dialogue is a crucial means of facilitating these. Key elements in a possible design for dialogue are developed through interviews and observations focusing on teacher learning experiences. Different pathways to dialogue relate to different biographical profiles and learning maps. Pathways for facilitating dialogue amongst teachers with a past time orientation are proposed.

The model of development through dialogue so constructed meets the challenge of the present and allows individuals and organisations to negotiate the future with confidence.

# Contents

Chapter 1	Biography and Teacher Development	6
	Current practices in teacher development – Reflections and critique	
	Biography as a factor in teacher development	
	Exploratory interviews: Listening for the connection between biography and development	
	Listening to myself	
	Reflections on interviews	
Chapter 2	Conceptualising the Relationship between Biography and Development	21
	The concept of development	
	Teacher development as contributor to teacher knowledge	
	Models of teacher development	
	Development of teacher knowledge – the biographical dimension	
	Time orientation and self-reflexivity: Stances on biography and development	
Chapter 3	Research Question and Methodology	37
	Defining the research question	
	The interview as research method	
	Interview guide – purpose and design	
	Content of interview guide - Biography and knowledge acquisition	
	- Links to professional practice	
	- Links to professional development	
	From interview to case study	
	Selecting the sample	
Chapter 4	Interviews and Analysis	60
	Issues on data collection and analysis	
	Five extended interviews with practising teachers – Compilation of profiles, drawing out of themes	

Chapter 5	Generating Theory	110
	Collating themes and building theory	
	Common themes – time orientation	
	- self-reflexivity	
	- perceptions of practice–planning, teaching, reviewing	
	- stances on development	
	Summary of findings	
Chapter 6	Implications for Teacher Development	125
	<i>i) Goals of Coherence and Complexity</i>	
	Resolving an apparent paradox – Individual maps – common goals	
	Coherence and complexity – Reviewing the literature	
	Coherence and complexity – Examples from the case studies	
	Dialogue as a means towards coherence and complexity	
Chapter 7	Implications for Teacher Development	137
	<i>ii) Process of Dialogue</i>	
	Dialogue as a tool for development	
	Considering and evaluating the dialogic theories of Bohm	
	Working examples of dialogue in teacher practice: evidence from a selective range of scenarios	
Chapter 8	Pathways to Dialogue	152
	Matching individuals to pathways	
	Linking profiles with dialogic pathways:	
	evidence from Alice, Alan and Howard	
	‘Resistant’ learners – the findings of Pauline James	
	Implications for Howard	
	Summary of findings	
Chapter 9	Constructing a Model and Shaping the Future	165
	A model for enhancing teacher development through dialogue	
	Applying the model to current challenges	
	Looking to the future – Building the practice of dialogue in schools	
Appendix 1		180
References		181

## Figures

Fig. 1	McCracken's Four-part method of Inquiry	48
Fig 2a/b	Associations between biography and attitudes to development as expressed in teachers' accounts	124

## Chapter 1

### Biography and Teacher Development

#### Current practices in teacher development – Reflections and critique

*"Not another one of these. I could have spent my time more profitably marking Year 10's work"*

*"I know what you mean. I can't see this helping me to inspire 9S tomorrow"*

The conversation above is fictional yet its spirit is not. I have heard many such conversations over the years which have commented adversely about the inadequacies of 'school development days', those days when staff from one school undergo training, often collectively. Certainly their positioning at the beginning of the school year or at the close of hectic terms does little to add to their popularity yet, more often than not, it is their content and method of delivery which are criticised or held to ridicule. Of course, school development days do not alone constitute professional development and there exist numerous examples of teachers voluntarily attending courses to increase their professional expertise. Some courses find favour: some do not. Yet while recognizing the diversity of development opportunities it is still disconcerting that a major component of these - and, indeed, the very one which schools might be expected to use to support their staff's development most effectively - is the one which finds so little favour.

Why then the discrepancy between policy and practice? Development, as used in educational parlance, usually carries with it suggestions of beneficial, positive growth and is tied to the moral imperative of improving learning opportunities for students through enhancing teacher skill. Phrased in such a way there seems little scope for argument yet it is clear from reading the words above that teachers' attitudes to their own development are complex and ambiguous. Rhetoric and reality do collide and it is worthwhile examining the discrepancy.

The research literature provides some answers. McLaughlin (1991), while noticing staff development's central role in educational policy requirement, talks of the multitude of staff development initiatives which are not designed to enable teachers' professional

development. A core criticism is that these initiatives have an insufficient relevance to teachers' classroom practices. Guskey (1986) and Smylie (1988) provide evidence of this yet the most telling example comes from Little's (Little et al, 1987) Californian research. Here, although nearly all of the teachers responding to an assessment of staff development efforts in the state had participated in conferences and workshops, only one in six believed that these sessions had any positive impact on their classroom practices. These were teachers who were expressing dissatisfaction at what was on offer, yet who were looking to develop their practice to contend with an ever changing world and were seeking development strategies which would support that search. Equally, there are teachers who do not seem at all committed to professional development. These are the teachers who in Huberman's terms (Huberman, 1989) have disengaged. A case can be made that it is the poor quality of planned development initiatives that may explain the latter group's disenchantment yet to rush to such a conclusion runs the risk of oversimplifying the issue. Teachers' reactions to development opportunities are complex and diverse; and while Hargreaves' title '*Changing Teachers, Changing Times*' (Hargreaves, 1994) succinctly describes the need for ongoing teaching development, the challenge is to explain teachers' ambiguous responses to that sentiment.

Informal conversations with a wide range of teachers in my workplace give a flavour of commonly held criticisms of development initiatives. They endorse the idea that what is offered lacks relevance to the classroom but, in addition, offer critiques which centre on a lack of individual focus in development planning. For instance where the planning and organization of staff development programmes are based on management analysis of staff needs without adequate consultation, there is a danger that individual needs will be neglected. An instructive example was presented of a development day in the school where I work which was devoted to increasing the awareness of differential needs of students in a classroom. Ironically, however, no thought was given to the idea that the staff themselves had different levels of knowledge and everyone was exposed to the same undifferentiated programme.

Another related strand of thought to emerge from these teacher conversations is that there is a distinction to be made between the role of the teacher and the individual person within the role. It is a request for the personal dimension to be recognized. This, too, has support in the literature. Lodge, McLaughlin and Best (1992) argue that while

teachers as teachers require support linked to professional development, teachers as individuals require satisfaction of personal needs. Schools, they argue, have to be aware of how professional and personal requirements are inextricably linked and how a teacher's development is dependent upon the meshing of the two. From another angle Huberman, (1989) too, provides confirmatory evidence of appreciating the personal as well as the professional. In a study of one hundred and sixty Swiss secondary school teachers Huberman, by using in-depth interviews, identified distinct career phases in the professional life cycle of teachers. In addition, he matched years of teaching experience with a variety of attitudinal responses to teaching and professional development. He argued that because teachers at differing stages of their careers will have differing needs, it was incumbent upon developers to be sensitive to these respective requirements.

Together this evidence suggests that a missing ingredient in thinking on development is an adequate awareness of the teacher as an individual whose thoughts, feelings and actions are, at least in some respects, qualitatively different from those of any other. This is not to say that the collective dimension should be overlooked. Attention to individual needs does not necessarily indicate an isolationist view of development. Indeed, writers like Lieberman and Miller (1991) are enthusiastic about pointing out the desirability and effectiveness of such milieux in promoting learning and designing these contexts may well be the challenge. What, however, is important is that schools, in promoting corporate visions of their institutions, need to attend to the voice/requirements of individual members, recognizing that their individual needs, when satisfied, allow them to be more effective partners in a school's quest for improvement. The gain, it seems, may well be mutual.

### **Biography as a factor in teacher development**

In thinking about professional development several questions suggest themselves relating to purpose, design and delivery, but what intrigued me most was the considerable variety in individual teachers' desire and capacity to engage in development opportunities. Working in a busy English Faculty in a large mixed comprehensive school allowed me to observe, first hand, some of this diversity in approach. Two new entrants to the Faculty – they are introduced in detail later in the chapter – particularly caught my attention. For both it was their first teaching post, yet



the difference in teaching style and disposition to development was enormous. It is true that a twenty-five year gap separated them yet that factor, I felt, was not enough to explain their divergent approaches. What, then, might provide a better explanation? I felt increasingly drawn to the idea that the answer might be in their respective biographies. At the time I was reading Goodson's text, 'Studying Teachers' Lives' (Goodson, 1992) where the question of teachers' biographies influencing their teaching methods was raised. Goodson aimed to explore what he called the dialectic of school life/whole life where he posited the view that teachers could only be understood by examining the complex interplay of personal and professional in their lives. Knowles, (1992) in a contributory essay to the same text, not only surveyed existing literature which indicated that biography was an important factor in shaping classroom behaviours and practices of teachers but went on to illustrate, by means of case studies, how a range of pre-teaching experiences influenced the teaching styles of student and beginning teachers. While these writings focused only on teaching style and did not consider professional development, there was, I felt, potential in employing biography as an explanatory tool for assessing why an individual is qualitatively different – why he/she thinks, feels, reacts differently in a range of situations – and in particular, what that might tell us about their approach to development.

What seemed important at that point was to conduct some exploratory interviews which would listen for connections between biography and development. In addition, there was a need to explore the appropriacy of the interview as a research method with the intention of sharpening the focus for more rigorous enquiry later. Establishing a secure method is related to the notion of developing ideas more securely and I felt the progress of the research process was tied to the relationship between the two components.

### **Exploratory Interviews – Listening for the connection between biography and development**

Choosing the interview method seemed appropriate in that it allowed the interviewees the space and time to reflect on life experiences prompted by occasional questions on the part of the researcher. The method was felt to belong to the qualitative paradigm in that it was how the interviewees interpreted and made sense of their world as social actors which was important.

Trying to adopt a sensitivity to the world being examined - the teacher's life - requires, of course, a close listening to the teacher's voice. Adopting the right interview style is important. Powney and Watts (1987) offer two possibilities. First, '*informant interviews*' where control and setting of the agenda are more likely to be determined by the interviewee than the researcher and, secondly, '*respondent interviews*' where a reverse arrangement may prevail. It is not necessary, however, to subscribe to this stark description of opposites. '*Respondent*' and '*informant*' are idealised descriptors premised on a confrontational style of interaction, which is not necessarily the norm in interview exchanges. I prefer to consider interviewer and interviewee as mutually dependent in terms of advancing the narrative. In this context, and with the purpose of facilitating the interview, I prepared an interview guide as suggested by Brenner (1985). This had a dual function: first, it ensured that topics believed to be important by the interviewer were included in the interview and second, it offered a useful prompt to the interviewee to consider areas previously unexamined.

The term "*exploratory*" indicated the value of a quest for suitability of structure and style. While the contours of the research were drawn and access was provided by the interview guide, there was ample scope for experiment. A principle of creative uncertainty in terms of interview design not only allows the interviewer scope to fashion appropriate styles but also permits interviewees greater opportunities to tell stories their way. The organization and emphases, which the narrator brings to his/her account, may yield important perspectives on approaches to development. At the same time an incomplete account may stimulate interviewers to modify their approaches for future interviewing.

I chose Howard and Gabriel, the two new entrants mentioned earlier for the exploratory interviews. Both were in their first post and in their second year of teaching in the school where I teach. I knew both Howard and Gabriel as colleagues in the same English faculty and, in addition, was Howard's subject mentor. While there was a similarity in professional experience between them, there was a substantial difference in terms of chronological age. Even more marked was their difference in approach to teaching style and disposition to development. It was also easy to note major dissimilarities in their attitudes and lifestyles; their social class was different as were their politics, their views on gender, their moral outlook and their leisure pursuits. Indeed, apart from the fact they were both male and teachers of English in the same

school, there was little to connect them. In terms of Huberman's (Huberman 1989) life cycle research on teaching, both men would have embarked upon the '*survival and discovery*' stages of their career treading a still uncertain path towards '*stabilization*'. Neither descriptor seemed to encapsulate their experience and indeed it seemed more likely that their approach to teaching and development would be found in their differences rather than any projected similarities. A surface similarity – they were both beginning teachers – served to highlight their real differences and, I hoped, that in choosing them as interviewees, I would give support to the developing idea that it is in the detail of biography that we find explanations for teaching and development behaviours.

First, I needed to speak to the interviewees. I outlined to Howard, in general terms, my thoughts on how a teacher's biography might influence approaches to teaching style and dispositions to development and he was, as I expected, excited about the prospect of contributing, interpreting it as an opportunity to talk expansively about his history. Approaching Gabriel required more care as I knew him to be more cautious and reflective in temperament. For this reason, I talked to him in more detail about the thinking behind the research. He announced himself happy to talk about his practice and ideas about development but he made it clear that certain areas of conversation relating to family life might be off limits. Neither this imposed restriction nor Howard's enthusiasm to direct the conversation in his own particular way worried me unduly. Indeed, on the contrary, the divergence of approach seemed just another way in which these two individuals differed and confirmed my reason for choosing them.

In the event, both interviews lasted for two hours. The interview guide with its thematic categories provides a rudimentary structuring of the data which allows a rough hewn thematic analysis deemed sufficient at this stage to allow construction of profiles. The profile comes in the form of a summary of the interview following Hycner's suggestion (Hycner, 1985) that this is the next stage on after the determining of themes from clusters of meaning. Fidelity to the interviewees' accounts is preserved by reproducing their ordering of material and by quoting their words extensively. A comment section follows, which provides exploratory analysis of the link between biography and attitudes to development.

## Interview 1 – Howard

Howard was an English graduate and PGCE holder. At the age of 51, he was a late entrant to the profession. Advised of the focus of the interview, he proceeded to describe in rich detail his life experiences. Little prompting was needed by the interviewer. Howard gave much emphasis to his family background particularly the role of his father. A middle child of a very large Catholic family, he lived his youth against a background of poverty in inner city Manchester. The parenting style was *'firm with tough discipline, always administered with a sense of humour'*. His father was a key figure, an *'extravagant character with a range of moods, always characterised by intensity and sudden change'*. He was *'artistic, but a drunken brawler, clever, gifted, popular, instinctive'*. Forced to take a job beneath his ability, his potential was unfulfilled. In Howard's opinion he *'would have made a terrific teacher because of his spontaneity and quick wittedness'*. With others, Howard's father was *'direct, forceful, with a strong undercurrent of potential violence'*. This was a man's world where women played a marginal, subservient role, although Howard recalled how his mother taught him to read.

Primary school brought back memories of a fierce Irish woman teacher, a tough school and a tough neighbourhood. Amidst it all Howard was a *'bright boy, successful because of my mother's influence'*.

Junior school was *'all boys, male teachers and brutal punishments dispensed with humour'*. Teachers were recalled with affection. They were seen as *'caring but despotic'*.

Because his parents moved at the time, Howard did not sit the scholarship examination and thus was not able to go to grammar school, a destination his ability pointed towards. The subsequent experience at secondary school was disastrous. Sited in a more prosperous part of town, the largely female staff were *'unable to cater for an influx of inner city children like me'*. The whole experience was dismissed as irrelevant and Howard left school at 15 with no formal qualifications. The late teenage years were marked by a variety of casual jobs. By his early twenties signs of dissatisfaction were creeping in. *'Life is becoming meaningless'*. At the age of 23, he entered the priesthood where he remained seven years.

In his early thirties, he undertook a series of more demanding jobs centred around local government. He married at the age of 41, a friend's death the catalyst for '*a more settled life*'. Although now enjoying a position of authority, a lack of formal qualifications encouraged him to embark upon a series of educational courses, which finally led him to Manchester Metropolitan University.

Howard had no time for what he saw as the '*fripperies of University education*'. University had no value but was seen as a '*means to an end – a qualification*'. His PGCE year was spent at Swansea, where lecturers' contribution amounted to '*airy fairy junk*'. They were '*well intentioned but what was offered was not relevant to classroom practice*'. Howard cut through '*niceties, the pseudo sophistication of twaddle*'. He believed they had a lack of respect for him as a mature man with a world of experience, viewing him as a '*token working class Northerner*'.

In his teaching practice he '*recalled my old role models, my old teachers and put into practice their methods*'. His style in the classroom was an '*amalgam of influences centering on my own father and my teachers*'. His teacher training contributed '*nothing to my personal style*'.

In his present school he employs the same '*tough but funny paternalistic approach*' relishing his position as '*a caring disciplinarian*'. He is dismissive of INSET opportunities and development programmes, believing they have nothing to offer him. He is not for developing. '*What you see is what you get is my motto*'. It is his own experience he passes on to his students. '*I teach them how to survive in the working world. To learn from my example the power of education*'.

## Comment

It is clear from his account that biographical influences have shaped Howard as a teacher. He deliberately recalls those influences and transplants them from the classrooms of the 1950's to those of the 1990's. Control is his focus and fear, leavened by humour, holds sway. His is an authoritarian presence, a style of leadership he has inherited from his role models. It is certainly the style and the teaching approach that I observed and have subsequently come across in examples of paired teaching. It is a style which puts little store by students constructing their own learning and centres

everything round the personal charisma of the teacher. Indeed, as can be inferred from his account, Howard does not so much teach students as promote an extension of himself. Cusick (1983) talks of how secondary teachers construct egocentric fields and how the presumed needs of students accounted for most justification of teaching practice. Certainly, in his focus on survival and the power of education, Howard is presenting his own history to his students, a story he believes has relevance for them.

Education, according to Howard, provides status. Learning as a process is dismissed. An anti-intellectual tone pervades his criticism of universities, fuelled by a deep-seated working class distrust of intellectuals. Teaching, he believes, is a '*practical craft*' and any attempt to '*theorise*' is met with scorn. Any form of development initiative will, by definition, fail because, in his view, there is no need for him to develop.

In short, for Howard, his success is in his arrival, his attaining of the status of teacher. The triumph is over poverty, a wayward youth and years of meaninglessness apparently unresolved by his time as a priest. The bright child, encouraged by his mother, and, in later years, supported by his wife, has realized his potential, something denied to his father.

The narrative stops here. In fact, it goes backwards. The world he presents to his students, his world, is a historical world increasingly unsuited to their needs. His past, while inspiring him, has claimed him for itself.

## **Interview 2 – Gabriel**

Aged 25, Gabriel had a BA in English/Classics and was a PGCE holder. The starting point for the interview was Gabriel's entrance to teaching.

There had been no long held desire to teach and a decision had been made late in his university career. There was a realization that an interest in literature and philosophy might be extended by further study and teaching. His PGCE tutor at Exeter was a key figure. He was very interested in the '*creative side of teaching and we held similar views on creativity*'. One such view was that '*the learner would be involved in creating or re-creating himself*'. The PGCE English course had a strong dramatic basis and '*there was much talk of acting, performing, personas and interpretation*'.

Outlining a philosophy of teaching, he claimed that teaching was not a question of facilitating knowledge. It was *'bringing about a situation where the learner would be involved in creating or recreating himself'*. He continued: *'Real learning has occurred when there is a conscious realisation of the self having changed'*. In talking about the learner's potential of ever enriching the self, he borrowed a metaphor from the theatre *'an actor interpreting a series of roles'*. These, however, were not abstract philosophical ideas, but guidelines to address practical reality. The philosophy was shaped to meet the differing needs of individual students.

By the time of his first teaching practice, these views were taking shape. Teaching in a small rural community school in Somerset, and encouraged by a sympathetic Head of department, he began to encourage students *'to look beyond the surface of literature, to create meaning for themselves'*. He admitted that his experience in his first year in his present employment was much more difficult and demanding with no strategies for dealing with disaffected children.

Asked if the creation of personae or roles was not risky behaviour for student teachers, he was adamant that this was not the case, *'provided that you maintain your teacher image. You do not allow yourself to personalise anything'*. A model for these different roles was his own character. He had always been independent, a *'loner'*. He did not allow his *'self to be scrutinised'*. He was interested in *'self protection'*, allowing his *'essential self to remain a mystery'*. He would like to think he was constantly *'recreating myself, manipulating my self image'*.

Self-protection went back to school days. Coming from a rural Dorset background and a tranquil childhood, he was *'innocent, naive, sheltered'*. Secondary school was traumatic. Misunderstood by teachers, he was put into *'low, quasi-special needs groups'*. He, in response, cultivated a sense of apartness, taking a delight in being different. His thinking became *'rebellious'*, but not his behaviour. *'I had always been brought up to be well behaved'*. It was at this stage of his life that he had learned *'to manipulate my self image, to construct a number of selves'*. Asked if he recalled teachers as role models, he recalled those who tended to be outrageous, idiosyncratic. *'Those are the teachers I would identify with. Teachers who, in retrospect, had an image'*. He concluded by referring again to his drama based PGCE course, which encouraged teaching as performance: *'PGCE got my teacher images up to scratch'*.

One year into his present post, he embarked upon an MA Course in Education. Initially it was an escape from day to day difficulties, but he soon began to see a connection between theory and practice. A particular unit on assessment was seen as having practical implications. Theoretical insights into practical matters once deemed difficult allowed Gabriel to extend his range of competences. The whole course was a spur to development.

Response to development initiatives was enthusiastic but reflective. *'It is important to take from initiatives what is useful to your own practice. Critical reflection is the key'*. He concludes: *'Learning from each situation and integrating it into your philosophy is the way forward. I am now ambitious for success'*.

## **Comment**

Central to Gabriel's account is his philosophy of teaching and learning. For him, learning is self- development. He embraces what Hargreaves calls the *'boundless self'* (Hargreaves, 1994) a capacity to reinvent the self to meet the demands of each new situation. His self-reflexivity is underscored by the process of critical reflection. Teaching is a process of presenting opportunities for others to participate in learning. To improve teaching it is essential to embrace development. Self-reflexivity demands this. There are key episodes in his narrative. The PGCE course and its tutor were clearly influential in shaping his philosophy. Later the MA course had a powerful impact in expanding his repertoire by deepening his understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. The trauma of school life prompted defensive responses which Gabriel claims enriched his teaching. There are omissions in this account. Family life does not intrude, except in references to a sheltered childhood and the remark that he was not allowed to misbehave. Privacy draws a veil over some of the past, yet in another sense, the past is of less importance when a future oriented, situation determined approach to life is embraced.

## **Listening to myself**

At this point it seems useful to introduce myself, the researcher, in terms of biographical information in keeping with the theme of the thesis. I do this not only for ethical reasons – I should expose myself to what others are exposed to - but also in the interests



of reflexivity. By being reflexive I am acknowledging that the research undertaken reflects a personal concern and that it is not neutral in terms of its content and design. The knowledge I gain of others might also be knowledge which will benefit me. The existing knowledge, however, I have of myself – or at least the intimations of knowledge - is what helps to shape this research. It is a knowledge which the reader is entitled to share as a means of understanding what follows. What I have tried to do is to reflect on the issues I have explored with the other two interviewees and in doing so I believe I can identify key factors which have been influential in impacting on my current teacher identity and my approach to development.

I am now in my 27<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and have over the years become more flexible as a classroom practitioner and more adventurous in seeking to develop. Both processes, however, have been gradual and I think the pace has been determined both by a lack of confidence and early models of learning.

My own schooling, a formal grammar school education, conditioned later approaches to teaching and learning. In retrospect, it was a dry style but it may well have suited my learning needs. As a consequence, however, I think I inherited a limited, unimaginative approach to learning and (subsequently) teaching, which took a long time to shed. Teachers were seen as repositories of wisdom and knowledge and I was drawn to them as charismatic figures. Certainly in my early years of teaching I attempted to 'cut' a similarly attractive figure and my decision to go on to university to study Classics was heavily influenced by these teachers.

University was wonderful. While allowing me to dabble in the counter-culture of those heady years – a process begun in school but now given more scope – I enjoyed the time working on my studies. In many ways I think the method of study was that of school. I remember no conversations about learning and there was a similar teacher led transmission of knowledge.

The decision to train as a teacher was more a response to '*what on earth can I do?*' rather than any sense of commitment although there was a strong tradition of teaching in my family. As to my initial teacher education, I find it difficult to gauge any impact. It was schizoid in character with a strong theory/practice divide. I enjoyed both parts. Attending seminars on philosophical/psychological and sociological aspects of

education was stimulating and my teaching practice in a comprehensive in an outer London suburb is still remembered with affection. I appeared to be successful, but perhaps because Latin and Greek were the preserve of the most able students, I did little more than deliver my subject knowledge, albeit with a sense of fun.

My first teaching post offered much of the same although I was asked to teach some English for which I was not trained. At the time I conceived teaching not in terms of learning but in presenting the appropriate information. I relied heavily on my persona – young, entertaining, slightly anarchic, the style of my university years reprised. Teaching English was more of a concern, partly in terms of subject knowledge but more in designing appropriate learning experiences. I muddled through, a process of trial and error, regretting a lack of appropriate training.

Promotion led to my lengthy tenure at my present school. Here, after an initial period as a community tutor, I became a full time English teacher. Subject knowledge gaps were filled and a greater expertise was gained although I still had reservations about my skills as an English ‘specialist’. In parallel to my career in the English Faculty, I took on a post in the Sixth form where I became Head of A level studies. It was at this point that I felt I needed to expand my knowledge about learning which was why I began an MA course. For me, this was a major breakthrough. Theoretically, the course was stimulating, but unlike before, I was able to see relevance to my teaching. I began to think about teaching/learning in different ways. One major outcome was an increase in confidence. I became much more enthusiastic about being part of school development programmes or at least taking a genuinely critical stance towards them. There was a feeling of self-enhancement which also worked in my students’ interest. For the first time I became more collaborative in my approach, a stance I felt unattracted to and unconfident about earlier in my career. The MA led to the PhD – the current study – and a sustained interest in how learning can be constantly developed.

An interest in learning led me to investigate and later establish a programme of peer-tutoring within my school and, in a separate development, to become a subject mentor for English and then a professional mentor for student teachers. These experiences, underpinned by the university courses, exposed me to new ways of considering learning which significantly augmented my views of the teaching–learning process. The possibility that there is a new approach still to be discovered, and that there is no need to

simply stay with what we have at present still sustains me when I am faced with challenging classes and gives learning a provisional future oriented character.

Interestingly, as I conclude, I notice I have made no reference to my home life. I have not spoken about the close family life which encourages me now or the supportive, close relationship I had with my parents. These are not omissions but invitations to consider how many of our experiences are subsumed within a continuing narrative of development. They also raise questions about whether the various dimensions of an individual's life are perceived as integrated or separate. I now return to the interviews I held with Howard and Gabriel and offer some reflection.

## **Reflections on Interviews**

What was interesting about these interviews was how closely they resembled everyday conversations. Both 'interviewees' were comfortable in presenting their views and the encounters did not appear forced. The interview guide proved just that in that it occasionally prompted me to ask questions but in the main it was more important to listen to and respond to Howard's and Gabriel's accounts.

Howard's natural mode was towards description rather than analysis. He was more comfortable about talking about himself than analysing his practice and the needs of his students. In Gabriel's case, there was a preference for the analytical mode with thoughtful contributions about practice and development. Both spoke of their perspectives on development, albeit in a different way. Howard, for example, spoke very little of it yet in his reticence revealed much of his sense of self-sufficiency and hence his dismissal of development as appropriate for him. Gabriel, by contrast, was excited to talk about his practice and how it related to future thoughts on his progress.

In terms of revealing life episodes, Gabriel was much more circumspect than Howard and it is worth asking whether more could have been unearthed. Being a 'loner' and enjoying a sense of his separateness perhaps suggest a diffidence which might have been usefully explored. In a similar way, there was no probing about Howard's time as a priest. Left unexplored is how such a seven year commitment – and a decision to reverse it – impacted on a teaching style and, more generally, any requirement for self-reflection. In retrospect, however, it seems reasonable that both interviewees should

choose to draw a veil over certain episodes in their lives that they do not wish to comment on. Such is the norm in human interaction, and rather than agonise over how more appropriate techniques might have revealed more, it would be better to accept that in authentic conversations, parameters are routinely drawn.

One important outcome of the interviews was how they illustrated a difference in time emphases in the case of both interviewees. Howard talks almost exclusively about his past, while Gabriel is much more present and future oriented in his thinking. While it could be argued that Howard simply has richer experiences to draw upon, given his greater age, it is also possible that people's ways of interpreting and processing experience is different and, in the case of Gabriel, the past has been critically appraised in such a way that its relevance for the present and the future is limited. Gabriel's example allows us to conclude that it is important to admit the present and the future, as well as the past, as appropriate elements of biography.

These interviews confirm the initial hunch that teacher differences can be illuminated in the detail of biography. This, and in particular the finding relating to temporal emphasis, suggests that the interview method offers considerable potential to explore the link between biography and professional development at a later stage in the research process.

## Chapter 2

# Conceptualising the relationship between Biography and Development

### The Concept of Development

As yet the notion of development has remained unexplored but it connotes a beneficial quality, an underlying sense of positive growth. Jackson (1992), in trying to distinguish it from change in general, suggested that it belonged to that '*subclass of changes that are desirable and positive in quality as opposed to negative*' (p. 63). Thus increases in skill and improved perception would be counted under development, whereas a growth in cynicism within a teacher would not.

Such a definition takes us some way but it does not serve to explain the processes underlying change/development. It offers a description of development as outcome but not how that outcome is effected. What then is required is a model or theoretical representation which will illuminate the workings of those underlying processes. Such an understanding is at the core of this research: there is nothing more fundamental to the research's purpose than an explanation of why teachers change (or do not change).

Developmental Systems Theory (Ford and Lerner, 1992) offers a starting point for this enquiry. Bohm (1994) defines a system as a set of things connected, associated or interdependent so as to form a complex unity. For Ford and Lerner, these notions of interconnectedness or interrelatedness can be observed in the organism's interaction with its environment. Any attempt to understand change processes needs to take the whole system into account. For example, the teacher exists within a complex web or network of relationships all of which impact on his/her practice. The diverse worlds of parents, industry, government and students themselves interlock in complex fashion to create the contexts in which the teacher must negotiate change. To work outside the system does not seem an option yet, in the form of Howard, there was an example of someone adrift from his responsibilities to a wider network of obligations. It was significant that Howard saw no need to change.

Developmental Systems Theory identifies three types of change related processes – Stability Maintenance, Incremental Change through Self Construction and Transformational Change. Most thinking on teacher development makes use of incremental change but it is useful to keep alive the other notions and for that reason this account will offer explanations of all three processes.

*'Stability Maintenance'* describes how an organism must maintain its integrity, its sense of wholeness, if it is to remain alive and adaptive. To maintain stability, an organism wards off potential perturbation to its state of equilibrium by employing defence mechanisms. A process called negative feedback is said to operate which informs action to reduce the discrepancy between the desired state and the current state, thus maintaining stability. Stability maintenance can be seen as an important factor in the lives of teachers. It might, for example, represent a core principle or belief which is not static but dynamic in nature, allowing a sound base from which to contemplate change.

*'Incremental Change'* can be described as continuous and small scale and is different in character from *'Transformational Change'* (see below). It could well incorporate the accommodation of new experiences and the development of new skills. When a teacher, as a self-constructing organism, identifies a goal - a new desired state - he/she will seek the appropriate information and then examine what capabilities are required to match it. The likelihood is that incremental change will ensue.

*'Transformational Change'* is defined as *'a relatively rapid transformation of an existing state or pattern through some reorganization of existing shapes'* (Ford and Lerner, 1992 p. 39). It might be witnessed in experiences like religious conversions or in learning terms in the sudden insightful solution of problems characteristic of Gestalt. It might be argued that the character of change in modern societies has a transformational stamp of its own. Watkins (1996), for example, reviewing a range of future trends, highlights the rapidity of change within communication systems which has allowed them to *'create a psychological sense of community which transcends immediacy of place'* (p. 5). A qualitatively different pattern of communication has occurred. Fullan, (1995) depicting post modern society as characterised by ubiquitous and relentless change, writes: *'New knowledge, new ways of knowing and learning, and global interdependencies are changing all the time in unknown ways'*, (p. 254). Here, not only rapid but shaped change is envisaged and teaching, he argues, will need to

respond to such transformations. In the light of this, it might have been premature to suggest the primacy of the link between professional development and incremental change, although the counter argument is that while the overall picture is of a transformational character, steps to development may still be incremental in nature.

In reflecting on stability and change within the classroom, it is possible to argue that maintaining a purposeful atmosphere for the promotion of learning represents a positive interpretation of stability maintenance. That said, it is not difficult to see stability and its protection as less than positive, if defence mechanisms are employed which cause a state closer to stagnation. Such a state, for example, might describe Howard's position. Rebuttal of development opportunities leaves his world in stasis, a seemingly hopeless condition given the tenor of Fullan's remarks (Fullan 1995).

Treading a similar path to Fullan but providing more explanatory detail, Huberman and Marsh (1993) argue that to embrace the status quo makes no sense in the teaching world where constant change, unpredictability, uncertainty and indeterminacy are the defining characteristics. Change is evident at every level. They speak of '*context features*' characterised by political decisions, all with the potential of creating turbulence. There are '*school factors*' with '*changeable inputs*' such as syllabi and curricula change or management personnel change perhaps initiating a different climate or ethos. Such unstable environments are not helped by a factor termed '*Indeterminacy of Outcomes*' where any idea of measuring results is complicated by an unsureness of what the goal was in the first place. Changing from a school to a classroom setting only serves to highlight a new range of problems characterised by the nowness of teaching where the conditions of immediacy, busyness, multi dimensionality and simultaneity bring in their wake unpredictability and instability. The successful teacher has to make sense of the potentially chaotic.

In such an environment the desire for maintaining stability must be great. That stability, however, will only be positive if it has been arrived at after change has been successfully accommodated. Gabriel represents a good example of this. Critically reflecting on how development opportunities might add to his practice, he embraces the new, integrating new and existing skills to promote an increasingly complex whole.

In summary, it is important to understand that development is not simply, as sometimes popularly conceived, unremittingly positive and forever ongoing, but part of a dialectical relationship between stability and change. This notion might help in viewing teacher development in terms of an ongoing interplay between consolidation and renewal. It is worth remembering that there is a strong element of personal inclination or agency in the notion of development, and it is perfectly possible for teachers either to accommodate or deny change. The interesting question is why they should do so. Biography's role as a factor in making such a decision will be explored later in the chapter.

### **Teacher Development as contributor to Teacher Knowledge**

Developmental Systems Theory (Ford and Lerner, 1992), with its emphasis on an interplay between stability maintenance and change, gives credence to the notion that professional development is a necessary part of a teacher's career if he/she is to meet the challenge of a constantly changing world. Expanding a teacher's knowledge base is, according to Borko and Putnam (1995) the route to professional development. This begs the question of what is meant by teacher knowledge.

In defining teacher knowledge, Grossman (1990) proposes four components - Subject Matter Knowledge referring to awareness of subject content and the structures of the discipline, General Pedagogical Knowledge related to learners, learning and instructional strategies, Knowledge of Context, an awareness of community and school and, finally, Pedagogical Content Knowledge which goes beyond subject matter itself and considers subject matter for teaching. Here there is particular emphasis on appropriate instructional strategies and representations for individual topics and the psychological readiness of students to approach these topics.

While all four are important elements in the composition of teacher knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge perhaps best captures the experience of the classroom with the teacher engaged in matching strategies with task. This type of knowledge, according to Grossman, may be developmental. *'Experienced teachers may possess rich repertoires of metaphors, experiments, activities or explanations that are particularly effective for teaching a particular topic, while beginning teachers are still in the process of developing a repertoire of instructional strategies and representations'* (p. 9). This



links with Huberman's notion (Huberman, 1992) of the fund or bank of knowledge cumulatively assembled over the years, which the teacher can increasingly call upon as his/her experience grows. Evoking the image of the '*bricoleur*' or handyman as a metaphor for the teacher in action, Huberman describes how the skilful artisan can take material and strategies, considered valuable over time, and reform them to meet the requirements of specific situations in the classroom. This suggests a non-static definition of knowledge forever expanding as a response to a range of situations.

Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi (1992) describe teacher knowledge as composed of reflection in action, reflection on action, intuition and an all-encompassing notion of professional craft. Such qualities are not honed through the more traditional varieties of professional development where prescriptive technologies are believed to provide the pointers to effective practice, but can be cultivated in contexts where teachers work collaboratively, reflecting on themselves and their craft. Butt et al's preference for such development opportunities implies a belief that the practitioners - the teachers - possess a more valuable knowledge than those who would prescribe solutions for them.

There are distinctions to be made in the views above. Grossman seeks to define what constitutes teacher knowledge. She and Huberman point to a gradual accumulation of that knowledge: Butt et al suggest that knowledge is in existence already, as practised in the teacher's craft. Theirs is an appeal to attend to the teacher's expertise, an invitation to listen to what Goodson (1992) would describe as the '*teacher's voice*'. The distinction may appear slight, yet I believe there is a problem in an excessive valuing of teacher voice. To equate voice with expertise runs the risk of not acknowledging that some teachers can become trapped and have no way of solving their difficulties. At times there appears to be a political and emancipatory zeal in Goodson's writing to promote the teacher as expert thus obscuring individuals' needs for development.

It is instructive to look at the research of Huberman (1992) in this regard. Huberman maintains that knowledge acquisition does not come easily. Identifying instructional mastery as a key feature in teacher satisfaction, he subdivides the critical facets of teaching into those which are more or less mastered and those which are poorly mastered. Even in the former category up to 17% of his sample had experienced problems and this proportion increased as the elements became more difficult.

Huberman also discovered large cohorts of teachers who disengaged after only 10 or 15 years' experience or who made no attempts to change instructional practices which they themselves judged to be problematic. These two findings justify the need to critique a too simplistic notion of teacher knowledge as an ever increasing sophisticated response to context thus creating a constantly developing repertoire. Many teachers do refine their practices in the light of experience, but it is right to focus a question on why some teachers remain flexible and seek new responses to difficult situations, while others disengage. None of this denies the importance of using an individual teacher's knowledge to promote his/her development but it does require a clear assessment of that knowledge before any attempts are made to build upon it.

## **Models of Teacher Development**

If it is reasonable to state that the purpose of teacher development is to increase teacher knowledge, the interesting question is what models of teacher development exist which can make the maximum contribution to knowledge? Is there, for example, a model which is more sensitive to individual development, that is to say designed to build upon and value the individual's present level of knowledge? To answer, this I turn to the work of Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) who identify three models of teacher development.

