

## Chapter Seven - Working With Individuals

### From Under a Wide Brim

The Princess of Trampogymnastics surveyed the scene with great pride. Here were her teams, leaping on and off the apparatus gracefully, sailing through the hoops they found around the place, and only occasionally faltering and getting wrong footed. In their tumbling routines also, they usually fell onto their feet. Mind you, they had been well trained. The Princess herself went through the vault with them, and quite often, the Queen would ask them about their progress and would come to the gymnasium to see them at work.

The Princess thought her teams looked good; their colourful strips blended well together, and she particularly liked their hats. Each team had developed different hats; sometimes, if team members were in two teams at the same time, they had to wear two hats, and this always caused problems, because they often didn't know which one to wear on the outside. So it sometimes happened that members of the teams felt they had got their hats round the wrong way, and felt uncomfortable because the hats didn't fit together well.

The Princess liked her own hat. It grew more comfortable as the years passed - it had seemed pretty strange at first. It had a wide brim which curved gracefully upwards, so she could see everything, and whichever way she wore it, she always could see everything. Her hat would have been no good at all if it had given her some blind spots, because she needed to see how well her teams were doing all the time.

The Princess of Trampogymnastics was working away with her teams one day, when she noticed some faces pressed up against the window of the gymnasium. They waved shyly to her, and she noticed that they all wore different hats - some berets, some balaclavas, a cap - and so on. They called through the window to her and said,

"That looks fun, can we come and join you?"

"Well," replied the Princess, "We are only doing our customary workouts. Are you sure you want to come and play?"

"Yes," they said, "We would like to be able to support each other over the apparatus".

The Princess thought about this. She had taken to cartwheeling around the gymnasium, but her teams were all so busy she didn't think they had noticed what she was doing. It was sometimes hard keeping her hat on when she was upside down, but she liked the new perspective. She saw things differently.

She thought it would be good to work with a different group of Hats and particularly liked the idea of them supporting each other. She was keen for them to choose the apparatus they wanted to use, and then to use it in ways which best suited them. She was not going to tell them what to do.

So she helped them to get started, and was interested to see the shape they spun, with each of them fitting in and supporting bits of the others. Then all change! The shape changed, the positions changed, where they all touched changed. They balanced precariously against each other from time to time, and from time to time they realised how important each bit of them was to each other. But they weren't sure that each of the Hats knew this.

"Don't move!" cried Beret, "Or we'll fall."

"And don't tell Friend of Panama!" implored Balaclava, "Or we won't be able to get into that sort of shape again, and it was good."

It was agreed. Hats would keep it to themselves. They were excited by the new shapes and about how they got into them. They wanted to talk about their ideas all the time and the Princess loved to hear them talking.

But one day the Princess heard them saying that they needed to be careful with the shapes they made because she would see them. She was a bit perplexed at this because she had thought they were making the shapes they wanted for themselves.

Nevertheless, the Princess continued to enjoy her cartwheeling activities, and began to get stronger and better able to balance for longer periods of time on her hands. She began to encourage her other teams to work differently too, to think out ideas for themselves - she hoped to see fewer headsprings and neck rolls, and more creative sequences of movement. She wanted them to share their support, like Hats were doing.

One day the Queen came to the gymnasium whilst The Princess was balancing on her hands.

"What on earth are you doing?" cried the Queen, who thought the Princess must have taken leave of her senses.

"Well," the Princess replied, finishing her cartwheel and holding her breath in some trepidation, "I've found a new way of going on. I'm engaging in a different perspective!"

"A different perspective!" murmured the Queen. "Whatever next!"

The Princess of Trampogymnastics peered from under the wide brim of her hat at her teams.

"I think my new perspective is good," she announced, "Just look at Hats over there - how much they are helping each other, and what interesting shapes they have made. And also, the Square Table team is beginning to think for itself."

Just then, the Princess remembered the conversation about Friend of Panama. She wondered how much Hats would want her to say about their shapes. She thought maybe they should keep to themselves the initial stages of the gymnastics and what they said to each other, but eventually, they would want to share their learning with other people because it was so exciting. That's what the Princess felt anyway.

The Queen shook her head quizzically as she walked away. But the Princess thought she had detected an uncertain smile of approval before she went.

"Only time will tell!" thought the Princess of Trampogymnastics, as she resumed her cartwheeling activities.

In September 1992 I had set up an action research group, to which any teacher who wanted to could come. The meetings were every fortnight, and were part of the official school calendar. My purpose in setting up the group was so that we could investigate and improve aspects of our practice with which we were not happy and to become a supportive community in which individuals would help each other to achieve the changes they wanted.

The action research group was different from Department A and from the Middle Management group because it was a group made of self-selected individuals. It was also different because all the initial members of the group enrolled for a Post Graduate Diploma in Action Research at Kingston University which Pamela Lomax and I had worked together to develop and get validated by the University.

The Post Graduate Diploma followed an action research methodology and was 'content free', with teachers selecting their own area of study, using experiential learning and working in collaboration with colleagues, to develop reflective practice. The main objective was to develop teaching or management skills; teachers were encouraged to ask questions about the work they were currently doing, to share ideas and feelings about their professional experiences, to try out alternative ways of doing things, to support others in their enquiries and to be supported by them, and to use new information in their search for better answers and more effective strategies.

The Diploma was supported by the school, financially through an 85% contribution towards the fees; in terms of time through planned meetings on the school calendar; and in the Management Plan through being part of the short and long term objectives. It was supported by Kingston University through its accreditation procedures, and through its network of action researchers, who met regularly at six weekly intervals, and to which I belong. My role as the School-based tutor was as a facilitator and co-researcher as we were all engaged in the process of self education.

The course was open for any teacher to join; the only prerequisite was an acknowledgement that he or she would make time for the work and the meetings. In the first group there were seven teachers out of a staff of approximately 60, and they chose their own topics to study. The topics during the first year included

- how can I improve my practice to become more student centred in my approach to my teaching?
- how can I manage my team of tutors more effectively?
- how can I become more confident in my English teaching so that pupils benefit from my new skills?
- how can I improve my personal organisational skills so that the pupils benefit from more effective marking and preparation?
- how can I teach Modern Languages through a less teacher-dominated methodology?

The topics were chosen and developed using story. Each teacher was encouraged to write a story about a pressing professional concern, and this was offered to the group for discussion. By the end of the discussion, there was plenty of food for thought, and the teacher could go away to reflect upon the experience and to decide on an area of enquiry to pursue. As the years have gone by, the teachers have become very skilled in analysing these stories through a dialectical approach, and have come to write and use more stories to explore further thinking about their situations.

During the years that the group has been meeting, we have discovered that

- we share a common purpose
- we work from our own value positions which we have made explicit
- we have the opportunity to interpret our own professional world
- we enter into dialogue with others about our experiences and interpretations
- we have the opportunity to support each other
- we are able to share feelings - celebrate achievement, offer encouragement, build confidence
- we recognise the importance of our previous experiences to our present thinking
- we interact amongst ourselves knowing that the leader is sharing similar research needs and activities.

We set up action research cycles, based on the approach of McNiff, Whitehead and Lomax, in which we moved from our concerns and value positions to plan our actions in order to change the situation. We used story to find a focus for our concerns, to establish our value positions, to depersonalise the situation and as a stimulus for discussion.

I amassed considerable data during my work with the action research group and have used this for two purposes:

- 1) to write an account of the educational journey upon which I embarked with the teachers in the group, and
- 2) with Pam Lomax, to examine our partnership in setting up the action research diploma and exploring aspects of our own learning in relation to its successful implementation.

#### The Educational Journey

My account of the educational journey is too extensive to include in total, so all but the introduction has been assigned to my archive. In writing this account, I intended that it should

- incorporate my thoughts, feelings - worries, excitements - interpretations, values, actions and reflections in relation to the many conversations in which we had engaged
- show the key part played by relationships and feelings in our learning
- be written in an easily accessible form, which would invite teachers to read it
- give opportunity for teachers to speak for themselves and be heard
- be an authentic record of our discussions - but edited, for ease of reading
- be checked out with the participants as being authentic

The story is about the people that the teachers are; it is about their values, experiences, feelings, thoughts, hopes and fears. I began writing the story in an attempt to plot our development as a group, but I eventually reached a point when I realised that the teachers were writing their own stories, and I

knew then that I could stop transcribing tapes of meetings and let them put into writing what they wanted to say. This was an exciting discovery, as it marked a more equal phase in our development

The story is an autobiographical account of my journey with the group in school, from the beginnings of the idea in June 1992 to now, during which time the participants come to learn about and to practise action research. It traces our understanding of the process of action research, and demonstrates the support and trust generated in the group, enabling us to explore tentative thoughts, to expose value conflicts and insecurities, to plan strategies for improving our professional practice, and to discuss outcomes.

I have written this story with the active agreement of the participants. With their permission, I taped each meeting, and all participants had access to the tapes. As our work developed, they took away the tapes to transcribe or to copy for their own purposes, before returning them for my record. I also kept a tape-recorded diary of events and of my reflections.

Much of the data for this account is taken directly from the tapes of the meetings and is complemented by the recorded events, and by my reflections. I have constructed our story in a manner which I hope is accessible to all readers, so that, rather than presenting the data as straightforward transcripts, I have adapted it slightly to improve the flow of words, and to enable the reader to understand my perceptions of the developments that I am recording. In the text, I have indicated - through footnotes - which parts are taken from tape-recorded meetings, which are events recorded in my diary, and which are my reflections.

