

# **Enquiring to Learn or Learning to Enquire?**

***'An exploration of the role of the Community of Enquiry in facilitating the development of critical literacy and in demonstrating the fluid nature of identity amongst a group of adult learners.'***

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For Sarah

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If it hadn't been for my daughter's encouragement I wouldn't have started this project, if it hadn't been for my supervisor I wouldn't have completed it, and if it hadn't been for my students I couldn't have done it at all.

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## **Abstract**

*This thesis explores the role of dialogue in the process of learning. Specifically it examines the impact of a series of Communities of Enquiry (enquiry) on a group of mature undergraduate students through tracing their development of critical literacy and in demonstrating the fluid nature of identity.*

*The research participants are tutors or trainers in the lifelong learning sector. The research methods are qualitative and data collection includes written learner reflections, transcripts of a recorded discussion and the series of enquiries.*

*Data analysis uses a rhizomatic framework developed from Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) image of the rhizome, combined with Holquist's description of Bakhtin's theoretical framework as 'dialogism.' (Holquist 1990) I refer to the analysis as 'rhizodialogism'. The approach had enabled me to detect the dynamic movement of ideas within effective enquiry and the fluid nature of identity formation.*

*Findings suggest that the process of enquiry is influential in developing critical literacy amongst participants and this extends outside of the learning context and becomes 'lifewide' influencing aspects of self identity and resulting in increasing levels of self confidence in interactions with others.*

*The rhizomatic format indicates that whilst there is evidence of 'long conversations' (Mercer 2000) the process of development is not linear but illustrates a rhizomatic emergence and re-emergence of themes.*

## **Preface**

*'By way of preface let us say that on none of the matters to be discussed do we affirm that things are just as we say they are: rather we report descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at the time.'*

(Sextus Empiricus 1994:3)

To preface my work with the above quotation may suggest a tentative approach to introducing my thesis. I use it however not as an insurance policy against accusations of lack of rigour but rather to describe the destination to which my journey has taken me. The study centres on a group of people who met and worked together at a historical point in a particular cultural context. As a researcher I recognise the importance of the influence of these factors, and of the limits, and indeed desirability of the role of 'objectivity' in a piece of research such as this.

My original plan was to measure academic development over a period of time and attempt to assess the contribution of the specific pedagogical intervention of enquiry in that development. As the study progressed however, I realised that such measurement was bound to be subjective and may ultimately be meaningless. I have always been aware of the importance of maturation as an influential variable in any demonstration of progress over time, but I became

increasingly aware that the development I was tracking was not linear and therefore could not be readily measured as such.

I became interested in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980) on rhizomes and their application in many research areas with some relevance to my own, (St. Pierre 1997; Honan 2007; Mazzei 2010; Jackson 2003; Jackson 2010) and this seemed to me to be a more apposite approach for analysing the data I was generating. I was also concerned to ensure that the voices of my participants were heard and I start my data analysis section by listening to their reflections on the process they have undergone. From this point I look back at the beginning of their journey and finally focus on the enquiries themselves.

What I believe the research demonstrates is the development of critical literacy amongst the group as they encounter new perspectives on their work and their lives, and a developing epistemological and ontological understanding. I believe it also traces the fluid nature of identity as it changed and fluctuated during the period of the study.

## **Introduction**

This research project is the result of a long career in adult education during which I have recognised the importance of dialogue and the role of collaborative exploration of ideas and perspectives in successful learning.

During the 1990's I was introduced to Sapere<sup>1</sup> and the work its members were doing in schools using 'community of enquiry' (enquiry) to enhance learning. I could see the value of this methodology for all types of learners, and as a teacher educator at that time, I felt it had potential benefits as a learning technique both for my learners and for *their* learners should they choose to use it in their teaching. Consequently, I became a frequent practitioner of enquiry in my classrooms and have drawn on that experience as piloting to inform the planning of the project.

For this research project I have followed a small group of adults studying their first degree. I wanted to investigate the extent to which the use of enquiry as part of an overall pedagogical approach which privileges discussion and exploration of ideas might develop their skills of analysis and criticality, and explore the extent to which

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Sapere is an educational charity which promotes philosophical enquiry with children and communities throughout the UK.: <http://sapere.org.uk/>



there were changes in the participants' sense of identity as they became experienced in enquiry. The data collected includes individual written reflections; recordings of the enquiries themselves; and a group discussion in which the participants reviewed their experience of enquiry and the course as a whole. I used video recordings for the first two enquiries and these were useful for the observation of body language, however technical difficulties resulted in my recording the remaining enquiries using an audio digital recorder. I am also aware that the presence of cameras can at least potentially inhibit relaxed participation.

As the course leader and tutor I also had access to all the participants' written work and tutorial records and my original intention was to use some of this material to 'measure' progress. I was aware however that maturation was bound to be an influential variable particularly in written work and as my research progressed I became concerned to find an analytical framework which could track movement in ideas, attitudes and confident engagement with academic materials, and crucially, to allow the voices of the participants to be heard.

My reading introduced me to Deleuze and Gutarri's (1980) concept of the rhizome and its research applications (St. Pierre 1997; Honan 2007; Mazzei 2010; Jackson 2003; Jackson 2010) and led me to

believe that it was an apt framework for tracking the movement of ideas arising in enquiry.

Consequently I moved away from my original Torrance test research instrument and towards the development of a rhizomatic format enabling me to detect fluidity and the dynamic movement within effective enquiry which I have called '*rhizodialogism*'<sup>2</sup> This is an experimental approach which I have worked towards using transgressive data from reflections and enquiries.

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Rhizo from Deleuze and Gutarri's work on the application of the concept of rhizomes, dialogism from Holquists description of Bahktins theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 1**

### **'Enquiring to learn or learning to enquire?'**

*'An exploration of the role of the Community of Enquiry in facilitating the development of critical literacy and in demonstrating the fluid nature of identity amongst a group of adult learners.'*

#### **The genesis of the research**

In this chapter I will briefly describe my own learning background and how that has influenced my interests and approach to teaching, and I will review the theorists who have been influential in my research.

#### **The Sector**

The sector has a multiplicity of learning cultures (James and Biesta 2007) and during both my teaching career and my learning career I have experienced a diversity of these. Before I describe the context of the current study it might be useful to explore my own learning background and my experiences of teaching two diverse learning groups all of which were influential in both my pedagogical and research approaches.

#### *My learning experiences.*

I attended a secondary modern school for girls in the early 1960's. I was one of the many young people who couldn't wait to leave school

and start work, which I was able to do at the age of fifteen. The education system at that time stressed conformity and the importance of role; particularly for girls who were perceived to be destined to become wives and mothers. At that time 'O' levels were only taken in grammar schools, GCSE's didn't exist, and the only school leaving certificate open to secondary modern school pupils was the 'Northern Counties' certificate which even then was not valued by employers or other learning institutions.

Within the hierarchy of the 'tripartite system' lay a further hierarchy which sub divided secondary modern pupils. The top stream of the female group might aspire towards office work, and the elite of *that* group might take a civil service entry exam. (A large civil service administrative block in the area provided a need for staff.) The next tier might apply for work in shops, and the residual group would work in the many factories in the area. I sat and passed the civil service exam, but before the results of the exam were released I left school and started to attend a clerical course at my local technical college. I enjoyed the experience of learning in this environment and to acquire new skills particularly since they seemed to have a purpose in that they would lead to an adult role. When I was appointed to the civil

service this seemed to be an opportunity which would lead to secure employment and a role in the adult world.

Part of the induction process for a young civil service recruit was to continue my general education. I therefore returned to both my local college and also the civil service college. To my surprise these experiences engendered in me an interest and ultimately a love of learning which I have retained. The adult learning environments to which I have referred motivated me to learn, and an apparent purpose to the learning seemed to make it more relevant to my life.

Interestingly however not all the study I undertook was work related. There was a policy at that time to continue the general education of young members of the workforce with 'day release' in which we studied courses on a variety of subjects including something known then as 'civics' and languages.

However I did not enjoy my life as a civil servant and left a few years later to move into other clerical posts. At that time employment was more readily available than I suspect any time since, but conditions of service and equality of access were not, and I became an active trade unionist.

Following a period of being at home as a mother, I returned once more to a local technical college and followed a variety of courses from interest, gained some 'A' levels and proceeded to university on the advice of a tutor. Her advice was crucial to this decision since it gave me the confidence to embark on something which previously seemed far out of my reach. At university I met other mature students and my experiences taught me that those written off by a system designed to fit local employment prospects and gender roles, denied opportunities to many able people.

On completion of my first degree, I undertook a teacher training qualified specifically directed towards teaching in further education which had become my ambition, and finally returned as a teacher to the environment that had stimulated me as a learner with a desire to transmit this enthusiasm by encouraging others whose initial learning experiences had been disappointing or challenging.

*My teaching experiences.*

*Trade unionists*

Before becoming a teacher educator my role was as a trade union tutor. This brought me into contact with many able and astute people whose academic skills were limited. Their strengths often lay in their effectiveness in argument and counter argument and their ability to

detect flaws in propositions. These qualities were demonstrated verbally rather than in written form.

They also had a commitment to improving working conditions for their members and this provided a motivation for learning. The TUC pedagogical approach was based on discussion and collaborative problem solving. The groups learned much from one another during the exchange and comparison of experiences; and much from joint exploration of problems which were either 'real' and current in their workplaces, or set by tutors.

They displayed the characteristics of adult learners which Knowles has identified in his theory of andragogy:

- Autonomous self image
- Relevance of life experiences
- Readiness to learn
- Immediate application of learning

However Knowles' (1996) concept of andragogy appears to suggest that adults learn differently from children and this is disputed (Rogers 2003; Hanson 1996). Knowles' use of language suggests that it is in

fact an approach to *teaching* rather than learning and the title itself '*an emerging technology of adult learning*' (Knowles 1996) suggests a technical role for practitioners. Hanson has suggested that the theory expounds '*a normative educational utopia*' (Hanson 1996:100) based on practitioners views on the ways in which their institutions provide learning opportunities for adults; and their image of adult learners '*as autonomous self directed learners*'. Beliefs which she suggests may be at odds with actual experience and which ignore issues of knowledge, power and control. '*Theories of adult learning which do not take account of culture and power do adults little service, even if they aim to produce self directed learners*' (ibid:101).

An important characteristic with these groups was the separation of the curriculum from the 'mainstream' provision. Within mainstream provision, Hanson suggests '*there is no clear distinction between pragmatic aims and ideological assumptions*' (ibid). The course programmes together with materials and resources were provided by the TUC and delivered by TUC 'trained' tutors. This training emphasised an andragogical inclusive approach to learners, although that terminology was not used.



A further characteristic of union learning groups was the notion of a *right* to learn. They were enthusiastic to develop both the knowledge and skills they felt they needed to improve the workplace and to identify rights they could exercise by law or through negotiation.

A theoretical framework with some application for this learning context is Lave and Wenger's Communities of Practice which Wenger describes thus:

*'Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.'* (Wenger 2006:46)

Within these trade union groups' new members on the periphery are absorbed into the community of old timers through listening to their war stories (Lave and Wenger 1991). A crucial element of their composition was the mixture of workplaces represented. Part of the learning for all the participants were the similarities between conditions in very diverse workplaces. The discussion of issues and strategies for dealing with them were valued highly and the communities of practice which developed were *'formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour.'* (ibid)

### *Craft apprentices*

In contrast, my first teaching role was teaching craft apprentices 'communications and general studies'. Bailey and Unwin (2008) trace the emergence of this work to a post war expansion of training and an increase in day release attendance which continued to grow during the period of industrial expansion. Clearly my civil service experience was part of this initiative.

The young people I taught (usually men) were in full time employment and attended a day release programme for training in college. The day was separated into practical skills training and theory sessions. *'Often these students had left school with poor literacy and numeracy skills and presented teachers with problems.'* (Bailey and Unwin 2008:62)

It was the role of the communications and general studies tutor to help them to improve literacy and numeracy skills (communications) and introduce them to political and cultural issues. (general studies)

The first task for the teacher however, was always to create motivation, interest or at the very least tolerance! As Bailey and Unwin identify, this could be challenging. Although apprentices were full time employees in terms of their working hours they were frequently as young as sixteen and thus a mixture of adult and adolescent, on the cusp of moving from one stage to the next with all the sensitivity, emotion and defensiveness that brings. Their perception was that they had left school behind and didn't want to be taken back to it or even reminded of it. What they wanted from their day at college apart from the social aspects, was training in their trade and not to 'waste time with other stuff.'

Illeris suggests that

*'in modern societies that define themselves as democratic, most people – not least the young – expect to be able to decide for themselves what they are going to learn and not learn, and when this is not the case, it is experienced as an injustice.'*  
(Illeris 2006:6)

What they displayed in fact were all the characteristics which Knowles claims for adults, and yet it is unlikely that this was the age group he had in mind.

Teaching strategies could either be coercive or stealthy. I chose the latter approach and participated in some very lively discussions during the sessions which I think became effective learning opportunities both for them and for me. Illeris has described the mental defences that reluctant learners use against learning which might be seen as '*threatening or limiting*' (2006:1) and the concept of 'identity defence':

*'this is a type of defence potentially developed together with the identity and which precisely serves to protect it'* (ibid: 3)  
He describes this as '*the most ordinary, profound and usually the strongest defence mechanism against learning*' (ibid)

What is important about the groups I've described here is the historical context in which they existed. I taught craft apprentices during the early 80's when traditional industry was still healthy in the region and apprenticeships common. Apprenticeships of the sort described no longer exist in substantial numbers.

I taught TUC learners during the early 90's when trade union membership was still reasonably healthy although clearly declining, particularly in the traditional 'heavy' industries which have always been seen as the backbone of the trade union movement, and at that

point representatives from the 'white collar' sector were becoming more prominent.

Trade union courses still exist but with an emphasis on the creation of 'union learning reps' (ULR's) supported through the DfEE's <sup>3</sup> Union Learning Fund and this together with more stringent legislative curtailment of negotiating rights has resulted in a decline in the more traditional courses on collective bargaining, employment law and health and safety at work. It has also seen the demise of courses for women which were a popular feature for a period of time.

There are contrasting perspectives on the development of ULR's. In an era of industrial restructuring and modernisation in the face of growing global competition unions are perceived as having an important role in creating a framework for response. Mahnkopf (cited in Sutherland and Rainbird 2000) for example, argues that their traditional role in the defence of wages and conditions is an insufficient response to current conditions and that unions need to develop a modernisation strategy. The rationale for the existence of learning reps is that they are perceived as more approachable and trustworthy to their members than a manger or member of the

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□ Now superceded.

human resources staff who may have a different agenda, this may be particularly important for those who have limited skills or knowledge gaps in areas which are becoming more important if not essential in a digital age and in a 'knowledge economy' and to which they do not wish to draw the employer's attention. A less positive perspective on the development is that union reps are taking on the role of the old personnel or new human resources departments.

*'Trade union cooperation with employers on skill formation raises well founded concerns about its implications for their ability to negotiate effectively on other aspects of the employment relationship. (Sutherland and Rainbird 2000: 47)*

Both of these cultures will perhaps only be recognisable to those who participated in them at the time. Bailey and Unwin trace the move from a 'liberal' approach to craft apprentice education epitomised in The Association of Liberal Educators (ALE) which defined its purpose as being:

*'to encourage the extension of liberal education in an industrial society that increasingly demands specialisation'*

and reaffirmed 'four beliefs' that underlay this aim. These beliefs were:

- The student's right to be regarded as an individual human being, not merely as a potential worker, and, as such, should be offered full educational opportunity to develop his powers of thought and personality;

- The student should be encouraged to understand and question his (sic) place in society, his rights and duties;
- Education in the schools, colleges and universities of the country should not be confined by narrowly vocational or over-specialised curricula;
- It is the duty of teachers periodically to examine and revise the subject-matter and methods of their teaching.  
(cited in Bailey and Unwin 2008:66)

This approach to learners has been replaced by one firmly rooted in the current climate of the *'determination by English policy makers to position education as the key lever for national growth and competitiveness'* a shift which *'marked a staging post in the journey from 'free enquiry' to 'core skills' (2008:72).*

Martin also identifies a change in attitude towards adult education and what he describes as its *'social purpose'*.

*'Briefly, social purpose in adult education can be characterised in the following terms:*

- *Adult students/learners are treated as citizens and social actors*
- *Curriculum reflects shared social and political interests*
- *Knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance these collective interests*
- *Pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission*
- *Adult education exists in symbiotic relationship to social movements*
- *Critical understanding leads to social action and political engagement*
- *Education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change.'*

(Martin 2006:3)

Martin identifies three '*underlying processes at work in current social and educational policy*' which he suggests militate against this view of adult education. '*These are the processes of respectable-isation, demoralis-ation, and responsible-isation.*'

'Respectable-isation' he links to professionalism. He quotes McWilliams in suggesting that '*the sort of knowledge which counts as developmental is generalisable economic, technological and management knowledge underpinned as it often is by psychologicalised models of human behaviour and organisational life.*'

(McWilliam cited in Martin 2006:4)

*'The language of the market and the values of enterprise tend to become hegemonic in all this.'* (Martin *ibid*)

Demoralisation is created by the transformation of the social structure into a 'social pathology' in which individuals are held responsible for their position in the social structure. Martin cites Ecclestones work on the 'therapeutic culture' which helps people to cope and survive rather than understand and challenge the structure which oppresses them as being illustrative of this phenomenon.



Crowther defines this as a *'deficit discourse'* (2004)

Martin identifies a second and more insidious form of demoralisation in which cause is disconnected from effect leading to diminished sense of agency for both students and educators. 'Performativity' understood as the *'definition and regulation of professional life around bureaucratic targets, measures and sanctions'* demoralises teachers in both senses. (Martin 2006:4; Simmons and Thompson 2008 )

Responsible-isation is clearly linked to the former categories. In a shift from state responsibility to 'responsibilised' consumer citizen *'Citizens are thus 'empowered' to exercise both choice and voice in their consumption of increasingly marketised public services.'* *'The active and empowered citizen must learn to become responsible for the consequences of the choices he or she makes.'* (Martin 2006:4)

*'Responsible citizens make reasonable choices – and therefore 'bad choices' result from the wilfulness or irresponsible people, rather than the structural distribution of resources, capacities and opportunities'* (Clarke cited in Martin 2006:4)

*'In Foucauldian terms, this learned process of responsible-isation actively produces new kinds of 'self regulating' subjects.'* (Martin 2006:4)

As a general studies teacher my role required me to 'service' a range of departments within the college and this allowed me to observe a variety of teaching and learning cultures. When I

became a teacher educator part of my role required visits to a multiplicity of venues to observe students on 'teaching practice.' This gave me an insight into the diverse working environments within initially a technical college environment and later a wider further education context.

I recognised the deficit discourse to which Crowther refers both in my own early education and more importantly towards current students of many of the staff I now taught. Many were involved in teaching 'employability' courses which 'pathologised' the students in seeing as 'deficient' which accounted for their lack of employment. This is a cynical and corrosive approach particularly in a period and area of high unemployment which was due largely to the decline of traditional industry and lack of investment.

My Masters course introduced me to writers who explored the importance of language and the use of dialogue in learning. The completion of which resulted in my desire to research more closely how powerful it could be in a specific context in which I was currently involved. As a practitioner of 'Community of Enquiry' (enquiry) within my teaching and witnessing its success

with a variety of learning groups I felt this might be an appropriate vehicle for further research.

The aim of the research project was to assess the impact of enquiry amongst a group of adult learners. The research group are teachers, tutors or trainers working in the post compulsory sector, which is now more commonly known as the lifelong learning sector. The participants hold vocational qualifications in the subject in which they teach or train but were not graduates. The course they studied with me was their first experience of studying at degree level. I will refer to them as *'teachers-as learners'*.

The lifelong learning sector is very diverse and includes further education colleges, work places, prisons, training agencies and community venues. The research participants are drawn from areas throughout the sector and many have experience in more than one venue or *'learning culture'*. (James and Biesta 2007)

The degree course they are studying is a modular programme, which provides a range of elective modules appropriate for the diversity of learners it attracts. The participants join the programme for reasons of

personal interest; to enhance their CPD profile; or for progression or enhanced status at work.

The research focus is on two related and mutually reinforcing areas:

- 1) Critical literacy
- 2) Identity

Data was collected by following one group of learners through a two year degree programme. There are three data sets which I analyse by starting with the learners' own voices as they review their learning during the programme. I then look at their reasons for joining the course and at their reflections on the early modules, and finally at the enquiries themselves.

### ***The philosophical journey towards a research strategy***

I needed a strategy by which I could measure progress, and tools I could use to demonstrate effectiveness.

de Landsheere suggests that the origin of modern educational research is to be found in the natural rather than the social sciences.

(de Landsheere 1993) He cites Thorndike as the first person to conceive of teaching methods as formulations of experimentally tested learning theories, and as being perhaps the most characteristic

representative of the scientific approach. (ibid) This theory operates on the belief that a specific stimulus would result in a specific response (stimulus-response or S-R). Causality could thus be detected and used to establish desired behaviour:

*'We are concerned then with the causes of human behaviour. [...] by discovering and analysing these causes, we can predict behaviour; to the extent that we can manipulate them, we can control behaviour.'* (Skinner 1953:48)

Such a perspective has a sinister ring to modern ears, but as de Landsheere observes, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *'most educational research was quantitatively orientated and geared to the study of effectiveness. For a while, Taylorism and the study of efficiency became a component of educational thinking.'* (de Landsheere 1993:7)

The growth of 'positivism' an epistemological position which affirms the 'facticity' of the world, privileges quantitative research because of its measurability and resultant creation of 'legitimate', 'objective' knowledge.

*'the methodology employed [...] exclusively scientific, grounded ontologically in the positivist assumption that there exists an objective reality driven by immutable natural laws, and epistemologically in the counterpart assumption of a duality between observer and observed that makes it possible for the observer to stand outside the area of observation.'* (Pring 2000:250 original emphasis)

The development of the expert distanced observer suggests that progress can be realised; and that human problems can be identified and solved through the use of reason. From this perspective research has an instrumental role. Since I was dealing with adult learners who would themselves undertake research during their course of study with me, so I originally intended to devise a measuring tool in the form of a 'Torrance' test through which I could explore development of the rates of genuine enquiry and determine whether they increased over time. The results of which I intended to share with the group and this might help and encourage them to establish their own research projects.

However, Scott and Usher suggest that the traditionally close links between educational research and educational practice have tended to conceal the philosophical assumptions behind the adoption of the methods and procedures through which research is conducted. (Scott and Usher 1999) Yet the research process itself, they suggest, cannot be understood without addressing epistemological and ontological questions. Educational research is social research and *'social research is always valued research, in that both the values of the participants in the research and the values of the researcher themselves are central to the research texts.'* What researchers 'silently think' informs their apprehension of the research process. Thus *'there is a necessary*

*relationship between the four levels at which researchers operate – methods, strategy, epistemology and ontology.'* (ibid)

My focus on the development on the somewhat nebulous concepts of critical literacy and identity meant that I needed to develop a strategy which enabled me to explore rather than solve, demonstrate rather than prove.

'Scientific' quantitative research has frequently been accused of ignoring the complexity of human life. It is criticised on the grounds that the questions it asks are based on assumptions; and that the theory itself is based on the assumption that there are mechanical cause and effect relationships rather than the complex processes of interpretation and negotiation. I found when I attempted to devise and use simple measurements that they were both inadequate for the task and surprisingly difficult to establish. I quickly became aware that determining categories was very subjective and open to dispute.

The contrasting 'anti-positivist' perspective **which** suggests that social action is not predetermined but constructed over time is based on perceptions which are 'framework' dependent, *'perception of the world is influenced by skill, point of view, focus, language and framework'* (Eisner 1993:51) Weber reinforces this point: *'something which is*

*never attainable in the natural sciences, [is] the subjective understanding of the action of component individuals' (Weber 1995:277-8)*

This seemed very relevant to my use of enquiry as a research tool and a qualitative interrogation of the evidence rather than an attempt at structured 'measurement' of progress.

Qualitative research focuses on *exploration* rather than measurement. It may concentrate on a small number of cases analysed in depth, using unstructured or semi-structured data collection methods which allow for interpretation of the meanings brought by human actors to the situations in which they find themselves. Social action therefore is understood by interpreting the human meanings and motives which cannot be understood from statistics. Natural scientists deal with matter which has no consciousness; therefore reaction to stimuli is essentially meaningless behaviour. People not only respond to social circumstances but actively *construct* reality through experiencing the world through the creation of meanings which have no independent existence. Meaning is not imposed externally but created through social interaction. To understand the meanings and motives which



drive and create social action requires methods which facilitate *verstehn* – an ability to apprehend the perspectives of others.

The examination of meanings and motives is inseparable from the recognition of human beings as social actors. Social action relies on a concept of self and of others; and the role of language within social interaction. An individual's self concept is built, reinforced and modified by other people and individual social actors act in accordance with this image. '*Identity is constructed socially by others*' and by the reflections they are given. (Measor & Woods 1991:73) Therefore image and thus self concept may change over time and adapt to new circumstances. Social interaction is made possible through the creation of agreed 'symbols'. The process of 'symbolic interaction' is the means through which this shared understanding is transmitted. To understand how this process operates in specific situations, research methodology must allow a researcher to immerse her/himself in the social situations of the actors observed in order to understand the meanings they give to the symbols they create. An ethnographic approach allows such engagement with the world under study and also implies a commitment to a search for meaning. (Ball 1993:32) The choice of ethnography '*carries with it implications about theory, epistemology and ontology.*' (ibid)

Critical social research perceives knowledge as a process rather than a goal to be achieved. It rejects the notion of an objective truth which exists and can be discovered. Knowledge can never be separable from values. Critical research challenges the dominant ideology and hegemony which masks the material reality of social existence. It does this by exploring abstract concepts and their relationship to the wider world. The example of 'housework' can be a useful illustration of this point: the empiricist can assess who performs which tasks in a household, but the critical social scientist can explore the extent to which housework is *classified as work* in the wider society.

Critical social scientists explore the interlinking of social phenomena which create the totality of society. Whilst societal structures constrain and limit, they also make social action possible. Such structures are not static; they change over time and are related to historical contexts. The process of deconstruction uncovers the fundamental concepts and allows for reconstruction through praxis.

*'In effect to ask epistemological questions is to ask questions about what is to count as knowledge. Ontology on the other hand, is about how what exists can be known.'* (Usher et al 1997:173)

I have attempted in my analysis to reflect the shifts and movements generated by both the historical context and the influence of enquiry and thus capture the changes these factors wrought on the individuals. This cannot be done by a simple measurement which can be reproduced in a graph and must reflect the participants own perceptions rather than the observations of a distanced objective observer.

One of the most important claims made for quantitative research is that its scientific basis provides an objectivity that qualitative research cannot achieve. However, Eisner argues that the concept of objectivity itself is based on tacit, unexamined assumptions.

One of these assumptions is that a scientific approach to research enables the researcher to distance her/himself from the object of their research through empiricism and somehow discover 'truth'.

*'Empirical-analytical research views educational events and practices as 'phenomena' susceptible to 'objective' treatment.'* (Kemmis 1993:188)

Eisner suggests that in fact the concept of objectivity is contextual. In some contexts it is about fairness and in others about methodology or procedures. Consequently he identifies two types of objectivity which he suggests are both a legacy of the Enlightenment for a craving of

tidy, intellectual order. (Eisner 1992:50) – ontological and procedural. To be ontologically objective would be to see things as they really are, to develop 'veridicality', an ideal predicated on the correspondence theory of truth which suggests that when belief corresponds with perception, understanding and representation, it can equate to 'truth' and this can be discovered by a careful observer as an undistorted view of reality. It holds in fact '*a mirror to reality*' (Rorty cited in Eisner *ibid*)

Procedural objectivity on the other hand is about methodology. It is an attempt to eliminate subjectivity through measures which avoid interpretation by taking the researcher out of the research.

*'Traditionally, the aim of the research enterprise, from a methodological perspective, is to use a procedurally objective set of methods in order to gain an ontologically objective understanding of the events and objects we study.'* (*ibid* 51)

However, Eisner suggests that such views of objectivity reinforce a doubtful view of knowledge. '*Some argue that a 'true' view of reality allows us to predict and control events*' However, the ability to predict and control does not ratify our view of the world. (*ibid*)

What this view fails to do is recognise and accept that there is an inevitable transaction between the self and the world. Through this transaction between existent conditions and our personal frames of reference we make sense of the world, and this is what constitutes our experience. *'acculturation and education can be considered as psychosocial processes'* (ibid 54) This process enables us to achieve commonality with others and facilitate the communication essential to social life and progress.

This Eisner believes, is both more realistic and more useful than a search for absolute truth. Indeed, he suggests that *'participation in a plurality of worlds is what education should achieve.'* (ibid)

## **Postmodernism**

*'Postmodernism blows the whistle on scientific intellectualism as one more form of Victorian morality, which inappropriately tries to establish itself when it comes to people.'*  
(Loewenthal 2003:371)

Lather suggests that there has been a shift in the contemporary scene from an emphasis on the 'real', the independently existing, objective, self evidently available world of realism, towards a discursive construction of the world that occurs in the research process, that research in fact 'worlds' the world, whilst being itself a discourse that

is part of that 'worlding.' (Scott and Usher 1999:19) Where, in fact, reality is no longer self evident.

*'Postmodernism challenges modernist epistemology to recognise its own relativistic character and its silence on issues of knowledge and power.'*  
(Scott and Usher 1999:19)

Scott and Usher argue that postmodernism is not another paradigm or another methodology, let alone a new toolkit for research, rather it offers possibilities for opening up the research process to ask '*What is going on when we do research?*' an opening that must involve living with uncertainty. (Scott and Usher 1999:154)

St Clair suggests that the term 'postmodern' refers to an era of thought the most influential aspects of which tend to be diversity and contingency.

*'The notion of many truths opens up new perspectives upon educational research, moving the emphasis away from positivistic methods of attaining the 'correct' way of understanding a situation. Each understanding reached is contingent upon a number of factors, not the least of which is the identity of the researcher. There are no universal norms, no ideal forms of action, and no guarantees of the right thing to do.'* (St Clair 1997: 395)

St Clair identifies the attempts by critical theorists to combine their own analytical approach with that of the postmodernists, since they share he suggests, a concern with both the research problem and the

problem of research. For many, the interest lies in representation  
*'the problem of who can speak for whom; and positionality – the implications of the relationships of power between the researcher and the researched.'* (ibid)

This observation is pertinent to my research. I was concerned throughout to find a research strategy which privileged the participants' voices.

He suggests that a means of reconciliation explored by some writers is the attempt to focus research upon the local and to invite the participation of the researched (St Clair 1997 citing Kincheloe and McLaren; Lather 1991)

My own perspective is that this involvement of the 'researched' is both essential to the notion of collaborative learning espoused in enquiry, and to the notion of research validity. But is this 'critical research'?

St. Clair suggests:

*'Validity in research is seen as predicated upon the transformational potential of the research endeavour, and there is an underlying assumption that actors who understand a situation will inevitably act to change it. It has been suggested, for example, that researchers 'need to locate their work in a transformative praxis that leads to the alleviation of suffering and the overcoming of oppression' (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994: 154).*

According to Lather transformative praxis is captured in technical terms by the idea of catalytic validity, or '*the degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses and energises participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it*' (Lather 1991, 68). This form of validity sits alongside others in the assessment of critical research, but acts as the cornerstone of this particular approach to knowledge creation. *The obverse of this notion is that research which is not transformational is not valid research.*' (St. Clair 1997:398)

This issue of criticality has concerned me in my attempts to define my research approach. To what extent I am able to claim a critical approach is unclear. I seek change for my learners through a 'liberating' or 'empowering' experience of exploration. I am aware however, that a changed perspective on a situation or system does not in itself lead to an ability to change it.

*It seems to me that it is problematic to base measures of validity upon factors which are only capable of being influenced peripherally by the researcher. Nonetheless, notions such as catalytic validity do offer the means to deal with pragmatic application of critical research philosophies.'* (St. Clair 1997:398)

*'I believe that there is a real danger of dissimulation if research as praxis is adopted unproblematically, with the researcher taking*



*on the responsibility for changing the life situation of the researched (St. Clair citing Lather 1997:397)*

St Clair suggests not that the researcher has no responsibility, but rather that it *'is theorised with care and respect, and without the hubris which often accompanies discussions of the research function.'*

(ibid)

Lincoln has suggested that validity in educational research should be based on a number of relational issues which she terms 'emerging criteria' - those issues which shed light on the relationship between the researcher and the researched; specifically:

- 1) *The form of research and its consistency with other examples.*
- 2) *The recognition of 'positionality'.*
- 3) *Its relevance and accessibility to the community it serves.*
- 4) *Voice, reflexivity, reciprocity and sharing the 'prerequisites of privilege.'*

*(Lincoln cited in St. Clair 1997:398)*

*'The epistemology these criteria express is one which recognises that the claims to knowing we can make as academic researchers are predicated on the willingness of others to share their experiences and their meanings. The understanding of researchers will always be partial, and the creation of knowledge through research is a selective and collective process.'* (St. Clair 1997: 397-8)

I consider this to be an important point and I have attempted to hear other voices and indeed privileging the voices of the participants.

St Clair makes the following observation on adult education:

*'While education itself is a modernist endeavour, tied into ideas of Truth and Progress, it has been pointed out that adult education has often represented a postmodern moment. This argument is predicated on the view that adult educators do not strive to fix meanings, but to support an ongoing process of meaning formation (ibid citing Usher and Edwards 1994)*

For *teachers-as-learners* in the lifelong learning sector this dichotomy is very evident. Their experience as teachers is frequently to 'transmit' knowledge regimes; and as employees they have been taught that standards exist to which they must not only aspire but meet in full; furthermore they must demonstrate that achievement, and they are accountable for any failure or deviation. The funding regime is clearly tied to recruitment, retention and achievement and the achievement is measured by defined learning outcomes and auditable skills accumulation, leaving little or no scope for 'meaning making.' The '*deficit discourse*' to which Crowther refers is a common one and almost universally embraced within and indeed without, the sector (Crowther 2004). This is supported by what Coffield describes as the '*damaging assumptions*' endemic in

government policy (Coffield 2007) together an 'unspoken' theory of learning in which *'the implicit model is a simple input-output one.'* (Coffield 2007:42)

Critical writers such as these are introduced to the learning group early in the course and their ideas can be initially challenging and lead to self doubt and disillusion with their role, and seem at odds with the hegemonic discourse in which they operate. The following quote from one of the group illustrates this:

*'I thought I was part of the solution, now I think I might be part of the problem.'* (Ken)

St. Clair cites both Ellsworth (1989) and Lather (1991) as noting that when an attempt is made to bring an explicitly emancipatory agenda into the educational setting there is often a great deal of resistance from the participants in the programme (St. Clair 1997). The act of viewing the research situation as the potential site of an internal reality which is to be created rather than discovered, changes the nature of research as praxis.

*'The emphasis moves from emancipation and constraint towards agency and potential. The validity of the research is not based on the extent to which they conform to a universal norm, but on what they choose to understand based on their life situation. This is not to deny the influence of ideology, but to suggest that it is necessary to move away from universal approaches to the*

*exploration of ideological understandings.'* (St. Clair 1997: 398)

Thus, the creation of areas of bounded rationality for critical research requires that the researcher deals with the issues of representation and positionality explicitly.

*'Statements of whom the research is speaking for are entwined in the creation of these bounded areas, as is consideration of the positionality of all the participants in the research project.'*  
(*ibid*)

My research explores the extent to which the use of a critical pedagogical approach which includes the device of enquiry can both facilitate the development of critical literacy, and demonstrate the fluid nature of identity amongst a group of adult learners. As such it is a project which perhaps cannot be described as emancipatory but demonstrates a move towards the '*agency or potential*' described above and becomes a research site which is seen as one of '*internal*' and '*bounded*' rationality. This perspective also accords with Foucault's concept of a heterotopia.

*'Transformative learning theory, as I have interpreted it, is a metacognitive epistemology of evidential (instrumental) and dialogical (communicative) reasoning. Reasoning is understood as the process of advancing and assessing a belief. Transformative learning is an adult dimension of reason assessment involving the validation and reformulation of meaning structures.'* (Mezirow 1991:27)

My *teachers-as-learners* came to the research site with the '*nested perspectives*' described by White (1992) and within the research were able to explore and re-evaluate their current frameworks of reference.

*'The philosophy of adult education privileges collaboration of participants and this is consistent with the creation of bounded rationality. In what way is it understood by those people who participate in the situation every day, and how do they make sense of it?'* (St. Clair 1997: 398)

Research questions and the limits of their application therefore, must be created within the research setting. Participants should be able to reformulate questions so that they make sense and have value for them. As this reformulation proceeds, the research project will begin to take on the rationality and the reason of the setting. Instead of assuming that the situation must be improved, the researcher should be open to understanding why the situation is as it is.

### ***Foucault***

*'Archaeology helps us to explore the networks of what is said, and what can be seen in a set of social arrangements: in the conduct of archaeology, one finds something about the visible in 'opening up' statements and something about statement in 'opening up visibilities.'* (Kendall and Whickam 2003:25)

At this point in my journey towards an understanding of what I can know and what I can discover through research, Foucault's archaeological framework becomes useful. This process of 'opening

up' and the exploration of networks seems an apt approach for my work.

Foucault looks for contingencies rather than causes. His archaeological approach is the process of investigation of the archives of discourse.

It signifies a move away from:

*'the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very outset, beneath the persistence of particular genre, form, discipline or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably. There are the epistemological acts and thresholds. .... There are displacements and transformations.'*  
(Foucault 1972:4-5)

Foucault describes a number of propositions *'that lie at the heart of these analyses'* (Foucault 1972:131):

- 1) the sayable and the visible – what can be said and what is made visible – the relationship between words and things;
- 2) the ordering of statements – the hierarchy through which statements flow;
- 3) the discourse – the authoritative statements which manifest as truths;

- 4) how statements produce subject positions – through defining roles and attitudes;
- 5) the surfaces of emergence – where statements manifest themselves;
- 6) how institutions become places of visibility – the architecture and spatial arrangements;
- 7) the forms of specification – the vocabulary and the concepts which define.

(adapted from Foucault (1972) and Kendall and Whickam 2003)

### ***Deleuze and Guatarri***

*'Make a rhizome. But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment.'* (Deleuze and Guatarri 1992:45)

In '*A Thousand Plateaus*', Deleuze and Guatarri (1992) explore the characteristics of a rhizome which is a 'subterranean stem' with principles of connection and heterogeneity. The image suggests the

capacity to exist within multiple connections, and in varying degrees, within an assemblage.

They suggest that *'thought lags behind nature'* (ibid:5) in its binary logic which has failed to reach an understanding of multiplicity.

Modernity pays allegiance to an image of trees with roots which reflect a strong spiritual unity. The rhizome however is by its nature multiple, *'any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other and must be'* (ibid 7)

Deleuze and Guatarri identify 6 principles of the rhizome:

1 & 2 – the principles of connection and heterogeneity – *'any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes and orders.'*

(ibid 7)

3 – the principle of multiplicity – *'a multiplicity has neither subject or object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions which cannot change in number without the multiplicity changing in nature.'* (ibid 8)



4 – the principle of signifying rupture - '*a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines or on new lines.*' (ibid 9)

5 – principles of cartography and decalcomania – '*a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model*' – these are '*infinitely reproducible*' principles of a tracing. '*a rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing.*' (ibid 12)

A rhizome emerges from the 'lines of flight' which thought takes, and appears as 'irruptions'. Connections and disconnection occur and the notion of unity appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity. Understood in this way the emergence of power relationships and identity can be traced. Massumi suggests that for Deleuze and Guatarri the image of power is close to Foucault's, as an instituted and reproducible relation of force, a selective concretisation of potential. (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004: xvii)

The image of thought expressed here also reflects Foucault's archaeological approach which seeks contingencies rather than causes. The image of fluidity in which ideas and perspectives emerge, submerge, and re-emerge seems to me to be appropriate to the

process of enquiry. It expands I believe Lipman's image of the '*tacking boat*' moving forward indirectly, and the notion of a '*system of thought in equilibrium*' by developing the concept of multiple connections as opposed to linear development. It also reflects Freire's theory of dialogue as ceaseless '*creation of meaning*' and enquirers as '*immersed in a permanent search*' and in which an active participant in social dialogue as Bakhtin suggests, will '*brush up against thousands of dialogic threads.*'

My journey had taken me through an exploration of epistemology as a scientifically measurable and therefore legitimate thing (episteme) to be differentiated from opinion or belief, (doxa) towards a questioning of what *can* be known separately from the opinions and beliefs of the human and social actors which are the subject of the research. This leads to rejection of the terminology 'subject' as research becomes exploratory and investigates the meaning making process in which critical social researchers conceive of knowledge *as a process in itself* rather than a goal to be achieved, and the researched as participants in that process with their own voices which must be heard. Finally, the postmodern perspective opens up the notion of *contingency* and moves towards a discursive construction of the world in which research is part of that '*worlding.*' (Lather cited in Scott and Usher 1999)

## Chapter 2

### *The research strategy*

#### **'What is a case?'** (Ragin and Becker 1992)

*'Case studies are set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around a case.'* (Hitchcock and Hughes cited in Cohen et al 2010)

I have used a case study approach to this research which has enabled me to focus on a small group of learners throughout their course and generate a range of rich qualitative data.

According to Ragin and Becker a case study has several hallmarks:

- It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
- The researcher is integrally involved in the case.
- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report.

(Ragin and Becker 1992: 251)

This seems appropriate for my research since it allows me to use the 'thick' narrative and reflective data from the participants together with my own perceptions as observer/participant and accords with the notion of the research site as a collective entity. I have attempted in fact to capture the learning journey of both the research participants and the researcher.

Whilst the case study as a research method is not new, White suggests it dates from 1870, (White 1992) its value has been and indeed still is, disputed in terms of the scientific validity.