These are:

- a) Teacher development as knowledge and skill development
- b) Teacher development as ecological change
- c) Teacher development as self understanding

The models will be considered in turn.

### *Teacher development as knowledge and skill development*

Clearly, an increase in knowledge and skills as a means of facilitating improved teaching would be welcomed by teachers. So closely tied are knowledge and development that it would be illogical to reject the former element, if the latter is being pursued. However, Hargreaves and Fullan make a different point in critiquing this model. For them '*Knowledge and Skill development*' is not used to describe an end result but a means of delivering. As a form of delivery, it attracts criticism because of its customary top-down imposition of material. New skills are identified and outside

experts are called in to inculcate them. Teacher involvement is negligible. These are the prescriptive technologies Butt et al believe are doomed to fail, so dismissive are they of teachers' collective practical knowledge. Hargreaves and Fullan argue that the imposition of skills and knowledge is favoured by administrators whose task it is to develop common visions and commitments to shared goals. They prefer the acceptance of '*supposedly incontrovertible findings*' of educational research (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992 p.4) rather than tangle with the indeterminacy of many educational findings.

Connelly and Clandinin (1995) invoke the metaphor of landscapes to describe the acquisition of teachers' professional knowledge. They argue that meaningful development will be that which connects with the day-to-day world of the classroom. Here teacher practice and the collaborative endeavours of colleagues offer potential for growth. The other location on the landscape, however, places practice in a subservient position to theory. Theory is imposed from the outer and takes the form of abstracted knowledge which is then funnelled into the teacher's world. Connelly and Clandinin are not objecting to theory itself but what they call '*a rhetoric of conclusions*', a stripped down knowledge which has been uprooted from its origins and presented as a '*Sacred story*'. Sacred has connotations of strict adherence to the truth, here perhaps in the form of universalist knowledge which does not acknowledge the need for any modification to meet local needs and conditions. The '*sacred story*' calls only for uncritical implementation rather than thoughtful analysis of what is required for particular situations. The notion of '*voice*' exemplified in Goodson's phrase (Goodson, 1992) '*sponsoring the teacher's voice*' is rendered redundant within such a delivery mode, as no value is attached to the teacher's professionalism.

Such criticisms strike a chord with those informal teacher conversations recorded at the outset of this thesis. To remember, however, that the criticisms have been of a '*delivery*' rather than a '*model*' is to realize that important skills can still be cultivated under this banner. There may well be skills which can be usefully enhanced and will form a constituent part of the model of development selected.

## *Teacher development as ecological change*

The underlying assumption of this model is that the context for development is all important and that the working environment will provide conditions in which teacher development initiatives succeed or fail. A preoccupation will be to remove constraints and achieve optimal conditions for development.

Constraints are many and, while not overwhelming, are certainly prejudicial to development. Lieberman and Miller (1991) take this stance in evoking '*the flesh and blood of teaching*', (p.96) detailing what they call the '*dailiness*' of the task, the day-to-day social realities, the cumulative force of which serve to imprison the teacher within a closed world. Themes are identified to express that dailiness - rhythms, rules, interactions and feelings. Rhythms impose patterns on days, weeks, terms and years providing stability but also an unquestioning acceptance of reality. Rules serve the same function. One rule is to be practical which is to dispense with idealism. It is idealistic, for example, to be open to change and to outside influences. Self-sufficiency becomes a virtue. It is a short step to privacy, the second all embracing rule. In the private world of the classroom, interactions are reserved for teacher and student interchange, the adult world of peer contact far removed. Feelings can be intense. There is joy and satisfaction of working with students but there is also a sense of frustration and powerlessness to effect the working environment exacerbated by a lack of confidence itself stemming from the imposed isolationism. Lieberman and Miller (1991) summarise the teacher's condition, '*The feelings that surround issues of always being with children, of professional competence, and of being in-and-out of control are highly charged and little acknowledged. They should not be underestimated; these feelings often block a teacher's impulse to improve his or her teaching or to influence what happens in the school*' (p. 103).

Interestingly, Nias (1985) identifies similar aspects of occupational culture, which militate against effective development. She cites the need for teachers to feel in control, the reluctance to listen to one another's perspective on professional matters because of concern for personal competence and an apparent preference for authority dependence, a condition engendered by a lack of confidence in an ability to effect change.

It is important to remember that these failings do not represent psychological deficits, but are products of culture and environment. They need not become the persistent realities of teaching: new cultures can emerge. Little (1986) and Rosenholtz (1989) give voice to this new culture defined by collegueship, experimentation, openness in relationships and a view of teaching as collaborative work. Privacy, practicality and isolationism are discarded values seen now as preserving stasis rather than promoting development. Individuality still has an important role in this world. Indeed, Lieberman and Miller (1991) talk of a continuous quest for a fragile balance where '*collaboration and collegueship are promoted and where individual integrity is allowed to flourish*' (p. 108). The talented teacher no longer retires into his/her private space but enriches and is enriched by those who share the same communal space. Rosenholtz's description of '*learning enriched*' schools (Rosenholtz, 1989) testifies to the establishment and maintenance of collaborative organizations. Teachers in these organizations see themselves as members of a '*professional community*' (Louis, Kruse et al, 1995). Review, reflection and improvement are continuous activities. All such acts are supported by those in leadership roles who model effective practice by encouraging '*evaluation, feedback, exploration and initiative*' (Watkins et al, 1996, p.7). These organizations have a democratic hue, where power and decisions are shared. For Hargreaves, cultures of collaboration are linked with the restructuring of school power relationships: '*We would expect the working lives of teachers to be organized not around principles of hierarchy and isolation, but ones of collaboration and collegiality*' (Hargreaves, 1994 p.244). It is argued that only in such genuinely collaborative cultures can the seeds of development flourish.

Questions present themselves. Does the promotion of collaborative cultures allow all teachers to develop? What of those teachers who may find collaborative endeavour difficult? Howard is an example which comes to mind. The rewards accruing from collegiality are clear and desirable but to allow some individuals to enjoy these, it may be necessary initially to focus attention on the development of teachers' self-understanding. It is to this model I turn now.

### *Teacher development as self-understanding*

The primary focus of this model is the teacher as person and professional. It does not start with any notion of skill deficit but an attempt to engage the individual as person

and practitioner. Benyon (1985), for example, argues that teachers should not be treated as cardboard cut outs. Instead, it should be recognized that behind teaching lies a range of attitudes, motives and emotions which, when subjected to scrutiny, can yield much evidence about the nature of the teacher and the teaching. Prioritising the voice of the individual teacher, however, might simply be seen as part of a politicised emancipatory crusade. As a counter to this, it should be recalled that Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) speak of this type of development as changing the person the teacher is. Promoting the self-awareness of the teacher is the first step to developing new insights on professional matters in that teacher.

Yet is self-awareness the desired goal or would we be better with a term like self-reflexivity? Hargreaves (1994), writing of the *'boundless self'* as one of several post modern paradoxes, talks of how the self has become a continuous reflexive project capable of being constantly and consciously remade and reaffirmed. This capacity for change can be creative and empowering for the individual - Gabriel, in his interview, identifies how the constant reinvention of the self is a major strength in negotiating a range of teaching contexts - but also can be a source of uncertainty and vulnerability. Talking specifically about staff development Hargreaves identifies both positive and negative components. Of the latter he writes: *'This orientation is marked by a desperate and deliberate search for biographical meaning and personal narrative unity in a chaotic social world'*. (Hargreaves, 1994 p. 72).

A preoccupation with the personal and the neglect of the social is, he believes, reflected in recent research centering on personal narratives and teachers' lives. For him, the quest for such self-understanding has the potential for indulgence and can take on a narcissistic quality. However, once the quest for self is tied to a moral framework and incorporates a social context - the possibility of improving the education of students or the ability to work productively with other teachers - there is then he believes, great merit in pursuing this form of development.

To advance this point it is useful to turn to the work of Hedges and Lang (1993) who, in discussing the personal development of psychotherapy trainees as part of their professional training, point to a *'systemic, social constructionalist model'* which allows the self's identity to be seen as formed in action in particular contexts. Hedges and Lang distinguish between *'self-reflexivity'* and *'self-awareness'*. They argue that the latter

implies the idea of self as an object to be discovered, while the former suggests the idea of self-emerging in social interaction. One is a dynamic view of self, the other static. In addition, a temporal dimension is apparent with self-reflexivity more likely to favour a future orientation.

In its focus on context, self-reflexivity looks outward rather than inward and in doing so, offers more potential for meeting the challenges of a modern world. Fullan's (Fullan, 1995) description of the post modern world as that of relentless and ubiquitous change and Elliot's (Elliot, 1993) assertion that professional practice needs to respond to conditions of discontinuity and fragmentation point to a requirement for individuals to understand themselves in an increasing variety of social situations including those not regularly met. In these contexts, reflexivity provides a useful tool for self-enhancement as it provides the individual with the capacity to re-edit and reconstruct understanding in a way which will inform future professional development. The capacity to shape the future is a liberating notion. It is tied to the notions of goal directedness and ideas about improvement. In contrast, Howard saw his world as shaped by the past. As a perspective this was limiting. A preoccupation with 'innerness', infused with notions of self sufficiency and self satisfaction, left him psychologically ill-equipped to embrace the future. In conclusion, it does seem that developing skills in reflexivity will provide the teacher with the means not only of accommodating the future but also appropriating it in the interests of self and significant others.

In critiquing the three models, all can be seen as providing valuable strands. In arguing for self-reflexivity as the most appropriate for the current context, none of the other perspectives is jettisoned. For example, the '*ecological change*' model may well provide the context for self-reflexivity to be practised in a school. Similarly, self-reflexivity is a skill and the purpose of the first model – '*Teacher Development as Knowledge and Skill Development*' - is the promotion of worthwhile skills. These two perspectives are likely to complement the self-reflexivity model as a means of understanding and informing development.

That said, there is a distinctiveness about self-reflexivity particularly in its implicit future orientation. The thesis is that by encouraging the teacher to be self-reflexive, he/she will seek through self-understanding, as revealed in particular contexts, to improve his/her learning. Improvement comes as the self has grown in complexity, a

range of developing and different skills integrated into a more complex unity. The question remains as to how the teacher can develop self-reflexivity. One contention is that it entails an understanding of what Pinar (1988) calls the '*architecture of the self*' which includes beliefs, values, dispositions, feelings, guiding images and principles. This is a reconnection with the idea of teacher as person as opposed to teacher as professional only. It is also an invitation to consider biography as a means of illuminating an individual's disposition to development and the acquisition of teacher knowledge, central to which may be the promotion of self-reflexivity.

## **Development and Teacher Knowledge - The Biographical Dimension**

This section argues that biography may well be a factor in determining an individual's ease or willingness to acquire the knowledge for teacher development.

Oja's work, (Oja, 1991) takes us some of the way towards this notion in reflecting how individual differences regarding development can be recognized and planned for. She focuses on '*stages of adult development*' arguing that each stage offers a vantage point from which individuals interpret their world. Her thinking owes much to Loevinger's theories on ego development (Loevinger, 1976) a concept characterized by '*a sequence of steps along a continuum of development and complexity*' (Oja, 1991, p.41) with each stage more complex than the last. Adapting Loevinger's model, she posits differential development stages for teachers – self-protective, conformist, conscientious and autonomous. The self-protective stage has as its characteristics fearfulness, dependence and distrust while the conformist stage focuses on social acceptance and belonging and a regard for rule observation and conventional behaviours. The conscientious stage marks the individual as responsible, goal-oriented and self-critical while the autonomous stage incorporates flexibility, concern with self-fulfilment, being creative, dealing in complexity and using many options and alternatives. For Oja, development will ensue when appropriate supports and challenges are offered at each stage.

Oja's work is a corrective to the '*one size fits all*' provision of school development days yet the key question of how teachers arrive at their respective stages is not addressed. It is here that the notion of teacher biography may again play a part. An understanding of a teacher's background, his/her learning and early teaching experiences, lifestyle and critical life events might help illuminate how knowledge is acquired and consequent



attitudes to development. There is evidence from the research literature to support this view. Goodson (1992) talks about how teachers constantly refer to their own lives as part of the process of explaining their professional thinking and practice. He also reports on how Hargreaves (1975) noted similar autobiographical comments when interviewing teachers about their work.

The biographical research literature offers much to illuminate notions of teacher practice and development. For example, pre-teaching experiences and, in particular, the teacher's own schooling and family background are recognized by Knowles (1992) as shaping factors of teaching styles among beginning teachers. Nor is this influence short lived. Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) argue that any future professional experiences tend to be viewed in the light of views and values formed at that time. Elsewhere, the impact of early teaching experiences, even those during student teaching practice, are credited as influential in the socialization of beginning teachers particularly in the contexts of teaching behaviours and open/closed attitudes to improvement.

From another angle, Measor talks of '*critical phases*' during which incidents occur which ultimately shape the course of a teacher's career and, in the interim, impact on teacher style (Measor, 1985). She identifies three phases:

- a) Extrinsic critical phases: Examples might be historical events like the Second World War or more localised events like policy changes in education. Benyon (1985) gives the example of comprehensivisation where a grammar school/secondary modern school are amalgamated. In his view, there was a resultant schism amongst the two sets of teachers and there was an emergence of a differentiated pattern of promotional opportunities.
- b) Intrinsic critical phases: Measor identifies the following:
  - 1. Choosing to enter the profession
  - 2. The teaching practice
  - 3. The first eighteen months
  - 4. mid career moves
  - 5. pre-retirement

Such time periods partially echo Huberman's (Huberman, 1989) stages of a career where years of teaching are matched with particular thematic styles.

- c) Personal critical phases: These, according to Measor, include marriage, birth or illness of a child and family bereavements. Such episodes would form part of what Fessler (1995) calls the '*personal environment*' which impacts positively and negatively on the teacher's world of work.

Finally, there is research literature relating to gender and how it will impact on issues like career development. Sandra Acker's text: '*Teachers, Gender and Careers*' (Acker 1989) is a key contribution here.

Taken together, here is a body of research evidence which suggests that biographical factors may impact on the acquisition of teacher knowledge and dispositions to development.

### **Time Orientation and Self-Reflexivity: Stances on biography and development**

My research relates to and brings new dimensions to existing work on this area. For example, the influences of pre-teaching experiences on teaching style for beginning teachers as reported by Knowles (1992) are confirmed in Howard's and Gabriel's account but this research goes further by suggesting more explicit links between these early experiences and dispositions to development. In addition, by choosing teachers other than beginning teachers, the relationship between pre-teaching experiences and style and development is rendered more complex. Elsewhere there is a difference in focus. Huberman's (Huberman, 1989), Measor's (Measor, 1985) and Acker's (Acker, 1989) accounts stem from a career perspective and while career development and professional development may be adjacent fields of study, they are not the same, the former focusing on employment progression, the latter measured in more complex understanding of work processes. Nor is this research grounded in a particular perspective as for example Acker's work on gender. It would not be surprising, however, if my research traversed some of the same terrain.

That said, there are two elements of an innovatory character. First, there is emphasis on a temporal dimension. This will focus on how a teacher's time orientation can shape practice and development, a line of enquiry suggested by the exploratory interviews.

James (1892) was the first to analyse self-conceptions according to their time perspective, his findings cast in very regimented notions of time. More recently, Schutz (1964) instituted an empirical investigation of self-conception whereby respondents answered the open question, 'Who am I?' The subsequent analyses allowed him to formulate the idea of the *'tenses of self'* where in place of blanket temporal demarcations such as past, present or future, subtle gradations are introduced to represent descriptions of self-concept more accurately. Thus, the past is composed of a *'reflective past'* and a *'completed past'*. The present can be divided into a *'past continuing into present'* (*'I was and still am'*) and *'a current present self'* (*'I now am, I have become'*). The future, too, is divided into *'prospective self'* *'actually expected self'* and *'potential self'*.

Referring once more to the exploratory interviews, it is instructive to compare the temporal emphasis of Howard's account with the description of *'past-continuing into present'*. For Gabriel, unlike Howard, there is a sense of *'completed past'* and there is certainly an emphasis on *'prospective self'* and *'actually expected outcome'*. Schutz's more subtly differentiated notion of time perspective provides a counterbalance to Raymond, Butt and Townsend's dictum: *'In order to know what we wish to do next, we need to know ourselves, who we are and how we came to be that way'* (Raymond, Butt and Townsend, 1992 p. 151). Such a perception is more tied to the notion that biography is the study of time past and while this might be adequate to illuminate Howard's perceptions, it seems to fall short as an explanation of how interviewees like Gabriel process life experiences in a way which subordinates the past in favour of a future orientation. Indeed, in general terms, we might wish to offer an additional slant to Raymond et al's dictum with the following suggestion *'Surely to know what we wish to do next we need to know our hopes, plan and dreams'*.

The expanded notion of biography incorporating a future orientation is then a focus of this research. Added to this is an emphasis on self-reflexivity: the two are connected. Watkins (1996) writes of how: *'Dominant modes of individual psychology have encouraged us to understand ourselves and others in terms of our insides and pasts'*. Believing these tools to be inadequate, he calls for an understanding of our *'outsides'* and our *'futures'* to complete the picture. Our *'outsides'*, he argues, might be understood in terms of self-relating to different contexts. Here self-reflexivity comes into play as the process whereby the self is capable of re-editing and reconstructing

itself as it participates in a variety of social situations. Those players who practise self-reflexivity tend not to be those tied to their pasts, but individuals who actively seek new challenges and thus are constantly redefining themselves. Gabriel could be seen in this category.

In conclusion, the importance of self-reflexivity and temporal dimension are two features to emerge strongly from a chapter whose purpose was to conceptualise development and in doing so reconnect it with biography. The way different individuals relate to these concepts will be the concern of future chapters.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Question and Methodology**

#### **Defining the Research Question**

Chapters 1 and 2 have identified biographical issues which may be contributing factors to teachers' practice and their attitudes to development. In line with this, a research question designed to explore these possibilities might now be drawn up. Tentatively, it would read: 'How can key issues identified in teacher biographies illuminate an understanding of teacher development', the primary focus being that of appreciative description, a process of casting light on the important questions.

Moving from a tentative to a final form for the question will be the immediate challenge and will be the focus of the first part of this chapter. A start can be made by subjecting the proposed title to scrutiny, examining implications for the researcher, the researched and the research process itself in an attempt to make explicit the exact nature of the enquiry. One phrase, for example, within the title's wording – 'an understanding of teacher development' – immediately invites comment. It is important to pause and ask whose understanding is being referred to here. The phrase admits ambiguity. For example, is it solely my understanding or might it be that the research process itself has the potential to increase the teacher's own understanding of his/her practice and his/her attitude to development by encouraging self-reflexivity? The latter point is worth pursuing. If teacher development through self-reflexivity is the preferred teacher development model, would it be reasonable to suppose that biography as a tool towards self-reflexivity would contribute to that development? There are two related questions to be considered here, one dealing with the quality of the research relationship and the second, focusing on the teacher's approach to the research in terms of openness to learning.

#### **Research relationship and teachers' perception of the research**

In considering the research relationship, Measor and Sikes (1992) talk of the life history method (similar in form to biography), requiring mutual closeness, trust and a

sense of collaboration for a successful outcome. While all social scientists, they argue, are conscious of the importance of establishing a relationship between the researcher and the person supplying the information, researchers in life history method are required to forge links which are almost of a different qualitative character. Woods (1986) agrees: *'There would have to be a relationship between us that transcended the research, that produced a bond of friendship, a feeling of togetherness and joint pursuit of a common mission rising above personal egos'*. (p. 63) Such phrasing indicates not only an unusual intimacy of contact but also in words such as *'joint'* and *'common'* a sameness of purpose and, arguably, an equality of status.

Arguably, however, is the key word as the following comments indicate: *'We have emphasised the stress we placed on quality of the research relationships, but we need to acknowledge that the relationship was, after all, one primarily developed for the purposes of collecting data'* (Measor and Sikes, 1992, p. 214). Here the obvious but often overlooked point is made that research acts would not happen if they were not initiated by the researcher. The same authors then proceed to examine the notions of rapport and empathetic listening. Their conclusion is that, while both are central to this type of research, what is crucial is the process of *'listening beyond'* which they describe as *'listening for more than is being said on the surface'* (ibid. p. 214). This suggests an interpretive role for the researcher and a responsibility to probe the account for a more complete understanding. A simple equality of status for both researcher and researched does not easily survive this reading of the research process.

Measor and Sikes accept *'an element of instrumentality in our concern to establish good relationships with our teachers'* (ibid. p. 214). They debate the ethics of such a stance and draw some comfort from the realization that very few encounters in life, if any, aspire to the elevated and impossibly high expectations some would claim for the research encounter. Moreover, an acceptance of instrumentality does not amount to any condoning of exploitation. It is unreasonable to assume that researchers seek to take advantage of their interviewees and, indeed, in their quest for quality data, it is more likely they would cultivate a relationship based on trust and good faith.

As Hammersley (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1979) reminds us, the research bargain *'is a social construction, the result of assessments by each side of what the other has to give and what they are prepared to offer in return for these things'* (p. 120). Here the

comment informs us that interviewees are not passive victims of researcher supremacy, but individuals who negotiate their way through an interaction, protecting themselves when necessary, but also promoting their own interests. It may well be that they see in the research encounter an opportunity for self-growth. That they do so is a reflection on their own agency and the quality of a research relationship which has created an atmosphere of mutual closeness and trust.

The second factor in reflecting on an increase in self-reflexivity relates to the interviewee's openness to learning. In Howard's case, for example, there is a proud proclamation of who he is and what he stands for. In defining himself in this rigid way he sets limits to the possibilities of self-development making it unlikely that he will view the research encounter as an opportunity for self-reflection and self-growth. A teacher however, like Gabriel, open to new possibilities and understandings is more likely to consider the research encounter as a potential means of self-enrichment. The research encounter in encouraging and supporting critical reflection may, for him, replicate previous and other ongoing occasions where the self in social interaction is afforded the opportunity to effect the process of re-editing and re-shaping. Here the notion of self-reflexivity is being described.

What does this mean for the wording of the research question? In Howard's case the research encounter offers considerable opportunity for the researcher to identify key issues in the teacher biography and thus illuminate for himself how these issues have impacted on that teacher's development. On the other hand, Howard's scope for being illuminated seems limited, given his attachment to self-sufficiency. In Gabriel's case, however, for the reasons advanced above, the potential for identification and illumination seems to exist for both researcher and interviewee.

In conclusion, two points can be made. First, to insist that it is the researcher alone who, in the words of the title, '*identifies*' and is able to '*illuminate*' is to offer an incomplete view of the research process. Denying the possibility that the interviewee might have his/her knowledge illuminated seems to contradict the whole biographical method which in its mutual closeness, trust and sense of collaboration has, at least, the potential for promoting self reflexivity. Admitting that both parties may be enriched in the process is, then, a clear possibility. Such an admission, however, does not guarantee that the research process will automatically result in the interviewee's enrichment.

Second, and more importantly, as Measor and Sikes (1992) recognized, research initiatives are undertaken to elicit data, to supply answers to questions the researcher has raised. In attempting an appreciative description, in this case, shedding light on the issue of teacher development as a consequence of studying biography, the prime beneficiary is the researcher whose findings will hopefully add to a deeper understanding of the issues involved. However, it might be added that the very nature of the research encounter with its unmistakably collaborative ethos and the capacity of those being researched at least on occasions to derive benefit from it, adds a secondary and complementary feature to the research. In other words, being alive to the notion that the research process might stimulate reflexivity, does not undermine the research's primary perspective, but adds a potential enhancement.

An additional element of the research can now be considered. To the appreciative description component it is appropriate to introduce a '*so what consequence*' component. The new element would seek to discover what might be included in teacher development strategies given the findings relating to biography and development. Encouraging self-reflexivity may be an important part in this. Guiding examples can be found in the work of Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) who assembled groups to promote the idea of discussing individual biographies in a way which would inform collective practice and Nias' (Nias, 1992) free discussion groups where individuals met to unravel their most deeply entrenched values and views. For Nias, in particular, the process of change is very difficult and painful, but it is debatable whether this has to be the case. Similarly, both examples claim it is absolutely essential to understand the past to determine the future. There are already sufficient intimations to cast doubt on this view. It will be the task of this research to suggest alternative strategies.

It is now worth redefining the research question to accommodate the two elements of study. It might read as follows: 'How can key issues identified in teacher biographies illuminate an understanding of teacher development and inform thinking on appropriate forms for teacher development strategies?' To pause and ask whose thinking is informed is to recall the earlier argument that, while primacy is granted to the researcher perspective, the enrichment of those being researched is not ruled out.



## The Interview as Research Method

The choice of the interview as a research practice indicates a response to a fundamental question relating to social science method. It is an argument over what constitutes completeness or how an account can be said to be adequate. Scott (1995), addressing this issue, describes '*three broad paradigms or traditions (which) have dominated sociological thought since its inception*' (p. 119). The first paradigm emphasises the '*brute and imposing facts of society*' (ibid. p.119) whose overwhelming force reduces the human being to a marginal influence. There is no sense here of human actors controlling their destiny, trapped as they are in subservient relationships to society. A second paradigm emphasises the '*active and intentional flow of social life*' (ibid. p.119). At its most extreme it embraces the concept of '*Verstehen*' (Weber, 1964) where the role of the human actor is considered of paramount importance and no attention is paid to any constricting societal forces. Recently, a third paradigm has been identified which seeks to give weight to both structure and agency. Described in Giddens' '*Structuration approach*' (Giddens, 1984) here is belief that human beings do play an active and purposeful role in their constructions of the world even though these very constructions are '*subject to structural constraints*' (Scott, 1995 p. 119).

In choosing the interview as a research method it is this agential character to human behaviour which has been emphasized and, although Giddens' point about constraints can be recognized, I would maintain that any account which does not pay attention to what participants in a social situation have to say about their activities is bound to be inadequate. Interestingly, within the interview, at a micro level, the introduction of an interview guide might be viewed as an example of a constraint, in this case, to the unfettered expression of an interviewee's opinion and viewed in some quarters as a feature of an asymmetrical power arrangement. This issue of power and control alluded to earlier in the discussion of the quality of the research relationship can now be addressed more explicitly in the first of two sections which focus on objections raised regarding the choice of interview as a research method.

### a) Issues of power / control within an interview

An interview is often thought of as a structural arrangement in which one party seeks information and the other party is expected to supply that information. It has been

defined as '*two person communication*' (Cannell and Kahn, 1968) or a '*dyad communication*' (Gorden, 1969) and while this seems to ignore the concept of the group interview, it nevertheless does justice to the notion of social exchange which characterises an interview. Although the word itself is neutral in defining the status of the participants, there is a view, as exemplified in the first sentence of this section, that in the research interview there is a measure of control exercised by the researcher.

To illustrate this perception it is useful to recall the words of Ball (1983) describing the unique nature of the interview as a form of social interaction: '*the interviewee is asked to elaborate, illustrate, reiterate, define, summarise, exemplify and confirm matters in his talk in ways that would be unacceptable in other talk situations. The rules of conversational discourse are flagrantly disregarded in the name of social science. The interviewer comes to "know" his subjects without ever necessarily having to engage in a reciprocal process of personal "social striptease"*' (pp 93 - 95).

Measor and Sikes (1992) are clearly sensitive to this argument and in their chapter '*Visiting Lives*' refer not only to research bargains and relationships as expounded by Hammersley (1979), but suggest that in life history method where trust and collaboration are key components, there may come a stage where '*one may not be asking questions at all*' (Measor and Sikes, p. 213). They refer to Ball's description of '*interactive research*' (Ball, 1986, p.75) as a more accurate depiction of life history method. Here Ball, perhaps reflecting his unease, rejects the notion of "*interviewing*" in favour of an approach where both parties collaboratively probe and reflect on the emerging data.

There is a number of rejoinders possible to Ball's earlier critique of the interview method. First, it overestimates the interviewee's powerlessness. Scott (Scott and Usher, 1996), for example, in listing shortcomings of the interview method, writes of how there can be a gap between the events referred to by the interviewee and the account given to the researcher. In certain circumstances: '*The interviewee may deliberately set out to deceive in order to protect their interests, other interests or to place in the public domain an account of proceedings which they judge advances a particular political project more effectively*' (p. 66). Such conduct does not suggest manipulation.

Second, Gorden (1969) describes how interviewees actually enjoy being given the

opportunity to present their views. This would suggest a lack of discomfort with any power differential in an interview arrangement. Finally, and most powerfully, where research is of a collaborative nature and where the perceptions of individual respondents are important, any attempt to conduct research in an autocratic manner would be self-defeating.

Thus in terms of the internal relations that constitute an interview, Ball's (Ball, 1983) pessimistic reading of power differentials within the interaction seems overstated and, on this point at least, there is good reason to suppose that interviews can exist as a vehicle for interviewees' perceptions of the world.

Issues of power and control also often surface in questions over ethical stances in research such as the decisions researchers have to make about how they conduct themselves in the course of an interview and the vexed question of rights and responsibilities attributed both to the researchers and researched. Scott (Scott and Usher, 1996) suggests three models of operation: first, '*covert research*', where the researcher operates secretly and the aims and purposes of the research are unknown to participants. Humphreys' research on male homosexual activity in public toilets (Humphreys, 1970) is advanced as an example of this model where he claimed the illegality of the practice justified the clandestine approach. Second, there is '*open democratic research*' which stresses the rights of participants to control which data are collected and which are included in the research. Third, there is '*open autocratic research*', which denies the right of veto to respondents, but otherwise operates in an overt manner.

Simons (1984) advocates open democratic research. She talks of researcher impartiality in key matters such as research design and use of data. She offers strict guidelines in matters of confidentiality/control, negotiation and accountability and is emphatic about the requirement for collaboration. Yet an argument against such a method is that opportunities given to re-present an account might offer covert means to subvert the original. In addition, the researcher's access to alternative frameworks (see below) to interpret data may enrich an account, which might be then jeopardised, if a veto was applied thoughtlessly.

The term "*open autocratic*" is not appealing but its description perhaps best fits this research. In justifying it, it can be argued that it is possible to share information with

respondents at different stages and at different levels without invoking complex negotiation procedures at every point along the way. In the case of the exploratory interviews and those which occurred later, I talked to interviewees about the purpose of the research and later responded to their requests about what progress had been made. Their interest in discussing emerging ideas varied from slight to very substantial and I was able to accommodate this range by meeting and talking to individuals at a level which appeared to be mutually satisfying. The term 'collaborative' is not out of place to describe such a process and again refutes the charge that relationships within research encounters work to the disadvantage of interviewees.

## b) Conclusions drawn from interview data – a question of validity

This second section examines another source of objection to the interview as a research methodology. This objection focuses on the validity of findings which from a positivist framework will always be suspect given that the interview method is considered intrinsically unreliable, its interpretive quality seen as obfuscating objective truth. Two elements will be considered: first, the process of rationalization which questions the reliability of an individual's account and second, the idea of the double hermeneutic which focuses on how the researcher's involvement further complicates the reliability of the findings..

### i. Rationalisation

One major criticism of the interview method is that the interviewee may well choose to 'rationalise' his actions and thoughts for the benefit of an audience or readership. While rationalization simply denotes the act of making rational or intelligible, it is true that in contemporary usage, it conveys a pejorative tone. In this sense, it is akin to self-justification and not too far removed from deception, a charge that can be levelled against some respondents who, as suggested earlier, set out to falsify an account. Yet such a reading of the word is not necessary. The rationalising process may be unintended and, certainly, in the recall of events from time past the intervening years of experience and understanding give scope for alternative interpretations. Mead (1934), for example, argues that the self *'is forever evolving and thus both reconstitutes itself at different moments and, more importantly, reconstitutes reality, both past and present'* (Scott and Usher, 1996 p. 66).

The revisions and adjustments which individuals bring to an understanding of their life do not constitute a problem for a research method which gives credence to the notion of human agency. Indeed, as a research method, it seeks to encourage self-reflexivity, a process defined by notions of re-editing and reconstructing. Rationalisation in this light can be seen as an open-ended process to build increasingly elaborate and complex models of coherence appropriate for the understanding of human lives. In conclusion, in thinking about rationalization, it is more important to focus on the research model's capacity to encourage a more informed perspective on life rather than be drawn into discussion of accuracy and scientific verification of detail, a concern of a positivist approach to research.

## ii Considering the Double Hermeneutic

The word 'hermeneutic' has its origin in the Greek word 'hermeneuein' meaning to interpret. According to Usher (Scott and Usher, 1996), hermeneutic research assumes that *'all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices'* (p. 18). Contrasting hermeneutic research with a positivist model, he argues that in social research *'knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control, but with interpretation, meaning and illumination'* (ibid. p. 18). There is, however, a complication. Usher writes: *'Human action is given meaning by interpretive schema or frameworks. It follows from this that as researchers (engaged in the human action and social practice of research) we too seek to make sense of what we are researching and we too do so through interpretive schema or frameworks'* (ibid. p. 18-19). Thus emerges the 'double hermeneutic', as researchers and researched pursue their role of sense makers. Scott, (Scott and Usher, 1996) recognising the capacity of social actors to construct their understanding of the world and to *'reflect on'*, and *'reflexively monitor, their own actions'* (ibid. p. 67), points up the problem the researcher brings to the situation. *'However the presence of the researcher and their desire to investigate social reality by focusing on the perceptions and behaviours of social actors requires a further level of interpretation. Thus the researcher in effect is interpreting through their own conceptual and perceptual lens interpretations made by those being studied'* (ibid. p. 67).

Scott (Scott and Usher, 1996) invites us to consider the alternative. It would be to

choose a method which would focus exclusively on the '*phenomena that compel social actors to behave in certain ways regardless of their intentions and understandings*' (p. 67). For Scott, such a rejection of human agency is unacceptable. There is no choice but to accept the partiality of interpretive research. As Usher (Scott and Usher, 1996) argues: '*It follows also that since all sense seeking is from an interpretive framework then all knowledge is perspective bound and partial, i.e. relative to that framework*' (p. 19).

Human beings do interpret and make sense of their world as social actors. To deny this is to reduce them in Scott's words to the role of '*unwitting dupes of structural forces beyond their comprehension and influence*' (Scott and Usher, 1996 p. 67). Yet their interpretation is partial and it is important to consider whether the researcher can bring anything additional to their accounts. For example, Giddens (1976), while acknowledging that an understanding of the actions of fellow human beings requires knowledge of their intentions, is reluctant to rely only on that knowledge. The knowledge, he claims, is inevitably partial and an insufficient base upon which to build comprehensive theory. It is, however, left to Gray (1992) to exemplify how her women respondents' perceptions can be accepted and valued but taken a stage further. '*What the women said to me does not directly reflect their experience, but it is their way of articulating that experience. The interview data on which this project is based has therefore been subjected to a double interpretation; the first is the interpretation which the women bring to their own experience, and the one which they share with me, whilst the second is the interpretation I make of what they say. Their interpretations depend on their subject position and the discourses to which they have access and through which their subjectivities are constructed. My interpretation depends on those things also, with the important addition of a theoretical and conceptual discourse, which constitutes the framework of my analysis*' (p. 33-34).

The researcher's ability to access additional interpretive frameworks contributes to a different way of knowing, which complements that of the interviewee. Taken together, they provide good reasons for choosing the interview method as appropriate for biographical research.

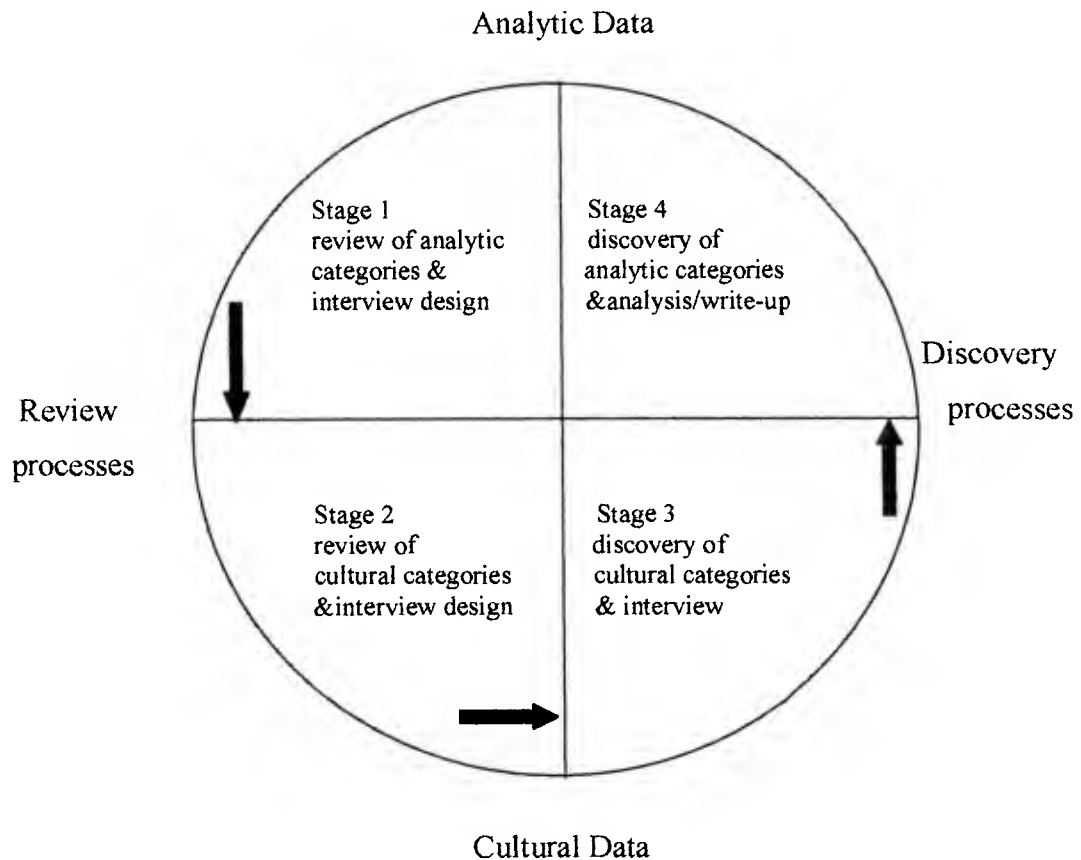
## Interview Guide - purpose and design

Interview guides have their detractors. Sikes (1985) reminds researchers that each teacher has an idiosyncratic biography and warns not to impose too rigid an interview structure so as to constrain the free expression of the interviewees' views. This, however, does not deny the value of an interview guide. The device, for example, can be used to ensure a complete coverage of an issue employing a variety of '*probes*' (silent probe, encouragement, and clarification) for this purpose. A '*mutation probe*' for example can be used to introduce a new topic, which is perhaps useful, if the interviewee has exhausted an area of interest. Interview guides do not specify when a topic is to be broached and there is much value in allowing the interviewee to develop the conversation as he/she wishes. The clue is in the word '*guide*', a reminder to secure the best possible data not only to satisfy the researcher's questions but to allow the interviewees to do justice to their own thoughts. It is a reminder of the collaborative nature of the exercise.