In order to be sure that my perceptions were reasonably consistent with those of other members of the group, I have given each chapter to them for approval - or alteration - as I have gone along, and at the time of writing, there have been no problems. If there were, I am confident we would resolve them by negotiation.

A further check on what I am writing can be found in the archives of my enquiry. All members of the group have written their own action research accounts, and all apart from Fiona (who is submitting late, through illness), have achieved the Post Graduate Diploma. I think these accounts show the teachers' development, and also that of their students.

The action researchers are very happy for me to tell our story, because they recognise their substantial professional development which has happened over time, and are willing to share that with other people, if by doing so, they throw light upon the development of reflective, learning, and action oriented communities of teachers in schools. If their story will help other people, they are happy for it to be told.

In all my other stories, I have projected myself as Kate. In this, the final account, I am able to write it as an autobiography, entitled, 'My Eyes Have Become Different'.

Chapter One - The seed is planted

<sup>1</sup>Rose was off sick. She was sick in body and sick at heart. Her new job had not turned out quite as she had expected, and she found herself struggling - with the pupils, who were 'lively', and the departmental staff - all of whom were older than she was and yet she was the second in the department. She had a role of responsibility to play in the department, but it was hard to establish her credibility, because nearly all of her departmental colleagues had an even greater responsibility within the school, and so were more senior to her. Most of them were men, and the only two other women were very timid souls, who waited to be told before doing anything.

Rose drove herself hard. She had watched her Head of Department at her last school and all her previous colleagues at work, and she felt she matched up well to their standards, even though she was only just starting her teaching career. She wanted to move upwards through the promotion ladder, which was one of the reasons why she had applied for her present post after three years' teaching.

But she also carried around a lot of 'baggage' from her youth which sometimes weighed heavily upon her. Now was one of those times. She couldn't face the outside world.

People from school tried to contact her.

"I'm sorry," said her mother<sup>2</sup> - who had moved up from Wales to be with her at this time - "but Rose is asleep right now, and I don't want to disturb her."

"Of course not," the concerned caller would reply, "but do give her my best wishes and say I hope she'll be well soon."

After some weeks, she was able to emerge once more. She came in to school a little at a time, and eventually seemed to be on an even keel and returned to full time working.

\*\*\*\*\*

While Rose was away, the staff development group made a decision<sup>3</sup> to set up an action research group to start in September 1992. No-one in the group, except me, the leader, knew what action research was. It sounded good however. It was going to let teachers get together to talk about their practice and to make improvements where necessary. I was surprised they were so keen; I thought they had enough to do without adding to their busy lives. I also thought they had ample opportunities to talk in meetings about what they were doing, and that they wouldn't want more meetings. But I was wrong. There was a lot of discussion about how the action research group would be set up and who could come to it. I said anyone could come if they wanted to.

The meeting closed and I cleared up my things to take them next door to my office. Sarah followed me in.<sup>4</sup>

"I hope you don't mind," began Sarah, "But I was wondering. Would anybody be able to join the group, - not just those who perhaps are more advanced than others?"

"More advanced?" I replied, "What do you mean?"

"Well, I know this may sound strange, but I really would like to join, but I know I'm not quite as good as other people, and I thought that might be a bit of a bar to me being able to come."

"Sarah, I'm not judging how 'good' people are - whatever that means - I just said in the meeting, anyone can join....."

"Yes, I know that's what you said, but for instance, maybe if there were a lot of people who wanted to, you might have to limit them somehow, and you might just take those who are, well, sort of, more likely to be successful. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes," I replied, "I understand perfectly - and I'm saying to you there is no reason why you should not be able to join the group if you want to. I'm not going to select people for the group - if anyone wants to join it, they can. The only criteria for joining is being prepared to do the work that goes with it!"

---

<sup>1</sup> diary entry - discussions with Rose in March 1993

<sup>2</sup> diary entry - July 1992

<sup>3</sup> diary entry June 1992

<sup>4</sup> diary entry June 1992

"Oh, right, good, I'm pleased about that. I hope you didn't mind me asking, but it could mean so much to me. I haven't got a degree you know, and I feel most other people are much more qualified than me. I really do want to do it, although I have to say that I must be the longest serving student of the Open University - I think it's eighteen years and I still haven't got the degree! I hope I shall be able to do this Diploma. Do you think we'll be successful at it?"

"Well," I said, suddenly struck with the awesomeness of responsibility for the aspirations of another, "I sincerely hope so. The only possible stumbling block that I can see is lack of time to do the work. But we'll have to plan carefully what we need to do, and then this shouldn't be such a problem."

"Oh, I see, yes, I might need to reorganise some of my priorities. Thank you so much, I am looking forward to it," said Sarah, gathering up her many pieces of paper and books. She disappeared down the corridor.

\*\*\*\*\*<sup>5</sup>I was just settling down to shuffle the papers around my desk and set up the cover list for tomorrow, when Fiona appeared at the door.

"I'd really like to do that action research," she said. "I was thinking, I could do it on my sixth form tutor group."

"Oh, yes," I replied, "It could be a good thing for you. You've seemed so much happier recently."

"Yes, well I made up my mind, you know, when my back was bad and I thought I might have to give up altogether. I was determined not to give in, and I've been really pleased with myself since then. I've hardly had any time off - even though sometimes I have to drag myself in. But I really want to come - I do so like working on the CPVE - or the Diploma as I suppose I should call it now."

I thought about Fiona for a moment. I was a bit surprised that she wanted to do the action research diploma, as she already had a higher degree, and she did have this real problem with her back, which must make life difficult from time to time. But I was pleased, because she always seemed to want to be more involved in the life of the school than she currently was, and perhaps this would be a good opportunity for her. Certainly it would enable her to mix with a wider group of colleagues - sixth form tutors and teachers tended to be a bit exclusive!

"Yes," I replied, "You could do your action research on your role with the sixth formers - the action research needs to be about you, rather than on them, - it's your actions we'd be interested in - but you could collect data about their responses to you perhaps?"

"I'll go away and think about it. I just wanted you to know that I want to do it!"

Fiona treated me to one of her bright smiles and probing looks.

"Good, I'll be pleased to see you there!" I said, turning reluctantly back to my papers.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was September 16th, 1992, and the first meeting<sup>6</sup> of the action research group was in progress. I had planned for this carefully as I realised that if what I said didn't appeal to those present, then I wouldn't get volunteers to take part. I found it quite hard to explain action research; in a way, the concept sounded reasonably simplistic - that you identify an aspect of your practice which you want to improve, then plan strategies, carry them out, collect data of your observations, reflect on these and then replan. It always seemed to me that this was what conscientious teachers did as a matter of course, so why should I make a big deal of it? However, most teachers don't write about their reflections, and many of them don't read around the subject of their concern. In fact, one of the main differences between action researchers and teachers who evaluate their work less formally is that action researchers stand back from the scene of their concern and give themselves the opportunity to reflect, not only on what is happening in their teaching or managing activities, but also, reflect upon themselves, trying to understand themselves and their actions better.

It was only much later on, when I myself had done some more reading<sup>7</sup>, that I realised the significance of Donald Schön's expressions, reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action, and I came to see that you

---

<sup>5</sup> diary entry June 1992

<sup>6</sup> Tape 4, September 16th 1992

<sup>7</sup> Transfer report, Chapter 1, June 1993

*reflect-in-action if you think about what you are teaching as you are doing it, whereas, you reflect-on-action if you stand back, giving yourself the advantage of space from the action and perhaps the opportunity to hear other people's views about what is happening. Reflection enables you to 'reframe' your thinking - to make a shift from one set of guiding principles to a slightly different set - one that is more congruent with your set of values. You begin to see the world differently.*

*"The action research diploma," I said to the group<sup>8</sup>, "has been set up in co-operation with Kingston University, and will take a year to complete, but then you have a further year to write it up if you need that. But, I hope we shall be writing as we are going along, so that should not be such a problem."*

*"How many words does it have to be?"*

*"I think it's about 10 000, but you will find that as soon as you start doing things, you will have plenty to say - you needn't worry about the number of words! I think it's more important at this stage to sort out in your minds, the nature of action research. I would expect you to start by knowing that you are concerned about some aspect of what you do - that it doesn't sit easily with your values - you feel uncomfortable with what you are doing and you want to change your way of going about things.*

*It could, for instance, be something like, you know you should give your attention evenly to each member of the class, but you think that, often, you do seem to spend more time sorting out the boys, or attending to their needs in some way, to the detriment of your attention to the girls. You would then need to plan what to do about it, and how you could monitor what you do; you need to make observations, on which you can reflect, to see whether what you have done makes any difference."*

*There was a general discussion as people tried to get their minds around the idea. Eventually, I asked for comments from each of them as to what they thought of it all so far.*

*"I'm really looking forward to getting in to it," said Nicole. "I'm doing my appraisal - with you as you know, of course, - and I'm looking at how I manage my team! What I thought I could do was to use the appraisal as a support for my action research, and the other way round - I would hope to improve my management skills through action research which will in turn help me to achieve the targets set in my appraisal. I think I should get some useful feedback from the data that you're collecting - would I be able to use that in my action research?"*

*I thought she would, and was pleased to hear such a positive response. I hadn't really thought of the appraisal link before, but of course, action research could be a very useful structure in the school to support the appraisal process. I was interested to hear Nicole talk about appraisal in public - we had only just started it, and most people were being quite secretive about it; the staff development group, who were responsible for drawing up the appraisal system, had been careful to stress the confidentiality of the process. It was good to hear that Nicole was not afraid to talk about it to the others.*

*Rose made a contribution to the group at this stage. I had been surprised and a little concerned to see that Rose had chosen to come - I was concerned lest Rose should subject herself to too much pressure so soon after her illness. Rose talked about her MA which she was part way through. She thought the action research would help her - it would provide the opportunity to stimulate her thinking and she could maybe use what she did to add to her higher degree studies.*

*Henry floored everyone at this stage.*

*"I'm doing a PH D," he said, "And I think this group might be useful for me to bounce ideas around before I use them in my thesis."*

*"Mmm," I said, "Remember action research is about looking at one's own practice with a view to improving it."*

*I was concerned that all this talk of higher degrees would be off putting to those like Sarah and Jemma who already felt disadvantaged because they didn't have a first degree, never mind anything else! I asked Jemma for her thoughts on what she had heard so far.*

---

<sup>8</sup> Tape 4, September 16th 1992

"Well," said Jemma, "I don't know what I'm doing here! I'm way out of my depth. I don't think I can cope. In any event, at the moment, I've got so much to do with starting teaching English, when for years I've been out of a classroom and teaching PE - I'm finding it really hard.