Flyjberg (2006) points out that conventional wisdom about case study research that suggests that a case study cannot be of value '*in and of itself.*' This perception is founded on the belief that the knowledge gained is necessarily context dependant and therefore less valuable than *objectively* derived context independent knowledge which is generalisable and therefore scientific.

Yet for researchers, experience of concrete context-dependant experience is central. Exposure through '*continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study*' is an effective safeguard against the risk that the usefulness of the research becomes

unclear and untested. (ibid 223) Such knowledge and expertise lie in fact, at the heart of the case study as a research strategy.

*'Cases matter; there is nothing innocent in how they are framed.'*  
(White 1992: 84)

White suggests that the design of a case study depends on its mission. He identifies three possible basic missions – to prefigure, explain or interdict.

Intervention or 'fixing for control' results in endlessly changing, renegotiating and restructuring the environment. White describes Kuhn's historical study as '*a classic study of interlocking interdict efforts*' which he suggests '*in engineering terms*' is a '*study of fix it controls.*' (ibid)

This can be valuable. As White expresses it:

*'There is bite to speciation. If you want to understand control, you should not turn to the comparative/statistical case study which explains so nicely – which, to be precise, explains away so nicely.'* (ibid: 94)

Achieving control White argues is a reality of the social process, which '*in its own social timings disdains and cuts across exactly the sets of stories, the smooth explanations for multiple actors, that constitute the bulk of workaday conversation and social sciences.*' (ibid)

## ***The approach***

I have attempted to use an ethnographic *approach* to the research in that I have tried to become an unobtrusive member of a community of learners. I am aware that this can only ever be done with limited success when a power relationship exists such as that between learner and tutor.

*'ethnographic projects are by intentions and definition open ended'*  
(Measor & Woods 1991:73)

The purpose of the research is to address questions rather than support a 'fixed' hypothesis; this requires an investigative and exploratory approach rather than an attempt to prove or disprove a statement. Consequently, I have used qualitative methods designed to explore meanings and processes which I hope yield a '*richest possible tapestry of data*' (ibid: 70)

I subscribe to the view that people *construct* reality rather than simply respond to social circumstances. Meaning is created through social interaction. Thus to understand the meanings and motives which drive and create social action requires methods which facilitate Weber's

concept of *verstehn* – an ability to apprehend the perspectives of others.

The examination of meanings and motives is inseparable from the recognition of human beings as social actors. Social action relies on a concept of self and of others; and the role of language within social interaction. (Lather 1991) An individual's self concept is built, reinforced and modified by other people and individual social actors act in accordance with this image. '*Identity is constructed socially by others*' and by the reflections they are given. (Measor & Woods 1991:73) Therefore image and thus self concept may change over time and adapt to new circumstances. To understand how this process operates in specific situations, research methodology must allow a researcher to immerse her/himself in the social situations of the actors observed in order to understand the meanings they give to the symbols they create. An ethnographic approach allows such engagement with the world under study and also implies a commitment to a search for meaning. (Ball 1991:32) The choice of ethnography '*carries with it implications about theory, epistemology and ontology.*' (ibid)

My role during the series of enquiries is that of a participant observer. I attempted to participate as an 'enquirer' rather than a leader,

facilitator or teacher; since I believe that '*research is a social activity*' (Measor & Woods 1991:67) and I sought to avoid exercising unwarranted control which might distort the natural development of the enquiry.

Using this approach allowed me to generate the 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2003) to be found in the data itself.

*'Through dialogue and reflexivity, design, data and theory emerge, with data being recognised as generated from people being in a relationship.'* (Lather 1991:72)

### ***Nested perspectives create a tapestry.***

*'Layered realities are built up, in which codified interpretations of existing realities become aspects of new realities.'* (White 1992:95)

The layered realities emerge from the 'interdigitation' of the perspectives of the actors themselves, the institutions and social science. '*Each order of perspective influences the other two.*' (ibid)

Such layering can be a positive tool of social analysis, and in this case study the exploration of the journey undertaken by each individual towards the site of the research; together with the impact of the pedagogical intervention contribute to the 'nested perspectives on the environment.'



The context of the institution in which they work, and by which they are influenced is an important factor in individual and ultimately group perspective. The impact it has on the individual identity of the research participants and on their contribution to the enquiries is crucial.

White claims that the style of a study can mix species and reflect all perspectives. *'Style is an intersection of design-for-action with nesting-as-perspective across a species of cases.'* Style is in fact, *'an endless nesting of prior choices which frame what we can now see.'* (ibid: 96) Thus it should be possible to trace the diversity of perspectives which 'nest' to create an individual's social interaction and ways of knowing.

## ***The context of the study***

### **The sector**

*'There is no escape from the game of culture'*  
(Bourdieu 1979:17)

The project is situated in the post compulsory education sector which has recently become known as either the 'learning and skills sector' or the 'lifelong learning sector'.

The term 'lifelong learning' emerged from European dialogue on adult education during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of policy documents issued by UNESCO and the OECD.

*'The concept of lifelong learning as an educational strategy emerged some three decades ago, through the efforts of the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. It was a response to the anomaly that while individuals learn throughout life, the provision of education opportunities was limited largely to the early phase of life, dominated by formal education.'* (OECD 2004:1)

It has become part of governmental discourse following the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 which required partner states to convert theory into policy.

However, as the OECD foresaw, the term is open to interpretation:

*'In current OECD usage, lifelong learning no longer refers simply to recurrent or adult education but encompasses all learning endeavours over the lifespan. While the term is in wide*

*currency, often used as a slogan, it is open to multiple interpretations.'* (ibid)

In the UK Lifelong Learning United Kingdom (LLUK) has no doubt about the nature of their organisation and the role of lifelong learning. As an 'employer led' body:

*'We have one agenda at Lifelong Learning UK, and that is to ensure that the lifelong learning workforce is the best it can be.'* (LLUK 2004) <http://www.lluk.org> (website accessed 10/4/10)

This narrow skills based definition is reinforced throughout the website:

*'As the skills landscape is rapidly evolving, so job roles change and everyone needs to upskill. It is critical that the lifelong learning workforce has the right skills, as they are responsible for upskilling all other industries.'* (ibid)

and the workforce is firmly placed in the position of being responsible for their own 'upskilling'.

Aspin and Chapman (2001) suggest that a narrow economic based perspective rests on two assumptions "*that lifelong education' is instrumental for a further goal; that the goal of lifelong learning is economics related.'* This they suggest, presents 'a limited account of the need for lifelong learning. Another approach claims that *lifelong learning is good in and for itself.'* (2001:5)

Crowther (2004) goes further. He suggests that '*lifelong learning is part of a hegemonic project where the only thing that matters is the economy.'* (2004:15) and indeed that the dominant discourse of

lifelong learning is ultimately a '*deficit discourse*' which locates responsibility for economic and political failure at the level of the individual. This creates a mode of social control which acts as a new disciplinary technology to make people more compliant and adaptable for work. He suggests that: '*Lifelong learning diminishes the public sphere, undermines educational activity, [and] introduces new mechanisms of self surveillance.*' (2004:13)

The flexibility required of the workforce amounts to Bourdieu's image of 'flexploitation' '*a new mode of domination 'based on the creation of a generalised and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into the acceptance of exploitation.*'

(Bourdieu cited in Crowther 2004:13)

*Teachers-as-learners* are acutely conscious of the demands for constant upskilling and flexibility, as both recipients and purveyors of lifelong learning.

The sector has its origins in further education (FE) which provided training for the industrial workforce. Following the post war 1944 Education Act its role expansion under the control of the local education authorities (LEA's) However, as Simmons and Thompson suggest '*FE had a particularly low political and public profile, well*

*deserving its later description as the 'Cinderella' of the education sector.'* (2008:608)

This profile they suggest is due to its existence on the margins of mainstream education its focus on working class employment.

*'FE has always focused mainly on practical and technical skills and knowledge for the workplace, but until relatively recently the majority of FE students and teachers were drawn from a predominantly working class elite consisting of skilled manual and technical workers.'* (ibid)

FE then, was about trades not professions. Consequently few policy makers had direct knowledge or experience of colleges. *'With a few exceptions, neither they nor their children have ever passed through it.'* (Coffield 2007:4). This lack of involvement Coffield suggests, contributes to a lack of understanding or awareness of the sector.

Working conditions needed to be sufficiently attractive to entice skilled practitioners away from industry<sup>4</sup>. There existed within institutions a respect for those skills which allowed for a degree of autonomy, and a low level of managerialism. *'Such working conditions would seem to provide the high-trust, high skill relations that, in contemporary*

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□ Though they were never sufficient to attract professionals such as accountants and lawyers who tended to be employed on a sessional basis.

*discourse, are argued to underpin future economic prosperity.'*

(Simmons and Thompson 2008:608) During a period of industrial expansion and economic confidence this remained largely unchallenged.

During the later years of the twentieth century, changes in the political and economic climate provided an impetus towards the 'new right' agenda of marketisation, regulation and the use of performance indicators to regulate pay and conditions. Decline in heavy industry and trade union power rendered the traditional areas of the FE sector relatively powerless in the face of change.

As a result of changes in the economic and industrial climate and the political ambitions of the Conservative government, FE colleges were called upon to diversify their mission, and by the 1990's 20% of funding came from central government (Simmons and Thompson 2009).

In 1992, the Further and Higher Education Act (F&HE 1992) created college incorporation by radically restructuring the management, funding and organisation of FE. This change to 'corporate status' gave colleges independence from local authority control. Boards of

governors, drawn mainly from local business with some community and education representatives, were charged with drawing up policies appropriate for local conditions.

Colleges were then 'free' to compete for learners with other institutions, and thus accrue funding from the newly established Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Performance related funding linked the recruitment, retention and achievement of individual students to college income.

*'Despite the rhetoric of freedom that accompanied incorporation, this effectively established a system of centralised state control.'*  
(Simmons and Thompson 2009:609)

*'to fully understand incorporation it needs to be seen as part of a broader political and ideological project to restructure and redirect the public sector and to reconfigure it as subservient to the perceived needs of the economy.'* (ibid)

### ***New Labour***

Simmons (2009) describe the early years of incorporation as being *'particularly fraught'* *'FE colleges became far more taxing places in which to work, particularly for teachers; workloads increased greatly; pay and conditions deteriorated; and levels of professional autonomy were significantly reduced.'* (2009:287). These changes were accompanied by a developing trend towards 'macho-management' culminating in the loss of over 20,000 staff, industrial unrest and

financial irregularities. *'It would be fair to say that the New Labour Government inherited a sector in crisis when it came to power.'* (ibid.)

In 1997 the 'new' Labour Government took office with a pledge to prioritise *'education, education, education'* (Blair 1997)

*'Learning is the key to prosperity - for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century. This is why the Government has put learning at the heart of its ambition.'*  
(Blunkett 1997:1)

In the same year the 'Fryer Report' was published which stated in its preamble:

*'A culture of lifelong learning can act as a resource in the midst of change, helping people both to cope with change and in their strivings to shape it to their own devices, as active citizens.'*  
(Fryer 1997: s1.2)

Changes were both global and local. In local terms, during the latter half of the 1980's the decline in traditional 'heavy industry' (mining, engineering and shipbuilding) which resulted in a corresponding decline in apprenticeships. This was a particularly important phenomenon in the North East of England in which this project is set. Government perceived a need for regeneration, alternative sources of employment, and a new role for FE.



## **Kennedy**

The Kennedy Committee was established in 1997 with the task of establishing the means by which the wider community could be persuaded both to enter further education (FE) and to remain there until they have gained qualifications and training which would equip them for new sources of employment (Kennedy 1997).

*'Education must be at the heart of any inspired regeneration of Britain.'* (ibid: 6) and colleges were to become a *'springboard for the revitalisation that our communities so urgently need.'* (ibid:5)

The Committee perceived *'a social landscape where there is a growing gulf between those who have and those who have not.'* To bridge this gulf, social cohesion needed to be fostered. Kennedy saw both economic and social imperatives for this. *'Making social cohesion a prominent goal of education also has a prominent role in economic terms.'* (ibid: 6)

The Report describes the *'centrality of human and social capital in economic success'* (ibid). Human capital is perceived as capital which is *'embodied in the knowledge and skills of human beings'*; social

capital is *'moral obligation, duty to community and trust'*; the latter has *'a large and measurable economic value.'* (ibid)

Yet there is a tension between these two forms of capital. Social capital, according to Coleman is *'high where people trust each other, and where this trust is exercised by the mutual acceptance of obligations.'* (Coleman cited in Schuller and Field 1998:230) The mutuality envisaged in this definition seems to be missing from the Kennedy perspective described above. Coffield suggests that: *'The over concentration on individual human capital leads to a corresponding neglect of social capital.'* (i.e. strong social networks, shared values and high trust.) (Coffield 1999:178)

Kane also questions whether it is possible to promote social inclusion through the building of social capital, and suggests that it may be pursued in its 'weak' version by incorporating those on the margins. (Kane 2005:105)

Incorporating those on the margins was indeed seen as the first step to achieving the goal of wider participation. Advice, guidance and support of prospective learners were to drive funding mechanisms and excellence in provision was to be the aim. The Committee stated: *'For*

*the overwhelming majority of colleges, the driving force for excellence remains a non discriminatory service to all sections of the community.*'(Kennedy 1997:4)

The driving force for lifelong learning then whilst avowedly inclusive, is based on the tenet that '*Learning is central to economic prosperity and social cohesion*' (Kennedy 1997) the drive towards full employment and a reduction in benefit dependency has resulted in policies which focus on education for employment, as Clegg and McNulty recognise: '*Lifelong learning forms a central policy for developing people's capacities for employment.*' (Clegg and McNulty 2005: 213)

The implementation of the Committee's recommendations had far reaching implications for colleges. Recruitment target areas were widened to include those 'postcode areas' with traditionally low levels of participation in post compulsory education including the long term unemployed, parents and ethnic minorities. Crucially, funding became based on recruitment, retention and achievement. It rapidly became the role of the individual FE lecturer to recruit, retain and ensure successful completion and achievement for a diversity of learners.

### ***Tomlinson***

Whilst the Kennedy Report called for widening participation for all parts of the community, the Tomlinson Committee concentrated on adults with learning difficulties and suggested that:

*'Colleges be required to take more systematic account of local needs and to receive help with strategic planning to take account of under-represented groups of adult learners, including those with multiple difficulties, mental health difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.'* (Tomlinson 1998)

These recommendations were enshrined in legislation through the Special Education Needs Discrimination Act (SENDA 2001). This Act amended the DDA (1996) by laying duties on those educational institutions which were not previously covered to 'make reasonable adjustments' in order to enable those with disabilities to access courses. The definition of disability is '*a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities*' (DDA 1996) and the duties are *anticipatory*, therefore institutions must actively prepare for a diversity of learners, it is not sufficient to react when they arrive.

Inclusion mechanisms create classrooms and workshops with a huge diversity of learners. The opportunities for social cohesion presented by this diversity however are limited if not lost by the pressure to achieve auditable targets. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that the support workers for those with identified 'needs' are tempted

to 'over support' when course work has to be completed and presented for assessment and verification by outside agencies. Teachers are frequently concerned that pressures to meet achievement targets may lead to accreditation of individuals who will not and indeed perhaps should not, be employed in the sector for which they are given qualifications.<sup>5</sup>

This raises a moral dilemma. Few people would dispute the rights of all citizens of entitlement to the education or training of their choice. When that takes place in a primarily vocational institution however, there is an expectation that the qualification will lead to employment or at least will guarantee the prospective employees ability to work in that industry. The current funding mechanism privileges accredited courses therefore potentially at least, an increasing number of 'over supported' students are released qualified but not prepared for the world of work. A child care tutor I interviewed for a previous piece of research expressed her fears thus:

*'What are they going to do when the support isn't there?'*

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□ Child care is an area of particular concern. It is an attractive area for those with limited or no formal qualifications and is perceived as being 'easy'. Those qualified and experienced in the area express concern at this view and the implications it has for recruitment and more importantly for the 'message' which is sent out by accreditation. (unpublished personal research)

The focus on personalising learning as a mechanism for ensuring a 'fit' for each learner has had the effect of atomising individuals. The call for individual learning plans, the emphasis on individual learning styles and emotional intelligences has created a culture which separates learners from one another and labels them as 'types'. This can work to the disadvantage of both learners and staff. Learners may accept these labels themselves and limit their efforts to work in ways which don't fit with their 'preferred style.' Part of my role in the teaching development centre is to observe new teachers. During one visit to an application of number session I witnessed a learner explain to her tutor *'I'm a kinaesthetic learner, I can't do numbers.'*

*Teachers-as-learners* are subjected to the same regime. Staff appraisals focus on past success and future progress. The terms on which these are judged however, are firmly in relation to the organisational goals of recruitment, retention and achievement, with little reference to forms of development which don't lend themselves to measurability. Following an exploration of FE cultures, James and Biesta conclude: *'Our overall analysis suggests that the FE culture has become a barren environment when it comes to celebrating tutor creativity.'* (2007:115) The audit culture in institutions within the sector *'operate in framework[s] which avoid the risk associated with unconventional solutions'.* (ibid)

Consequently, as Edward et al. (2005) suggest, staff find themselves trying to meet conflicting demands and reconcile them with their own cultural and professional values and with their own perceptions of what is important, indeed the very purpose of their work, during a period of *'unprecedented turbulence and change'* within the sector.

Orr has also suggested that the evolution of managerialism which started with incorporation moved FE colleges *'inexorably moved towards these measurable outcomes at the expense of teachers' professional autonomy in, for example, the selection or assessment of students.'* (Orr 2008: 99) Perhaps inevitably, these pressures coupled with much lower rates of pay than in schools and universities has resulted in a high turnover of staff. (Orr 2008; Edward et al 2005). This inhibits the development of relationships between tutors and learners which may be particularly important for those learners who have negative school experiences and college is a second chance to succeed. It also leads to inconsistency of provision. The focus of funding on vocational qualifications has resulted in the cessation of a considerable amount of community based provision which was developed in response to the widening participation agenda stimulated by the Kennedy Report. The loss of this provision affects both the communities it served and the staff who lost jobs as a result. Staff

morale is inevitably damaged frequently leading to higher levels of stress and absenteeism particularly given that throughout the sector there is a growing tendency to recruit new staff on temporary contracts; through agencies; or as 'instructors.'<sup>6</sup> Jobs are insecure and scope for career progression limited. At the same time there is a divergence in pay between sectors and 'grades' of staff (Edward et al 2005).

### ***A new learning landscape***

The pressure on teaching staff to satisfy policy requirements is considerable. Whilst policy may not determine practice it creates the conditions and the environment in which professionals and those who administer and implement policy must work (Edwards and Coffield 2007). Orr has described '*a torrent of initiatives that have increased central scrutiny and control over FE*' (Orr 2009:479)

Coffield has identified three underlying and damaging assumptions on which policy is based. '*First, that 'our future depends on our skills' (Foster 2005) second, that in all matters concerning vocational education and the skills strategy it is appropriate 'to put employers in*

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□ In the college in which I work there are currently two grades of lecturer and three grades of instructor, supervised by three grades of leader and managed by four levels of management all of whom have differing terms and conditions of employment.



*the driving seat'; and third, that market competition is essential to make providers efficient and responsive.'* (Coffield 2007:42)

### **Funding**

Funding mechanisms move the agenda. Recent emphasis on level 2 qualifications in the Foster Report (Foster 2005) and the Leitch Report (Leitch 2006) recommended that funding should be directed towards those courses likely to lead to 'employability.' Benjamin describes the 'standards agenda' as, a *'global phenomenon, linked to the needs of nations and of global capitalism to produce adults who will have the skills and dispositions to contribute to national and global economies as producers and consumers.'* (Benjamin: 187)

This amounts to an economic imperative. The social imperative, on the other hand, is about the inclusion of those who are perceived to be excluded from society. *'Equity dictates that all should have the opportunity to succeed.'* (Kennedy 1997:15)

As Slee and Allen have identified *'There is a tendency to speak in one breath about inclusive education, but fail to acknowledge the policy context that presses us towards educational exclusion in the other.'* (2005:16)

*'Valuing diversity' begs the question of what forms of 'difference' can be slotted into the standards agenda'* (Visser cited in Benjamin 2005). Benjamin suggests that as a term it can conceal and even reproduce reactionary practices. (2005:175)

It seems therefore that the implementation of the two founding documents for inclusion in colleges, Kennedy and Tomlinson, has in fact created a policy contradiction.

Kennedy provides guidelines to ensure quality of provision since poor quality provision was seen as one of the reasons for lack of retention of those learners who most need further education, the result of which is that funding now follows success, and are issued to colleges and other organisations able to demonstrate not simply an intake of new learners, but retention and achievement of those learners. The funding works on the basis of auditable recruitment, retention and achievement, and the *'postcode uplift'* provides additional funding for recruitment from what are defined as *'deprived areas.'*

Tomlinson focussed on the inclusion of those disadvantaged by disability previously excluded from further education. To combat these inequities, ironically funding now follows success, and is issued to organisations able to demonstrate an intake of new learners, retention

and achievement of those learners. The current vocationally orientated aims outlined by Leitch (2006) are frequently unachievable by these same learners, and as discussed above, are in some cases undesirable.

Sectors do not exist in isolation. Any analysis of the impact of government legislation must explore the relationship between several policy agendas as well as the history, practices, and cultural factors within the workforce (Edwards and Coffield 2007). Orr suggests that as a consequence of FE finding itself at the nexus of the government's social and economic policy agenda there has been '*a stampede of initiatives and policies that attempt to draw people into education, and to standardise what they learn there.*' (Orr 2008: 100)

It might be useful to return to Foucault's concept of archaeology here:

- 1) *the sayable and the visible – what can be said and what is made visible – the relationship between words and things*

The sector is more diverse now than its FE origins and includes

prisons, training agencies, agencies for employment, colleges and adult education venues – statements are made about how each of these should operate – instructions, guidelines, policies, and each of these has a visibility which is distinct and manifests beliefs about its nature and the people who exist within it. As an observer of new teachers I visit a diversity of teaching venues and I find striking the influence of the environment and the interaction which takes place within it. Prisons are of course a stark example but agencies focussing on the unemployed manifest similar cultures in their disciplinary codes and interactions with their 'deficit' learners. Restrictions I have witnessed in terms of leaving the room for comfort reasons would not be tolerated I suspect even in prisons.

2) *the ordering of statements – the hierarchy through which statements flow.*

The statements made within the sector emanate from government through its agencies including its regulatory bodies, and are passed downwards to the teachers, tutors and learning assistants to the final recipients the learners<sup>7</sup> and at each point they are internalised by

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individuals and the cultures in which they exist.

3) *the discourse – the authoritative statements which manifest as truths through repetition.*

Examples of the discourse used include the terms 'employability' and 'employability skills' which illustrate the deficit discourse Crowther has identified (Crowther 2004) are accepted as 'facts' as is the unquestioning acceptance of the inevitability and rightness of the marketisation of education. (Coffield 2007).

4) *how statements produce subject positions – through defining roles and attitudes*

'Subject positions' are defined by the discourse – the unemployed lack employability skills, and if their teachers fail to provide these they are therefore themselves deficit in skills, the combination of these deficits results in unemployment and damage to the national economy.

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□ It's interesting to note the change from 'student' to 'learner' – with connotations of what Coffield refers to as 'a simple input-output' theory of teaching. (Coffield 2007)

5) *the surfaces of emergence – where statements manifest themselves*

Surfaces of emergence include the institutions themselves and the political rhetoric within the media and other organs of dissemination such as government and institutional policy statements. This also provides an example of Foucault's theory of power in that the rhetoric is internalised by both staff and students and becomes 'obvious' and 'common sense'.

6) *how institutions become places of visibility – the architecture and spatial arrangements.*

The architecture, the size of the rooms, the furniture and resources which are provided for learning and the constraints upon them, the nature of the 'knowledge' imparted within them. This is particularly apparent in some of the venues used within the lifelong learning sector, both in colleges and even more starkly in some of the buildings used by training agencies dealing with the unemployed.

7) *the forms of specification – the vocabulary and the concepts which define.*

The vocabulary of achievement and the techniques of assessment define the progress and success of the individuals within the institutions – both those who teach and those who learn.

### ***Professionalising the workforce.***

In 2001 Blunkett observed: *'We can't achieve our aim of raising standards without high quality teaching in all our further education and sixth form colleges'*.(Blunkett 2001)

In 2007 The Further Education and Training Act 2007 (FETA 2007) implemented the White Paper *'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances'* (Dfes 2006). This Act required that from September 2007 in order to qualify to work in the Lifelong Learning Sector, new staff must achieve Qualified Teaching and Learning Status (QTLS) through a suite of courses approved by LLUK (LLUK 2006).

Orr has pointed out that *'the length of these standards and their banal specification of practice contrast unfavourably with the equivalent documents covering schools and the HE sector.'* (Orr 2008:103) *'FE teachers are given a very much shorter leash by the government.'*<sup>8</sup> (Orr 2008: 103). The standards amount, in fact, to a definition of

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□ This applies not just to FE however, but to all who teach in the sector.

what professionalism means in the sector, and that definition is very much more restrictive and prescriptive than in other sectors (ibid). Indicating, according to Avis, (cited in Orr 2009) '*a truncated model of trust.*' (Orr 2009:482)

An example of this truncated model of trust is the emphasis placed on 'measurability'. Implementation of the workforce reforms requires that '*the milestones and outcomes should be measurable.*' (LLUK 2008:5) The difficulties this presents for the CPD requirement of the Reforms is recognised: [there is] '*an urgent need to develop more precise instruments for impact measurement.*' (LLUK 2008:4)

*All those who lead and work in the sector will need to move up a gear. Rammell (LLUK 2008:4)*

The importance of the history and development of the sector for this research lies in its influence on the participants and particular the views of 'learning', education, training, their own roles in the processes and their own self perceptions as both learners and teachers.



## ***Ethical issues***

*'Codes are not enough...'*  
(Small 2001:387)

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) issued a set of ethical guidelines in 1992 to enable researchers to *'reach an ethically acceptable position in which their activities are considered justifiable and sound.'* (BERA 2004:4) A revision was issued in 2004 as a result of criticisms which suggested that the original guidelines were limited in scope, but also in acknowledgement of the diversity of the types of educational research currently undertaken, in particular the growing popularity of 'action research'.

At the time of that revision there was a clear commitment to *'review and continuously update the Guidelines.'* (ibid: 2<sup>9</sup>)

Whilst the commitment to review is a response to the growth of innovative research methods, it also a recognition of a wider ongoing debate on the nature of ethical and moral conduct. As Moghaddum expresses it *'there is no terminus for moral debates.'* (2004:1) He believes that moral concepts are originally at home in specific historical contexts, and in support of this proposition he cites

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□ There is in fact a new edition issued in 2011 which I have not used in this work.

McIntyre who criticises those philosophers who try to discover '*the timeless language of morals*' (ibid)

The Guidelines also acknowledge the 'problematic' nature of the range of concepts used in research such as 'validity', 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity', 'truth' and 'reality'; (BERA 2004:4) and there is an explicit recognition of the legitimacy of a diversity of educational research '*philosophies, theories and methodologies*' (ibid) This diversity however, in itself results in conflicting perspectives.

Howe and Moses (1999) suggest a complication has arisen for research ethics as a result of the '*interpretive turn*' taken in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century through the growth of qualitative research. This has resulted in the development of two distinct approaches to research ethics which they term the *traditional* and the *contemporary*.

The 'traditional approach' has its roots in the positivist tradition of experimental and quasi experimental, quantitative research methodology. It draws a clear distinction between the *prescriptive* and *descriptive* components of research. (1998:21) Prescriptive

elements are those concerned with moral issues, the central one being the protection of individual autonomy.

(The descriptive being the scientific, methodological focus)

The traditional controversy over moral conduct lies between the deontological, Kantian approach which espouses an absolute standard through which researchers regard their participants as human beings who are ends in themselves<sup>10</sup>; as opposed to the teleological, utilitarian or consequentialist approach in which the focus is on the value of the end product of the research. This perspective views participants as the means to those ends.

Utilitarianism<sup>11</sup> seeks to maximise the greatest benefit for the greatest number, thus knowledge gained through research and subsequently utilised for the greater good can justify a degree of 'harm' which may be suffered during its acquisition.<sup>12</sup> The extent of this harm however, must always be set against the degree of benefit.

Guillemin and Gillam suggest the potential harms to participants in

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□ Kants moral imperative: *'So act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but at the same time as an end'* Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (in Gardner 'Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason' Routledge 1999)

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Utility as usefulness rather than the commonly used interpretation as pleasure or happiness.

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Guilliam and Gillam provide what they describe as the standard definition of harm from bioethics – *'a setback to a persons interests'* – which can include whatever aspect of a persons life they consider important – *there are many ways in which a person can be harmed.* (2004:278)

qualitative research *'are often quite subtle'* stemming from the interaction between researcher and participants. *'As such they are hard to specify, predict, and describe...'* (Guilliam and Gillam 2004:274) This leads to the moral question of who is to be the arbiter of the degree of harm? Who in fact are the 'gatekeepers'? (Homan 2001)

The contemporary approach, on the other hand, questions the 'centrality' of autonomy. The *'interpretive turn'*, an expression credited to Rabinow and Sullivan, (Howe & Moses 1999:32) describes the epistemological shift from positivism towards heuristics. From this perspective *'virtually everything that makes humans what they are'* is created and exists only within social relationships. Social life is 'dialogical' therefore social researchers must learn to listen, and listen carefully, to hear the voices of the participants. Beliefs and norms which create moral perspectives are not discovered, but are *constructed* through interaction. (ibid)

Ladd suggests that: *'Even if substantial agreement could be reached on ethical principles and they could be set out in a code, the attempt to impose such principles on others in the guise of ethics contradicts the notion of ethics itself, which presumes that persons are*

*autonomous moral agents'* (cited in Small 2001:390) Ladd also points out that since codes set only a minimum standard, there is a risk of condoning whatever is not expressly forbidden and this in itself can lead to unethical conduct. (ibid: 391)

Homan makes a similar point in suggesting that codes may allow an abdication of responsibility in that once agreement to participate has been reached '*the signature of the subject on a piece of paper may be held to indemnify the researcher.*' (Homan 2001: 332) Homan further suggests that formal definitions of moral conduct may lead to '*a single process of compliance rather than a continuous process of considering the ethical aspects of one's actions*' (cited in Small 2001:391)

Bibby sees the danger of ethical codification as being twofold: firstly, there is a risk that the code itself may become a measure of 'good' research. Secondly, and related to the previous point, is that a mechanical or quasi mechanical application of standards may exclude valuable research. (Bibby 1993)

Small suggests that: '*Codes of ethics present a temptation to institutionalise one philosophical approach to ethics, namely, a 'top*

*down' strategy'* (Small 2001:389) by starting with abstract and universalist principles and to try to derive particular judgements through a kind of logical reasoning. Whilst the attraction of a 'ready made model' is apparent, and may seem to guarantee consistency, it also raises questions about best practice. *'A codified practice is of very limited use in arriving at ethical decisions.'* (ibid) For Small the 'striking objection' to codes of ethics, is that they are misnamed *'ethics is by its nature bound up with individual decision, and so cannot be legislated.'* (ibid)

*'Whose Ethics, Which Research?'* (McNamee 2001)

Ethical research codification originally developed as a result of World War Two atrocities and took the form of the Nuremberg Code. (Guilliam and Gillam 2004; Kenny 2008; Rhodes 2005) The guiding principles include voluntary consent, informed consent, right to withdraw, avoidance of harm and suffering, and the duty and responsibility of the researcher to the participant. Contemporary codes including those issued by BERA reflect these central concerns. Physical experimentation was the trigger for the original principles, and medical ethics is still the most contested and active area of

ethical dispute, but social science research is not immune to controversy.

Psychological experimental research in the 1970's illustrated the need for protection of participants (e.g Milgram 1974; Zimbardo 1971 (in Haney et al 1973)) and more recently the cautionary tale of Chamberlain and her research into the lives of Fen women (in Tickle 2001) reinforces this need for protection and raises the issue of how fully informed consent needs to be and indeed can ever be.

Utilitarian principles can be raised in defence of Milgram and Zimbardo; since it might be argued that the knowledge gained from the experiments contributed to the society. Chamberlain on the other hand might be accused of a lack of foresight on the implications of publishing her research. Her participants were embarrassed and humiliated by press interest which arose as a result of their identity accidentally being revealed, what Etherington calls '*the ethics of consequences*'. (Etherington 2007:608)

That the educational research is unlikely to inflict the type or degree of harm which resulted either from these experiments is a matter of degree rather than principle.

The agreement of participants on the basis of the researchers' description of the project, may lead, as Homan has suggested, to a perceived indemnification of the researcher against future research innovations. Yet some research is based on innovation. For example '*ethnographic projects are by intentions and definition open ended*' generating '*theory grounded in the material which is unearthed - research design and theory making is ongoing*' (Measor & Woods 199:60) How then can harm be foreseen?

Pring suggests that it is necessary to distinguish between principles and rules: principles embody values, whereas rules are specific, however, some principles are consequentialist, some deontological. (2001:413) He offers four solutions should a conflict arise between principles: ignore the problem; decide whether to be a consequentialist or a deontologist; try '*in vain*' (*original words*) to find even higher principles to which to adhere; or fourthly, decide which applies in the context of the research since '*one situation is relevantly different from the next.*' (ibid: 414)

This doesn't seem very helpful. It also seems to suggest what

Pendlebury and Enslin call '*a sort of relativism*' (2001:361). Using the



example of Lane's research as a hearing person conducting research within the deaf community, and Phurutse's ethnographic study in a South African school, they point to the issues of trust in working with human beings and the distinction between researching 'with' or 'on' research 'subjects.' (The issue of the description used - subject or participant - is raised by others including Guillemin and Gillam 2004)

Pendlebury and Enslin also raise the question of who has the right to speak for others. In both cases cited there is, they suggest, a dual identity which presents dilemmas which cannot be resolved '*without a deep and astute situational appreciation.*' There is in fact, '*no view from nowhere.*' (ibid 363)

Moule et al describe the importance of 'positionality' particularly for 'insider' research. The relationship between teacher and student is clearly one of unequal power. '*The place of power in knowledge development must be acknowledged as permeating the research methodology*' and a '*collaborative social justice methodology must be achieved to give the students a 'voice.'*' (Moule et al 2004:2).

### **'Ethics in practice'**

(Guillemin and Gillam 2004)

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) differentiate between 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice.' The role of procedural ethics, including ethics committees they see as useful at the design stage for the protection of basic rights and for providing 'checklists' for conduct. However, this has limited value 'in the field'. *'Arguably, procedural ethics has little or no impact on the actual ethical conduct of research.'*

(2004:263) On the other hand are *'the everyday ethics which arise in the doing of research'* – ethics in practice – are those issues which arise as *'ethically important moments'* in which an approach or decision made by the researcher may have ethical ramifications.

(ibid) These need not be dramatic or 'dilemma-type' issues (ibid: 266) but may involve the 'complex dynamics' between participants which Komesaroff describes as 'microethics' (cited op cit.)

Guillemin and Gillam suggest that a responsive approach to research necessitates a process of 'reflexivity' can provide a bridge between procedural ethics and ethics in practice. They argue that reflexivity should be viewed not as a single or universal entity, but as an active, ongoing process which 'saturates' every stage of the research. It is a process of critical reflection both on the *kind* of knowledge produced from research and *how* that knowledge is generated. (2004:274) It

mirrors Bourdieu's view that the reflexive process takes two steps back – one to observe the subject/participants, and the second to reflect on the observation itself. (ibid)

*'A reflexive research process is a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the data but also to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, participants and the research context.'* (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:274)

They suggest that whilst a reflexive process cannot foresee specific issues, it can offer a process which can foresee potential consequences and *'general sort(s) of predicaments.'* (ibid: 276)

A reflexive researcher is one who is aware of the factors which influence their own construction of knowledge and how that has impacted on the planning, conduct and reporting of the research; and importantly, the ultimate purpose of the research. Such an awareness leads to recognition of the importance of interaction with participants and its relevance to ethics. *'It is in these interactions that the process of informed consent really occurs.'* (ibid: 275)

The reality of informed consent and the ongoing nature of the process of reflexivity require the researcher to develop an awareness of the *potential* impact of the research process, including, for example, the

wording, framing, posing and timing of interview questions. This seems to be no more than the sensitivity that any careful researcher should employ. Etherington however suggests that it is, in that reflexivity *'requires the researcher to come from behind the protective barriers of objectivity'* (Etherington 2007:599). Reflexivity is a tool in fact, for *'including ourselves at any stage, making transparent the values and beliefs we hold that almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes.'* (ibid 601) She argues that by *'permeating'* every aspect of the research process, reflexivity challenges researchers to be more fully *'conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience.'* (Hertz cited in Etherington 2007:600) The link then between reflexivity and ethical research rests on *transparency*. (ibid 604)

Heshusius questions our ability to create this distance through a *'methodology of subjectivity'* suggesting that a preoccupation with how to account for one's subjectivity can be seen as a subtle version of empiricist thought. *'One only has the need to subjectify self and reality if one has first objectified them.'* (Heshusius 1994:17) She suggests that in borrowing methodology from science we also borrowed the idea of distance, and the belief that distance can be created and then managed to create *'knowing'*. This results in an *'alienated*

*consciousness.*' She contrasts this Schachtel's concept of '*allocentric*' knowing which requires a '*temporary eclipse all the perceiver's egocentric thoughts and strivings*' in order to merge or integrate the '*self and the world that is learned.*' (ibid) This approach she describes as '*participatory consciousness*' - '*a deeper level of kinship between the knower and the known.* (ibid 16) Heshusius suggests that concerns of objectivity versus subjectivity in educational research are based on a misunderstanding. The essential meaning is not about methodology but about how we understand our consciousness. (ibid 17) The act of knowing becomes an ethical act when the researcher forgets self and becomes embedded in what one wants to understand '*there is an affirmative quality of kinship that no longer allows for privileged status.*' (ibid 19) Unequal power relationships are resolved through knowing as a mode of access in which '*egocentric concerns*' are released '*and the idea of distance, in management and control, is relinquished.*' (ibid 20)

How has this brief literature review informed my practice?

I share Etherington's (and others) view of reality as being '*socially constructed and of knowledge as situated and created within contexts and embedded within historical, cultural stories, beliefs and practices.*'

(Etherington 2007:599) Therefore I believe that the community of enquiry is an effective tool for developing criticality and critical literacy. My participants were aware of this belief and to this extent my perspective is 'transparent.' I described the project, the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time in line with BERA guidelines. My 'duty' towards them includes avoidance of foreseeable harm and providing value for them from the project rather than using them as means to an end which only benefits me.

However, the research is exploratory and whilst written consent was obtained, I share with Etherington the belief that consent is a process rather than an event. (ibid: 603) There is a risk in the observation of 'dutiful ethics' of failing to anticipate unforeseen harms which result from heuristic research. (ibid 601)

Did I successfully '*come out heuristically*' with participants? (ibid 613)

I am conscious that my 'positionality' includes my position as an insider since some of my learners are also members of staff, and I am also aware my position of power as a tutor researching my students. The role of researcher as insider does not have to be problematic in itself. Previous research projects within the college have demonstrated colleagues' willingness to co-operate and a certain

degree of trust has been evident *because* of my role as an insider. I have also taught many of the participants in previous courses which I believe has increased their levels of trust in me.

My current role as tutor/researcher was nevertheless more challenging. I explained the purpose of the activity as part of the skills development work relevant to working at a higher academic level and participants had a 'voice' through verbal and written feedback, reflective logs, and more formally through their course representative. I share Etherington's belief that '*we learn most about our practice from those with whom we practice*' and '*we can negotiate the sometimes tricky pathway in dialogue together.*' (Etherington 2007:606) I therefore shared the data with the research group and discuss findings in the hope that I would be able to enhance the data through triangulation increasing its 'trustworthiness.' (Lather 1986:260)

To be an effective teacher it is important to achieve open dialogue with my groups of adult learners but can that become the quality of 'kinship' that Heshusius believes alleviates privileged status? How will I know if I have achieved that? Heshusius acknowledges that '*many*

*questions will need to be further explored'* to achieve a participatory mode of consciousness. (Op cit 20)

Have I then achieved the reflexivity that will enable me to work ethically? Etherington provides the following guidelines:

- To remain aware of the potential power imbalances between researcher and participant.
- To negotiate research decisions transparently with participants and to balance our needs with those of the participants.
- To provide ongoing information as it becomes available even when that requires the use of appropriate and judicious self disclosure
- To include in our writing and representations information about research dilemmas that may occur, and the means by which they have been alleviated.

Remaining aware of power imbalances however does not negate them. I needed to create a context of dialogue with the participants which empowered them and give rise to reciprocity if I was able to address the first three guidelines (Lather 1986:264).



The most challenging ethical dilemma lay in my interpretation of their words. Scott and Usher remind us that reflexive accounts in themselves represent a construction on the part of the writer. (Scott and Usher 1999:20) Can I be 'objective' in my findings? Need I try?

Eisner describes two kinds of objectivity: procedural objectivity which I believe I can work towards, and ontological objectivity which he suggests is not achievable (Eisner 1992). The state of 'veridicality' towards which it is directed is predicated upon a 'correspondence theory of truth' which suggests that the truth exists and can be found through enquiry (Eisner 1992:10). This is a return to the positivist perspective in which the idea of objectivity masks the ideologies of power (Heshusius 1994:19).

The aims of the project were to assess the pedagogical device in terms of its impact on critical literacy and identity. Who is to be the judge of that? As the researcher it is my function to interpret the data, but I must be aware that it *is* an interpretation. To ensure that I do not 'silence' the voices of the participants I must also include their perspectives and perceptions. This I attempted to do through valuing their reflections and discussing my (and crucially

*their*) findings. If disagreement arose this needed be recognised and negotiated.

*'Research remains a constantly challenging and humbling engagement with ethical dilemmas.'* (Street 1998:15)

## Chapter 3

### Orientating the literature

A community of enquiry is *'a collaborative and reflective approach to dialogue built up over time with the same group of learners.'*

(Nottingham 2005:1)

The concept was developed by Matthew Lipman as part of his work on 'Philosophy for Children' (P4C) in order to encourage 'reasoning' amongst children.