The interview guide for this research will in its composition seek to make the links between biography, knowledge acquisition, professional practice and professional development.

Of these four elements a word needs to be said about professional practice and its link with biography. The word '*practice*' has not been absent from the text so far, but it has not been stressed as an entity of its own. It will be remembered that Gabriel, one of the two interviewees, was keen to talk about his practice and how it related to his future development. His future orientation was noted. Traditional representations of biography favour its employment as an instrument to show the effect of past on present but this is an inadequate conceptualisation. A concentration on the interviewee's past is likely to direct his/her thoughts solely to that time perspective and what is required is a means of redirecting thinking. For this reason, a perspective on current practice might be useful in shifting the emphasis. It is likely, too, that in reflecting on practice, evidence will be unearthed of the application of teacher knowledge, itself shaped by biography. Attempts to build upon practice, that is to say, to pursue development, might also be affected by biographical factors. For this reason, the association between biography, knowledge acquisition, professional practice and professional development is explored.

In thinking about designing an interview guide and the part it plays in the research process, I now turn to the work of McCracken (1988). McCracken identified a four-step method of enquiry as appropriate for the conduct of in depth or 'long interviews'.



As the diagram indicates (ibid. p. 30), he represents the enquiry process in terms of a qualitative research cycle. The east-west (horizontal) axis separates two domains, analytical and cultural data. The north-south (vertical) axis separates the other two domains, review processes and discovery processes. Taken together, the axes divide the circle into four quadrants, each of which represents a separate and successive stage in the research process.

The four stepped approach embraces not only interview design but also analysis of data to the point of recognizing thematic patterns. He argues the outcome can be measured in a set of conclusions validated not simply in terms of following the steps in sequence but appreciating the inter-connectedness of the steps. For example, the data which emerges from the interview and the thematic shape it takes reflects not only the structuring of the guide (McCracken refers to it as a questionnaire) but the analytical



and cultural categories which inform the guide in the first place. Step 4 of the enquiry method deals with analysis of data and will be discussed later but I will now detail the first three steps of the method, the third of which marks the completion of the guide itself and the beginning of the interview process.

## Step 1 - Review of Analytic Categories

Step 1, termed '*Review of Analytic Categories*' is largely connected with an extensive analysis of the literature. One virtue of this is that it familiarises the researcher with the territory permitting the development of concepts, which might later underpin emerging perspectives. It will lead to the construction of the interview guide suggesting categories and relationships which may organise the data. Another virtue is that it provides a distancing effect against which objections can be raised. Some minor points can be made here. In my research, literature interacted with sample interview data to produce an original slant on the topic - the future dimension of biography - rather than existing as a discrete entity. Second, in selecting the topic in the first place, inspiration came from what McCracken would term '*cultural categories*', namely my own experience in teaching and notions of teacher development rooted in my role as a teacher. '*Cultural categories*' provide McCracken with his second step but they may have a preliminary role in informing analytic categories developed through reviewing the literature.

## Step 2 - Review of Cultural Categories

By cultural, McCracken is suggesting that in most cases the qualitative researcher has considerable familiarity with the culture under study. This, he stresses, is an advantage in this type of research, allowing the researcher's self to engage with the words and meanings of the respondent. By examining closely, however, the cultural assumptions which underpin the researcher's experience of the topic, more than has been previously taken for granted may be unearthed. It is against this background that respondents' comments can assume a sharper focus. Any danger of over-familiarity engendering preconceptions is balanced by this method of manufacturing distance.

The cultural review, by allowing the researcher to construct the topic in terms of his/her own world understanding, supplements the analytical view provided by the literature by

suggesting categories and relationships not previously unearthed. While it might be difficult to uphold a distinction between analytical and cultural in any meaningful practical sense, there is merit in recognising the two complementary dimensions, the acceptance of which will enhance the research enquiry.

### **Step 3 - Discovery of Cultural Categories**

Step 3 represents a move to activity represented by the guide construction and the interview procedure. McCracken stresses the need for an obtrusive/unobtrusive balance in compiling the guide and in the interview itself. While it is crucial that the respondent gives his/her view of the world, the researcher needs to exercise control so as to give structure to the interview.

The design of the interview guide and the conduct of the interview should allow the respondent to shape her/his understanding of the topic and to express it in her/his terms. The researcher, having read the literature critically and having clarified his/her cultural assumptions, can produce and implement the interview guide which has the potential to produce rich data.

In compiling the guide for this research it is possible to detect the analytical and cultural components. The broad headings and categorisation betray the influence of critical reading: the questions themselves are shaped by a familiarity with the context, but there is a distancing, which has emerged from a consideration of cultural assumptions. Together, as McCracken suggests, they represent the best hope for interviewer and interviewee to engage with the topic.

## **Interview Guide**

### **Biography and Knowledge Acquisition**

In this section, the task of investigating biography – what teachers say about their professional and personal lives – as a factor in determining teacher knowledge, is begun.

- a) The first set of questions focuses on the present working reality of the teacher. This serves the purpose of making immediate contact with the interviewee on safe ground.

### Questions (Present Work)

- 1) Tell me about your current role(s)/position(s) in school and what it involves?
- 2) What aspects of your role(s) give you satisfaction?
- 3) Are there any aspects you are dissatisfied with?

In this section of the interview I expect to be listening to how satisfaction and dissatisfaction might be important indicators of time orientation and have implications for teacher knowledge acquisition. For example, dissatisfaction may have a number of outlets. It may be a motivating force in implementing change. A teacher may perceive some form of skill deficit in his/her teaching and seek to rectify it by attending an appropriate course. It would be possible to speak here of a '*future orientation*'. Equally, however, a response to that skill deficit might be to do nothing, as Huberman (1989) discovered with those teachers who did not engage with their difficulties. The '*stagnant present*' might describe the state that ensues. It is also possible that a dissatisfaction with the present might indicate a wish to return to the certainties of the past. Here a '*past orientation*' would be evident. In some cases as with Howard, the choice to embrace the past comes not from dissatisfaction, but from its opposite, the self satisfaction or complacency that argues change is unnecessary.

- b) The next set of questions focuses on how the interviewee has reached his/her current position. While necessarily recalling the past, it will seek to elicit how past events have been processed, interpreted and reconceptualised in the course of time.

### Questions (Previous Experience)

1. Can you give me an outline of your professional life to date?
2. As you look back, can you highlight important moments in your development as a teacher?
3. As you look back, can you identify personal life events which might be influential in your development as a teacher?

The research literature provides an important listening frame. There may be evidence on how family background and values transmitted through family members impact on teaching experience as attested to by Knowles (1992) and Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi (1992).

There may also be indication of how school learning experiences can have a long lasting effect on teaching behaviours - sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. For example, focusing on the latter, Lortie (1975) talks about prospective teachers appropriating styles of teaching from their observations of their own teachers not recognizing that their appropriated style is skewed because they have seen teaching only from the viewpoint of a student.

Experiences at university level may also be interesting to listen for. For example, does the B.Ed. student emerge with a more informed teacher identity than the subject specialist with a one year PGCE training? More generally, do university experiences contribute to a development of interests and values which will inform subsequent teaching behaviours?

Teacher training will be an interesting area of focus. Here there are interesting questions about the educational philosophy of the time when training occurred, perhaps exemplified in the preferred teaching models. The age of the entrant to the training process might be significant. Presumably the more mature entrant will bring different experiences to bear which might influence his/her approach. It will be useful to contrast more modern methods of training which will incorporate school mentors with traditional methods where there appeared to be more of a theory/practice divide. Finally, to what extent were the positive outcomes of training lost in the socialisation into school practices? Here the work of Copland (1980), Yee (1969) and Karmos and Jacko (1977) is important.

Other issues to listen for might be the experience of the first teaching post and subsequent career movement. The content and contexts for development experienced today will be of interest.

The concept of the '*moment*' will allow subsequent questioning on times before and after. Here the notion of the '*tenses of the self*' is important (Schutz, 1964), referred to

earlier as a means whereby more nuanced gradations of time, subdividing elements of past, present and future are used to describe self concept more accurately. Is the past, for example, now the completed past or does it still impact on the present? An answer to these questions may provide an important guide to an individual's orientation to development.

c) The third set of questions seeks to elicit details about the future.

### **Questions (Future)**

- 1) Tell me about your hopes/plans for the future.
- 2) How do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

Here I will be listening to how interviewees conceive of the future. There may well be examples of celebrating the future or more negatively, a sense of ignoring or denying.

### **Linking to Professional Practice**

This section seeks to explore the association between knowledge acquisition and professional practice.

a) The first set of questions relate to conceptions of teaching and learning

### **Questions**

1. Tell me how you see your role in the classroom.
2. Tell me about some of your most successful experiences as a teacher.

In this section of the interview I will be listening to how teachers frame their understanding of teaching and learning. I will have in mind how Watkins et al (1996), using Biggs and Moore (1993) make broad links between three conceptions of learning and teaching. First, a view of teaching as transmission of knowledge which is related to a quantitative definition of learning - how much, what are the essential facts. Second, the idea of the efficient orchestration of teaching skills which has a parallel in a concern with the validation of knowledge as institutionally defined and third, a conception of teaching as a facilitation of learning where learning has a qualitative character and embraces the active construction of meaning and interpretation. It is the third model which incorporates active learning and learner responsibility, Watkins' keys to effective

learning, ideas which underpin his thoughts about preparing for a changing future. A teacher, in preparing his/her students for the future, will need to model flexibility and openness to new experiences and he/she will need to be future orientated. With this in mind, I will listen to how accounts of professional practice are shaped by conceptions of time orientation - the teacher who looks to the future, the teacher who looks to the past.

b. The next set of questions relate to issues of planning

## Questions

1. Can you tell me something about your planning?
2. Is your planning done on an individual or collaborative basis?

In the first question I will be focusing on ideas of fixedness and flexibility and whose interests are more served by the planning. Some useful research in this area has been carried out by Sanches (1994) who talks about the innovative teacher who plans for flexibility, preferring a '*mental map*' which allows greater scope for adjusting to student-learner needs and the less creative teacher who tends to maintain the initial plan, come what may, with an emphasis on teacher determination of content, style and pace. I will listen for time orientation in planning. It might be possible to identify both the spontaneous risk taking, innovative planner with an eye on the future and the conservative planner employing tried and tested methods.

The second question relates to collaborative planning. Here again I will listen for any connection with time orientation. A key issue may be whether future orientated interviewees will be eager to embrace collaborative learning as a means of knowledge accumulation.

c. The final set of questions in this section relate to reviewing and reflection

## Question

1. What does reflection in terms of teaching performance mean to you?

I will listen for evidence of reviewing and modifying, ascertaining why some teachers seek to improve and others do not and what is the focus of their attention. Zeichner

(1994) is of value here. In his research he questions the assumption that the reflective practitioner is the good practitioner. Reflection does not necessarily lead to positive change and some types of reflection narrow the teacher's perspective. He does, however, recognize a type of reflection which belongs to the '*developmental tradition*' which prioritises reflection about students' thinking and developmental growth. This perhaps ties in with other earlier descriptions which privilege student consideration and which are favoured by the innovative, future oriented teacher.

## **Links to Professional Development**

- a. The final section of the interview guide makes links to Professional Development

It will attempt to identify contexts which have led to positive development experiences, perhaps revealing strategies which have been successful in assisting individual growth.

## **Question**

1. Which of the contexts you work in or have worked in have/have not proved beneficial for your development?

In this section I will listen for how individuals approach development in different ways. I might expect to hear accounts of how teachers are developing as part of their everyday reflective practice or how they search out development opportunities in terms of courses offered by a range of providers. It will be interesting to listen for those who develop through collaboration. Another area of interest may be why some avoid development opportunities.

## **From Interview to Case Study**

Armed with such a guide the way is clear to conduct a number of in depth interviews. Each interview, when complete will give rise to a case study or profile. It is here that an interesting question presents itself. Do the emergent profiles exist simply as rich descriptions of individual cases or can they generate greater knowledge of the topic –the

link between biography and professional development – through identification of common themes? .

In illustrating an understanding of the case study method, Cohen and Manion (1994) seek to contrast it with research methods belonging to the '*scientific experimental paradigm*' (p.106) which is based upon the '*creation of theoretical frameworks that can be tested by experimentation, replication and refinement*' (ibid. p.106). Case study, they argue, belongs to another paradigm where the focus is interpretive, a paradigm to which the interview might be said to belong, as discussed earlier. In the interpretive paradigm the principal concern is to understand how the individual '*creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself*' (ibid, p. 8). In terms of methodology, the scientific experimental paradigm inclines towards a '*nomothetic*' approach, that is to say it is concerned with the creation of general laws relating to social behaviour, while the interpretive paradigm focuses much more on an '*idiographic*' approach, emphasising the particular and the individual. Burrell and Morgan (1979) believe that the two models are based on different assumptions about human nature, the interpretive model emphasising its voluntary aspect, the scientific model stressing how human nature is determined by social forces. Yet to view these paradigms as polar opposites might be wrong. Cohen and Manion themselves (1994) see them as complementary rather than competing approaches to enquiry and Bhaskar (1978) is keen to argue that interpretive and positivist researchers have more in common than they are prepared to admit. Crucial to his argument is a rejection of the notion of the pure '*scientific*' position where it is posited that the researcher is clearly separate from what is being researched. To deny that researchers can '*remain neutral with their values separate from the descriptions of reality they provide*' (Scott, 1996 p. 55) is to question the bedrock of the experimental/positivist position. Scott (1996) summarises Bhaskar's argument as a call for '*a new research paradigm which will embrace all forms of enquiry*' (p. 75).

It is not, however, necessary to endorse Bhasker's radical request for a uniparadigmatic model to appreciate the fact that the scientific and interpretive paradigms, while containing important differences, do have important areas of overlap. To illustrate, it is helpful to quote at length Cohen and Manion (1994) as they contrast the experimenter and the case study researcher. '*Unlike the experimenter who manipulates variables to determine their causal significance or the surveyor who asks standardised questions of*



*large, representative samples of individuals, the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit – a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs'* (ibid. p. 106-7). There are issues to be unearthed here. First, there appears to be something distinctive about the case study's in depth and intense focus on the individual phenomenon in contrast to the surveyor's large samples. Second, in both models there is a concern for generalization, even though it was argued earlier that it is only the experimental paradigm which favours the '*nomothetic approach*'. While, it is true that generalization may be understood differently within the context of the two models, it is instructive to ask how the interpretive approach, for example, views sampling procedures, as a means of connecting the individual with the wider population. Such a question is crucial to any qualitative research which seeks to do more than simply describe a phenomenon.

Taking the first point, it is reasonable to agree with Adelman (Adelman et al, 1980) that a case study's distinctive strength lies in its concern to produce an account which represents '*the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right*' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, page 123). The unique aspects of each case are preserved by a richness of description or to use Geertz's phrase (Geertz, 1973) a '*thickness*' in detail.

Much more contentious is any attempt to justify generalisation and the development of formal theory from individual cases. Mitchell (1983) identifies the difficulty inherent in such approach. '*The basic problem in the case material in theoretical analysis, however, is that of the extent to which the analyst is justified in generalising from a single instance of an event which may be and probably is – unique*' (p.189).

Hammersley (1985) identifies three types of case study research. First, there is a concern with typicality where cases are selected to represent a larger whole. Woods (1986) for example, emphasises the requirement for '*the case*' to be as representative as possible to satisfy external validity, defined as the '*ability of a piece of research to relate to other contexts and environments*' (Scott, 1996 p. 80). The second type of case study research is, according to Hammersley (1985) where researchers want to use cases to test theories. The process here is to study more and more cases '*until they are*

*satisfied the theory holds'* (Scott, 1996 p.151). A distinction in sampling practices can be discerned. In the first type of case study research, cases are selected for typicality, whereas in the second, cases are chosen for their explanatory power, their potential to illuminate theories. The third type of case study eschews the idea of representativeness, dealing instead in the uniqueness of each case and focusing on how '*the workings of particular processes are illuminated by single cases*' (Scott, 1996 p. 151).

It would be difficult to argue that the cases selected for this research were based on typicality. Teachers, chosen for interview, were not in any sense representative of fellow professionals at large as I make clear in the final section of the chapter. Nor would it be appropriate to argue that Hammersley's (Hammersley, 1985) second type of case study research, where fieldwork is undertaken to test a theory, is pertinent here. The gradual unfolding of the research process in this case is antithetical to such a concept. It is the third type of case study which holds out most promise. Mitchell (1983) writes of how formal theory can emerge which has explanatory power but which is based on the uniqueness of each case. A theory can emerge linking biography and attitudes to professional development which has been informed by the narratives of individual teachers. Mitchell (1983) refers to theoretical sampling as the process occurring here. Instead of selecting cases which, by virtue of their typicality, can be representative of a larger population, cases are chosen because of their own internal logic, or to use Scott's phrase (Scott, 1996 p.152) their '*interior geography*' which the researcher uncovers and makes explicit. This process is best illustrated with reference to the sampling choice made for this research.

### **Selecting the Sample**

In Chapter 1 an explanation was offered as to why Howard and Gabriel were chosen for the exploratory interviews. Attention had been initially drawn to the many differences which separated them as practitioners, despite the fact that they were both beginning teachers. The hunch was that their distinctiveness might be explained in their biography. In this sense they provided '*exemplar(s) of the workings of a process*' (Scott, 1996 p. 152), namely, how biography might impact on practice and disposition to development. Their cases, when examined, seemed to confirm these initial hunches.

The forthcoming chapter introduces the reader to five more teachers drawn from the

same large comprehensive school in which I work. The selection offers a range of personnel. There are teachers at the close of their career and teachers who are only just beginning, teachers who have spent all their life in the profession, and others who have chosen to enter the teaching world after time spent in industry or commerce. There is also a range of positions held. I chose these teachers because from my knowledge of them I felt they had stories to tell that might well contribute to a greater understanding of the issue under investigation. It is true there is only one woman in the sample but this was not as the result of any deliberate pre-planning. This lack of gender balance is regrettable, nevertheless those chosen constitute a sample which is connected in the sense that they all belong to one institution and yet individually separate in terms of their role, age and experience.

In choosing diversity and interest as criteria for selection, attention is given to the individuality of each case. Theory emerges in the way that each case study contributes to a more refined understanding of the way biography impacts on development. Here it is important to balance notions of uniqueness and commonality. For example, while there will be elements of uniqueness in each account, it might also be possible to identify common aspects such as self-reflexivity or attitudes to time orientation which have great explanatory power in terms of understanding attitudes to development. In formulating theory, the case study's power resides in both its individuality and its contribution to a more generalised whole.

One last point is worth considering. The quality of my research may be regarded as vulnerable, on the grounds that my position as interviewer in the same institution as my interviewees, may skew or prejudice my potential findings, the relationship affecting what they say to me and how I interact with them. There are two responses. First, it is that very familiarity which has allowed me to conduct this research successfully. My prior knowledge has enabled me to select them as appropriate interviewees to facilitate the research and their prior knowledge has enabled them to have confidence in me as a researcher. Second, any danger of over familiarity has been balanced by the rigorous and meticulous approach in the compilation of the interview guide and the subsequent analysis of data. Such rigour is likely to supply the appropriate distancing effect. In conclusion, while acknowledging there are risks when interviewer and interviewee share the same working space, the arguments outlined above suggest that in this case, the potential benefits far outweigh any possible demerits.

## Chapter 4

### Interviews and Analysis

#### **Issues in data reduction and analysis**

At the close of the last chapter, an important stage had been reached in the research process. The creation of an interview guide as a flexible device to facilitate interaction between interviewer and interviewee offered the possibility of illuminating the linked concepts of biography and development. Later in this chapter, the case profiles of the five interviewees will be presented but prior to that it is necessary to backtrack and consider how collected data can be processed into such a format. The discussion will necessarily focus on the techniques of data reduction and analysis.

In Chapter 3, I described how McCracken (1988) identified a four step method of enquiry as an appropriate process for conducting in depth interviews (see diagram 1, p. 48). He suggested that the outcome of an enquiry was a set of conclusions validated not simply in terms of following the steps in sequence but appreciating the interconnectedness of the steps.

The interconnectedness can be glimpsed in its implications for data analysis. Correcting the misguided assumption that the imposition of order and structure on the data occurs only post data collection, McCracken reminded us that collection and analysis are simultaneous activities. Analysis, for example, is the mediating factor in shaping questions according to interviewee responses.

Thus, while data analysis might usually be viewed as beginning after the implementation of the interview guide, its origins are earlier in the research process and, in fact, illustrate the circular nature of the whole design. As an illustration of this, the stages in step 4 of McCracken's approach - a step occurring post data collection – will inevitably require reference to earlier steps. Indeed, it is the very processes of reference and projection which help to validate any conclusions drawn.

McCracken's fourth step, which he terms 'Discovery of Analytical Qualities' recognizes five stages, the last of which relates to the collating of themes, a later process

in the research and a concern of the next chapter. The stages describe a journey from the particular to the general, marked by a process of data reduction. Below is a discussion of McCracken's stages together with an account of how Hycner (1985) views the same process. The similarities of the two accounts are pronounced and it was this convergence of approach which encouraged me to choose McCracken's method of reduction and analysis for my own interviews.

Analysis, according to McCracken, begins with the production of the transcript, the interview tape translated into written form. Hycner, at this same stage, recommends several readings of the transcript and listenings to the tape to provide a context for the emergence of specific units of meaning and themes.

The transcription completed and studied may now yield what McCracken describes as '*utterances*' recognised by the researcher as '*intrinsically interesting*'. Both words invite comment. In the word 'utterance' there is no emphasis on communication. This is deliberate as the intention is to focus on the world of the interviewee rather than a shared world. 'Intrinsically' has the same force, directing the interviewer to an almost de-contextualised meaning. Practically, this is not possible given that the utterance has necessarily taken place within a defined context but the idea is that it employed as a distancing technique, an attempt to understand what the interviewee is saying rather than impose what the interviewer expects that person to say. Attempting to put aside any pre-conceptions in order to consider the utterances as freshly as possible is to employ what Hycner (1985) describes as '*bracketing*' or suspending researcher judgement.

Gadamer (1975) would deny the possibility of suspending judgement. He would argue that it was impossible '*to separate oneself as a researcher from the historical and cultural context that defines one's interpretive framework*' (Usher, 1996 p.19). Interpretation, he would claim, always takes place against a background of assumptions and presuppositions which can never be fully specified. It would be better to state prejudices before the research begins and then observe how these change in the course of the research. In response to Gadamer, however, it is possible to agree that while completely disregarding one's own preconceptions may be impossible, to attempt to do so, as far as possible, is a realistic position for researchers like Hycner and McCracken to maintain. It is part of the familiarisation/defamiliarisation dialectic. In this, the first

stage of analysis, the dangers of too easily coming to a judgement are offset by attempting to manufacture distance.

The end of stage 1 is marked by a researcher observation on each utterance, usually in the form of a noted comment. Here researcher '*intrusion*' is apparent. The second stage now begins (Stage 2). This stage is characterised by further investigation of the utterances, first in their own terms, secondly in relation to the transcript and thirdly, in relation to the literature and cultural review. What is apparent here is the process of widening out. The utterances are no longer seen as discrete but as interconnected, recorded in the transcript as part of the interviewee's shaping of his/her world. Any emergent meanings relate not only to the categories of the interview guide but to the literature and cultural reviews which informed the categories. Researcher '*intrusion*' is certainly more in evidence in this stage. In beginning the process of constructing meaning from the interviewee's words, the researcher is reacting to the data, partly through a process of intuition and partly by matching, rummaging through personal experiences to find similarities in perception. Here lies the importance of cultural proximity, the likelihood that the researcher has a deep and long-lived familiarity with the subject under scrutiny. Thus, there is the familiarisation balancing the earlier defamiliarisation.

Stage 3 sees a further movement away from the transcript to examining interconnections emerging from it. Fully fledged themes are not recognisable at this stage but there is a momentum building towards this. The distinction can be illustrated by referring to two steps in Hycner's analysis, processes identified as '*Clustering units of relevant meaning*' and '*Determining themes from clusters of meaning*'. In the former the researcher '*tries to determine if any of the units of relevant meaning naturally cluster together*' (Cohen and Manion, 1995 p. 294) while in the latter, the researcher, '*examines all the clusters of meaning to determine if there is one (or more) central theme(s) which expresses the essence of these clusters*' (p. 295).

McCracken's Stage 4 has been reached. It can be referred to as a stage where themes are beginning to be identified. Themes can now be viewed against the backdrop of what the research literature and the cultural review would have indicated. The point, of course, is not that there should be consistency - although there might be - but that the backdrop provided can throw into greater relief any counter expectational data. The

circularity of the process, with its demarcations of stages suggests a reliability of method which can be replicated elsewhere. In addition, the practices of reference and projection, and balance between familiarisation and defamiliarisation, give confidence as to the validity of the findings. A criticism might be that the process is unduly mechanistic and that it is difficult at times to establish the discreteness of each stage, but to its credit it has a thoroughness designed to ensure reliability and validity. Hycner's similar analytical process underscores the suitability of the method for analysis of interview data.

It is at this point Hycner suggests the compiling of a summary of the interview incorporating the themes that have been elicited from the data. In a similar way, I will shortly present a case profile drawn up after an interview with Alice, the first of my interviewees. The data from Alice's interview has been subjected to the reduction and analysis techniques as advocated by McCracken and, as a result, three hours of fascinating material have been condensed into a relatively brief report. First, however, I will present some reflections on the interview process as experienced in the exchange with Alice and some thoughts on reporting it. This serves not only to inform the reader about the interview ahead but also to highlight issues which will be of importance in the other encounters.

### **Interview with Alice – process reflections**

The first comment concerns the interview guide and how valuable it was in terms of its flexibility of operation. Set out on a page (see Appendix 1) it seems to have a linear composition with each section clearly demarcated but in implementation there is considerable scope in moulding it to reflect the natural progression of the interview. For example, it was envisaged that a question relating to future development would be located within a discussion of biography and knowledge acquisition, yet a more natural place for it turned out to be the close of the interview. Similarly, the question relating to personal life events, in its very discreteness, offered little in illuminating acquisition of knowledge, yet its relevance was clearly demonstrated elsewhere in the interview, where the personal and the professional were closely interwoven in explaining attitudes to development.

Other repositioning was needed. The section relating to the interviewee's professional

life to date, which incorporated a discussion on development thus far, was complicated by the fact that Alice had spent most of her working life outside teaching. This required some re-ordering of the questioning relating to development. Indeed, it can be argued that some of these issues are so interconnected - for example, can development be meaningfully separated from planning, reflection and practice? - that any division is arbitrary. There is some truth in this, yet there is always a requirement to order the data and the virtue of the guide is that it can not only identify the terrain to be covered but it is flexible enough to adjust to the route each interviewee takes. This will be born out in subsequent interviews.

The guide also plays a crucial role in the reductive and analytical process. Alice's thoughts, prompted by the guide, are then re-channelled through the guide's organising structure and assessed against the literature and cultural reviews which informed the guide in the first place. The result is a distillation of Alice's thoughts without any loss of richness. In composing the profile, however, there is flexibility in approach. Mostly, the headings under which the material is organized recall the categories of the interview guide but there is a clear departure from this where the data suggests an alternative arrangement of information. This will be a feature in the composition of all the profiles and reflects not only the different narrative techniques of the individual but also the differing value they place on particular aspects of their life and career. Significant deviations from the expected order will be commented on at the beginning of each interview.

Alice's words, as those of subsequent interviewees, feature heavily in the profile both as a reminder that the interview as a form exists as a vehicle for the interviewee's thoughts but also to demonstrate how these thoughts can lend themselves to the development of themes. Each section is followed by a commentary where ideas are discussed and, at the close of the profile, themes are drawn out. This mirrors the progress from stage 3 to stage 4 in McCracken's approach (McCracken, 1988).

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that the interview with Alice was successful in its aims and that this success allowed me to embark on subsequent interviews with confidence. The results of the first three interviews are recorded below. At the end of the third interview there will be a pause for some reflections before the final two encounters are reported on.



## **Interview with Alice – themes and comments**

Alice is in her late forties and is a senior member of the Mathematics Faculty in a large, mixed comprehensive in the South East of England. The interview lasted in excess of three hours. Interestingly, at the end of the interview, Alice spoke of how much she had enjoyed talking about herself and her craft. She had discovered new ways of looking at issues and new insights as a result of being allowed to reflect on experiences. To accommodate busy teaching schedules, the interview took place over a number of days and it was clear that on re-entering the conversation Alice had been thinking about earlier remarks and often this occasioned further clarification of thoughts. Both of these factors suggest that the interview process may have stimulated reflexivity.

### **The Profile**

The profile begins with reflections on current roles, satisfactions and dissatisfactions. It then considers the interviewee's professional life prior to teaching and the influences which shaped her decision to become a teacher. A section follows on aspects of practice, discussing planning and reflection, supplementing the earlier data. This leads to a discussion on development and thoughts for the future.

### **Roles, Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

Alice begins by describing how she has a pastoral role as a tutor and an academic role within the faculty, not only as a classroom teacher but as a person responsible for assessment, special needs and the GCSE modular course in the Sixth Form.

Reflecting on satisfactions, she begins: *'I finished today on a lesson with my year 10 Special Needs group, students who have learning, behavioural and some emotional difficulties. The satisfaction was enabling students to work at what would be their learning mode and being able to do so in a class context. That gave me a strong sense of satisfaction because you have enabled the students to participate in something which they have come away from feeling they have gained.'*

Alice continues by contrasting the above with occasions where there is only misguided teacher satisfaction. *'You can give a lesson which you think is good, but when you reflect on it, it was a virtuoso performance. You have not necessarily taken the*

*children'. It is a dual satisfaction when 'I have eased open some of the windows to allow them to open them completely'.*

The design of the assessment policy has also given great satisfaction, especially as it has been a collaborative process: *'To be able to work with your colleagues is, I think very important from a variety of points of view - personal, social, professional. If you don't interact with your colleagues, you could become stale, because you become tunnelled to the teaching element without looking beyond that - there is more than what we are teaching.'*

A dissatisfaction is the breakdown of a lesson with a particular group. Her response is to: *'Go away, reassess class management strategies. I look at what can be done to change the situation'.*

### *Comment*

There is a strong sense here of teaching as a means of facilitating student learning. A collaborative approach is also noted, undertaken to broaden the repertoire of teacher roles. The alternative is the tunnel vision of the classroom, where the lack of light is damaging to those who need it most. The other metaphor used is the temporal one of staleness, the past catching up, making the fare on offer unattractive. In a similar vein, the restorative power of reflective practice is celebrated, a belief that it is not necessary to be trapped in the present. Clear temporal emphases are emerging in the account, particularly a concern for the future, measured in improved teaching technique and student progress.

### **Professional Life to Date**

Alice did not receive the necessary 'A' level grades to read a degree. At that point, she decided against teacher training. Instead, she progressed through the ranks of accountancy to a high-powered career in the City. She worked there for 11 years, finding the challenge very satisfying. At that point, she gave birth to twin boys, gave up her employment to bring the children up, and because of her husband's work moved from London. It was then she decided to study for an Open University degree.

*'I had two small babies, had moved from London and I wasn't in a good position for making friends. There was a lack of adult company. The move from London was quite traumatic. I had lost a wide circle of friends - high powered, well educated. I was immersed in a world of babies and baby talk. When you start to come out of that world, there is a need for something else. And that for me was missing. I wanted something which would give me a challenge, a contact with people who were questioning. I suppose I'm not the sort of person who sits back and just accepts everything is like that.'*

Alice started to work at the local Adult Education College. *'I had always had an interest in education. I had been on governing bodies in primary and secondary schools. I was very political.'* She enjoyed the work, took on some research in learning applications and, then, started to think about secondary teaching. Enrolment on a PGCE course was to follow. *'I became me as a person, wasn't the twins' mum, Geoff's wife. I was actually me. I had a persona, status in my own right. For 10 years I had been a non person.'*

It was an exhilarating year: *'Teaching practice was nerve wracking, but the luxury of having time to develop ideas was wonderfully liberating.'* A critical note is struck in a description of lecturers who have little understanding of mature adults. In addition, there was disappointment that the course offered little in the way of educational theory, particularly the psychology of learning.

Post training, Alice was offered a post in her present school.

### *Comment*

It seems significant that Alice didn't want to choose teaching as a second best option. That would have gone against the grain for someone eager to embrace a challenge. It is the requirement for challenge which compels her to escape a stultifying boredom. There is a need to re-create her own world, achieved in the liberating experience teacher training provided.

The need to question the 'given' seems to be one of the hallmarks of her stance. It is glimpsed in her dissatisfaction with some of the teacher training, which failed to build

upon her existing knowledge. It is worth remembering that the root of the word question is quest, the notion of search, a word which denies stasis.

Finally, there was a need to surround herself with people who were questioning. Intellectual stimulus was required and was later realised in the collaborative work of the Mathematics faculty.

### Influences in Becoming a Teacher

The period working in adult education was very informative. Alice enjoyed the equal-status relationship between teacher and student and it significantly affected the way she treated school students. In her own teaching she practices mutual respect and in this regard she believes adult education provided her with its own form of teacher training.

Alice now turns to political influences. *'Politics has always been something which has been important to me. It is the ideology behind the way I live, teach, behave.'* She describes how she was influential in implementing the comprehensivisation process at a London school where she was a governor. *'I felt very strongly the comprehensive route was the one to follow.'* She cites coming from a working class background and being female and successful as major shaping factors in her passionate belief in the equality of opportunity. *'I would consider myself a feminist - very much a feminism based on equality. That has permeated a lot I have done.'* She reveals that fighting discrimination in the workplace was a feature of her life in the City.

Alice's own education shaped her politics. *'I didn't want to go to a girls' grammar school.'* Instead she attended a co-education comprehensive. Contrasting her experience with that of her friends at the grammar school, she comments: *'I was getting something they weren't. I felt I was getting an education broader than just subject base'. It opened your ideas to new experiences. I feel fortunate, retrospectively, that I experienced that'*. Her school experience led to her choice of her present teaching position in a comprehensive.

Alice's school teachers are remembered not so much for their inspirational teaching, but for their interesting personalities. There was no subsequent importing of their teaching styles into hers.

Alice was encouraged by her father who had a very strong belief in education. Now aged 87, *'he is still very questioning, looking for knowledge'*. Alice's mother was much more circumspect about the value of education for girls and it is from her father she believes her questioning attitude stems.

The City was the context for a refinement of organisational skills. She comments, *'I think I am conscious of bringing these skills to teaching.'* Other work experiences – *'the bits and pieces, childminding etc'* undertaken after her move from London - are harder to quantify in terms of influence except to say: *'they formed things I didn't want to do. I was aware of some of the effects of being stuck'*.

### *Comment*

Strong influences shape Alice as a teacher. Her social class and gender have fuelled a politics of equality which sustained her in her fight for acceptance and success in the City and which determined an educational philosophy reflected in a preference for comprehensive schooling and in a valuing of students. Politics provides steadfast principles but it is a dynamic force energising thinking and action.

The past is not without value. Her school experience is recalled as a formative influence and there is an interesting use of the past continuing into the present when she describes the positive values of that time. *'I feel fortunate, retrospectively, that I experienced that.'* Yet there is no borrowing of teaching styles. While her time in the City may well have honed organisational skills later deployed in teaching, Alice's phrasing is tentative *'I think I am conscious'*. It appears that such episodes have been worked into an evolving life story and they have been unearthed in response to the researcher's questions. What is valuable are those elements of the past that still have pertinence for the future. This is why Alice emphasizes the questioning attitude inherited from her father – it is this which gives her an impetus to look forward.

### Aspects of Teaching and Learning

Alice confirms that she favours active rather than passive learning, seeking to engineer learning opportunities where students construct their own understanding.

She is a fairly detailed planner, especially when new syllabi are being implemented. However, changes to lessons are frequent: *'Oh yes, if something occurred during the lesson - that piece of paper is not written in stone and you can adapt. There have been some interesting and exciting lessons because of that'*. Changes are according to student need.

Planning is often collaborative with much discussion of possible approaches. The department share successes and disappointments and this is reflected in sessions devoted to reflecting on and reviewing the teaching of units. Alice comments that review and reflections are crucial elements of her own practice.

### *Comment*

Enhancement of student learning is the focus of practice. This is the product of an individual and collaborative approach to planning and reflection. Within these practices are the seeds of a future oriented approach to teaching.

### Developing as a Teacher

Alice recalls her early days. Development was: *'First falling flat on my face, thinking about what had gone wrong. Secondly, by talking to other people, picking their brains, and trying to incorporate their ideas in my own work. Trying different things, being an avid reader of The Times Ed and seeing what could be integrated, trying to add to the bank of knowledge'*.

