

**DEMONSTRATE a COHERENT APPROACH, CLARITY of THOUGHT and
QUALITY of ARGUMENT**

You said that I have demonstrated a coherent approach and clarity of thought but to some extent I have to disagree with you on this one.

I would say that it has become increasingly coherent and clear over time but I don't think this has been the case throughout. By the very nature of my enquiry there has been emergent thought and chaos.

If we are taking coherent to mean consistent, then yes I've been consistent to the point of being stubborn, in that I have stuck with my determination to conduct my enquiry in a manner that would fit with my life, would be enjoyable, and would be presented in the most authentic way I could manage.

If we are taking coherent to mean easily followed, then I'm concerned at a possible lack of coherence because of my difficulty in presenting an argument which is jumping about all over the place in order to try to make sense of the data as it arises. We have to bear in mind that we have travelled this path together and therefore there are what you call tacit understandings between us that others haven't been privy to. Having said that I do feel that my arguments about the use of dialogue are finally falling into place.

These coherence and clarity of thought issues have bothered me all along because I believe them to be areas where my type of dissertation, which shows both the dialogical and dialectical nature of my study as it takes place, could be subject to strong criticism. Coming back to the CARN Critical Conversations (1993) - I said I would - I want to refer to Rosemary Crowe's response to the paper by Gill Plummer et al (1993).

Her response was interesting as she didn't seem to me to immerse herself in the dialogue. In effect much of what she wrote appeared to me as an academic reply in that it analysed and reviewed the earlier arguments but it added little to them and I felt that she wasn't fully convinced of the possible value of letters as research in themselves.

She seems to consider informal letters as inadequate for a research report, for example, she observes,

*"It is also fair to say that in some more informal types of writing the ideas are **less articulate** (my emphasis); in many cases they are **"being worked through"** (my emphasis). Nonetheless, they are important and can stand up also as **part** (my emphasis) of a formal presentation of research theory and ideas but they are different." (p.19)*

Furthermore she says,

*"The content, reason and format of those letters are important, but if they are to add to the body of knowledge in their **less than perfect** (my emphasis) academic form then they must be "admissible evidence" which may well be able to say something that a formal essay or formal oral presentation may not." (p.20)*

I'm still wondering at what stage I can consider my letters to be sufficiently coherent and clear for an unknown recipient to be able to follow them and understand me. At the same time, I wouldn't want my letters to be so clear that they leave nothing in the air, there needs

to be an element of puzzlement, and a feeling that there's more to the story and it will all come clear in the next instalment.

I got quite stuck on your suggestion for the quality of argument. You said "*In relating the 18 qualities (now shown on page 42) to your learning you can fulfil the criterion about the quality of argument.*" I'm not sure of how to do this. I've already said "*It would seem that the literature to which I most closely relate is that which deals with such issues as: case study and self study, reflective practice, the integration of personal life with professional life, etc. etc.*"

Are you simply asking me to say that I don't just relate to this literature, but it's more than that, it's what I do and how I learn? That seems to be too simple, you've never made things that simple for me! It's like asking the letters to speak for themselves. I almost feel obliged to go over the literature and my writings again to try to "prove it beyond reasonable doubt." Perhaps my introduction, when I write it, will improve the quality of my argument. Gosh, haven't I got high expectations of this promised introduction, I do hope I can come up with the goods.

I'm still not sure whether I've been able to *demonstrate a coherent approach, clarity of thought and quality of argument*, but I'm going to start on the next criterion. I've reached a stage where I want to get on and finish this letter and post it off to you. I can't wait for you to read it!