*'Philosophical enquiry is concerned with the empowerment of students to take confidence in their own thinking and the process of developing [...] These classroom deliberations evoke thinking that is skilful and deliberate, thinking that employs relevant criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context. It is not just any kind of thinking, it is critical thinking.'*

(Lipman, 1991:4)

Lipman was influenced by Vygotsky (1962) and Dewey (1916). With Vygotsky he shares a 'socio-cultural' view of learning in which language is a cultural tool for meaning making, and individual contributions are seen as an integral part of a social interaction. I have seen the value of discussion both inside and outside the classroom for the development of understanding of ideas and alternative perspectives. With Dewey he shares a belief that the primary role for education is the development of reason; and a recognition of the

importance of questioning and enquiry in the development of those reasoning abilities and my own experience reflects this.

Mercer has described language as a '*tool for thinking*' (Mercer 2000:1) and Aoki suggests that *teaching 'should be more about the provocation to think than any communication of knowledge.'* (Aoki 2000:14) With this in mind, I wanted to use the enquiries to explore the development of '*interthinking*' (Mercer 2000) amongst the group and explore the extent to which '*passages of intellectual search*' (Tizard & Hughes 1991: 32) impact on both individual and joint development of criticality.

### ***The role of dialogue in learning.***

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) embodied his view that intellectual development is sensitive to dialogue and situational factors, a process by which *intermental* (individual) processes can be facilitated and accelerated by *intramental* (social) activity.

Mercer has referred to an '*intermental*' *development zone* (IDZ) '*which builds a shared communicative space on the contextual foundations of their common knowledge and aims.*' (Mercer 2000:141)

Essential to this process is '*scaffolding*' (Bruner 1990) in which assistance is given to those struggling with difficult concepts. Mercer suggests that an '*uncritical, non-competitive and constructive relationship of 'cumulative talk' can be created*' (Mercer 2000:173) which will provide this environment. This seems to me to be a crucial factor for effective learning and to engender the atmosphere essential to the self and mutual respect adult learners expect.

Bakhtin recognised dialogue as being central to how meaning and understanding are created and viewed language as '*involving a constant dynamic tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces.*' (Bakhtin 1986:47) Centripetal forces are the 'official' discourses of authority and organisations, as opposed to the more personal centrifugal forces which are individual experience. The relevance of these opposing forces is inescapable in the current climate I have described above and became increasingly apparent to the participants during the project.

## ***Critical literacy***

Critical literacy *'should aim to develop 'powerfully literate' readers and writers who can approach texts and social life critically as well as master the range of genres and techniques in writing for effective participation in society and a participatory democracy.'* (McKinney citing Lankshear 2003:189)

Critical literacy and the development of dialogue create the potential for social agency. *'... the knowledge content of the learning is not simply disseminated, but rather produced from dialogues between the body of academic knowledge [...] and the diverse skills and experience of people and their organisations'* (Scandrett et al 2006:24) creating in fact, of a 'community space'. *'This space gives top priority to the community as the source of wisdom.'* (Cavanagh 1999:6)

As an educator I seek to create the environment in which my learners can learn from one another and question the received wisdom of the organisational cultures in which they operate. I believe by exploring together in a safe and supportive environment they can create new knowledge.

## ***Identity***

The development of critical literacy is connected with the concept of identity. The post-structuralist position views identity not as a fixed entity, but rather as changing, developing and transforming '*identity categories are positioned as multiple, fluid and often contradictory, both internally and externally*' (Lather and Ellsworth 1996:43)

Academic research has explored the issue of identity amongst teachers, particularly in the FE context. (Bathmaker and Avis 2004; McNally and Gray 2006; Ecclestone 2007; Mercer 2007) and in this project I aimed to explore its formation and development during the two year period of the study, recognising the influence of government policy (Avis 2000; Ball 2003; Avis 2006; Coffield 2007) and organisational culture. *Teacher-as-learner* constitutes an identity in itself I believe, and I wanted to explore its nature and formation.

I found Hughes (2010) concept of 'identity congruence' useful here. Hughes suggests that whilst collaborative learning has much to offer, not all learners participate fully and peers groups can be exclusive. Her study of students on blended courses explores how they negotiate identity congruence with their peer groups in order to belong and

engage. The three elements which she identified seemed appropriate for use with my research group:

- *'Firstly, there is social identity congruence: the personal identification with peers which draws on representations of identity.'*
- *'Secondly, there is identification with the processes, practices and technologies of social learning, which I term 'operational identity congruence'.'*
- *'Thirdly, identification with the ideas, concepts and knowledge that are under construction gives knowledge related identity congruence.'*  
(Hughes 2010:48)

These categories provided a useful framework through which I was able to trace emergences of identity during the period of the project. I have attempted to identify these in data set 2 in which the participants identify their own sense of identity and in data set 3 in which I have attempted to codify instances of identity congruence and discongruence in the enquiries.

In addition to these individual characteristics which participants bring to the group, I also wanted to explore to what extent a distinct group identity was created and for this I found Foucault's concept of the heterotopia useful. (Foucault 1986) I discuss this in chapter 2.



## ***The context***

The first module of the course is designed to introduce a range of academic commentary and analysis of the sector and also to develop the academic skills necessary for the successful completion of a degree level programme including the higher order thinking (HOT) skills of analysis, criticality, reflection, evaluation and synthesis. One of the teaching strategies I use to develop these skills is to introduce the group to the practice of enquiry. I do this in order to encourage philosophical questioning and deeper analysis of new concepts and ideas which may prove initially challenging. Used over a period of time, I believe enquiry is also a useful device for the development of listening skills and the deeper form of learning essential for success at this academic level.

By offering a series of enquiries my aim is to explore what Mercer has described as the '*long conversation*' which is created amongst groups of people who:

- 1) *have a shared understanding of the topic and purpose of the talk therefore the creation of a shared frame of reference*
- 2) *experience collective remembering which provides conversational ground rules and*
- 3) *use past activity to create the long conversation*

through which they can *'draw on the resources of their history and their continuing joint activity.'* (Mercer 2000:48-50) to create what Hicks has termed a *'stable generic form'* from which to develop. (Hicks 2003:4)

### ***The learning group***

Course applicants have usually completed initial, intermediate and diploma level teacher training courses or the equivalent within the post compulsory sector.<sup>13</sup> To operate successfully at degree level learners need to move away from the narrative understandings of teaching/training techniques and policy implementation which are frequently the focus of professional training courses, and to move towards a deeper awareness of the philosophical, historical, political and sociological imperatives which underpin the policies they are required to implement.

This step can be a challenging one for many learners both in terms of the development of the skills of academic literacy and also through the introduction of politically contentious material in the current climate in which the lifelong learning sector exists. (Brookfield 2002; Smith 2007; Warren & Webb 2007)

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□ The course is designed for all types of employees within the lifelong learning sector e.g. managers, administrators and human resources staff, therefore candidates do not need to be practicing teachers and may have different but equivalent level professional qualifications.

As Hicks has pointed out '*Discourses can never be neutral or value free, discourses always reflect ideologies, systems of values, beliefs and social practices.*' (Hicks 2003: 5)

### **Enquiry**

The format of enquiry is the provision of a stimulus by the 'facilitator' which may take the form of a written text such as a haiku, poem or a piece of prose; a visual stimulus such as a picture or cartoon; an object such as an ornament; or an auditory stimulus such as a piece of music. The stimulus need have no direct relevance to the course since the object of the enquiry is to open minds rather than channel thoughts.

Participants are then invited to consider the stimulus individually for a few minutes to explore the ideas or feelings generated, and then share their thoughts with a partner or small group with whom they are then asked to form a question. A list of questions is generated which is then considered by the group and 'voted' on; the one selected will become the focus of the enquiry.

Questions should be of a 'philosophical' nature since reflection is an essential part of enquiry. Questions therefore, should not be 'closed' or answerable in through one word, simplistic answers; enquiries should be

*'conceptually rich, coherently organised, persistently exploratory, and consistently articulated.'* (Nottingham 2005:2)

The concept of a 'philosophical' question as opposed to a discussion or a debate can be challenging, particularly when the process of enquiry is new. Careful introduction is essential and time needs to be spent on identifying its characteristics.

### **Language**

*'Language is so intimately connected with social life and human behaviour that any model of language tends to embody assumptions and value judgements which cannot be challenged by empirical data because they already circumscribe what kind of data is regarded as relevant to the theory.'* (Graddol cited in Goodman et al 2003: xviii)

This observation is crucial to my understanding of how the use of words works, and how they can influence behaviour and the understanding of context.

According to Lillis, the social perspective on the use of language suggests that:

- Language is conceptualised as language-in-use rather than language as an abstract system.
- Language-in-use inevitably involves a focus on the social context in which language occurs.

(Lillis 2003:xiv)

She describes sociocultural theory as:

*'a distinctive field within the broader area of social psychology and focuses on the link between language and learning, both of which are viewed as fundamentally social phenomena.'* (ibid)

The aim of this research project was to explore the role of language in learning; specifically, the impact of dialogue on the development of a group of adult learners in a particular learning environment and at a distinct historical point in their lives and in the sector in which they work.

As part of the skills development for the course, the group needs to operate successfully at degree level and the acquisition of 'academic' literacy and the facility to critically explore ideas and the sociocultural environment in which they work is essential to this.

The pedagogical approach reflects the sociocultural theory by focusing on interactive and participatory activities within the classroom including enquiry. As Leat and Higgins have observed '*powerful pedagogical strategies*' encourage talk. (Leat and Higgins 2002:76)

## **Lipman**

Lipman himself describes enquiry as follows:

*'The C of I<sup>14</sup> is in one sense learning together, and it is therefore an example of the value of shared experience. But in another sense it represents a magnification of the efficiency of the learning process, since students who thought that all learning had to be learning by oneself come to discover that they can also use and profit from the learning experiences of others'. (Lipman 2003: 92)*

The notion of 'learning by oneself' is very much reinforced by the current philosophy within the sector which embodies what Matusov has termed the '*ethnocentric bias of modern Western societies*' which stresses autonomous learning or '*privileges solo activity as the crux of human development*' and which Matusov defines as the '*birthmark of modern western societies.*' (Matusov 1998:327) This is evidenced by numerous policy documents and in the adoption for example of individual 'learning styles' questionnaires used frequently in the sector as part of the initial assessment (and thus labelling) of learners, despite their being discredited by writers such as Coffield et al. (2004)

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<sup>□</sup> I use the English 'enquiry' – Lipman uses the American 'inquiry' – in direct quotes, I will use his spelling and in other areas mine. (I am aware of the debate on usage of these terms but it is not within the remit of this work to engage with it)

The atomisation of learners is further encouraged by the use of Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) which attempt to map out a learning journey for each learner largely in isolation from their peers (Avis et al 2002).

Hughes has indicated that learners, including adult learners, can experience the concept of learning from peers as a challenge (Hughes 2010). Whilst this is undoubtedly true, as adult education teachers or trainers themselves, the group are conscious of the value and importance of peer group and collaborative learning and frequently use teaching strategies such as syndicate group activities and collaborative projects in their own work. They also recognise that as learners they themselves benefit from sharing and comparing experiences and are comfortable with discussion and group activities in the classroom and I believe the data illustrates the extent to which both their epistemological and ontological perspectives are altered through their experiences on the course and particularly through the process of enquiry.

*Teachers-as-learners* are therefore familiar with *'multiple perspectives and knowledge as socially contingent (and) would*

*find the notion of learning from peers as well as authoritative*

*'experts' much more palatable.'* (Hughes 2010:59)

However, enquiry is more than this:

*'Philosophical inquiry is concerned with the empowerment of students to take confidence in their own thinking and the process of developing [...] These classroom deliberations evoke thinking that is skilful and deliberate, thinking that employs relevant criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context. It is not just any kind of thinking, it is critical thinking.'* (Lipman, 1991:4)

Lipman suggests there is a lack of clarity about what 'critical thinking' means however, and that a degree of 'institutionalisation' exists which prevents the concept from fulfilling its promise, this includes:

- *A narrow focus lacking scope for creativity and imagination*
  - *Lack of a 'valuational' component which allows students to discuss values*
  - *Lack of connection of components into wholes, thus fragmentation occurs*
- (Lipman 2003:5)

The Community of Inquiry, Lipman suggests should be the methodology for developing critical thinking in the classroom:

*'When a classroom is converted into a C of I students listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assess each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions.'* (ibid: 20)



This can be a challenge for the facilitator. The tendency for participants to simply exchange anecdotes or slip into debate can interfere with the creation of the enquiring mindset needed for the process.

*'A C of I attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads[...] A dialogue that tries to conform to logic, it moves forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process it comes to resemble that of thinking it self. Consequently, when this process is internalised or interjected by the participants, they come to think in moves that resemble its procedures. They come to think as the process thinks.'* (ibid: 21)

This can be challenging for the participants. It suggests a new and perhaps alien means of exchange. This is a potential challenge for *teachers-as-learners* since their role as teachers or trainers tends to privilege certainty over doubt.

From Buber, Lipman takes the idea of dialogue rather than conversation. Dialogue occurs when the participant *'really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship between himself and them.'* (ibid 91-92) Buber contrasts the concept of dialogue with monologue, debates, conversations, friendly chats, and lovers talk, none of which has a focus on community. In my early attempts at enquiry sessions

frequently deteriorated into monologues and debates which demonstrated a lack of listening and of conversations which strayed from their original focus often excluding the 'community' in which it occurred.

Dialogue is concerned with both with thinking and with community.

*'The C of I wants to build a system of thought. It begins with a provisional scaffolding made up of the relevant beliefs that are already held, the aims of the project, and the values that are to be upheld. The procedure is dialectical: specific judgements are molded to accepted generalisations, and generalisations are molded to specific judgements. Considerations of value are weighed against antecedent judgements of fact. The goal is a system of thought in reflective equilibrium.'* (Lipman 2003: 103)

'A system of thought' however, reinforces the modernist preoccupation with 'effective equilibrium' which is rational and goal orientated. My own goal for the use of enquiry was to develop and explore which may lead to deviation and contrasting perspectives. It is at this point that I differ from Lipman in my understanding of the role of enquiry.

It also raises issues with the use of the terms dialectic and dialogue.

### ***Dialectic or dialogue?***

#### ***Dialectic***

The original concept of the dialectic from Ancient Greece has become familiar as the Socratic system of interrogation. In contemporary

academic use however, it is perhaps better known as a Hegelian concept later developed by Marx. Whilst its essence is dialogue, it is one that explores differences in perspective with a view to persuasion and resolution. Its presupposition is that whilst language, meanings and concepts may be shared; ideologies and beliefs may not.

Hegel ascribes to Kant the perspective of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* by which the process of dialectic is most commonly recognised. Hegel's own terms were *abstract-negative-concrete* or *immediate-mediated-concrete*. The essence of the dialectic then is movement towards resolution from positions of difference.

Marx further developed the concept to move away from Hegel's metaphysical and idealist preoccupations towards the perspective which became known as materialism.

*'My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly the opposite to it. For Hegel the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'The Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the idea is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought. (Marx 1873/1976)*

This perspective I believe encapsulates the sociocultural approach, and for me reinforces the importance of context and the power relationships that exist within those contexts. The material world for *teachers-as-learners* is encapsulated by their experiences in the discourse of their work environment and the extent to which that impacts on the sense of identity. Those ideas based in experience and translated into thought which is shared through enquiry however, may not always result in resolution. Nor need they do so for the success of the enquiry or for the learning to take place from the process.

## **Vygotsky**

Vygotsky attributes to Hegel the mediation of mind and to Marx the application of Hegelian mediation for use as a tool. Language and consciousness are tools. Language is '*practical consciousness*' and first a tool for the co-ordination of productive activity which then becomes internalised.

Vygotsky also recognised the directional nature of conceptual frameworks:

*'The formation of concepts develops simultaneously from two directions: from the direction of the general and the particular...the development of a scientific concept begins with a verbal definition [...] which descends to the concrete. In contrast, the everyday concept tends to develop outside any definite system; it tends to move upwards toward abstraction and generalisation.'* (Daniels 2001:53)

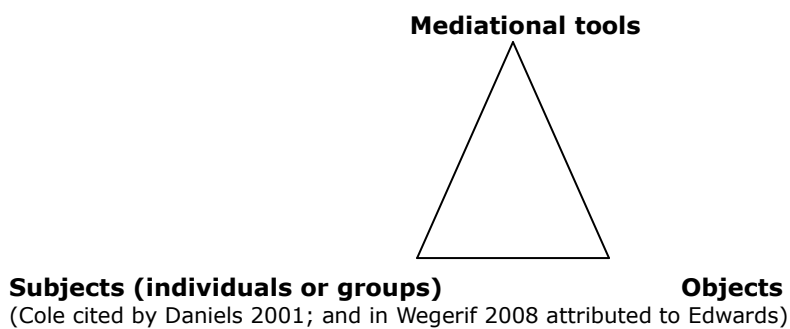
*'for Vygotsky any two opposing directions of thought serve as opposites united with one another in the continuous whole – the discourse on ideas.'*

(van der Veer and Valsiner cited in Daniels 2001:36)

Daniels suggests that the central concept of the *'Vygotskian thesis'* is mediation, or as Edwards describes it *'tool mediated action'* (Edwards cited in Wegerif 2008.) in which links are made between concepts.

According to Daniels the framework which arises from this view leads to pedagogical interventions based on a sociocultural perspective and the processes of mediation are those in which individuals operate with artefacts (or mediational tools which may include words and other forms of communication) which are themselves shaped within activities in which *'values are contested and meanings negotiated.'* (Daniels 2001:13)

Diagrammatically:



**Fig 1 Mediational tools**

Vygotsky's emphasis on self-construction through and with mediational tools suggests to Daniels that:

- The individual agent is an active agent in development
  - The importance of contextual effects
- (Daniels 2001:39)

Therefore, the emphasis on mediation is through and within sociocultural settings. However, the use of the term mediation might also suggest that there is not necessarily a direct connection between the individual and the social.

This leads Daniels to question whether if we think of all cognition as situated in specific social, cultural and historical circumstances, we can also speak of individual development. Matusov offers the possibilities of two models based on the sociocultural perspective which he defines as the internalisation model and the participation model:

	<b>Internalisation thesis</b>	<b>Participation thesis</b>
Social and psychological planes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate</li> <li>• The social precedes the psychological in ontogenesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutually constitutive and inseparable</li> <li>• Transformation of participation</li> </ul>
Joint and solo activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate</li> <li>• Solos being psychologically and developmentally more advanced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutually constitute one another</li> <li>• Solos activities in the context of sociocultural activity rather as context free mental functions</li> </ul>
Transfer and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer of skills and functions from one activity to another</li> <li>• Skills and functions exist outside activities</li> <li>• Objectively defined by human sociocultural nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills and functions Embedded in activities</li> <li>• Meaning is distributed across time, space and participants – it is interpreted and re-negotiated</li> </ul>
Course of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original thesis (Vygotsky) suggested universal teleology</li> <li>• Current interpretation more relativistic with immediate societal influences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Child) creatively shapes process of development and contributes to defining direction</li> <li>• community activity level of definition</li> </ul>
Study of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of skills And functions before, after and during intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• study of processes of change of and in participation</li> <li>• individual test</li> <li>• construed as joint activity with tester in a test activity context</li> </ul>

**Fig 2 Internalisation and participation models**  
 (Developed by Daniels from Matusov Daniels (2001:40))

Matusov suggests that these models represent two 'worldviews' which are in dialogue with one another.

Vygotsky's concept of internalisation illustrated the transformation of *intermental* externally influenced function into *intramental* internal functions through sociocultural participation. Emphasising the transformation of social functions into individual skills, Matusov suggests, leads to a '*chain of mutually related dualisms between oppositional abstractions such as the social and the individual, the external and the internal, and the environment and the organisation.*' (Matusov 1998:326) The participation model he believes helps overcome these dualisms considering as it does, individual cultural development to be a '*validated process of transformation of individual participation in sociocultural activity*'. (ibid)

In the internalisation model social support for an activity becomes redundant when the individual can apply the skills alone. Thus, social and psychological planes are separate. In the participation model however, they are mutually constitutive. Socio-cultural activities cannot be reduced to mental functions that can be performed by one individual since skills and functions are embedded in sociocultural activity.

Matusov suggests however that the internalisation perspective both stimulates and develops the participation perspective. '*Transformation*



*of participation involves assuming changed responsibility for the activity, redefining membership in a community of practice, and changing the sociocultural practice itself.'* (ibid)

## **Dialogism**

### **Bakhtin**

*'Our speech is filled with others words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of our-own-ness, varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework and re-accentuate.'* (Bakhtin 1981:89)

Vygotsky and Bakhtin were contemporaries and as Russians were subject to the same cultural influences. Whilst they share some perspectives, their thinking diverges on the issue of dialectics:

*'Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness—and that's how you get dialectics.*  
(Bakhtin cited in Wegerif ibid)

In Holquist's exploration of Bakhtin's work he suggests that Bakhtin's thinking is '*dialogism*' (1990:15) a term Holquist created for what he perceives as an interconnected set of concerns which dominate Bakhtin's thinking, dialogue being the 'master' key. Bakhtin lifelong

meditation on dialogue Holquist suggests is not simply relevant to the literary theory Bakhtin discussed, but *'it is now clear that dialogism is also implicated in the history of modern thinking about thinking.'* (ibid)

This 'modern thinking' is based on the rejection of Hegelianism and the metaphysical philosophers as irrelevant in the light of contemporary scientific discoveries. The philosophical antecedents of dialogism are to be found in *'attempts made by various Neo-Kantians to overcome the gap between 'matter' and 'spirit'. 'The non-identity of mind and world is the conceptual rock on which dialogism is founded ...'* (ibid: 17)

*Bakhtin's thought is a meditation of how we know, a meditation based on dialogue precisely because, unlike many other theories of knowing, the site of knowledge it posits is never unitary.'*  
(ibid: 18)

Consequently, Bakhtin is critical of what he terms *'epistemologism'*, which occurs when there is perceived to be *'a unitary and unique consciousness'* which denies any consciousness outside of itself. In contrast, the basis of consciousness on which dialogism is based, is *'otherness.'* Holquist describes this as *'the differential relation between the centre and all that is not its centre.'* (ibid: 19)

The centre in Bakhtin's terms, however, is not used in the 'logocentric' sense of being the '*unreflective assumption of ontological privilege*' but rather as a relative rather than absolute term – thus Bakhtin's use of self and other '*always enacts a drama containing more than one actor.*' (ibid)

Like Buber, with whose work he was familiar, Bakhtin differentiated between dialogue and conversation on the basis of *relationality*. However, for Bakhtin there is no primacy between relations because dialogism's fundamental *a priori* is that nothing *is in itself*. Thus he differs from Kant. Existence is the event of co-being – *sobytie sobytiya*. Part in fact, of a '*vast web of interconnections [...] so immense that no single one of us can ever know it.*' (ibid: 41) which leads to a constant, ceaseless creation and exchange of meaning.

*'Because of the epistemological claims it makes, dialogism is, perforce, a philosophy of language.'* Because of its emphasis on the syntagmatic rather paradigmatic features of language, '*dialogism is a philosophy more of the sentence than it is of the sign.*' (ibid: 42)

As a result of this emphasis, Bakhtin accuses Saussure of an '*abstract objectivism*' which treats language as a pure system of

laws that confront individual speakers as 'inviolable' norms over which they have no control; and also for the opposite '*individualistic subjectivism*' which denies pre-existing norms, and holds that all aspects of language can be explained in terms of each speaker's voluntarist intention. Bakhtin rejects these polarities of self/other relationships since the former sees language as happening entirely outside the person, the latter as completely within.

Nevertheless, Holquist suggests that Saussure's influence on Bakhtin's thought should not be underestimated. Both thinkers begin with what was at that time the revolutionary assumption that language should be explored from the point of view of the individual speaker; and in doing so both recognise many of the same characteristics. For example, for both individual utterances are made from a unique vantage point, and Saussure's 'inner duality' equates, Holquist believes, to Bakhtin's self/other simultaneity of idiosyncratic and shared features. Finally, both emphasise the present moment of utterance in which an individual speaker occupies in both physical and social space.

Where they differ though, is again on a Saussurian binary – the opposition of speech and language. For Saussure, speech or *parole*,

is the 'I' in the inner duality, the other being language or *langue*, which is the realm of the social. It is only in this pole of duality that the general rules exist which lend themselves to the systematisation which individual speech cannot – consigned as that is to '*an unanalyzable chaos of idiosyncrasy.*' (Holquist 1990:46) Therefore, only on the social aspect of the duality can a scientific system be found for Saussure since: '*as a thinker whose paradigm is still dialectic rather than dialogic, he cannot entertain both possibilities simultaneously.*' (ibid)

Dialogism begins by visualising existence as an event, '*existence is addressed to me as a riot of inchoate potential messages [...] some in the form of 'natural language', some in social codes or ideologies.*' .... '*so long as I am in existence, I am in a particular place, and must respond to these stimuli either by ignoring them or [...] (by making) 'meaning out of such utterances.'*' (ibid:47)

*'the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousnesses around the given object or an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.'* (Bakhtin 1981:276)

However, it can only do so by being selective and therefore reduce the number of meanings. Bakhtin uses the example of Dostoevsky's

battle between good and evil in the heart to illustrate a war between the centripetal impulses of cognition and the centrifugal forces of the world.

It is this 'deeply literary' quality in Vygotsky's work that lead Matusov to claim that Vygotsky and Bakhtin had very different 'life projects'. Whilst Vygotsky studied children, Bakhtin seemed to be concerned with how people constitute one another '*in their diversity, agency and dialogue.*' (Matusov 1998:328) Their co-operative efforts therefore are less towards the accomplishment of a goal but rather, their '*transgradience*' or 'otherness' allow never ending dialogue.

Wegerif argues that: '*Dialogic is often included as part of a sociocultural position and even sometimes sourced to Vygotsky as well as to Bakhtin [...] Vygotsky is not, however, a dialogic thinker in Bakhtin's sense of this term.* (Wegerif 2008:348)

The difference he suggests is fundamental to understanding the ontological assumptions that enter into research in educational dialogue. He defines the difference between the concepts as follows:

*'From a dialogic perspective the difference between voices in dialogue is constitutive of meaning in such a way that it makes no sense to imagine 'overcoming' this difference. By contrast,*

*due to the implicit assumption that meaning is ultimately grounded on identity rather than upon difference, the dialectic perspective applied by Vygotsky interprets differences as 'contradictions' that need to be overcome or transcended.'* (ibid)

Wegerif's definition of the 'default' meaning of dialogic as 'conversation and inquiry' however, leaves the underlying philosophical assumptions unexamined and thus implies a modernist philosophical framework in which dialogue is used to help teach 'explicit reasoning or to help in the construction of knowledge.' (ibid: 308)

*'The term dialogic is frequently appropriated to a modernist framework of assumptions, in particular the neo-Vygotskian or sociocultural tradition. However, Vygotsky's theory of education is dialectic, not dialogic.'* (Wegerif 2008:347)

Modernism in this context privileges a formal, abstract and universal image of reason over one which is situated in real dialogues.

The linking of Bakhtin and Vygotsky is therefore interesting according to Wegerif, since Bakhtin's account of dialogic could also be read as '*a radical challenge to the monologic assumptions of modernism in general and of dialectic in particular.*' (ibid)

*'Both Markova (2003) and Sidorkin (1999) point out that, in his analysis of dialogic, Bakhtin goes beyond epistemology, or the issue of how we know things, into the realm of ontology, or the issue of the ultimate nature of things. Bakhtin concludes that the world for us, that is the world of meaning, is essentially*

*dialogic. This implies that meaning cannot be grounded upon any fixed or stable identities but is the product of difference.'* (ibid: 349)

Whereas for Bahktin: *'A human being never coincides with himself. The formula of identity 'A is A' is not applicable to him.'* (Bakhtin cited in Wegerif 2008:350)

for Vygotsky:

*'we may say that we become ourselves through others and that this rule applies not only to the personality as a whole, but also to the history of every individual function. This is the essence of the progress of cultural development expressed in a purely logical form. The personality becomes for itself what it is in itself through what it is for others.'* (Vygotsky cited in Wegerif ibid)

### **Freire**

*'Dialogism must not be understood as a tool used by the educator [...] dialogism is a requirement of human nature and also a sign of the educator's democratic stand.'* (ibid)

Kaufmann (2010) suggests that Freirean critical pedagogy is situated in the lifeworld of the participants, is grounded in dialogue and praxis, reflection and action, and for Freire dialogue is an encounter between people who 'name the world,' it is in effect an epistemological process in which people are involved in changing the world. It requires, he suggests, an 'intense faith in humankind.':

*'Dialogue "is the essence of revolutionary action" and the practice,*



*along with praxis, through which the oppressed can transform the world'*  
(Kaufmann 2010:3).

Human nature for Friere is socially and historically constituted rather than pre-existing. *'The trajectory by which we make ourselves conscious is marked by finiteness, by inconclusion, and it characterises us as historical beings.'* (ibid)

Thus the opportunity is presented for us to become immersed in a permanent search. We are unfinished, and have made ourselves capable of knowing ourselves as such. This is what makes us educable and the very radicalness of our lack of 'conclusion' makes necessary the permanence of education. This search must be conducted in a spirit of hope. *'How would it be possible for a consciously inconclusive being to become immersed in a permanent search without hope?'* This hope is based on our *'nature as a project.'* (ibid)

Consciousness and intentionality of consciousness does not end with rationality and is not limited to a rationalistic experience – it is a totality – *'reason, feelings, emotions, desires, my body, consciousness of the world and myself, seizes the world to which it has an intention.'* (ibid)

Curiosity, questioning, and existing as '*beings in permanent availability for questioning,*' gives rise to gnoseological activity – a concrete expression of our possibility of knowing.

This seems to me to be an essential aspect of this research project. To recognise that the formulaic 'delivery' of skills and knowledge to a group defined as deficit is to deny the human aspects of the learning process.

Friere contrasts the contexts in which curiosity can occur – the seminar room is a *theoretical* context which is in a contradictory relationship with the *concrete* context where facts occur. In the theoretical context we are distanced from the concrete and are able to objectify it; it demands epistemological curiosity.

In a concrete context there is the possibility of taking a *reflective-critical* position which may become epistemological. If distancing ourselves from the concrete to allow for better understanding, the relationships between the contexts would become purely mechanical. Therefore it is not necessary to change contexts for curiosity to become epistemological. '*Physical space is not what makes a context theoretical, the state of the mind is.*' (ibid 97)

In this research the theoretical and concrete contexts overlap in the sense that Friere describes. The material explored is both the theoretical object of epistemological curiosity, and also the concrete 'lived' experience of the participants.

Friere suggests that as people apprehend a phenomenon or a problem, they also apprehend its causal links. The more accurately causality is grasped, the more critical their understanding of reality will be. (Friere 2003b)

Critical consciousness always submits causality to analysis '*what is true today may not be so tomorrow*'. *Naïve consciousness sees causality as a static established fact and is thus deceived in its opinion.*' (Friere 2003b:44) 'Magic' consciousness on the other hand, '*simply apprehends facts and attributes them to a superior power by which it is controlled and to which it must therefore submit. Magic consciousness is characterised by fatalism, which leads (men) to fold their arms, resigned to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts.*' (ibid)

It is this fatalism which can blight the curiosity of those working in the sector and result in magic consciousness. '*Critical*

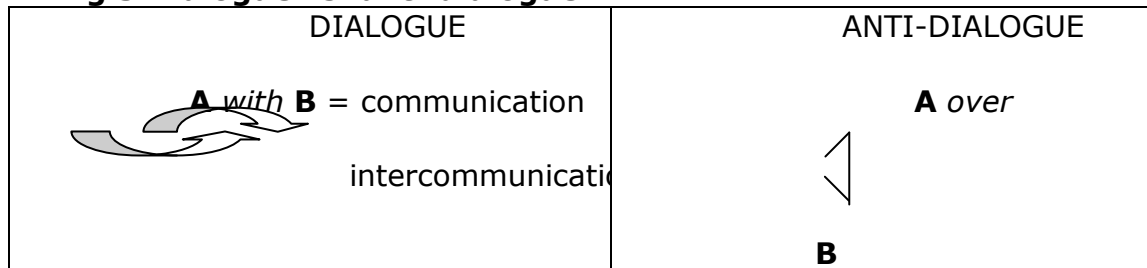
*understanding leads to critical action; magic understanding to magic response.'*

*'Critical consciousness is integrated with reality; naïve consciousness superimposes itself on reality; and fanatical consciousness, whose pathological naïveté leads to the irrational, adapts to reality.'* (ibid)

In his own work, Friere helped move his learners from naïve to critical transivity through dialogue *'Born of a critical matrix, dialogue creates a critical attitude.'* *'Our method then was to be based on dialogue which is a horizontal relationship between persons.'* (ibid)

The diagram below illustrates the relationship of empathy when people are engaged in joint search and which is broken when the relationship is one of anti-dialogue.

**Fig 3 Dialogue vs. anti-dialogue**



(Freire 2003b:45)

### *Knowledge*

*..knowing is a social process, whose individual dimension, however, cannot be forgotten or even devalued. The process of knowing, which involves the whole conscious self, feelings, emotions, memory, affects, an epistemologically curious mind, focused on the object, equally involves other thinking subjects, that is, others also capable of knowing and curious. This simply means that the relationship called "thinking" is not enclosed in a relationship "thinking subject – knowable object" because it extends to other thinking subjects'. (Freire in Lyons 2001:1)*

Tan Bee Tin suggests that it is essential to the study of dialogue in learning and knowledge construction *'to consider what knowledge is and how it is constructed through the use of language in interaction.'* (Bee Tin 2000:225)

She suggests that for Bakhtin, an idea has a dual function of not only conveying information but also generating other ideas. *'That is, once an idea is uttered, it can stimulate the thinking process, making one think backward (reflect on old ideas); and think forward*

*(generate new ideas). This view of ideas also implies the significance of studying the links between ideas in order to understand the way we construct knowledge.'* (ibid)

The implication of this view of knowledge implies that 'what counts' as valuable knowledge can vary between sociocultural settings. A sociological view of an education programme is to socialise learners in to a view of knowledge *'and this process of socialisation is carried out through three message systems (curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation). Group interaction, which is part of the second message system, pedagogy, can thus be seen as a process of socialising students into a view of knowledge; or, alternatively the group interaction patterns will reflect the view of knowledge into which students have been unconsciously or consciously socialised through their previous and present educational experience.'* (ibid)

As *teachers-as-learners* the research group have views of knowledge which are formed within the context in which they work and operate as teachers/tutors/trainers and also in their role as learners. These perspectives will be explored and compared in the data analysis section.

## Sidorkin

*'Thou art, therefore I am'*  
(Sidorkin 1999:12)

Sidorkin is influenced by both Bakhtin and Buber. He suggests they have described the world of human relations differently. An achievement he equates to the Copernican revolution in that all three contributed to the world not invention but discovery of something there. *'Buber and Bakhtin, like Copernicus, discovered the new centre of the human universe, the dialogical.'* (Sidorkin 1999:11)

For Sidorkin, dialogue is an ontological concept *'In dialogue we transcend our immediate situatedness, and get in touch with what is essential about us as humans.'* (ibid) Without a dialogical relationship we are no more than a physical or biological organism.

Whilst he is convinced of the value of dialogic methods in the improvement of teaching and learning, his own primary concern is *'not to study dialogue in teaching, but teaching in dialogue.'* (ibid) For dialogue is not a means to an end but an end in itself, *'the very essence of human existence.'* In fact *'dialogue that is being used for*

*something else ceases to be dialogue.*' (ibid 15) Its secret lies in the fact that it is embedded in daily existence, what Virginia Woolf calls moving between the entanglement of the '*cotton wool of daily life*' to '*moments of being*' (ibid 17)

For Sidorkin it is important to separate dialogue from the claim of hermeneutics which is that understanding is translation. To describe dialogue in terms of social science is to lose its meaning; dialogue does not need to be translated into a different language, because it *is* that different language. Bakhtin, he argues denies the possibility of singular meanings. Both writing and speaking are dialogical activities through which meaning is born because they are addressed to and heard by another. Whilst Gadamer allows for the possibility of a lost original meaning, Bakhtin denies its existence. For Gadamer understanding is achieved through a 'fusion of horizons' – a dialectical concept, but one that 'gravitates towards unity' and is thus teleological.

Buber and Bakhtin however, believe that dialogue transcends language and is a meeting '*beyond discourse, beyond time and space.*' (ibid 26) Sidorkin contrasts this conception with the modernist rational one held by Habermas. For Habermas language



could be an instrument of power. He offers the concept of 'ideal speaking' rational discourse able to validate true consensus.

Sidorkin has what he describes as a '*disagreement with the non-ontological theories of dialogue*' (ibid 73) and suggests there are both micro and macro-implications of the dialogical concept of self for educational theory. Rather than an 'orderly' discussion based on Socratic questions, dialogue may happen when a '*holistic text of curriculum is broken down, challenged, retold ...*' (ibid) Sidorkin suggests there is no way to include dialogue in the learning process, rather it is the teacher's role to reorganise learning in order to enhance the chances for dialogue to happen.

### *The three drinks theory*

Sidorkin uses the examples of a dinner party and a scholarly conference to illustrate his 'three drinks theory' or the three stages of discourse.

❖ The first stage of discourse coincides with the first drink; it is focused and polite although not always meaningful. It establishes a common set of references, and a shared language for future conversations.

❖ The second stage which may coincide with a second drink; is less structured and controlled and may involve people talking over one another as individuals bring themselves into the exchange. Remarks however are still directed towards the whole group. '*The idea is to enmesh the self into the text, to break down the whole, to salvage*

*whatever is left from a common meaning for individual sense-making.'* This second discourse Sidorkin suggests, is *'somewhat dialogical, or has a dialogical tendency although it does not appear dialogical at all.'* (Sidorkin 1999:75) Sometimes however a genuine dialogue emerges.

❖ At the third stage or drink, the conversation disintegrates into smaller conversations only loosely connected to the original focus or topic. It becomes in fact a *'primordial'* discourse, a reconciling discourse. *'For different opinions to coexist, there needs to be the nurturing atmosphere of a carnival, where all things seem to be possible and all things laughable.'* This humour according to Sidorkin is essential as it is the *'only way to end a good conversation with dignity.'* (ibid)

Sidorkin suggests this process represents *'some common means of making sense'* and the essential ingredient is the group itself. To focus on the linguistic properties of dialogue is to neglect its more fundamental ontological understanding. He suggests that Bakhtin didn't reduce language to a linguistic phenomenon but rather viewed language as just one area in which dialogue might be examined.

He applies to his theory Bakhtin's distinction between *'authoritative'* discourse and *'internally persuasive'* discourse.

The first phase is the *'authoritative'* discourse, which Bakhtin suggests *'enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass'* to be totally affirmed or rejected. *'it is indissolubly fused with authority – with political power, an institution, a person'* (Bakhtin cited in Sidorkin 1999: 77) it cannot be divided or partially accepted.

The second phase however, *'in the internally persuasive discourse, a word is half ours and half someone else's'* (Sidorkin ibid)

*'The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogise it, this discourse reveal new ways to mean.'* (Bakhtin cited in Sidorkin 1999: 77 – emphasis in original)

Whilst for Sidorkin the latter is essential in education, he stresses that successful learning needs to be conducted according to the cycle of the three discourses, and if one or more are missing, *'the classroom conversation may not be educationally effective.'* (Sidorkin ibid)

This can be challenging for a teacher, even one committed to dialogue as a tool for learning. The 'carnavalesque' elements of discourse may appear to be distractions rather than fundamental elements of learning. The temptation may be to curtail these elements favour of those more focused stages where discussion is 'serious' and probing. According to Sidorkin this is to risk allowing the dialogical aspects of classroom discourse to go unnoticed.

At this point in my review of the literature I was faced with two questions:

- Am I looking for dialogue or dialectic?
- Is dialogue epistemological or ontological?
  - Can one result in the other?

Questions which I hope to address through my data analysis.

### ***Critical literacy***

McKinney suggests that critical literacy is not 'one thing.' It has she suggests, diverse intellectual roots and a complex relationship with pedagogy. (McKinney 2003) One of the roots she describes is the link with Freire who saw literacy itself as a tool for 'conscientisation' which he describes as:

*'The process in which people, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.'*  
(cited in McKinney :2003:90)

Building on Freires' ideas, Giroux offers this definition for a contemporary setting:

*'the opportunity for students to interrogate how knowledge is constituted as both a historical and social construction' which should provide them with 'knowledge and skills necessary for them to understand and analyse their own historically constructed voices and experiences as part of a project of self and social empowerment.'*  
(ibid)

McKinney suggests that central to the concept of critical literacy is the notion of being critical and this can only be developed in a pedagogical environment which allows that development, hence her remark on the complexity of the relationship between critical literacy and pedagogy. McKinney suggest that the goals and practices of critical literacy pedagogy will inevitably change according to the historical and socio-political context in which they take place.

### ***Identity***

The development of critical literacy has a clear link with identity. To question the world and the 'givens' within it is to place oneself outside that world.

As Ellsworth has indicated, people have investments in the world in which they live, and these '*are not lightly given up*'. (cited in McKinney 2003:196) The extent then to which students participate or resist critical pedagogy is bound up with their sense of identity. As Zerubavel describes it:

*'Like any other act of classifying reality, constructing an identity is a creative process of actively 'sculpting' distinct mental clusters rather than just passively identifying already existing ones.'* (Zerubavel 1995:1094)

Enquiry is about movement and change and as one of the group observes it is also about *'learning to accept other people's opinions'* (Sally data set 1) to do this is to challenge one's own perspectives.

## **Pedagogy**

*'Learning is a process where knowledge is presented to us, then shaped through understanding, discussion and reflection' (Freire in Lyons 2001:4)*

The role of pedagogy for the development of critical literacy and in creating the conditions necessary for enquiry and the development of the higher order thinking is essential. By definition, these skills should result in challenge and in deep exploration which is critical literacy. The role of the teacher/tutor/facilitator is therefore crucial and should allow the creation of a critical and exploratory 'space'.