She continues in a more general mode: *'I don't know you can ever stop learning because you are always going to meet new situations. I don't think it can be a static entity. It's got to be dynamic. I like to be aware of what is going on - what new approaches/new thoughts are around. I would like to think I consider them, implement or incorporate them, if appropriate'*. Talking of contexts of development, she contrasts the faculty and the whole school approach. *'I feel the faculty has developed in spite of the school.'* School inset encompasses *'A lot of awareness raising'* but no time is allowed to consider the practical application of policy. She believes that on the school's part there is little trust in the faculty's capacity to devise its own initiatives. *'There is planning to the nth degree.'* The school needs to be aware of the quality of much of the

informal work practiced on an everyday basis. External stimulus is also important. Alice had recently attended an 'A' level statistics course. The course had been successful because the teachers were encouraged to be active learners in preparation for pursuing that approach with students. Alice notes she approached the course with trepidation, as she felt rusty in the subject area, *'but felt obliged to attend to meet the needs of my students'*.

### *Comment*

Clearly, development is seen as crucial, as the demands of new situations constantly call for new responses. For Alice, development is synonymous with learning and she needs to attend to her learning to meet the needs of her students. Development is not simply a quest for the new but a search for what is appropriate. Development is tied to practice in the widest sense of that word and there is frustration with approaches which amount to little more than a general airing of the issues. Alice, as an individual, is vigorous in pursuing development possibilities whatever the source. For her, individual and collaborative do not collide but are complementary approaches in promoting effective teaching and learning.

### **The Future**

Alice's views on the future as a description of her life orientation and, by implication, her thoughts on development are clear.

*'I'm aware of the past. I don't think you can walk away from the past because it does have its effect on you, but I think to look backwards rather than forwards is stultifying really and I think when I get to that stage I'll be at least 90. There are just so many interesting things about and there is not enough time to enjoy them or to find out about them. My interest and curiosity comes from my home background and has been added to by events over the years. When I stop looking forward, that is the time to give up certainly.'*

### **Drawing Out Themes**

The above statement is an eloquent testimony to the way Alice views life and learning.

It is to be explored and enjoyed as part of a process of self-enrichment. She wants her students, too, to share in this process, thus she encourages active learning, allowing them to “*open the windows*” to self worth. It is important to disassociate self-enrichment from self-interest. Alice's self fulfillment comes from pursuing her professional role, playing her part in allowing others to develop. In a similar way, her autonomy is enhanced and not weakened by collaboration with her colleagues.

Self-reflexivity is the key to the way she continuously edits and reshapes understanding in the light of new discoveries whether in approaches to planning, practice and development or life events. The process of incremental change may describe her approach to professional development, change underpinned by the stable yet paradoxically dynamic force of political principle. Finally, when confronted by change of an almost transformational character - her move from London and consequent sense of anonymity - there is an inner resource to meet, or more accurately, shape the future with confidence. Perhaps it is her father's questing spirit, which allows her to enrich herself or better still recreate herself to meet the challenges of a new situation.

### **Interview with Adrian – themes and comments**

The second interview is with Adrian, a young man in his late twenties teaching a range of Social Sciences in the same school as Alice. As with Alice, the interview was more than three hours in length and in a similar way, was conducted over a number of days to suit the schedules of interviewer and interviewee. At the close of the interview Adrian spoke of the therapeutic value of the occasion and his surprise that certain areas of his life had been touched on which had remained unconsidered for some time. This suggests that the interview had at least prompted reflection, although whether this would encourage reflexivity, as was the case with Alice, is more open to doubt. The arrangement of the material follows that established with Alice although there is an additional section entitled ‘*A major life event*’ which is given particular status to reflect its great impact on Adrian's life as a whole.

### **Roles, Satisfactions, Dissatisfactions**

Adrian has been teaching for 7 years. He teaches predominantly in the upper school, specialising in Economics at ‘A’ level and Law at ‘AS’ level. This year he has



embarked upon the teaching of 'A' level Law, a venture which has sprung from his impressive success rate at 'AS'. He has taught GNVQ Business for four years and is now a team leader in GNVQ. Recently he has been appointed as Conference Centre Manager, a key appointment in the school's drive for income generation. This has coincided nicely with a unit of study in his MA in Curriculum theory, which considers how institutions can raise revenue.

Adrian is or has been involved in a wide range of extra curricular initiatives, some of which have now been put aside to concentrate on career development. While such activities are important for an organisation's health, they are not, he explains, remunerative posts. He is firm in stating his need for status and that status should be financially rewarded.

There is no hesitancy in Adrian's response to what gives him satisfaction. *'Without a shadow of a doubt, when the results come out, that experience of elation.'* Students' good grades are *'one of the most rewarding things I have experienced'*. He is to add: *'I have allowed them to achieve their aims - to go to University'*. He enjoys meeting successful students *'flushed with success'*. He concludes: *'Their success is my success'*.

Adrian enjoys working in a flexible organisation, whose lack of constraints enable him to prosper. As an example, he cites GCSE Law, which he inherited, but had plans to develop. He met with resistance from *'the system'* but because *'I thought it was the way forward, I managed to persuade some key people in the organisation I was right. It happened and that was enormously satisfying to me - to make something happen'*.

Adrian embraces new challenges. *'I threw myself into achieving qualifications so I could teach GNVQ'*, believing GNVQ a more appropriate learning experience for students. However thinking changes: *'At the time I did think GNVQ was the way forward I don't hold that view anymore. The way forward is NVQ'*. Asked whether he will be at the forefront of the development of NVQ, he comments: *'Well, again, my trick is to have a finger in many pies, keeping my interests high profile'*.

Change is necessary: *'As soon as things get regular, routine, set, people stop questioning what they are doing, serious problems set in. I am a great change agent, an agent of change.'* Explaining that sentiment in relation to student interests he

comments: *'The consequences of failing in an economically deprived area are dire. It is desperately important people don't fail. Passing 'A' level makes the world of difference'*. His role is clear, *'I accept responsibility of ensuring students pass and, when things go wrong, it is devastating'*.

Adrian's dissatisfaction is with a type of professional who doesn't share his sense of the need for change. Quite often, he believes, they are in senior positions, aiming to eradicate risk and stress as they approach retirement. The distorted focus of such people goes into a *'massive attention to detail, trivia'*. Staff meetings, development days, even faculty meetings become clogged up in endless pursuit of the irrelevant. They all draw Adrian away from his purpose which is *'to identify single mindedly with what students want and need'*.

He finds it difficult to identify further dissatisfactions, because he is skilled in diverting attention from what is irrelevant to what is satisfying for him. Burdens, which other colleagues endure, such as cover lessons, are negotiated away after discussion with key decision-makers. He is happy to admit a sense of *'childlike glee'* when he can extricate himself from what he finds mundane and unappealing and relishes the role of astute negotiator or manipulator, especially if the gains achieved can be to the benefit of himself and students.

### *Comment*

Most notable is the intensity of pleasure accorded to student success. What is stressed is the mutual inter-connectedness of student/teacher satisfaction. It would appear that Adrian lives or dies by *'his'* examination results. Elation and devastation mark the extremes of reaction.

Making things happen seems central to his purpose. Change energises him, providing the impetus for new challenges. Yet there is something relentless about this change, driven as much by opportunism as necessity. Initiatives are cast aside when they no longer serve a personal purpose. Status is, for Adrian, a key issue. There is a financial focus to this, but it can also be glimpsed in his dealings with senior members of the management team with whom he *'negotiates'* to secure more privileged conditions.

Paradoxically, these same managers arouse his ire because in their conservatism, they frustrate change.

Adrian's single-mindedness represents a rejection of collective endeavour. Those very forums which define collegiality are dismissed as irrelevant. His desire to devote himself to his students may be altruistic but it comes at a cost - an increased workload for his colleagues certainly and, perhaps, a brake on his own future development. If true autonomy embraces mutuality, there appears to be a missing element here.

In incremental change, change and stability maintenance are in productive tension. It is difficult to see what represents stability in Adrian's case unless it resides in a sense of self-promotion.

### Life before Teaching

To explain how he became a teacher, Adrian reviews his life, beginning his narrative with his school days.

A change of parish for his father, an Anglican priest, led to problems in the early days of Adrian's secondary schooling. His attendance at the local comprehensive was characterised by a time of violence, perpetrated both by him and against him as the means to ensure status in the pecking order. Academically, he was very unsuccessful. *'I failed everything - except I made a good trolley in O-level woodwork'.*

One event stands out. *'I can remember passing my driving test and my life kind of began with that. Before that I didn't know anything, do anything, a big blank'.* After a post-exam summer of menial jobs, a realisation dawns: *'I began to realise I needed qualifications'.*

Adrian took a GNVQ route at College. There he immersed himself in student politics. He cites this period as excellent preparation for his current role of astute negotiator. An intense period of self-improvement begins, as he becomes aware at the age of 20 that there were fundamental inadequacies in his education. At this point, he met a girl who went to university to study economics, so he decided to do likewise. University was *'terrific'* with Adrian relishing the academic atmosphere: *'I enjoyed hearing the pennies drop. There was light where before there was darkness.'*

After university, there were plans to pursue a career in marketing with his fiancée. Unfortunately, the relationship foundered and a planned life in Canada was aborted. Chance now took a hand. A casual remark at a party, the illness of an incumbent economics teacher, the need to fill a timetable - the net result was a permanent teaching appointment. After a feeling of failure, he describes how he looks for stability: *'I bought a new suit, committed myself to teaching. A serious bash. I'm a teacher. It sounded ace.'*

### *Comment*

Adrian's route to teaching seems capricious or at least fortuitous. Once arrived at, however, there is a new seriousness, the formal status recognised in the suit. This is a status won not through fighting, but as a result of a passionate quest for enlightenment. School was bleak, an almost unmitigated failure. The driving test became a metaphor for mobility and new horizons. Intriguingly, the religious metaphor of light symbolising awareness is employed to describe the new attraction to learning. The importance attached to his students' success at school, particularly in examinations, is an interesting counterpoint to his own failure. There is a concern that they should not make his mistakes. He has the responsibility to ensure that doesn't happen. Adrian's pre-occupation with status is perhaps glimpsed in his comments about the relationship with his father.

### *A Major Life Event*

Adrian talks about how he saw his father as an example to follow. His role as a priest was such that *'He made things happen, he changed things'*. Yet events have occurred which have soured the relationship. First, there is Adrian's academic failure at school. Then, there is his decision to co-habit with a young woman and the subsequent birth of a child, events happening in the community where his father ministered. The fact that they live close by and his father has refused to approve the relationship (they are now married) or indeed visit his grandchild (now grandchildren) is a cause of great distress. *'It has been a big impact on my life in every way. The whole way I conduct myself, view myself, is tied up in my relationship with my father.'*

## Comment

It is noticeable that Adrian's way of speaking of himself as a change agent mirrors the way he speaks of his father. He is keenly aware of his father's status and power and seeks, perhaps, to emulate it. Yet because he lives his life within the framework of a father-son relationship (see quotation above), it will not be easy to cast aside the censures of academic and moral failings and indeed, parental rejection. The need for status and approval will be paramount. The appointment as a teacher may, he hoped, have renewed his relationship with his father, given he felt it represented success, yet, as it can be seen, subsequent events were to render this impossible. It is a quest to achieve the impossible which will fuel Adrian's narrative, now returned to at the moment he begins teaching.

## Developing as a Teacher

As a licensed teacher, Adrian was required to attend college on one day a week. He talks of how the experience alerted him to education as an academic discipline, giving him a theoretical framework for his practice. He claims that the course occasioned a fundamental shift in his way of thinking in that student needs now come to the fore. He cites as an example his recent choice of 'A' level syllabus, reflecting student interests as opposed to his own.

He noted that some members on the course had difficulty in adjusting to alien concepts of education, their own school experiences a barrier to understanding. Adrian believes in this regard he was fortunate. His own experience pre-16 was '*diabolical*' and thus he was not '*imprisoned*' by any nostalgia for the past. Certainly, no teachers would provide role models. This he believes '*is refreshing*'. '*We think we are the most important thing on the planet, regarding these kids.*'

Now, established as a teacher, he draws an interesting distinction in terms of INSET opportunities. He attends a wide-ranging number of external courses; which have brought a '*great deal of benefit, particularly the opportunity to network*'. Of internal courses, he is scathing in his comments. He describes them as '*infestations*', '*time stealers*' and he is '*outraged by these interruptions*'. In such a context, he is '*the*

*outlaw, the subverter, a bit of a rogue*'. Internal development days are the vehicle, he believes, for those who seek promotion opportunities.

As far as his own development is concerned, it is a question of initiating change and then abandoning it. He sees himself at the forefront of change with others struggling to match his foresight: *'With GNVQ I represented the ugly face of change. People who shunned me then now ask 'Adrian, can you do this?' I'm tired of it now. I have washed my hands of it.'*

### *Comment*

It is intriguing to hear Adrian speak of shifts in understanding regarding teaching and the role of the teacher as a result of his college course. Dismissing the exaggerated sense of importance teachers have about themselves, he, paradoxically, assumes a role of huge influence in taking responsibility for student success. Is not allowing them to take responsibility for their learning a more radical demonstration of privileging student needs? There is irony in believing that he is not a prisoner of his educational past, when he chooses for himself the most traditional interpretation of teacher role, that of dispenser of knowledge. It must be open to doubt whether a one-day a week college course can really transform an understanding of teacher practice.

In speaking of development, there is a competitive edge to his thinking. There is a delight in being proved right, that others are left struggling. As reported earlier, development days are not worthy of his attention, yet opportunities to *'network'* are relished. There may be some enhancement of status in associating with powerful outsiders. It is interesting that he does not explicitly relate these *'positive experiences'* to student learning something which might have been expected from earlier words.

### Aspects of Teaching and Learning

Adrian is no fixed planner, nor has he anything similar to a *'mental map'*. Ideas which don't work well are *'ditched'*. Preparation for a course is seen in terms of reading up a topic to teach it as part of a new 'A' level syllabus. There are domains of knowledge which he has internalised and which he now teaches. Within the teaching of a topic *'tinkering may occur, but it is more a question of achieving the right teaching style'*.

'A' level involves '*memorisation and regurgitation*'. The lesson is teacher led, often featuring dictation followed by a practice in '*writing within the parameters of time*'. Students '*have got to come out with a specific understanding. I want them to have the official view of experts*'. Asked if they develop their own views he answers '*I don't have any truck with that sort of business*'.

Adrian identifies two essentials in teaching. First, there is the need to make complex issues relevant to students' lives. Second, there is humour and, in fact, this is often the device which bridges the abstract and the concrete. The humour selected is that which is the vogue, allowing Adrian access to the students' cultural world.

### *Comment*

It seems the epitome of irony that for all the rhetoric regarding change, Adrian's approach to teaching and learning should be so traditional. Students are not encouraged to construct their own understanding, but to memorise the received wisdom. Student needs appear to be narrowly defined as passing examinations. There is no careful process of planning, practice and reflection to construct learning experiences, but an orchestration of teaching skills to deliver material. The focus is on the teacher's responsibility and role.

### The Future

Adrian comments 'I have no grand plan. That isn't me. As ever I'll have my eye out for the next opportunity. I have my finger in a number of pies. I can't see myself straying too far from the students as that is where I get most of my pleasure – but you never know. The worst scenario would be to end up like those reaching retirement. The time-fillers. I always want to be able to make things happen'.

### *Comment*

Here the opportunism is emphasised. The world described has an egocentric feel with

self-promotion at the heart of Adrian's endeavour. There is a dismissive tone about the contribution of others. In short, the future looks very much like the present.

### Drawing out Themes

Outwardly, Adrian is preoccupied with the future hence the rhetoric celebrating change.

Yet the vigour of the assertions calls into question the beneficiaries of this change. He certainly draws attention to the importance of status, his status, as a motivating force and he enjoys being one step ahead of the game. Eschewing co-operative endeavour, a competitive instinct marks his dealing with staff, especially senior management. There is, however, an ambiguity in his relationship with authority figures and there is undisguised delight in his ability to negotiate with people of power, probably because it enhances his own status.

The need to re-instate himself in relation to his father underscores his drive for success. Denied approval, he seeks it relentlessly. Meanwhile, there is influence to be enjoyed. His maverick status allows him roving rights, which the balances of a collaborative culture would check. The success he has brought to his students gives him great pride. In his own mind re-casting the role of teacher - now someone close to students, sharing their successes - he has given them the '*results*' he himself was denied. Yet his influence has, in fact, resulted in their powerlessness, denied by his methods, to construct their own understandings. How will a diet of facts and opinions to be memorised and regurgitated equip them to face change? Mistakenly, Adrian believed he had erased the past, yet it has reasserted itself in a traditional approach to teaching and learning. It is there, also, in a need to restore his relationship with his father.

The period of training was short and insufficient to build a sufficiently broad conception of teaching and learning. With his teaching experience limited to academic sixth formers, there has not been a requirement to test himself in a variety of settings. The skills of planning and reflection in and on action have been undeveloped. Development was defined earlier as a continuous interplay between stability and renewal. It was not seen as relentless change, a model Adrian seems to have adhered to. Self-actualisation in teaching can be achieved in the pursuit of a professional role where the beneficiaries include students and professional colleagues. Currently, the former are unwittingly short changed and the latter are slighted, their contributions to Adrian's development



passed over in favour of external and more prestigious courses and qualifications like the MA. A more comprehensive conception of teaching and learning and the discovery of the self-enrichment which comes from working with others may provide more satisfaction than the solitary pursuit of status will ever do. In the meantime, the future seems to be more of the same: a relentless quest for the next opportunity for self-aggrandizement.

### **Interview with Alan – themes and comments**

Alan is the third interviewee. He is a Deputy Head teacher operating in the same school as the earlier interviewees. A man in his late 50s, he is on the point of retirement. The length of interview and its management follows the pattern now established. His response to the interview was extremely positive and it allowed him, he claimed, to piece together aspects of his life in a clearer manner.

Alan's proximity to retirement means that his account is almost exclusively retrospective. This, however, does not mean that the theme of development is neglected as he is in a privileged position to reflect on a lifetime in teaching, an excellent vantage point from which to consider his own development. Here is a compensatory perspective to balance the loss of the future dimension.

In compiling the profiles so far, a balance has been effected in the organisation of data. Where appropriate the categories established in the interview guide have been retained, but where the dynamics of the data suggest alternative classification, adjustments have been made. Such elasticity is required in Alan's account where one element - the crucial experiences of his schooling - is to determine the reporting of almost every category. The influence is all pervasive, as will be seen in an early description of roles, satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

### **Roles, Satisfactions, Dissatisfactions**

Alan's responsibilities cover three areas. First, he is a Deputy Head involved with Pastoral Care. Second, he is a co-ordinator for staff development which includes the supervision of student teachers and, third he is a practising teacher. *'My first role is Head of Pastoral care - which means, in effect, in charge of discipline. Basically, I deal*

*with lots of children, lots of parents - and unfortunately, I tend to see parents of children who are naughty rather than the nicer type of child. I sometimes get a bit fed up.'*

The second role of staff developer Alan explains in terms of marrying the individual needs of staff with the needs of the school. He operates the school's staff appraisal system, which, he believes, is a positive tool for development, but resistance from teachers makes it *'an absolute pain'* to manage. In contrast, working with student teachers provides great satisfaction. They are *'receptive, open to ideas, not as cynical as us'*.

While the first two roles encompass notes of dissatisfaction, there is no such equivocation in his description of himself as an English teacher. *'I have taught English to low ability children for the last 5/6 years and I love it. I think the kids respond and get a fair amount out of it. I certainly get an awful lot out of it.'*

Alan's training is not in English and he has arrived there after stints in a variety of subjects. His enjoyment has been in meeting a challenge, the roots of which lie in his school life. *'When I was told I had to teach Shakespeare to these kids, I really did shake in my boots. I thought I will never be able to do that. Kids would never be able to grasp it. But I really worked hard at it. I have acquired little techniques I can put over in the classroom. Kids actually learn - I learn - by enjoyment.'* Reviewing his school days he recalls, *'Shakespeare was a grind in my time. I used to think it was awful. I look back at my own school days and, in many ways, I had a bit of a rough end of things because the teachers weren't particularly inspiring.'* He concludes, *'I like to think I give the kids a better deal than I had'*.

Alan moves on to his relationship with the Head as a source of satisfaction. It is a very close relationship offering maximum support. It provides Alan with an *'awful lot of self confidence'*. He explains: *'I haven't had it throughout my life because of the way I was taught. I was at an all boys' grammar school and it was a very physical regime and we were hit a lot when we couldn't understand things and we were told we were stupid. It took me an awful long time to recover my self confidence.'*

Another satisfaction shading into dissatisfaction is his pastoral work with *'naughty children'*. *'I still remember what I went through as a child and when I deal with*

*children I try to put myself in their place.'* This can, however, lead to uncertainty. *'Sometimes I'm not harsh enough in some respects, because I think, well, that is what I went through and it didn't do me much good'.* Always looking for the *'nice things within them'*, he is disappointed when the approach backfires.

The joy of working with student teachers is evident. *'Obviously I like to think I have something to offer them and they accept it with open arms.'* It is not a question of passing down wisdom. *'I like to stimulate a debate. Do you think it's a good idea? Don't just take it from me.'* Finally, he comments: *'And they are just very nice people. I do like them'.*

One major dissatisfaction is highlighted - the impact of the job on Alan's life: *'Although while I'm at school I like it, and it keeps me going, when I come home, I'm still quite hyped up because I'm thinking all the time. I'm absolutely washed out and I can't have a normal life really. It impinges too much on my lifestyle - in fact it has for the last 20 years taken over my lifestyle'.*

Alan points out a personal concern: *'I think what upsets me most is that I haven't been able to modify the way I work - and I'm sure some people can modify and pace themselves - but I just can't do that. That is the bugbear with my job'.*

Thus the decision to retire. *'It will become more and more tiring - and there'd be more and more school and less and less anything else.'*

### *Comment*

Clearly, the past exerts a tremendous influence over Alan, impacting still on his present work. The destruction of self-confidence, the outcome of his school days, has trailed him throughout his career and, had it not been for the strong support of the head, he may have made a lesser contribution.

In dealing with *'difficult'* children, the legacy of the past guides him and his practice is mediated through his own experience. In his teaching, too, he is determined to improve upon the past, yet here there is a happier resolution. Shakespeare is now not tied to

feelings of failure, but reborn as a positive experience which teachers and students can collectively enjoy.

The distinction between naughty and nice is alluded to on several occasions. His role of disciplinarian ties him largely to those in conflict with authority - the naughty ones and is perhaps a frustrating reminder of his past. It might also explain why he relishes the opportunity of working with student teachers who are '*nice people*'. Nice, here, has connotations of good and successful. Student teachers are contrasted with the disaffected young people he usually deals with. It is noticeable that he does not experience the same satisfaction working with colleagues and here, it is possible that some of the earlier lack of confidence comes into play, perhaps not so apparent with less experienced members of staff.

Maintaining discipline - a narrow definition of pastoral care - is a relentless, dispiriting, ever more time-consuming task. Here Alan's comment on the difficulty of modifying his way of working is perhaps a reflection of his inability to learn new approaches, a consequence of the muddled messages from the past. The result is exhaustion and the onset of early retirement.

### Professional Life to Date

Alan began his teaching career at a grammar school in the West Country as a PE teacher. Teaching PE was merely an extension of Alan's own sporting career.

*'At the time I was competing both in athletics and rugby. I didn't particularly want to be a teacher. I wanted to be a PE teacher.'* Alan dismisses the skills required to be a PE teacher. *'Oh yes, but I found that ever so easy. I could do all these things.'*

In summary, *'It was a very nice life. It was a very nice way of doing things and if I had had my way, I would have carried on like that until I was 50'*.

Two things prevented this. First, promotion was almost impossible, given the low turn over of staff and, second, gnawing away at him is his lack of academic success, his acceptance at Teacher Training College being simply on the grounds of sporting prowess. *'When I was 30, I decided, well, I haven't done anything academically at all. I'd better start doing something so I went to Leeds University and I did an Advanced Diploma - and I did Psychology'*. Further qualifications followed - a degree at the Open University, a Masters at Bath. He still recalls a comment from a boy: *'PE teachers are*

*not real teachers, are they?' It is a sentiment he understands and it leads to some thoughts about the tyranny of teacher expectations. As a 'B' stream boy at a grammar school, he was discouraged to think of success academically with sport offered as the only other option.*

Alan's first and last move was to his present school, where his appointment was as Head of PE. He describes the deep unhappiness of the first 18 months in a school which was newly opened whose environment was unsettled and unsettling. After that initial period, however, he settled to an enjoyable job clouded only by thoughts of academic failure.

Reviewing why he chose to remain at his present school, he describes a fortuitous pattern of events: *'But it all fell in place really. When I was looking for promotion in 1976, I thought well perhaps I should be looking for a pastoral post which was what I quite wanted - up came the head of 5th Year. When 1980 came round, I thought, well perhaps I should be looking for a Deputy Headship and I got that. So it's all fallen for me nicely. And, so, I have been a very lucky man really'.*

The Head of Year job was an *'obvious career move'*. *'Well that was the logical step. I wasn't an academic so I couldn't be Head of Maths etc.'* As well, there was a perceived continuity in the type of job. *'Oh yes, I think in PE you are very close to the children and Head of Year was very similar in being close to the children. I thought it was a wonderful job. I loved that.'*

Offered a temporary Deputy Headship, he reacts with a sense of disbelief *'I thought that's wonderful, it just suits me down to the ground.'* The appointment was made permanent but the uncertainty is obvious. *'I was still terribly self conscious that I wasn't good enough and my self confidence wasn't all that good.'* Even years later *'People would ask my opinion and I would give a brief opinion and they would want more and I thought what are they asking me for'.*

Becoming a Deputy Head was a major achievement. *'That was one thing I went home and told my Mum. I'm a Deputy Head now. I'd never done that before. The one thing I was quite proud of really.'* Asked to amplify, he is to return to the theme of his schooling: *'It's proving once again to the teachers I had - it's going back all the time*

*they wouldn't believe it. My teachers certainly had a terrible influence on nearly all my life. When I became Deputy Head, I thought well I'm better than most of those now. I'm better than them. They became less important then, which gave me more confidence'.*

He concludes: *'I have been extremely lucky in that I still think I'm fairly limited academically - and I have been extremely lucky in what I have been able to do - what I have been given the chance to do'.*

### *Comment*

The last quotation typifies Alan's perception of himself and the chance factor which has worked in his favour. Phrasing such as *'it's all fallen for me'* and the repetition of *"lucky"* from earlier in the account illustrates a disinclination to trust his own skills and ability to achieve success. He downplays his skills as a teacher in his first post, choosing instead to think of PE teaching as playing games. Indeed, PE teaching is not real teaching, a prejudice he has inherited from his school days, where academic success was all that mattered.

His route to promotion is defined by him as a non academic route. The Head of Year post is embraced because it is viewed as similar to Head of PE in its proximity to the world of children. Even the Deputy Headship has its primary focus in dealing with children. Promotion occurs but perhaps not development, certainly not development in self-image. Running through these years is a vulnerability, occasioned by a lack of academic success. Subsequent qualifications only partly resolve this so deep is the damage inflicted by the destructive school years. The attainment of Deputy Headship is a proud rejoinder to those who dismissed him, yet acquisition of self confidence is still someway off. Even at the close, he can hardly believe his own luck.

It is to English teaching that we turn for a development of self-esteem.

### Teaching English - Planning and Practice

Teaching English was a *'very big jump'* from teaching PE. It requires flexibility and student participation. *'You can ask their opinions. And they come out with things that*

*you haven't dreamt of - and I think that is wonderful. And the more you teach this type of subject, the more knowledge you get from the kids - and I think that's great.'*

Planning is student oriented. Although there is a plan to guide, there is much adjustment. *'You go with the flow.'* Alan describes himself as increasingly risk taking. He talks of how *'I can drag kids back from the brink'*.

He enjoys the collaborative dimension of the work, working with colleagues bringing great satisfaction. *'A fantastic amount. We all help each other. There is lots of planning and lots of resources.'*

As a closing comment he offers: *'I found it really fantastic learning things like Shakespeare - which I didn't rate at all until I got to grips with it. And you get to grips with it because you have to teach it'*.

### *Comment*

Comments like the above suggest a quest for self-knowledge, but it is not a knowledge bound up with status. Learning here has a decidedly liberating effect, the manacles of the past unlocked. No longer is it understood as a matter of accretions - one qualification after another - but something which can be shared, shaped and augmented by colleagues and students. Words like *'fantastic'* and *'wonderful'* suggest the self-revelatory nature of the discovery.

One of the discoveries is a concept of teaching and this is intimately linked with a concept of learning. Alan's self-realisation is being seen in terms of fulfilling a professional role where the beneficiaries are students, colleagues and himself.

These discoveries are not revolutionary in that they have happened over a period of 5/6 years. They may have occurred because of Alan's increased self-confidence, the liberating effect of the subject or the fact that he is working in a collaborative community, whose daily discourse is the enrichment of learning. Whatever the origins, however, the effects are radical.

### *Development*

Talking as a Co-ordinator for Staff Development, Alan is frank in his assessment of development days within the institution: *'I have never really been happy with them.'*

*Apart from when we have had an outstanding speaker - or the last session where lots of staff were involved - that's the key to it involving staff. What staff want is a new input or they want to take part themselves'.*

He talks of how his own development has been best served in a collaborative manner. Working with colleagues, especially in the context of team teaching, has provided him with the best experiences. Research findings are important, but teaching, he claims, is successful only when it engages with students and development initiatives should focus on that fact.

### *Comment*

As Co-ordinator for Staff development Alan, it seems, has presided over initiatives, which, in his eyes, do not seem to have been successful. His new awareness of what might be more successful has emerged through his own development as a teacher. The insight has been hard won, yet it seems incongruous that Alan has been entrusted with this role when his own development had been blighted so badly. As an institution, the school does not seem to have given too much thought to how to support and develop Alan. In one of his roles - dealing with disaffected children - he seems to be tied to the past and in another he seems, at least initially, ill-equipped to lead others to a better future. His new-found awareness comes, almost co-incidentally, in what would be perceived as a minor role in teaching Special Needs English.

### Drawing out Themes

Alan's career narrative ostensibly illustrates the path of linear development, the promotional progress from teacher to Head of Department, to Head of Year to Deputy Head. Yet the word development strikes the wrong note. Certainly, there has been an accumulation of roles but in no case has there been a concomitant sense of growth. Even by his own reckoning, promotion has always been a question of more of the same. In fact, promotion has reinforced his sense of failure. Even embracing the academic in later life - a perceived route to satisfaction - did not really lead to greater self-belief. Instead, the late blossoming to his career takes place in a backwater, well hidden from the route of traditional success.



Alan's narrative reveals how the powerful and destructive influences of the past can have a deleterious impact on present and future. Unfortunately, it shows how unwittingly an institution can exacerbate these problems by giving insufficient thought to an individual's support and development. On a more optimistic note, it illustrates how experiences of collaborative learning with pupils and colleagues can be a source of great inspiration.

## **Reflections on the interview process**

The end of Alan's interview marks a time to pause and reflect on the interview process. By now the interviews have settled into an identifiable pattern not only in terms of duration and time management but also in the way they are conducted. As suggested in comments related to Alice's interview, the guide has been of immense value in allowing myself as interviewer to broach what I feel have been appropriate issues and for the interviewee to construct their own understanding of their experiences. The directing as opposed to the prescriptive nature of the guide has allowed a rapport to develop between interviewer and interviewee that has yielded considerable benefits for both parties.

Earlier in the thesis I speculated about the beneficiaries of the research. Some tentative answers are beginning to emerge. As a researcher, my task was to illuminate a connection between biography and teacher development and while it is far too early to talk of collating definitive themes, it is impossible not to hear in the accounts already completed expressions of differing attitudes to such issues as time orientation and reflexivity already identified in the exploratory interviews as areas of importance. It is also significant that the interviewees themselves describe the encounters not only as enjoyable experiences but also valuable. The idea that the interview has stimulated reflexivity is explicitly mentioned by Alice while both Adrian and Alan talk of the interview as a means of ordering or making their experiences more coherent. Therapeutic value is also credited to the interview in the last two examples. It is worth recalling that all these interviews lasted in excess of three hours, the time factor in itself giving a sense of the quality of engagement for interviewer and interviewee. That there was also value in the engagement is attested to in the comments above.

If, as I believe, the primary purpose of the research – a quest for researcher illumination, seems to have been complemented by a secondary purpose (gains for the interviewees)

then this is an endorsement of the successful and collaborative nature of the interview method. It provides some optimism for further exploration of the issues as I now turn to the final two interviews, beginning with Tom.

### **Interview with Tom –themes and comments**

Tom, the fourth interviewee, is in his early forties and like Alice, entered teaching late. Length of interview time and the manner of its arrangement followed the pattern of the other interviewees. Another constant was the positive way Tom spoke of the interview process, talking of how it had allowed him to present a coherent account of his life and the role of teaching, learning and development within that frame.

The organisation of data established in Alice's account is largely mirrored here with a second section concentrating on Tom's professional life up to his appointment as a teacher.

### **Roles, Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

Tom is a Science teacher, specialising in Physics and Chemistry, whose classes are predominantly Lower school (Years 9 -11). He is a main scale teacher. Tom is also a tutor in the school's pastoral framework.

One area of satisfaction is the academic performance of students. Here he recognises three gradations:

- 1) Day to day, measured in terms of the achievement of short term objectives.
- 2) Longer term, in terms of a group working well, responding and learning more.
- 3) Final satisfaction measured in 'good' results which are not necessarily 'high' examination grades but levels of achievement appropriate for particular individuals.

Satisfaction also exists in the pastoral dimension. It is tied to the differentiated progress of individual students. For one student, there is a satisfaction, *'that the child has got through his last three years of mainstream education - fairly smoothly, in the worst case not excluded'*. For another student, the pleasure is that he as a tutor has *'helped create an environment in which they have succeeded in achieving high academic targets'*.

As another source of pleasure he talks of '*continually learning*' in terms of Science. "*You never stop finding out about your subject*". Learning comes through '*preparation for teaching, individual lessons, series of lessons*'. He continues: '*You do learn from the children, particularly new ways of looking at things*'. In general terms, it is '*satisfying updating and broadening knowledge*'.

Dissatisfaction is '*the opposite side of the coin - the lessons, the groups not going well. It is obviously part of the challenge, but can also be a dissatisfaction. A way of putting things right at best*'.

As an institution, the school is a more '*happy than unhappy context in which to work*'. However, '*there is a major satisfaction in working with young people*'.

### *Comment*

Tom's words are carefully weighed as seen in the penultimate quotation relating to the school itself. There is no such tentativeness in his description of the pleasure in teaching individual students, yet there is a measured reflection in the way he talks of the appropriateness of individual targets. Perhaps there is a conservative tone here in the careful delineation. Learning, certainly, has a dynamic quality with a need to augment on a continual basis. It is noted, too, that students can be partners in the learning process. Finally, although a dissatisfaction can be re-identified as a challenge, there is perhaps a lack of robustness about the phrase, '*A way of putting things right - at best*'.

### Professional Life Prior to Teaching

Teaching was something Tom '*first looked at when I left university in 1975*'. It had been a close decision but '*in the end I went into industry*'. He worked for a company in the Chemical Industry for six years, including an 18 months posting abroad. In response to the question, '*Did you enjoy your time in industry?*' He replies '*Yes...I did. In the main I did. I enjoyed a lot of it*'. He concludes '*satisfactions outweighed dissatisfactions*'. It was at this point '*I again looked at the possibility of teaching. Again I was fairly, finely balanced - but I didn't*'.

Instead, he entered the family textile business, where he worked until the business' collapse ten years later. They were '*very hard years*', '*a very tough decade*'. A harsh

economic climate militated against successful business dealings and when a major retailing chain withdrew its contract, the *'writing was on the wall'*. The experience was *'extremely, unbelievably stressful'*, the more so because it was a family concern with very strong local ties. He concludes by remarking that he may have learned a great deal from it, but it had made him *'extremely bitter, unbelievably bitter, very painful'*.

Re-launching the company on a more modest scale was a possible option as was accepting another post. *'I didn't have to go into teaching. In the end I must have wanted to go into teaching, because I chose that route. I did it and that was that.'*

As an explanation he offers: *'There is a strong religious part of my personality - rarely vocalised - I felt I was led into that direction. A step in faith. Everything would work out, which in effect, it did'.*

A PGCE course at Leicester University followed, preceded by a two day taster course run by the local authority. The PGCE was hard work and enjoyable, although there were personal adjustments to make, given the time interval since the last academic work. Teaching practice was also enjoyable and experience was varied. One critical note is struck in terms of theoretical deficiency, particularly in any discussions of concepts such as authority and respect. *'I suggest an area not being tackled is children's respect for the teacher. That there is less automatic respect. That it is not there by right. There is a requirement to fit into what children expect of authority.'*

Tom had three interviews before he accepted his present position. There was no particular desire to stay in Leicester and indeed, *'I had cried a lot of tears. I was ready to seek fortune elsewhere. A new start.'*

### *Comment*

The last comment illustrates a wish to draw a line under the past and to look ahead. The collapse of the family business must have represented a quasi transformational change in Tom's life. Certainly the severity of the impact is reflected in the ferocity of the language completely at odds with the restrained tone elsewhere. Yet it would seem that the inevitable pain of that period has not seeped into his present thinking. It is an event of the past. It is significant to observe the number of times Tom employs a sense of the 'completed past' in his account: *'I did it and that was that'*. It is not that the past has no

value, but what is done is done and it is time to move on. This is as true of the time in industry as it is with the family business. The anchorage is provided by Tom's faith, the bedrock of security against which all of this change has been successfully negotiated. It is interesting to note his thinking on authority and respect. Here there is no nostalgia for the past where children knew their place, but a need to move with the times, to negotiate new relationships based on new principles. That change may not be easy and new teachers may be unprepared, but it must be accommodated to meet new situations.

## Influences in Becoming a Teacher

Tom first reflects on his secondary education as a boarder at a public school in Leicestershire. It belonged to a different world and was a totally different school from the one he operates in now. He is aware of younger teachers imitating the style of their former teachers – *'I'm going to be "mark 2" until I develop my own style'* - but for him, *'I don't honestly think I did'*. The institutions themselves, the students who attended them and the mores of the time were so different that nothing can be equated.