For instance I've got to read something like twenty eight books that we've got in the stock cupboard, so that I shall know which is the best one to choose for my classes."

I heard this with some dismay. I had worked with Jemma for some time now, and had always seen her as a competent, cheerful teacher, who coped more than adequately, and in an organised way, with her work load. I sensed others in the group moving in to support Jemma. There were three other English teachers present, and each of them tried to allay Jemma's misgivings. Fiona made a practical suggestion.

"If you really feel you must know what each of the books is about, why don't you take one book from the top of each of the twenty eight piles and give them to one of your classes to read and review? That way, you've only got twenty eight pieces of writing to read, and you'll know what is in each book."

That seemed to me to be a good idea, but Jemma wasn't convinced. After the meeting had finished, Nicole and Jemma stopped on to talk to me. Jemma was considerably distressed. She wasn't sure she was capable of doing the diploma, and she wasn't sure that she had time to do it. She was also finding her English teaching very stressful.

"I understand how you might feel about the English teaching," I said. "As you know, I was also a PE teacher before I turned into a maths one - and I found it incredibly hard. I wasn't expecting it to be so hard, because when you teach PE you think of yourself as being well organised - in the way of control - controlling groups of children, and controlling equipment; controlling the beginnings and ends of lessons and so on - and consequently getting the best out of the pupils. But when you get into a classroom, somehow it is different. It's different motivating children and getting good results from them. And I felt very insecure about my subject knowledge to begin with, and just very inexperienced, despite my twenty five years in the job!"

"Yes, I feel like that now. I can't get the children to behave as I want them to, and I know some of them don't do enough work, and I have to try different ways of cajoling them. And I don't think it should be like that; if my lessons were good enough, they would be keen to take part, and I wouldn't have to force them so much," replied Jemma.

"Well, why don't you use this group to help you sort it out - you could focus on some aspect of your English teaching?" I suggested.

"I could do, but I feel I should be able to do it - everybody will think I'm terrible if I keep coming and saying I can't do this and I can't do that!"

Nicole interrupted with "But as you go along, you will set things up that you will be successful with, so you will be able to tell us about your successes."

"Mmm" said Jemma. "I'll think about it."

\*\*\*\*\*

I met Jemma the next day in the English corridor, and we began to talk<sup>9</sup>. We found somewhere a little more private as Jemma explored her concerns about her problems in teaching English, and her loss of confidence now that she had more or less given up teaching PE. She felt so deskilled, and found it hard to come to terms with this feeling as she was such an experienced teacher.

She had been teaching for about fifteen years, and had been successful, particularly enjoying her contact with children and the friendliness which they show through the many informal contacts which are established in the lessons and in the extra curricular activities.

---

<sup>9</sup> diary entry, September 17th 1992

Jemma was also into the 'either - or' syndrome. Either you will do this as I want it done, or we won't do it at all! The children respond to this in the gymnasium, or on the field, because most of them enjoy PE and want to do well. But Jemma found such ultimatums less effective in the classroom, and also she was teaching boys for the first time, in demanding circumstances.

"I've made lots of mistakes last year," she said, "But I know how I'm going to change some of these for this year. I think it's also important to get myself better organised - the marking takes me so long - probably because I haven't been used to it. But I've been thinking - I should like to give the action research a go - but I haven't got a degree, and all the rest of the group must be better qualified than I am, talking about MAs and PHDs - I don't know if I'm clever enough - do you know what I mean?"

"Of course you're clever enough Jemma," I replied. "In any event, one of the great things about action research is that we pick it up from where we are now, and it's a matter of looking at ourselves and being committed to improving what we can, with support from other people. You'll have to do some reading, and writing - which you may not be used to just now - but everyone will also have to be doing that. Action research is so appealing because the subject you're studying is you yourself - not English, or statistics or whatever. So if you really want to do it, you'll be fine - and you will have the support of the group."

<sup>10</sup>I went away from this meeting feeling pleased that we had had the opportunity to talk, but worried about whether Jemma would have time to do her action research. However, that was not my decision to make, and I could see that Jemma might benefit a lot from being involved. I would need to help Jemma - and the others - in coming to a focus as quickly as possible, so as to get the greatest use from the time we had available.

On thinking about finding a focus, I was reminded of Richard Winter's work on fictional critical writing, which I had used recently. I remembered that Winter had used fictional writing with his MA students to enable them to come to a research focus and remembered particularly the 'Fable' by Rose Thorne, in which Dean Baker's clothes get thrown into the swimming pool, clog up the Corporation's filter system and Dean's school file gets thrown in the Headteacher's waste paper bin and no-one ever hears about him again.

<sup>11</sup>I decided to introduce the group to fictional critical writing at the next meeting, using the story of Dean Baker as an example.

---

<sup>10</sup> my reflections

<sup>11</sup> my plan of actio

The action research group had been discussing one of their stories - Henry's story 'A Matter of Policy', and other matters, and wanted me to listen to the tape afterwards. I heard them making comments which revealed their insecurity about their skills in writing, and about whether they should have let the 'Deputy Head' know what they were thinking.

I was somewhat perplexed by this and I felt I wanted them to know some of what I was feeling. I thought their conversation brought into play the status differential between them and me, which I had thought had not been an issue as we had developed group understanding and loyalty. I felt that I wanted them to know that I also was putting my practice on the line in the way in which I was working with them, and maybe they hadn't realised that I had relinquished my deputy head role in favour of being a fellow action researcher - a much more experienced one admittedly, but none-the-less a researcher even so. I was not always sure of 'the answers' - for instance, I was not sure that writing stories was a 'good' thing to do - but I was finding out that it seemed to be a very beneficial process. I think I felt that we had built up considerable trust between us all but that this was brought into question by the comments they had made on the occasion when I hadn't been there.

So I contemplated how I could convey all this in a story, for in writing a story myself, I would be saying to them, 'Look, I am one of you, and this is what I think!' It came to me in a series of images - of teams - my teams - my teams of teachers, but also - my teams of pupils from previous years of teaching physical education. I got to thinking about how my teams had looked, and what they had done, and how pleased I had been with them! I pictured them in the gymnasium of the school which had a door to the playground that was never used. Against this door, other pupils would come at lunch time and press their faces to see what we were doing. The pupils had become very skilled at gymnastics and trampolining, and were able to perform splendid routines - which included headsprings and neck rolls, backward and forward somersaults and so on. But we also taught them creative, - or educational - gymnastics, which I believe was a real front-runner in terms of comprehensive education and equal opportunities for all, and provided a marvellous learning environment in which pupils could answer tasks according to their skills and inclination, developing confidence as they went along, rather than being forced into all doing the same thing, and having to recognise that some of them couldn't achieve

what others could. Anyone who wanted to could come to these lunchtime sessions - they weren't restricted to the teams - and the pupils worked at what they wanted to improve, so they could choose their own apparatus. They learned to help each other, and sometimes to work in groups supporting each other to achieve interesting balances.

In my role at Roseacre, I had responsibility for certain teams. The action research group was not a team, in the accepted sense of the word, so I pictured them as wearing different hats - if they had been a team, they would all have worn the same. In my fantasy, the act of cartwheeling indicated that the Princess had overturned her customary way of working with her teams, and the interaction with the Queen showed that she was not sure what the Queen would have said had she known exactly the space and freedom the Princess was giving her group. On the whole, the Queen expected things to be done in certain ways, and the Princess was not sure that she would easily have accommodated the Princess's 'new perspective'.

Looking at my story, I see that it enabled me to give voice to the theories which have arisen from my practice - but which were only put into words as I wrote the story, and then not made explicit until I analysed what I had written. These were understandings I had made through my work with this group of people, and I presume this has become part of my tacit knowledge. By making this public, I am expressing what I know about my practice.

Carter (1993 p6) referred to 'story as a Mode of Knowing'. She pointed to 'an intrinsic multiplicity of meanings' and claimed that

The knowledge represented in story cannot, therefore, be reduced to abstract rules, logical propositions, or the covering laws of scientific explanation. Indeed stories seem to resist such singular interpretations, and thus cannot be subsumed into what Bruner (1985) called paradigmatic knowledge. To elaborate an example Bruner used, paradigmatic or scientific

explanation requires consistency and noncontradiction. Story, on the other hand, accommodates ambiguity and dilemma as central figures or themes.