Daniels provides a broad definition of the term pedagogy:

*'Pedagogy involves a vision (theory, set of beliefs) about society, human nature, knowledge and production in relation to educational ends, with terms and rules inserted as to the practical and mundane means of their realisations' (Daniels 1984:26)*

Pedagogy then is more than the *'practical and mundane means to an end'* or the teaching strategies, it is a set of beliefs about

learners, the society in which they exist, the nature of knowledge and the purpose of knowledge. In a research context, an essential element of awareness of *self-as-researcher* has to be recognition of the pedagogical perspective of *self-as-teacher/tutor/facilitator*.

Vygotsky recognised the political dimension of education and its role in the internalisation of hegemony:

*'pedagogy is and never was politically indifferent, since, willingly or unwillingly, through its own work on the psyche, it has always adopted a particular social pattern, political line, in accordance with the dominant social class that has guided its interests.'*  
(Vygotsky cited in Daniels 2001:5)

Kang suggests that adult learning in postmodern lifelong learning conditions requires a new approach to the theory of learning. Traditional models are inadequate since they attempt to '*signify foundational certainty by using binary trapped adjectives*'. (Kang 2007:205) indeed the use of *adjective-plus-learning* makes binary thought inescapable. Consequently adjectives such as experiential; transformative; and situated are limiting. He argues therefore that a new perspective, rhizoactivity, is more appropriate '*to navigate multiplicity in a postmodern world*.' (ibid) I will explore this further in chapter three.

The practice of enquiry cannot exist successfully in a vacuum.

The enquiry group must be 'prepared' for enquiry by being part of a collaborative learning group in which the value of dialogue is recognised from the beginning of the course through the development of positive and collaborative interaction between learners, and between learners and their tutor. The exchange of ideas and perspectives are in fact, a crucial part of the pedagogical approach. Vygotsky has suggested that '*pedagogy [...] has always adopted a particular social pattern, political line...*' (Vygotsky cited in Daniels 2001:5) For Friere '*There is no communication without dialogism, and communication lies at the core of the vital phenomenon. In this sense, communication is life and a vector for more-life*' however '*Dialogism must not be understood as a tool used by the educator [...] dialogism is a requirement of human nature and also a sign of the educator's democratic stand.*' (Freire 2003a:92)

Alexander has indentified the concept of 'dialogic teaching' as being '*collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful.*' (cited in Skidmore 2006:503) In what Skidmore describes as '*dialogically organised instruction*' students are asked to think rather than simply remember; thus they are seen not as empty



vessels but as competent thinkers in their own right. (ibid: 504 – 505)

Particularly important in the interaction is the extent to which learners are enabled to participate in knowledge building or creation:

*'What matters most is not simply the frequency of particular exchange-structures in classroom discourse, but how far students are treated as active epistemic agents, i.e. participants in the production of their own knowledge. [...] 'the preferred mode of interaction adopted by the teacher carries consequences for the epistemology of the classroom: broadly, the teacher can orient towards controlling what knowledge is produced, or towards structuring the activities through which students produce knowledge.' And the creation of a 'pedagogy of mutuality' (ibid: 508)*

*'A reader does not suddenly comprehend what is being read or studied, in a snap, miraculously. Comprehension needs to be worked, forged, by those who read and study; as subjects of the action, they must seek to employ appropriate instruments in order to carry out the task.' (Freire in Lyons 2001:5)*

My role as tutor then is to create a learning space and provide the instruments needed, and my role as researcher is to detect movement and development within that space.

My starting point must be the point at which the learners enter the learning/research site. I found the work of Carr and Claxton useful here.

## ***Carr and Claxton***

### ***Learning dispositions***

Carr and Claxton (2002) suggest that the fundamental purpose of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to facilitate the development of the capacity and confidence to engage with lifelong learning and central to the enterprise is the development of 'positive learning dispositions'.

Katz suggests that '*dispositions are a very different type of learning from skills and knowledge. They can be thought of as habits of mind, tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways.*' (Carr and Claxton 2002:10)

Whilst Carr and Claxton's vision is very much at odds with the current emphasis on the formulaic delivery and testing of employability skills within the sector, their vision very much echoes mine, particularly in this context and research site.

Carr and Claxton acknowledge that whilst the validity of generalisable personal qualities using the traditional vocabulary of psychological

traits and processes may be 'highly questionable', particularly in situated learning framework, they nevertheless suggest that the *affordances* of the learning environment may be crucial here as is the practices and intentions of those framing the learning environment.

Reviewing the literature on learning dispositions Carr and Claxton identify three: *resilience*, *playfulness* and *reciprocity*. I have attempted to explore the existence and relevance of these dispositions to my research participants through an attempt to identify instances and combinations within the data.

### *Resilience*

*'One of the key learning dispositions must surely be to take on (at least some) learning challenges where the outcome is uncertain, to persist with learning despite temporary confusion or frustration and to recover from setbacks or failures and rededicate oneself to the learning task.'* (Carr and Claxton 2002:14)

Embarking on a two year degree programme for this group of students requires working at a higher level than previously demanded, being faced with challenging new concepts, and coping with full time employment and family commitments – they will certainly need to be resilient.

### *Playfulness*

The authors' define playfulness as the readiness, willingness and ability to perceive or construct variations on learning situations and consequently be more creative in their interpretations and reactions to problems. *'In our current conceptualisation we identify 3 types of playfulness: mindfulness, imagination and experimentation.'*  
*(ibid)*

As the authors make clear, the expression 'playful' presupposes an element of fun, and this aspect fits with the second element of Sidorkin's three discourse theory which he believes is an essential element to the learning process, and in which he describes the concept of 'carnival'.

*'Carnival is the place for working out [...] a new mode of interrelationships between individuals, counterposed to the all powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non carnival life'*  
(Bakhtin in Sidorkin 1999:135-6)

A 'parallel reality' in fact.

## *Reciprocity*

Reciprocity is about valuing others and the relevance and importance that their contributions and experiences bring to the learning experience; but it is also about being able to *recognise and express* that. The learning environment and its affordances are again crucial for this disposition to flourish.

I would summarise the theory as follows:

- 1) Can the learners persist with a task in the face of difficulty or lack of success?
- 2) Are they able to engage with the tasks in an imaginative or creative way?
- 3) Do they value, seek and welcome social interaction as part of their learning and are they able to express that?

This theory fits I believe into both the need the group has to develop their academic skills to operate successfully at degree level; and also with the process of enquiry which stretches participants in their conceptualisation of ideas and assumptions. It also reflects the meaning making process from the 'riot of inchoate messages' which

Holquist suggests is Bakhtins view of dialogism – persistence, imagination and interaction with others through dialogue.

Carr and Claxton stress the need for an effective assessment strategy to track the existence and development of learning dispositions and suggest the following three forms may be appropriate:

- 1) Observation
- 2) Information from other parties in the learning environment
- 3) Self report

These assessment tools coincide with my data collection instruments and this has allowed me to identify individual learning dispositions from the initial data (set 2) and explore the extent to which the participants learning dispositions were altered or reinforced by the process of enquiry through sets 1 and 3.

Finally, I have found useful Foucault's theory of 'other spaces' – linking although not necessarily reconciling, many of the previous writers' concepts. For example: Marx's theory of the relationship between mind and the external world; Vygotsky's tool mediated

action; Bakhtin's centripetal and centrifugal forces; Freire's theoretical and concrete spaces and Kang's rhizoactivity. The process on enquiry itself I believe creates another 'space'.

### **Foucault**

*'there are also, probably in every culture, in every civilisation, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter sites, a kind of enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault 1986: 24)*

Heterotopias or 'other spaces' are linked to, but separate from, the societies which create them. These 'other spaces' are environments which whilst part of the wider society, are separated from them by their limited access to the wider community. *'We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineate sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (Foucault 1986:23)*

Foucault suggests that *'there is probably not a single culture in the world which fails to constitute heterotopias.'* (ibid 24) They come however, in different forms. In primitive societies 'crisis'

heterotopias; in modern societies 'deviance' heterotopia are more common.

Foucault's own examples include prisons, brothels, boats at sea, boarding schools, retirement homes. *'Consequently entry is either compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications.'*

(Foucault 1986:26)

I identify here the six principles of heterotopology, and explore in further detail how I have applied this to my research in my data analysis chapters.

Foucault's first principle is that a heterotopia exists alongside the wider society and works in relationship to it, but follows a slightly different code in that it has its own rules, culture and context.

1) *They exist in all societies but in different forms –crisis or deviance.*

2) *Their function is affected as history unfolds.*

3) *The heterotopia is 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.'* (Foucault 1986:25)



4) *'Heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time – which is to say that they open on to what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.'* (ibid)

5) *'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing, that both isolates them and makes them penetrable [..] 'either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. (ibid 98)*

6) *Heterotopias 'have a function in relation to all the space that remains.'* (ibid.)

## **Chapter 4**

### ***Data collection and analysis***

#### **Data**

##### **Set one**

*Final reflections:*

- Transcription of a group discussion

##### **Set two**

*Initial data:*

- Reasons for joining the course
- Reflections on the modules

##### **Set three**

*Enquiries:*

- Transcripts of the enquiries

#### ***Reflections***

*'Reflection is a form of response of the learner to experience.'*  
(Boud et al 1996:106)

Reflective practice has become a requirement for many professional qualifications in recent years (Bright 1997; Khan 2007) and has been the subject of much academic writing (Mezirow 1991; Boud, Keogh & Walker 1998). Despite this popularity writers have *'different conceptualisations which [...], raises the question of whether these authors share a common understanding or the term reflection.'* (ibid)

Khan offers this definition of reflection in a higher education context:

*'The notion of reflection, by which we broadly mean the extended consideration of problematic aspects of knowledge or practice' and, 'may be used to help an individual understand their professional practice or to gain insights into their progress against a set of personal goals' (Khan 2007:1) However, 'programmes that simply expect students to 'engage in reflection' are more likely to see streams of consciousness on minor technical issues, rather than anything that will lead to genuine learning'. (Khan 2007:2)*

My own experience supports Khan's suggestion in that the rather formulaic reflective records required of students on initial teacher training courses tend to limit their reflections to classroom incidents isolated from wider perspectives and spheres of influence and thus lack the deeper learning which is the function of reflection. There may also be a tendency to write for the audience which is the antithesis of deep and thoughtful reflection.

In the degree course I am asking for reflection on experiences, feelings and challenges rather than incidents. I am asking in fact for self revelation which may be difficult. As Winter suggests *'We do not 'store' experience as data like a computer: we 'story' it'* (Winter cited in Bolton 2010:3)

For the purpose of this research the definition provided by Boud et al is useful:

*'Reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations'* (in Boud et al 1996:106)

I share Dyke's misgivings on summative assessment of reflective journals. He identifies the ethical issues concerned with the assessment of personal reflections, and the risk of such journals becoming in Foucault's terms, mechanisms of power (Dyke 2006:116):

*Summative assessment of journals can empty reflection of any genuine critical thought, becoming simply another assessment hurdle students are expected to jump.'*  
(Dyke 2006:116)

Or as Bolton describes it: *'A creative leap is required to support widening, deepening of perspective and the effective ability to mix tacit knowledge and evidence based or explicit knowledge.'* (Bolton 2010: 16)

Since written reflections are part of the programme, I sought to use them as a learning opportunity rather than an assessment tool. Part of the initial module includes work on how to reflect, and I attempted to 'deliver' this aspect in the spirit of communal learning appropriate for adult learners and in keeping with my own personal approach to teaching and learning. Boud has observed that whilst experience is

the foundation of learning, in itself it does not automatically lead to learning (Boud et al 1996). I am also conscious of the fact that to assess reflection is to use a product based approach to a process activity.

Some members of the group seemed comfortable with reflection however others were less so and during the course I was asked to revisit reflective skills by those participants who felt they needed more help with this. This is discussed in more detail in data set 1.

I wanted my learners/research participants to begin to reflect on *what* they had learned, and to discuss the ideas raised through the material as well as their experience of the process. Inevitably this included some emotional responses to both the material and the process itself. Reflective skills should ultimately lend depth to the understanding of reading and inform the written work produced, thus demonstrating the development of critical literacy.

Khan suggests dialogue is central to the development of understanding, '*allowing as it does for social modelling and internalisation of the process.*' (Khan 2007:1) To facilitate this, he

advocates a '*directed reflective process*' with an accompanying framework. (ibid)

Khan has developed a format for analysis of reflection which I adapted to assist group members to develop their reflections. (Appendix 1)

My adaptation took the form of a set of questions to guide reflection (Appendix 1.)

### ***Exploring the ideas***

*'After the process there occurs a processing phase'*  
(Boud et al 1996:33)

Brookfield has identified the importance of '*thinking time*' for students. (Brookfield 1995) Time constraints limit the extent to which ideas which are generated during enquiry can be fully explored; particularly for the 'listeners' and the 'thinkers' who are also likely to be the most reflective participants yet are likely to contribute least. To increase the opportunity for participation, I tried to use the 'online' facilities of the VLE to pursue the ideas and share experiences which have been generated by the enquiries. I encountered reluctance to engage with the medium which appears to be common during the introduction of a new learning genre and this is discussed in data set 3.

Janssen et al (2007:138) have observed that in recent years advanced ICT applications have developed rapidly leading to educational designers '*embracing these applications as potentially useful for education.*' However, meta-analysis has indicated that whilst ICT can have 'moderate' positive effects on student learning (ibid; de Smet 2006) researchers and theorists have increasingly recognised that learning is not only a cognitive, but also social, cultural, interpersonal and constructive process (de Smet 2006 citing Fletcher et al) .

Hakkinen and Jarvala (2004) suggest that higher perspective sharing and more reciprocal understanding may be dependent on the pedagogical context of the course studied. I think this is crucial, the ethos of enquiry and my own pedagogical approach is based on the view that collaborative learning and teaching methods create an effective learning environment. Its effective transference to a virtual environment proved to be problematic.

Dawson (2006) also suggests that a link between the degree of communication interaction students undertake and the sense of community experienced during their course of study. The group became cohesive and enjoyed classroom sessions and requested

additional meetings. I was presented with the challenge of transferring that enthusiasm to using an online community.

### *Written academic assignments*

Critical literacy should become apparent in written as well as verbal form; therefore submitted assignments should also indicate the success of the pedagogy employed. However, the process of maturation might also bring about such improvements. Assignments may not in themselves demonstrate a causal link. Consequently I decided against using assignments as data. The triangulation provided by the learners' reflections however, helped to indicate whether the device of enquiry has been effective. These reflections take the form of written reflection, transcribed discussions and reviews.

### ***Enquiries***

I recorded the enquiries using video for the earlier recordings and audio for the later. Video recordings were useful since they allowed us to observe body language however, audio recordings proved to be less intrusive and the available technology was easier to use. I transcribed recorded enquiries exploring the language used since as Mercer has



indicated educational discourse is never context free, *'the intelligibility of its meanings always depends on its invocations [...] by the speakers'* (Mercer 1991:51) and the interaction between speakers.

I rejected my original analytical tool which was a 'Torrance test' template through which I attempted to track individual contributions in terms of blocking, building etc. for three reasons. Firstly, I felt that the categories I selected to identify were limited and to make the template useable needed to be so; secondly the interpretation of qualitative data is of course always open to the accusation of subjectivity but I suspected that my interpretation of individual categorisation was likely to be too subjective and open to dispute rendering any 'results' less than useful; thirdly, and most importantly, a template such as this was unable to capture the rhizomatic movement which I believe emerged during enquiries.

Mazzei talks of her own research in the following terms:

*'As I enact my own methodological practices I perform my project on the Deleuzian map. And so I begin, and begin again attempting to negotiate with a map that is changing, with an image that I must discard, and with a vocabulary that I must unthink.'* (Mazzei 2010:515)

## **Observations**

*'Any observation of social interaction which is carried out with the knowledge of the participants may affect what is said and done.'*

(Mercer 1991:47) I am aware of my ethical obligation to inform my group of the nature and purpose of my research and obtained informed consent to participate. (BERA 2004; Walford 1991) *The crucial issue is whether or not the observation causes serious distortion of phenomena or creates artefacts.'* (Mercer 1991: 48) I therefore explained the purpose of my research and hoped that I was able to remain unobtrusive, become in fact an *'insignificant other.'* (Walford1991: 93)

As Walford points out, it is in fact easier to explain the purpose of research to adults than children (ibid: 97). In addition to which, these learners were undertaking research of their own in the second year of the course and I hoped it would prove useful to discuss methodology and findings with them as part of their development.

## **Tutor as researcher**

There is inevitably a power relationship which must be acknowledged when the researcher is also the class tutor.

I attempted to create a climate in which *'the teacher is no longer the one-who-teaches but, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. In this case arguments based on authority no longer exist.'*

(Freire 1987:67)

I believe that I was able to remain unobtrusive as the group became more comfortable with both the process and one another, an observation I will discuss further in the data analysis section.

### ***Generalisability***

The use of a small case study may claim theoretical inference rather than generalisability. Schofield has discussed the issue of generalisability of qualitative research suggesting that the concept may need to be redefined as one in which a 'fit' between the situation and others in which it might seem relevant. (Schofield 1993:109) St. Clair proved useful here.

*'The site of research must be viewed as an area of bounded rationality within a diverse and complex social field. Universal claims to transcendence and emancipation must be avoided in recognition of postmodern critique, and knowledge generation must be seen as a local and contingent process based on agency and transformation.'*

(St. Clair 1997:399)

### ***The analytical framework.***

The focus of my research was to explore to what extent the pedagogical device of enquiry impacted on the development of critical literacy and identity of the participants.

Sanger (1994) suggests that a less mechanistic approach to design and data collection may create coherency problems for the analyst. Strictly codified data however can lead to '*stilted and lifeless renditions of the human condition.*' (1994:3) He also argues that qualitative data analysis is not always a summative operation undertaken at the end of an intensive period of data collection. Whilst this method claims neutrality in that it avoids 'prefiguration', another approach is to analyse data formatively. This approach needs to be made explicit and the risk of premature interpretation which will result in limited if any consideration of alternative perspectives must be recognised.

Conscious of this perspective and following my rejection of my original coding approach to data analysis I have attempted to use what Sanger refers to as 'the middle ground' by using progressive focusing in which '*the boundaries are drawn wide at the outset and are then tightened*

*like a noose around what is imagined to be the significant neck of the data.'* (ibid)

I have reversed the order of my data by presenting first the section which was collected last in which some of the group discuss their perceptions of the learning process they have undergone. This section is of particular importance I believe since it allows the participants voices to be heard and I am conscious of the importance this and indeed the need to privilege it above my own voice.

The second set to be analysed is the first set of data collected which contains the group's reasons for joining the course and their early reflections on the development of their learning.

Finally I have analysed the enquiries and in this data set I have intensified my rhizodiologic form of analysis by identifying incidences of lines of flight; irruptions of plateaus of perspective, and the emergences of identity congruence and discongruence.

The research process generated the three data sets as described above.

**Data set 1** is chronologically the last to be collected. It is a transcription of a discussion between some, although unfortunately not all, of the group members, after they had listened to the enquiries and watched those which were also filmed. At this point I said no more than I had found them interesting since I wanted to avoid influencing their reactions.

**Data set 2** was the first to be gathered and included initial applications for the course and their reflections on the modules they studied at the beginning of the course. The first module of the course included skills development, in particular academic reading, writing and seminar presentation. We started by discussing the article which formed part of the application process by Frank Coffield (2007a) which questions the conventional wisdom of government policy, before moving on to reading and discussing amongst others Aspin and Chapman (2001) and Crowther (2004) on the meanings and interpretations of the concept of lifelong learning. These initial readings may be challenging on two levels. They may be written in terminology with which the group are unfamiliar, and include a level of criticality which is new and sometimes disturbing. Crowther for example introduces the idea of lifelong learning as a '*deficit discourse*'. Given that many of the group are involved to some extent in

reinforcing this message, this can be thought provoking to say the least. The assessment tasks for the module is to work in pairs or small groups to research and present a seminar on a concept or perspective of their choice and write a supporting paper. The topics the group chose were performativity; communities of practice; capital (social, human, cultural); and workplace learning.

The second module is on research methods and is assessed through the development of an individual research proposal which they present to the group for comment and feedback.

Data generated at early stages of the course helped me to identify individual starting points and '*nested perspectives.*' It also illustrates individual ontological and epistemological beliefs and on the concepts we discussed. This information helps me to assess the degree of development or movement that the enquiries facilitated.

From this data set I also found it useful to identify individual learning dispositions as described by Carr and Claxton (2002), from which I could then track changes or developments during the process of enquiry.

I also wanted to explore the influence of the cultural context of the sector and Matusov's work on participation and internalisation seemed appropriate here since it links with Foucault's theory of power which I have used to discuss the cultural context of the research.

Analysis of the initial applications allowed me to:

- Identify individual reasons for joining the course
- Identify self concepts or identities

and reflections on the first module illustrated:

- Response to the material and the course pedagogy – which illustrated the participants own theoretical frameworks of learning and individual learning dispositions.

I have attempted to link their comments with my literature review and start to form a picture of the individuals and their interaction as a group. I also wanted to discover whether the group might be classified as a heterotopia.

St Clair suggests that: *The site of research must be viewed as an area of bounded rationality within a diverse and complex social field.'*



(St.Clair 1997:399) and I have applied Foucault's concept of the heterotopia to describe my research site.

Heterotopias or 'other spaces' are linked to, but separate from, the societies which create them. These 'other spaces' are environments which whilst part of the wider society are separated from them by their limited access to the wider community.

The six principles of the heterotopology are:

- 1) *They exist in all societies but in different forms - crisis or deviance.*

Foucault's first principle is that a heterotopia exists alongside the wider society and works in relationship to it, but follows a slightly different code in that it has its own rules, culture and context. Blair has applied the concept to his research site of a further education college, and suggests that a college lies within the borderline of the two categories of crisis and deviance in that the participants are undergoing a period and process of change. (Blair 2009:95)

Following his example, I suggest that this group of *teachers-as-learners* are also undergoing change which may be life transforming as Mezirow has described, and that they share a specific identity which is

separate from, but part of, the lifelong learning sector in which they operate, coming as they do with separate nested perspectives to create a mutually constituted culture.

*2) Their function is affected as history unfolds.*

To follow a lengthy course of study is a historical process in itself. In this case the research period has also spanned a period of rapid policy development within the sector and in the personal lives of the participants.

*3) The heterotopia is 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.' (Foucault 1986:25)*

There are conflicting pressures on members of the group examples of which are identified and discussed in the data analysis section.

*4) 'Heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time – which is to say that they open on to what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at*

*full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.'* (ibid)

The data indicates that the research period coincides both with the political developments to which I refer in principle two, and crucially with personal developments which both influence and are influenced by, the course of study. This is explored later in the data analysis section.

5) *'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing, that both isolates them and makes them penetrable [..] 'either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. (ibid 98)*

The admission system of the course includes 'rites and purifications' of entry and the permeable nature of the boundaries are an essential feature of the course linked as it is to the professional and personal development of the participants.

6) *Heterotopias 'have a function in relation to all the space that remains.'* (ibid.)

The links between the group and the wider society exist on many levels – as individuals they are workers, students, parents, partners, children and siblings. Each of these roles impact on the heterotopia, as the heterotopia impacts on each role.

The second module reviewed research approaches, methods and ethical issues. Data from this module I hoped would allow me to track changes or developments from the first module.

**Data set 3** consists of the transcriptions of the enquiries.

My initial exploration was to identify the incidence of interthinking through dialogue or dialectical exploration; the development of critical literacy; and the fluidity of identity. The work of Lipman, (2003) Bakhtin, (1981) Freire (2003) and Sidorkin (1999) were useful here.

My attempt to identify an appropriate framework for analysis of the movement of enquiries took me back to my reading of the work of Bahktin; Foucault, (1972) and Deleuze and Guatarri. (2004) From these writers I have devised a rhizomatic framework.

*'A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power [...] a semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive.'* *'There are no points or positions in a rhizome [...] there are only lines'* (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:4)

The application of this imagery enabled me to identify 'lines of flight' and instances of criticality and identity within the data and to view the process of enquiry as an 'assemblage'.

Deleuze and Guatarri use the example of a book as an assemblage:

*'In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification.'* (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:4)

An assemblage is a multiplicity and is thus unattributable.

As Lipman describes the process of enquiry:

*'A C of I attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads [...] when this process is internalised or interjected by the participants, they come to think in moves that resemble its procedures. They come to think as the process thinks.'* (Lipman 2003:21)

There are comparative rates of flow within lines of flight as they produce phenomenon of *'relative slowness and viscosity or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds constitute an assemblage.'* (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:4)

I believe this image captures the flow and ebb of enquiry and also the process of learning itself. There are pauses or instances of silence within the enquiries which are signifiers, and there are also instances of rapid interthinking and flights towards a concept or idea. The writing of the book or the process of enquiry is not simply to do with signifying however, *'it has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are to come'*. (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:4)

To take this perspective is to view the development of the process, and the impact of the process not as linear but as rhizomatic.

Language through this lens is *'an essential heterogeneous reality'* in which the interplay approximates to the activity of weavers. An assemblage is the increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity which changes in nature as it expands its connections.

I do not claim however, that this is a 'Deleuzian' piece of work, or even a wholly rhizomatic one. Rather it is an experimental one than has its origin in a linear structure but hopes to culminate in a rhizomatic journey by experimentation with the methodology.

## **The pilot**

### ***Pilot data***

Previous experience of enquiry has taught me that the most important aspect of the process is the groups' understanding of the purpose and their willingness to engage.

### ***Understanding the process***

Pilot data from reflections from previous groups demonstrates that whilst learners express a general understanding of the purpose of enquiry, the language they used to describe their experiences indicates less clarity.

Below are some extracts from my field notes for two separate undergraduate groups.

For the first group I have included extracts from the recordings, and for the second I have included learner reflections plus my commentaries.

### **Group 1**

I attempted to track changes and developments in the way that participants used language to analyse the issues they discussed.

Field note extracts:

*Key ideas:*

*'Communities use language to operate' (Mercer 2000:106)*

A process of enquiry starts from the Vygotskian premise that language is a cultural tool for meaning making.

Using Rojas-Drummond my own perceptions are that there is a marked change in the groups approach to enquiry between the first session and the last. I observed a considerable increase in the number of questions they asked of one another in the last enquiry and a reduction of the anecdotal approach which characterised the first.

The recording of the first enquiry shows some, but limited use of scaffolding amongst the participants. There was also a much higher level of tutor intervention than I either wanted or intended to use.

*Interaction*

Sam's use of a somewhat directive image channelled the discussion along predictable lines. He maintained control of the session from the outset by (appropriately) answering a question posed to the tutor. He invites contributions and attempts to draw out ideas.

However, contributions from Colin were regularly blocked. Phrases used by Sam and Iris such as 'no big words, Colin'; 'keep it simple', 'moving on!' with support from Iris in 'yeah, words we can understand' effectively cut off both Colin's contributions and his attempts to use some of the concepts which had been introduced on the course.

Colin attempted to regain some ground by a blocking tactic of his own 'I think you're all missing the point - I think it's a big plug!' and later he challenges the application of experiential learning to a case study introduced by a group member. Following Sam's agreement with his comments he embarks on an anecdote of his own which seems to 'peter out' and he makes no further attempt to introduce the notion of social capital.



### *Discourse*

The most striking aspect of the discussion is the discourse. Despite six tutor interventions to broaden the perspective, the discourse remains firmly in the instrumental interpretation of education as a tool for economic success and thus measured in those terms. Doug's attempt to expand this by reference to funding still fails to redirect the dialogue into a questioning framework. If this issue had been taken up by the group the discussion may have moved to address issues of social policy. Iris returns to the question of what freedom means. Whilst this is an interesting question and an appropriate one for a philosophical discussion, it is never successfully explored. An effective enquiry would have questioned each concept as it arose.

The discourse changed during the period of enquiry from assertions from experience and 'common sense' rhetoric to a more questioning approach.

The period saw a development of identity amongst all the participants in their development towards a more 'academic' approach to learning

### *Actions and interactions*

In the last enquiry an unsettling change altered the dynamic of the group. The structure of the course allows for learners to return to study after a break, therefore an additional member joined the group for the second year - Bob. He is a very talkative and somewhat opinionated person who quickly attempted to dominate the group. He is unused to enquiry and other members of the group helpfully guided him through the 'rules' of establishing questions for discussion. However, during the discussion Bob's contributions echoed the shortcomings of the first enquiry. He expressed opinions without much if any reference to other views. In marked contrast, the other members had developed a questioning dialogue. They demonstrated what Mercer has termed 'reciprocal obligations' towards one another in which there are ground rules for specifying appropriate behaviour. (Mercer 2000:106) this took the form of a subtle 'closing of ranks' against Bob who had breached these unwritten rules.

During the last enquiry the issue of social capital was again raised. This time however, it was not raised by Colin, but by Doug. On this occasion its application was discussed without any of the self consciousness with which it was greeted in the first. Clearly it is to be expected that during a course of study more concepts should be used and explored therefore this in itself cannot demonstrate the effectiveness of the enquiry, but I think it is a hopeful sign.

An interesting feature of the last enquiry was that Colin caricatured his own class image by offering the question 'how does the

subjugation of individuality impact on learning?’ to much laughter and groans. This reference back to the first enquiry reflects Mercers long conversation and simultaneously illustrated Bob’s exclusion from that shared history. The nature of that incident suggested to me that the relationship between the group had developed and tightened. The laughter and Brenda’s stroking of Colin’s arm and saying ‘You think too much!’ was said in a different spirit to the original blocking of the first enquiry, when lack of security seemed to be the motivating force.

### *Ideology*

The most useful data for establishing the participants ideological perception of the enquiry is the questionnaire collected after the final enquiry.

With one notable exception the feedback was positive. I also conducted a discussion with the group in which Sam was honest about his questionnaire response and his feelings. Whilst his was a minority view it is nonetheless worthy of note and has informed my reflections.

So,

- How effective is the community of enquiry as a pedagogical device?

Notwithstanding the minority view, I believe the research has demonstrated that enquiry can be a powerful pedagogical tool. Developments I have observed in both written work and group dialogue suggest this, as does feedback from the learners.

- What evidence is there to indicate the development of criticality amongst the participants?

The change from anecdote to question suggests I believe a move towards criticality. The group is now less likely to limit their view of education as merely an instrument for success in financial terms. Examples of their comments on the value of enquiry would seem to support this:

*‘I think they are an excellent introduction to critical thought’*

*‘Made us think and stretch out thoughts’*

*‘Broaden our concepts, so that when we are doing or assignments they are more comprehensive and look at and present information from a wider perspective’*

*‘The purpose is to think outside the box and reflect on ideas and issues raised by others’*

*'Helped us to think about things more deeply and to question other people's thoughts and ideas'*

*'I thought it was a waste of time. I understood the purpose and why we were doing it but it doesn't work for me.'* (Sam)

(Interestingly Sam was perhaps one of the most successful facilitators)

- *Are there examples of 'interthinking' within the group?*

Interthinking is illustrated by this extract which attempts to build a definition of disadvantage:

Sam	But is there a need to interact that way?  If you look at the Rain Man he had no social skills, but did anybody see that programme on the television about the man (inaudible) he had social skills and ability and it showed that it can be learned. He tied what he was doing to learning to interact.  So is there a need to be disadvantaged?
Doug	Is it about social capital then? Can a stupid person be at an advantage? Can they have more social capital if they live out a lack of aspirations?
Gary	So is the main disadvantage that they don't have gifted parents'
Vera	Are we talking about inclusion?
Doug	That's my understanding
Here a barrage of questions are made to clarify the concept under discussion	{Are you saying? {When you say gifted? {Are you talking about?
Vera	Is it not the prolonging of childhood that is being lamented?
Hazel	Yes I suppose so...why do things before you have to? Why make children do things before they have to
Doug	Surely its about social mobility - qualifications mean life

	<p>choices, so if you can get them early enough...you've got more life...</p> <p>Pause</p> <p>What if the question read talent instead of gifted?</p>
Gary	<p>It's still all about isolation isn't it?</p> <p>What's better to have – healthy citizens or gifted loners?</p>

- How does the discourse used indicate a subjective view of identity?

Using the 'post structuralist' conception of identity which is described as one 'which is not fixed but develops and transforms through discourse'; manifesting a fluidity which allows people to construct and reconstruct themselves and thus develop a 'sense of who they are' then the group have developed a subjective identity both as a group and individually. As individual learners they have learned to grapple with the demands of academic literacy and as a group they seem to have built that collective identity which makes them a community. (Mercer 2000)

### *Evaluation*

I think this attempt has been successful within limits. I don't believe I was as unobtrusive in the research as I hoped. Whilst I made no interventions at all in the final enquiry, I was conscious of being a 'presence' throughout.

I have learned that to be effective enquiry has to be understood. With my next group I intend to spend more time explaining its role and function. I was frequently disappointed by the questions agreed for discussion and was tempted to intervene. They tended toward the obvious 'debating' issues rather than philosophic challenges. This was partly due to some misunderstanding of the purpose of enquiry I believe, but it was also a function of my own perhaps higher than reasonable expectations. Steve's comments suggest that enquiry is not an effective method for all learners and his observations have made me aware of the necessity for a more careful introduction of the practice.

'*Critical literacy is not one thing*' (McKinney 2003:89) and has a complex relationship with pedagogy. (ibid)

Further research might illuminate more fully than this limited project has allowed whether communities of enquiry can really facilitate the development of critical literacy.

## **Group 2**

Student 1 made the following two comments in her reflection:

*'Starting to do Communities of Enquiries. Tina did Japanese poem? Slow response to start but became really animated discussion.'*  
(The reference is to a haiku)

And later:

*'Tina brought baby son for a short time. I did my Community of Enquiry. Took in old 78 record. Nisha didn't know what it was! (She's very young) generated philosophical discussion about advances in technology and the passing of time. Enjoyed it.'*

In these comments she uses expressions such as 'animated' and 'philosophical' without explaining the terms, or reasons for using them. Nor does she analyse the discussion which took place or why she considered it to be philosophical. Whilst to read she 'enjoyed it' is gratifying, it is not informative. My aim was to explore such perspectives more closely.

Student 2 notes:

*'We did two communities of enquiries today which were good and we had enjoyable discussions on the picture and the item brought in.'*  
(Student 2)

The words used such as 'good' and 'enjoyable discussion' are again without analysis. The purpose of enquiry is not only to create enjoyable conversation or debate but to encourage the exploration of ideas. Whilst I believe many of this learning group were aware of this, their language suggests otherwise. Reasons may include reluctance to explore more deeply; lack of 'words' to describe feelings and perceptions; or lack of understanding.

A third student seems to capture more nearly the purpose of enquiry:

*'Really good session –fascinating how one bizarre image can generate such an interesting and varied range of ideas. Quite lost off to begin with and not entirely confident about voicing own interpretation of picture. Shouldn't have thought so much about it – could have contributed more although pleasing to hear others opinions and have confirmation that own ideas not entirely out of place. Enjoyed seeing how to develop an idea - & getting better at listening! Trying hard to justify things in own mind – not easy to vocalise or substantiate orally views! Definitely learning more about people in the group – find it quite difficult to see some points of view at times although making progress – tolerance – and keeping an open mind.'* (Student 3)

This reflection seems to analyse the experience more fully and recognise the potential for learning that it creates. It appears to be a more sophisticated reflection than the others.

*'Learning is therefore the process of creating and transforming the experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, senses and beliefs.'* (Jarvis cited in Dyke 2006:117)

A second year student said:

*'We covered a unit of enquiry of today I enjoy these sessions as they force you to recognise other peoples' thought processes and perspectives. I pick up a great deal from listening. I sometimes feel it is expected that you need to participate verbally. Some others do too much talking without giving time for others to reflect on what is being said. A good 'chairperson' will divide the talking by offering open questions to all the students which happened tonight but only at the end.'*  
(Student 4)

This final example seems to illustrate a more mature reflection on the process which recognises that learning is a reflective process and that there is a skill in facilitating its development. Although he also says he 'enjoys' the sessions, he goes on to say why; he identifies his own method of learning from enquiry, and discusses the role of the facilitator.

The differences between these comments might illustrate a difference in the ability to reflect on experience, or it may illustrate a more limited perspective on what should be included in a reflection, or indeed how to record that reflection. The learning for me was the importance of exploring the role of reflection before expecting participants just to 'do it'.

Reflective diaries are kept for teacher training courses and tend to focus on 'critical incidents' in the classroom. This can lead to a narrative, limited reflection. My own belief is that reflection is a skill which can be difficult to acquire.

Khan suggests dialogue is central to the development of understanding, *'allowing as it does for social modelling and internalisation of the process.'* (Khan 2007:1) To facilitate this, he advocates a *'directed reflective process'* with an accompanying framework. I will explore this idea for the next group.

My aim was to enable my learners/research group to begin to reflect on *what* has been learned, and to discuss both the ideas raised and their experience of the process. This reflective skill should ultimately inform their reading of academic articles and the written work they produce. In this way the development of critical literacy can be demonstrated.

### ***Time to reflect.***

*'After the process there occurs a processing phase'*  
(Boud, Keogh and Walker 1996:33)

The comments of learners above also indicated a need for follow up to allow fuller exploration of concepts. Brookfield has identified the importance of 'thinking time' for students. (Brookfield 1995) Clearly ideas are generated through enquiry, but the development and exploration of which are constrained by time limits; particularly for the 'listeners' and the 'thinkers' who may be the most reflective participants and yet may contribute least. To increase their opportunity for participation, I intend to attempt to use the VLE to pursue the ideas and share experiences which have been generated by the enquiries. 2003:250)

Planning for improvement:

The lessons learned were:

- Spend time introducing the concept and setting it in a relevant context, e.g. 'HOT' skills development
- Spend time discussing reflection – provide examples but not models.
- Is enough time spent on the initial formative stage when questions are being established?

A comment in passing from a member of the current research group also gave me pause for thought...

*'I'm enjoying these communities of enquiry. I thought I would hate them. A friend of mine has just finished her degree at \*\*\*\*\* and they had to do them. But they had to think of questions at home and come in with them for the next week and she said it was horrible, everybody worried about them all week and the enquires were torture.'* (Jill)

Obviously I can't know from this passing comment what caused this discomfort, or indeed how widespread it really was, but it reminded me of one of my early experiments in accrediting facilitation during which I quickly realised I was in danger of setting a barrier, and

making what should have been an enjoyable formative experience into yet another hurdle.

Reflection on my previous experience of enquiry facilitation taught me to take time to introduce the concept if I was to avoid 'debates' rather than enquiries and if the participants were to understand the value of the process and its relevance to their learning; to clarify my role as a facilitator and occasional contributor rather than a 'tutor' expecting 'right answers'; and to allow time for initial consideration before starting the enquiry.



## Data analysis

### The research group.

*'A common outcome of entering post-compulsory education as a mature student appears to be development and growth of the self.'*  
(Mercer 2007:19)

#### *Group Profile*

There are twelve *teachers-as-learners* in the group, four men and eight women.

All work in the lifelong learning sector:

- 6 work in FE of whom:
  - 2 work with learners with learning difficulties (LD)
  - 3 work in what might be call 'traditional' FE e.g. vocational training (1 of whom is a manager).
- 1 teaches skills for life (sfl)
- 4 are involved work based learning (WBL)
  - 2 workplace trainers;
  - 1 FE-based delivery in industry;
  - 1 training agency manager
- 1 works in Offender Learning and Skills (OLASS)
- 1 works in Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

This spread of experience throughout the sector and proved to be a valuable source of learning for the group and they appreciated one another's perspectives and learned much from them. This was evidenced in both discussions and reflections.

I asked the group to listen to the recordings of the enquiries. Since I wanted fresh perspectives which were not influenced by my theory or thoughts I made no comment about my own views except to say that I found them interesting. All heard at least some of the transcripts but only five of the group were able to attend a review session in which we discussed the enquiries and their impact on their learning. By chance the five group members were all women. Some of their comments illustrate issues that may be particularly relevant to women learners.

## The Data

### Data set 1

#### Reviewing the enquiries

The following exchange was the result of my inviting the participants to discuss their experiences of viewing the videos and listening to the recordings of the enquiries.