Tom, recalling the style of teaching, remembers *'chalk and talk'* adding, *'as I suspect it still is'*. Yet *'sometimes phrases pop into the head in terms of explanation'*, explanatory devices used by former teachers. These, *'I have carried over but haven't copied in any conscious way'*. He recalls other techniques which he has dismissed as inappropriate. Finally, to the question *'Did the school inspire a love of Science?'* He responds, *'Did it squash it?'* setting more store by having a chemistry set as a child, having Science books in the home and his father being interested in Morse code.

University had been very enjoyable providing a different atmosphere from school with a wide range of people and views. He recalls lectures, *'some incredibly boring, others absolutely fantastic'*. There is incredulity that topics which are exciting can be rendered tedious, a notion he brings to mind in the planning of his own lessons.

Referring to skills brought with him from his time in industry he comments, *'If you work in different jobs in industry, you will acquire a vast range of interpersonal skills which you are using all the time'*. Continuing on the theme of entering teaching from industry he comments, *'There are different ways of arriving. Having lots of experience in different workplaces, other than school, does have its own value'*.

Turning to personal life events, Tom remarked that meeting his second wife and his three stepchildren was a significant moment in his life. Getting to know his stepchildren and later, getting to know his own son would, '*inevitably have influenced the way I teach*'.

His eldest stepchild, Julia, was quiet by nature and knowing her '*reinforced the idea of getting to know the quiet*' in his own teaching. He concludes '*it does have an influence*', although, at times, difficult to pinpoint.

### *Comment*

It is interesting to listen for temporal references in the above section. As before, there is a very definite sense of the completed past in his reference to his own schooling. True, the past might reassert itself in minor, oblique ways as in the recall of explanatory devices, but the point is they are not conscious borrowings. Similarly there is no widescale overt borrowing from the world of industry to tackle situations in teaching, yet skills acquired in the former arena will more than likely have been subsumed in a general repertoire of interpersonal skills. They are not quantifiable and, more importantly, there is no personal need to quantify them. They exist as part of an evolving life story. Talking of his relationship with his children and its impact on his teaching, Tom comments, '*It does have an influence*'. Here is an example of something whose origins are in the past, but whose potency is still present and is likely to continue. This can be contrasted with the minimal impact of the closed world of a boarding school, an age away in time and significance.

### Aspects of Teaching and Learning

Tom is not a fine detailed planner but '*I like to know where I am going for a sequence of lessons*'. Schemes of work allow him to establish '*base rock*'. Objectives are identified around which greater or lesser flexibility is possible. There have, however, been times in the recent past where the curriculum map has been in a state of flux. '*We have been literally in the situation of continual change. You have really got to put your effort into your next sequence of lessons rather than looking to the past sequences.*' Tom recalls how '*People were fed up producing schemes of work to be scrapped*'.

The individual plan for a lesson is important. *'The plan is there so you are never in a position where you don't know what to do. So you never suddenly don't know where you are going. Just switch back into plan.'* There is a normal lesson sequence *'introduction, practical, summation of the practical, homework to write up the practical'* - but the pace of the lesson will change according to the needs of students. Recently, however, Tom taught a lesson where he totally changed his plan because *'Students particularly enjoyed it, wanted to do a lot of things with it that it filled two lessons without a problem. I had not planned to do it like that. I had to adapt as I went along. I didn't see that as a defeat. They worked very well. I thought they got a lot out of it'*. The new lesson will now be in the *'back of my mind, part of the repertoire'*.

Teaching is not following a syllabus. *'You are teaching kids to understand things.'* A syllabus prescribes a linear approach, whereas progress is very often, *'a little bit circular'*. He continues, *'It doesn't matter really what the syllabus says or what you have planned, if the people can't understand, because you haven't done something prior to that, then you have to field that. You have to provide, give the kids the ability to take the step'*.

### *Comment*

Comments about flexibility, changing the pace to adjust to the needs of the students and the example of following the children's interests, even though it disrupts the initial plan, are all evidence of reflection in and on action. It is noticeable that, in an environment of relentless change, it is that very process of reflection which suffers.

The syllabus details the knowledge to be acquired but the route to that knowledge may be negotiated. The one example Tom cites where the plan is abandoned and students' enthusiasms come to the fore is viewed as radical in character. This departure from the norm emphasises that Tom's usual practice is more cautious in nature. Nevertheless the insight gained from this experience is likely to influence later reflections on how to secure improvements for teaching and learning.

### *Developing as a Teacher*

In his four years in his present post there have been no identifiable singular moments in

his development. *'No light on the road to Damascus.'* It has been more a gradual evolution of practice, a process of *'continuous learning'*. Tom comments, *'I believe in experimentation. Selecting what works'*.

Reflection on lessons can lead to development but there are other more informal ways of learning. *'You might not be deliberately observing but just talking and think that sounds like a good experiment'* or *'that would be a good way of explaining.'* Lessons improve because over time, *'you select what works. I think it is a repertoire of skills'*.

Tom has recently enrolled on an Advanced Diploma in IT. The course is run at school, taught by members of staff. *'The opportunity was there. There were links with Science teaching. Initially, it was catching up. Important that I have the same skills as those coming out of college - updating, catching up.'* The process has been enjoyable: *'I have enjoyed it, the contact with colleagues. I have enjoyed learning, being taught by and with colleagues. I have enjoyed the collaborative side of it, the social content'*. Apart from the official support of the teachers teaching the course, there was the *'unofficial support'* of fellow teachers, offering help informally. Whole school development opportunities vary in their usefulness. They might be beneficial *'for some but not for others'*, depending on the expertise of individuals.

In general terms, Tom spoke of the transition required from the study of Science to the teaching of Science as a focus for his development. In content terms, much material left unused for a long time needs to be relearned and techniques have to be acquired to present that information. The PGCE course initiated that transition, but the years of teaching refine the process. In some ways, of course, that process is never complete as there have to be ongoing responses to the development of scientific knowledge and the skills needed to communicate it.

### *Comment*

There is a gradual, evolutionary character to Tom's development forged in an environment of change. There is also the recognition of a distinction between the study of a subject and the teaching of it and how the process of perfecting the latter is cumulative in nature.



The description of the enjoyable development initiative suggests a number of desired conditions. First, there is a perception of relevance. Second, it is localised. Third, a strong collaborative dimension exists. Finally, there is a degree of informality in the whole process. The collaborative element is highlighted and there appears to be a feeling of unexpected pleasure in this dimension. The informality dimension was mentioned earlier as a context for collecting new ideas. In contrast, whole school initiatives with a more generalised focus are more variable in their chance of success. It is interesting to hear Tom echo Huberman's notion (Huberman, 1994) of a repertoire of skills assembled over the years. Here is an illustration of incremental change.

## The Future

Asked of his plans 5 years hence, he comments 'I don't know. I don't know. I think I would have hoped of getting into the management of teaching by now really. The clock is ticking away'. He has, however, no plans to move because of the disruption to the family that would cause. In fact, 'I enjoy the job more as times go on - in the main'.

## Comment

Tom's cautiousness is seen again in the addendum '*in the main*'. His late entry into the profession may preclude managerial responsibility, yet a growing satisfaction in his teaching probably outweighs any disappointment. The future will be embraced in a thoughtful, reflective manner.

## Drawing Out Themes

Tom embraces the notion of development, seeking always to improve his skills as a classroom teacher. The satisfaction he gains is in the success gained by his students. His goals for himself and his students are future oriented. Although cautious by temperament, he is open to new ideas in teaching aware always of a changing environment. His words speak of '*updating*' and continual '*learning*'.

Change has been a feature of Tom's working and personal life. The past has provided no certainties. Change has provided challenges - the discovery of a new family, the

possibility of launching a new career - and, in response, a flexibility which has facilitated a positive outlook. Some of the change may appear to have a transformational character, but it has been assimilated into a life process more reminiscent of incremental change with the constancy of religious faith supplying both stability and dynamism. The self-reflexivity Tom has illustrated in a whole life context is mirrored by his approach to professional practice and development.

## **Interview with Charles – themes and comments**

The final interview with Charles details the thoughts of a head teacher who is shortly due to retire from a post he has held for 20 years in a large, mixed, comprehensive school. The format largely follows the design established in earlier interviews but there are modifications. The section on 'Roles, Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions' is longer than in the other interviews to accommodate the greater diversity and complexity of the role he plays. In addition, contrary to the pattern established in earlier interviews, the three elements are separated and each followed by a commentary. Such a division, I believe, makes for easier reading. Another different element is a section towards the close entitled 'School and Family'. While this sort of material does appear in the other interviews, it tends to be more integrated into the account. Here, it is given a separate focus to indicate the importance Charles attaches to them.

Length of interview time and the scheduling of it is as with the other interviewees. Charles also spoke of the importance of the occasion as a means of producing a coherent account of his career.

## **Roles, Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

Charles chooses the adjective complex to define the nature of the headteacher's role. Expanding on the definition, he talks of the range of different tasks and functions he has to fulfil and how these are integrated into a complex whole. First, he describes himself as *'adopting a role as an interface between the school and the community, representing the interests of the school in a variety of ways'*.

Within the school there is *'the assumed role of leading professional, not in the sense that I have all the answers, professionally speaking, but merely because I have a leading role'*. Here he rejects the notion of autocracy as an appropriate style for the modern head, preferring instead *'productive partnerships'* balanced by a requirement to be *'primus inter pares'*.

There are expectations from the *'gatekeepers'*, those external forces which *'any headteacher has to wrestle with on a daily basis'*. Amongst these is the responsibility to the governors. Such responsibility has a fiscal dimension: *'I liken a school like ours to an educational business and I am the Managing Director responsible to a Board, who are in turn responsible to the shareholders. So there is clearly a value for money concept'*. Yet here lies the tension, the difficulty of measuring productivity, *'since we are not producing cardboard boxes, all of even shape'*.

Another expectation is personnel management – *'staff need to be put in a position, professionally speaking, where they are able to do their best'*. This is closely allied to the notion of *'development underpinning all our practice'*, development understood in terms of an *'awareness, an up to dateness of curricular developments affecting day to day practice'*.

At this point, he concludes his initial remarks offering a summative comment: *'I'm trying to give you a flavour of those issues which one has to be preoccupied with within and without'*

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### *Comment*

There is great emphasis on the complexity of the modern headteacher's position. There is a diversity of interests to be satisfied and expectations to be met. Spatially, there has to be a *'within and without'* focus, yet it is mistaken to view all these differing strands as discrete components, as they need to coalesce to form a functional whole. It is to be noted, however, that tension can be present within the system. The business model of management he refers to with its notion of fiscal responsibility seems to be at variance with a philosophy which celebrates individual student difference.

Leadership style tends towards the democratic with an acknowledgement of the need for other insights but, it is noted, that this is held in check by a requirement for the

headteacher to be a *'first among equals'*. Such balance, it might be inferred, is an essential feature of leadership yet it can be ironically observed that in Imperial Rome, where the phrase was first used, it justified a sham equality. This is certainly not the case here, but it does alert us to the possibility that there may be a defensiveness in Charles' understanding of the leadership role.

Finally, the temporal emphasis. There is both a concern for the *"day to day"* but also, in the commitment to development, an orientation to the future. Both are interdependent.

## Satisfactions

Charles begins: *'My priorities are people and polices and interlocking these is a quality of public relations'*. Indeed, it is to the nature of his personal relationships over a range of contexts to which he turns first, beginning with the classroom. *'I love teaching and I like children. I practise with enthusiasm, I have retained my joy in being able to share in youngsters' successes'*.

Defending himself against a potential charge that a headteacher's time in a classroom is economically wasteful, he is able to argue that the institution's needs have required him to take that role. It is, however, more than that: *'I have always regarded myself as a teacher - headteacher, yes, simply because I am the leading professional but teaching has been an ever present delight'*.

Another context for personal relationships is Charles' work with the governors, which he very much enjoys. *'My relationship with the governors has been most constructive. I know that Heads are supposed to get on with their governors - or else. There's never been that threatening relationship. Governors have never been treated as a 'cipher - in that I make a decision and expect them to rubber stamp it'. Instead: 'I am concerned for their well being in the sense of being informed appropriately' so that 'they realize the range of decisions they have taken or are responsible for'.*

Relationships with parents give rise to satisfaction. Of paramount importance is the generation and maintenance of trust *'they must trust our judgement: they must trust us that we are using our resources to the best advantage, that we are creating situations where children are not just members on a SIMS package'*. Trust, he argues, has its

roots in accountability. *'Clearly, in this day and age, the parent is interpreted as a customer and customers need to be satisfied.'* This requires appropriate *'humility'* on the part of the professional. It does not, however, require an *'abandonment of professional expertise'*. Charles explains how his relationship with the PTA has struck a balance between professional distance and customer satisfaction.

In working with staff, trust is again the watchword: *'I have always wanted to be trusted by staff. Trusted in that they feel I look after their interests from a professional and personal standpoint'*. Charles' interaction with staff avoids the extremes of courting popularity or inspiring awe in favour of cultivating approachability. People share confidences with a *'fellow human being, who is in a position, to make things happen or effect issues which may be worrying them'*. On the other hand the *'power'* element (*'because one cannot divest oneself of various types of responsibility'*) requires Charles to attend to the needs of those *'whose professionalism has been found lacking'* and *'to make sure these people are improved from some in-service training standpoint'*.

All the different contexts, in which Charles exercises his personal skills, interlock: *'Rather like, it sounds grand perhaps - even though the image itself is rather humble - but it's rather like the hub of a bicycle wheel - where all the spokes are linked with - they don't lead to - that's too precious - but all these spokes are linked with the focal point - the hub of the wheel - the rim of the world are those external sources. All those groups - external groups - with whom I have had a role are on the rim as it were, all linked with the spokes - and the spokes are the children, themselves, staff, parents, governors, non-teaching staff- all those who have some connection with me. So I feel rather like the hub'*.

### *Comment*

A major satisfaction for Charles is the creation and the maintenance of a complex, interconnected world, achieved through the promotion of partnership, itself effected in the quality of personal relationships developed between the players.

Seeing himself at the hub of matters is not a wish for self aggrandizement, as the choice of imagery and tortuous syntax makes evident, but appraisal of the central importance of his role in serving a network of interests. There is, perhaps, a tone of defensiveness in his account of his dealings with governors and the Parent Teachers Association. In his

desire to ensure that they are aware of the magnitude of their decisions, he is perhaps, protective of his governors, showing a lack of confidence in their ability to make informed decisions. This may reflect an uncertainty about devolving too much power. Such conservatism can be glimpsed in his '*middle path*' policy with the PTA. There is no desperate clinging to power here, but perhaps a lack of confidence in others to contribute to the debate. While it would be wrong to over emphasise this aspect of his style, it is intriguing to notice the ambiguous tone in the statement '*I have always wanted to be trusted by staff*'. Self-defensiveness and trust are not traditional partners and in promoting the latter's importance in facilitating relationships, Charles is perhaps implicitly aware of a need for self- growth in this area.

## Dissatisfactions

Dissatisfactions, he argues, is too strong a word. '*Frustrations rather than dissatisfactions - frustrations where unreasonable expectations are levelled at times. There is a level of personal frustration in not being able to satisfy these demands, these expectations, because of a lack of a solution to the problem - not through any personal weaknesses - they are difficulties which I believe we cannot surmount. However, the stamina and quality of my life are what permit me to survive the frustrations.*' There is, too, the comfort of a personal philosophy. '*I always wish to be regarded as a realist and I have described myself as an optimistic realist. I always look on the bright side.*'

A measure of how the satisfactions outweigh the dissatisfactions is seen in this reflection on retirement: "*There are some people who go into retirement feeling that the job is not finished - I am leaving fulfilled*".

## Comment

The brevity of the section above in contrast to the copious material recorded under '*Satisfactions*' emphasises Charles' resolve to treat difficulties as challenges. This can be seen in the reframing of dissatisfactions as frustrations. At the same time when the odds are insuperable, then the challenge is termed unrealistic. What disappointment there is assuaged by Charles' resolve and the '*quality of my life*'. The latter phrase hints at complementary satisfactions which exist in private life and which inform a whole life perspective.

## Professional Life to Date

Charles found his PGCE year 'fascinating' *'I realized at an early stage that the choice I had made to pursue a teaching career was an appropriate one.'*

The abandonment of National Service meant he was able to take up his first teaching appointment in 1959. Even this early in his career he displays a future orientation:

*'I had set my sights on staying in each school that I eventually made my way to for a whole generation of children. That I felt was part of a deal I had made with myself and the institution – 5 years. I maintained that rotation – which was convenient from a domestic point of view – literally, until I came here.'*

He now charts his career rapidly. *'I went to B \_\_\_\_\_ as a brand new teacher of languages, went from there to a grammar school in W \_\_\_\_\_ as Head of Modern Languages, went from there to a suburban comprehensive as a Deputy, went to a headship in S \_\_\_\_\_ and then came here.'* He concludes: *'All the times I moved were geared to the concerns of my family and I have never followed my star round in a cavalier sense'*. Asked if it was a question of meeting challenges, he replies: *'I think so. It wasn't restlessness. I was not naked in my ambition'*.

He remembers his first post with great affection: *'I have very fond memories of those days. It was almost a new school. The staff had a sort of pioneering zeal. The school had been established as a Technical High School'*.

However, *'once spurs were earned, I moved to the grammar school – and that too was a fairly small school. That was an extremely enjoyable experience. The boys' school – a comprehensive was a real challenge – from a sleepy rural grammar school to a suburban comprehensive was a distinct culture shock'*.

Moving from there to the headship of a boys' school on the same site as a girls' school, which Charles was to amalgamate successfully and to become the overall head of was, *'a wonderful opportunity'*. He recalls how this was, perhaps, apart from the pleasure of his present post, the most satisfying part of his professional life. He describes *'the task of being trusted with putting two schools together – with two sets of everything – what*

*do you do in situations like that? – Where you have such duplication across the board. To overcome the distrust of the girls' school and to create a structure, to weld two halves together – to put those two things together was the proverbial challenge'.*

It was a challenge met. *'Now, having done what I thought I was expected to achieve, I thought it was time to move on.'*

Reviewing his progress to this point, Charles reflects on possible criticism.

*'I was a young head. I got my first headship at the age of 34, having been a Deputy at the age of 28. One could say, "God, this man has hardly earned his spurs. Can we possibly entrust him with something as large scale as that when he is relatively inexperienced?'. Well, I believe the nature of my experience fitted me for those challenges and I believe, without bombast, that I met those challenges, and decided, that at that stage, the time was right for me to look to a bigger school.'*

Encouraged to explain his success, he first talks of confidence in his own ability and how he has always relished a challenge. He refers to innate skills such as sensitivity – *'realizing how uncertain a whole range of staff felt'* and believes that personal characteristics such as *'my humanity, my approachability, my willingness to listen'* were crucial. He details a picture of how anxieties were overcome in a series of individual interviews, how detailed and sensitive negotiations ensured that most staff achieved a sense of fulfillment and how the whole undertaking met with the approval of the Inspectorate who used it as a model for other schools about to undergo amalgamation.

### *Comment*

The rapid summary of his career to date offered at the beginning of the last section signifies an important aspect of Charles' narrative. He was keen to skate over early professional episodes and to return to talk about his present post and it was only my prompting that led him to focus on past experiences. It is not that he is averse to talking about the earlier years because of any dissatisfaction but because they are completed episodes. To use one of his favourite words, they are *'challenges'* which have been



met. Once met, it is time to move on. There is undoubtedly a future orientation, as seen at the outset of his career, when he outlines his 'five year' policy.

Naked ambition is not a motivation. He is sensitive to the interests of the children under his charge and to the requirements of his family. Indeed, it is his sensitivity which he believes equipped him for the difficult task of amalgamating the two schools. He talks of the trust in which he was held by those who employed him for the task.

Self-confidence is clearly required to complete such a task, a quality that Charles believes has allowed him to achieve as much as he has. Certainly, a series of successes will have fuelled self confidence, yet there is still an inconsistency here with the self defensiveness noted earlier as a small part of his leadership style. Perhaps it is part of the ongoing challenge to test his capabilities in this area. This might explain both the pride in achievement and the requirement to improve further.

### Influences – Developing a Style

Asked about role models. Charles refers to two of his 'A' level language teachers. *'Two excellent men – one had served in the war and had used his personal language skills for interpreting. They were very experienced men of the world, with colourful pasts. I was touched by their style.'* Clearly they were influences: *'I have to say in the early part of my career I did model my teaching style on them. Because they had been successful in dealing with me, I transferred their skills, I suppose, into my own attitudes'.*

Charles, however, believes style changes in the course of time or more precisely style changes to the demands of the situation. As an example, he talks of what was expected of him on his appointment prior to the amalgamation of the two schools: *'I was expected to be the autocrat – that was the culture of the school. Things had gone badly and they wanted someone to give it a shake. So in that sense I was expected to be the knight on a white charger. And they were not disappointed. I did slay a few dragons in my time. However, while I would be the first to admit I slipped quite easily into that role, I slipped quite easily out of it as well'.* Flexibility is the key. *'In terms of flexibility of approach, I am not a chameleon but I am aware of the needs of certain situations, I believe I have sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of particular*

*communities. I was a bit of a martinet in promoting a good reputation for the boys' school, but I was called upon to exhibit another set of skills in effecting the amalgamation.'*

Elaborating, he discusses how his style was modified further on arrival at his present school. Resisting the wishes of many to remount the white charger, he sought to '*strike a happy balance, promote some clear vision where things should go and at the same time continue sensitively the democratic progress which had begun*'. He sought to respond to the situation, '*in whatever way I felt was appropriate as an expectation of me by others and realistically, in the light of circumstances in which I found myself*'.

### *Comment*

Oja (1991) talks of flexibility as a characteristic of the autonomous developmental stage. It is at this stage that the individual is best equipped to deal with complexity. She cites the appropriate challenges for this stage as assuming leadership roles and creating new programmes and policies. These were the very tasks Charles was embarked upon.

It is also interesting to note how early influences were simply that. The two language teachers of his youth are fondly remembered, but their influence has receded over the years as new opportunities have presented themselves. It is a defining characteristic of flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities.

### *Present Post*

The stay in the present post has lasted for twenty years. '*I can sum up my tenure here, by being fulfilled professionally speaking. The challenge is constant. I have hung on in here and thoroughly enjoyed my time.*'

### *Comment*

Twenty years in one post differs sharply from the five-year cycle reported earlier. It is perhaps the variety and the diversity of the challenge of running a large comprehensive school which has necessitated the longer time commitment. The enjoyment of meeting

the continual challenge is evident but the summative statement which begins the section above with its talk of professional fulfillment now indicates a completed action.

## School / Family

School days were '*very happy days*'. In traditional Welsh terms, education was highly prized. He recalls being a grammar school boy. '*And those grammar school boys who got on the bus and went six miles to wherever were the favoured few.*'

There was no tradition of higher education in the family and Charles was the first to go to university. His parents were very proud of his achievements and it is one of his regrets that his father - a coal miner - did not see his final success. His mother did and she '*seemed to be bursting with pride*'.

Now Charles enjoys a close family life. '*I have always regarded family life as being vitally important. I have enjoyed a closeness, a real family unit and when adversity has occurred, we have clung together.*'

He has succeeded in maintaining a private life. '*I may be interpreted as a very private person. I hope I am. I wish to be because I feel I am. My private life is my business.*'

## Comment

Family ties have always been important whether it be the closeknit parental home or in later years, his own family. The closeness which they share provides the security and balance necessary to embark confidently on the challenges of professional life. Attention to the private self seems crucial to invigorate the public self.

## Aspects of Teaching and Learning

Concluding the interview, Charles returns to teaching, recalling one of the cards he has received on his retirement, bearing the message, '*Thanks for the mud on the wall*'. He explains: '*I talk about language learning as me throwing mud on the wall, in the sense that if I throw fifty words at them and they remember ten of them - figuratively, the mud sticks on the wall*'.

Charles is moved that the girl remembers the image and has '*enjoyed the process of the learning*'. He concludes: '*And the message is, learning is vital, learning is lifelong – you will carry on learning for ever more in some way or the other. This certainly will be my philosophy*'.

### *Comment*

The thesis that learning should be lifelong is not surprising, given Charles' earlier comments. What might be arresting is the description of a teaching–learning process which is clearly teacher directed, and leaves little room for the learner to construct his/her learning. Perhaps there are echoes here, of the tendency to enjoy the retention of control glimpsed in his dealings with the governors and the PTA. There is an inconsistency here in the philosophy of learning and development which has not been entirely ironed out.

### *The Future*

Charles comments: '*I am not retiring to grow roses. I'm not retiring to inactivity*'. He has resigned from all organisations on which he represented his present school. '*I want now to think again and because I am young enough and vigorous enough, I would like to go forward with some new venture. I would like further opportunities to respond to challenge.*'

Comment here is superfluous.

### *Drawing Out Themes*

A sense of enjoyment pervades all of Charles' professional experiences. Those experiences are framed in terms of challenges. It is interesting that in describing current satisfactions and dissatisfactions that there is no reference to the past, even though past experiences have been very enjoyable. The explanation here is that the focus is always on the present or the future and while there may have been earlier positive influences their relevance diminishes overtime as a new situation demands another response. That is not to say there are no constants in this picture, but even these tend to have a dynamic force. For example, the capacity of flexibility and the cognitive skill to appraise a situation serves not only to facilitate a response to the present but also to create

possibilities for the future. In addition, it is difficult to underestimate the secure emotional grounding which the family has always provided and which replenishes the self as it deals with the complexities of the professional world.

A slight self-defensiveness has been noted in the leadership style and this seemed to be underlined in a preference for a teacher directed style of learning. In the latter case it might be that the head teacher label with its inbuilt notions of power precludes a more exploratory atmosphere in the classroom and a necessarily limited access to the classroom gives scant opportunity to refashion a style. Greater exposure and the setting aside of the headteacher designation may well have paid dividends in liberating the self, leaving it more open to the contributions of others. This would also have had wider professional significance.

Responding to challenges has been a lifetime's work for Charles. Perhaps in his identification of qualities like trust and his idealization of them as the *sine qua non* of professional development, he has recognized a personal challenge which he has almost, but not quite, surmounted.

## Chapter 5

### Generating theory

#### Collating themes and building theory

The task of this chapter is twofold. First, it seeks to collate the themes emergent from the interviews so far, a point in the research which recalls the final stage of McCracken's four step analytical process where the particulars of individual lives serve to describe '*the general properties of thought and action within the community group under study*' (McCracken, 1988 p.46). Second, building on this, it seeks to construct a theory where the connection between biography and development is delineated with the purpose of progressing to the later stage of the research where the consequences of the link are mapped out in the form of development initiatives.

Stage 4 of McCracken's process, it will be recalled, reached the point where themes in individual transcripts were recognized. This final stage looks beyond and seeks to compare accounts testing to see if there is any commonality in themes. The decision to produce profiles at the end of stage 4 proves its value here. Similarities and differences in responses to identified themes can easily be compared and contrasted by examining the last section of the profile entitled *Drawing out Themes*.

First, however, a word needs to be said about the collation of themes, particularly in the way it relates to the status of individual accounts. The work of Polkinghorne offers a guide. Polkinghorne (1995) seeks to '*tease out and present a taxonomy of different kinds of narrative inquiry*' (p.12). He identifies two essential types that correspond to two modes of cognitive functioning as recognized by Bruner (1985). These two modes might be termed '*paradigmatic cognition*', the traditional logical-scientific mode of knowing and '*narrative cognition*', where narrative knowledge is seen as a legitimate if different form of reasoned knowing, not merely as discredited emotive expression. Polkinghorne describes the type of enquiry which uses paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis '*analysis of narratives*' and the type that uses narrative reasoning, '*narrative analysis*'. In the former, researchers '*collect stories as data and analyse them with paradigmatic processes*' (Polkinghorne, 1995 p.12). The aim of such is to describe

themes which hold across the stories. In the latter, researchers '*collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesise or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories.*' (ibid. p.12). Polkinghorne succinctly distinguishes the two in a final comment: "*Analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories*" (ibid. p.12).

The title of this section - *Collating Themes* - would seem to indicate that a form of paradigmatic cognition is in operation here, in that particular instances can be classified as belonging to a category, concept or theme. For example, while accepting that the individual case profiles of the interviewees offer something that is unique and non reducible to categorization, there is much common experience which will allow the generation of knowledge, in this case an understanding of the link between biography and professional development. It will be recalled from an earlier chapter how each case has been chosen to illustrate what Mitchell (1983) calls '*the workings of a process*'. Theory is built from the illuminations which each distinctive case provides.

It would, however, be wrong to suggest that individual differences disappear completely in achieving McCracken's (McCracken, 1988) '*general properties of thought and action*'. Indeed, in insisting that the generalisation process does not deny subtle gradations of individual difference in a rush to present a coherent picture, nuances of individual perspective will still be visible. For example, the profiles of Tom and Alice may yield similar views on matters such as time orientation, self-reflexivity and approaches to practice and development, yet within these very themes there may be differences of emphasis. The complete account will succeed in presenting a global picture, yet retaining gradations of difference. In short Polkinghorne's divide, while eminently useful, is perhaps too rigid for what is reported here.

## Common Themes

### Time Orientation

That time orientation may be significant was first glimpsed in the two exploratory interviews where Howard and Gabriel described contrasting perspectives on time. Here Schutz's work on the tenses of the self (Schutz, 1964) further refined the perspective, illustrating how divisions within time categories allow a respondent to describe

himself/herself more completely. In particular, the distinction between '*completed past*' and '*past continuing into present*' was noted as an indicator of how elements of an individual's past may overshadow his/her present thinking. Similarly, respondents could talk about themselves in the future tense, distinguishing between an '*intended self*', an '*actually expected outcome*' and a '*possible self*'. All of these insights offer a rejoinder to the undifferentiated notion that biography is simply the study of time past, a temporal dimension which Watkins (1996) reminds us has been favoured insistently as a means of understanding ourselves and others.

These insights also shaped the design of the interview guide, reflecting the hypothesis that a particular time orientation could well relate to attitudes to practice and development. Even when the questioning was ostensibly on the individual's present or another discrete time category, it was envisaged that the interviewee may employ his or her distinctive temporal emphasis to explain thoughts and practice. Such a supposition was amply demonstrated in the course of the interviews.

Of those interviewees whose present relates more strongly to their interpretations of the past Howard and Alan speak most directly of their memories. Interestingly, while the impact of the past is reported as massive in both cases, there are significant differences in how in each case, the past has affected the individual's present and how in attitudinal terms the past has been viewed. In short, the past unfolds for these two individuals in complex and differentiated ways.

For Alan, his school experience destroyed his self-confidence and had a pernicious effect on his career. Choosing teaching and particularly choosing to be a PE teacher, given the low status attached to the subject by his school, would constantly remind him of the low self-esteem in which he believed he was held. Clark et al (1994) give examples of how thinking about how events occurred in the past leads to assimilation effects in assessment of current well being. These constant reminders have a cumulatively corrosive effect and even when initiatives are embarked upon to repair status - Open University Degrees, Masters - they run the danger of being overwhelmed by the sheer force of the past's influence.

Intriguingly, when placed in a discipline role, Alan seeks above all else to break from the past, not to treat people as he was treated. This is no doubt commendable, given his



own severe experiences, yet the fact it is not impelled by a concern for the present situation raises doubts about its effectiveness. Try as he may, Alan cannot disavow his past. Or at least not until that past has no shadow to cast on his actions. This, indeed, occurs when in the context of Special Needs English he discovers what for him are new conceptions of teaching and learning which are radically different from any associated with his schooling. Alan, for a long time had been trying to repair the past but now he was being successful in moving away from it.

Status is a motivating force in Howard's account. His failure to achieve his academic potential is sufficient to inspire him in middle age to train as a teacher. From his own experience he recalls how teachers are men - and men is the appropriate word - of status and respect. To be what they were is his goal. Yet, therein, lies the problem as seen in the confusion of tenses. His future lies in their past, a past which he has assimilated. A teacher of the early 1950s may be a very different character from a teacher of the 1990s, yet, by choosing the former as his role model, he is tying himself to a dated concept of teaching and learning. Of course, there are opportunities to update his thinking - his PGCE training, subsequent development initiatives in his workplace - yet they are rejected as not relevant. His motto, proudly proclaimed as '*What you see is what you get*' is rephrased by Buchmann as '*This is the kind of person I am*' (Buchmann and Flodden, 1993 p.149), the force of which is usually to stifle discussion and block off any creative thoughts which might emerge from listening to the ideas of others. Such a reluctance to change and to admit the words of others is an apparent demonstration of self sufficiency yet, as Sanford comments in his description of the authoritarian personality, it is a self '*characterised by narrowness of consciousness, rigidity of thought and action and a tendency to reduce everything to a few simple categories*' (Sanford, 1966 p.208). Discussing Howard in terms of an authoritarian personality is not the stance of this research, yet in one key area, namely a preoccupation with dominance-submission, it can be noted how he appropriates the authoritarian models of his teachers and his father for use in his own classroom. The apparent nostalgic certainty of the past is for him a more secure image than the thought of re-inventing himself to meet the requirements of the classrooms and students of the 1990s. For Howard it is a case of re-living the past.

The other interviewee whose past impacted on his present was Adrian, although a superficial reading of his account would suggest a pre-occupation with the future. Yet

again status was a motivating force, informed by the need to repair the damages of the past, expressed in a broken relationship with his father, caused initially by his academic failure and then compounded by what were immoral acts in his father's eyes. In his conduct as a teacher, he ostensibly rejects the past in fashioning warm and close relationships with students, yet, unknowingly, surrounds himself and them with the impedimenta of the past - traditional didactic teaching methods, a pre-occupation with passing examinations rather than learning and, ironically, a teacher-student relationship which, in a very traditional mode, stresses the dependency of the latter on the former. Yet, intriguingly, that dependency is mutual. Adrian needs those students and those successful examination results as much as they need him and the success they believe he brings.

It is interesting to speculate upon what examination failure for his students might mean for Adrian. By chance, we have the answer to that question in that shortly after the interview, he received news of a very disappointing set of examination results. It certainly represented a great blow to his status yet it did not persuade him to take the opportunity to explore different conceptions of teaching and learning which may have been liberating in effect for students - they are decoupled from their teacher and are able to construct their own learning - and for the teacher who, released from the shackles of status maintenance/enhancement, could re-invent himself in another guise. The wound was so great that, rather than critically appraise the issue, he left the matter unaddressed and sought, instead, another opportunity which might enhance his status. The quality of teaching and learning for future students was not considered, as the preoccupation still was to regain favour in his father's eyes. This ties Adrian to the past and will continue to do so in that no amount of opportunistic grasping of the future in a quest for status will in all likelihood satisfy either him or his father. While in many ways seeking to move from the past, Adrian seems only to be re-living it. Indeed, it would appear from all three interviewees that attempts to negotiate a successful future are hampered when, for one reason or another, there is a tie to the past.

The impedimenta of the past seem not to exist for the other three interviewees. Experiences can be traumatic - Alice's removal from London, career and friends, the collapse of Tom's family business - yet are seen as only part of an evolving life story. Karniol and Ross (1996) record how, if some people see themselves tied to their past, they lose their sense of agency but, by underplaying the relevance of past failures and

disappointments, they '*can maintain the belief that they are in command of their futures and that they have the power to produce success*' (p. 611). Such belief is not self-delusion but a self-confidence which permits them to approach new situations with a flexibility of thought and a potential for enrichment. Of course, that self-confidence is anchored in a variety of stabilising influences; in Tom, his religious faith, in Alice, her politics of equality, and in Charles, the emotional security provided by his family. Yet that very stability has a dynamic and positive force, which offers in Buchmann's terms (Buchmann and Flodden, 1993) a '*luminous thread of life and personal meaning*' (p.176) Although influences may have their origin in the past – Alice's inheritance of her father's questioning spirit - the point is they are illuminating and life giving rather than dark and threatening as in the '*heavy repressive dead hand of the past*' (ibid. p.176).

It is true that Alice's and Charles's reflections on temporal matters differ in tone from Tom's. Their robust embracing of the future which closes their accounts, is at odds with Tom's more cautious approach, yet this is more a reflection of temperament and personality than a difference in philosophy. Gabriel, too, had a focus on the future in terms of his practice and development and talked of the need to reinvent the self to meet the demands of each new situation. This is the boldest statement of all three and has its origins in a study of philosophy and a personal requirement in the past to shield the self by inventing new "*personae*". Thus far, he claims this philosophical model has served him well. It will be interesting to see how well it shapes up to the vicissitudes of life, bearing in mind that Gabriel is the youngest of the interviewees.

In considering how each interviewee negotiates time orientation, it is pertinent now to reflect on the notion of self-reflexivity, the second of our common themes.

## Self-Reflexivity

In discussing models of teacher development, emphasis was given to self-reflexivity, because, as a concept, it stressed how the self's identity was formed in social interaction. For the teacher, it suggested a capacity to see oneself in a wider context and reconstruct understandings in the light of new situations. This was felt to offer much potential in informing practice and professional development.

Giddens (1991) talks of the reflexive project of the self, as the process by which self-identity is constituted. He sees it occurring in what he describes as a risk culture which for him is a defining cultural aspect of modernity. Risk, of course can have negative connotations, but it is important to distinguish it from danger. To endanger would be morally wrong. For Giddens, risk is not only inevitable, but crucial in negotiating an optimistic future. He writes, '*Risks and attempts at risk assessment are so fundamental to the colonization of the future*' (ibid. p.114). Clearly, it involves uncertainties but uncertainty describes the spirit of the age. The comfortable practices of tradition have been swept away by the whirlwinds of high modernity and, indeed, it is more dangerous to cling to the tried and tested formulas of old. Thus, there appears to be an irresistible topical and moral imperative for teachers to attend to their reflexive selves, if they are to provide the means for their students to '*colonise the future*'.

The interviewees' capacity to engage in risk and uncertainty in the teaching process and in terms of professional development will be examined shortly but, first, their general orientation as reflected in their biographies can be commented on. Perhaps it is most evident in the cases of Tom and Alice whose responses to failure and extreme disappointment are not devastation but a capacity to re-engage and be flexible about new opportunities. The demands of new situations call for new responses themselves producing new refinements of self. It is not, of course, only the most dramatic of circumstances which yield such a change. Any experience has the potential to cause the individual to reassess his/her understanding of himself/herself and, thus, affect an interpretation of a subsequent situation. For example, as recorded earlier, Alice spoke of how the interview situation allowed her to re-examine aspects of her life in ways previously unconsidered. In general terms, it can also be seen in the flexibility of Charles' approach as he adapts the self to each new challenge.