My story, 'From under a wide brim' has plenty of ambiguity, and a central dilemma - which concerned the trust the group had in each other and in me. The ambiguities are wrapped up in the fictional part of the story, whilst the reality is only for the author, and even then, there is a shifting of reality as the author comes to look at things from a different perspective - from the discussion which arises amongst the readers of the story.

Mitchell (1981) expressed the view that 'story is a mode of knowledge emerging from action', and Carter argued that because action 'in a situation is subject to a multiplicity of influences, it is often complex and unpredictable. Thus, story, with its multiplicity of meanings, is a suitable form for expressing the knowledge which arises from action.' The action, in the case of 'From under a wide brim', was my work with the action research group. I gave the story to them so that, together, we could explore the possible meanings of the dilemma which concerned me. I am reproducing some of their comments below, taken from the tape of the meeting on December 2nd, 1992. (M is me; also present are S, N, F - all female, and H, male).

*N princess is standing a bit back from all this because she 'heard them saying they need to be careful about the shape they made' - but she'd been the person to encourage them to make these shapes in the first place*

*H it comes over as being a very personal thing between them and the princess, and until you get down to the bit further down between the princess and the queen there's no suggestion that the hats look at the princess as a channel to a higher authority, but that could be the reason why they didn't want the princess to see them doing what they were doing*

*M I don't follow that*

*H there's a sentence in here 'she was a bit perplexed..' That suggests a very personal thing between the hats and the princess, they're almost equals, but one is being shut out, and is perplexed. Now if you were talking about the princess being a link to a higher authority, so they were concerned about what messages were being passed by the princess, it would make more sense, and I find it interesting that the queen comes in which is a new idea at this point - if it said, 'she was perplexed but wondered if they thought that she would tell the queen about what they were doing' I think that's a*

*different kind of meaning from the meaning which is in here, which seems a very personal one like a clash of equals, sort of thing.*

M *so are you saying that she shouldn't have been perplexed, or that she was passing on things to the queen or what? Or that the queen shouldn't have been coming along and seeing, or the queen should have known everything anyhow.....*

H *I think that, as a story, that section is unresolved because we don't know why the hats didn't want her to see - what we know is that she was upset by that*

M *but why do you think the hats didn't want her to see the shapes they made?*

S *it's to do with people's perspectives I think, because Hats may think they have to be seen in a particular shape, and they're much more fluid than the fabric would suggest, and obviously enjoyed a bit of experimentation and perhaps they worry because they might not be orthodox - so they are apprehensive because they might have been doing this so positively that they've actually been doing some free shaping - if one can have that image - and well, when's a balaclava not a balaclava? Perhaps when it's being stretched in a different direction?*

N *but hats are developing and teams are mentioned and this new shape they are making and getting to know each other and they realised how important the other hat was for them to do that, - they weren't sure - they weren't having the exchange to discover that - they were still not sharing what they needed to share to make these shapes fully supported*

M *so hats themselves weren't sure of each other?*

N *no*

S *so is one of the objectives to accommodate each other without making the others misshapen? Because they said don't move or we'll fall, you've got all the different shapes there, and some are seemingly more able to go into a free shape than others, others will have these domes and other aspects about them, so is it that some of this assembly is difficult because people are wanting to be part of the assembly but are conscious of what their shape is apart from this assembly and they're worried that their own shape is going to be lost.*

M *I don't know, is that what they might think?*

N *I can't carry the analogy like Sarah can, so I'll be a bit more literal here. I think of it as team work. Here seems to be a group of things, let's say people who are trying to do something different and they're exploring and making discoveries and realising how much support they have from other members of the team, but they're not too sure whether everybody is feeling the same - they're a bit nervous, perhaps because they're still developing this team - they're nervous about anyone else coming in as well, they don't want friend of Panama coming in because they're still exploring themselves and their own relationships, so there's uneasiness there about the role of the princess as well - perhaps that's why they're suddenly going off and - because presumably princess would be very happy for them to go off and make their shapes and so on because that's what she wants them to do*

S *yes, if you think of these hats as people, ( general laughter and agreement) if you think of a garment, a garment can be turned inside out, and if that extended to the people in the process of their*

*reshaping, they may show more of their underside than they would normally be showing to the public, and in so doing, although it's a supportive team - certainly one can see the condition of the wearer, perhaps, and it does expose a lot of other things, - so perhaps hats, and people, are a bit sensitive about their team shaping because in the process you're seeing all these other things, which as a team you're very supportive of but you have to have tremendous confidence for it to be a display for anyone to see, and .....*

(Taken from audiotape number 15, 2.12.92)

### About the ethics - again!

H            *it does raise another issue doesn't it, that we've got to be careful of - from an ethical point of view if we're sharing things in this forum that we're not prepared to share with other people outside, who are involved - that's another interesting issue*

N            *but how involved? Who else needs to be involved in the conversation with Sarah about her feelings?*

H            *well I was thinking about your story for instance - you were talking about people you work with - I mean I didn't know enough about the people to identify them - as far as I was concerned we were talking about characters you could find in any school, but if you were one of those people and you discovered you were being talked about in a forum and not on a one to one, that's an ethical issue, isn't it?*

N            *I'm not sure - perhaps it's an ethical issue, but what I didn't want was for it to be misinterpreted, because my story was written for me, and the focus in my story was Owl*

M            *and your story was a story, it was something you made up, like my story was a story that I made up - it hasn't happened. What you're saying about talking outside these meetings, what was your perception then of what we should talk to the queen about? Are you saying that now I would need to go to the queen and say, look we've talked about such and such?*

H            *.....it worries me if we are discussing other people*

M            *but you've been there, have we discussed other people?*

H            *well I felt that Nicole's one, there were people saying well I know who this is and I know who that is - I was just looking at it and saying, I've come across people like that in schools - I know what they're like .....*

S            *and I didn't even know the author was you, so I didn't at all*

H            *but there were other people there who said, 'I know who all these people are'....it's just something you've got to be aware of, it doesn't mean you cut off all that discussion - I would hope that when you talk to the queen you say we've had an interesting discussion, we talked about a lot of things,*

*we did talk a lot about Sarah's story which was a very interesting road we went down, because we discussed Sarah's problems*

*M Right - but that shifts the emphasis away from talking about people who are not in the room and I would contend that although we have mentioned people who aren't in the room this evening in the context of being in the stories, we haven't actually talked about them in the sense of if you go back to the science department and say 'oh we talked about so and so last night in our meeting' - that would be totally erroneous, because I do not believe that that's what we've been doing*

*H but I think that's something we should have in our minds the whole time we're talking - we've got to keep that distinction.*

(Taken from audiotape number 15, 2.12.92)

I have been attempting to answer some of my dilemmas in using story as a mode of coming to know my practice as an educational leader, through writing about my experiences. I still find it difficult to answer the questions I posed in chapter 5 -

- Is it right to use my experiences to write a story about people with whom I work?
- Do I need to ask their permission before, during or after my writing?
- Should I negotiate the story with them?
- If it might upset them, should I keep it to myself?
- If it might upset them, should I not write it at all?

and I am reminded of a (recorded) discussion at the close of my validation meeting on July 10th 1993.

The issue of truth - or reality - and whether this should be negotiated amongst those about whom the story is written, was raised. Despite all my work on story, and my searching for clear cut answers to this problem, I am still in the position of thinking that if there is an answer, it has eluded me so far. I am somewhat reassured by Burgess (1989:8) who pointed to the fact that there were no 'solutions' to the ethical problems of researchers, but that they needed to be reflective in developing further understandings of the ethical implications of their work. My first story 'The Canterbury Tales' remains un-negotiated, but the insights I have gained from it are significant. I have already made my case as to why I do not intend to negotiate the story, but had I not written it because I 'should' have negotiated it, I may not have benefited from these insights - I may not have realised the significance of Eloise's 'unreadiness', Schön's reframing, my own underlying motivations and so on. I think that, in the same

way as stories have multiple interpretations, so the ethical issue is multidimensional, and cannot be simply resolved.

The following discussion took place on July 10th 1993, and picks up some of the points about reality and story. (Those who contributed to this part of the debate were - P, I, -both female, B, J, both male, and M - me).

P            *But true is true and one knows that true doesn't exist, does it? .....the mistake is to think that if what (other people) say is different from us, we're wrong - I don't think we can accept that, because there's no true, but **it's very important that we can recognise that there are alternatives**, and I think subjecting your story to other people exposes it to the possibilities in the world and it might change your mind about things or it might not.*

I            *What's the point in subjecting it to other people if you have no intention of it letting you change what you think?*

P            *No, I'm not saying you have no intention, - you have or you needn't - **what you have is enabling you to recognise alternative positions, which may or may not inform the next stage of your work.***

B            *But if you work together as a team, there has to be some form of consensual negotiation in what seems to be a reasonable reality*

P            *These are your rules B - you're laying down rules when M is exploring possibilities - you're saying what ought to be the case - if you have an open mind whereby you don't know that - then you can leave it open*

J            *And on this contentious issue, after all, that is where we are in terms of this research, - these are fundamental questions on the nature of knowledge and the claims that are being made*

P            *and we don't know and one of the most interesting things in M's account is the work she's been doing on 'reframing'.....but that understanding which comes out of looking with an open mind, with a question rather than an answer .....that notion of being able to move and change what one thinks - which is what action researchers do, don't we - how do we change when other people don't?*

M            *Yes, I think that's one of the fundamental questions that I want to look at because that's one of the places we're at at the moment, - we've got lots of people who are asking questions of their practice but we've still got some who are not, and who are still saying the same things as they were saying five years ago or whatever, - and how can you get them to move to just see there might be other ways of doing things or thinking differently from how they are - how can you challenge them in what they're saying.....*

(Taken from audiotape number 67, 10.7.93).