### Section 1

#### 'learning to accept other people's opinions'

1	Tina	how awkward we all were sitting there...
2	Jill	how awkward?
3	Tina	ahh, we're all sitting there, we're all sort of like.... because it was the beginning wasn't it? We weren't comfortable with each other
4	Sally	yeah it's true
5	Mary	it was, it was November wasn't it?
6	Tina	and you look and we're all a little bit stiff and starchy....but that was then wasn't it?
7	Sally	Yeah.. Oh dear I hadn't thought about that because I have lost all my weight since then.
8	Tina	and I was watching the body language as well
9	Others	mmhmm
Brief pause		
1 0	Mary	but I think the talking ones <sup>15</sup> ermm
1 1	Tina	oh <i>yeah</i> ...
1 2	Mary	the thing I noticed errmm and I think I made this comment to Christine how <i>polite</i> we all were, we <i>waited, we didn't interrupt</i> ...
1	Tina	but can you remember going right back to when you

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□ Mary refers her to the audio recordings as opposed to the audio visual ones Tina has been discussing

3		hear errmm .. when you think of someone do you hear their voice? I was listening to that and I could... that took me right back to being in that classroom
1 4	Mary	yes
1 5	Tina	I could shut my eyes and I could visualize everyone sitting there...errmm and I could visualise that whole lesson again.
1 6	Mary	absolutely
1 7	Joyce	I had a whole other argument with myself about that actually ... (laughing) can we hear ... is it our own voice that we hear
1 8	Tina	yes I could definitely see the whole class, and yes, we were polite and I think if we had that whole lesson now...
1 9	Mary	there was a hell of a lot of laughter in it, it was very, you picked up from it that it was a nice atmosphere, even my husband said it was a nice atmosphere
2 0	Tina	yes
2 1	Mary	it didn't sound like people arguing...it was people having a discussion
2 2	Joyce	but they've all been haven't they?
2 3	Mary	sorry?
2 4	Joyce	we've been very lucky haven't we? Every session not just the enquiries, all the sessions we've had have been really nice sessions
2 5	Jill	I think, I think, lots of times I've had a difference of opinion with someone... not in a <i>bad</i> way with what we've discussing... but even on a couple of occasions they've pulled me half round to a different way of thinking and normally, when I think something, to be honest, I think it.
2 6	Others	Mmhmm
2 7	Jill	it's solid stone in my head ... yet the way people put points across the way they discuss it and rationalised it...it was really good
2 8	Sally	do you not think that's part of the learning though?
2 9	Mary	it is
3 0	Sally	it's learning to accept other people's opinions

3 1	Others	[Yeah [mmm
3 2	Mary	Being open
		[Open yes
3 3	Tina	I wondered if we had the same lesson again would the questions and answers be a sort of higher level than they were then?
3 4	Joyce	I would hope that they would be... I think, I think listening back to these enquiries and watching them ...I think certainly if I compare where I was then to where I am now...I've read a lot more, I'm open to a whole lot more theories now than I ever was then.
3 5	Mary	You're probably aware of a lot more theories
3 6	Joyce	has it lead you on? The enquiries that we did? Have any of them lead you on . . . to look at other things? You know the one about the pictures? Did it lead you on to anything?
3 7	Mary	not....consciously...
	Others	mmmhhmm
3 8	Mary	ermm...but perhaps....subconsciously...
3 9	Mary	I don't know....do you.....
4 0	Tina	I think I actually observe things more closely now
		Murmurs of agreement
4 1	Tina	look closer...look more carefully
4 2	Sally	look <i>through</i> ..I don't look at, I look <i>through</i>
4 3	Mary	yes
4 4	Sally	like headlines...what are they actually saying to me...it's like they've become transparent and you see through them
4 5	Mary	we probably always did that in some way. It wasn't so overt or...you weren't so aware of it. You're looking now for hidden meanings if you like.
4 6	Sally	yes.
4 7	Mary	or what's behind it, you can usually come up with some sort of argument whereas before I couldn't be

		arsed!
		Laughter
4 8	Mary	but now, now, I say well that's going against everything that...and my husband says, hey, hey, this is the news, be quiet
		Laughter
4 9	Mary	I don't think I take anything at face value now
5 0	All	No, no
5 1	Jill	I don't think I've taken any of them on intentionally to learn, but a couple of the subjects we talked about I've talked to people at work or, ermm one Sunday dinner, the one we talked about 'are all the voices you hear your own' I had a whole discussion with my family and they were all going (thinking gesture) like they were all thinking about it in their heads. We had a whole load of debate about that even outside. We get loads of documents round at work for different things from meetings and dissertations and projects other people have done and I've never read them, not unless they were closely linked to what I'm doing but now I read everyone's.
5 2	Tina	and understand them
5 3	Jill	yes. It's not that I couldn't read them it's that I <i>believed</i> I didn't... couldn't read them
5 4	Tina	once you start to struggle
5 5	Sally	I remember the very first document we read...the Frank Coffield....
5 6	Mary	oh yes!
5 7	Sally	you look back now and see what an easy read! Compared to....

[...]

Tina identifies the development of ease within the group as a '*stiff and starchy*' original interaction gives way to a more relaxed atmosphere.

Mary detects politeness and a willingness to listen to one another without interruption and a *'hell of a lot of laughter.'* There is an echo here of Sidorkin's three stages of discourse or three drinks theory. The first stage is focused and polite; (though not always meaningful Sidorkin would argue) the second is less structured and controlled but becomes 'somewhat dialogical' and the third become 'primordial' and reconciling of different opinions. *'For different opinions to coexist there needs to be the nurturing atmosphere of carnival, where all things seem to be possible and all things are laughable.'* (Sidorkin 1999:75)

The creation of a positive learning environment is important to all learners but perhaps particularly for mature learners when they are being asked to undertake a new *type* of learning in which they are being challenged not only to learn, but to relate to one another and one another's ideas in a new way. Their identity as *teachers-as-learners* may also be an important factor since enquiry based learning and questioning the hegemony is not always encouraged by the cultures in which they work.

Sidorkin applies his theory to Bakhtin's distinction between *'authoritative'* and *'internally persuasive'* discourse. The move from

the first to the second signifies a move towards a more open dialogue

'this discourse reveals 'new ways to mean' (Sidorkin 1999:77)

*'in the internally persuasive discourse, a word is half ours and half someone else's'* (Sidorkin ibid)

As they identify that discussion rather than argument is generated through the process of enquiry, Jill recognises that difference of opinion at times resulted in her reassessment of her original position. Whilst Sally appears to recognise this as 'part of the learning' it surprised Jill:

*'Normally, when I think something, to be honest, I think it.'* Evidence perhaps, of having achieved a dialogic state of exchange.

Joyce's discussion on her own development from the beginning of the course in which she detects a change, initiates a discussion on metacognition in which some interesting and perceptive observations are made on the participants developing ability to engage with ideas and arguments that emerge in daily life with a more critical approach. She describes the widening scope of her reading and her increased 'openness' to new ideas (line 34).



This seems to me to provide evidence of the development of critical literacy as defined through the development of '*powerfully literate readers and writers*' (Lankshear cited in McKinney 2003:189)

*'The process in which people, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.'* (Freire cited in McKinney 2003:190)

Freire identifies contrasting contexts in which 'epistemological curiosity' can occur – the 'theoretical' – the classroom – and the 'concrete' – where 'facts' occur. In the theoretical context we can distance ourselves from the concrete; however in a concrete context we can take a reflective-critical position which may become epistemological.

This merging or overlapping of areas of existence 'lifewide' experiences also illustrate the permeability of the boundaries of the heterotopia and ultimately the rhizome in which ideas and perspective emerge and re emerge.

Jill provides further examples of the impact of learning through enquiry for her through her own work and personal life experiences. In the first she has extended to her family, apparently engaging them, in the

discussion of what must have appeared to them to be the obscure subject of hearing voices. (Line 51).

In her second example she identifies her increased willingness to read and engage with other people's work (Line 61). The essence of this increased engagement is her belief on her *ability* to understand the material and recognise its relevance. This theme is taken up by others who identify issues such as the cumulative nature of knowledge and vocabulary. For example Mary can now apply her knowledge of the concept of performativity to an article by Coffield (2007) which formed part of the original application task for the course.

### **'Turning clever'**

The following extract continues the discussion by assessing development or distance travelled.

5 8	Mary	no that's good point though I remember reading this with Emma and we were saying 'what's this about?' 'what is he saying?' and we were dividing it into chunks and now you just read it through and think yes, he's got a point there about performativity and also..
5 9		[Yes! [Laughter
6 0	Mary	yes and I know the history of that
6 1	Jill	I've still got things I prefer to read
		[Yeah
6 2	Jill	styles but if ...I think ermm...if I needed to read something now I wouldn't think 'oh my god I can't...'
6 3		[Yes [Yes
6 4	Joyce	but the scope of what you can read has widened hasn't it?
6 5	Mary	I don't think I'm any <i>cleverer</i> at all.... You think...you know ' <i>oh she's turned clever</i> '. I don't think I am
		[No [no
6 6	Mary	I think you can interpret things better
6 7	Sally	I think my vocabulary has expanded...massively
6 8	Mary	yours?
6 9	Sally	yeah
7 0	Mary	do you think so?
7 1	Sally	yeah, definitely .....words that I use now I wouldn't have considered using before
7 2	Mary	what you use words like performativity?
7 3	Sally	yeah
7	Mary	I had to explain what that was to somebody at

4	work a few weeks ago....well! sit down!...
Laughter	

[...]

## Metacognition

One of the most interesting aspect of this discussion for me was the fact that Jill, Sally and Mary clearly identified areas of development. In enquiry 4 they were vociferous on the issue of tangibility of knowledge and the limitation of the use of some types of learning to the learning context itself rather than for a more practical application in their lives or workplaces. Now there is evidence of transference not only to their work situations but into their homes of both skills and dispositions developed or perhaps generated by enquiry.

Interestingly though they differentiate this developing ability and disposition from 'turning clever.' They don't believe that there is a fundamental change in their characters rather than they have the confidence to use words and interpret things they read more effectively. This latent ability is discussed further in the next section.

## Section 2

### Changing attitudes

*'women are frightened of men's violence, men are frightened of women's minds and voices'*  
*(Ruth Rendell 'The Water's Lovely')*

1	Joyce	From my point of view Tommy, Tommy <sup>16</sup> has shown a whole lot more respect for me that he used to...not that he didn't respect me!
2		[No [No [No I know what you mean
3	Joyce	but in a different way...
		[Yeah
4	Joyce	and then at work...
5	Mary	well you got your promotion..
6	Joyce	yes, yes, I'm promoted at work
7	Mary	but would you have gone for that if you hadn't done this course?
8	Joyce	ermm...I don't think it would have even been considered. But when I was having my review, my personal development review a couple of weeks ago, my manger said ' <i>Joyce, you know you still don't sell yourself enough</i> ' that's something I have to work on ermm...but he said, he said, ' <i>I have to say that you've got a lot to offer, you're self-motivated and you're self-educated and that's big big thing</i> ' and I have to say that because of doing this course, people

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<sup>5</sup> Joyce's husband

		want to listen to me more?
9		[Mmmm
10		[Yeah
11	Joyce	that I've got something important to say? That's fantastic! That's fantastic! How's that for a boost to your confidence?
12		Yeah [Yes [Laughter
13	Joyce	it is!
14	Sally	I think me doing the degree actually put a divide between my husband and I.
15	Mary Christine	[it can do [oh right?
16	Sally	yeah, I do and I think, I think, that the divide had to be there in the first place to be honest. But I think he became very intimidated by the fact that I was moving on...
17	Tina	Same. Jealous. Very, very jealous.
18	Sally	and doing something with myself. And I'm not saying that was the catalyst but I do think it was a factor in our ....you know....problems. Because he was fork lift truck driver, he had no education and he ermm... you know found it very intimidating that I was going on and getting an education and he saw me mixing in, in ....and I think with my job as well, he saw me mixing in different circles that he didn't feel comfortable in being in, so....
19	Tina	I've got more, well my brother has certainly changed his attitude with me <i>and</i> my sister-in-law. I mean he's actually turned round and said 'if I can help you...' and I said yes! I'm stuck I can't get this graph to work, and he said 'you do this...' and I said 'oh, no' cos my laptop's brand new. And he's helping which is something I <i>never</i> expected from him.
20	Mary	marvellous
21	Tina	but it's lovely yeah

Many of issues raised here have been discussed by feminist writers and reflect Mezirow's work (1991). To discuss these issues in depth,

however, is outside the scope of this thesis and the transcription of this section has not been made in full.

However an interesting contrast of experience is described. Most of the women in the group had mentioned at some point during the course the pressures studying had placed on their family lives. Only one of the men did so, but whether they chose not to share that or didn't experience pressure isn't clear, nor did I make any attempts to discover this since it wasn't part of my research project and might be intrusive. In Joyce's case, despite problems, her partner ultimately supported her, but in both Sally and Tina's case their marriages broke up in the second year of the course. However Tina felt her brother and sister-in-law changed their attitude towards her. As a hairdresser she felt she had poor status in the family, as someone studying for a degree that status changed.

22	Tina	I'm not frightened of research anymore
----	------	--

[...] (A discussion is omitted here about fear of using statistical analysis)

23	Joyce	I think our dissertations are more about themes and theories and agreeing or disagreeing and applying those theories to practice more than to do with stats. They're a bi-product rather than to prove...
24	Mary	I think what we're doing you can't really <i>prove</i> it's a different type of research
25	Sally	absolutely not
		[Yeah [mmhmm
26	Pause	

27	Tina	I can't believe how much I've learned.
28		Murmurs of agreement
29	Tina	I really can't that's what's flabbergasted me. The confidence I have...with the students, getting one tested. A couple of years ago I wouldn't have dreamt of ringing up and saying I've got a student here and I think she's got dyslexia and I think she really needs a bit of help here... and approaching the girl and the parents...I wouldn't have dreamt of it! I would have gone to my line manager and said ' <i>oh, there's a problem here</i> '
30	Jill	but do you not think that's more that...you probably could have done it all along but you didn't know how to evaluate the results of everything you've done and now you know how thing are working and they're working really well, you think ' <i>god I can really do this</i> '
31	Tina	I think it's all the reading and the research that I've done
32	Joyce	that gives you the confidence
33	Tina	this girl, the alarm bells are ringing and I'm thinking ' <i>hang on a minute I've read about this</i> ' and go home and look through my notes and say ' <i>yeah, that's it</i> ' and then have the confidence to forget my line manager and just go straight ... get the learning mentor out, then approach the parents, and then say ' <i>oh by the way I've had so-and-so tested</i> '
34	Joyce	but it's doing this that's given you the confidence isn't it?
35	Tina	yes. I would have just thought ' <i>oh, I've got one of them in my class this year.</i> '
36		Mmmm
	Joyce	I'm not saying you wouldn't have got to that stage
37	Tina	I wouldn't have done the research
38	Joyce	well I know but the thing is you might have come across it as some point you know through your day to day teaching without coming on this course. But coming on this course and doing a lot of reading you've gotten to it probably a whole lot sooner than you might have. Just with...
39	Tina	yeah. Of course now I'm thinking back to 2 or 3 years ago and about certain students I'm thinking possibly I could have helped them if I'd had the knowledge I had today.
40	Jill	but you've never been provided with that...if the college know you are going to have these problems they should



		have put you on a course to provide you with the skills to identify... I also think it should be in DTLLS <sup>17</sup> , or an option even..
--	--	---

[...] (a discussion about the DTLLS course and issues arising with adults with ADHD in Jill's workplace is omitted here.)

41	Mary	I think with you Tina, you identified things that affect your teaching didn't you?
42	Tina	definitely.
		[Yes [Yeah
43	Mary	it wasn't the course you were doing...it's about <i>you</i> and er, brought .....
44	Tina	brought about by the confidence to actually do it
45	Sally	I think also the power to <i>reflect</i> more effectively
46	Mary	oh gosh, yes
47	Tina	oh yeah
48	Sally	that's got to be....
49	Tina	I argue with myself when I'm reflecting
50	Sally	what I've picked up I guess is the <i>art</i> of reflection...you start to reflect on what you've done
51	Mary	I always used to do that but I never ever used to write it down
52	Christine	how useful is it though to be <i>made</i> in a way to write it down? Has that been useful or has it been a chore?
		[Useful [Yeah, definitely
53	Mary	well I took to I like a duck to water ....
		Murmurs of agreement
54	Mary	and I also found that things that were bothering me...if I wrote them down they became less of a problem. Or it would remind me to go and find something out about it...
		[Yeah [yeah
55	Mary	ermm and sometimes just by writing it down you could actually resolve it yourself
		[Yes
56	Mary	yes cos you could...the things that are churning around in your head, once you wrote them down you thought well... hang on that's not so bad. It helps you get things in perspective.

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57	Tina	I think there's so much going round in your brain that the bit that's left you can actually sort round whereas when it is all floating round up there it's like wool!
58	Mary	I mean things that happened in your...well certainly in my...when I started teaching....why did that learner do that? Or what did I do...that could have perhaps had an effect? I found that very useful because I think I work in a flipchart sort of mind and I find that very useful... it does help me to recall incidents and you think perhaps there is something I could have done and you're not looking for blame.....
59	Jill	I'm much less embarrassed to say something didn't work. Because I felt it would go against me in the past and now it's just me and Susan and we're trying to bring more people into the training department and I do sessions with them and I'll sit down and say 'I wouldn't do that again' and 'I don't think it worked' and she'll say 'oh I thought it was OK' and it encourages them to do that. But I'll openly say it to my trainers though.
60	Tina	we've got these course review documents and I said ' <i>I don't think it worked this year</i> ' and the office just went silent.

Several themes emerge from these exchanges:

*'I don't think it worked'*

Tina's last comment (Line 60) indicates the prevalence of a culture in which good or 'best' practice is illustrated by a failure to acknowledge and confront problems. It came as a surprise therefore to her colleagues that she should admit publicly that something wasn't working effectively and this was signified by their silence.

Jill also illustrates her developing strategy of questioning practice in which she encourages her staff to participate (Line 59). The women themselves seem to equate these changes in perspective to their experiences with enquiry.

*'That gives you the confidence'*

The ability to recognise and articulate areas for development in practice is linked with their growing confidence in themselves as practitioners and in the process of enquiry in a wider setting. Tina's proactive approach to dyslexic students for example appears to be rooted in the knowledge she gained from the research she undertook for her dissertation and crucially her willingness to take action on it rather than wait for a management figure to act for her. Jill's comment (30) echoes the views expressed earlier on ability developed rather than created.

Joyce presents another example of developing confidence in which she has achieved a promotion at work. In an interesting response to the question *'would you have gone for that if you hadn't done this course?'* she suggests *'I don't think it would even have been considered.'*

Whilst she doesn't identify by whom, I suspect she is referring both to

her manager and to herself. She wouldn't have had the confidence or the belief in her ability to apply and her manager clearly recognises her potential and her lack of confidence. (8)

### *'The art of reflection'*

I was relieved to find that the reflective element of the course was recognised and valued by the group. My fears were that enforced reflection designed to demonstrate deeper learning would become formulaic and a 'chore' rather than a valuable activity. The data suggests that deeper learning has and indeed is taking place as a result of reflection and this is discussed further in the next data set.

## **Data set 2**

### ***Distance travelled***

In the second section of my analysis I explore the initial application tasks from the participants and their reflections on the modules.

To join the course applicants need to complete an application pack which contains two tasks. From the first task I learn something about their motivation for joining the course, their expectations, and their own perception of their skills, abilities and areas for development.

From the second task I learn something about their ability to read and understand a writer's arguments and perspectives and then express their own in written form.

What emerged from the data however, was what St. Pierre has described as '*transgressive*' data (1997) in which she includes emotional data. Such data she suggests '*are out of category and not usually accounted for in qualitative research methodology.*' (1997:175)

From the initial tasks I am able to identify aspects of self identity and nested perspectives emerging from individual contexts. From the reflections emerge examples of the emotional aspects of learning which Beard et al. suggest are both important and under researched (Beard et al 2007). I have attempted to capture these emotions rhizomatically initially through what I have termed a '*rhizomatic scatter*'.

Their reasons for joining the course were similar:

*I have worked in the Lifelong Learning Sector for ten years and feel that doing the course will provide me with an academic and broader understanding of the sector and in turn complement my existing experience and provide me with the opportunity for personal growth and professional development. (Emma)*

*I want to join the course to gain the qualification which I feel will enhance my own credibility and increase my confidence when carrying out my job role. I have years of experience in all aspects of adult education but feel that my qualifications should constantly be updated particularly considering the current focus on CPD due to the 2007 FE Reforms. Many of my colleagues seek my advice on their own continuing professional development with regards to teaching so I do feel that the qualification is particularly appropriate to my job role. (Ann).*

*'Joining the course will, for me, be a natural progression since completing the DTLLS course earlier this year and this was always my intention.*

*My hope is to achieve a first class honours degree. (Joyce)*

*The course seems to be a natural progression of my studies over the last few years. I feel it will give me a deeper insight into the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of lifelong learning. On a personal level, it offers me the opportunity for personal and professional development in my chosen profession. (Mary)*

*My reasons for wishing to complete this course are twofold. My original plan was to progress onwards on completion of my Cert Ed some nine years ago. The situation at the time was that I was a team member in a section that was expanding at an incredible rate, resulting in my weekly class contact often exceeding 30 hours. Since then I have migrated from the south, and am only now in a stable enough position to commit the time and effort required. My other prime reason is that of professional development. I am currently 46 years of age, which leaves me at least 19 career years remaining. Gaining this qualification would allow me more choice and opportunity in those remaining years. (Matt)*

*After I completed my CertEd, my intention was to carry on to complete the BA. Unfortunately I was unable to do this as personal circumstances prevented it. Fortunately, my current employer has now funded this course. My team has grown exponentially over the past 2 years and I need to be able to support these staff to ensure our standards are maintained.*

*Additionally, I would like to be able to further my career in this field and without this level of education; I am unable to do so. (Sally)*

Some of these extracts illustrate the internalisation of the CPD requirement discussed earlier and an expectation of '*natural progression*' from previous courses.

*'...feel that my qualifications should be constantly updated'*

*'...enhance credibility'*

*'...ensuring standards are maintained'*

Some also include a more personal level of interest and commitment to learning:

*'...academic and broader understanding'*

*'...allowing more choice and opportunity'*

*'..deeper insight'*

Mercer has observed that returning to education as a mature student is often viewed as a period of profound self-development, change and growth (Mercer 2007:20) one of the motivations for learning she suggests may be associated with an aim to change some aspect of self.

As a group they 'bonded' very quickly.

*'First impressions: I feel I can work with the group, it helped enormously that I know several participants. The others were friendly and after several discussions, we appear to be there for the same reasons and share very similar outlooks. I am looking forward to further discussions as the mix of occupations and*

*working environments will give a broader view of lifelong learning in many different sectors.'* (Mary)

Bonding is crucial for the success of collaborative learning and the process of enquiry. Tensions within the group make deep collaborative learning difficult if not impossible. The mixture of backgrounds adds to the richness of the tapestry of learning and may identify the 'nested perspectives' which White identifies. (White 1992)

There is also the first indication of the existence of reciprocal learning dispositions, and a sense of identity congruence.

### ***Reflections***

Unlike the first group discussed in the pilot material there is no evidence to suggest that the participants were challenged by the introduction of new perspectives or ideas, or threatened by what they might see as 'invented' words, such as 'performativity' or 'respectablisation.' Their reflections on this tasks and other readings they were given, illustrate the beginning of a period of transformative period of learning and a growing awareness of critical literacy.



From the second task I gain some insight into their ability to read fairly long and complex articles. I use an article written by Frank Coffield (2007a) which was published in the NIACE journal 'Adults Learning' a less 'academic' publication and thus appropriate for those who may be unfamiliar with academic writing. Whilst the article is quite lengthy, it is written I believe in a fairly accessible form, however it engages critically with the policy environment in which they all work, and some of his criticisms are likely to be new to them. I ask a series of questions on the article; ask them to summarise his arguments, and then give their own opinions on them.

I have used this article in the past and found some common problems in the responses given. This is useful guidance for me in identifying individual issues with critical reading and writing. For example:

- Some respondents don't answer the questions asked.
- Some don't read the article carefully.
- Sometimes the answers are too brief indicating lack of depth of understanding.
- Sometimes they misunderstand the article and therefore misinterpret his argument.

This group tackled the tasks fairly well although some of the problems identified above were present.

In general the group responded positively to the article which we discussed at the beginning of the first module:

*'I found this module to be of great interest and overall I have gained a greater insight on how education is influenced by the state, economy and society. At each session I felt like I was adding a new piece to a jigsaw and through personal reading and class discussion I was building up a clearer picture. I had a lot of moments of realisation.*

*I identified with the words of Coffield in his published articles 'Are we on the Right Road' and 'Just Suppose Teaching and Learning Became the First Priority. I felt that Coffield had taken how I feel about education and expressed it on paper in a succinct and eloquent way. Reading his work has helped me deal with some of the angst and frustration and I was feeling about the educational system within the UK. I found it reassuring to read that I wasn't alone in my opinion and that educators like Coffield are providing a voice for opposing thoughts and ideas to the current system we are working within.*  
(Emma)

The key words in this reflection seem to me to be: *realisation, identification, feel, anger, frustration and reassurance*. This terminology illustrates the emotional or affective aspect of learning.  
(Beard et al 2007)

Matt also appreciated the validation of his views from Coffield and others:

*'I found the readings fascinating, that academics had come to the same conclusions in research, and that we were not alone in these fears and therefore failing in our vocations, merely human.'* (Matt)

Again Matt uses emotive words to describe his engagement with the material. For example he uses the expression '*fascinating*' to describe his discovery that '*we are not alone*', and '*merely human*' that academic support and recognition exists for the discomfort he and his colleagues experience with workplace expectations. '*Fear*' and '*failing*' are strong emotive expressions.

John describes the difficulties he experienced and unfortunately continued to experience:

*'So far material that I have read in relation to my course, I found myself reading the articles a second, and in some cases a third time before I was able to take anything from it. An example was a paper by Evens and Rain Bird (Workplace Learning, Perspectives and Challenges) this was one of the first papers that we discussed as a group. In this case it was not so much the content but the unfamiliarity of the way arguments were presented. Once we discussed it in the group session I had a better understanding however, I found that there were phrases and terminologies used that were not clear to me and there were points that I did not even consider when reading the article myself, this annoyed and frustrated me. In this instance the group discussions encouraged me to read further (Evens 2002) from that I was able to get a clearer and fuller explanation. Another was Margaret A R et al (2007) Training Intervention, in this case it was so much the content but the subject that caused me problems. I was looking completely in the wrong direction and this frustrated me whereas I did find it interesting I also felt that I had wasted my time. I realised that I had been approaching the whole concept of reading academic works from the wrong direction. I found myself becoming more and more frustrated with the books and articles that I was reading because they were not telling me what I expected find or I felt that I needed to know. This I later discovered only after a completely new approach as a result of the time and assistance from others, and accepted that it was not the writer at fault but me. I was looking for answers to questions within the text instead of reading the whole*

*text and using it as a basis for forming an arguments and comparing the views and opinions of those who wrote the articles.*

Again, frustration is mentioned but also '*annoyance.*' The source of these emotions however appear to be John's initial reluctance to engage with new concepts and the level of writing he is given. Most importantly, he is not finding the reinforcement of his own views. He seeks '*clearer and fuller explanations*' rather than new perspectives. Even when he was interested, he felt he had '*wasted (my) time.*' This illustrates his '*nested perspective*' as a manager within the sector; his role is to implement policy, not to question it. There is perhaps also, however, an example of a resilient learning disposition.

John's comments also illustrate his expectations of the course and the type of relevance he expected from his reading:

*'I found myself becoming more and more frustrated with the books and articles that I was reading because they were not telling me what I expected find or I felt that I needed to know.'*

*'I was surprised that I was unable to consciously directly relate anything that I have learnt to my every day work.'*

John illustrates here Schon's concept of techno-rationality (1996) as Usher et al (1997) have observed:

*'The Schonian dilemma of rigour versus relevance is a characteristic of the practice which is also found in the education and training of practitioners or in continuing professional development. Here the dilemma arises because continuing professional development has a rationale which is invariably 'practical' in the sense of helping practitioners to develop the skills and capabilities that will enhance their practice.'* (Usher et al 1997:132)

In this case, his role as a manager required direct relevance and reinforcement of the status quo existing in his organisation.

There is also an indication of John's *'ideology or belief about the process'* (Rojas Drummond 2003:14) in this case about the nature of the course itself. His previous study had been focussed on strategies for teaching and policy implementation.

#### *Group Working*

*Working as part of the group during class sessions has given me a better understanding and appreciation of the views of others and has allowed me to contribute and participate in discussions. More importantly it has identified alternative ways of approaching and tackling tasks. For instance when I was looking to prove a point I would look at what it was I needed to know and look for the answers within a given text and be happy that I found it. Once we started to discuss a paper or writing as a group I found that I was not only starting to argue with my own findings or my initial understanding but that I began to realise just how little I had actually taken from the work.*

Clearly John values the input of his peers and recognises the value of their contributions in helping him to learn demonstrating the reciprocal learning disposition. He also makes two important discoveries. Firstly that he attempts to *'prove points'* by looking for justification before he has explored alternative perspectives, and secondly that he is not *'taking from'* or engaging with the material.

### *Own Writing*

*Feedback received following the submission of my first paper, I really felt at that stage that should perhaps be giving serious consideration as to whether I should continue or not. I totally miss understood the point and went off in a tangent. I did not include any referencing to books that I read and the bibliography was appalling.*

*Even during my tutorial when it was explained that I had failed to submit a suitable assignment and more importantly where I had gone wrong and what should be done to correct the problem I still had reservations. I could not quite come to terms or grasp what was involved in writing an academic paper. There were two particular instances that changed this for me, when I saw the light, the first being when I read a paper by Hanger, Paul and Hodkinson, for the third time, and this time I looked particularly at how reference to other writes was made and the way in which points were argued and discussed. The second was when I asked for help from \*\*\*\*\* who works within the library at \*\*\*\*\*. \*\*\*\*\* took me through a couple of books that I had signed out and showed me examples of how to use them for research.*

*From this I have realised that I need to select the most appropriate martial, read it and allow time to read it again and most importantly read the full text and not just look for the answers.(John – errors in original)*

John clearly struggled with the level he needed for the course, and not only referencing conventions themselves, but also the *need* for referencing. During the tutorial to which he refers, he expressed his annoyance at the need to refer to academic sources, since he thought he was 'entitled to an opinion'. I assured him that indeed he was, but this also needed to cite some support for his views and perhaps some exploration of alternative perspectives. As a manager he is used to writing reports and consequently submitted an assignment written in this format which lacked critical analysis and the exploration of theory or alternative perspectives. Thus his learning disposition was influenced by his workplace role of compliance to policy diktats. Carr

and Claxton describe the opposite of the imaginative aspect of the playful disposition as: '*not being able to see beyond the original interpretation and being stuck with the 'literal truth' of the situation.*' (Carr and Claxton 2002:14)

The group interaction and additional help were clearly influential, as was the following incident in which criticality began to influence practice:

*I was surprised that I was unable to consciously directly relate anything that I have learnt to my every day work. It was not until I started to think about it that I realised that this was happening without consciously knowing about it. An example of this was when a statement had been issued by the Director of School stating that we had failed to reach certain targets and reasons for this were given. Normally I would have accepted the reasons and moved on with an appropriate course of action to rectify the problem. However, when I started to look at the reasons for failing to meet targets there were contradiction not only within the directors statement but misinterpretations of what had actually been said at Group Level. I found myself presenting an augment, carefully that resulted in the original report being revisited and subsequently changed. The situation as it turned out was not as bad as was originally reported and was in fact had been miss read by the director.*

*I have not felt comfortable or confident about the course as I seem to lose the thread and direction. This was not helped recently when we were working in groups on a particular assignment that neither of use took the lead to steer the group in the right direction. The consequences were that work that was required had to be completed twice to achieve the same aim.*

*I have found it challenging not having worked at this level previously however not beyond my ability I underestimated the level of commitment that is and will be required to complete the course. This is something that I must address and plan for in the future. I have also found the time required for reading material very demanding however surprisingly I have found what I have read very interesting I particularly like the work of Perry, Payne & Keep probably because they are easy reads if the truth was know.'* (John – errors in original)

There is no indication of what John found interesting in the work to which he refers, but there is an intriguing comment in that he was surprised by that fact. That he is struggling at this stage is apparent from his opting for an 'easy read.'

Others also experienced initial struggles:

*'I have a 'passing acquaintance' with Coffield as I had read some of his work on Teaching and Learning and Learning styles last year. His style of writing appeals to me as it is fluent and he doesn't use too many technical terms. This obviously helps to understand the main message, however the task was to engage with the idea, analyse and then evaluate.*

*I feel that my answers were reasonable in the sense that, although I hadn't researched the subject matter deeply, I understood the point of Coffield's speech and had enough background knowledge to convey my understanding.*

*Coffield's point about learning theories didn't make an impact on me, I must admit. If he had elaborated more within his speech, I may have picked up his point about the 'jug and mug' theory of learning. After several readings, I still couldn't decipher the reference.'*

*(Mary)*

However, Mary's perception of the task clearly differs from John's, she is aware of the need for the application of the 'HOT' skills to which the group had been introduced and assesses her response as 'reasonable'.



She has sought an explanation of a theory with which she is not familiar, and she has clearly explored *some* learning theories on her teacher training course. However time constraints increasingly limit the time spent on theory in teacher education courses in favour of strategies for meeting the professional standards and preparation for inspection. Perhaps inevitably those more radical theories will be neglected in favour of the traditional 'psychological' approaches which are in keeping with the current discourse within the lifelong learning sector of dividing learners into styles and types and ultimately atomising learners by personalising 'packages.'

Mary valued her teacher training course highly however, and was influenced particularly by the notion of responding to students needs. I will explore the results of this later. However, meeting student needs is expressed as a 'standard' and may be understood as such without reference to its origins with educators such as Friere and its more profound and radical implications for practice. Initial assessments are frequently standard assessment procedures which are easily 'measured' in keeping with the audit culture endemic to the sector.

However again discussion proved valuable:

*'Reading through the papers with the group has been really successful for me. I think the process of analysing and evaluating specific points has made me more aware of relating words or phrases back to the topic of the section and has certainly helped me with note taking.'*

*'The format of the sessions does appeal to my learning style and, although I realise that a great deal of reading is involved, we will be debating or discussing the relevant points either from our reading or the subject topic. I am sure this will help to develop my own perspective, as I won't just be reading and making my own judgements, but discussing other points of view and taking on board how these opinions could affect the wider picture in a professional capacity.'*

*'Although I was aware that the government's lifelong learning policy leaned heavily towards a skills agenda, I hadn't realised how much controversy it had engendered in academia. I was surprised when I read the OECD policy brief to discover that lifelong learning was envisioned as an 'education strategy'.*

*The following discussions with the group seemed to confirm that we are all working towards the skills agenda, which isn't surprising really as we don't have much choice due to government policy. The whole concept of a policy or a strategy of education or learning has been really interesting to discuss, even though we have just skimmed the surface, I feel we are beginning to realise just how much this impacts on our own areas of teaching or training and we are starting to articulate our thoughts.*

*I have found the themes of globalisation and social capital especially relevant for my area of work. Working, as I do, with either unemployed or unemployable young people, I have wondered for some time, just how, gaining an adult certificate for literacy or numeracy will actually help them to achieve a worthwhile job. The recession is affecting not only employment but also lifestyle choices which are bound to impact on several social groups.' (Mary)*

Whilst Mary refers to her own 'learning style', her comments illustrate her awareness of the importance of discussion to her learning and demonstrates the disposition of reciprocity; particularly as she recognises the importance of 'debating and discussing' in the development of her own perspectives and how that will be enriched by others. Her final sentence relates these thoughts to the wider society

and her professional identity within it and signals her growing awareness of the political and social implications of her work.

Emma, John and Mary all use the word 'frustration' to describe their reactions and their discomfort in exploring their practice in the light of their reading. Mary describes a process of realisation:

*' I feel we are beginning to realise just how much this impacts on our own areas of teaching or training and we are starting to articulate our thoughts.'*

The affective domain is important to the process of learning and according to Beard et al (2007) under-researched and under theorised:

*'We need richer conceptions of students as affective and embodied selves and a clearer theorisation of the role of emotion in educational encounters.'* (Beard et al 2007: 235)

This involves, they suggest, an exploration of higher education pedagogy in a broader context.

*'we are proposing a way of thinking about pedagogical spaces in higher education where the physical, psycho-social spaces and climate allow the development of language and activities, and the exploration, expression and acceptance of emotions and feelings of self and others in ways that contribute to learning..'* (ibid:240)

I believe that the pedagogical climate which is generated by a socio-cultural approach which includes the use of enquiry has allowed that

to occur providing as it does the opportunity for learning *'from a perspective which does not reduce human learners simply to minds'* (ibid 249).

Carr and Claxton make a similar point in their discussion of the importance of learning dispositions: *'we prefer to treat 'thinking' as one important kind of learning, but to hold open the possibility that there are other kind of learning that do not depend on conscious rationality.'* (Claxton cited in Carr and Claxton 2002:11)

In the following extract Sally describes her fears about the course but also her reassessment of long held assumptions:

*'I have, for a very long time wanted to complete this course and feel very lucky that I am now able to do so. I therefore started this course feeling very lucky however very nervous as it is some time since I was in any type of formal learning situation. Additionally, I have always envisaged an academic course of this type to be out of my reach so I had very big worries about my actual ability and whether I would be able to work at this level.*

*I found the pre-course work that we carried out invaluable in terms of familiarising ourselves with academic journals. Initially I found these very challenging and had a great deal of trouble reading them, spending hours on just one article, using my online dictionary. I also found that I would read one journal, then another and completely forget what had been in the first. The in-class discussions we had were excellent with Christine being able to prompt us to deepen our learning through discussion. This aspect of the classroom element of the course has been very beneficial making me feel more comfortable with the subject matter and it also brought us together as a group. I really enjoyed reading "Are we on the right road?" by Frank Coffield even though I found it very hard to read initially. I felt he*

*was a very interesting writer and I would very much like to meet him at some point.*

*It has made me think about the concepts that we take for granted – for example Lifelong Learning. Previously, I would not have contested this and would have had a single view on what it meant and had no idea of the political implications that this had. Now however, I have many different views and have the knowledge to question views around it. Because I have started to learn to see beneath the words, this has lead me to start questioning other things that I see in the news or at work and I am quietly excited about it.*

Again the use of words such as 'lucky' 'nervous' 'big worries' indicate the importance of emotion in learning Sally describes her fear of an academic course as being 'out of her reach' identifying herself as non-academic, however she also describes a resilient disposition to succeed. The 'quiet excitement' Sally experiences though in starting to question indicates emergent critical literacy. Like Mary she understands the demands of the task and the importance of reciprocity in learning.

Her statement:

*Now however, I have many different views and have the knowledge to question views around it. Because I have started to learn to see beneath the words, this has lead me to start questioning other things that I see in the news or at work'*

appears to illustrate the 'mindfulness' aspect of playfulness:

*'mindfulness is a kind of perceptual openness which relies upon the*

*inclination to notice the unfamiliar or to 'read the situation' is different ways'* (Langer cited in Carr and Claxton 2002:14) and the internalisation of a process of criticality.

*Another of the documents that I particularly enjoyed was "Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority..." again by Frank Coffield. This completely changed my view on teaching and I now always refer to it as teaching and learning. Thinking back, I don't ever remember a teaching session that I delivered where I did not learn something' (Sally)*

'*Enjoyment*' is another emotional term as Sally apprehends what she already experienced in a different way. It also gives her claim to a new vocabulary which she uses to describe what she recognises in her practice.

However Sally still doubts her ability:

*'Throughout the initial stages I have been questioning my ability and whether I have it in me to complete this course. Sometimes I wondered whether what I said during the discussions was relevant or whether I had picked things up in the right way. I am very self critical and found that the first few weeks of the course, I was even more so which did lead to me feeling very stressed about the work that I had in front of me. I even questioned myself as to whether I should be on the course – not because I wasn't enjoying it, but because I was questioning my ability.*

This self doubt is characteristic of Mezirow's findings of self doubt amongst women returners to higher education (1991). However, later her confidence grows:

*'I felt much more confident in my ability to then complete my assignment. I think initially you just need confirmation that you are thinking along the right lines, I certainly found it useful to receive the feedback from the seminar. I'm always very nervous about moving forwards with something until I've got confirmation that I'm on the right track.*

*The more I have read throughout the course, the more interested I have become in the subject matter. My ability to read documents is still in its infancy, however, I have found that even when reading articles that are not linked to the course, I am trying to critically evaluate and read more into the meaning of them. I also feel I can argue against some things that I see as I can see what lies beneath the words.*

and she begins to detect a change in herself:

*As the course moves on I feel that aspects of 'me' will change. I already feel that I am changing and my perspectives about things have developed much more fully and I am much more questioning of things. Its almost as if my rose tinted spectacle view of the world has been removed and I am for the very first time seeing what has been there in front of me all the time, but I just haven't seen it clearly before. I am a little nervous but excited about how this will affect me moving forwards and how it will change me in the future.'*

These comments illustrate both Mezirow's concept of transformative learning, and Lathers concept of catalytic validity leading to a reorientation which energises participants towards knowledge for transformation. (cited in St. Clair 1997 – see above p 30)

Sally's initial preoccupation with 'getting it right'...

*'I think initially you just need confirmation that you are thinking along the right lines'*

changes:

*'Its almost as if my rose tinted spectacle view of the world has been removed and I am for the very first time seeing what has been there in front of me all the time, but I just haven't seen it clearly before.*

*I also feel I can argue against some things that I see as I can see what lies beneath the words.*

indicating the emergence of critical literacy.

Joyce's first reflective account indicates a learning curve that resulted in a change of awareness<sup>18</sup>:

*'What have I learned?*

*I've learned that what should logically not be a contested concept, that is lifelong learning! I think it's astonishing the number of organisations that have been created over the years, all of them wasting good money that could have been spent on real education reform.*

*I also think it's a shame that the current government have already started sweeping away the last parliament's reforms and all, it seems to me, in the name of making their mark as a political party. It seems to me that the whole thing has nothing to do with learners and everything to do with politics and money.*

*What implications does this learning have?*

*I think I've developed a healthy cynicism as a result of this. Also, as a teacher, if I didn't feel it already, I feel even more of a duty to do my utmost for learners as the powers that be don't care or only care about what makes a difference to them.*

*The readings I've done and the change in government has piqued my interest and I'll make a point of keeping up with changes that will undoubtedly be coming up.*

It is interesting to note that Joyce's reflections to this point indicate a developing cynicism but also a determination to do her 'utmost' for her

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□ Joyce uses a format based on the guidelines I provided at the beginning of the course to help foster wider reflection. (appendix 3)



learners. Critical engagement does not necessarily lead to apathy or disillusionment. It can in fact be empowering and generate praxis.