Self-reflexivity differs from self-understanding in its dynamic quality, in its capacity to initiate change. It may well have a future momentum. It requires openness and a capacity to learn. Charles, Tom and Alice exhibit these qualities. By contrast, where there exists a rigidity of thought and a disinclination to learn, as in the case of Howard, the scope or desire for self-reflexivity is virtually non-existent. The interview process, for example, offered Howard an opportunity for self-absorption or self-glorification rather than self examination. With Adrian, while there is no difficulty in seizing new situations in a quest for status, there seems little alteration in the self as it negotiates

these experiences. There is an obstruction in the learning process, which condemns Adrian to repeat the same errors. As suggested earlier, the obstacle lies in an unresolved issue of the past. Interestingly, in talking about the interview, he talked about the therapeutic effect of introducing issues into the conversation which had remained unexplored for some time. That is not to say that, as in Alice's case, this amounted to new configurations of thought, but it may have represented the first opportunity to review what, in time, would appear to be contradictory thoughts and unreflective judgements.

Karniol and Ross (1996) round up evidence of how goals affect memory retrieval. That is to say some individuals appear to ignore relevant past experiences when they doggedly pursue a goal. It is as true of Alan, as it was of Adrian above. Alan repeatedly sought to embrace the academic to remedy his low esteem, even though it appeared to offer little comfort. Self-reflexivity did not flourish here. Yet in the interview Alan intimated that the process of reliving events helped to clarify his thinking. The disappointment for Alan is that this process is beginning too late but, on a more positive note, if a single interview can initiate small changes, then there will be great potential for a development model, which has increasing self-reflexivity at its core.

In summary, there is a close connection between an individual's time orientation and his/her self-reflexivity. Those practised in the art of self-reflexivity tend to be those who have quietly assimilated past experiences and who approach the future with confidence. For those, however, who are still tied to the past in some way, the scope for self-reflexivity is more limited. To do what one can to increase the level of those individuals' self-reflexivity is of paramount concern as such an action affects not only them but the students in their charge, as will be seen in the next section when aspects of performance and development are considered.

## Perceptions of Practice

### a) Planning

Alice and Tom are both planners. Alice describes her planning as '*fairly detailed*', while Tom, although not '*meticulous*', likes to have a clear direction, both in a scheme

of work and in a lesson plan. Both would subscribe to Tom's '*base rock*', a position of security from which to launch and return. Both describe how lesson plans change to accommodate needs of students and report how interesting and exciting lessons emerge because of that. Thus, there is no fixedness about the planning. There is tolerance of uncertainty perceived positively as '*openness*', '*awareness of possibilities*', '*fluidity*', '*freedom from rigidity*'. Yet there are also developed practices which screen out unnecessary risk. Buchmann and Floden's chapter title (Buchmann and Floden, 1993) '*Between Routines and Anarchy*' suggests how judicious use of the former enables the teacher to accommodate the inevitable (and welcome) uncertainty of the classroom. Thus there is a dialectical relationship occurring here between planned/unplanned, certainty/uncertainty which recalls notions of stability and incremental change. One final note is required here. While Alice and Tom have been grouped together as representative of a type of planning, individual differences are visible. These amount to matters of scope and pace. Alice may be further advanced in her thinking about how students shape their own understandings and more certain of how to engineer appropriate learning opportunities for this purpose. Tom has embarked upon the process but is still in Alice's wake.

Adrian's planning is negligible. New branches of a topic are read up, internalised and, then, presented as knowledge. As Adrian does not require his students to construct their own understandings of subject matter, there is no need to fashion learning experiences which will facilitate that process. Risk and uncertainty, in Adrian's thinking, are renamed as danger and are removed from the learning process.

Alan's perceptions of planning have shifted considerably in the course of his career. As a PE teacher, he talks only of '*playing games*' and accords little value to the skills required in preparation for that. However, in talking of his English teaching, he describes how he devotes much time to planning lessons. This marked the time when Alan's conception of learning had lost its association with status enhancement and had a much more pronounced democratic character with himself, students and colleagues uniting to share learning experiences. In such an environment, it is reasonable to suppose planning will have a provisional character.

In terms of planning, it is intriguing to analyse Charles' position. In the limited account he gives of his teaching, planning would not seem a priority, given his teacher directed

stance towards learning. This approach, however, is clearly at variance with the approach required to function successfully over the range of challenging tasks he has faced in the course of his career. Here, as with Tom and Alice's experience in the classroom, there would need to be the balance between the security which planning gives and the flexibility which allows for the grasping of new possibilities. Such a balance, of course may well have developed in Charles' classroom, had there been more exposure to a greater variety of teaching.

Of the interviewees in the exploratory interviews, Howard and Gabriel would appear to represent the opposite poles of planning. Gabriel talks of critical reflection as the process underpinning his planning and practice, reflection providing the balance or security to embark upon new learning experiences. Howard's teaching is only an extension of himself, his own narrative designed to illustrate the path his students should tread. No planning is necessary here.

It is to be noted that some interviewees favour a collaborative dimension to planning while others do not. Alice and Tom embrace it although there are differences between the two in their emphasis on formal and informal contexts, Alice more insistent upon the faculty's formal gathering as a forum for planning and reviewing schemes of work. Alan has discovered it, while Adrian sees himself as a solo performer. In Charles' case, there is a tentativeness about total commitment. While it must form part of the '*productive partnerships*' he talks about, a slight self defensiveness casts some doubt about its total integration. It is difficult to imagine Howard working collaboratively, given his focus on self-sufficiency. On the other hand, it might be expected of Gabriel, yet there is little in the account to support this.

In summary, those whose orientation is to the future seem to plan with students' interests in mind. For this reason, their planning is provisional, leaving room for unexpected development. They also welcome the collaborative into their planning. Their openness and inclination to learn is consistent with their capacity to be self-reflexive. Here, again, there is a certain ambiguity about Charles' position. Certainly, a good case can be made for his self-reflexivity in the wider professional arena, but it could be argued that he falls short of planning '*with students' interests in mind*'. This paradox can be partially resolved by again suggesting that a greater time spent in the classroom may well have allowed him to explore different conceptions of teaching and

learning which may have resulted in the appropriation of a more student centred style. There is, certainly, evidence in Alan's account that this type of reorientation can occur. Meanwhile, it would be true to say that for those tied to the past any careful balance between what to plan, and what to leave to chance is necessarily of less import, given that the teacher's perception of what is required is paramount.

## b) Teaching

It is difficult to disassociate performance from planning and any division appears arbitrary in nature. Yet it can be observed how Alice and Tom transcend the syllabus, if they believe it is appropriate to do so to improve the learning of their students. Tom reflects simply: *'You are teaching kids to understand things'*. As with planning, the syllabus is the *'base rock'* around which learning experiences are planned. The more conservative approach is evidenced in Adrian who keeps rigidly to the syllabus, the sure guide to knowledge that needs to be delivered for examination success.

To consider teaching as a facilitation of learning is to encourage students to embrace an active construction of meaning and interpretation. It has the effect of minimising the importance of the teacher as seen in Alice's carefully judged professional as opposed to excessively personal satisfaction in *'eas(ed)ing open some of the windows to allow them to open them completely'*. In contrast, teaching, typified as transmission of knowledge, tends to exaggerate the importance of the teacher. Adrian's exhilaration on hearing successful examination results transcends *'professional'* pride and becomes a celebration of the *'personal'* self. The active or passive roles of the students in these types of teaching may have impact on their capabilities to engage in future learning. It is not difficult to predict that those in the former category will fare better in meeting the demands of the future.

A final word about teachers. It would be wrong to suggest, as the previous paragraph may have done, that teachers belong exclusively either to Alice's camp or Adrian's camp. The map cannot be so simply drawn. On a positive note, there are amongst our interviewees, those who are or were working towards Alice's position. Tom is: Alan was. A focus of development might be to accelerate that process. In Charles' case, a more student-orientated approach in the classroom may well have initiated a more collaborative style in other professional matters. There is every reason to believe he



would have met such a challenge, given his belief in the need to adapt the self to each new situation.

### c) Reflection

Reflection, too, is closely tied to the practices of planning and performance. Both Alice and Tom refer to it as central to their practice, Alice also emphasising her faculty's collaborative approach to it. Alan, too, views it as a key feature within the group approach to Special Needs English. Gabriel refers to critical reflection as the process which underscores the design of opportunities for students to participate in learning. This point is crucial as it positions reflection in what Zeichner (1994) calls the '*developmentalist tradition*' which prioritises reflection about students' thinking and developmental growth. Elsewhere, Tickle (1993) laments how Schon's (Schon, 1983) concept of the reflective practitioner is misused by beginning teachers in their attempts to establish control over the situations they handled. By mastery, they seek to eliminate risk. As a counter to this, Tickle suggests a reflexive practice which in Elliot's words (Elliot, 1993)) '*subordinates technical reflection to reflection which aims at the transformation of the self*' (p.xii.). The self-reflexivity described here, with its potential to enrich self and those whom the self comes into contact with, describes the reflective practice of Alice, Tom and Charles. It is less likely to describe Adrian's and Howard's practice.

### Stances on Development

Alice, it will be recalled, offered the following while talking about development: '*I don't know you can ever stop learning because you are always going to meet new situations. I don't think it can be a static entity. It's got to be dynamic*'.

Here the cumulative nature of development is stressed, as in the self enrichment process which occurs in meeting the challenge of new circumstances. This is Hargreaves' notion (Hargreaves 1994) of the post modern '*boundless self*', ever capable of refining itself, a position endorsed by Gabriel, and acted upon by Charles.

Tom talks of development as the gradual evolution of practice, tying it to improving the learning experiences of children. It is a continuous process of learning sharply at odds

with Howard's insistence that in his case there is no requirement for development. Howard's status as a teacher is sufficient. It was status which drove Alan in the earlier part of his career and which drives Adrian now. The opportunities which Alan seized upon did not advance his self esteem and nor do similar initiatives appear to be doing so with Adrian. The underlying message here may be that self-development in the context of teaching appears to be connected with the enrichment of others.

In thinking about contexts for development, there are differences reported. Alice, for example, is a self-propelled learner, eager to embrace development opportunities, whatever the context. Her own account details both external and internal sources but the geographical location is irrelevant provided that in her judgement what is offered has the potential to improve her practice.

Location can be an issue and is for very different reasons for Tom and Adrian. Tom is enthusiastic about his IT course because it is held at his own school and it has allowed formal and informal tuition and advice from colleagues. The communal feeling seemed novel and enjoyable. In contrast, Adrian is dismissive of development opportunities in his own school, preferring the more prestigious MA course at a nearby college. Status here is probably a factor.

Whole school development days are critiqued by Alice because, although they may raise issues, insufficient time is given to discuss the implications of these at a more localised level – i.e. the classroom. Tom's comments suggest that the problem lies with a lack of differentiation, which means it might be useful *'for some, but not for others'*. Alan has come to the conclusion that staff involvement is crucial for success. The tenor of these remarks is not that such days are worthless but that they need to be geared to the working reality of individual teachers, a point made by Lieberman and Miller (1991).

It was interesting to note the favour in which PGCE courses were held by most interviewees. Charles, for example, describing the time as fascinating. Although for both Alice and Tom there was some theoretical deficiency in the course (a problem of differentiation?), both appreciate the impetus it gave to their careers. Tom spoke how it had initiated the transition process from the study of Science to the teaching of Science, a process to be constantly refined as practice evolves. In contrast, Howard spoke of

*'airy fairy junk'* as the contribution of his PGCE year. It is also worth pointing out that Adrian, as a licensed teacher, did not serve a training year and the brevity of what was offered to him as an alternative was probably insufficient to challenge inherited concepts of teaching and learning.

In summary, while the discussion above reflects individual's opinion and preference, it could be argued, more generally, that it is an individual's capacity to be open and receptive to learning and change in the interests of significant others which is the key factor in ensuring successful development. Beyond that is a question of personal inclination and quality of provision.

### **Link to theory**

What, then, are the conclusions to be drawn relating to the link between biography and teacher development? What do the individual profiles have to tell us and what common themes have been revealed? First, the research tells us that biography does have a major impact on time orientation, reflexivity, practice and perceptions on professional development. Time orientations, in particular, signal distinctive ways of thinking about practice and development. Those teachers who embrace the future are more inclined to work collaboratively, have a more flexible student oriented approach to planning and practice and are more likely to engage in critical reflection with colleagues and students. These very qualities predispose them to look to professional development as a means of improving teaching and learning opportunities for themselves and their students and, in their constant quest for improvement, they are more likely to attain more coherent and complex visions of their work. Those who embrace the past, are less flexible in their approach, tend to prefer teacher-centered methods and express little concern for student needs and learning styles. They are predominantly individuals and non-collaborative in nature. The allure of earlier certainties, a sense of self-reliance and a disinclination to see the future as both a challenge and opportunity for themselves and their students to explore new ways of learning, establishes a context where there is little incentive for development. In the diagrams (fig. 2 a and b), I demonstrate the different associations between biography and attitudes to development as expressed in teachers' accounts.

Fig. 2a

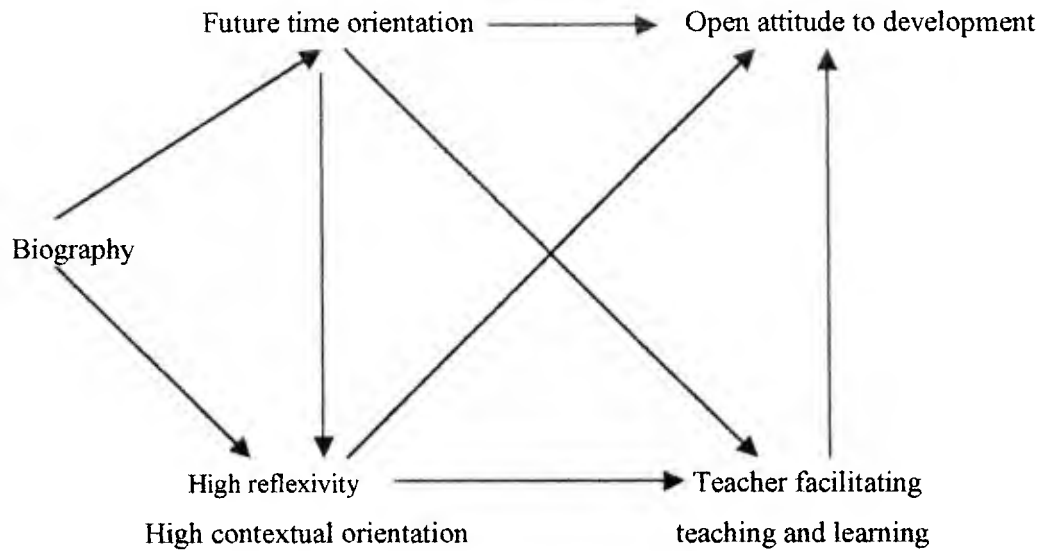
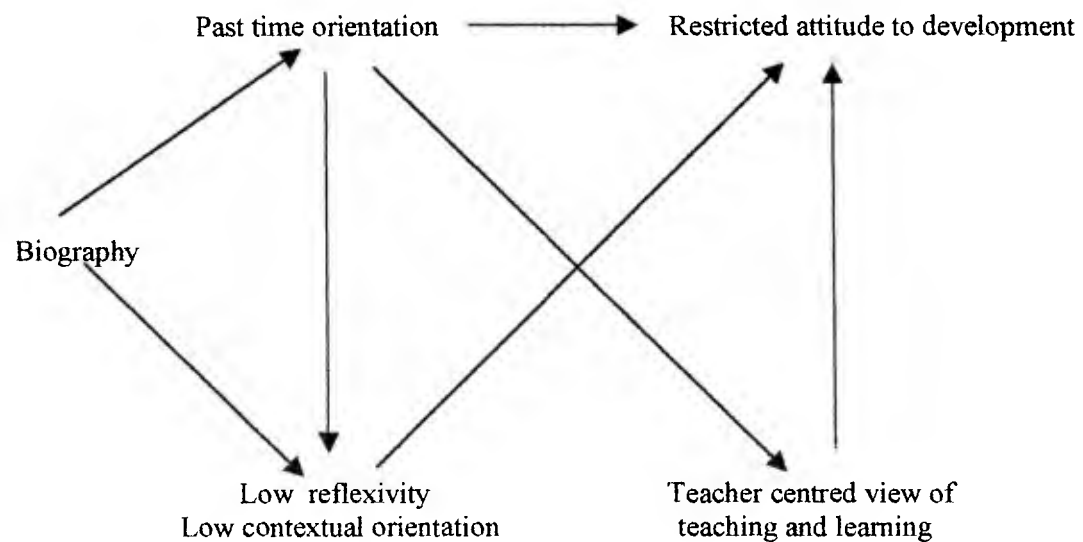


Fig. 2b



The theory that biography impacts on attitudes to development has been the theme of the first half of this research. This formed the appreciative element of the inquiry. It is now appropriate in the second half of the thesis to turn to the further developments of these findings for development initiatives, the so-called consequentialist element.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Implications for Teacher Development**

#### **i. Goals of Coherence and Complexity**

##### **Resolving an apparent Paradox**

This chapter signals movement from illumination to consequence or, to phrase it more explicitly, further investigates how the research findings to date may help in identifying appropriate strategies for teacher development. To facilitate this process, I will explore overarching goals or purposes to which all professional development might aspire. These will provide a conceptual framework within which subsequent programmes can be structured.

Initially, however, two points need to be raised regarding the suggested link between biography and development. The first actually queries the requirement for overarching goals, suggesting a contradiction in terms, while the second questions the feasibility of change in particular instances. The resolution of both points offers an opportunity to clarify the chapter's argument.

The first observation discerns a tension between biography which privileges the individual actor and a concern for common goals. Is this view well founded? The answer, I believe, is no. Programmes can be devised to accommodate both individual and shared interests as well as levels of expertise: indeed they need to be to avoid the uniform approach criticised at the outset of the thesis. In this way they will provide both the global picture and the diverse ways individuals will seek to realise it.

The second point may initially seem more difficult to resolve. The research has provided evidence that biography has impact both on teaching style and attitudes to development. In the cases of Alice, Tom and Charles, the influence has been benign yet in the other cases, the evidence may well engender some pessimism about the possibility of promoting change. It might be asked whether in these particular cases, issues are too entangled in biographical patterns to be susceptible to more usual change processes. Do they require insights from other disciplines perhaps - therapy for

example? Again, I believe the answer is no and would point to Alan's example from the research as a reason for cautious optimism. Alan's biography clearly detailed how his schooling had a destructive impact on his self-esteem and how this was later to bedevil his career as a teacher. Routes to development through embracing academic respectability led nowhere. Yet there was to be a late blossoming. It was achieved within an unremarkable but different context within his everyday working world. What it did involve was a reframing of his understanding of learning. It also bore distinctly individual features in the manner it was appropriated, a point worth observing in the light of the earlier discussion. The point here is that the apparently intractable can be resolved without recourse to technologies from other disciplines.

In summary, then, the adoption of commonly accepted goals to assist the design of development strategies does not negate individual means of achieving them. To ride roughshod over individual learning styles and plans to plot the journey to improvement makes no sense. Nor should we be too disconcerted about how biography has influenced the development of some individuals as there may well be ways of circumventing what appears to be a difficulty.

In anticipating what is to emerge later, Alan's example seems most promising as it highlights a personally rewarding version of learning in the form of a response to a changed context. A possible means of unlocking learning will be introduced towards the end of the chapter but first I turn to where the chapter began by aiming to conceptualise teacher development around some key goals.

## **Coherence and Complexity – Reviewing the Literature**

I suggest that the twin themes of coherence and complexity offer appropriate goals and purposes for teacher development. What I mean by these qualities and how I have come to formulate such a conception requires an explanation but it might first be useful to review the use of these two words as they appear in the development literature.

First, complexity. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) talks of complexity in terms of the relationship between differentiation and integration within a system. Differentiation refers to the degree to which elements differ from each other, while integration refers to the extent to which elements are connected. Csikszentmihalyi would argue that a

system that is more differentiated and integrated than another is a more complex system. In terms of learning, a more complex outcome would be a finer grained understanding of different elements and, at the same time, a greater appreciation of how these different elements are integrated into a complex whole.

A capacity to deal with complexity is included as one description of the autonomous developmental stage in Oja's adaptation of Loevinger's stages of adult development. (Loevinger, 1976) The autonomous stage represents the highest stage of development for the teacher and is characterised, amongst other qualities, by an '*ability to see multiple points of view and synthesise them.*' (Oja, 1991 p. 55) This descriptor seems to illuminate the idea of handling complexity and in its language, echoes Csikmentmihalyi's notions of differentiation and integration.

Richert's approach (Richert, 1991) is to identify the complex work of teaching and to argue for the skills' development to respond to that complexity. She refers to teachers' work as '*multi-faceted and complex*'. (p.116) She exemplifies what she means by referring to her suggested means of development practice, namely, using teacher cases for reflection and enhanced understandings. Cases provide '*rich description of practice*' (ibid. p.116), a richness measured in the way the description mirrors the diversity and connectedness of classroom life. These two terms are useful in the way that they explore how the factors that contribute to teaching actions or decisions are not isolated from one another but related, albeit in a manner which requires some reflective analysis to appreciate. Cases allow teachers to look at episodes '*carefully and systematically*'. (ibid. p.125) She continues '*Strands of the complex web involved in any teaching act – strands defining the teacher's motivation, cognition and /or action – can be teased apart as teachers consider a particular case in order to understand and respond to it*'. (ibid. p.125) By appreciating diversity and connectedness, teachers develop a more complex understanding of issues and situations.

Fullan's contribution (Fullan, 1995) is to position complexity within a modern context. In the following extract, he describes the present state of teaching. '*Traditionally, the task of teaching was comparatively stable and less complex than it is today. It was about the transmission of knowledge, skills, habits and culture. It was a 'conservative' proposition. Teaching has changed radically over the past 30 years. Not only has teaching become more complex but it is ever changing. Post modern society is a*

*dynamically complex and non-linear one in which change is ubiquitous and relentless.*' (p. 254). It is possible to cavil with some of the language used here. There is, for example, an inexactitude about what he means by complex and it is unclear whether change is part of the complexity or a separate complicating element. In addition, it is probably wrong to describe change as relentless given what we know about Developmental Systems Theory and the idea of the interplay between change and stability maintenance. Nevertheless, his description of an era of great uncertainty can be grasped and it is against this that he seeks to define the new and uncharted task facing professional development. The answer, he argues, lies in re-conceptualising professional development as continuous learning. He quotes Pascale (1990) who advocates inquiry as a heuristic device; *'The essential activity for keeping our paradigm current is persistent questioning. I will use the term inquiry.'* (p. 14). Just how important that requirement is for new and creative thinking is underlined in a quotation from Stacey (1992). *'A successful, innovative organisation must have groups of people who can perform complex learning spontaneously. Because in open-ended situations, no-one can know what the group is trying to learn, the learning process must start without a clear statement of what is to be learned or how.'* (p. 112). The argument is that when the environment is unstable and susceptible to change, it is crucial to have a learning process which can both keep pace and handle ambiguity. The learning needs to be complex so as to be aware of the increasingly diverse factors in a situation yet at the same time appreciate how these factors are integrated in a complex whole. As with Richert, complex situations call for complex understanding.

One final point can be noted. Richert spoke of how cases required colleagues, partners to converse with. Oja implied similar collaboration in her notion of multiple views and their synthesis. Stacey spoke of groups of people and Fullan saw collaboration as one of the four core capacities for being able to learn on a continuous basis. Indeed, given the emphasis Fullan gives to collaboration, it would be possible to say that he sees it functioning as a meta-value directing and shaping the development process. That all four writers allude to its importance in shaping the complex response serves notice that it is a theme to be returned to.

What of coherence? That it has some close parallels to complexity is hinted at in my use of the phrase 'twin themes' and this proximity of meaning will be confirmed shortly. It can be defined as a 'hanging together', a sense of order or harmony. It is



possible for example, to speak of a coherent argument or, indeed, a coherent notion of development. The connotations of the word are positive. To test this, it is only necessary to consider the antonyms of coherence – incoherence, fragmentation or lack of connectedness.

In thinking of coherence it is instructive to contrast it with consistency, a word with which it is sometimes linked, in the assumption they both refer to connectedness, order and unity. However, as Buchmann and Floden point out, (Buchmann and Floden, 1993) *'Despite their resemblances [however] these two concepts are not interchangeable'* (p. 222). A distinction can be seen in the derivation of both words. Consistency is derived from the Latin verb 'consistere' meaning to stand together. The root of the Latin word is *stare* and its lexical derivative *stat*. This gives rise to words in the English language like *static* and *station* where the emphasis is on standing still, the idea of an unchanging present. Unlike consistency, coherence has no temporal connection. Removed from this idea of temporal restraint, coherence can admit to changing forms or patterns of order or harmony. Elements in a situation may *cohere* for a certain time and then *reformulate* in another pattern as a situation changes. This dynamic notion of coherence seems to be dominant in Buchmann's and Floden's definition of the word. They speak of coherence as *'the rebel angel'*. It is a force for the good but is always elusive and always eluding complete control. It advances human learning by engaging us in a quest for it but remains tantalisingly out of grasp. There is a paradoxical sense of grasping the ungraspable but the fact that it is ungraspable in a final complete form, an unchangeable form does not reduce the importance of the search to attain it. There is a similarity here to Pascale's notion of persistent questioning (Pascale, 1990) especially when we consider that the word questioning is a form of quest, the meaning of which is search.

Perhaps the notion of a vital but in the end unrealisable quest can be appreciated in an example from the classroom. As teachers it would appear that we need to have formulated a 'working vision' of coherence for our own and our students' success which might represent, for instance, our clearest held perceptions of what is best in teaching and learning processes. We operate on the basis of this 'working model', recognising both its usefulness and its flaws but seeking always to update our version to take into account the 'particularities' of experience. 'Particularities' may be represented by new, unexpected phenomena which can initially engender doubt and uncertainty. To

screen out the new in order to minimise unwelcome feelings serves only to impose a false coherence on a situation. Instead, it would appear to be better to accommodate doubt and uncertainty and to use these two elements to activate a search for a more meaningful coherence. In the examples which follow - one of which has been introduced before – we can see an instance of how a desire for closure denied a coherent understanding and in another instance how a coherence of understanding was sought. In the former example we can see how complexity is denied and in the latter how the twin themes are connected.

First, Elliot (1993) reports on Tickle's findings related to beginning teachers involved in induction programmes which he himself had established. *'According to Tickle, the new teachers "reflected" to establish control over the situation they handled; to simplify the complex, to render the unpredictable predictable and to stabilise what is essentially unstable. Reflection was non systematic and orientated to getting it right by eliminating the problematics of practice and establishing routinised solutions for them.'* (Elliot, 1993 p. xi-xii) Tickle views such attempts to effect closure in terms of reflection as a desire among those teachers to establish mastery and control by de-problematising the teaching process. They are, in effect, seeking to impose unity which mistakenly, is confused with coherence. It represents a fake coherence, one consequence of which is, as he observes, a necessary reduction in complexity. In fact, these teachers, unwittingly perhaps have their sights more on consistency than coherence as evidenced in their attempts to eliminate anything that endangers uniformity.

Contrast this stance with the earlier example of Richert's teacher cases, introduced earlier as an example of complexity (Richert, 1991). In that instance teachers worked together to construct an understanding of a particular situation. Instead of seeking to master the situation they were open to a variety of perspectives and were content to hold a view which was not complete but which, as a result of collaboration, is likely to be more enriched. They did not make the mistake of importing this view into any judgement of another case, yet, in a general sense, their understanding had been enhanced. They could approach a new case with greater understanding although they knew that the particularities of the situation would demand a further refinement of their thinking. Their understanding was becoming more coherent but would never be complete. What was crucial was that in their response to each situation they were aware

of its intrinsic complexities. In this sense their awareness was more complex and it would, in turn, contribute to a more coherent understanding.

In summary, I would argue that coherence and complexity are linked and represent defining principles for development. Development can be viewed as a quest for coherence, a continuous search for an updated understanding of practice. There is a future dimension with no necessary sense of final discovery. Changing situations ensure this is not the case. Understanding each element of newness or change in a situation in terms of how it brings diversity but also becomes more integrated adds complexity to the picture. This complex understanding feeds into an ever greater coherence, a coherence always associated with a degree of ambiguity.

Finally, in thinking of how we can cultivate coherence and complexity it is interesting to consider the evidence relating to collaboration. Earlier, we spoke of it in positive terms citing writers like Oja and Fullan. That it can have a negative impact can be seen in Tickle's example but it is important that this particular instance does not obscure collaborations's role in advancing coherence and complexity, a point clearly illustrated in the research evidence.

### **Coherence and Complexity – examples from the case studies**

In looking again at the research data in search of ideas relating to coherence and complexity, there may well be disappointment in finding no explicit mention of the terms in the words of the interviewees. This may appear a surprising omission in the case of Alice, Tom and Charles but I believe it can be explained simply by the fact that these teachers don't necessarily frame their thinking about teaching, learning and development in this way. My argument would be that the notions of coherence and complexity do, in fact, succinctly describe the nature of their thinking and practice and, indeed, distinguish them from interviewees like Howard and Adrian who have not yet thought and acted in this way.

One clear, distinguishing feature is an approach to collaboration and a second is a focus on student learning. By contrasting Alice with Howard and Adrian, I will explore how collaboration or its absence can either promote or hinder a quest for coherence and complexity and will also examine how respective approaches to student learning can

either facilitate or impede students themselves becoming coherent/complex learners. I will argue that a measure of a teacher's development, expressed in his/her grasp of coherent and complex thinking, is the extent to which he/ she can work to advance these qualities within his/her students. This is, I believe, a particular contribution of this research.

Collaboration is at the heart of Alice's practice. It is seen in her satisfaction, in working with colleagues on an assessment policy, in mentoring and in departmental reviewing and planning. It is also seen in her learning conversations with students. Partly, it is posited on a simple belief that collaboration is essential for personal learning, an endorsement of Fullan's statement, '*There is a ceiling effect of how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves*'. (Fullan, 1995 p.257) It is also a reflection of her open mindedness, her belief that others can contribute new thoughts and approaches which she can critically reflect on and integrate into her thinking. This process of extending, refining and re-assessing is not a question of simply adding to the teacher's bank of knowledge but responding in a vital and dynamic way to the changing demands of a learning situation. This is not to say that Alice is always in 'change' mode. Such a perception would be to misunderstand the nature of development as outlined in Ford and Lerner's Developmental Systems Theory (Ford and Lerner, 1992) which emphasises the dialectical relationship between stability and change. What it does mean is that Alice has the capacity to accommodate change where appropriate and thus remain alive and adaptive to new situations. What she is doing here is adding complexity and a greater coherence to her thinking.

What the account above however, does not sufficiently emphasise is why Alice chooses to embrace development opportunities so enthusiastically. To argue that it is simply for 'personal learning' is to miss the point. She, like some of the others in the research, is indeed passionately committed to enhance her skills but it is with the specific purpose of also expanding her students' skills. In her interview, she cited the case of the A-level Statistics course on which she enrolled. The course presented itself as employing active learning methods in preparation for such an approach in the classroom. Alice recognised the importance of being an active learner herself if she were to pursue that approach with students. In approaching their needs, she sought to extend and refine her practice in a way which would allow for mutual development. She sensed a connectedness between teacher and student learning.

The dynamic dimension to coherence emphasised earlier is clear to see in Alice. New situations demand new learning responses. There is a sense of a continuous search, not for perfection, which suggests completeness but for a more fully nuanced understanding. Her approach to development, however, as exemplified in the statistics example, suggests a quest for coherence which has a dual dimension. She has mapped a journey both for herself and her students towards greater levels of understanding and development. They are joint partners in the learning process. Eschewing the virtuoso performance of the teacher who seeks to deliver knowledge, she tries to ensure that her students construct their own understanding, or in other words, develop their own coherent grasp of a topic. My argument is that Alice's vision of coherence incorporates an awareness of how students frame their understanding. It is an expanded model of coherence and a more complex one.

In summary a teacher like Alice is future oriented, collaborative in style, committed to a search for coherence and complexity in her practice, and sees her own learning as connected to that of her students. She is committed to her students' success but does not construe it as her own success. This is because she sees herself as a facilitator of learning providing the means whereby students initiate their own learning as opposed to being provided with the knowledge. She is interested in creating complex learners. This last point is important as I will illustrate below with examples of teachers who, because of different conceptions of teaching and learning, trap themselves and their students in a mutually dependent relationship, thus denying any possibility for both parties to grow as future oriented, complex learners.

Adrian and Howard, like Alice, wanted nothing more than for their students to succeed; indeed they set enormous store by it. The problem lay in the definition of success. Both teachers envisaged the path to success in their own terms. Their own biographical examples set the learning agenda and, in their own ways, they embarked on a deliberate course of teaching their own examples or perhaps, more precisely, tried to ensure their students avoided the pitfalls to which they had succumbed. Thus Adrian, considering himself as a failure in academic terms at secondary school, came to have an excessively high regard for examination success, believing it alone to be crucial to his students' lives. Similarly, Howard, reviewing what at times appeared to be a wayward and disordered life, attributable, he felt, to a lack of success at school, was determined that his students should not make the same mistakes. In Howard's case, this led to hortatory

addresses on the importance of motivation, hard work and attention to the teacher's word and example. For Adrian it meant a resort to the most traditional pedagogic techniques to ensure the 'correct' information was 'delivered'. For both teachers, no attention was given to the expression of student learning needs or their modes of learning. Students' needs were redefined in their teachers' terms.

What evolved, in both cases, was the casting of the teacher as expert. Students put aside whatever knowledge they had acquired of how to shape their own learning and, instead, deferred to the superior knowledge of their instructor who promised them examination success if they followed his line. Such a relationship engenders mutual dependency: neither party is offered the possibility of growth. Students may or may not vault the immediate hurdle of examination success but they will be less well equipped to meet the learning demands of the future. For the teacher the danger lies in too close an identification with the students' success and an excessive regard for the potency of teaching methods whose appropriacy for a changing world seems increasingly dubious. For the teacher, as for the student, the affirmative mutuality of the relationship cocoons him/her in a static world and diminishes the need for any exploration or extension of practice.

Teachers like Howard and Adrian tend to define success and the means to it in very narrow terms. Their choice of pedagogy offers little potential for collaboration in the classroom. Indeed, because their focus is narrow and their sense of self-efficacy apparently so strong, they feel little need to collaborate with fellow professionals. This isolation has its drawbacks: it denies those teachers access to a diversity of practices which may be subsequently integrated into a more informed practice. The language of this last sentence has direct links to the language used to describe complexity. It is no surprise, then, that these teachers do not develop into complex learners. Nor are they engaged in a quest for coherence in the sense identified above where teachers look constantly to update their understanding of changing situations in order to meet their students' changing needs. By an unhappy extension, coherence and complexity of thinking will also be off limits for their students.

In contrasting these teachers, it would then be fair to say that their maps of coherence and complexity are different and that one significant difference lies in their inclusion or exclusion of the student learning perspective. When Fullan (1995) wrote of the

importance of being able to learn on a continuous basis, he had teachers' professional development in mind but he could equally have been speaking about students. Students are required to become complex learners as surely as teachers, in an environment of constant, rapid change and need to be equipped to meet that challenge. It falls to teachers to be crucial players in preparing students for that task and it is vital that this dimension is recognised and written into their accounts of learning.

In conclusion, when we talk of teachers acquiring coherence and complexity, there will be subsumed within that idea the notion that teachers understand how they can help their students acquire the very same qualities.

### **Dialogue as a means towards coherence and complexity**

Of the features, then, that distinguish the teachers discussed above, two can be readily discerned. First, there is a different conception of students' needs and learning modes. Second, there is the radically different attitude to collaboration, whether that be in exploring approaches to learning with individuals or groups of students or in conversations with professional colleagues, the outcomes of which are likely to feed into the design of learning programmes for students. If, as I have argued, collaboration is the key to promoting coherence and complexity not only for teachers but also for the development of student learning, then it is the art of collaboration that needs to be cultivated.

At the core of collaboration is the capacity to share and construct understanding. Its medium is talk, although of course, this is not to say that any variety of talk will lead to greater illumination. Dixon (1998) identifies and promotes '*development talk*' (p.1), as a means of enhancement adding that such talk is often referred to as dialogue. Indeed, her text, '*Dialogue at Work*' is subtitled '*Making talk developmental for people and organisations*'. At this stage of the text what constitutes dialogue is not yet made explicit but the context in which she envisages it occurring, provides familiar reading. For example, Dixon writes '*As diversity becomes the rule and change the only constant, complexity is increasing. The only effective response to this complexity is development*' (ibid p.1). Later she talks of the importance of '*open, differentiated and integrated perspectives*' where '*Open... means a willingness to entertain alternative perspectives*' where '*Differentiated means the individual is able to draw fine distinctions between*

*concepts' and where 'Integrated means that the individual is able to weave these differences into an increasingly complex whole, a system view rather than an ethnocentric or fragmented view'. This is the language of Csikzentmihalyi (1993). She continues in a way which points up the different development stances of our contrasting teachers. 'As an individual becomes more developed, he or she is able to deal with increasing complexity or, perhaps more accurately, is able to construct increasingly more complex perspectives on the world. The opposite of continued adult development is rigid and highly defended thought pattern – patterns that leave a person less able to adapt to changing conditions and less able to change' (Dixon, 1998 p. 9).*

Development, then, is crucial and dialogue, according to Dixon, is an effective means of achieving it. What dialogue is and how it might look will be the focus of the next chapter.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Implications for Teacher Development**

#### **ii. The Process of Dialogue**

##### **Dialogue as a tool for development**

In the last chapter, I argued that professional development might be best described as a way of gaining a more coherent and complex understanding of teaching-learning processes, particularly in the context of a rapidly changing world. This raises the question of how such an enhancement is to be achieved and leads, in turn, to the focus of this chapter which examines how dialogue might prove to be a vehicle to promote coherence and complexity.