I believe that story is a powerful means by which one can challenge taken for granted assumptions; that as Noddings (1991 p157) said, 'Stories have the power to direct and change our lives'. But if we are too frightened to use them because we have not resolved all the issues surrounding them, then we will close down a rich opportunity to come to know, and change, our practice. Rather than getting hooked onto the truth/reality debate, I would prefer to use stories as Pam Lomax suggested in the validation meeting discussion, that 'what you have in and through stories enables you to recognise alternative positions, which may or may not inform the next stage of your work.'

### The Partnership

An interesting aspect of this research is my relationship with my main supervisor, Pam Lomax. Her view of action research and the values that underpin it have been formative influences on my own development as an action researcher. She has often claimed that as a teacher she aims to promote the independence and autonomy of the learner; and this has been mirrored in her view of action research as participative, collaborative and empowering. It requires an action researcher to share ownership of the research with others.

But the learner who would be autonomous frequently exists within a hierarchical relationship to the facilitator of her learning and this causes dilemmas which can be difficult to resolve. This was seen in the story of the Princess. The Princess set up a learning community, and the learners grew excited by what they were doing, but suddenly they became aware of the hierarchical nature of their relationship to the Princess, and were shy about showing her themselves 'in the process of their reshaping' because they felt exposed and vulnerable. As Sarah said 'you have to have tremendous confidence for it to be a display for anyone to see'. But despite the fact that the Princess was in a hierarchical relationship to them, she also wanted to give them freedom to find their own authentic knowledge, and they gradually came to know that this was what she was doing. The Princess herself was in a chain of hierarchical relationships, from the Queen to the Princess to the Hats to 'the Other People'. One of the aspects of this that the Princess was keen to explore from her new perspective was whether it was possible to exist within a hierarchical structure, while still giving other people genuine freedom to develop ownership of

their learning; whether it was possible to live the value of learners owning their learning whilst being in this kind of relationship to them. It is here that the discussion on 'power' in Blackmore (1989:93-129) is so interesting, as she reconceptualises power as empowering people rather than dominating 'from the front'. The concept of Hargreaves' (1992:233-4) 'collaborative cultures' (or 'genuine collegiality') is also relevant, as he talked of building 'openness, trust and support' in professional communities, but warned that this takes time, and could have unpredictable outcomes. It was how to move from being 'in control' of teachers' learning to enabling them to want to take ownership of their own development that occupied much of my thinking in this enquiry.

A fundamental part of Lomax's view of action research is that the self is the focus of the enquiry and the ultimate question is what have I learned and changed about myself from this study? In seeking to know about 'myself', I and the teachers at Roseacre have followed closely the six principles that Lomax sees as structuring her own form of action research. I will now show how our partnership developed through using these principles.

Principle no.1 - action research is about seeking improvement by intervention in such a way that what counts as improvement is addressed and routine everyday practice is transformed as praxis, which is morally committed action.

I was seeking to make improvements to two main areas of my practice

- my time management skills to enable me to stand back and reflect on my work
- my support of colleagues

Lomax, in discussing the Total Quality Management (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993) approach to school improvement pointed to the need to realise the centrality of values in identifying and putting in place changes to practice. 'Deciding how to improve professional practices such as teaching is much more difficult than implementing technical improvement because what counts as improvement will be influenced by informed professional judgements that are made within particular professional contexts.'

(Lomax 1994b:3) She talked of the need to change practice into praxis 'which is morally committed action' (Carr 1987).

The two areas of practice I wanted to improve were of very different kinds - one was a technical matter of identifying time management skills and making mechanical adjustments in order to give myself more time for reflection (as described in Chapter 3), whereas the other, improving my support for colleagues, was a much more fundamental change and led to praxis in which I wanted my values, intentions and outcomes all to be internally consistent. The professional judgements which led me to change my practice emanated from my reflections on my action research cycle 'The Canterbury Tales'. I came to recognise that my colleagues were experiencing my support as 'paternalistic' - I was doing something 'to them', whereas I had wanted to give the teachers the opportunity of taking control of their own learning. Insofar as my intentions were not being lived out in my practice, I was living this part of my life as a contradiction, without realising it.

I gained an understanding of 'reframing' (chapter 8), and recognised that one only reframes if the current frame is uncomfortable, and then only in small steps as one gradually understands more and more. I began to think a lot more carefully about how to help teachers develop their knowledge of teaching, and felt that I was gradually reframing my approach to the problem as I was opening up opportunities to middle managers to learn by giving them the story 'Just Tell Me What To Do!' for reflection and discussion. By identifying a problem which was greatly concerning me and others in the school, I thought I was enabling my colleagues to get involved creatively in solving it. Similarly with the Heads of Year, I opened the agendas of our meetings far more, and came with a reasonably open mind as to how we could deal with situations. My intention was that we should work together in a genuine team effort, and maintain corporate responsibility for the decisions we took - all within the context of the School Development Plan.

But I only fully understood how to enable teachers to 'own their own learning' when I started to work with the action research group. What I meant by 'owning their learning' was that teachers would identify their own concerns about improving their practice and then be independently proactive in

searching for solutions with appropriate support from colleagues. This was my own experience of how I 'owned' my learning, and it indicated success for Pam Lomax's approach to teaching in promoting 'the independence and autonomy of the learner'. Although the teachers in Department A had found the INSET sessions useful and valued the opportunity to get together, they didn't take control of the learning because the agenda for the meetings mostly came from Harriet and me, and they saw themselves as receivers of knowledge rather than generators of it. Similarly with the middle managers. Although I gave them greater freedom in contributing to the solutions of problems and in planning for the future, I, as the leader, was still 'controlling' in a fairly traditional manner. It was the action researchers who showed me that it was possible in schools to let teachers take control of their learning and to set up the support they needed in order to explore their values, practice, experiences and thinking before planning how to move forward to address their concerns.

In judging my action research against the criteria Lomax set out in her paper, 'Standards, Criteria and the Problematic of Action Research...' (1994a:117) I think I have explained the research context and made my educational intentions clear. I want my action research to 'build upon democratic and co-operative human relationships and to contribute to their development' and I hope I am doing that through enabling the action researchers to work together within a supportive framework. I think that the trust generated within the group and their feeling of autonomy in developing their own knowledge override their feelings about the hierarchical nature of the relationship between them and me.

Principle no.2 - action research involves the researcher as the central focus of the investigation, researching practices that are integral to their professional values so that the research is truly formative, facilitating changes as part of the process itself, not as a result.

My enquiry involved a lot of people - Department A, middle managers, and the action research group that I established, not to mention other teachers who became drawn into the action as participants talked about what they were doing, and asked for critical feedback on their actions. It involved the Headteacher and the other two Deputies who all discussed many aspects of what I was doing with me, and who were central in supporting me in my enquiry. But the fundamental part of the research

always came back to me, as I struggled with my values and whether I was truly living them out in my practice - in particular, whether I was providing the kind of support for teachers which enabled them to develop as autonomous learners.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 are key chapters. In Chapter 4, I pursue the issue of support given to teachers in Department A, through our inservice programme, and whether it was effective. For instance, to all intents and purposes, the programme should have been useful for all participants, but in the event, we did not realise that we had not taken into account the need to differentiate the in-service work we did. In Chapter 5, I debate an ethical dilemma I found very hard to resolve in my work with this Department. The dilemma here was whether it was ethical to reflect back to the Head of Department her less-than- satisfactory performance, in the hope that this would help her to see where she needed to change her practice, and bearing in mind the interests of the democratic principles of action research in which all participants have the right of access to the data collected, or whether this would simply exacerbate the difficulties under which she was labouring at the time, and so should be left unsaid.

Throughout the study, I continue to explore my difficulties in conceptualising teachers' learning, and how I could set up effective in-service training programmes. This issue becomes crystallised into the building up of trust within our action research group, and particularly my dilemma in developing a collegial approach to research within the context of a hierarchically structured school, of which I am a senior manager.

One of the points of real interest to me, as I look back over the work I have done during the last four years, is the metamorphosis which I have been through and which is seen clearly in the development of my writing. I believe I started from a far less problematic 'I' as I assessed and decided upon my concerns, and straightforwardly set about reconciling the value conflict I perceived. As I progressed through the enquiry however, the 'I' I started with turned into my other self - Kate - the one who was pulling herself aside and struggling with the value conflicts, the dilemmas, the problematics of practice, while the day to day work of the Deputy Head went on, informed by Kate's thoughts. It was as if I was not yet ready to open myself to a new way of working or to expose my thinking to the outside world,

and so I projected myself through my alias. By the time I reached the final part of my thesis, 'My Eyes Have Become Different', I had come through a difficult journey, but at last I was able to emerge as me, and I could acknowledge my own perspective and be happy to 'own' it. This story was written as an autobiography, and it celebrates the great achievements of the members of the group, but also gives voice to the concept of the 'emerging I'.