*Was it comfortable?*

*Yes, parts of it were – namely the readings on Coffield as I really like his style of writing – informative with just a touch of humour, which is enough to help me to remember.*

*As usual, I did feel that parts of this were hard to write; again, that's probably down to my own inadequacies and fears about getting it wrong, however, if I'm ever going to ride the bike I'll have to get on it sometimes!*

*Was it challenging?*

*Yes, I thought it was really quite challenging, mainly because there's so much to write about here. My biggest challenge was to try not to waste word space.*

*Were you surprised by anything?*

*I've been constantly surprised at just how many politicians suddenly think they know everything about education and are quite happy to start making changes. I realise they must have whole teams of people and 'experts' behind them but nevertheless, it's quite astounding just how much change is made when governments change – surprised and increasingly disappointed.*

*Disturbed by anything?*

*Again, the changes on education wrought by politicians. What I'd really like to see is government deciding to leave it in the hands of educators. Surely, they can do a better job than the utterly ridiculous amount of reform that we've had over the last 30 years?<sup>19</sup>*

She also traces a developing ability in reading and confidence:

*What have I learned?*

*I read several articles for this task; the ones that appealed to me most were the ones referred to in Task 2. I found it really interesting that while I was reading these articles I was constantly comparing my experience of communities of practice. I found a lot of agreement with my experience of CoPs (particularly the ones at work) and the articles I was reading. At times it almost seemed like the managers who formed the CoPs at work had read these articles before I did! Whether they did or didn't doesn't really matter – it's what I think that counts.*

*I've also found that when I read an article for the first time now, I tend to read the abstract and introduction then flip to the references at the back to see which other sources I can look at. Does this mean I'm starting to be discerning in my reading?*

*In relation to the way the articles were written, I think it helped me to try to use them as a kind of template to set out my own report. At work I check a lot of technical papers and reports and I think this has been a real help to me, particularly as we've been limited to 1500 words meaning we have to make every word count. The draft report I've submitted is a little lower than the 1500 words but I'm expecting feedback and hope that the word count being a little lower will give me the space I need to add more if there's anything I've missed. I certainly think it'll be easier to add words than remove them.*

*I feel like I had to force every word out onto the page and wonder how some people seem to be able to write so effortlessly while I find it so difficult. It doesn't seem to matter how much I prepare I still end up staring at a blank screen for hours before I can start – very frustrating. I must ask everyone else how they found the writing of their report.'*

Joyce also demonstrates an increasing ability to use the articles she is reading both as materials to explore rather than fear, and as templates for her own work. Joyce also demonstrates a growing confidence in herself and her ability. For example:

*'Whether they did or didn't doesn't really matter – it's what I think that counts  
'Does this mean I'm starting to be discerning in my reading?'*

At the beginning of the course both for Sally and Joyce there was an anxiety to 'get it right' and a perception that 'others' particularly those

who wrote academic articles had some knowledge which must be found and learned. The changes which are occurring indicate a growing confidence and engagement and application of the learning which is taking place.

Ken found the challenging nature of the material helped by collaborative learning:

*As a newly energised and active member of the Lifelong Learning Sector upon embarking on the BA (Hons) course I soon realised how shallow my knowledge and experience of this area was. I was now exploring and starting to discuss concepts of Lifelong Learning in political, philosophical, sociological and economic terms often feeling overwhelmed and frustrated as I was constructing my knowledge from what I considered a relatively low baseline. As I have been exposed to increased academic literature I have found myself agreeing with every concept and theory while subconsciously knowing I have to formulate my own opinion demonstrating criticality and the ability to justify my reasoning on academic terms. While finding this a daunting and often frustrating task I have found solace in the group discussions that have been conducted around the reading material we had been given. This communal learning environment has enabled me to share, develop and express new ideas providing discussion and often clarity through a haze of academic theories concepts and opinions. Without realising this I had joined an emerging Community of Practice (CoP) and soon recognised many of the characteristics of such a group described by Wenger (1998) in his paper *Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System*.*

*As a gregarious personality I am naturally attracted to the concepts of belonging, identity and the sharing of knowledge and experiences and was interested in developing these and chose to join a group who had selected this as the basis of a seminar. (Ken)*

*'Energised', 'active', 'overwhelmed', 'daunting' and again 'frustrated'*

Ken analyses his own struggles effectively here and describes a common experience amongst those new to higher order thinking skills such as analysis. He also demonstrates a reciprocal learning

disposition however, and recognises the value of the 'communal learning environment' for his gregarious personality. His attraction to the concepts of belonging and sharing attract him to the concept of communities of practice led him to choose his seminar group on the basis of its topic.

He also recognises his tendency to too readily accept all arguments and whilst he found himself slipping back into this he used it to develop deeper questioning:

#### *Researching Communities of Practice*

*While researching this topic further I identified that one of the main proponents of the Community of Practice theory is Etienne Wenger (1998) who conceptualised the idea that knowledge was a key resource to any organisation. Immediately I found myself agreeing with yet another theory while also questioning that if knowledge is now viewed as a resource how could its effectiveness be measured? I found myself trying to put a value on "knowledge", although without doubt a valuable commodity, something that could not be seen or compartmentalised. I had challenged myself to justify something which I strongly believed in but had difficulty equating a direct value. In an attempt to identify an output of this resource I referred back to a paper I had read by St. Clair (2005) who when discussing capital based perspectives in the lifelong learning sector had stated that human capital could be measured in terms of an individual's productivity which could then be equated to the economic capital of an organisation. Although I am not entirely content with this outcome<sup>20</sup> I consider that there is a definitive link between an individual's appropriate knowledge and the ability to deliver business results in economic terms.*

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□ I suggest that what Ken refers to here is probably more appropriately described as an argument rather than an 'outcome' but the choice of work (word?) is interesting.

Ken's search for the meaning of knowledge is interesting here, as is his comment on how it might be used as a resource and given a 'value'. The 'marketisation' of the sector and the discourse used within it is apparent here.

His comments below start to apply theory to practice using the group as his example:

*While exploring Communities of Practice and particularly Wenger's viewpoint I identified my own CoP's which I belong, in both the capacity of a core member and periphery member and was happy to accept Wenger's (2006) definition.*

*The verbs Wenger uses to define CoP's such as "sharing ,belonging, participation, exploring , constructing, developing" in relation to learning are all very positive and clash with the potentially negative concept of networking which can be seen as utilising and even exploiting other people's knowledge and social contacts for personal advantage and benefit. The negative aspect of this is also suggested by Wenger who states that CoP's can breed elitism and exclusivity if the boundaries are not flexible or permeable.*

#### *Collaborative Working*

*As a group the approach we took was one of independent research with regular contact to avoid repetition. This approach resulted in a rich cross section of views as a basis of discussion for the seminar content.*

#### *What did I learn?*

*I have found the experience of collaborative learning as part of an evolving CoP extremely rewarding. The support function of the group has enabled me to research, feedback and validate my ideas and theories in a safe environment constructing my knowledge in an area I am particularly interested in.*

*From an academic view I have undertaken the first steps on what will no doubt be a long journey of research and evaluation. At times this has been frustrating due to the immense amount of subject matter available*

*and I am looking to sharpen my research skills to become more efficient and effective. (Ken)*

Matt however, found the collaborative nature of the first module challenging:

*'My initial reaction to the first module being a group exercise was mixed as I tend to be a bit of a loner. During my adolescence, I had a string of illnesses that resulted in me missing a considerable amount of school and working at home. My industrial working life of 15 years as a welder can also be an isolated trade, often spending long periods, not only in your own cubicle, but also in a welding helmet. My pastimes of fishing and riding Lambrettas (long distances) are also very insular. That said, I've played a number of team sports and am told I am a good team player. I think my problem as a group member is that I never feel 100% comfortable that my contribution is sufficient or that others are pulling their weight. Despite feeling uncomfortable in groups, I somehow find myself leading groups, which I suppose is yet another isolated role.*

*It may be of no surprise then that it was not the Community of Practice that captured my imagination, although whenever I have participated in these exercises in the lessons I have found them very productive. I opted for the Creativity and Performativity subject because my initial readings of Stephen Ball struck a chord with what I have witnessed since entering the sector some 14 years ago. I have seen creativity being encouraged through CPD training days in the form of guest speakers who are classed as innovative and outstanding teachers, who have described methods and techniques of motivating and enthusing students.*

*Arguably the hardest part of my job (controlling hormonally unbalanced school kids can also be interesting at times) is being creative with my teaching. Practical sessions can be relatively easy for me because of my background and 'cutting my academic teeth' as an instructor. The difficulty comes when trying to be creative with a theoretical subject when you are not trying to discuss the theory but explain the fact. Using video, visual and demonstration can be effective, but devising activity can be more problematic. We use quizzes, games and student presentations; we try to relate to every day aspects. I've used a Dragons Den exercise to develop invention, innovation and entrepreneurship and have had good results.*

*What seemed at odds with this approach where the teacher created an atmosphere that was all about the learner was inspections with frameworks that dictated what was to occur in the classroom. To me this always created an unreal situation that was not typical of a usual*

*session in the classroom and I have never felt comfortable preparing special lessons just for inspection. If I am observed, I want to know that what I do week in, week out is good enough.*

Matt's final comment voices the feelings of many teachers. The isolation and alienation described is perhaps endemic to this 'over inspected' sector. The micro-management of teaching as outlined in Fig 3 above results in teachers being reluctant to take risks when being inspected and to prepare an officially sanctioned style of teaching. As Leat and Higgins have observed *'the Ofsted inspection regime has fostered a climate of compliance.'* (Leat and Higgins 2002:74) and *'there is a strong focus on accountability, results and an attempt to link observation of lessons with (pupil) outcomes measures.'* (Leat and Lin 2003:383)

Teachers, and perhaps particularly new ones, want to be proud of what they do and feel constrained by a culture which is prescriptive and limiting. James and Biesta have explored the limitations placed on innovation in FE, *'in enhancing learning cultures, 'what works' is often localised and contexts specific. Attempts to impose rigid standard procedures are often negative rather than positive in effect.'* (James and Biesta 2007: 147)

*My initial thoughts on Performativity are that it is the 'darkside' to Creativities 'force'. Once again I have seen the structures of the*

*organisations become loaded with administrators, all wrestling with data and statistics. Whilst as lecturer I not only have to be an up-to-date expert in my speciality, a qualified and outstanding teacher, but I also have to understand the ever changing funding methodology, the latter being a minefield that seems to change quicker than the ministers responsible for it. It's like the farmer character from the Fast Show, "this week we are mainly funding 19+ on their first level 2"*

*And so it was, armed with all these preconceptions and a dread of group work, that we had our first group meeting. My first concern was that our group dynamic was a little too biased, being made up of 5 lecturers. I felt it would have been beneficial to have had one or two from a more industrial background. As it turned out, there was no need for balance and this arrangement worked to good effect as much of our eventual presentation utilised a valuable asset, that of our collective experiences and opinions.*

*At our first meeting it was obvious, due to our mismatching workloads and various locations that physical interaction was going to be limited to the Monday evenings. The first of these team sessions I was unable to attend due to a transport problem, but due to modern technology we were able to keep in touch constantly through the medium of email.*

*My fears about group working were totally unfounded in this case, as I believe we truly worked as a collective, each sharing the responsibility and the workload. We emailed each other the moment we found a reading that could be of use, whilst June acted as a hub for the Powerpoint. As Tina, Mary and I submitted our contributions; Tina then merged it into a final draft that Gary then tidied up ready for presentation.*

*Finding the time for researching the seminar was at times difficult, as I have mentioned I have a dread of not pulling my weight and admit to feeling guilty about taking a weekend off to go down south to see my son in the middle of the project. I usually apportion my time working on this type of project by a system I call 'The Carpenters Approach' whereby I concentrate my efforts on 'Rainy Days & Sundays'. It's not a scientific approach but I find it most productive and I do feel more inclined to concentrate on academic study on a wet weekend rather than when the sun is shining or after a stressful day at work.*

*Leading up to the presentation, it was all coming together and I could see a natural area for me to deliver. We had divided the workload amongst ourselves with myself taking on the Tensions and Dilemmas. As mentioned above, I had some pre-existing ideas and opinions, which the more I read, the more I discovered were not isolated to just*



*myself, but were widespread. For me the biggest thrill of this course so far is, the more I read, the more I discover opinions I hold are being confirmed by eminent education academics.*

*Prior to the presentation, we were unable to manage a dry run and the final running order was decided in the coffee shop only half hour before. Despite what I would normally regard as disorganised group work, I felt totally confident that the group was prepared for this and it would only add an edge to the presentation and get the adrenalin pumping.*

*To some degree, I was expecting to be questioned along the lines that all industry is subject to quality control, why not education? To be honest, I take on Gary's comment that I may have become Institutionalised (FE). I do accept that we do need quality control, it's essential to measure our success in some form. My argument, and I believe the way I answered the questions, was that large aspects of Performativity are based on either snapshots that are not true representations of the whole landscape (Lesson Observations) or statistics (retention and achievement) that once again do not show a full picture. Subsequently, teachers are often held accountable for statistics they have no control over or, at best, have limited influence.*

*I don't think having the cameras and crew there made one bit of difference to anyone in the group in a negative way. I personally found them a benefit, maybe I'm a show off but I think they filled out the room. Despite our lack of a run through, I believe the presentation went well I believe we got our message over and we stimulated and managed a debate.*

*In conclusion, my initial fears of group work in this instance were totally unfounded. The group cooperated very effectively with each other, everyone contributed research and ideas that were discussed and either accepted or dismissed with honest diplomacy. We supported and encouraged each other, both practically and emotionally, whenever any of us felt unsure or insecure. We managed to overcome the difficulty of regular meetings by using technology to good effect, I'm sure this will be experienced by the whole class in the future by using Moodle.*

*On a personal front, despite being part of a course team, department, faculty or whatever, being a teacher can sometimes be a lonely existence, because apart from the students, it is just you in there who knows fully what you are trying to achieve. What I really gained from this task was twofold. Firstly, I got to work with a group of people in a situation where we were able to honestly discuss the emotional aspects of what we do. We were conscious that our presentation should not digress into a teacher moan, but these fears we felt were*

*real and mirrored those we see in our colleagues every day, although not admitted to. Secondly, I found the readings fascinating, that academics had come to the same conclusions in research, and that we were not alone in these fears and therefore failing in our vocations, merely human.*

*I was also stimulated to look further into Performativity, and discovered that, just like Health and Safety legislation that responds to accidents and tries to prevent them occurring in the future, a considerable amount of inspection and audit is concentrated in checking data accuracy and fraud prevention. The reasons for these frauds are a research subject on their own, although the Universities and Colleges Union and Unison tend to suggest unrealistic target setting to be the initial cause. (Matt)*

The development traced here seems to include a change of perspective on collaborative projects and perhaps an emerging disposition of reciprocity. Again the pleasure in reading 'academic reinforcement' of ideas that Emma appreciated is apparent.

Gary illustrates another 'nested perspective' which is disturbed by his reading and discussions and ultimately is changed:

*'The possible feelings of guilt or uneasiness expressed by some tutors in Jeffrey and Woods (1998:118) in a performative FE culture have not been my own experience. Craft and Jefferson (2008) claim that 'Teachers coming into teaching from other occupations are an increasing phenomenon and this sample was found to be more resourceful in resolving policy tensions.' This reflects my situation as a newly qualified tutor who has come from a business background. The performative culture now prevalent in FE is the only work model I have known. The gradual erosion of tutors professionalism (Jeffrey and Woods) and the constraints performativity places on tutors is obviously a new viewpoint for me. I perceive that this new found knowledge about creativity and performativity is having a reverse effect on my practice. The initial thoughts I had about what was involved in a professional teaching approach are starting to evolve. The requirement of the good personal traits I had developed in the business sector is clearly*

*sought by government but at what expense to the tutor and the students? In the seminar a colleague stated that he had felt the same when he first came to teaching but this had changed dramatically as his teaching experience broadened. I am starting to question all the 'levers' Coffield described as being partly necessary and partly manipulative. The way society is being directed towards an evolving education system that produces flexible worker, and tutors, for the good of the economy and neglecting learning for social good is starting to disturb my thoughts. (Gary)*

His comments in this extract reflect Mezirow's definition of transformative learning:

*'Transformative learning involves learning to think critically by questioning assumptions and expectations that shape and influence what we think and do.'* (Mezirow 1991:25)

In his study of women returning to college Mezirow found that *'transformations often follow phases of meaning becoming clarified'* and may take the form of *'a disorientating dilemma'*, *'self examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame'*; *'a critical assessment of assumptions'*; recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared.' (1991:28)

The early struggles of the group illustrated an emergence of and their recognition of the need for the skills of critical literacy.

McKinney's definition *'it should aim to develop 'powerfully literate' readers and writers who can approach texts and social life critically as well as master the range of genres and techniques in writing for*

*effective participation....'* (McKinney 2003:189) seems appropriate for their efforts at this time.

*'the knowledge content of the learning is not simply disseminated, but rather produced from dialogues between the body of academic knowledge[...]and the diverse skills and experience of people and their organisation's* (Scandrett et al 2006) creating in fact, of a 'community space'.

*'This space gives top priority to the community as the source of wisdom.'* (Cavanagh 1999:6)

At this point in the course the group had experienced:

- working together as a whole group in which they discussed articles they had been given to read exchanging views and experiences;
- working in small groups researching and presenting topics of their own interest;
- and had been introduced to, and participated in, enquiries.

What seems apparent from these reflections is that the challenge of working at a new level is helped through collaborative learning within a trusted group with shared experience. They have developed both reciprocal and resilient learning dispositions.

Captured rhizomatically the emotional themes emerge, submerge and re-emerge as irruptions throughout the text. Rhizomes have no clear identifiable beginnings and endings since there is no clear path through a rhizome. Reactions to the material and to working together appear as a multiplicity of feelings linked to concepts.

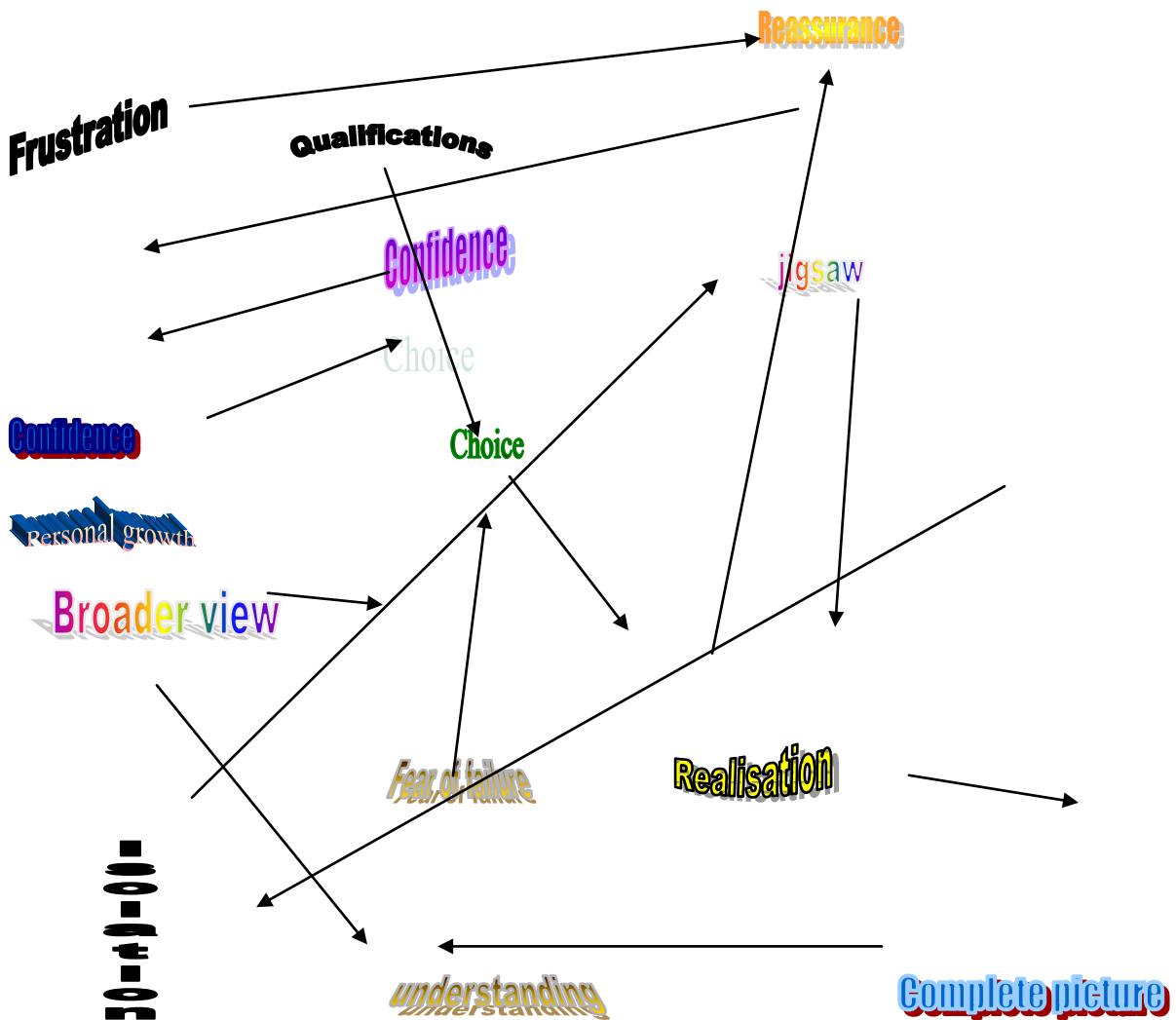


Fig.4 Rhizomatic illustration of emotions.

## **Module 2**

The next module also brought doubts:

*'I was very anxious about writing this assignment and felt I had overloaded on journals and books. I'd taken several days holiday and spent several weekends just sitting and reading through the information and trying to digest it. I had lots of 'wobbly' moments when I started to think I wouldn't be able to do the project I had chosen, or that the one I had chosen was too complicated. When it came to actually putting words onto paper, it took me a lot of time to actually formalise my outline.*

*I sometimes feel like I've got loads of thoughts in my head but just can't seem to get them down on paper. Even when I've written my assignment I feel like I've still got loads that I could say and that I understand it all in my head but can't seem to write it down. I feel I get very animated over some of the journals that I read however when I come to write my assignment, can't seem to go back to that animation and lose the thread of the journal a little.*

*I know I put myself under a huge amount of pressure as I'd really like to aim to get a First Class degree but I don't think I've got the ability to do that. This probably causes me to become more stressed when I'm working on an assignment than I should be really.' (Sally)*

Again Mezirow seems relevant here, but this time stress led to positive action:

*'I know other members of our group felt the same so arranged for us to get together for a read through of our assignments on the usual college night. This was a really great way of us all being able to read out loud our assignments and get feedback from other people who actually understand what we have written. My husband just glazes over when I ask him to read anything. (Sally)*

This comment indicates an example of identity congruence in which Sally needs the reinforcement of shared experience and language. It also indicates I believe an emerging heterotopia since the group provides and creates an exclusive space.

*I think it would have been much more difficult to do this with our first assignment. I certainly wouldn't have wanted to read anyone else's assignment in case I inadvertently copied an idea. Sometimes someone else's idea may inspire you to do something along similar lines and you could end up being too similar. It was easier this time as we were all covering completely different areas. We've created our very own community of practice, with the shared common goal of passing our degree with flying colours.*

*We all found this session really useful and got a lot out of it, not only because it clarifies what you've done is along similar lines to your classmates, but also that you didn't feel like you were alone, we all felt the same. I think it gave a well needed confidence boost to us all. '(Sally)*

This is another illustration of the need for peer as well as tutor endorsement and perhaps an indication of an epistemological shift in Sally's thinking.

Sally applies theory to practice by identifying the initiative as the creation of a 'community of practice' which she also believes is applicable to her own workplace:

*'Some of the interesting items I read about communities of practice were around the transfer of knowledge from the*

*individual's tacit knowledge to the explicit knowledge of the group. Siebert et al call this "a continuum from knowledge that is individually situated, to knowledge which is organisationally situated". This really made me think about the knowledge that is held within the staff in my organisation and how the release of this knowledge is affected by the morale of the staff.'* (Sally)

Overall this resulted in increased confidence:

*'I've really enjoyed this module. I feel it has brought me much more into my comfort zone. I'm not sure whether that's because I think I may know a little bit more about research projects having carried out a small one previously for my CertEd, or whether it is because I now know more from the learning achieved in the first module.*

*I found the presenting of the research proposals in the classroom very inspiring. Each week, I felt that I found I understood the concept more and more and felt able to question things where I would not have previously. This gave me a lot more confidence in my own research project. It was also a fascinating way in which to find out more about my fellow students, the areas in which they work and the issues they face on a day to day basis. I was quite astounded at some of the issues they faced.'*(Sally)

The issues to which she refers are the target driven culture endemic to FE and discussed in chapter four.

*These issues made me look a little further into the work that I do in work based learning. I felt that practice in my area of teaching and learning was more about the individual and less about the result which I hadn't really looked at before.'*

*My organisation has undergone some huge changes over recent years with more significant change coming over the horizon. Staff morale is probably at its lowest ebb since I've worked in*



*the NHS which is one of the reasons I chose the research project that I did. Every article I read, inspires me to want even more, to be able to 'fix' my organisation and take it to a happy place, where learning is integrated into the fabric of the buildings and staff feel motivated and proud to work for the NHS, our national treasure.'* (Sally)<sup>21</sup>

Again this reflection is peppered by emotive words and expressions:

*anxiety, pressure, doubts, animation, understand, inspire, enjoy, comfort zone, inspiring, confidence, 'low ebb', motivated, proud.*

Mary also struggled but recognised the connection between reading and writing:

*'The writing still doesn't come easy but I feel I may have absorbed some of the technique through reading. I re-read several papers to concentrate on the style rather than the content and noted the use of certain phrases or terminology. I still don't feel very confident in using them but am sure that this will develop.'*  
(Mary)

but again demonstrates her resilient learning disposition.

Joyce also recognises the role of her peer group in her learning and the strength in a community of learners:

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□ Unfortunately, during the course a new government came into power pledged to making financial cuts which impacted massively on the staff in her organisation. Consequently her research plans were radically changed.

*'I've learned that there's an awful lot to consider when planning a research proposal. Aside from the obvious question of whether or not the proposal is relevant or valid or whether it's even do-able, we must ensure that it's clear enough and with the right amount of content to make it interesting and worthwhile for the reader.*

*Going back to some of the reading that we did during the DTLLS course, I found quite a lot of that really heavy going. However, in relation to this task and in particular to the TLRP books, I found them quite easy to read - very appealing to the reader - quite deliberate, I'm sure.*

*I've also learned that I need to learn how to focus more and be less easily distracted in order to get the job done. I joked about finding other things to do (anything) instead of getting on with the task in hand. The real truth though, was that I was unsure and nervous about the whole thing. The only way I can overcome this is to keep trying, learning by my mistakes and speaking to my tutor and peers for their support and guidance. I think it's definitely going to be the collaboration of the entire group that gets us all through.*

*I've also recognised that reading leads to more reading and so on.*

*Was it comfortable?*

*At the time, it felt like a nightmare. I swung between really enjoying it and being absolutely terrified of making a mess of the whole thing. However, I know that the key is lots and lots of reading with thorough preparation and a timetable to help stay on track. I'm still plagued with having to drag each word out onto the page but understand that this will improve each time I write.*

*I also think that getting someone else to read it through helps. It's all too easy to assume that the reader will know exactly what you're talking about even if you've left out half the information! Getting someone else to read it helps highlight the areas that need further expansion.*

*What was comfortable was meeting up with a few members of the group to discuss our proposals and help each other. It was really helpful to go through what we'd done so far and get each other's feedback. It certainly helped me to focus and get back on track with what I had to do. I think the general opinion was that, in the weeks when there aren't any scheduled sessions on Monday evenings, we'll definitely meet up at College to go through what we've been reading, are working on, etc. I think it will not only be really beneficial but, for those of the group that live further away and can't travel to meet up at someone's house, using the College as the central point and treating each Monday evening as a scheduled class will be a huge help. We will also have the added benefit of having the library on site and if CB is on site, then all the better.*

This development of autonomy illustrates Mercers IDZ – an *'intermental'* development zone which builds a shared communicative space on the contextual foundations of their common knowledge and aims.' (Mercer 2000:46)

*Was it challenging?*

*Yes, it was definitely challenging. However, if I get this right I know it will ensure that I'll be able to undertake this kind of thing in the future with some confidence.*

*Looking ahead, in relation to the implementation of Sharepoint at work, I've already been asked to do interviews after implementation to see what went well and what improvements could be made. This will help in the roll out to other departments.*

*Were you surprised by anything?*

*I was surprised by some of the reading. By that, I mean the style in which it was written made it easier and therefore more enjoyable to read. Personally, that means if it's easier to read there's more chance that it will sink in and stay there! Having said that, I'll still read it again just to be on the safe side.*

*Disturbed by anything?*

*I was disturbed at my own lack of focus and how easily I gave in to distractions rather than just get on with the task in hand. On further reflection I think my giving in to distractions was a method of putting off what I had to do because I wasn't confident about the whole thing. I think that, because this wasn't my first idea, which was shot down in flames by the group, my confidence took a knock and I therefore didn't want to go ahead with this proposal. However, once I started and as time has progressed I really want this project to succeed. Going forward, I realise that I won't always love the research proposal I must undertake so hopefully, my initial reticence with this proposal will help me' (Joyce)*

Here she demonstrates a mature attitude towards criticism and an honest assessment of her own strengths and weaknesses, and again the importance of the affective domain in learning.

In the second module Emma also felt less confident in identifying a research proposal:

*On reflection I feel the phrase 'unable to see the woods for trees' sums up the overarching situation I found myself in during this module.*

*Having read a number of research articles I underestimated how difficult it would be to focus on a topic and propose a question or hypothesis to research.*

*My initial thoughts were to focus on literacy, numeracy, language and IT as this is my area of specialism. I have a particular interest in informal learning and with enthusiasm started to revisit this area. I soon realised that much of what I wanted to research had already been investigated in detail by experienced researchers. At this time, I was approached by a former colleague who is now employed by a community development organisation based in Northumberland as she had funding to support small organisations gain accreditation for non-accredited learning and wanted to ask for my assistance as she knew I had worked on a RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progression and Achievement) project within County Durham. This again changed my focus as I thought I could possibly look at something within this area. After much consideration I decided that this would be to wide an area to research without collaboration in the given timescale.*

*I then went on to look at the area of how theory and practice are interlinked as within the department I work in there are several trainee teachers. Towards the end of January I was involved in a discussion they were having regarding the underpinning knowledge and theoretical learning on the course and how they felt it didn't link succinctly to what happened in practice. This led me to research this topic although on reflection I feel this led me down a somewhat dead end as I couldn't get my head around what I wanted to know and why. As time was running out I decided to use the discussion to form the basis of the initial research proposal I presented to my peer group. My thoughts were not clear and I felt I had no clarity in my presentation. I came away from the session with the notion that I was going down the wrong path.*

*A week later I found myself interested in blended learning and decided once again to change course and direction. I spent two days in the library exploring blended learning.*

*I had so many thoughts running through my mind and after several sleepless nights I stopped myself. I realised that all I was doing was over thinking and grasping at straws. I enjoy looking at a wide range of topics but during the process of coming up with my research proposal I have realised that often I lack internal focus and direction.*

*'At the beginning of February, I met Grace\*, she had booked into an assessment session for assessment of her current literacy skills. It was evident from the outset that Grace could not identify her name or write it. My colleague carried out a discussion with Grace and discovered she could not identify any letters in the alphabet. As Grace is originally from Nigeria I looked into ESOL provision for her but she was assessed as having a good understanding of the spoken language and the official language of Nigeria is English so she did not qualify as an ESOL learner. Although the School of Access to Learning has a Skill for Life department we have no provision for people with such low skills and I had to tell Grace I would have to signpost her out of the college and to another provider. As I told Grace this information she began to cry as she had been passed from provider to provider and had been let down time after time. She felt the college was her last hope. Over the course of the next hour I listened as Grace told me she had been trafficked from Nigeria, forced into prostitution, and escaped only to live in fear for her life and that of her two boys. All she wanted in life was to be able to read and write in order to better her life.*

*After leaving Grace I walking back into the staff room only to be confronted by my manager as she was concerned that we were behind on test targets and needed to engage more people in order to meet them. Over the course of the next few days I found myself stood in various job centres trying to engage new learners. My pitch was aimed at people who were competent in the use of English and included the theme that achieving a national literacy and numeracy test would increase job opportunities and support individuals back into work.*

*As I heard myself saying this pitch I began to question whether it was based on any solid quantifiable statistics or qualitative research or whether I had for the time being bought into the notion of being driven by targets. I spoke to many people who had achieved the qualification but were still searching for work.*

*I decided that the best line of research was to investigate a topic that I actually cared about and that impacted on the people I want to give a voice and support.*

*I read an article written in a personal capacity by Carol Taylor, Joint Director of the Basic Skills Agency, as she described disadvantaged communities where residences were encouraged to participate and increase skills in order to gain employment but were still unable to find work. I felt this article offered a realistic picture and supported what I was finding out more and more frequently.*

*I then went on to read a number of articles that backed the argument that increasing skills transforms lives and helped people gain employment.*

*Although my research will be on small scale I want to explore this area in depth and find out if the work I am doing is actually beneficial and helping people back into work.*

*In terms of the experience of Grace it seems that we are so focussed on targets that often we forget that we have the skills and knowledge to support people who actually need it. On a personal level although I am unable in my capacity help Grace I managed to keep my promise and got her the help she so needed. Grace is now being tutored by a literacy charitable organisation and yesterday, seven weeks on from our initial meeting, I met with her and her tutor to see what progress was being made. Grace in her own handwriting had written me a card and was able to recognise over 70 words.*

*Graces life was being transformed as she was now sitting down and listening to her two small boys read.*

*Often my work as it is so target driven makes me despair but it's a great feeling to know that I am able to help people in some small ways and if my research produces positive results then I will be able to support and help even more people. I thought about Coffield's words "just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority..."*

*\*name has been changed to protect identity*

*(Emma)*

This moving account illustrates what Mezirow has identified as a 'disorientating dilemma' which actually resulted in Emma identifying an imaginative research proposal.

Other members of the group also started to question their roles

particularly after reading and discussing articles on performativity:

*'Something happened today which has brought my presentation together and has made me reflect on the reading I have done. A couple of weeks ago I may have just answered the learner's question and not thought about it again, however today's events have brought a sort of clarity. In short, I'd finished a session designed to assess any gaps in learners' calculating ability using an hourly paid pay/ wage slip (created by me). There was a lot of addition, subtraction and multiplication using relevant resources and the session went really well. I had some very good feedback, however, when we were clearing up a learner approached me and asked why we didn't do maths and English lessons. This comment crystallised creative teaching for me and the argument put forward by Craft & Jeffrey in their paper on distinctions and relationships. The question I had to ask myself was 'had I been so creative that the learner hadn't recognised the maths involved?' or did this learner lack the creativity to see the connection? A dichotomy indeed.*

*Something else occurred to me on the back of this event, the learners I teach have all experienced education under a Labour government, they are a 1997 cohort, i.e. they were aged 5 in that year. In the next session I decided to conduct some on the spot research into creativity and asked them how they had been taught certain subjects, what resources were used, the teaching method etc. If they were telling the truth and not exaggerating it would appear that not much has changed since I was taught history, science and maths at secondary level. Perhaps their primary education was more creative.*

*This does raise concerns for me however, if teachers of adults are exhorted to be creative, and I believe this to be true especially in Skills for Life, and if learners don't recognise this as learning, why are we putting so much effort into it?*

*I have thought about my comment above and I think it's more to do with learner 'readiness' or the stage they are at. That one comment has made me reflect much more deeply on creativity and I do feel that my understanding or perception of it has changed radically since the start of this module. I now feel that creativity must be considered from the learner point of view not just the teacher or teaching aspect. I can see a correlation here between my own learning and what happens in my classrooms. I suppose it is about taking the time to reflect and consider other viewpoints.' (Mary)*

I have attempted to capture the ideas and emotions which arose in what I will refer to as a rhizomatic scatter:

*comfort zone*                      *nightmare*                      *proud*  
*distraction*  
*despair*                      *easy to read*                      *jokes*  
*pressure*                      *doubts*                      *anxiety*                      *focus*  
*animation*                      *enjoy*                      *understand*                      *heavy going*  
*inspiring*  
*low ebb*                      *reticence*                      *motivated*  
*learning*                      *mistakes*                      *guidance*  
*appealing*                      *a great feeling*  
*unsure*                      *nervous*                      *trying*                      *confidence*  
*terrified*                      *support*                      *collaboration.*

**Fig. 5 Rhizomatic scatter (1)**



## **The third module**

Following the two core modules the group are free to select and elective module to complete their first year of the course.

Mary's earlier reflection digs deeper into the context in which she finds herself and begins to explore the assumptions lying behind her perspective, ultimately to change it. By the end of the first year she had reached a life changing decision:

*'It does seem apposite that my final module for year one is policy. As we started with policy I will hopefully, be able to compare what I knew and understood then and compare it with what I, hopefully know now.'*

*Although policy is always evident within a skills for life context, it's not something that one is terribly concerned with when teaching learners. I suppose it mainly impinges on the outcomes and how management react to the 'numbers' at the end of the financial year.*

*However, I think the interpretation of teaching and learning, within the sector, has had the most impact on my professional career. After just skimming some of the articles, I have already picked up several references to how programmes are implemented and the consequences. I think I may feel some justification in my decision to leave my last post as I thoroughly disagreed with the traditional view of pedagogy and the lack of understanding of the learners' needs. Perhaps the readings will give me a bit more insight into why SfL in some 16-19 year old programmes is so dire and totally work-book based. I am also aware that the readings may change my point of view and I may lose my optimism for what I once thought of as a really necessary service.'*

*'I have been offered two jobs recently but on further investigation, discovered that the learner was not at the centre of the learning. In one instance I was informed that any deficit on the diagnostic assessment had to be 'plugged' with a course, the courses for each element attracted ample funding; so, the more deficits – the more funding generated. The course, although advertised as blended, mainly consisted of learners working on their own, on-line with very little input from the*

tutor. This is probably an example of 'Digital Taylorism', or how I think of it. Can the 'expertise' of a tutor be replicated by examples or explanations alone? My own thoughts are 'definitely not', considering how I interact with learners and how I seek clarification myself when learning something does makes me realise that the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge is intangible. It is difficult to express in words how I've learned something, it's almost as if one just enters a state of 'knowing', perhaps this is cognisance?' (Mary)

This is clearly an important stage of Mary's learning journey during which her developing critical literacy leads her to question her working environment and the policy which created it. She also begins to explore the notion of knowledge and its tangibility. This is an issue which arises more than once in subsequent discussions and enquiries.

Like Sally, Mary finds collaboration helpful:

*'I have been working collaboratively with Emma. We met up twice to discuss ideas and consider what aspects to include in the assignments. We also telephoned each other regularly, mainly to check salient points or iron out a challenging concept.'*

*I have found talking to someone else in the same field more than helpful. Emma knows the types of problems we face and like me, has experienced poor management and difficult learners. Rather than struggle with an idea, it's been useful to present my interpretation and get instant feedback which has led to other thoughts and approaches. I've enjoyed hearing Emma's view of SfL from her perspective as her role is slightly different from mine but the impacts are, strangely, rather similar. I think we both put the learner first and then struggle when this is questioned or we are asked directly 'when will they be test ready'. I have to admit that, for the last couple of years, this phrase has brought to my mind, an 'oven-ready chicken'!*

*I do feel that SfL has become almost mechanised, especially within the private training sector that I have experienced. Perhaps I have been unlucky but I doubt that lots of good practice truly exists within these small organisations.'*

*I do find myself thinking about the ideology of politics and the philosophy of education and wondering why and how the system has developed and more importantly, why we accept it or what is an alternative? All these thoughts go back to the first question we considered on the course – what is education for? It's still difficult to answer this question. I now feel there are several alternative*

*perspectives to any answers, all would contain merit depending on their perspective but whether any answer would be finite, is debatable. To use a metaphor, I see this course as having been a jig-saw, all the pieces, social capital, human capital, knowledge economy etc. have been in front of us and we have slowly found out how they fit together. However, whether the 'picture' makes sense to us or whether we are pleased with the finished product is quite a different story. (Mary)*

Here Mary has perhaps encapsulated a post modern perspective in which reality is no longer self evident. *'it signals [...] the sense that we live between the no longer and the not yet, a time when formerly comfortable holds on making sense of the world no longer suffice.'* (Lather and Ellsworth 1996: 70)

*As a sort of system or a check on what I have learned, understood etc, I have concentrated on reading the papers from the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme then returned to Coffield's inaugural lecture from 2006. As Coffield's paper was part of the initial readings last year, I judged that it would be a good benchmark to assess my progress or lack of it. As I suspected, having more background knowledge made a huge amount of difference. Reading his paper again, I could relate several comments to the actual research and fully concur with his statement regarding the 'pelting torrent' of official documents. Last year I found his flow charts of post-compulsory education rather bewildering and I thought at the time, they were a 'bit over the top', perhaps produced to emphasise his point of view. However, with the current changes to the LSC this year and the disbanding of several quangos by the new coalition government, I thoroughly support his view.*

*I have been amazed myself, when researching specific points for my assignment, by the numerous agencies involved, for example, when trying to define skill gaps and shortages based on reading Keep & Mayhew. Oddly this also coincided with a job advert in a national newspaper for a position with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. As I had never heard of them, I 'googled' the name and was again amazed to discover they were the result of another merger and had been in existence since 2008. The information available from the site has provided useful reading, especially the statistics relating to the skills required in the next few years. It will be interesting to see if there is a flurry of interest in specific course design/area in the near future and if it can be related back to these recommendations.*

*Nearing the end or the end is in sight.....*

*I have produced the first draft of my assignment, having changed the format several times as ideas or phrases suddenly changed the course of my thinking. I have found it difficult to chart a way through all the information and then try to articulate my thoughts. I did find that after reading and taking notes for several hours that I couldn't then just start writing. I think this is why this assignment has taken so long to produce. I have had to 'sit back' and synthesise or digest all the information, trying to link it to other ideas, concepts etc.; then consider why or how this has or will impact or what were/will be the consequences. And I suppose, what had always been at the back of my mind, is this work level '6ness' or is it just good enough to meet the criteria?*

This again seems to epitomise the development of criticality and perhaps the contrast between the culture of teacher 'training' which privileges the understanding of policy requirements and strategies for its implementation, and in to one which questions the discourse and its implications.