Reference has already been made to the work of Dixon (1998) and, in particular, her highlighting of the term '*development talk*' or dialogue. Dixon makes explicit links between development and a requirement for complexity and sees the practice of dialogue as a means of attaining it. In her text, she reviews the work of five theorists, one of whom, Bohm, I have selected for further analysis. Two factors prompt the choice. First, a matter of shared emphasis. Bohm (1985, 1994) focuses on the need to build coherence of meaning and this dovetails nicely with my own judgement that a quest for coherence is at the core of teacher development. His endorsement of the need to refine and extend individual thinking through collective processes is echoed in the approaches of interviewees like Alice, Charles and Tom. Second, I was struck by how Senge (1993) turned to Bohm's thinking on dialogue to advance his own theories on collective visions of learning and how they might inform the practice of learning organisations, a theme taken up in the final chapter of the thesis. Taken together, these two points provide a substantial reason for investigating Bohm's thinking, provided that we remember that Bohm's point of departure and purpose for dialogue would be different from that of a practising teacher.

##### **Considering and evaluating the dialogic theories of Bohm**

A consideration is now offered of Bohm's work on dialogue with reflections on its

appropriateness for use in teacher development. Four components are considered. First, his general worldview and what prompted him to embrace dialogue; second, his central argument about the incoherence of thought and how dialogue is a vehicle to override it; third, his views on the necessary conditions for practising and, finally, his thoughts on the form dialogue will take. The attendant question will be the extent to which the Bohmian model can provide a working guide for teachers in their quest for coherence and complexity or, if deemed either wholly or partly inappropriate, what can be offered in its place or added to it which may extend our understanding of what is required for a model appropriate for teacher development.

Bohm's views on dialogue have their origin in his work as a physicist and, in particular, in his study of quantum theory. The quantum perspective is that the nature of the world is relational and contrasts with the more mechanistic view of Newtonian physics. Ellinor and Gerard (1998), writing of quantum theory, point up the distinction, '*Rather than being made up solely of parts, it (the world) is based on the interconnection of parts*' (p. 17). Reality, they continue, is '*One seamless whole and cannot be reduced*' (ibid. p.17). Bohm, (1985) was to describe the world as an '*unbroken, flowing whole*', and he was to apply this observation, gleaned from physics, to comment how in terms of viewing the world, a holistic rather than fragmentary perspective was vital.

Bohm's fundamental objection to a fragmentary view of the world was that '*it disposed people to think of the divisions between things as absolute and final rather than having a limited utility and validity*' (Dixon, 1998 p.29). Disconnected from a wider perspective, this worldview had the disadvantage of being unaware of alternative positions. Words like 'absolute' and 'final' described the closure of the thought process, rendering it impermeable to new ideas. For Bohm, the social and political upheavals of the late 20th century, evidenced particularly in the proliferation of nation states and the growth of nationalism, provided disturbing examples of how a new isolationist, narrowly defined and globally disconnected political perspective was gaining in credibility. Communities and whole nations were retreating behind self-imposed barriers, constructed out of rigid, inflexible thought processes, expressed in political ideologies centred on ideas of exclusivity, frequently based on race or creed. In short, the fragmentary rather than the holistic perspective was in the ascendancy and Bohm foresaw increasing dangers which would emanate from such a tendency.

Bohm's response to fragmentation of this order was to search for a mode of discourse which aimed to develop shared meaning. Dialogue was his choice. For Bohm, dialogue, with its roots in the Greek words 'dia' suggesting through and 'logos' indicating word or meaning, had the idea of '*meaning passing or moving through – a free flow of meaning between people in a sense of a stream that flows between two banks*' (Senge, 1993 p.240). By contrast, discussion, Bohm argued, shared the same root as the words 'percussion' or 'concussion', indicating the notion of striking with an emphasis on winning and an adversarial climate which was not conducive to a quest for coherence. Indeed, the Latin word 'discutere', from which the word discussion is derived, literally means to break things apart and thus, by extension, to analyse. Dixon succinctly points up the difference, '*Discussion leads to separate points of view. Dialogue leads to shared meaning*' (1988, p. 30). She adds that for Bohm, dialogue is a '*way to apprehend the meaning of others and to thereby experience the wholeness of the world rather than the fragments into which understanding is broken*' (ibid. p. 30). Here again is the perspective emanating from the quantum view of the world rather than the Newtonian.

It is important at this stage to pause and make some preliminary observations on what Bohm's views have to offer us in thinking about a dialogue model for teacher development. The global perspective which fashioned his conception does seem remote from the teacher's experience and is likely to give rise to a form of dialogue which is very different in scope, yet there seems much common ground in what he has to say about attitudes which inform fragmentary and holistic perspectives. The data from my research give ample evidence of these contrasting approaches. The former can be glimpsed in practices which appear unconnected to wider learning objectives or perhaps to the student's world while the latter succeeds in making those same connections. A narrow, limited outlook characterises the former while the latter favours a more expansive, exploratory approach. Above all, there is a distinction in the attainment of coherence. Dialogue's role in facilitating coherence is an objective which Bohm and this research share.

One difference, however, is worth identifying. Dixon makes much of Bohm's notion of dialogue as a means of developing shared meaning. For Bohm, this is an understandable objective and springs from a desire to create social cohesiveness where there was divisiveness. Yet for us, dialogue has the potential to go further. I would

prefer to talk about expanding meaning or creating more complex meaning. An attractive feature of dialogue is that it never closes the door to new possibilities. Additions to meanings can always occur. In this light, *'shared'* seems too restrictive a notion.

## **The incoherence of thought**

A central tenet of Bohm's perspective on dialogue is his notion of the incoherence of thought. It must be stressed from the outset that, for Bohm, incoherence is not a feature of some thought - for example, an individual's thought – but a general deficiency pervading the whole concept. This is, in itself, an arresting view, given that thought has long been considered as the distinctive feature of humankind and Bohm himself acknowledges that his view will seem strange to somebody who hears it for the first time. What, then, has gone wrong? For Bohm, thought is a system, a set of connecting things or parts which are necessarily mutually independent for their meaning and existence. Such a system is *'constantly engaged in a process of development, change, evolution and structure changes, although there are certain features of the system which become relatively fixed. We call this the structure'* (ibid. p. 19). All is well until the structure breaks up as it is no longer fulfilling its function effectively. There is a fault in the system (a 'systemic fault'). Applying this notion to thought, it can be said that a fault in the thinking process has led to an incoherence. Ideas which were once intelligible (they 'cohered') are now unintelligible (they no longer cohere or they fragment). There may well be better alternatives. Ellinor and Gerard (1998) offer an example from the world of business. Talking of the way work is traditionally structured around operational areas such as finance, marketing and production, they remind us how *'Once we make these arbitrary divisions, they seem permanent domains of activity, separate from one another and often with very different cultures'* (p.38). They add, *'We forget that we were the ones who created the separations, and that it may be time to reconsider the current structure'* (ibid. p.38). This view encourages us to re-examine what has led us to current conceptions of practice, otherwise we are likely to be presiding over what is no longer useful or relevant. Bohm argues that sometimes the consequences of unexamined thought can be very dangerous. Those, for example, who in politically unstable parts of the world, hold to dogmatic positions and act upon them unquestioningly, may well unleash destructive forces. In an example closer to our concerns, the teacher, whose thoughts on teaching-learning processes seemed

intelligible and coherent at one time of his/her career may discover – or more alarmingly, may not discover – that these same views become increasingly inappropriate or unintelligible over the course of time. The problem here does not only reside with the teacher but also those students he or she may come into contact with as they may well suffer from the teacher's unexamined stance. Both the cases above convincingly make Bohm's point. The positions we hold and the situations we find ourselves in are all products of our thought system and unless they are opened up to reflection and scrutiny, they will soon be rendered incoherent.

To make this point, Bohm asks us to distinguish between 'thinking' and thought. Grammatically, thought is the past participle referring to a completed action while thinking is a present participle, reflecting a continuous action. Thought, he argues, has the potential, if unexamined, to intrude on the present, corrupting the fresh and direct perceptions gained from thinking. Thus, there is always a constant requirement for alertness to avoid thinking becoming thought.

What has been said, thus far, that has relevance for our interviewees? Taking Alice as an example we can see that her future oriented approach, characterised by open-mindedness and a willingness to explore alternatives does the very things which Bohm would consider important to overcome the rigidity of thought. She exemplifies the difference between 'thinking' and 'thought'. What characterises Alice is her desire to stay ahead, to meet the challenge of the new and to continually shape her understanding in the context of additional information. Her definition of development was defined earlier as a quest for coherence and it would be correct to say that this pursuit is facilitated by her acknowledgement of the need to review her thoughts critically and then move on to appropriate new insights through further critical thinking.

If, however, Alice exemplifies the difference between thinking and thought in a positive manner, the reverse could be said to be true for interviewees like Howard and Adrian. With previously quoted examples of Howard using his own past experience to instruct the children of the present and Adrian employing the most traditional of teaching techniques to ensure that his students did not fail their examinations in the way he did, we have evidence of how thought filtered through past and personally meaningful experiences can impose unhelpfully on the present. Such unexamined thought does not equip Howard and Adrian to see the inappropriateness of their actions and, indeed, their

potentially harmful consequences. In Howard's case, for example, it is unlikely that the challenges to be faced by his students today will match those of his own day and thus, his advice may be counterproductive. Equally, Adrian's students may not develop into the complex learners they will need to be to meet the demands of the future nourished only by teacher centred methods of learning. Senge writes of how *'Thought stops tracking reality and just goes, like a programme'* (Senge, 1993 p.241). The word 'programme' here has a sense of automation, uninformed by thinking and unable to readjust to change. There is a danger that time moves on but thought stands still, trapped in the past, unable to meet the requirements of the present or future. Adrian and Howard, in other words, seem trapped by the incoherence of thought.

The question is why should that be and what should be done about it? Bohm's answer to the first part of the question lies in the fact that thought, once formulated and left unchecked, seems to have an almost independent existence with a creative force all of its own. The tacit assumption is that thought is *'just telling you the way things are and it is not doing anything'* (Bohm, 1994 p.5). Bohm however rejects this notion that our thinking processes neutrally report on what is *'out there'* in an objective world. Such a belief in objectivity encourages the illusion of control. We, in other words are *'running thought'*. In reality, Bohm claims, thought is the one which controls each of us. Unless we realize that thought has this agential character, we will continue to allow our vision and our actions to be controlled by it. Worse still, *'thought establishes its own standard of reference for fixing problems, problems which it contributed to creating in the first place'* (Senge, 1993 p.241). The net result is not solutions but a compounding of the problems. An example from my own institution helps to make this point. The school's senior management decided that to improve the schools A to C examination success at GCSE, they would carry out a number of interviews with students emphasising the importance of diligent study and preparation. The interviews in fact made no explicit impact on examination results. The response, perversely, was a redoubling of efforts, a decision to interview more students without any questioning of why no success had been achieved by the first measure. There was no logic to the decision yet the 'thought', now established in the vocabulary of 'successful strategies' remained unchecked and contributed nothing to the solution of the problems.

The examples above and the instances of Howard and Adrian make the point of how fixed attitudes, which do not engage with the situations they encounter, are unlikely to

secure propitious outcomes. Faulty thought only brings incoherence in its wake. The question is how to respond to it. Perhaps there is a clue in Alice's, Tom's and Charles' choice of collaboration as a working method. They all embrace thinking in Bohm's sense of refusing to leave current assumptions unquestioned and look for fresh perspectives on issues. In addition, they recognise that they cannot simply improve thought individually and that there is a rewarding, collaborative dimension to be pursued. By working together in groups, they can create more coherent meaning than could be created by an individual alone. It does depend on the discourse employed. Discussion, as argued earlier, would only succeed in separating points of view; dialogue, on the other hand, would seek to develop meaning, a meaning located in the flow of ideas between people. Insights are gained as the group freely explore ideas which would simply not be available to the individual. *'A new kind of mind begins to come into being which is based on the development of common meaning which is capable of constant development and change'* (ibid. p. 241). The incoherence of thought or the faulty assumptions on which it is based are uncovered in the practice of dialogue. Dialogue is a way of assisting people to see the agential character of thought and *'to become more sensitive to and make it safe to acknowledge the incoherence in our thought'* (ibid. p. 242). Finally, according to Bohm, dialogue allows people to become observers and monitors of their own thought and they begin to separate themselves from their thought. This leads them *'to take a more creative, less reactive stance toward their thought'* (ibid. p. 242). Here we seem to be in the territory of meta-thinking, as individuals become aware of their thinking processes and exercise control. Meta processes are connected with higher order processes of understanding and have been highlighted as an important element in the definition of effective learning (Watkins et al. 1996). Earlier, I have identified interviewees like Alice, Charles and Tom as effective learners capable of dealing with complexity and engaged in a quest for coherence. Their collaborative preference was noted. It would be appropriate to say that dialogue is one practice which allows them to search for coherence in their thinking and in the process, develop higher order learning skills. Their open mindedness, flexibility of thinking and quest for improvement equips them well for the dialogic process.

## **Conditions for Dialogue**

Bohm identifies three conditions that are required for dialogue to take place. First, he

calls for the suspension of assumptions. The literal meaning of 'suspend' is being evoked here, the idea of 'holding out in front of you' those previously unexamined thoughts. Assumptions are not abandoned or dismissed but are made available for questioning. As people question each other there is scope in reflection and reappraisal. As argued earlier, fresh thinking replaces tired thought. Bohm indicates that suspending assumptions, while essential, will be a difficult process because *'the mind wants to keep moving away from suspending assumptions....to adopting non-negotiable and rigid opinions which we then feel compelled to defend'* (Senge, 1993 p. 244). This may seem too comprehensive a comment. For Alice, Tom and Charles there was nothing to suggest that accommodating change through examining thought was an inherently difficult process. Similarly Alan, although like Howard and Adrian, trapped by past thoughts, was able to experience a freshness of thinking in a dialogic context without any sense of discomfort. Assumptions were dismantled but in a way which seemed refreshingly liberating. To suggest a marked divergence from Bohm's thinking, however, would be inappropriate. What is important to remember was that Bohm's analysis of the dangers of unexamined thought was pitched at a societal if not global level. His purpose was to identify such thoughts as a vehicle for intransigence and political disharmony. Individual variations would not concern him. In small scale research such as mine such variations will be noticeable

The second condition is that all participants must regard one another as equals. For Bohm, hierarchy was hostile to the spirit of dialogue which requires people to *'see each other as colleagues in mutual quest for deeper insight and clarity'* (ibid. p. 245). Status and consequent notions of power, he argued, have no place in a discourse of a more democratic hue. This enjoinder about equality would seem appropriate when the task is to develop ongoing meaning and when expressions of power might have the mark of absoluteness and finality. A key question is raised. Are relations in school sufficiently non-hierarchical to allow dialogue to happen? Or, more to the point, is it possible that in appropriate situations people will choose not to use their power reflected in their status, recognising that such action does not contribute to the common good.

Third, Bohm argues for the presence of a facilitator whose task is to monitor our progress lest *'our habits of thought continually pull us towards discussion and away from dialogue'* (ibid. p.246). Such a drift, he claims, will be a constant feature of our early attempts as we try to wean ourselves from the attraction of thought which insists



that *'this is the way it is'*. We can question this assumption and query whether a facilitator is indeed vital. Here, however, we should avoid being too literal in our thinking. We may dismiss the idea of a facilitator but we can welcome the idea of strategies and processes which will facilitate dialogue.

Finally, there is perhaps an initial condition for dialogue which Bohm does not mention. Participants need to have a shared sense of future, a feeling that dialogue is worth embarking upon as it is working towards an enhanced position. Axelrod (1990) for example, argues that an important condition for people co-operating is that each party can see the future implications of their actions on each other. He talks of how in this way the *'shadow of the future'* falls back on current behaviour and thus guides their aspirations. Visualising the future appears to be a necessary pre-cursor to dialogic success.

## **Forms of Dialogue**

Bohm contends that forty members constitute an ideal number for a dialogue group. This, however, reflects his requirement to assemble a group which would reflect all shades of societal opinion and is a reminder that his purpose was to employ dialogue as a means of constructing social harmony from diversity, and was rooted in his anxieties about a fragmented world. Bohm also advocated agenda-less dialogue which stemmed from his view that to identify topics for inclusion beforehand necessarily shaped the quality of the dialogue as it permitted incoherent thought – unexamined thought - to prejudice the potential of fresh thinking. Instead, participants moved towards their own choice of topics as the spirit of dialogue indicated. It is clear to see the logic of this position, anchored as it is in the principle of incoherence of thought and designed to respond to a particular situation where it was vital to explore new possibilities, unencumbered by thoughts of the past. Nevertheless, it is not certain that Bohm's enjoinders about number and content should constrain us. It may be possible to envisage a multiplicity of forms which dialogue might take, the form moulded to the purpose it serves. Our purposes are likely to be more defined, our forms more individually nuanced.

In conclusion, what does Bohm offer? His thoughts on the dangers of fragmentation are

well observed. We can readily accept his statements on the perils of unexamined thought and a consequent need to examine assumptions. He also correctly emphasises the importance of equality to allow individuals to work freely to construct new understandings. There is no fundamental disagreement about the difficulties which can attend dialogue but his model of incoherent thought, because of its comprehensiveness, did not discuss individual variations. We can also regard agenda-less dialogues and prescriptions of ideal numbers to ensure diversity as inappropriate requirements for teacher development needs.

Most obviously, however, there is an important lack of attention to the process of dialogue. For example, while it is thought to be essential that assumptions are examined, there is no clear guidance from Bohm how this might happen. A detailed idea of how dialogue might work is missing. To remedy this, I now offer three examples from my workplace, which I believe can be characterised as dialogic. In each case, the scenario will be described and then the following questions asked: What can be deduced and in what way has our understanding of dialogue been enhanced? Taken together, the scenarios, I believe, help to construct a new understanding of what is appropriate for a model of dialogue for teacher development.

### **Working examples of dialogue in teacher practice: evidence from a selective range of scenarios**

In this section I move back to empirically based evidence to test out ideas of how dialogue for teachers might work. The scenarios are characterised by their diversity yet, intriguingly, one forum is not represented, namely the whole school development day, the object of criticism at the beginning of the thesis.

#### **Scenario 1**

This situation is a school INSET day where English teachers met to discuss the current state of A-level teaching. I was part of this group participating in discussions but also making field notes as part of this research.

The meeting took place amidst feelings of gloom and despondency as teachers grappled with the problem of stimulating students who were uninspired by the diet on offer.

Lack of inspiration seemed to affect the staff too; there was much negativity and no discernible enthusiasm to remedy the situation. Indeed, talking about the problems seemed only to intensify them. Some staff turned inward, believing themselves to be incompetent while others externalised the blame. Tackling the problems, the purpose of the meeting, was leading nowhere; something else was required. That something was stumbled upon as a result of a chance remark. Jenny, the Head of Faculty asked Trevor, a colleague if he recalled an occasion when the latter had held spellbound an audience of staff and students at a conference for English A-level students. Jenny explained to the others how Trevor, in trying to explain the themes of control and domestication in Shakespeare's 'Taming of the Shrew' had drawn a parallel from Barry Hines' novel 'A Kestrel for a Knave' where the young hero tames a wild bird to serve as his own pet. It had proved to be a brilliant, illuminating metaphor which had not only made interpretation of Shakespeare richer but had had lasting impact on the memories of those who were there.

Those hearing the story for the first time were intrigued and sought to know more, questioning the circumstances, the rationale and method. The talk suddenly became constructive and a new mood of optimism was released as colleagues were now happy to contribute their own stories (and their students' stories) of success. A flavour of the renewed enthusiasm is captured in these comments from the field notes, *'Yes, that reminds me of the time we were doing Othello and we put the hero on trial. I remember how interest levels shot up. They began to understand the themes of the play for the first time'* and in a response to this statement *'The same happened when we did some hot seating and I asked individuals to play the parts of Hamlet and Claudius. They brought new understanding to the characters – and they enjoyed doing it'* (Jackie).

Teachers then broke into pairs and small groups and began the planning of a range of new learning programmes. Dialogue was evident in the way teachers freely explored possibilities, allowing their thoughts to be questioned and working to fashion new understandings. They were of the opinion that their talk had attained new levels of understanding. A comment from the field notes endorses this, *'For the first time I saw what working together could do. I do believe we had a better understanding of what we were trying to do'* (John).

## What can we deduce?

First, there is an important distinction to be made between forms of talk. The initial talk focusing on problem solving was counterproductive, exacerbating the situation. What was productive was the drawing out of a story, and more to the point, a story celebrating success. It is at this point that something interesting happens. People connect to these successful episodes and identify similar experiences in their work. This process of identification validates their sense of worth and gives them confidence to share these experiences and also to question other individuals' stories in a spirit of discovery. They now want to construct and develop new meaning and, in doing this, they forge closer relational links with colleagues. Dialogue (and enhanced development) is the product. The scenario also suggests that dialogue can take place in small groups and that these groups can already be in operation rather than being specially convened as Bohm imagined. What is important is that the group should have shared experiences to draw on and that they can visualise the prospect of developing practice. Dialogue, on this occasion needed some scaffolding for it to occur and the stories were to provide this. The stories offered a specific form of facilitation particularly in the way they illustrated how the best practice of the past can be a trigger for future development.

## Scenario 2

The situation described here is a successful mentoring arrangement. My comments are based on an interview I conducted with the two parties and on field notes I gathered.

Michelle and Martin see themselves as learning partners in the institution where I work. Officially, Martin is the mentor and Michelle the mentee. Michelle talks with pleasure about how she and Martin work collaboratively, developing resources and planning assignments. *'The good thing about working with Martin is that I can make use of his vast experience. I can test out ideas with him. He's obviously much more experienced than me but I have the feeling that he will listen to what I have to say.'* Martin, in turn, speaks of how Michelle brings fresh ideas and new perspectives. *'For me it is the enthusiasm she brings which is important. The new ideas are stimulating. I think I offer some sort of stability.'* Both parties enthusiastically present their views in the expectation that their partner will, by sympathetic enquiry, seek to tease out a meaning which is greater than any meaning either could have constructed individually. Michelle

offers the following, *'I think what we come up with is good. It is the best parts of both our thinking'*. Martin concurs, *'Together, we create a better product'*.

## What can we deduce?

Mentoring, in the form presented here represents an interesting example of dialogue because it offers an illuminating perspective on equality, a classical feature of the practice according to Bohm. In effect, Martin and Michelle's relationship could be described as equal but asymmetrical. Asymmetry here takes into account differences of experience and status while the notion of equality centres on the key aspect of the relationship, the learning element. Both mentor and mentee see themselves as learners, reflective practitioners, keen to use their professional relationship as a means of promoting their development. As in the first scenario, Bohm's direction about the need for large groups is proved redundant. What is important is the quality of the relationship in engendering a mutually appreciative regard which allows the twin processes of advocacy and inquiry to occur and which promotes the development of ideas likely to be characterised by greater coherence and complexity.

Already, we can see that with the pair format here and the small group format in scenario 1 that our image of the form of dialogue need not be as limited as Bohm's. The scenario also makes operational the concept of equality achievable even in hierarchically organised institutions like school. Finally, in linking scenarios one and two, expressions like 'quality of relationships' and 'appreciative regard' seem to be emerging as telling factors.

## Scenario 3

The third example is fascinating in that it describes a dialogic encounter featuring teacher and students. My comments are based on an interview I conducted and field notes I gathered.

Peter, prior to teaching an A-level English lesson, was anxious about how he was going to approach a text. The topic was a short story from 'The Dubliners' by James Joyce. *'I was genuinely unsure about how to interpret the story and was reluctant to impose my own understanding upon it. I decided to open it up to class discussion, allowing the*

*group to offer their own reflections.'* Peter records how the lesson assumed a more charged focus than usual as individuals probed each other's views and sought, in co-operative manner, to build a more complex understanding of the story. *'What was interesting was the way the group worked together to get a better understanding. The enthusiasm was there – more than before. It wasn't a case of people just saying their own views but really listening, trying to accommodate other people's thoughts. They certainly learnt more as a result.'* He adds, *'I must say I think I understood the story better – I was with them - a part of them, learning with them'*. Afterwards, he took the opportunity to review with his students the whole learning episode. *'I was fascinated by how good they were in commenting on their preferences for particular learning styles. They were keen to tell me how in their opinion the group could work together in a more effective way.'*

In short, Peter gives the impression that this was a highly successful learning encounter which had a revelatory character.

## What can we deduce?

The blurring of teacher and student roles seems significant here and yet again illustrates how equality is possible in a traditionally hierarchical relationship (teacher-student) when both partners see themselves as learners. It is clear Peter's decision to relinquish the role of expert was pivotal as it indicated an affirmation or appreciation of the students' own skill to contribute to the lesson. That they responded so positively suggests that they, too, were appreciative of an opportunity to present themselves in a more authoritative yet supportive manner. The new relational appreciation engendered seems to have been a catalyst for greater exploration of ideas and, as a result, enhanced understanding.

One interesting comment from Peter is his observation of the charged focus of the classroom. Here he is talking of a level of interest and participation which exceeded the norm. There is talk, too, of the students' 'subordinating themselves' to the interests of the group. There are echoes here of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) who talks of how in 'flow' experiences, there is a loss of self, yet, afterwards, reports of greater levels of self efficacy. Unfortunately, in this example, we do not have the words of the students themselves but judging from Peter's comments there does appear to be enhanced

understanding. What we do have is a great deal of mutuality within the group. It is possible here to talk of a relational flow, where the group is united and focused around the appreciative regard for each other's contributions. The flow is the medium through which more agile thinking occurs and thus more coherent and complex understandings. Finally, we note that dialogue between teacher and students can be a vehicle for development especially if 'learning about learning' is addressed. In actual fact Peter talks of two dialogues. In the first, both parties developed their knowledge of James Joyce while in the second, and perhaps in the long run, more importantly, both developed their understanding of learning processes.

What, then, do these scenarios tell us? Have they helped in illuminating the process of dialogue? Some conclusions can be drawn. First it seems that dialogue can be envisaged as occurring in a number of forms and that prescriptions about group size are unnecessary. What is important is the process, the way individuals work together to access greater coherence of meaning. The dismantling of assumptions is as ever crucial but rather than emphasise the inherent difficulty of this process, it is possible to see how with a change of emphasis – from problem solving to appreciative regard of existing success – a way can be found which makes the process less problematic. Bohm talks of the need for a facilitator to smooth the transition from discussion, characterised by entrenched thought processes, to dialogue with its more creative approach. The diction appears unnecessarily pessimistic suggesting an inherent difficulty, an idea reinforced by the notion of the outside expert required to show the way. However, there is a sense in which there is facilitation although this time in the form of stories. The difference here is that stories begin with individual teachers and because they celebrate success are demonstrations of existing value. The stories themselves will be underpinned by assumptions which need examination but there is something in the way that the telling of stories allows individuals to connect with one another that permits these assumptions to be explored and more coherent thought to be developed.

What does clearly emerge from these scenarios is the importance of relational appreciation developed within the various formats and which has its origin in a celebration of worth. In each case it is the catalyst for fostering dialogue. This finding represents a valuable addition to our thinking on dialogue and is an element underplayed by Bohm. As the account progresses and we seek to construct a model for dialogue appropriate for teacher development, it is an element to which we shall return.

## Chapter 8

### Pathways to Dialogue

#### **Matching individuals to pathways**

In Chapter 6 I argued that, in highlighting coherence and complexity as twin objectives of teacher development, it was important not to forget that individuals needed to tread their own path towards these desired goals. In promoting dialogue as a means of advancing the quest, this caveat clearly holds. The dialogic form, for example, needs to be sufficiently expansive in design to accommodate the various means of individual appropriation. The evidence of the last chapter offers some reassurance here. In beginning to map a design for dialogue appropriate for teacher development, a rich diversity of practice was revealed which not only embodied the key principles of dialogue but also suggested a range of possible pathways for individuals to discover. The question of matching individuals with dialogue types or pathways will become the focus of this chapter.

The research has already discovered examples of dialogic success in terms of promoting development. These examples may well be able to illuminate why some might favour one dialogic form over another or indeed, why in other cases, individuals might find themselves operating at ease across a variety of forms. A question, however, remains about those interviewees who have not yet practised dialogue as a tool for development and who seem ill equipped or ill disposed towards it. What evidence, for example, is there of pathways for them, which are sufficiently accessible or attractive? To help reflect on this, I will, in the course of the chapter, review some findings from research undertaken by Pauline James (James, 1997) drawn from her work with teachers reluctant to accommodate change. These findings not only indicate that there is potential for development to occur, even in the case of the most resistant learners but also, more interestingly, that the medium for development which she identifies, has strong parallels with what I have identified as dialogue. If this is so, a case can be made for dialogue as a genuinely transformative medium which is 'inclusive' in its designs and range.



## Linking profiles with dialogic pathways

To examine this idea of the potential inclusiveness of dialogue as a form of transformational development, I have selected three examples from the research data which reflect a range of responses to development through dialogue.

- First, Alice who epitomises the learner who employs an expansive range of dialogic forms.
- Second, Alan whose use of dialogue has been in a much more limited context but nevertheless has been successful within this constraint.
- Third, and in contrast with the other two, Howard, who has not yet employed dialogue as a means of professional development.

Several questions suggest themselves which can act as a focus for the chapter.

1. What has allowed Alice to develop successfully in a variety of dialogic contexts?
2. What has permitted Alan to discover the capacity to be dialogic within a particular context?
3. Given that he has shown no enthusiasm for dialogue, how can Howard become dialogic if he chooses to be?

I believe that the range of examples will illustrate that dialogue as a tool of development is likely to be profitable for a wide range of individuals provided it is understood that their pathway to it and their employment of it will be various and will differ in terms of the range of the form practised.

### Alice's profile

To reflect on Alice's biography is to see clearly how in both personal and professional spheres she demonstrates a capacity for revision and renewal. Faced, for example, by the traumas of having to leave London abruptly, to bring up twins in rural isolation and having to abandon a career which was both highly regarded and highly rewarded may have reasonably engendered major disappointment, not to say distress. Perhaps it did so, but crucially, not to any debilitating extent. Instead, she sought to reconstruct her life, partly by drawing strengths from past successes but, more importantly, by engaging in a variety of new enterprises, seeking on each occasion to match her skills with the

challenges presented. She demonstrated a capacity to reflexively monitor her thinking and actions in a range of diverse contexts which was to subsequently empower her to meet the challenges of new situations and thus rework and extend her understanding.

This openness and flexibility of mind is a feature of her approach to professional learning and development. In her interview, she expresses a desire to embrace a wide range of development opportunities emphasising that there is potential for learning in a variety of sources. Alice indeed, epitomises the self-directed, the self-propelled learner, eager to pursue self-growth, in Oja's terms, the '*autonomous learner*' (Oja, 1991). It is worth, however, pausing at this point to reflect on that phrase 'self-growth'. Alice's account reveals that she does not embark on new enterprises in any sense of self-aggrandisement nor is there any simple sense of acquiring personal mastery underpinning her action. Instead there is an understanding that a characteristic of autonomy is an increasing awareness of the importance of interdependence and mutuality. There is a recognition that the self can only be enhanced in relation with others and that a feature of this enhancement is a contribution to their development. This more complex account of self-development is what Buchmann and Floden (1993) are arguing when they claim that it is insufficient for a teacher to pursue self-development unless that self development incorporates a discovery of how to promote learning in others. This, I believe, is the self-development Alice has in mind. For example, in her account, she is keen to demonstrate how she avoids the role of the virtuoso teacher in favour of discovering the '*satisfaction that comes from allowing students to open the doors to learning themselves*'. To this end, she works with or alongside others, interacting with them and valuing their contributions.

Alice herself attributes her approach to learning to her time spent teaching in Adult Education. She talks of how this episode in her life alerted her to the importance of respecting and valuing a learner's experience as a starting point for development. '*You start with what they bring to the equation and work with that. From that point you are learning together.*' This idea of learning through relational affirmation has clear parallels with what I described as relational appreciation when examining the development scenarios in the last chapter. It is an approach visible in her collaborative work with colleagues in such forms as mentoring and faculty planning but it is also a value which she constantly practises in her work with students.

Alice offers two intriguing examples of relational learning in the classroom which I believe, can be usefully reported on to illuminate how dialogue and through it, learning, is stimulated. In the first she speaks of an occasion where dialogue was not planned but was to prove successful in fostering new understandings and indeed, an enhanced relationship. The situation was an occasion of unanticipated difficulty from the teacher's point of view. Unable to work out a problem which was also confusing her students, Alice recalls joining them by sitting next to them and becoming a fellow learner as they grappled together with the difficulty. She speaks of *'seeing the problem through their eyes'* and how in arriving jointly at the solution, they reconfigured their relationship in a way which encouraged greater collaboration on subsequent occasions. She recalls, *'It was an important moment. We grew closer and, in the process, discovered new ways of thinking about learning.'*

Alice's second example centred on a television programme relating to a mathematician whose life was dedicated to the discovery of a theorem. This, she recalls, prompted an exciting but thoughtful and controlled exploration of lifestyles and career choices. Alice talks of the way students and teacher responded sensitively to each other's arguments and how this allowed for a growing complexity in thinking of the issue. *'I was struck by the way they listened to one another and how they built on each other's thoughts. Often in discussions you get students just peddling their own unthought out views. This was different. I, too, was playing a different role. I was contributing, developing my understanding through listening. There was a real blurring of identities; the terms teacher/student no longer seemed appropriate. We were both learning, both developing.'* Here there seems to be no tired regurgitation of unexamined views where the net effect is to close down talk but an open sharing of opinion, which in this supportive environment, led to fresh insights. This is a point Bohm (1994) made when contrasting dialogue and discussion, arguing that in dialogue we create a fuller picture of reality rather than breaking it down into fragments which discussion tends to do. Moreover, dialogue does not try to convince others but there is an emphasis on learning, collaboration and the synthesis of points of view. In Alice's example the collaborative ethos and the opportunity to be relational, measured in this instance by the appreciative understanding accorded to each person's views, paved the way for a successful and dialogic encounter – a learning encounter.

Both of the above examples testify to the power of relational appreciation to stimulate

complex learning. They exemplify the stance of a teacher who is confident enough to suspend conventional assumptions of her role and in doing so, begin to appreciate the value of her students to contribute not only to their own learning but also to her learning. The same approach is evident in her dealings with colleagues where the foregoing of status and assumed expertise and the consequent idea that all perceptions are to be valued and appreciated allows views to be explored and enhanced.

Alice is at ease in a range of dialogic contexts. A key reason for this is that with both colleagues and students – no distinction is made – there is a high relational appreciation of others as a source for improving. Open minded and flexible about her own learning experiences, she not only values others but is also confident to engage with them in the hope of securing enriched learning for all. The dialogic form is one of Alice's ways of joining with a variety of learning partners to realize future potential.

## Alan's profile

Alan's personal and professional journey, as depicted in his biographical account, represented a quest for worth and recognition, qualities denied to him from the outset by the destructive impact of a school experience where he felt condemned as a failure. A perception of learning reduced to a question of success or failure had been forged in this environment and it proved a difficult one to break. An instance of this was how, as a P.E. teacher, an ability to play games was his sole criterion of learning worth. Later, as a Maths teacher, it was a question of the calculation being right or wrong. It was, he now concludes, *'A simplistic view of learning but I knew no different!'* For him to develop, he needed to think about learning in a different way. This was to happen in an unexpected manner.

Remembering his school experience, Alan was worried when required to introduce students to Shakespeare but it was to prove a liberating experience. Alan talks of how he learned to teach through the process, how he was learning through teaching and, as importantly, how he learned from his students. *'That was exciting, they were giving me their ideas and I said, 'Yes, I hadn't thought of that.'* Here both the status and the outcome notion of learning have been abandoned. Instead, learning is mutual with the ideas that students are capable of constructing their own learning coming to the fore. In addition learning has a more provisional aspect in that meaning is not complete but can

be added to. Both parties – teacher and students – are contributing to a fuller picture and, thus, there is clearly a potential for more complexity. The fact that both sets of learners are learning more together than each could learn separately and that they both see themselves as contributors to shared learning suggest that what we are witnessing here is a form of dialogue.

At this point it is worth remembering how Alan had been rendered uncertain and unconfident as a learner by the events of his early life and it is only now, in the example quoted, that he is becoming aware of the possibilities of a more complex form of learning. Under usual conditions, a lack of confidence in himself would make him disinclined to contribute and test his views in the company of others. Dialogue with its vigorous, if sympathetic testing of assumptions, would not normally be for him yet here is an occasion where he has discovered an opportunity to contribute to a learning encounter not by delivering his expertise but by helping to create a dialogic learning environment which encourages his own growth and that of his students.

What, then, has permitted this to happen? First, it seems Alan is drawn to the learning world of these students. He is sensitive to their difficulties because he has experienced them himself or as he puts it *'lived them himself'*. They are reminders of his own story *'Sometimes I can see myself in them and think of what I was going through at that stage.'* His own story, from which he has previously gained little in terms of confidence, now serves him better in giving him the belief that he can be a force for their good in providing the means to allow students to learn. Why should that be? The answer probably lies in the key phrase, *'Allowing them to learn'*. He reports *'I knew from the start I wouldn't try to teach them in the way I was taught. I knew that wouldn't help.'* Instead, he values their potential as learners, wistfully recalling his own early frustrating experience, *'I thought back to when I was their age and had questions, points of view that I would have liked to put forward but didn't dare to'*. Here Alan has made an important shift from a teacher centred to a learner centred approach and with it there is a new found relational commitment to students and their learning. Accompanying this is a confident way of interpreting and re-working his own experience for the benefit of others and, as a consequence, there is a sense that he and his students are working towards a shared future. All of these factors make dialogue a feasible option.