Lomax asked (1994a:123) 'are the outcomes significant?' I think I have shown that they are particularly significant for teachers' learning, as I, and the action researchers, have recognised the importance of beginning from the teachers' value positions, rather than from the values imposed by me. I have been very pleased with this as an outcome, because it has given 'staff development' a completely new dimension in our school. No longer am I feeling an expectation to transmit knowledge to teachers, because I am confident that developing ownership of learning is a fundamental and viable approach to teachers' development. Those who completed the Diploma demonstrated in their Post Graduate accounts the excitement they have experienced through this form of learning. Unfortunately not all the staff are involved as action researchers, although many have contributed to the debates through the appraisal process, validation meetings or informal discussions. I am looking for opportunities to develop the work further by including other colleagues, by encouraging 'founder action researchers' to teach others, and by making links with the school programme of induction.

I think I have demonstrated that my learning is significant through my earlier discussion about the emerging 'I', and the evidence is to be found in my stories. I have recognised my own autonomy in learning, and have been helped along the way by the process of reflexive and dialectical critique.

Principle no. 3 - action research is participatory and others are involved as co-researchers rather than informants, so that critical communities of people are formed.

The story of my action enquiry tells of my development in understanding how to persuade teachers to become co-researchers. When I started my work with Department A, I thought I was involving the teachers as participants in the action and - therefore - as co-researchers. I discovered that involving

teachers as participants in my research enquiry was not too difficult, but involving teachers in developing their own research enquiries is a different matter altogether. Department A was happy to go through the motions of working with me, but it was not until some of them joined the action research group a year later that any of them really became co-researchers in their own right. Maybe one of the significant things in this is that they came to the action research group voluntarily, and asked their own questions - their starting point was their concerns - it was not from within a project which had been imposed upon them.

Chapter 7 has been an account of the development of the action research group. Having worked with Department A over a period of two years (Chapter 4) and having explored my concerns about the effectiveness of in-service training and how people learn with the middle management groups (Chapter 6), and my worries about opening agendas for participants to take greater control of their learning, I felt ready to let the action research group develop as the participants wanted.

Until this time I had felt the need to maintain quite close control of my management of teams, but I was beginning to see that to engender greater participation and commitment to institutional development, I needed to give opportunities for real ownership of the activities to the people who made up those teams. This was quite a change of leadership style for me, and in the culture of the school. I expressed some of my fears about this in my fictional story 'From Under a Wide Brim' which introduces Chapter 7.

The action researchers came to the meetings because they wanted to, and they took control of their learning; I was a co-researcher who shared my work with them, as they were doing with me. Although I wasn't in a position to talk completely openly about all my work, the part that involved them - the story of 'My Eyes Have Become Different' was open and fully negotiated. I will return to this issue of relationship between teacher and student when I consider how my work with my supervisor has developed, at the end of this chapter.

Principle no. 4 - action research is a rigorous form of enquiry leading to the development of theory from practice.

Action research is subjective, in that the researcher is a part of the action herself rather than detached from it and merely observing it. This is its strength - to experience things directly and know them immediately. I am able to challenge my subjective views, however, through the process which Winter (1989:39-44) has described as reflexive critique. Reflexive critique holds that judgements about data collected are made through the experiences, values and personal interpretations of the people concerned, and do not stand, therefore, as incontrovertible facts. This is why it is important for the action researcher to make her work open to the critique of others who might see things from a different standpoint and therefore interpret them differently.

This is what I did through story writing. I drew many of my stories from tape-recorded data. In listening to and reflecting on the tapes I became more aware of the dilemmas which perplexed me and I noted them in my diary. Then I sought ways of representing them through stories, so that instead of saying directly what was troubling me, I wrapped up my worries in fiction which I then gave to others to read. The most productive responses were always when 'the group' talked through the story, rather than made interpretations. So they talked about Eloise, or about Adele or about the Princess. Productive discussions were always about people and how they reacted to certain situations, and how they related to others in the story. These were my opportunities to test out what I had written into the story. What did other people think? They didn't know what Adele really thought and felt, or the contradictions which were going round in her mind, they could only respond to what I had written into the story. And they responded from their own frame; from their own experiences and moral viewpoints. By listening to what they said, I could evaluate their responses against my data and my thoughts; I had the opportunity to see other frames through their eyes, and to wonder whether I wanted to shift into a different frame or not. For instance, I engaged in discussions with the Headteacher about my thoughts on 'The Canterbury Tales'; with researchers at Conferences, (particularly at Stirling University BERA Conference, 1992); and with critical friends at school and my

supervisors at Kingston, who all gave me different viewpoints on the data I had collected. I was able to learn from the data; to make the ordinary problematic and to theorise about my understanding of it.

One of the claims I make about the originality of the work I have undertaken since September 1991, is that I have introduced 'story' as a way of enhancing the rigour of action research and developing theory. I have explained the detail of my methodology in Chapter 2:80 and have included there a diagram which shows how I have integrated story to my action research cycles. The use of story is a contribution to the methodology of action research - enabling teachers to unravel their values and concerns prior to starting the intervention into their practice. The powerfulness of story-as-method comes across strongly in my account of the action research group's development in 'My Eyes Have Become Different', and is supported through the teachers' own accounts written up for their Action Research Diplomas.

But I have also used story as a description and explanation of my living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989, 1993:67-77). I shall explore this in greater detail in Chapter 8, but it is relevant here to distinguish the idea of the living educational theory from theory represented in propositional form. Propositional knowledge is knowledge which does not hold within it the possibility of dialectical analysis; it is knowledge which arises from interpretations of the world as seen through the thoughts of the theorist, such as Piaget or Dewey. Whitehead argued that the living educational theory arises from the practice of the practitioner - so in my case, my theories, or explanations, of my practice are grounded in my lived experiences, and my theories are presented as my stories, which seek to explore the question 'how do I improve my practice?' 'The Canterbury Tales' is one such story (Chapter 4).

Lomax claimed (1994b:6) that successful action research leads to 'increased knowledge and not just successful action; it is able to generate theory from careful scrutiny of practice'. In looking at the totality of my action research enquiry, I believe I have engaged in exploring the emergence of a confident 'I' through searching for answers to the question 'how can I improve my practice as a Deputy Head with particular responsibility for staff development?' My living educational theory is embodied in the whole of my thesis - it is the story of my educational development over the last five years. I have used story to

tell my living educational theory, and the teachers with whom I worked have also used story to tell their theories - their explanations of their lived experiences.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990:7) argued that 'many teachers have sophisticated and sensitive observational skills grounded in the context of actual classrooms and skills'. They pointed to the ability of teachers to 'use the interpretive frameworks of practitioners to provide a truly emic view that is different from that of an outsider observer' even if the outsider researcher spends a lot of time watching what goes on in the classroom. The teacher is uniquely placed to describe what is happening from the perspective of her epistemology of practice (Adelman 1993), but academia needs to recognise alternative ways of representing this knowledge, instead of the traditional ways which are accepted today. Lomax (1994a:118) argued that new approaches to collecting and interpreting data, such as through story, should give rise to new ways of judging the quality of the work and that the educational intentions of the researcher are all-important. My educational intentions in collecting data for stories, and in sharing the stories with others were that through fictionalising the situation individuals would not be identified; problems would be more easily analysed, because the personal element would be removed, and in the case of giving back the story to the participants, reflexive critique would enable teachers to see how their actions appear to others. But the story must come from somewhere, and in outlining the diary events of 'The Canterbury Tales' in Chapter 4, I have shown that events and dilemmas were recorded as data, before being woven into a story. The 'knowledgeable outsider' (Lomax 1994a:119) has sufficient information to judge whether the data has been used fairly, and therefore whether it is reasonable to include the story in pursuing an analysis of the situation.

But stories cannot be independent of ethical issues which arise from them and Lomax (1994a:119) claimed that the ethical dimension in action research should be 'represented in the criteria concerned with intention.' In other words, have I developed and applied ethical principles to my work? I have argued the ethical issues at length in Chapter 5 and I agree strongly with Burgess (1989:8) when he said that there were no clear cut answers to ethical issues, but that they need to be negotiated as the research proceeds. They are also perceived differently by different people, dependent upon their own frame of reference. I wrote some ethical issues into the story 'From Under a Wide Brim' as I knew the action

research group was also concerned with the ethical dimensions to their work. I have shown in this chapter that they explored their views and established the working relationship within the group in respect of confidentiality and talking about other members of staff in the context of their work. They were particularly concerned that their discussions should not be thought of as 'gossip', but I am content that our discussions have always been at a professional level, and because the subject of the research is the person herself, the focus is on her rather than on someone else outside the group.

I resolved my own ethical dilemmas as I developed my ideas during the research; in particular I decided to write for the audience of those whose story I was telling, and to negotiate it carefully with them at each step along the way. This is often time-consuming and difficult to do in the context of busy days at school, when teachers feel it is self-indulgent to read and think about themselves. And giving back the story raises further ethical issues. For instance, when I gave 'My Eyes have Become Different' back to the participating teachers, having negotiated it step by step, one of the comments was, 'it shows us up in a very insecure light'. But that is only part of the story. The teachers' accounts of their learning and the excitement generated from it would need to be the second part of it. But in order to show their development, the formative stages have to be exposed and that makes anyone feel vulnerable, including me.

Principle no. 5 action research is about sharing ideas, interpretations and conclusions with an 'educated' audience who are able and willing to judge the authenticity and relevance of the work to a particular context.

My 'ideas, interpretations and conclusions' are incorporated in my stories, and my increasing understanding of establishing learning communities in school is the theme which runs throughout the course of this thesis. Lomax (1994a:123) said that the main aesthetic criterion for judging the action research 'would be "authenticity", but this would relate closely to criteria concerned with the collaborative intent and the application of ethical standards'.