*In summary then, overall I feel I have a better understanding of why human capital is considered so important to the government but wonder if a qualification stockpile is the most suitable way for a country to improve its productivity. The recession in the UK and the government's measures to deal with it will, undoubtedly have some impact on future education policies but I don't believe that 'pushing' the workforce to achieve a level 2 in literacy and entry 3 in numeracy will, ultimately bring economic stability or success.*

*Finally, I have to admit to a dilemma. Although I don't agree; or think some of the ideology behind government thinking is flawed; I am one of those who has benefitted from the policies; because without the SfL initiative, I would not be writing this.*

*What I mean is that; the reasons behind the perceived need for better literacy and numeracy, has enabled me to qualify as a teacher and progress to degree level. No doubt this is one of that reasons that fuels my enthusiasm for learning but I am also very aware that my motivation was purely personal. This is not the case for many adult learners at the moment.' (Mary)*

In this extract Mary recognises and reassesses her own role as a teacher and also as a learner in relation to her own learners.

Gary's reflections on his proposal express his emerging critical literacy:

*This research proposal has challenged and rewarded my learning experience whilst helping to establish a more informed view about educational theory. The very concept of research has evolved from an initially vague understanding of it as a detailed survey that followed scientific principals for authenticity. I now have an insight into a range of methods currently employed by educational research at all stages. My discovery of the complexity theory paradigm in research has enthused this proposal. I really identified with its principles and felt it was suited to a research proposal set within my current educational setting .The Psycho/Bio/Social educational model is one which I intend to explore within my own teaching practice. Similarly, the work of O'Brien about 'hard cases' and its role in the Psycho/Bio/Social which calls for negative case studies is also a concept I would like to pursue further.*

*Initially I regretted the time that I had spent pursuing an ideologically inspired research proposal concerning the relationship between students and tutors. I had to change my proposal quite considerably as I realised a desire to use research on students with learning difficulties would not feel right without their input into the agenda. I now realise that it is all part of my learning experience and it has only helped to provide a more detailed understanding of the issues and arguments that surround inclusive research and inclusion as a concept.*

This is a profound discovery for Gary. As a (very successful) teacher of learners with special needs he has always been aware of the importance of a non-judgmental and caring approach to his diverse

groups of learners. He had recently become more concerned with the issue of the student-tutor relationship in the learning situation and his original intention was to explore this and how it might be improved. Now he sees this as 'ideologically inspired' and is concerned that inclusion is real as well as apparent.

He becomes aware in fact of *'the problem of who can speak for whom; and positionality – the implications of the relationships of power between the researcher and the researched.'* (St. Clair 1997:395)

### **Aims and Rationale**

*No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I rewrite myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are now the centre of my talk*

*(Hooks 1990: 15-2)*

*The opening quotation was found near the start of my search for a topic upon which to base my research proposal. I had initially wanted to look at the relationship between tutors and students which had been mentioned in a seminar from Escalate. The initial literature I researched, including Hooks work and similar emancipatory research, left me feeling uncomfortable about simply doing work 'on' my students who have learning difficulties. It highlighted emancipatory research and the relatively new and innovative practice of students directing research that influences their lives. This kind of participatory research also seemed closely aligned with the educational model of teaching students with disaffection, disability or difficulty which I had read about from*

*Blamires (2001). I identified with this Psycho/Bio/Social model in my own work with students who have learning difficulties and thought it encapsulated or utilised numerous strengths of the social model of disability without disregarding the traditional Psycho/Bio model. The viewpoint the Psycho/Bio/Social model takes on the concept of learning difficulty, for example, is 'to acknowledge social aspects alongside psychological and biological aspects'. The traditional special educational needs (SEN) model views the concept of 'difficulty' as being 'within child' while the social model believes 'these concepts are socially constructed so can be deconstructed through language which impacts upon attitudes and practice' (Blamires:2001). It is my experience that two students are not the same even if they have similar biological or psychological backgrounds. The impact that their up-bringing, school experience or any of the myriad experiences from their unique social aspects will contribute towards a student's difficulty, disaffection or disability. I tried to apply the different models for two students with ADHD so that I was sure this would be a model I would like my teaching to aspire too. Students with ADHD have short attention spans and the Psycho/Bio model has diagnosis with treatment (Ritalin tablets) which reduces the hyperactive tendencies and it advises short and preferably practical tasks which seems a very valid and successful strategy for tutors to incorporate. The social model thinks that the tutor should personalise their teaching rather than individualise it. This is also a crucial tool for tutors to incorporate and overall I do perceive both models have useful but not definitive aspects which further the inclusion concept. This strengthened my belief that a combination of social aspects alongside psychological and biological aspects has clear advantages in my own teaching of students with learning difficulties. I also agree with the claim that 'the move towards an apprenticeship model (of teacher training) involving on the job training...results in less time for the consideration of important conceptual issues' Garner 2001 cited in Blamires) This has mirrored my learning experience in lifelong learning where the ability to apply HOT (higher order thinking) skills to theories behind different educational models has progressed my teaching ability and vastly improved my self-confidence.*

*The fact Blamires found it difficult to locate statements within the psycho/bio/social area because few researchers had explicitly located their work within the model has led me to try and create a*

*participatory research proposal with the potential to convince my peers/management to adopt this educational model.*

*I now feel that my original desire to research the tutor – student relationship is just one of numerous factors which could be analysed by this research proposal. To enable the students to become active stakeholders in the research process I have deliberately phrased the questions to act as a catalyst for the students to direct where the research goes. The students may highlight their relationship with tutors as something they want to explore within their educational setting. I am a little anxious that the proposal may seem light in regards to questions and data collection but I feel unable to progress this aspect without jeopardising the legitimacy of the whole project as truly participatory.*

*Upon reflection I realise that my initial thought process was to conduct research on my department in the hope that it would highlight current practices and to move beyond the current social model of educating students with learning difficulties. I now perceive that this prior agenda would have clouded my research and left me feeling unsatisfied whereas this participatory research has really inspired my thinking.’ (Gary)*

This is an example of the deep learning which can take place and alter an individual’s framework fundamentally. I was also impressed by the fact that Gary felt able to start his reflection by using a poem.

Ken returned to Coffield to help him:

*‘On reflection the initial stimulus for my research proposal can be traced back to Coffields’ article “Are we in the right road.” I found this article easy to comprehend and applicable to my personal situation as a work based trainer within a manufacturing environment. I found myself empathising with Coffield’s frustration at the unfulfilled opportunities, waste and lack of progress within the lifelong learning sector and particularly the flaws identified in the theme of increasing the individual learners “employability.”*



*On several occasions I have found myself striving to meet this challenge to increase my learners “employability” especially in the current climate of economic uncertainty when training is viewed as a tool to support workers facing a potential redundancy situation. On reflection I have often viewed this as a professional obligation and at times a personal mission however, I have also developed the belief that a learner gains more from training than simply new tangible skills with increased softer social skills such as confidence levels, communication skills, and sociability which are difficult to measure, but can be invaluable to increase the learners state of employability. ‘(Ken)*

Mezirow suggests that ‘*most transformative learning takes place outside of awareness*’ and yet it is clear from these extracts that the writers are very aware of the changes which are taking place in their perceptions. This may be due to the fact that they are required to write about and therefore articulate their changing perspectives.

Mezirow suggests that the following characteristics are involved in the process of transformative learning:

- 1) reflecting critically on the source, nature and consequences of relevant assumptions.
- 2) in instrumental learning, determining that something is true by using empirical research methods.
- 3) in communicative learning, arriving at more justified beliefs by participating freely and fully in an informed continuing discourse.

- 4) taking action on our transformed perspective – we make a decision and live what we have come to believe until we encounter new evidence, argument or a perspective that renders this orientation problematic and requires reassessment, and sometimes we live with the contradiction.
- 5) acquiring a disposition – to become more critically reflective of our own assumptions and those of others, to seek validation of our transformative insights through more freely and fully participation in discourse, and to follow through on our decision to act upon a transformed insight. (Mezirow 1991)

I suggest that the reflections above meet these characteristics in the following ways:

- 1) Reflecting on assumptions – it is clear that reading, discussion and the application of theory to practice has caused deep reflection in several of the group members. Emma, Mary, Sally and Gary all describe a reassessment of perspective.
- 2) Instrumental learning I would suggest can include both learning which has been gained for a vocational course and that which is gained as part of another goal. The learning which all of these participants have undertaken for their initial teaching training

has resulted in perspectives which they are now beginning to challenge. Mary for example, became aware of the importance of assessing learners needs on her teacher training course and this has informed her view of the training agencies she has worked for, making her more discriminating in her choice of employer motivated by a need to match their pedagogical approach to hers. She is also able to recognise the luxury of her position of being able to choose as opposed to the compulsion to which her tutees or trainees are subjected.

- 3) Communicative learning is apparent in the value that participants place on collaborative learning and also in the enquiries.
- 4) Taking action - Mary acted quite drastically on her transformed insight by looking for employers providing environments in which she can work to her own standards rather than seek to meet theirs. Emma circumvented her own organisational constraints to help 'Grace', and Gary challenged and ultimately overturned what he came to believe was a partial and restricted view of his role.
- 5) Acquiring a disposition – For all three the learning they have experienced appears to have informed their research focus. This in itself is transformative.

## Heterotopia

These comments seem to provide evidence of the existence of a heterotopia. The first principle is evident in the perceived need for the group:

*'This was a really great way of us all being able to read out loud our assignments and get feedback from other people who actually understand what we have written. My husband just glazes over when I ask him to read anything.'*

The second principle: *'their function is affected as history unfolds'* is illustrated by the group having become an autonomous support group which has taken collective responsibility for mutual tutoring functions.

The third principle: the juxtaposition of incompatible spaces is evident in the overlap of home and 'work' in this case college based activities are moved into a different space.

*'Three of the group met up to write the presentation and discuss our ideas and we found that working in a group was far easier and we got a lot achieved in just one Friday night. I particularly found this to be useful to discuss ideas and have confirmation that we were all thinking along similar lines.'* (Sally)

That they are linked to 'slices of time' (fourth principle) is apparent from the stage at which this development occurs, and finally, principle five in which there is a system of opening and closing which both isolates and makes them permeable can be seen in who is seen as part of this group.

*'The group we had for the Seminar was very good however I was disappointed that not all individuals participated at the same level, particularly one member who hardly participated at all.*

*Although the remainder of the group who had participated felt a little let down, we did not let that affect the professionalism of our seminar. I had a great sense of satisfaction when we finished the seminar and I found it gave me new found confidence.'* (Sally)

The themes arising from the final reflections seem to indicate a developing confidence in their ability to identify the issues which affect their learningI and the sector. I have again tried to illustrate the emerging themes through a rhizomatic scatter:



**Fig 6 Rhizomatic scatter (2)**

A rhizomatic representation of this first year would be a map of all of these themes and emotions, since all are interlinked and can recur as an 'irruption' (eruption) at any point and will do so.

*'a rhizome is made of plateaus [...] a continuous, self vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culmination point or external end.'* (Deleuze and Gutarri 1992: 21-22)

By this I understand Deleuze and Gutarri to refer to the eruptions or as I have referred to them, emergences of issues or themes.

*'we shall call a plateau every multiplicity connectable with others by superficial underground stems, in such a way as to form and extend a rhizome.'* (ibid 65)

As they emerge they form plateaus of intensity and then submerge as a line of flight takes off in another direction, but may re-emerge later:

career  
self-confidence  
lack of progress  
consequences  
justification  
empathising  
traditional  
optimism  
comfort zone  
nightmare  
proud  
distraction  
jokes  
despair  
easy to read  
anxiety  
pressure  
doubts  
heavy going

*animation* *understand*  
*enjoy*  
*necessary* *knowing* *opportunities*  
*rewarded* *challenged*  
*experience* *informed view*  
*ideology* *unfulfilled*  
*“employability.”*  
*appealing* *focus*  
*unsure* *nervous* *support* *trying*  
*enjoy* *a great feeling*  
*guidance* *terrified* *self-confidence*  
*career* *lack of progress*  
*consequences* *justification* *empathising*  
*traditional*  
*optimism waste*  
*flaws* *Interpretation* *professional*  
*isolation* *motivated* *inspiring*  
*collaboration.*  
*comfortable* *despair* *confidence*  
*low ebb* *reticence*  
*learning* *mistakes*

**Fig 7 Rhizomatic scatter (3)**

### ***Data set 3***

#### ***The enquiries***

My second data set explored the development of the group through their individual reflections and I attempted to identify recurrent themes in their writing which suggest a changing awareness, a growing self confidence, and move towards autonomy and criticality. I have tried to illustrate through rhizomatic scatters the emotions which emerge in their reflections. This imagery I suggest, mirrors the eruptions of emotion as they occur and reoccur during their journey through the course as encounter new material and new challenges.

In this section I use extracts from the enquiry transcripts. I attempt to develop the analysis through a progressive focussing approach using an increasingly sophisticated coding system. Initially I identify periods of interthinking and the use of questions which indicates an engagement with enquiry rather than an expression of opinion, and also what I consider to be lines of flight in which the enquiry is taken in a new direction. I also identify the first instances of identity discongruence using the key below.

In the first enquiry I illustrate the variety of graphical representations which can be used to trace movement and in the second and third



enquiries I move towards a rhizomatic format. In the fourth enquiry I introduce occurrences of identity congruence and discongruence. This enquiry is of a different nature to those preceding it since it is in fact part of an introductory session to a module on teaching, learning and assessment. I presented the group with a set of metaphors for teaching so that they could start to identify their own pedagogical approach. This results in some self assessment and thus some measure of self identity. I recorded it and used it as data since it lent itself to enquiry format. However my role is more prominent and I have indicated this by referring to myself as 'tutor' rather than Christine. I have used the same analytical format for the brief extract from the final enquiry.

**Key:**

**Columns at the left of the dialogue:**

**Column 1**

- Q question
- S statement
- Bc backchannel –receipts – acknowledgements or prompts
- e enquiry
- sc self correction
- sc/q self correction/question
- d disruption

**Column 2**

 lines of flight

Inter Interthinking

### Column 3

id	identity statement
ics	identity congruence social
ick	identity congruence knowledge
ico	identity congruence operational
idd	identity discongruence (idds/iddk/iddo)

### On grid

- Identity statement
- Identity congruence
- Identity discongruence or dissonance

It is important to acknowledge the subjectivity of allocation of the symbols described in the key above. Another observer may allocate them differently, particularly perhaps those that I have labelled 'e' for enquiry. I have used this symbol to identify those comments which I believe lend themselves to moving the enquiry forward rather than being statements which limit development. I have also used Q to symbolise a question which might also move the enquiry but requires a different and more direct response.

The first extract is from the beginning of the first enquiry.

## Enquiry 1

As I indicated in chapter five, I prefer to use non directive stimuli which encourage interpretation and imagination rather than those which are over directive or have an obvious reference. However, for the first enquiry I selected a short passage adapted from Baggini (2005) which I hoped would lead to an enquiry on the nature of belief and the need for evidence which might begin to clarify the concept of empiricism.

### Dhara Gupta

The stimulus for the first enquiry was the following passage:

Dhara Gupta lived all her life in a village in the Rajasthan desert. One day in 1822 her cousin returned from a trip he had embarked on two years previously.

He told them of wonderful sights and adventures he had experienced. He also told them of something he called 'ice.' *'I went to regions where it was so cold that the water stopped flowing and formed a solid translucent block. Even more amazing is that there is no state in between where the liquid thickens. The water that flows freely is only slightly warmer than that which has solidified.'*

She didn't believe him. She had also heard tales of fire breathing dragons, monster with two heads, women with snakes for hair. She didn't believe them either.

(adapted from 'The Pig that Wants to be Eaten' by Julian Baggini)

Following their first reading of the extract, the group worked in pairs to establish a question for enquiry. Due to the technical difficulties of attempting to record several simultaneous conversations I suspect a

lot of interesting discussion and exploration in these initial responses and ideas is lost.

The question chosen was:

*'Do we need evidence to believe things?'*

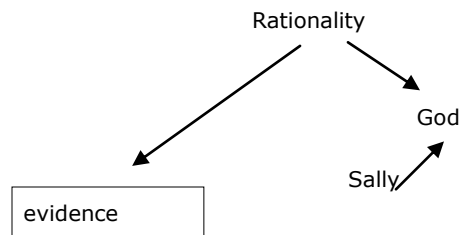
Sally started the enquiry. She did so by describing her own contribution to the paired discussion she had with Mary on their initial responses to the stimulus; she then invites Mary to do the same.

1	Sally :	I was talking about a girl that works for me is from Nigeria and she was telling me about when she was little and someone who had visited the UK used told her about these little houses that people in the UK carried round with them and they'd go all over the place used to stay in these little houses and then move on. And she would ask questions like 'did they have a toilet' and 'did they have a bed' and did they have this and that and people would say 'oh yes they have them all.' And she could never ever picture in her mind what it was and didn't believe what they were saying. And then when she came to the UK she realised that this house they carry round was a caravan. And then when she actually saw it she could understand what it was about, but she couldn't picture it in her mind and I think a lot of the things is about picturing something in your mind to then understand it and believe it. And the same with your experience...do you want to.... (turning to Mary who had been her partner in the thinking period)	S
2	Mary	mine was my cousins lived in Newcastle and I lived out in the sticks and they came to visit and said they'd come on the top of the bus and I'd only ever seen single decker buses so to me I could only imagine sitting on the outside on the top of the bus. And it was only much later when I came into Newcastle for a pantomime that I realised that they meant a double decker bus, but me never having seen one and even to this day when these cousins are mentioned I picture them sitting on top of a single decker bus. But that was my very visual thing I suppose but because I had never seen one, I mean if they'd said a double decker bus it wouldn't have meant anything to me, because I'd never seen one...so I suppose I needed the evidence to realise what it was. And I think this bit about fire breathing dragons I suppose in our sophisticated society we wouldn't believe that.....	S  e
3		Mmmmm	bc

The session begins with two anecdotes, and whilst they are interesting they don't immediately stimulate exploration. Mary moves to a more enquiring mode in her last sentence by the use of the expression '*I suppose,*' there is a pause. She then resumes returning to the focus of the stimulus:

4	Mary	..... but hundreds of years ago and it wasn't only in the UK was it, it was all over the world wasn't it these tales about fire breathing dragons and various animals, mermaids and things...	e	
5	Ken	so what's changed then? You say sophisticated society ...what's changed? People more educated? Is that what you mean?	Q	
6	Sally	well we believe in God .....	S	↗
7	Ken Sally Ken Ken	exactly.... {we believe in God and there's no evidence that God exists {...and where's the rationality in that? and yet some of the most educated people around believe ...are supposed to believe in religion	Bc e e e	

Ken poses a question which opens up the enquiry and Sally takes a line of flight to 'God' which Ken builds on to introduce the concept of rationality emerging from a short period of interthinking. At this point the group start to enquire.

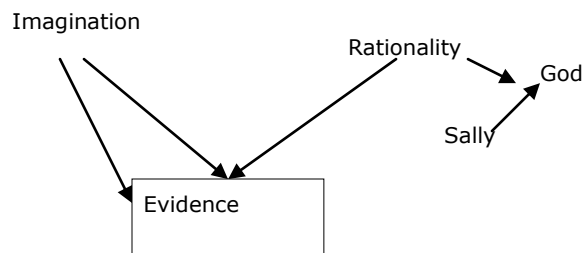


**Fig 8 Developing movement of enquiry (1)**

John then moves the enquiry back to the original focus on evidence.

8	John	I think if you had to have evidence for everything to believe it you'd have a very boring life. You've got children with Santa Claus you know, they believe...	S
9	Mary	well I think that's the point when your children.... or its something you've never seen ....you do have a wonderful imagination	e ↗
10	John	it depends on what it is if a student says I've done my homework and you say where is the evidence and they say well you'll just have to believe that's a different thing, it's a tangible thing you need evidence to substantiate because tangible is part of our every day working life. But if you had to have evidence for everything I just think it would be boring any way.	S

Mary takes a line of flight towards imagination, and John again returns to the notion of evidence and adds the concept of 'tangibility.' This is an issue which recurs in both the enquiries and reflections and will be discussed in late data extracts.



**Fig 9 Developing movement of enquiry (2)**

11	Joyce	ah well you don't have evidence for everything do you? There are many things you believe in them because you want to believe in them. I recently lost my brother and I realised, well I didn't realise, I <i>believe</i> that he's in a better place and that he's safe and happy and well but that helps me....emotionally that helps me.	S	↗
12	Ken	mmmmm because you want to..	bc	
13	Joyce	I want to believe that. I want to believe that.... you know ...that the suffering he went through is over now and that	S	

		he's alright now, he's well and he's happy. I might not be able to speak to him but you know...it's important for me to believe that he's alright. So, I've got no evidence that that is the case.....we're not going to know 'til that day any way ourselves are we?		
14		mmhhmm	bc	
15	Ken	would it help to look at what beliefs are all about? What are beliefs? that's question in itself really	Q	↗

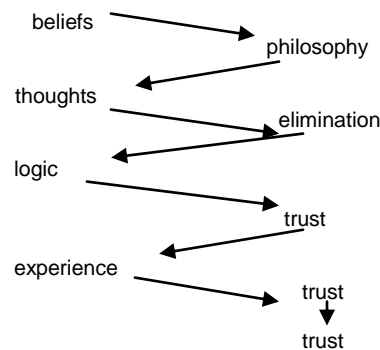
Joyce builds on John's contribution to reveal a personal pain which she copes with through what she acknowledges to be an irrational belief. Whatever their own doubts and thoughts may have been no-one challenges her belief although in other less personal circumstances they may have done so. Once more Ken attempts to define terms and poses a question. This is a further line of flight since it opens the enquiry and flies towards a concept 'belief' rather than an anecdote *of* belief.

The responses constitute a period of rapid interthinking in which a number of ideas are built upon one another:

16	Mary	it's a whole philosophy	S	↑ Inter
17	Sally	I think when someone tells you something you start to think in your head is it true is it not true?	e	↓
18	Mary	yeah	bc	
19	Sally	...and you go use a process of elimination in your head don't you?	e	
20	Ken	it's logic	e	
21	Sally	absolutely there's logic ... ..	bc	
22	Ken	and it's trust....	e	
23	Sally	....there's experience ...so you know....	e	
24	Ken	so I trust you but I don't trust Tina so....	bc	

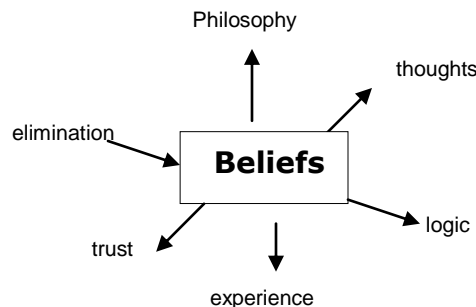
25	Matt	I think you've just, you've hit the nail on the head with the trust	bc	
26	Sally	yeah, well <i>it is</i>	bc	
27	Matt	because in a lot I teach I'm relying on trust with the students that they trust me to know what I'm talking about	S	
28	Mary	we talked about this last week didn't we? this came up...	Q	

Mary illustrates the 'long conversation' in line 28 by linking back to a previous session.



**Fig 10 Developing movement of enquiry (3)**

This exchange can also be graphically represented as thoughts emanating from a central point:



**Fig 11 Developing movement of enquiry (4)**



Dialogue broken down in sections such as this can be represented in various graphical forms. To create a rhizomatic representation however is to capture the emergences of thoughts and ideas through a multiplicity of flight lines which return and fly away and emerge again.

Envisaged in this way, enquiry becomes an 'unattributable multiplicity', is developed and proceeds through participant contributions as an assemblage it has only itself in connection with other assemblages – other enquiries, other interactions. The whole rhizome is a map of eruptions and connections of thoughts and ideas.

Deleuze and Guatarri use the image of a map since a map is oriented toward experimentation in contact with the real. It is open and connectable in all of its dimensions.

*'The map has to do with performance whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence.'*  
(Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:13-14)

A rhizome may be broken, shattered or ruptured but will start up again on a one of its old lines or on a new one. There is a rupture whenever segmentarity lines explode into a line of

flight, but this line of flight is part of the rhizome and the lines always tie back into one another.

*'A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance.'* (Deleuze and Guatarri 2004:25)

A plateau is always in the middle and a rhizome is made of plateaus. Plateaus designate a continuous self vibrating region of intensities which avoid an orientation towards an end. Just as enquiry never ends but is postponed to be reopened later. As Mary links back to previous sessions and the issues which arose and now arise again.

An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows and social flows simultaneously.

In the next extract from this enquiry Ken starts to summarise:


29	Ken	yes! Different factors, different criteria that have got to be in place which all come together	e	↑ Inter
30	Sally	in your head	e	↓
31	Ken	yes	bc	
32	Sally	there's little notches in your head	e	
33	Ken	yes, so to summarise there's trust,	e	
34		mmhmm	bc	
35	Ken	there's the desire or want to believe	e	
36		Mmhmm	bc	
37	Ken	what else is there?		Q
38	Joyce	hope	e	

				↑
				Inter
39	Ken	there's the hope, I think there's the need as somebody mentioned	e	
40	Sally	it's being able to envisage that....	e	
41	Ken Sally	[yes there's [the visual	e e	↓
42	Ken	yes and there's the rationale	e	
43	Ken	there's a number of factors that you make a conscious decision...and I suppose	e	↓
44	Ken	and you've got previous experience and knowledge of that person so all these factors come together to make a conscious ...opinion or a...and then that is your evidence that becomes your evidence.	e	
45	Sally	yeah...so I guess the answer is yes we do ....need evidence...because the evidence is in your head.	e	
46	Emma	yes because you might... you can create your own evidence for anything can't you?	e	
47	Sally	you do yeah, absolutely ...so actually the answer to the question is probably yes.	S	
48	Emma	but whether it's factual evidence or....	e	
49	Ken	we haven't even asked about factual evidence	bc	
50	Sally	whether it's factual evidence or evidence in your head....	e	
51	John	varying isn't it?	bc	bc
52	Sally	whether you've decided and that's you know.....	e	Inter
53	Mary	yes your own beliefs	e	
54	Ken	your own value system as well that's another factor	e	
55	Sally	yes absolutely	bc	

At this point the group are interthinking as ideas are generated towards a conclusion. Ideas build upon one another to reach a consensus or understanding – a dialectical exchange in fact..

In the next section a number of lines of flight are taken to disrupt the growing consensus, Matt introduces a new idea by suggesting that preparedness or willingness to believe is important, this is taken up to some extent by Sally's example, although that seems to distract focus for a while as additional examples are given in lines 3, 4, 5 and 6. Emma then focuses on the importance of *wanting* to believe which is a new line of flight. Ken redirects this to return to his earlier notion of the importance of experience and resists Mary's notion of the importance of an enquiring mind. This is the first examples of identity discongruence in terms of knowledge (iddk)

56	Matt	I think people believe as much as they are prepared to believe. We were talking about the moon landing earlier on. I've got a whole class who said it's a fake. Now they have been turned the other way round. They have been fooled into thinking it was a fake. So they're as gullible as I was watching the moon landings and thinking this is fantastic.	e	→	
57	Sally	absolutely and there's some, some major things that .....that you know .....evidence about global warming but then there's you know ...there's programmes that say that the biggest, biggest emitter of carbon by far....way more than we can possibly ever emit is the sea.	e	→	
58	Ken	and cows, cows	bc		
59	Mary	so why are we actually worrying about it ...because...	bc		
60	Sally	absolutely. There's a natural, if you look back, there's been a natural disparity between the carbon emission and the heat of the earth all the way through life.	bc		
61	Mary	and cycles	bc		
62	Emma	but then, it's the same though, whatever the outcome you want you can find the evidence to support it	e	→	
63	Ken	mmhmm it's experience though isn't it?	Q	→	

64	Sally	absolutely	bc		
65	Mary	don't you think that comes down to an enquiring mind though? If you have an enquiring mind, if you want to learn something, you're more likely to believe in something or not believe it...conversely you know	e		
66	Ken	No... I... I...	S		iddk
67	Mary	you don't?	bc		
68	Ken	no because I think irrespective of whether you've got an enquiring mind or not you're still going to make a judgment...irrespective...	S		iddk
69	Mary	mmhmm	bc		
70	Sally	based on the evidence	bc		
71	Ken	based on the evidence and based your own personal criteria for making judgments....irrespective	S		

This line of enquiry is blocked by Tina:

72	Tina	Yes and was Princess Diana killed or did she....was it an accident?	d
----	------	---	---

Ken tries again to summarise:

73	Ken	going back to our discussion where do we go from here?....	Q
Inaudible and laugh			
74	Ken	have we agreed?	Q
[..]			
75	Ken	so in summary did we agree that it was yes but based on personal...	e
76	Sally	the evidence takes different forms	e
77	Ken	based on personal ..... yes... judgments	bc
78	Christine	OK	bc
79	John	human nature demands a yes but reality says...	d
80	Christine	oh you can't talk to us about human nature!	d
81	Ken	oh, no, no	d
82	Christine	.....and get away with it!	d
83	Tina Sally	[we've done that [we've done that yes [you should have been here last week <sup>22</sup>	d

My own observations:

22

□ Mary's reference is to an activity which the group undertook in the previous session which explored the existence of human nature versus cultural influences.

As a first enquiry I felt this was reasonably successful. There was evidence of engagement with ideas and some interthinking. There is also early evidence of some of the characteristics that the group will bring to the process.

Ken appears to respond to the process of enquiry enthusiastically. He uses a lot of questions and makes regular attempts to focus the group on the subject of the enquiry. Sally tends to use anecdotes to illustrate her points and makes frequent use of the word 'absolutely.' This appears to be a blocking word because of its finality of tone. However, her interaction is less formidable and she uses welcoming body language and makes frequent eye contact with other group members nodding at their comments and contributions. These traits are not apparent in an audio recording or written transcription.

Emma and Ann are quiet but again seem fully engaged with the enquiry and their contributions and thoughtful and useful. Unfortunately these contributions are frequently 'lost' as they fail to be taken up by the rest of the group. Similarly, Mary and Matt have made few contributions to his enquiry but demonstrate engagement and introduce some interesting perspectives.

In this first enquiry it is also possible to identify lines of flight and instances of themes emerging or irrupting, submerging and reemerging later. There is also an example in the extract of a difference of perspective emerging. I have classified lines 66-71 as identity discongruence in terms of knowledge.

The experience also reinforces the need for careful facilitation of enquiry. As the first 'formal' attempt I was anxious not to over manage it, and felt the need to remain unobtrusive and make limited interventions. Consequently some interesting points were lost which I would have liked to develop through questioning or inviting clarification or further contributions. This is always a dilemma.

John appears to get restless by any lengthy enquiry into ideas and concepts, and makes humorous remarks. Interestingly however, the group bring him back to the enquiry. We can perhaps also see evidence of Sidorkin's three drinks theory here – the necessity to lighten the tone for the comfort of the participants, or as Sidorkin expresses it: the '*only way to end a good conversation with dignity.*' (1999:75)

From the perspective of a facilitator this presents a challenge. The temptation is to intervene when enquiry is in danger of being disrupted. I am conscious of the need to let the enquirers control the session and this is perhaps particularly relevant to an adult group who will be conscious of that dignity they both expect and deserve. I am also conscious of the second drink stage of Sidorkins 'three drinks theory' which he believes essential to effective interaction and learning.

## **Enquiry 2**

The next extract is the beginning of the second enquiry.

The stimulus is an extract from '*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.*' by Mark Haddon. I selected this passage because it raises the image of the mind or brain as a computer. I wanted the group to develop their understanding of empiricism and epistemology.

**And people are different from animals because they can have pictures on the screens in their heads of things which they are not looking at. They can have pictures of someone in another room. Or they can have a picture of what is going to happen tomorrow. Or they can have pictures of themselves as an astronaut. Or they can have pictures of really big numbers. Or they can have pictures of chains of reasoning when they're trying to work something out.**

**And that is why a dog can go to the vet and have a really big operation and have metal pins sticking out of its leg but if it sees a cat it forgets that it has pins sticking out of its leg and chases after the cat. But when a person has an operation it has**



**a picture in its head of the hurt carrying on for months and months. And it has a picture of the stitches in its leg and the broken bone and the pins even if it sees a bus it has to catch it doesn't run because it has a picture in its head of the bones crunching together and the stitches breaking and even more pain.**

**And that is why people think computers don't have minds, and why people think that their brains are special, and different from computers. Because people can see the screen inside their head and they think there is someone in their head sitting there looking at the screen, like Captain Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, sitting in his captain's seat looking at a big screen. And they think that this person is their special human mind which is called a homunculus, which means a little man. And they think that computers don't have this homunculus.**

**But this homunculus is just another picture on the screen in their heads. And when the homunculus is on the screen in their heads (because the person is thinking about the homunculus) there is another bit of the brain watching the screen. But the brain doesn't see this happen because it is like the eye flicking from one place to another and people are blind inside their heads when they do the changing from thinking about one thing to thinking about another.**





**And this is why people's brains are like computers. And it's not because they are special but because they have to keep turning off for fractions of a second while the screen changes. And because there is something they can't see people think it has to be special, because people always think there is something special about what they can't see, like the dark side of the moon, or the other side of a black hole, or in the dark when they woke up at night and they're scared.**

**Also people think they're not computers because they have feeling and computers don't have feelings. But feelings are just having a picture on the screen in your head of what is going to happen tomorrow or next year, or what might have happened instead of what did happen, and if it is a happy picture they smile and if it is a sad picture they cry.**

(Extract from: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon)

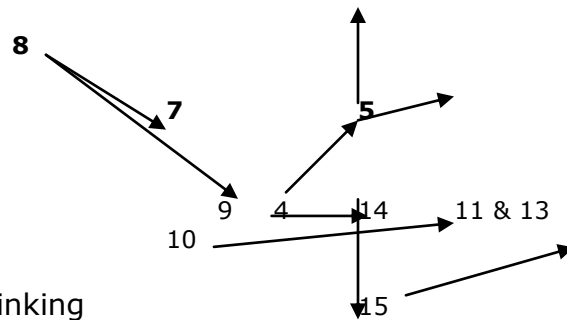
The question chosen was 'Do we think in pictures?'

Mary has been working with Joyce on this occasion and as she starts the enquiry she identifies a question she asked herself and her partner. This is a very effective opening since it focuses on questioning and this is a more 'enquiring' start than an anecdote. Ken takes up the idea of a picture to ask a further question.

1	Christine	talk about what you were thinking when you said that....		
2	Mary	Well obviously the first line, well this whole thing is about thinking in pictures, and I said to Joyce 'how do we <i>know</i> we think in pictures?' I couldn't actually describe.... a scene...	e	
3	Joyce	yes	bc	
4	Mary	....what I actually see.... and trying to get beyond that...is.. What do people see when they think about things?' .. we actually got on to a holiday you may be going on to.. somewhere you've never been. And you base that on previous experience and perhaps what you expect, but you've no idea what it's going to be, but you have a...a <i>picture</i> ...we use this term a <i>picture</i> ....	e	
5	Ken	Do these pictures have sounds and smells and..?	Q	
6	Jill Mary Sally	[Well do they? [Do they? [Do yours?	Q's	 
7	Ken	mmhhmm yeah. Yeah, and its songs, cause we hear songs as well don't we?	Q	
8	Mary	a song can trigger a memory for me....not necessarily a picture	S	
9	Others	mmmmm	bc	
10	Ken	but is a thought a memory?	Q	
11	Mary	it's probably a memory of something I was doing at that time, or somebody I knew....	e	

12	Ken	mmhhmm...	bc	
13	Mary	so it's very distinct from a sort of just an abstract type picture...	e	↗
14	Joyce	so is it picture or is it a perception?	Q	↗
15	Ken	or is it a video?	Q	↗

This passage illustrates a very rapid development of ideas and interthinking.



**Fig 12** Interthinking

This extract seems to indicate a growing understanding of the purpose of enquiry and it shows a rapid development of ideas indicating lines of flight. I have tried to capture this movement above. As the 'long conversation' of enquiry develops the rhizome develops. Ideas and thoughts, perceptions and perspectives, return and re-emerge. Ken asks two questions at line 5 setting off two lines of flight, these aren't taken up at this point and at line 7 he starts a new line by introducing songs. Mary takes this in a new direction at line 8 to introduce memory which seems reinforced by others but Ken takes yet another line of flight at line 10 by asking a question. Joyce returns to the

original topic in line 14 and Ken takes a further line of flight in 15 by asking a question which introduces the idea of a video.

Sally then intervenes with a challenge:

16	Sally	if I, if I.....I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what.....I'll say something right...	S d
17	Mary	yes	bc
18	Sally	and you've got to think about it.... <i>don't</i> think of a blue banana	S
19	Mary	Right...	bc
20	Sally	how many of you have not now not got a picture of a blue banana in their head?	Q
21	Mary	oh, I've definitely got a blue banana, yes, yes.	bc
22	Sally	exactly. So to me, we <i>definitely</i> think in pictures because if you say ...	S
23	Mary Sally	[but that's conscious isn't it? .... [..... <i>don't</i> think about something..	Q
24	Sally	yeah	bc

This seems to interrupt the exploration temporarily, particularly since her summary is very assertive. The question is taken up again however, and Emma introduces a new idea which is not pursued, John also attempts to introduce a new idea with the same result. This again is reminiscent of Sidorkin's second stage which may involve people talking over one another as individuals bring themselves into the exchange.

Jill uses an example to illustrate her perception of a picture in a particular context:

25	Emma	it would depend on if someone knew what a banana was..	e	↗	
26	Jill	I think....	s		id
27	John	it's cross referencing isn't it?	Q	↗	
28	Jill	I think....	s		id
29	Jill	I think in pictures if I'm thinking if I'm telling someone what happened today, if I say ahh...I was at work and this happened. Or ermm.... if I'm discussing things that's previously happened and I'm telling someone else...but if I'm like saying 'ohh tomorrow – I've got this on , if I say <i>with</i> a colleague called Susan I've probably got a picture of Susan in my mind....in a way because that's...	S		id
30	Mary	but is it a picture?	Q		
31	Jill	I don't have...	s		id
32	Ken	or a series of pictures... a storyboard?	Q		
33	Jill	well I don't have... I don't have a storyboard if I'm thinking of  something that hasn't happened yet. I <i>know</i> that. I do have a picture of people I'm going to be with in my mind...who I'm discussing. But when I'm telling someone what happened.... I think I'm kind of replaying it in my mind like a little movie.... but not if I'm thinking ahead... if that makes sense?	S  e		
34	Mary	yes, yes, perfectly.	bc		
35	Ken	but are you not anticipating what might happen and....? Because it seems to me as though the way the conversation is going now is there's two elements of this ...there's the <i>reflective</i> element of it where you are going back over in history and here's the <i>forward</i> element where you are almost anticipating what's going to happen and what might happen and what could happen and knowing Sarah you know she's liable to blow up if mention that....her hair doesn't look nice today, so I don't mention that...	Q  e		
36	Jill	but I don't role play it in my head.... I don't kind of see it as ...	bc		id
37	Ken	no? even ... you might do it subconsciously...	Q		
38	Jill	I don't think that I do	bc		id

Mary questions Jill's perception and Ken tries to develop it and culminates in identifying two distinct strands in the thinking so far.

This is an interesting summation which reflects Bakhtin according to Tan Bee Tin, in that once an idea is uttered, it can stimulate the thinking process, '*making one think backward (reflect on old ideas); and think forward (generate new ideas)*'. This identification of the links between ideas helps us understand how we construct knowledge.

(2000:225)

However, Jill returns to her assertion that she does not envisage future situations and Ken's ideas are not pursued.

Sally then intervenes assertively which encourages Ken to develop his point:

39	Sally	I do, I do	S		id
40	Ken	yes because you're evaluating constantly	Bc		
41	Sally	I do ...because when you get somewhere and oh, it doesn't quite look how I thought it was going to look .....	s		id
42	Ken	expectation	bc	≡	
43	Sally	...or ermm it wasn't really the sort of night I thought it was going to be....	s		
44	Ken	yes	bc		
45	Sally	because you kind of.... in your head you're thinking	e		
46	Ken	yes	bc		
47	Sally	...about how it's going to be...maybe not consciously... subconsciously...	e		
48	Ken	yes I agree	bc		idk


As Ken supports and builds on Sally's contribution Mary attempts to return to her concern about the issues of consciousness in creating pictures, again posing a question. A number of questions follow quickly:

49	Mary	that's what I was sort of getting at... is it...we're not always conscious are we?	e		
----	------	--	---	--	--

50	Ann John	[it's imagination isn't it? [is it not though?	e e	
51	Mary	I don't know....	bc	
52	John	is it not though...	e	
53	Ann	your imagination's visual isn't it?	e	
54	John	is it not just a cross reference I mean....	e	
55	Sally	Yeah you're right...you cross reference different things....	bc	
56	John	...you know....if I'm sitting here thinking ...if I was suddenly to think 'I could murder a cup of coffee'.... I know what I was thinking in a word, but I could also taste it I can also see it...	S	
57	Others	[yes [yes		
58	Mary	but if you <i>want</i> to, you don't necessarily need to visualise the coffee do you?	e ↗	
59	John	I don't think you consciously say 'oh lets picture that cup of coffee' that's a different thing altogether...It's like you said something had happened at work and last night my son fell off his bike and just then I thought 'oh crikey' 'cos I forgot to get the tyre today and the picture came in my mind of him crying as he's coming up the drive so it was just a reinforcement but I didn't consciously see .... I didn't physically, consciously see... is it not a cross reference and its like the filing cabinet and you're just pulling out bits and putting them together so you're actually thinking of a picture as a picture.	↗	
60	Emma Sally	[yeah [mmmmm	bc	
61	Ken	I think it's more than that...it's a sense	↗	
62	John	it's several things coming together as a cross reference to get a final answer. Because if you thought of everything as a picture like a computer you'd be overloaded in a week.	S	

John finally manages to open up the issue of cross referencing and uses an example to illustrate his point. Ken suggests there is more to the issue than cross referencing facts and moves the enquiry on by an illustration and a question:

63	Ken	mmhmm but have you seen that advert we talked about, the guy wandering through a forest and he's taking photographs....I look at you now I've taken a photograph...	Q e	↗
----	-----	---	--------	---

		and he's dropping photographs... is life not like that?		
64	Jill Sally	[yeah it's for the Kodak printer isn't it? [yeah, very true	bc	
65	Ken	and we take x million pictures a day ....and it's all stored up there so in effect we're very similar to computers in that .....	S	
66	Sally Ken	[we file things away [we file things away	bc	
67	John	and you recall it...when	bc	
68	Ken	it's more than just pictures its senses, sounds, smells...		
69	John	yes I think it's a multitude of things	bc	
70	Sally	And the files are shared by all the different things that are going on...		
71	John	but in having said that you do have the ability to close your eyes to recall a vivid picture, a clear picture you can do that, don't do that every time of the day	S	
72	Joyce	[what you said there then.....	e	
73	Jill John	[unless its traumatic [no, no I don't think it is just reflective		iddk
74	Sally	no I think it's ongoing		idk
75	Emma	no because		
76	Sally	no		
77	John	If I'm doing the lighting for a show here sometimes I'm sitting at home and I'm thinking 'what am I going to do?' and I can picture the coloured lights and if it put that there and I can actually picture the coloured lights coming on and I think 'oh that's a good idea if I did it that way'... so I think it's future as well.	s	
78	Jill	I can if I think about it if I'm trying to plan something ...'right I'm in the task room tomorrow' and I can picture it but if I was just chatting as in a normal...maybe I do it subconsciously if I just said 'oh tomorrow I've got such and such in a class' I wouldn't be trying to picture it because I wouldn't be thinking about it in that much detail	S	
79	Ann	inaudible		
80	Sally	yeah	bc	

Joyce then offers an imaginative perspective which is blocked by an intervention from Tina which stops the process of exploration:

81	Joyce	you can then use a picture as a sort of a mind map in your planning you've got the actual picture but then you've got all these ideas branching off it that link in to the picture they are going to become part of it they are gonna... you know.. help the whole thing flow ..so it ...it then means the picture itself that you had becomes a mind map	e	
----	-------	---	---	--



		because of all these things coming off it...		
82	Tina	I teach at XXXXX on a Friday I mean I know what the office looks like I've worked there long enough... and I walked in thought whoa! ...what's happened? Because it's all changed it's not the picture I had in my mind about where I was going to sit or the computer I was going to work at....	S d	
83	Ken	so you had expectations	e	
84	Tina	uhuh and I walked in and it just wasn't like that at all.	s	
85	Joyce	mmhmm	bc	

[...]