There are similarities here with Alice's profile, yet there is an important difference. While Alice is at ease across all contexts, it is difficult to see Alan flourishing in dialogue in other circumstances. Where relationships are perceived as a threat and where self-esteem is low— as it often is with Alan - factors prejudicial to dialogue will be present: status, or more accurately, a perceived lack of status, leads to a rigid, inflexible approach: working openly with others is less favoured and the future is no longer viewed with confidence, as echoes of the past are awakened.

What we can conclude is that Alan discovered an opportunity to develop himself and his students in a particular context which was congenial to both parties. The special quality of the relationship engendered proved important; the empathetic links he made with his students and their response in kind provided a catalyst for a successful dialogic and learning encounter.

## Howard's profile

Howard's stance on development can be described as vehement, apparently final and always couched in terms of rejection. As his biographical account makes clear, he believes he has now reached the end of his journey. To have made it as a teacher, after years of struggle and disappointment in his view is to have achieved success and the idea of subsequent development - or at least development in the form of opportunities he has been exposed to date – is perceived as irrelevant to his needs. He has happily appropriated the popular motto '*What you see is what you get*' which for him emphasises a sense of self-sufficiency and pride and is worn as a badge of honour.

There has been nothing in Howard's practice to date which resembles Alice's or Alan's dialogic encounters. This is not surprising. For instance, collaboration with colleagues is not a practice which features in his account, although on occasions he tested out ideas with close friends in informal contexts. In addition, his perception that it is his experience which it is important for students to learn from results in a teacher centred approach to learning which in turn means a low relational appreciation of his students' value as learners. There is also a temporal stance which fixes on the past making it difficult for Howard and his students to engage with the changing world. These would appear disabling factors for dialogue.

An alternative, more optimistic view of Howard's position is possible. For example, while Howard may not yet practise dialogue this does not preclude the possibility that some time subsequently he will uncover an opportunity to do so and through it, enhance his own learning and, by extension, the learning of his students. This after all is what happened to Alan whose receptivity to dialogue was to flourish when a congenial context was identified.

Alan's example is instructive. His engagement with dialogue occurred at a time when he was reassessing what was meant by learning. In fact, dialogue facilitated this re-conceptualisation. It led not only to self-enhancement but also to the enhancement of his students too. For Howard to develop in this way he too, may need to undergo a similar change in thinking about learning and if the premise of this thesis is correct, this may well be provided in an appropriate form of dialogue. To explore how this might happen, I now turn to the research of Pauline James (James, 1997) which I referred to earlier. James' research describes how a radical transformation in approaches to learning was offered when previously 'unwilling learners' became dialogic. I will argue there are clear parallels between Howard and those who feature in James' research. The task will be to consider whether any of James' findings have any relevance for Howard, in terms of assisting him to be dialogic.

### **Resistant Learners – the findings of Pauline James**

James' research (1997) provides an example of significant learning and relational shifts among a group of former trades people training to be teachers. She talks of how this and parallel groups had previously '*developed a reputation for resistance and negativism towards their coursework*' (p.135) and how their sense of toughness and authoritarianism together with sexism and racism dominated their thoughts. Such attitudes did not auger well and thus a requirement of the college course was to foster critical reflection on these dispositions. James adds that while transformational learning was sought, the path towards it was built upon a respect for course participants' culture. It was from sure ground that the journey would proceed.

The Educational Psychology course which James herself taught addressed issues which might be expected to be of concern to trainee teachers. There was, for example, a focus on working effectively with adolescents, incorporating ways of enabling student

learning. Despite this, resistance to learning was pronounced. There was a reluctance to admit the need for learning as it *'implied a confession of prior inadequacy'* (ibid. p. 138). Machismo prevented self-disclosure. The group made use of story telling yet *'much of this story telling appeared only to reinforce the values prevalent within the culture. Indeed, it served as a defence against threats to their identities as 'tough men' which the course content and activities had seemingly posed'* (ibid. p.138). Drawing on Willis's (Willis, 1997) research of how working class boys reached inward to their own culture to resist what they see as valueless, academic learning, James details a similar process of rejection among the former trades people.

To attempt to effect a change, James settled upon a strategy which involved her writing a short, narrative case study *'describing a teacher like themselves in the throes of a major life transition'* (James, 1987 p.138). She talks of how the *'hero'* of the story was a *'good bloke'* of a type easily recognised by the group, who, faced with difficulties in the contexts of school and educational institution, finally, with peer support and a greater belief in his own abilities, proved successful in meeting the demands of a new career. The purpose of the narrative was to provide a different perspective on their own experiences yet, at the same time, suggest that all of the group as the student teacher before them, *'had trodden this path before'* (ibid. p.139). James writes *'Even if their own dilemmas and disappointments were still withheld from others, it (the narrative) could potentially afford some insight into the stress evoked by change'* (ibid. p.139).

Later she records the success of the strategy, *'In fact the nature of these discussions surpassed all expectations. People began to speak of themselves, tentatively at first, and then with greater confidence, using the language of the narrative to describe their own experiences. The narrative thus led to unprecedented self-disclosure'* (ibid. p. 139). Student teachers not only developed new insights about their own circumstances but recognised the parallel experiences of their peers and developed a new sensitivity to their feelings. James talks of how the *'discourse changed'* (ibid. p.139). She adds, *'Relationships of a greater psychological intimacy than those of the past began to develop'* (ibid p.139). The group replaced *'the solidarity of opposition'* with a common *'commitment to learn'* (ibid. p.139). Importantly, the impact was not confined to within the group. Other teachers within the institution spoke of the trainee teachers' open-mindedness to new strategies. Their flexibility was also increasingly evident in their dealings with adolescents and it was noted that many for the first time worked



successfully with girls in their classes. Here is learning and development and although James herself does not use the term, I believe we have an example of dialogue through the medium of relational appreciation.

How, precisely, does the external narrative work? One point can be made clear from the outset. If James, as she had originally intended, had stayed with the stories which the trainee teachers brought to the group, there would have been no movement in terms of attitude change or relational appreciation. Stories were told with great relish but served simply to reinforce social and cultural stereotypes. They demonstrated what McEwan (1995) had in mind when he talked about how the stories teachers tell about teaching can, on occasion, serve to '*give legitimacy to(our) beliefs and consolation to unreflective habits of mind and practices*' (p. 175). They also reflect what Bohm (1994) meant by the incoherence of thought that stems from unexamined assumptions. What was required was a new focus to the stories. The old stories emphasised a deeply rooted sense of their narrators' identities and celebrated a feeling of their impregnability and resistance to change. In temporal terms they looked largely to the past as a source of their strength and sought to embrace the values of that era as a bulwark against change. The external narrative brought with it two interconnected elements: first it introduced the actual experience in the form of a man who had undergone the same process of career change that the group were currently engaged in: second, it told a story of success, a success which was of a hard won nature. The two elements combined to mark a crucial shift in focus. Now there was a move away from stories, shaped mostly by the past and centred round the person of the narrator to accounts which not only offered a consideration of the lived experience of the present, in this case reflections and feelings on the process of change involved in becoming a teacher but also reflected the promise of possible futures. Individuals were released from processes of thought which in Bohmian terms had remained unexamined or in some cases, restricted through feelings of anxiety and responded positively to an invitation to explore fresh thinking as a means of constructing new and more coherent understandings based on the challenge of practice. A story from a new stance could be told. It was a story that had the potential for greater complexity evident not least in that it not only embraced the narrator's self but incorporated an awareness of the needs of learning partners and saw self development in terms of furthering students' complexity as well as the narrators' own. Finally, as hinted above, it was a story which included the future and was without foreseeable closure.

In summary the external narrative served two functions: it allowed for identification and provided an impetus for change. It supplied the support or bridge for new learning by shifting the focus of the story from identity with its attendant restrictions to the possibilities that may well accrue from an engagement with the realities of present experience. It stimulated the relational affirmation which ultimately made dialogue possible. The emphasis on relational appreciation, of course, is consistent with examples described elsewhere in the thesis. It is a necessary ingredient for success, but in this instance it needed the trigger of external support, a support which fundamentally reshaped the tenor of the group conversation and paved the way for learning.

### **Implications for Howard**

From reading Howard's account it would be reasonable to say that he shares many of the characteristics of the former tradespeople perhaps partially signalled in the parallel experience of a career change. There is also a marked similarity in attitudes. An inflexible, authoritarian, sometimes aggressive disposition in the classroom is shared by both parties. There is a similar reluctance to consider change ostensibly premised on a belief in self-sufficiency but more likely, certainly in the case of the tradespeople, to be founded on machismo and an unwillingness to reveal perceived inadequacies. For Howard, as for them, there may well be a benefit in telling his story from another stance. A move from an identity based story to one which considers practice and how that practice might be enhanced may be welcome.

What then for Howard? Can Pauline James' example be replicated or would it be misguided to think in these terms? In responding to this set of questions, it is important to recall the special circumstances of James' group. The individual members of the group all belonged to similar professions and were all training to be teachers at the same time. The narrative, which was introduced with its external origin but with close links to members' concerns and aspirations, fitted perfectly into the context and successfully promoted the relational appreciation which made dialogue and learning possible. Replication, however, even if desirable, is unlikely. For example, such uniformity of groups is rare. Narrowly defined groups like this would tend to be the preserve of the training institution and are not the norm in school life. Howard would be unlikely to be a member of one.

Two points can be made. First, it is more important to think of the quality of relational appreciation that the group offered than any attempt to constitute a replica group. Howard needs to be part of a working arrangement which will provide a relationally appreciative context able to support an exploration of new attitudes. It may not necessarily be a group. In fact, given his enthusiasm for close friendships, a pairing arrangement may be more appropriate. A credible source for him may well be an individual who is likely to share many of his interests and is of a similar age and gender. Second, in thinking of the stimulus which might elicit relational change, it would be wrong to assume it will be the same as that offered by James. The crucial factor is the extra ingredient, the catalyst, which allows change to occur. For James' tradespeople, it was an appropriate narrative: for Howard it may be something different.

One way which might help Howard to change the focus of his thinking about learning through collaborative endeavour might be found in the appreciative inquiry literature. Hammond (1998), for example, speaks of the importance of an appreciative framework which can be designed to assist those inexperienced in the practice of dialogue. She explains how, for pairs or small groups, the framework might include key questions which can elicit previously positive achievements within the working context. The phrasing of the questions is important. It is essential that the questions allow participants to reflect and comment on the quality and detail of the teacher-learning experience rather than give an opportunity for a more self-focused, identity driven response. From the outset, stories are invited which are rooted in practice.

The appreciative element, evident in the encouragement of individuals to narrate stories of success, is important in that it signals the worth of the participants and allows them to proceed in confidence. Here again the productive mix of experience and success is noted. Hammond talks of how such stories can be collated and common themes underlying them recognised. She describes how the dialogic process can be seen as the participants in a spirit of relational appreciation tease out the complex elements that have made the success and, then, collaborate to construct more learning opportunities. The appreciative framework has been the bridge or scaffolding whereby a relationally responsive environment has been created and the means by which dialogue can lead to more complex learning. Howard, released from the need to couch his story in terms of identity may well, as the tradespeople before him, find pleasure in exploring the world of practice and through the medium of the pairing arrangement, receive and give the

necessary relational support to employ dialogue to create more coherent and complex understandings of the teaching-learning processes.

## **Summary of findings**

The chapter has confirmed that it may well be possible for individuals to construct their own pathways to dialogue. Some will explore a range of dialogic contexts while others will be more at ease within a specific context. On occasions there will be a need for specially designed frameworks which will allow those, who lack confidence or who are inexperienced, to practise the art. Whatever the context, however, it would appear that it is relational appreciation which contributes substantially towards the drive for dialogue and the realisation of greater coherence and complexity. This key element is likely to be a central feature in the model of dialogue appropriate for teacher development which I will draw up in the final chapter. If, however, relational appreciation is crucial, what is also necessary for teachers – and for that matter, students- is a focus on their lived experience of learning, their practice of learning. It is only by examining this and looking how to enhance it that development through dialogue will occur. Dialogue needs to be rooted in practice.

## Chapter 9

### Constructing a model and shaping the future

#### A model for enhancing teacher development through dialogue

In the first section of this chapter, I will be drawing together the threads from previous chapters and attempting to construct a model for enriching teacher development through dialogue. There are, I believe, four elements to this model which can be listed as follows:

- Qualities for dialogue
- Contexts and pathways
- Processes and means of facilitation
- Outcomes

I will focus on each in turn.

#### Qualities for dialogue

Four qualities have emerged which seem to dispose individuals, some more than others, to engage in dialogue for the purposes of development. These qualities can be listed as: self reflexivity, a time orientation geared to the future, a preference for collaboration and a disposition towards learning. The qualities are inter-connected. For example, those who are self-reflexive are more likely to favour collaborative endeavour as a means to embrace new situations and engage with others to redefine themselves in new ways. This focus on enhancement through collaboration in turn assumes both a learning and a future orientation with teachers working with colleagues or students to discover new means of increasing their and their students' understanding.

But what of those whose 'qualities' are less developed. It would follow that they require an environment in which these attributes can be cultivated, one which would afford them the confidence to re-think and re-orient their approach to learning. Given the requirements emphasised above, they would need to discover a learning dynamic which was geared towards collaboration as a means of approaching the future with a

sense of excitement and challenge. Finding a congenial context leads me naturally to the second element of the model.

## Contexts and pathways

A consistent view of this thesis is that there should be provision for individual appropriation of dialogue. Recognising the creative and transformative potential of the form does not require us to believe that dialogue should be presented as a new uniform technology to which all teachers can subscribe. Indeed, the focus on biography and its implications for individual learning styles suggests that it is important to think of a variety of pathways which individuals will embark upon. Individuals will seek to match pathway with learning approach. For some this may involve practising dialogue across a range of contexts while for others there will be a more limited but still beneficial engagement.

Two more points can be made. First, teachers can, in the course of their career, discover new ways of thinking about learning. A reorientation, for example, towards a more student focused, collaborative learning style may well make dialogue an attractive forum for development for those who had not previously considered it. Second, as Pauline James' example in chapter 8 proved, new pathways can be designed which can accommodate those who may initially find the form unsettling. The notion that '*things can be otherwise*' as these two points prove is a powerful corrective to those who assume that dialogue is beyond the reach of certain individuals

Contexts for teacher development through dialogue are many and this could be an important area for teacher developers to consider. Dialogue with students is one such option and the thesis provided some exciting examples of how teachers and students, working collaboratively could augment their understanding of learning processes. Initiatives, like mentoring, also offer scope for dialogue but there is opportunity too, in more routine gatherings such as Faculty or Year Group meetings. In fact, it is important to challenge the view that dialogue is a somewhat esoteric process occurring in rarefied conditions, a perception which may be gained from reading a theorist like Bohm. In reality, the teacher's everyday working world affords numerous opportunities for dialogic talk although this is not to say that dialogue will necessarily occur.

Teachers working with other teachers is likely to be a favoured context. The category can be divided into a number of smaller sections of which 'the pair' and the 'small group' are but two. These are not exclusive arrangements and it is quite possible to imagine fluid patterns of membership, as individuals look for preferred learning combinations. The composition of a pairing or group is an issue of contention in some quarters. In the last chapter I imagined Howard making a choice of partner for dialogue, believing he would select someone who shared his interests. Ellinor and Gerard (1998) question the wisdom of this arrangement, believing the potential for dialogue may be undermined by too much sameness in the relationship. They favour structuring groups to ensure difference and diversity. I believe this thinking is wrong. Individual choice needs to be respected as it often provides a source of security especially for those unconfident about dialogue. Removal of it would sometimes mean an individual would not embark on the dialogic path. While the concept of difference is important for dialogue, there probably exists sufficient diversity already within supposedly homogenous groups to engender interesting new perspectives.

### Processes and means of facilitation

Appropriate contexts and pathways are then important for individuals embarking upon dialogue. What is equally crucial is the quality of talk therein. What then are the processes of dialogue and how might we facilitate them?

In thinking of processes, I am looking at the means whereby individuals collaborate to see what is going on from a wider perspective. This involves participants suspending assumptions which underpin their thinking on an issue and holding them up for examination. Colleagues will then inquire into these assumptions, allowing individuals to clarify, expand or re-shape their thinking. Together, they will build a shared meaning composed of finer thoughts, the rough edges of assumptions having been smoothed away in the process of collective inquiry.

Such processes may be initially difficult for individuals who are used to the more combative, conversational mode of discussion where the norm is to justify and defend a position. For this reason, it is important to look at how the processes of dialogue might be supported.

I believe that whatever form dialogue takes, progress is more likely to ensue if an 'appreciative' element is introduced. The 'appreciative' element looks to celebrate what is positive in an existing situation and aims to expand this into something greater. It also establishes initial security, working well with those less experienced or those who approach dialogue with some unease. In this situation, appropriate frameworks can be designed to facilitate dialogue. Hammond (1998) talks of how even rudimentary structures incorporating nothing more than simple questions can elicit positive strengths which will help to provide a secure base for dialogic enquiry. It is in this secure environment that assumptions can be explored and new meaning constructed.

Importantly, such frameworks can help to foster a relational bond between members of the group or pairing. They contribute to a positive, appreciative environment where the value and integrity of all participants is affirmed. Such relational appreciation gives people the strength to interact and to explore together the possibilities for further advances in learning and is a vital and distinctive component of this model. It offers a contrast to the notion that there are necessary skills to be learned for successful practitioners of dialogue and that constant practice is necessary to hone these skills. This mechanistic emphasis is at odds with the idea that '*relational appreciation*' may be the engine that drives successful dialogue.

Finally, the importance of focusing on '*lived experience*' as a means of facilitating dialogue. Here is a recognition that for dialogue and the opportunity for learning to occur, there must be a focus on practice. To insist on this is to recognise that sometimes, when teachers tell stories about themselves, these stories will solely focus on the narrator and will often have little or nothing to say about learning or they will construe learning in terms of teacher approach rather than the learning needs of students. Such stories are also likely to focus on the past – often past glories – rather than meeting the challenge of the future. Stories, however, centred on practice are more likely to centre on learning and will look to the future in terms of learning possibilities for students and their teachers. For this reason, practice or lived experience is the raw material with which dialogue can engage as it is more likely to promote opportunities for individuals to work together to develop more complex accounts of their work. 'Can', however, is the operative word. Stories of practice will not in themselves guarantee dialogue; for that to happen we require relational appreciation to



be practised by all parties. Relational appreciation is the vital force in dialogue's nourishment.

## Outcomes

The outcomes of dialogue are neither tangible nor simple and neither are the outcomes of teacher development. One outcome, however, might well be increased coherence and complexity in our thinking. By focusing on an exploration of meaning, dialogue avoids simplistic judgements and allows individuals to work together towards achieving a more refined, nuanced understanding. Inquiring into assumptions underpinning thought processes allows participants to be more sensitive to faulty thinking and steers them towards more coherent judgements. Coherence, however, is never fully achieved. A changing world means that patterns that once held firm will, in time, dissolve and a new coherence will need to be sought. Here again, dialogue serves its purpose as it never views understanding as complete but is open to new voices and thus new meanings for changed situations.

Complexity is attained because dialogue encourages the complementary processes of differentiation and integration. Participants become adept in appreciating the fine distinctions between perspectives and also how these differences can be integrated into a more complex whole.

The capacity to entertain more complex perspectives on a changing world allows individuals and teams of learners to have a surer grasp of what is an uncertain future. This leads us to make explicit another outcome which dialogue can direct us towards. Dialogue, for the reasons offered above, affords us the opportunity to visualise and work towards the future with hope. It is a form which presumes a willingness to contemplate an enhancement of what we now have. Finally, in a way which subsumes the earlier points, it offers enhanced learning as an outcome.

In this final section of the chapter, there will be a focus on how knowledge gained about dialogue equips us to plan teacher development in a way which will impact positively on issues of teaching and learning. First, I will aim to show how the development model outlined earlier in the chapter can engage successfully with a current concern and then describe what schools as institutions can do in terms of policy and practice to

enhance themselves as learning organisations. The thesis began with familiar teacher criticisms of school-led professional development: it seems appropriate, then, that it should conclude with some detailed proposals of how the learning and development needs of the whole learning body can be met in a manner which is personally and collectively satisfying and which is also mindful of the challenges of the future.

### **Applying the model to current challenges**

At one level it would be appropriate to say that any model for teacher development should be required to demonstrate its capacity to respond to an existing situation. Its credibility will partly rest with the confidence it engenders among practitioners. Yet we need to be cautious in pushing this notion of ‘topicality’ too far. ‘Realities’ necessarily change, shaped, as they are, by a focus on the immediate present and by judgements of what appears important at that time. Constant change is often cited as the defining feature of the post-modern age in which we live and if that is so, responding solely to present reality is too restrictive. A new model for teacher development must, at the very least, reflect on that reality, have the potential to illuminate it in a new way and perhaps, even reshape it. This point can be now examined in the way we respond to a current concern, that of ‘performance’.

‘Performance’ features prominently in today’s educational landscape. As a teacher, I am required to attend to my students’ academic performance: as a mentor, I am advised to evaluate how my mentees satisfy performance criteria and competences. My school measures its effectiveness in its ability to ensure an appropriate percentage pass rate in the GCSE examination. Performance tables, student tests and target setting provide the vocabulary for its drive for success. ‘Performance management’ for teachers is a notion gaining in credibility in some quarters and the link is increasingly being made between teacher performance and successful student performance, as revealed in examination results. What does it all mean for the notion of teacher development?

My answer starts with an account of how the issue has been addressed in the institution where I teach. The initiative to be described came as a response to suggestions made during an OFSTED visit as a result of which the school embarked upon a ‘Quality Assurance’ exercise with a particular focus on teachers in classrooms. This took the form of senior members of the school’s Executive Team visiting individual teachers and

observing their teaching performance. Assessment took place and written feedback was offered. An earlier presentation in a staff meeting had presented a rationale for the exercise which was to identify 'good' examples of teaching, the term 'good' construed as a form of teaching likely to deliver examination success. The blueprint for quality was a highly prescriptive account of teaching behaviours which all teachers were advised to conform to and which was to be employed as the key component in the assessment process. As well as 'good practice', examples of 'inferior' teaching could be recognised and those failing practitioners supported by remedial programmes. The search, it was argued, was for 'consistency of approach' which would deliver 'consistently high standards'. A critique offered by a number of colleagues – and the one which I shared – was that such thinking put an unwarranted premium on 'teacher delivery' as a recipe for success and in doing so, it reduced the role of students to recipients of knowledge. Furthermore, the issue of 'student learning' had not been addressed while the relationship between teacher and students was being reconfigured in a most traditional way. The critique was not accepted.

In such a context, teacher development becomes very narrowly defined. It is now largely perceived as acquiring the skills necessary to deliver successful examination results. Crude appraisals of the successful and failing teacher follow from it. For the teacher deemed 'successful', there is no clearly marked development route. For the 'failing' teacher, it is a matter of being reappraised of the qualities deemed appropriate. The emphasis on conformity devalues the notion of community and, as a result, there is little incentive to explore and construct new understandings of teacher-learning processes, the potential fruits of collaborative endeavour and a conversational mode like dialogue. Indeed, the idea of individuals working through dialogue to access more coherent and complex accounts of their practice is rendered redundant when decisions about 'quality' are made hierarchically.

The model of teacher development emerging from my thesis is at variance with the example outlined above. For example, I have tried to explore the link between professional development and the promotion of student learning. I have argued that those interviewees who most actively embrace development are those engaged in the task of allowing students to construct their own understanding of learning. There has been an emphasis on how teachers, working collaboratively with other teachers or, on occasions, with their students, have through dialogue become increasingly aware of the

complexities of the learning process and have carried these new understandings into classroom encounters, the results of which have been enriched learning experiences and the development of more coherent accounts of learning. In short, a dual learning process has been taking place, teachers and students both being active players. It has been a model focused on learning, outlining how coherence and complexity can be enhanced through learning conversations with a variety of partners. Yet it is a model which has not once mentioned the word performance. Where, then, does it stand on this issue? Does it stand aside, arguing a concern for performance is too narrow a focus? My answer to this must be 'no' as such a stance would fail to satisfy a first requirement of a developmental model that it has something to offer an existing situation. Much better that it should engage in a way which can offer new insights and alternative strategies which relate to performance. Could it be, for example, that performance can be accommodated in a way other than the narrowly prescribed way outlined earlier? Might a focus on 'learning' not address the needs of performance and perhaps add something more? If this were the case, the role of teacher development as a supporter of learning would be enhanced and not, as in the delivery model, diminished.

The idea that learning more about learning improves teacher effectiveness and has impact on student performance is demonstrated in research carried out by Munro (1999). His study centred on 32 secondary qualified teachers who were engaged in a professional development programme that provided a framework for reflective study of the learning process, analysis of key aspects in their classes and identification of the implication for teaching. Changes in teacher effectiveness were closely observed in several ways, one of which was notable changes in student performance. What is interesting for our purpose is the detailing of some of the changes in teacher behaviours as a result of following the programme. For example, we read of how the '*opportunity for students to manage their learning in collaborative relationship with teachers and peers increased*' (p.162). There is also evidence of how '*teachers provided more opportunities for students to monitor their learning and to see themselves making progress*' (p.163) and of teachers '*providing students with the opportunity to learn more about how they learn*' (p.162). What we have here are teachers who, in a quest to understand more about learning, have developed teacher behaviours where there is a focus on allowing students to construct their own understanding of the learning process. In other words, teachers' learning and by extension, development, is tied to student

learning in the manner suggested in the thesis. Moreover, the focus is on how the 'learning' of both parties directly leads to improved performance on the part of students.

Complementary evidence is provided by research findings from studies collected by Watkins (2001) entitled '*Learning about Learning enhances performance*'. From these studies it is clear that encouraging students to reflect and talk about their learning brings positive benefits. Students who develop a learning focus - characterised among other things by a sense of agency, responsibility and collaborative commitment- rather than a focus on performance, tend to perform better. By contrast, focusing on performance can actually reduce performance.

However, these findings tell us more. Having a learning orientation rather than a performance orientation confers greater benefits than immediate success on the individual. The former equips and encourages the individual to seek out increasingly challenging learning experiences and cultivates an enthusiasm for improvement and development. There is a temporal dimension here. Those students with a learning orientation are more likely to look to the future for continued success while those with a performance orientation are more tied to a short-term objective. In thinking about the demands of the future and the way constant change will determine these demands, it seems vital that the learning dimension is emphasised. It still allows for success in the short term by embracing a style of classroom experience which privileges student construction of meaning but more importantly, it offers hope for a successful engagement with the future.

This style of learning calls for a different style of teaching and with it a different focus for teacher development. Earlier I reflected on how current practices in teacher development had acquired a narrow focus limited to supporting a vision of performance which had emphasised a highly rigid notion of teaching style. If the research evidence now raises doubts about the efficacy of this approach to satisfying performance requirements, we can instead look to an enabling mode of teaching which is more likely to allow students to experience success in the short term and also to promote a learning orientation which has the potential to equip them for future challenges. Changing the emphasis from delivering knowledge to facilitating student learning immediately expands the focus for teacher development. Teachers again become important players in the drama of learning. They are, for example, invited to consider again how

individual student's learning can be enhanced. The process of inquiry is, in itself, enriching and there is a real sense that in developing their students, they are developing themselves. Considering how best to support learning invites us to share our perceptions. The collaborative element missing in the 'delivery' model is required here to tease out more coherent accounts of appropriate learning. Gone is the centrally defined notion of 'quality' which all teachers had to aspire to and in its place is the recognition that teacher development and by extension, student learning, flourishes in an environment which values a variety of voices engaged in a constant quest to increase understanding. Dialogue, with its potential to build coherence and complexity by attending to diversity and promoting integration, is an appropriate medium for these conversations about learning.

The 'development' model explored in this thesis has always had at its core a commitment to learning, a crucial axiom being that teacher learning is tied to student learning. A focus on 'performance' in schools, which seemed to relegate the importance of student learning and teachers contribution to it seemed to threaten this, yet the threat was unfounded. Instead, an emphasis on learning - teacher learning and student learning – not only allowed performance targets to be met but illustrated how these narrow constraints can be transcended. I believe that the model of teacher development under discussion here has the potential to support a much more expansive and enduring approach to teaching for both teachers and students.

### Looking to the future

Having shown it can address the demands of the immediate present, the new model looks forward to the challenges of the future. It can do this because it seeks to promote an ongoing approach to learning driven by the adoption of dialogue as the conversational mode. Dialogue's importance is its capacity to build more complex and coherent accounts of an issue, continually developing our understanding. It promotes learning but it is also an appropriate medium to reflect on the complexities of learning and to deepen our understanding of the learning process. Such an understanding is more likely to occur when individuals find satisfying and productive ways to collaborate with others.

What then will teacher development through dialogue look like? What forms will it take in our schools? How can schools best support it? It might be assumed that a primary requirement for any development co-ordinator would be to articulate publicly the benefits of dialogue. Arguments could be assembled which would emphasise the merits of collaborative endeavour, the advantages that would accrue from encouraging diversity of opinion and the importance of building community and developing relationships of a positive quality. He or she might add that as the world changes and our working lives become ever more complex that it is crucial that we think in terms of shared leadership, developing collective mastery and work towards holistic responses. Dialogue, he or she might argue, is the conversational mode which would allow us to grapple with this new reality.

What, in effect, is being articulated here is a new vision statement about learning and organisational arrangements required to underpin it. On reflection, it sounds overblown, idealistic and is likely to meet a cynical response. Moreover, there is something deeply ironic about 'presenting' the benefits of dialogue. The qualities of dialogue need to be explored; it is a conversational mode to participate in rather than a process to be explained. Teachers new to this need experience of it to appreciate that it is not an esoteric practice but something which they can perform naturally and which will confer benefits upon them. It needs to be introduced in a small scale, localised fashion.

An existing grouping like a department or faculty might be a good place to start. The task would be to provide structural support for the group not only in terms of space and time to meet and converse but also, for instance, in the form of guidelines which would help to facilitate dialogue. Two examples can be offered. There might be a reminder that individuals have preferred learning styles and organisational arrangements need to reflect this. Within a grouping like a faculty, there will exist a number of possibilities – pair, small group etc and arrangements can be fluid as individuals discover their favoured working arrangement. Second, it can be advised that appreciative frameworks often can initiate dialogue by fostering a positive spirit of exploration. Frameworks which can be as simple as one or two carefully constructed questions can elicit examples of success which the group build upon.

The group itself would determine the most appropriate form the dialogue would take and would decide the issues at these meetings. In an environment where responsibility is devolved, there would be no central control of the agenda and no desire for it as all members of the institution would be working towards a set of 'shared values'.

The introduction of dialogue, however, needs support. One simple way to support it is to free faculty meetings from imposed agendas. Faculties, then, in a spirit of freedom, would be encouraged to explore their own creative and innovative strategies towards learning. In the thesis there was an example from the English Faculty of a teacher who was practising dialogue with his students, abandoning the role of expert to become a genuine partner in learning. It would be interesting to see that initiative explored further with the issue perhaps becoming a focus for that particular faculty.

Autonomy of faculties, however, does not mean that they work in isolation and one important function for a development co-ordinator would be to ensure channels of communication between departmental groupings. Bringing together the work of different groups is important for establishing professional community and it means going beyond superficial difference and seeing underlying patterns which draw groupings together and unite them in common purpose. Important gains of understanding need to be explored between groups and at an institutional level.

In the first case, it is possible to envisage seminars or mini-conferences where, for example, teachers from diverse faculties come together to discuss a particular learning issue. The dialogue envisaged here would not limit itself to exchanging information but would be involved in attaining sharper insights into the learning process that would come from attending to a different perspective, examining it and seeing how it contributed to a wider picture. The numbers are still sufficiently small to ensure intimacy yet the potential for adding complexity to thinking is substantial.

The development co-ordinator might now think of dialogue at a whole school level as a vehicle for development. Development initiatives here, however, often take the form of development days and the usual charge is that such days are irrelevant as they are not rooted in teacher practice. Can these development days be re-fashioned and made relevant? The answer is yes. Contrary to the usual practice where such days are stand alone, this day can be seen as a continuation of earlier initiatives where teacher work



has taken centre stage. In addition, it will have been organised along dialogic lines, a pattern securely established and approved of, the fruits of collaboration having been witnessed, perhaps, in that most grounded of environments, the teacher's classroom. Furthermore, such a day has not been planned 'from the top'. Instead it will have emerged from the workings of groupings within the establishment and the actual theme of the day will have been decided by such groupings.

There is a difference, too, in the form of the final product. Traditionally, the question at the end of many school development days is 'So what?' At best some interesting issues have been aired but how they can be integrated into practice is left unexplored. Here again a difference is envisaged. One purpose of dialogue is to illuminate an issue more fully. Individuals then move on to explore and experiment with new techniques. The end product of a day like this might be that perspectives developed will eventually find their way into community policy. The importance of whole school development days as conceived here is that they give a powerful sense of a community of learners. Everyone is seen as a contributor to the whole and draws strength from it. There is strength in the way that diversity has been recognised but integrated into a more coherent, complex picture.

A development co-ordinator must also remember that dialogue does not always need to be 'planned' into existence. In a quite natural way, it can take hold. For example, groups of individuals will join together to further their understanding of an issue simply because they feel the need to do so. Groups like this come into being even when there is no prevailing climate within the organisation which supports dialogue. They are often working against the grain but succeed because they are fulfilling a development need for individuals to which the organisation has not attended. What is important is that these existing aspects of practice are respected and allowed to thrive. It is possible they will provide a model for others who wish to embark upon dialogue as a means of development. Dialogue may grow just as convincingly from these small scale examples as from any centralist planning.

In thinking of promoting dialogue within schools it is also important to ensure the term is not too narrowly conceived. There are two dimensions to this. First, the over-zealous planner, eager to innovate, may overlook examples of practice which, at first sight, might not seem worthy of the name of dialogue. An instance would be the often

informal process of colleague working with colleague on a one to one basis with no official recognition. This seems low key but can be rich in potential. It is of great value for someone like Howard who would be likely to resist planned development – the image of the INSET terrorist is evoked here – but would welcome sharing and developing experiences with a close friend, as the process seems to offer no personal threat. The informal, the relatively unstructured and what might appear to be the marginal, need to be preserved.

Second, organisations always need to look outwards in their quest for continuous renewal if they are to adapt to the times. In a simple way, colleagues from different schools can meet to explore and construct new understandings on pressing issues. Such schools might, in some ways, be similar in style and organisation but in other ways be sufficiently different so as to engender diverse opinions on matters. There has always been a tradition of contact between teachers at senior management level but it would be useful to see this happening at a more grass roots level.

Productive relationships can also be developed between schools and local university teacher training departments. No longer do these two institutions inhabit sharply demarcated worlds of theory and practice. Nowadays, they have much in common but with sufficient difference in terms of approach and expertise to suggest the dialogic encounters on a continuous basis will be fruitful. Nor should the door be closed on other channels of communication. Industry, commerce and media are all potential contributors and provided the principles of dialogue are adhered to – particularly the requirement for the equality of status – all can be welcomed as players in working towards an enhanced future for our teachers and students.

In thinking of promoting dialogue development co-ordinators need to plan collectively, but also to respect the natural inclination of individuals to respond spontaneously to situations. They need to develop new fora for dialogue but appreciate those already in existence. They need to celebrate the informal as well as introduce the more formal. and look outwards as well as inwards. Dialogue is an open medium and the ways it can be constituted should be diverse.

Many of the initiatives detailed above are premised on the existence of a certain type of organisation. It is an organisation with a democratic hue which not only has structure in place for shared thinking but, as importantly, has affirmative, positive images about its

workforce and the contribution it might make. In dialogue, the words 'appreciative' and 'relational' feature largely. The former often triggers the latter and provides the unity of purpose which sustains the dialogic process. The two words might also describe the approach required of those in management positions who, in demonstrating trust and supportive leadership, can do much to confirm innovative and creative thinking which might emerge from dialogic initiatives. Trust is crucial when responsibility is devolved. It must be based on the respect in which the staff are held as agents of their development and also the value placed on collaborative processes like dialogue to produce distinctive contributions to the school's vision.

Ludema (2000) talks about how an organisation seeking positive change needs to nurture co-operative relationships amongst its members. People need a sense of their value and belonging. This, he believes, allows them to entertain a sense of optimism about their capacity to influence the future. It gives them the confidence to inquire together into their most deeply held values and highest aspirations. They can then realise the vision and indeed, enhance it. Their mode of conversation is dialogue, a mode which allows them to work towards greater coherence and complexity, built on the twin strengths of greater differentiation and integration. Importantly, dialogue never closes down meaning, listening always for new voices. This is why it is predominately a conversation mode appropriate for the future and the idea of renewal.

Dialogue generates hope and, I would argue, hope is vital to our future. Ludema writes, *'Hoping assumes a fundamental openness to the future; it prospers when people recognise the unbounded extent to which relationships and realities are open to creation and reconstruction'* (p.278). Here a powerful case is made for the relational and transformative power of dialogue.

It is a message of hope that schools, through their practices and their relationships, can unlock the learning potential of all their members to meet the challenge of the future.

# Appendix 1

## Interview Guide

### Section 1 Biography - Knowledge and Acquisition

#### *a) Questions (Present Work)*

1. Tell me about your current role(s) / position(s) in school and what it involves
2. What aspects of your role(s) give you satisfaction?
3. Are there any aspects you are dissatisfied with?

#### *b) Questions (Previous experience)*

1. Can you give me an outline of your professional life to date?
2. As you look back, can you highlight important moments in your development as a teacher?
3. As you look back, can you identify personal life events which might be influential in your development as a teacher?

#### *c) Questions (Future)*

1. Tell me about your hopes / plans for the future
2. How do you see yourself in five years' time?

### Section 2 Linking to Professional Practice

#### *a) Questions relating to conceptions of teaching and learning*

1. Tell me about your role in the classroom
2. Tell me about some of your most successful experiences as a teacher

#### *b) Questions relating to planning*

1. Can you tell me something about your planning?
2. Is your planning done on an individual or collaborative basis?

#### *c) Questions relating to reviewing / reflection*

1. What does reflection, in terms of teaching performance, mean to you?

### Section 3 Links to Professional Development

#### *a) Questions relating to successful / unsuccessful experience of development*

1. Which of the contexts in which you work or have worked have / have not proved beneficial for your development?

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