This principle is about validating or judging the work undertaken, and Whitehead and Foster (1984) argued that it was necessary 'to vicariously experience the activities described within an offered explanation and.....to judge whether or not human relationships can be seen in terms of the quality of the 'I-you' relationship'. Lomax pointed to the need for the judgement to be in 'educational terms', because, as educational research, action research is different from scientific research, and should be validated through educational criteria. Those judging it, she argued, should be 'educated' in the sense that they have an understanding of the nature of the research, and are prepared to judge it by an aesthetic rather than a scientific standard, by the ethical values which emerge during the course of the enquiry (Whitehead and Foster 1984:44) and by the authenticity of the work presented.

Bearing these criteria in mind, I asked myself the questions Lomax (1994a:123) posed 'Have you developed professionally and are your claims authentic?' My professional development can be seen through my stories. The development of my values is written progressively into each of my stories as I increasingly understood and worked at overcoming my living contradiction. I collected data in the form of tapes of meetings, diary entries, papers related to teacher's learning, teachers' views on their learning, improvements made to children's learning (greater involvement in lessons, improved examination results), and wrote them into my stories. The stories enable the 'audience' to experience vicariously the activities which I have described and explained, and show the human relationships which have dominated my thinking during the research. I then offered the stories to others, teachers and researchers, for dialectical analysis, and the depth of debate frequently demonstrated involvement of the audience with the authenticity of the story. When I went away and reflected on what had been said, I revisited the stories and changed aspects of them to be more true to my understanding of the data, or to be more true to my new, emerging understanding of the story. In some cases, the direction of my research was greatly changed as a result of the views expressed in these discussions. The discussion with Antonia in Chapter 5 is one such example, as it triggered my exploration of a major ethical dimension to my work.

Principle no.6 - action research needs to be public and published so that it can influence others' practice and inform policy.

Lomax (1994:8) said that 'action researchers should be obliged to bring good professional practice into the public arena so that others can judge the quality of the professional work in which they have engaged.....Ideally it should be (to) the whole professional community through publication.'

Another reason for bringing action research into the public arena is that it should be shared with other teachers, not necessarily for judgmental purposes, but to enable them to empathise with colleagues, so that teaching becomes less of a lonely business in which no-one really knows what happens in their colleagues' classrooms or management practices. When I searched the literature for a similar study to mine, I found none which informed me of a deputy headteacher intervening in enabling teachers to take control of their learning. This may be because no other deputy head has undertaken similar work, or, because they haven't represented their knowledge in an account of their practice. Lomax and Parker (1995:3) said that teacher researchers are more engrossed in the practice of action research than in writing about the action and that the traditional way of writing research reports in propositional form has little appeal to action researchers and is inappropriate to the educational form of the action research. Whitehead (1993:69) argued that certainty in the propositional form of writing 'masks the living form and content' of educational theory, and according to Lomax, (1995), 'the propositional form of interconnections is premised on certainties that are redundant when the living enquiry comes up with a contradiction that questions the referent on which connection makes sense.'

So instead of propositional reports of our work, Lomax advocated that accounts should make the 'research transparent', so that colleagues may 'enter a critical dialogue' with the writer, and draw out their own meanings through relating their experiences to the practices which are described and explained in an individual account. I have found this particularly real for me in writing stories about my research. In doing so, as Carter (1993:9) said, I am writing 'a theory of something. What we tell and how we tell it is a revelation of what we believe.' Stories are 'products of a fundamentally interpretive process that is shaped by the moralistic impulses of the author and by narrative forces or requirements.' I think this is particularly clear in the story 'Just Tell Me What To Do!' as my moralistic reasoning had moved me on from 'The Canterbury Tales' with its ethical dilemmas and pedagogical questions, to

demonstrate the emergence of ethical values which I could own, and fundamental questions about how people learn which helped me and others to understand more about experiential learning. This is a good example of what Lomax and Parker (1995:2) suggested is a dialectic 'operating at both an intra-subjective level, where our attempts to represent meaning change what we know; and at an inter-subjective level, where making our work public contributes to a dialogical community (Lomax 1986)'. In my attempt to represent meaning, I changed my understanding of members of Department A in 'The Canterbury Tales', and through sharing the story with others, I was able to contribute to debate about teachers' learning and the ethics of the research itself.

Stories are interactive, and my interpretation of the data is changed both through the process of writing, and in giving my story to other people so that I can engage in critical reflection with them. When I give the story away, it is mine no longer, as the reader makes the connections from her own frame of reference to create her own meaning of it. But in order to engage others in pedagogical dialogue, the story has to be believable; it should contain tensions, suspense and ambiguities, should talk about people and their thoughts and feelings, and should have a purpose. As a study of a single case and not a generalisation (Bassey 1990:10-12; 1995:86-117), I wanted my stories to provoke other people to compare, contrast, and creatively fill in the gaps from their experiences, and also I wanted teachers to go away to explore the theories which I had hidden into a literary form of research account.

My story must have an appeal that transcends the traditional presentations which teachers have notoriously disregarded in the past (Lomax and Parker, 1995), so that it becomes compelling reading. It must make the teachers say, 'Yes, I understand that; I've been there myself!' In writing 'My Eyes Have Become Different', I told the story of a group of teachers, many of whom were unsure of themselves and lacking in confidence about their teaching practice. I want to present their writing as action researchers at Roseacre School as a sequel to this as I think their reports authenticate the story of the beginnings of this critical community of teachers. I believe this story will be readily accessible, and of interest, to teachers. By publishing their story, I shall give opportunity for teachers to say what they have been doing; I shall give teachers the voice to say what their work means to them. The teachers want to demonstrate their development; they want to show that they started as insecure practitioners, but

gained enormously as they pursued their research studies. They want to share that development with other people so that others may benefit from their experiences.

But what have I learnt from representing my work in this way? Through writing this thesis as an autobiographical account, including in it the stories which articulate my theories about teachers' learning, I have been able to link my present changed understandings to my previous frames of knowledge; I have been able to show the shifts from frame to frame as I 'have forged the links' that, for me, give information its meaning (Bullock 1975). In looking at the relationships which have developed during this enquiry, I can see that they have changed the way I conceptualise the process of action research itself, moving it from an academic, cerebral framework (Dadds, 1993) to include a strongly affective dimension, in which the feelings of the participants need to be taken into account before any meaningful learning occurs. In collaboration with the action research group at Roseacre School, I reviewed Lomax's principles of action research and adapted them as follows:

Principle no. 1            action research is about improving practice through intervention and demands rigorous planning, observing, collecting of data, reflecting on it, replanning and validating claims to learning.

Principle no. 2            action research is about understanding and developing our sense of ourselves, through listening, talking, sharing and supporting.

Principle no.3            action research can use fiction to stimulate reflection and to challenge taken for granted assumptions. Action research enables the tentative, fictional self to struggle with the 'everyday' self, and celebrates our emergence with - maybe- changed values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and feelings.

Principle no. 4            action research is about dialogue, collegiality and support for each other. It is about building a learning community that recognises the centrality of feelings and the need to express these as part of the learning process.

Principle no.5            action research is our own voyage of discovery about our lived experiences, using the literature to develop our thinking about our practices.

Principle no. 6 action research can be reported as the authentic story of our development, accessible to colleagues, and judged against the principles which have emerged during the course of our enquiry.

The study of 'our selves' and hierarchical relationships

I have looked at the development of my 'self' in the context of my work with teachers at Roseacre, but a further part of this enquiry has been a study of 'our selves' by Pam Lomax and me as we have worked together in partnership to promote teachers' learning in school. We explored this partnership in a paper which we presented to the American Educational Research Association in the Special Interest Self Study Group, in April, 1995. The paper is another good example of the dialectic I described earlier, which operates at intra and inter subjective levels (Lomax and Parker 1995:2), in which 'our attempts to represent meaning change what we know' and 'making our work public contributes to the dialogical community'.

We have an archive of data that describes our partnership, including documentation relating to course validation by the University, records of personal observations and reflections by the principal researchers, recorded feedback from key people, teachers' descriptions of the action research and teachers' case studies. Some of the data we used to study our partnership relationship was an audiotape of a lengthy conversation between Pam and myself, on February 25th, 1993, about the ethics of my story about Department A. We thought that by reflecting on ourselves, through the stimulus of previous discussions, we would be able to deconstruct past experience so that we could take control of what we choose to be in the future.

I began this chapter by exploring hierarchical relationships through the story 'From Under a Wide Brim'. In the study of 'our selves', I want to focus further on these relationships, and I have done so through another story, called 'Reflections'. This is an analysis, at an intra-subjective level, of my thoughts and feelings about the ethical issue that concerned me; I engaged my-self-of-the-time, Self 93, in dialectic discussion with my-self-of-now, Self 95. I was asking myself whether I had changed over the years, whether I recognised my own paternalism, whether I recognised paternalism in other people, whether I would challenge paternalism which represented 'power over' people, and

particularly whether I would challenge that paternalism if it represented power over me! What comes across to me now is the absolute discomfort of self-study if it is honest, and the real worry that by exposing one's vulnerabilities, one could be exploited by others. On the other hand, my critical friend, Zoe, pointed to the fact that once a vulnerability loses its secrecy, it has started to be faced, and cover up operations are no longer necessary. Easen (1985:73-79) developed this theme in his discussion on personal learning, suggesting that the less we hold onto in our 'secret castle', (the part of ourselves we keep hidden), the less need there is for us to feel threatened that someone will storm the castle!

At an inter-subjective level, publishing this story, although risky for me, enables others to enter into reflection on some of the issues and into dialogue about how these issues might relate to them, and as Bassey (1995:111) said, 'the merit of the comparison is that it may stimulate worthwhile thinking.'

#### Reflections

Self 95 had tapes and transcripts and notes and papers all around her. She was deeply into worrying about what her old self might be saying to her new self about the ethics of protecting Harriet, when suddenly she saw a way of conveying her thoughts about herself incorporating her own work on writing stories. She believed she could show an aspect of the study of herself through a story - she knew she could detach herself from the pain of the self knowledge if she were to write about someone else. Self 93 was the obvious choice. She set to work with enthusiasm.

'I've just been talking to Pam about that discussion she and I had two years ago to the day, February 25, 1993!' said Self 95, in a musing kind of way.

Self 93 sharpened up her defences.

'Oh?' she said, and the guardedness was there in her voice. Self 95 heard it clearly, but couldn't pull away from what she'd started. It reminded her of when you stick the knife in to see if the meat's done. OK to start with, then gradually the juices ooze out, gently at first, then faster, and mingled with blood if it's not quite done. Self 95 detected blood in the juice, but she was too impatient to put it back and wait for it to cook. She started to carve.

'We read through the transcript of the tape. Do you remember what it was all about?' she asked.

'Yes,' replied Self 93 defensively, 'It was all about my action research and teachers in school, and Harriet and ethics - my

ethics if we've got to be open about this - my ethics in writing a story about Harriet, who was one of the teachers, and then not giving it to her so she could see what I'd written.'

'Yes, and if you remember,' gloated Self 95, 'Pam told you at the time that you should have given the story to Harriet. But you never did, did you?'

'No, I didn't,' replied Self 93, ' and I'm very pleased I stuck to my own view on the matter. I'm still convinced that Harriet couldn't have coped with it.'

'Ah, that's all very well, but you never gave her the chance of showing you, did you? You thought you knew best - but that was in the days before you'd really thought about giving teachers a voice - letting them speak for themselves. Don't you see it differently now?' asked Self 95 sweetly.

93 was not to be tripped up so easily. She put an obstacle in the way so that 95 would have to slow down. 'Why are you asking?' she enquired, 'What were you talking to Pam about that for anyway?'

She sounded as though 95 didn't have the right to resuscitate the debate.

'Well,' replied 95, importantly, 'Pam and I are engaging in some self study for the AERA conference. I'm really excited - I'm going to America for the first time, and I hope to meet all these people whose thoughts I keep reading. The ones who are interested in stories, and selves and so on.'

93 was pleased to have diverted 95 from probing deeper for a moment or two. But 95 was tenacious.

'Getting back to that discussion, I'm not sure that it was all about ethics now. We went through the transcript yesterday, and highlighted some of the issues we thought were important. It's strange, but we got into quite an emotionally charged debate! All about you, 93! I was pleased it wasn't about me!'

95 realised as she said this that it wasn't really true. But for the purposes of the discussion now with 93, it would do. 95 suspected that the argument with Pam was all to do with her, 95, but she wasn't going to face that yet. Let's tease 93 some more, she thought.

Yes, why didn't you face up to Emmeline?' she asked. She had always wanted to know the answer to this one - she was on tenterhooks - would she find out now?

93 went pale.

'Yes, you see,' continued 95 relentlessly, 'Pam said that discussion was all about you - she said it's about 93 and her relationship with Emmeline, 93 and her relationship with Harriet, 93 and the ethics of all this, and 93 trying to look objectively at herself.'

95 stopped to see how this was going down. Then she said, 'Actually I felt quite sorry for you - I did defend you, honestly!'

Actually of course, what had happened was that 95 had been under the spotlight, not 93 at all. 95 hadn't liked it, so was looking around for someone to blame, so that she could feel better.

Pam had started it all off when she picked on something that 95 had said when she was 93 - 'No, but Emmeline tends to be right an awful lot of the time' and Pam had disagreed with this. She didn't think Emmeline was right all the time, and implied that 93 should have known that. 95 felt guilty because she recognised that she should have challenged Emmeline more than she did - both as 93 and 95, but hadn't. She didn't want to know why not. She knew why not and she didn't want to talk about it. She didn't want Pam to know. And certainly she didn't want the rest of the world to know.

So she'd said to Pam, 'This self study is all very well, but if a self doesn't want to face herself, I think she should have the right not to.'

'Yes, I agree,' said Pam, in a very obliging and totally surprising sort of way, such that 95 was caught off guard. 'We can say, I don't want to take this any further at this time.'

'Yes,' replied 95, breathing a sigh of relief, 'I don't want to expose this particular dilemma, but in stopping it, you could argue we're not involved in self study, because you've - or in this case - I've put a block across something I don't want to expose.'

'Yes,' said Pam, 'I think that's true. But maybe it is a dangerous thing to do this exposing and we're not ready for it yet.'

95 and Pam had continued their discussion, but none of it was quite so morbidly fascinating as that part. 95 had been in a fog for the rest of the evening. The paella was excellent, but what was she going to do about the self study? She felt very uncomfortable.

She listened to the tape of their discussion as she drove home, swerving belatedly in mid argument when she suddenly realised there was a car perilously much in her way. She tossed and turned in the night trying to make sense of her thoughts. She wrote notes of the tapes.

There were two major things troubling her, firstly, why did she feel so bad about the discussion with Pam about Emmeline, and secondly, how was she going to and indeed, could she, record any self study?

**Self 95 -1 debated with self 95-2.**

**95-1 said to 95-2**

**'This business of relationships - it calls into question all my relationships with people who project themselves as authoritative people - who know what they think, and who know that they know. I cannot penetrate their thinking. If I argue with them, they always know what to say in reply. They aren't ever offput whilst they think of the answer. Therefore, I think they know, and I don't. I see this as a weakness in me, which I hope isn't clear to observers, but I suspect it might be. I don't want other people to see my insecurities.'**

**95-2 replied**

**'Is what you mean that you feel you are being controlled by people who think they know? You don't like being controlled, but are at a loss to know how to exert**

**yourself to change the relationship, and you don't want to talk about it because you perceive it to be a weakness, which, if you don't own up to it, no-one will know about!'**

**95-1 laughed and said,**

**'Yes, that's about right. And why should the rest of the world need to know this?'**

**95-2 replied,**

**'Perhaps because, until you've thought it out, you cannot address it properly. You may want to change, or you may prefer to continue to get around the situation as best you can, but at least you will have made a decision about it all.'**

**95-1 said**

**'I can understand what you're saying to some extent. But I still do not see why anyone else needs to know this. If I am to study myself, why can't the whole thing be private?'**

**95-2 replied**

**'Possibly because, as just now, unless you are encouraged into a situation in which you have to confront yourself, you may not do it. Perhaps self study needs to be social from that point of view, in the same way as your action research principles are strongly social, aren't they?'**

**95-1 retired to think about this.**

95 went back to talk to 93. She wanted answers to questions now - she'd quit playing with 93's feelings.

'Why did you try to protect Harriet from seeing her inadequacies?' Self 95 asked Self 93.

'I was protecting her,' replied 93, 'because I thought it would be unkind of me to put her under any more pressure at the time. She wouldn't have been able to cope with it, and it would have been counterproductive.'

'But did you feel that she couldn't speak up for herself? That she couldn't hold herself accountable for her actions?'

'No, that's not what it was about' replied 93, 'It's got to do with me and how I would have felt about highlighting her inadequacy in this particular way at this particular time. I felt I had a responsibility to protect vulnerable people and try to bring about change in them, but in less confrontational ways.'

'Like as a parent might protect her child?' asked 95.

'Just so, like as a parent,' reaffirmed 93.

'How would you feel if someone did that to you?' asked 95.

'I suppose I'd feel aggrieved that I wasn't being treated like an equal - if I knew about it. But I wouldn't want to argue about it. I'd try to work my way around it, peaceably, but ultimately, if I couldn't, I'd resign myself to a quiet life. What about you?' asked 93, rather unexpectedly turning the tables on 95, 'What would you do?'

'Me?' asked 95, 'I'm not sure. I don't think I'm much in advance of you on this one! Although maybe I understand better, perhaps! I know I'm able to put a contrary point of view more persuasively than I've seen you do in a straightforward adult to adult relationship, but I fear in a relationship where one party is playing the power part, I'm not a good protagonist. I try to hold adult-adult, but if I perceive the other person to be using the power in the relationship, then I fear I back off. I back off because I want to protect my position; I don't want to be forced into child-mode because then I've lost a lot of self esteem, and I'm not happy with that!'

An uneasy quiet fell between them.

95 broke it with, 'Looking back at the conversation - just two years ago exactly, there seems to have been a lot of paternalism about!'

'Yes, I think I could be accused of being paternalistic in looking after Harriet, and my perceptions of Emmeline were that she was acting as an all powerful parent towards me - but I don't know that I saw that at the time. What about Pam - where does she fit in all this study of myself?' asked 93.

'I think she sees the study of herself in how well the teachers at our school have taken to the action research process; but perhaps that's paternalistic as well?' ruminated Self 95.

Perhaps 'paternalistic' is too generalised a term, she thought. After all, each of these relationships is different. The important question is, are the relationships empowering people to learn, develop and face up to changes in their lives, or are they exerting power over others, so that they do what the person holding more power tells them to do? Maybe it is only by studying oneself in relationship to another that the answer to this can be found.