86	Christine	are the pictures ever wrong?	Q	
87	Sally	yeah	bc	
88	John	Oh yeah	bc	
89	Jill	yeah because if you're talking about the future ones they're not necessarily correct because it hasn't happened yet and you're imagining what it's going to be like	s	
90	Ken	based on previous pictures though....	e	

(Over talking at this stage makes transcription impossible and some dialogue is lost.)

91	Ken	but you've got that expectation...just for example if Sally invites me to her house ...I can imagine what Sally's house will be like based on what I believe Sally to have now	s	
92	Jill	but that's not on a previous picture of that place	bc	idk
93	Ken	but is a perception based on what I know about Sally already	s	idk
94	Jill	but it's not based on a picture, on a real picture	bc	idk
95	Ann John	[it's just what you imagine [it's just what you imagine though	bc bc	lck ick
96	Ken	but I'm building the picture based on what I know, that's what I'm saying	s	
97	Sally	you can have a picture in your mind of what it's <i>going to be</i>	bc	
98	Ken	yes	bc	
99	Jill	it's based on imagination though it's picture of what's it's <i>going to be</i>	bc	
100	Ken	yes	bc	
101	Jill	yeah but it's not what we were talking about before about your picturing something that you've seen ....you're building a picture in your head aren't you?	bc	idk
102	Ken	I'm still constructing a picture though.	bc	idk
103	Jill	oh yes	bc	

In this interesting exchange Ken and Jill are at odds in their interpretation of how a 'picture' is generated. Whilst Ken appears to believe it can be generated from a variety of knowledge sources, Jill sees it as based on memory or previous experience.

Following what seems to be their agreement Mary moves on:

103	Mary	do you not find if the same people witness an accident.....	Q	
104	Emma	yeah	bc	
105	Jill	they see it all different ways...	bc	☐
106	Mary	.....every perspective will be different	bc	
107	Emma	and some things you don't even remember	bc	
108	Sally other	Yes yes	bc	
109	Mary	why is that?	Q	
110	John	it's like a rally driver	e	
111	Ann	Is it not just your brain ....your brain (inaudible) you're in shock	e	

112	Joyce	it's your assessment of what's important to you	e	↗
		mmhhmm	bc	
113	Ann	what about when you've spoken to people on the phone and then you meet that person you get such a shock you think gosh that person doesn't look anything like how I imagined them	e	
114	Ken	they don't look anything like you think they look	bc	
115	Sally	and radio presenters....the radio presenter is a classic one . Stephen Cowan I used to listen to him on the radio every day and I used to think oh I bet Steve he's really quite ... you know ...quite...	S	
116	Ken	so you built a picture based on your perception	bc	
117	Sally	...and I was gutted when I saw him because he wasn't attractive at all	S	
118	Joyce	I did that with (inaudible) from radio 1 I thought he was going to be gorgeous	S	
129	Ken	why?	Q	
120	Sally	it's funny isn't it the way you build this...because he had a lovely personality and voice	S	
121	Ken	so the voice, personality led you to make some decisions, and based on those decisions you built a picture	e	
122	Sally	mmmm yes	bc	
123	Jill	I still think you build a picture they're just different because	S	ick

it's just ...not reflective based on real...something real that you've seen.

124 Ken no, that's right bc idk

125 Jill yeah. bc

126 Joyce and that's like the same as the picture you are building of Sally's house? e

127 Ken mmhmm absolutely....big mansion....jacuzzi bc

128 Sally it is not! Have you seen it? It's the same as hers.... bc  
Exactly the same (indicating Joyce)

Laughter

In line 113 Ann shifts focus to envisaging people rather than experiencing situations. This provides Ken with the opportunity to return to his previous dispute with Jill which the use of humour diffuses. Again Sidorkin's theory of three discourses is illustrated here. There was no acrimony in these exchanges but very clearly an intriguing difference in understanding.

129	Christine	So what's the answer to the question 'do we think in pictures'?	Q	
130	Sally	Yeah	bc	
131	Jill	Yes	bc	
132	Emma	yeah	bc	
133	Mary	sometimes	e	
133	John	a type of pictures	bc	
135	Emma	yeah, a type of pictures	bc	
136	Christine	[what was the sometimes?	Q	
137	Ken	[when don't you then?	Q	
138	Mary	consciously I suppose. Well when you've got your eyes open you're seeing things so therefore you're not really....	e	
139	Ken	creating pictures	bc	
140	Mary	....you're seeing things so you're not really thinking in pictures remembering them..	e	
141	Ken	creating pictures	bc	
142	Jill	so at the time, I'm looking round this room if I even although I am involved in this conversation (inaudible due to coughing) what will I have for tea? Are you picturing this room now....	e	
143	Ken	yes	bc	
144	Jill	or are you picturing the plate of food? That's what I think about when I'm thinking about what I'll have for tea later. I might see it in my head but until I consciously go 'ooh imagine that plate	e	

		full of food', I don't see the plate full of food do you get what I mean?		
145	Jill	I don't know whether that's just me everybody might be different	e	idk
146	Others[ Ken	[You've got to concentrate on [When we go out of the room tonight we'll be able to think about where everyone was in the room [if you go out the room and try to remember three things that were in the room		
147	Mary	I mean the title of this book, when I read it I picture the jacket with the dog and the spade and everything	s	
148	Emma	yes	bc	
149	Ken	I don't think you can no	e	idk
150	Mary	but that was very conscious because I recognised it	e	ick
151	Emma	mmmm, yes	bc	
152	John	you cannot, <i>not</i> think in pictures because I'm looking at you and I've got a picture	S	
153	Sally	yeah	bc	
154	John	so there's a picture there if I shut my eyes you know and thought...	e	
155	Ken	you've got no clothes on!	bc	
Laughter				
156	John	... so I don't think you can <i>not</i> think in pictures. Because I think you're taking a picture in.....		↗
157	Jill	but what if you think about something else while looking at Ma	Q	
158	Mary John Mary John	[well is that a bit like screening? [we all do that how many times.. [screen [how many times have you sat at meetings, or lectures	e	
159	Mary	yes and in your mind....	bc	
160	John	and you're looking quite intent but really you're thinking 'I'm go go down there tonight and I'm going to do this....'	e	
161	Jill	that's exactly what I was just saying if you're daydreaming.....	e	
162	Tina	but your shopping list... how many times are you walking round Tesco and you walk round the shop with your list don't you ...and then you start your shopping	e	
163	Ken	here's another one then how many people sing in their heads?	Q	↗
164	Joyce Mary	[oh, all the time [yes, yeah	bc	
165	Ken	but there's no pictures.....	e	
166	Emma	yeah but there's .....	e	
167	Ken	....and I suppose you're thinking ...but I'm singing I'm singing in my head now but there's no pictures there	S	ick
168	Ann	maybe you associate picture with that song though.... like....	e	
169	Ken	not necessarily..... I'm singing a song now		ick
170	Ann	you think about Christmas don't you?	Q	↗

171	Ken	you select the song	S	
		...pictures		

[...]

172	Ken	so are we saying here just ...or are we saying it's a combination of feelings, pictures, err senses and emotions?	e	
173	Emma Joyce Sally	[Yeah [Mmhhmm [yeah	bc	
174	Ann	yes your senses build the picture	e	
175	Sally	like you used your sense to ..you were saying you know you kind of built a picture of what my house was like....because you	e	
176	Ken	it's a party house	s	
177	Sally	because you...you know...ermm but if you think about what the tools that you use to be able to build that picture	e	
178	Ken	yeah	bc	
179	Sally	you know you've used all your senses your sight and	e	
180	John	but he's made that picture up not having seen your house and he did it from past experiences for other...	bc	
181	Sally	absolutely	bc	I n t e r
182	Other	yes	bc	
183	John	so it's not a total new concept	bc	
184	Sally	no	bc	
185	Mary	because he knows what a house looks like...	bc	
186	Other	yes	bc	
187	Christine	there's still a lot of assumptions there?	Q	
188	John	yes... but they're all out of the library	e	
189	Ken	yes	bc	
190	John	it's like I'm using an autocad to build a house I'm picking a door up and oh it's going to be red or blue and I'm picking the windows up...		↗
191	Sally	yeah, yeah	Bc	
192	John	...it's nothing new	Bc	
193	Ken	so we add past experiences into that bundle we've just talked about	e	
194	Sally	yeah, yeah	bc	

The second enquiry indicates that the group are engaging with the topics and the process of enquiry. There is evidence of links being

made between enquiries and other activities, and there are also examples of opposing perspectives.

Lipman believes inquiry is concerned with the empowerment of participants taking confidence in their own thinking and the process of its development. Thinking which '*skilful and deliberate, employs relevant criteria and is sensitive to context.*' (Lipman 2003:5)

### **Enquiry 3**

The third enquiry used an extract from Sidorkin as the stimulus. This was the most difficult passage the group had encountered so far and I used it to stimulate enquiry into conflicting perspectives and the concept of dialogical exploration. Again I had in mind the development of higher order thinking skills.




**Every voice within me has its own position, and can develop a convincing worldview, if only allowed to express itself. All these voices should be treated with respect; and all of them are equally authentic. When I live my life I should never make a final decision about which part of me is right and which part is wrong. I must keep my many voices alive and ready for interactions in the context of a unique occurrence. Some voices may merge, some whither, and some further split into yet more voices. But if my internal chorus is reduced to just one voice, there is no more self, and what remains is but a sterile dogma. In different situations one or another of my voices may be the most convincing, which helps me to make a decision when necessary. But this does not hold the most convincing voice in a privileged position forever. No person is always right or always wrong; there are no absolutely good or absolutely evil people. The**





**same holds true for the parts of myself I call my voices. Making a moral decision is the point of such a dialogical encounter that involves a mixture of the inner voices of myself and the outer voices of other individuals. I need the multiplicity of strong internal voices capable of disagreeing with each other. In fact, I have to cherish these contradictions and inconsistencies, for they are necessary for maintaining my internal dialogues.**

**Alexander Sidorkin**

The question chosen was *'are all the voices we hear our own?'*

(Unfortunately the beginning of the recording is inaudible.)

1	Jill	but it's our voice really....	e	
2	Sally	but		
3	Jill	it's always our voice that we hear	s	
4	Sally	but, but we <i>draw</i> on experiences of hearing other voices, so you draw on the experience of what other people have said to you, and how they've said it and then how you then perceive them to .....react to it. So you do...I think it might be your voice but I think you draw on experiences to create that role play .... in your head.	e	
5	Irene	...to what you expect them to say or do	e	
6	Sally	yeah	bc	
7	Matt	it's says there about one voice. I'm not sure whether it's meant to be one voice or one .... <i>type</i> of voice because we were talking about extremes earlier on (indicating Mary) I was just thinking about people like Adolf Hitler listening to one type of voice ... so they couldn't make reasoned judgements ...	e	
8	Sally	which is....	bc	
9	Matt	...they just constantly listened to one type of voice... Frederick the Great, Wagner whatever it was..	e	
10	Sally	which is....	bc	
11		Yeah	bc	
12	Matt	...and the only voice they listened to ...whatever it was it was giving one viewpoint all the time and that was the only voice they listened to.	e	
13	Sally	Yeah which is why I wonder if <i>bad</i> people...		
14	Matt	Are receptive to one type of .....	bc	
15	Jill	Mind in saying that, as we've said before, maybe they did hear another voice but one is so much more <i>dominant</i> than the other.	e	

Murmurs of agreement			bc	
16	Jill	ermm and they're putting their ...they can hear that view stronger ... I just think...	e	
17	Jill	if you're making a decision...It's bit like having a debate or an argument in your head and the other one is giving a rubbish way of looking at...	e	
18	Ken	it's about balance...that's all it is	s	
19	Sally	yes it definitely is...the balance of the scales	bc	
20	Ken	...that's all it is	bc	
21	Jill	the bad person, or people who are making bad decisions could hear more than one voice it's just that one is made more dominant than the others or in <i>their</i> mind is making more sense	e	
22	Sylvia	is making more sense then the other, yeah	e	
23	Joyce	it's a one way process isn't it?	e	
Murmurs of agreement			bc	
24	Sylvia	Or they <i>want it</i> to make more sense		
25	Jill	yeah, yeah, your decision, at the end of the day you're really gonna go with... you can ...make a decision yourself and your emotions will help make that ....and help you see that..	e	
26	Sylvia	but sometimes you know the decision you're going to make but you <u>still</u> have that little argument with yourself even though you know which way you're going to go	e	
27	Jill	or it might be that you're trying to justify it	e	
Laughter and general agreement				
28	Sally	a lot of the time that's <i>exactly</i> what it is...you're trying to justify the decision that you've made	e	
29	Jill	even though it's wrong you might be trying to just sort of.... justify it	e	
		Yeah Brief pause	bc	
30	Mary	yeah we talked quite a bit about good and evil didn't we? (turning to Matt)	s	
31	Matt	Yeah	bc	
32	Sylvia	yeah, cos it does make you wonder ...you know if there's two devils to one angel in a bad person or... two angels to one devil....	e	
33	Mary	we also got on to <i>defining</i> evil. Because as Matt said here 500 years ago ... ermm some of things that happened then we would be absolutely appalled by or...	s	
34	Sally	but they were the norm then	bc	
35	Mary	well and the other thing... (Mary turns to Matt) ..and what was it you said?	Sc/d	
36	Matt	and the other way around wasn't it? Things that happened 500	S	




		years ago that we consider quite normal now ....		
	Others	mhmh	bc	
37	Mary	they would ban people you know	s	
38	Matt	They would ban burn people at the stake	S	
39	Joyce	a lot of that was ignorance though	bc	
40	Matt	There's still a lot now	bc	
		{Yeah {Yeah	bc	
41	Mary	but what sort of inner dialogue did they have?	Q e	
42	Matt	yeah	bc	

[...]

This is the most challenging question the group have tackled so far and is one which they remember and reflect on later. (data set 1) It's interesting to observe that there is less reliance on anecdote in favour of trying to explore meanings and 'realities.' There is a discernible move towards enquiry becoming ontological as they start to explore the idea of being and the nature of humanity.

43	Jill	it's their religion as well though....	S	
44	Sally	It is	bc	
45	Jill	because they might not see death as the end though	bc	↗
46	Sally	well it is, but it's also about desensitisation as well ....	es	↗
47	Ken	possibly	bc	
48	Sally	.....though, which is why they reckoned that these kids that Watch the horror movies, they reckoned that they were the boys who murdered Jamie Bulger		↗
49	Sylvia	they had no concept had they?	e	
50	Sally	They had no concept because they were desensitised to the horror of it and that's what they think ...that's where all this comes from..	s	↗
51	Ken	is it not a case of....	e	
52	Sally	and it's about desensitisation so do those voices <i>change</i> based on your experiences?	Q	
53	Ken	yes, yes.	bc	

54	Ken	yes I don't think,... I do think that desensitise ...what you said ...has an impact....that's only because of their past experiences....and their ability to ... you know put in order and decide what is right and what is wrong they can decide what's right and wrong... having that inner voice...they haven't got the knowledge or they haven't got the emotional support, they haven't got anything to support the correct decision.	e	
55	Jill	no and if we're saying...	e	
56	Sally	but that's being desensitised	e	
57	Ken	I think it's an impact but one of the impacts	e	
58	Jill	if you've had a bad influence all your life all the time and you think that's the norm, how they behave is the norm then when we're saying in <i>our</i> opinion of what's good and evil or what's right and wrong in the little voices that you play its going to be totally different.	s	
59	Sylvia	there might not be two little voices though because that's the norm	e	
60	Sally	exactly it's like these people who have been kidnapped isn't it and they've been kept for years and they grow an attachment to their kidnappers	e	
61	Sylvia	Stockholm syndrome	bc	
62	Sally	absolutely 'til those little voices in your head are saying that's	e	
63	Ken	that's all part...	e	
64	Mary	but they may actually know it's wrong but its emotional..	e	
65	Sylvia	And they've got a dependency thing.....	e	
66	Jill	But do you not think if you read this and I've never read Anything this persons written ever but I think he picked certain words. He didn't have to use the certain words that he did, but he picked words that are very like emotive or provocative of things like some words he adds in you could take out of the sentence I would say that you could take out the words and the sentence would still make sense. It wouldn't perhaps make you think as much or make you have the reaction that you have. But he's put, you could just say there is no good or evil, he says there is absolutely, sorry there are ...no <i>absolutely</i> good or evil people'	e	
67	Mary	Yeah, yeah	bc	
68	Jill	And he just uses words...	bc	
69	Sylvia	making a moral decision	bc	
70	Jill	....and he's added in moral and always just uses words that are really sort of emotive or provocative all the way through	S	
71	Ken	It's almost wanting you to make conscious judgements	e	
72		whether its right or wrong. Pushing you to..	e	
73	Christine	I think,....I'm not sure that's quite right there. ' <i>no person is absolutely right or wrong, no absolute good or evil.</i> ' Now you could say, you were just saying about the Bulger case, people said they are <i>absolutely</i> evil, they are	e	

		<i>irredeemably</i> evil		
74	Ken	the act was	S	
75	Christine	right. That's what he's saying, can you...he's saying really there isn't	e	
76	Ken	in their minds	e	
77	Others	{Its not absolute, yes {Its not black or white	e	
78	Christine	Because if you do deal in absolutes, there's nowhere to go	S	
79	Ken	yes	bc	
80	Mary	you can't go back on it	bc	
81	Christine	well you can't go <i>forward</i>	S	
82	Ken	but in their minds they may not have seen that as evil. It might have been a game. In their inner voice.	e	
83	Christine	so I think when...this is interesting the way this is going, because if when you look at words like absolute, you have to think about what he is saying in a particular context which isn't.. You have to think about context.	e	
84	Ken	She's right	S	
85	Christine	If you said to me 'are you going to do this thing tomorrow?' and I said <i>absolutely not</i> , that's a decisive thing, but what he's saying is be careful of absolutes.	S	
86	Jill others	Yeah Yeah	bc	
87	Christine	because if you start to say absolute good and absolute evil, or absolute right or wrong, then you're actually... his argument I think is.....dismissing aspects of personality that's in everyone, because we're all tempted to do bad things	S e	
88		{Yes {Yes	bc	
89	Sylvia	that's what I mean can you have anybody who is <i>absolutely</i> evil?	Q	
90	Ken	no	bc	
91	Matt	even Hitler liked his dogs	S	
92	Sylvia	you can't say that anybody is absolutely you know doused in evil	S	
93	Ken	is it not a case that their acts are driven by this voice?	Q	
94	Mary	well who knows?	Bc	
95	Tina	in the mind of the mother of Jamie Bulger they will be <i>absolutely</i> evil because she won't be able to reason that. Her voices won't be able to reason that	S	
96	Mary	no, no	bc	
97	Sally	there is a unit in St. Nick's and they call it the 'mad or bad' unit because they don't know whether they are mad or just bad.	S	
Pause				
98	Mary	how do you tell the difference?	Q	
Mmmm				
99	Mary	is it because what they do could be interpreted by us by	e	

		us as <i>bad</i> ?		
100	Sally	or mad?	e	
101	Mary	exactly	bc	
102	Sylvia	and what they want you to believe as well	e	
103	Mary	and it's just labels isn't it? To help us...	e	
[...]				
104	Mary	I was explaining to Matt while I was explaining something I had an inner dialogue going on at the same time....what should I say	e	
105	Sally	thinking ahead	e	I n t e r
106	Ken	that's still your voice though isn't it?	e	
107	Sylvia	but that's planning again isn't it?	e	
108	Ken	rationalising	e	
109	Mary	but I suddenly became very aware of it.	S	
Murmurs of agreement				
110	Tina	we're all going to be lying in bed tonight not being able to go to sleep listening for inner voices.	S	
Laughter				
111	Jill	yes, and when your.. do you ever get that when you can't go to sleep because your mind is overactive?	Q	
112	Other	....your mind is overactive	bc	
113	Jill	yes, when I have a lot on my mind and I'm lying in bed and I want to go to sleep but I'm not falling asleep and I'm thinking I've got to do this and I've got to do that, I suppose in a way that's little voice I tend to..	S	
114	Ken	hang on you said little voices – that means there's more than one	e	
115	Jill	well no, just my little voice going on and on.	e	
Laughter				
116	Ken	what are you doing when you are going on and on and on?	e	I n t e r
117	Jill	rambling in me head	S	
118	Ken	rambling	bc	
119	Mary	trying to order things	e	
120	Jill	yeah I'm trying to organise things	e	
121	Ken	you're making decisions aren't you? You're evaluating, planning	e	
122	Jill	planning, definitely I'm trying to plan	e	
123	Tina	organising	e	
124	Jill	well I'm trying to	e	
[...]				
125	Christine	so what's the answer to the question then? <i>'Is the only voice you hear your own'?</i>	Q	

126	Ken	yes	bc	
127	Others	Yes Yes	bc	
128	Christine	any dissenters	Q	
129	Matt	mmhmm I still think that I use other peoples' beliefs to..	e	
130	Sally	yes, you do, but you might not actually physically hear what they have said.	bc	
131	Matt	so if I was thinking at the moment erhm in my head, something to say, and I'm thinking of the people around this room, I'm judging what I'm going to say on what I know of you already, so that is the upper voice coming back at me. Because I wouldn't say anything I thought was inappropriate. But I could be down the pub with a group of friends and I'm sitting there thinking 'can I tell this joke now?; and I would think 'yes, they can take it' so that's the voice that's coming back at me it's not just my voice, I'm using your ... once again it's a metaphor it's not your voices it's what I know of you ...	e	ick
132	Sally	yeah, yeah	bc	
133	Matt	.....reflecting back at me	e	
134	Sally	but it's what <i>you</i> know of us	bc	
135	Ken	your rationalising and evaluating	e	
136	Matt	possibly	bc	
137	Jill	I get that...what if you're reflecting? Then can you hear that pe voice?	Q e	
138	Sally	If it's a memory, a memory, then I think you can. I think you ca hear that voice.	S	
139	Jill	I think mainly you hear your own voice, but I do reflect on conversations ' <i>oh I should have said this</i> ' and ' <i>I should have</i> ' b I'll hear exactly what they said in their voice. But that's normally a <i>reflection</i> I agree with what you said if yo planning the next day it's your voice prevailing there	e	
Murmurs of agre				
140	Sylvia	cos it's happened hasn't it? you look back cos it's happened s rerun it	e	
141	Ken	Remember the pictures from last week?	Q	
142	Ken	it's your opinion almost right or wrong	bc	
143	Sally	it is because there are time when I've thought I've remembere things and someone says that's not how it happened it was thi way and I think yeah they're absolutely right and I have remembered it wrong	e	
144	Sylvia	In the way that you wanted it to happen	bc	
145	Ken	it's for example how do you see yourself? Do you see yoursel skin and bones? Or do you see yourself as or are you going in the conscious, the opinion, the individual in the ...do you know what I mean? The individual because, we're not just skin and I are we? We know that.	Q e	
146	Tina	No it's the bits inside	bc	
147	Ken	it's the bits inside... so the voices are your head, your heart,	S	

		experiences, I don't know... I think it's more...I still think it's yo it's what makes you <i>you</i>		
--	--	--	--	--

I made a decision to intervene (at line 73) because I felt that Jill was beginning to misinterpret the text. Therefore I made a tentative suggestion which I tried to express as an opinion. I hoped that by this time the group were comfortable with enquiry as a collaborative rather than a 'tutor led' process which would allow me to make a contribution as part of the group. I felt justified in this by Ken's remark at line 84.

The 'dialogic threads' which existed in the last enquiry can be seen re-emerging at lines 121. There is reference to rationalising, planning and reflecting all of which were discussed in enquiry 2. There are also examples of interthinking as contributions build on one another.

In the last section the group have started to explore the concept of multiple identities which moves towards developing an ontological perspective.

148	Ken	no I agree. But every day you're different. Something else happens that puts something else in your mind and influences your decision making process.	e	
149	Christine	and that's what he means by context. Because as Matt says quite rightly he's a different man in the pub with his mates than he is here, and than he is in his job	e	
150	Mary	and you change with your friends	e	

152	Christine	so, are we still agreed that it's only one voice apart from Matt who's got his own voices	Q	
153	Matt	and I'll be taking the tablets again	bc	
laughter				
154	Jill	I still say I hear other people	S	
155	Christine	right so that's two	bc	
156	Ken	is it external though or is it not you mimicking and reclaiming what other people said?	Q	
157	Jill	I've said that a lot of its reflection and I'm hearing it again what other people said, but I hear it as if they actually said it.	S	
158	Ken	did you say you hear voices that you don't know where they are coming from?	Q	
159	Jill	no I know here they're coming from when I hear them	S	
160	Matt	it's a sum of all your experiences whether conscious or unconscious. Yes I'll probably hear voices that I think they are coming for the left field or the right field and it's just a sum of all my experiences.	e	
161	Jill	I think everybody does it differently dependant on what experiences you have, what perspectives you've got and how your brain works.	e	
162	Mary	it's my voice I hear but not necessarily my words		↗ ick
163	Ken	that's interesting	bc	
164	Christine	it <i>is</i> interesting	bc	
165	Mary	its other perspectives I argue with myself about things you know 'don't do that because its silly' but it's my voice but they're phrases and expressions obviously I've heard in arguments or I've used in arguments	e	
166	Tina	you've heard on the news or the telly	bc	
167	Mary	yes, but to me it's my voice I hear, but not necessarily my words	S	↗
Pause				
168	Mary	perhaps I'm not very imaginative...or just tuned into one channel	bc	ick
169	Sally	it's right brain and left brain isn't it?	bc	
170	Mary	we mentioned, well Matt mentioned, Alan Sugar and Simon Cowell as being very sort of...	e	
171	Matt	single minded	bc	
172	Mary	single minded there's no grey areas, its very black and white, and what sort of inner dialogue they have... because they seem very focused and not open to...	e	
173	Jill	they give a quick answer don't they?	bc	
174	Mary	yeah and I'm fascinated by people like that because I stand back and reflect.	bc	
175	Ken	mmhmm	bc	

Mary's profound observation at line 162 is a line of flight which is not pursued, but leads to further reflection. The development of

the enquiries seems demonstrate a growing engagement with ontological concepts.

*'the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousnesses around the given object or an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.'* (Bakhtin 1981:276)

The last extract also illustrates Wergerif's view on dialogic versus dialectic:

*'From a dialogic perspective the difference between voices in dialogue is constitutive of meaning in such a way that it makes no sense to imagine 'overcoming' this difference. By contrast, due to the implicit assumption that meaning is ultimately grounded on identity rather than upon difference, the dialectic perspective applied by Vygotsky interprets differences as 'contradictions' that need to be overcome or transcended.'* (ibid)

The examination of meanings is explored without a 'conclusion' nor do the group appear to need one. Ideas emerge and submerge to emerge later illustrating also I believe the rhizomatic nature of enquiry.



## **Enquiry 4**

This session did not follow the usual format of a community of enquiry. It was based on an activity I use to introduce a module on teaching, learning and assessment in which I invite learners to select metaphors which they feel best represent their approach to teaching.

I felt justified in including it in my data since it takes the form of an enquiry using the activity as a stimulus and exploring metaphors. I have referred to myself as 'tutor' rather than Christine in transcription to indicate the difference in role since I was more interventionist in inviting contributions from each participant. It also presented me with the opportunity to develop more depth in my analysis by coding incidents of 'identity congruence'. (see key below)

I have also attempted to identify 'lines of flight' which encounter interruptions in the form of incidents of critical literacy and/or identity congruence.

**As a teacher I see myself as.....**

**A petrol pump attendant** – I fill my learners with refined knowledge delivered by tankers’

**A parent bird** – I regurgitate knowledge into digestible chunks for my ‘chicks’ to digest.

**A lion tamer** – I train my learners to learn and achieve.

**A sculptor** – I mould my learner lumps of clay into the desired shape.

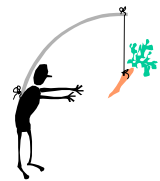
**A watchmaker** – I construct the finished product from a variety of parts.

**A gardener** – I plant the seeds and the learners grow themselves.

**A sherpa**– I act as a knowledgeable guide to take explorers through unfamiliar terrain.

**A chef** – combining ingredients to create a result.

**A tap** – dripping information into sponges.



**Which of these most closely resembles how you see your role?**

**What views of learning and learners does each suggest?**

**What would you like to be ideally?**

**What prevents you?**



**Can you think of any alternative metaphors which are more appropriate?**

### Extract from Enquiry 4

1	Tutor	right who'd like to start then?	Q		
2	Sally	when I did this I looked at it and I thought I'd like to be, ermm ..I'd like to <i>think</i> that I am a <u>s</u> herpa	S	↗	id
3	Tutor	right.	bc		
4	Sally	ermm .... and I'd like to be a lion tamer	s	↗	id
5		Pause			
6	Tutor	what attracts you to those then, because they are quite different, a guide and a trainer is a bit different isn't it?	Q		
7		Murmurs of agreement	bc		
8	Sally	mmm yeah...	bc		
9	Ken	you see that goes back to that cartoon about the dog, have you seen that? Where you train the dog to whistle and he says so why isn't he whistling, and he says he learned but he didn't ... no he ...I taught him it but he didn't learn	e	↗	
10	Tutor	snoopy	bc		
11	Ken	yeah that's it. Because training's...I think it's a little bit different from learning, or ...do you think so or not?	e		iddk
12	Sally	no it's not, I think... I think, well it depends...ermm I think, I like to think that we allow people to explore; which is why I like the sherpa.	S Sc/q	↗	iddk
13	Tutor	Yes I can see that	bc		ick
14	Sally	and we allow people to explore themselves and use their own...ermm and we are just there to guide them through unfamiliar terrain....and as they go they learn	e	↗	id
15	Ken	mmhmm, mhhmm	bc		
16	Sally	ermm and actually I think the lion tamer I think fits in with that because you then, you then...by doing that you're training them to learn... by giving them their own...their ability to think for themselves. You are a guide, very much like yourself (directed towards tutor), you guide us through ermm but we have to make the decisions, we have to choose the right path, if you like, or choose the...you know, which boulders to climb over, if you like.	s		id
17	Mary	I think a lion tamer sounds too harsh	d		idd s/k
18		Murmurs of agreement	bc		ics/k
19	Mary	if you think it's a whip; it's very much a control isn't it? behaviourist type of....	Q	↗	idd/s
20		Murmurs of agreement	bc		ics/k
21	Sally	It is, but actually it's not about, it's not about that bit though it's about...it's not about...	sc		Idd s/k
22	Mary	if you're looking at the metaphor, the lion trainer, you see I wouldn't see you as that...	s	↗	Idd/s

23		Murmurs of agreement	bc		ids
24	Sally	no you see I'm not looking at the metaphor at all...	d	↗	idd s/k
25	Mary	ah, well, I thought...	bc		
26	Sally	it's not about being a lion tamer, it's about training them to learn and achieve.	sc	↗	id
27	Mary	ah you see I don't think you can train people to learn ...and achieve...	d	↗	idd s/k
28		Murmurs of agreement	bc	i	
29	Sally	well you see I do....	d	↗	idd
30	Mary	...you've got to motivate them.	d		id
31	Sally	but that's all part of it though isn't it?	d		id
32	Mary	I think it's two completely separate.... things	d		iddk
33	Sally	you see I think by training them then you <i>can</i> motivate them to learn, and teach them to learn	st		id
34	Mary	but I think to train is a very...you can't really define that can you? .... I think though...	e	↗	iddk
35		Inaudible asides agreeing with Mary's point	bc		idk
36	Mary	....that's what I mean the behaviourist type thing	bc		id
37	Sally	mmhhmm but I think that's where it starts though, because once you learn those behaviours...it was like us reading, reading...all of the.....	e		id
38	Mary	but we were motivated to, weren't we?	e		ics
39	Sally	...reading, all of the articles...			
40	Emma	yeah	bc		ics
41	Sally	but you were still... training and motivation is the same thing	st	↗	idd k/s
42	Mary	I don't think it is, I don't think it is	s		iddk
43	Sally	but training <i>can</i> be motivational. Without a doubt.	s		id
44	Mary	some of it yes, but I don't think it's something you can lump all together.	sc		
45	Sally	mmmm... I disagree	s		idk

Sally starts by selecting a surprising combination of metaphors. I believe the pause following her selection is important. It signified surprise. The group by this time are comfortable with one another and have begun to know one another well. Sally's 'image' doesn't fit with her choice. I expressed this surprise using a question. Ken then uses an illustration from a cartoon to explain his perception of training as

opposed to guiding. Sally refutes this. It seemed clear to me that this was an incidence of identity 'discongruence'. Sally became defensive of her choice as Mary supports Ken and expresses her own view of Sally, despite further discussion however, Sally maintains her perspective.

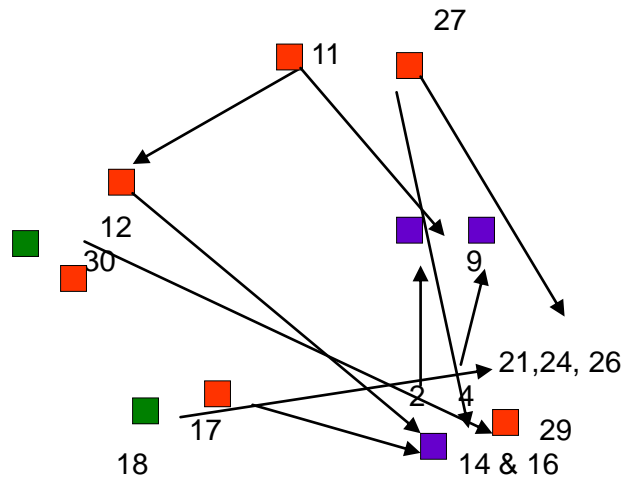
I have tried to capture the movement of the enquiry and the irruptions of identity discongruence rhizomatically below (see Figure 12). To avoid over-complexity and difficulty in reading the rhizome I have not included every utterance in the representation but sufficient I hope to indicate the movement and irruptions which occur.

At line 2 Sally makes an identity statement by selecting a metaphor which describes her pedagogical approach. This is signified by a purple box, she adds a further self identifying metaphor at line 4 also signified by a purple box, the imagery of these metaphors however seems to be inconsistent. Since this second choice is expressed as a wish it can also be seen as a line of flight which takes the enquiry into the direction of how people learn. Ken adds a further line of flight at line 9 in which he uses the example of a cartoon to suggest that training doesn't automatically lead to learning. He expresses this view more clearly at line 11 but in a questioning manner which allows Sally

to disagree firmly with him and elaborate further on the reason for her choice at line 12 and 14. The red boxes marked 11 and 12 signify this discongruence, and at 14 and 16 Sally returns to her metaphors with an identity statement designed to clarify her perspective.

At line 17 Mary makes a short clear statement which is supported by the rest of the group indicating identity congruence and signified by the green box. However her statement again leads to a discongruence which she reinforces at 19 and 22. Sally tries to recover her position by distancing herself from the metaphors and at 21, 24 and 26 attempts to describe her view of learning. The line of flight is back towards the original metaphors she chose. Mary's disagreement at line 27 is further identity discongruence and the arrow heads back towards Ken's comment on training and learning at 11.

At 29 Sally again firmly disagrees signifying further discongruence, as does Mary at 30. Following an exchange in which support from the group for Mary illustrates identity congruence with Mary and discongruence with Sally.



**Fig 13 Rhizome 1**

Later in the session Sally returns to her original view apparently still concerned to justify it. She clearly appreciates Mary’s support:

46	Sally	I think maybe why I chose lion tamer is because sometimes I feel like we’re always fighting against the change	S	↗	id
47	Mary	quite possibly yes	bc		ick
48	Sally	do you know what I mean? It’s a constant battle against change that we’re ....and the process procedure that we’re implementing that’s why that.	sc/q		
49	Tutor	mmm, it makes sense because I felt, and I think everybody else did that it’s quite a contrast between seeing people as explorers and seeing them as lions! (Laughing)	bc		
50	Tutor	but you <i>did combine</i> them, and I think that may be why, yes, yeah.	bc		ics

And at the end of the session she offers an alternative metaphor.

51	Tutor	And the image of the sponge is more positive perhaps than petrol tanker ... any body think of any other metaphors?	Q	
52	Sally	yes, the guide rails on a bowling alley	S	↗
53	Tutor	oh right, yes, that's interesting.	bc	
54	Sally	has everybody seen those rails you can put up at the side of a bowling alley? You allow the ball to move from side to side without allowing it to fall in the gutter so you actually always make sure they get to the right point in the end but give room to manoeuvre while they get there		
55	Tutor	very good. Right	bc	ics

This signifies an attempt I believe to move her identity closer to the group's perception without perhaps rescinding her original choice. She then offers an additional and useful metaphor strengthening her self-esteem and identity within the group.

### *'Tangible learning'*

I also recorded the second section of this session during which we reviewed the learning on the course so far. The comments were illuminating and are an interesting contrast to those in data set 1

Whilst the concept of 'knowledge' was used frequently both in reflections and during enquiries it was rarely defined as Ken recognised:

*'I found myself trying to put a value on "knowledge", although without doubt a valuable commodity, something that could not be seen or compartmentalised. I had challenged myself to justify something which I strongly believed in but had difficulty equating a direct value'.*

*(Ken- reflection data set 2)*



In the next extract the group begin to try to define knowledge:

56	Jill	<i>probably because I am a more practical person I like to see how I can use what we're doing in my life and although in a way I think this will be better for my future if I get promotion [...]...currently... its not so much something I'll use apart from <b>for</b> here, whereas the stuff we did before I could see it in use and why it was going to be so positive for me at the time.</i>	S		id
57	Sally	<i>Joyce and I were talking about this the other day and there's nothing tangible on this course ... for example if you did a degree in ...I don't know... photography you would actually have a physical camera and you would learn to take photographs and ...you know do different things with it, but with this course it's all touchy feely and hearts and minds isn't it stuff? ..and I think that's why I think may be the learning curve is as steep because there isn't a tangible physical piece of learning is there?</i>	S		id

'Real' or tangible knowledge has an immediate and obvious application because that is how it has previously been defined.

Less tangible skills, and even the enjoyment of learning if it lacks direct application to 'reality', is not seen as knowledge.

Jill's comment reinforces the idea of a leaning space which is separated from the outside world – a heterotopia in fact.

Ken disagrees and tries to introduce the notion of skills development as tangible.

58	Ken	I disagree because I think you're developing skills that ...analytical, critical...			iddk
59	Sally	oh absolutely!	sc		ick
60	Ken	and I would go along the lines you take things on face value,you describe it, now you analyse it looking deeper at the layers and then actually start to evaluate it more and I think that's a skill ...	e		

61	Sally	it is, it is	sc		ick
62	Ken	and not just for this course but for life in general	s		
63	Mary	yes but we haven't been <i>given</i> anything here			iddk
64	Ken	but you've <i>developed</i> ....that's tangible...I think that's tangible			iddk
65	Mary	I don't think it is, to me			iddk
66	Ken	you've said that you watch telly and you evaluate things now and you didn't do that six months ago	e		
67	Mary	yeah but that's...	sc/bc		
68	Ken	that's a tangible skill you've developed	S		
69	Emma	it's not tangible though is it?			iddk
70	Ken	I feel....			
71	Mary	I don't know that it's tangible, perhaps it was always there and I ignored it	e		id
72	Emma	developed	bc		
73	Mary	developed yeah	bc		
74	Ken	I just think that if there's nothing...you're not gaining anything other than knowledge	e		
75	Sally	No, no	bc		
76	Mary	Nothing organic if you like	e		
77	Ken	OK organic....	bc		
78	Sally	I'm not saying that I haven't gained, no, no, I've gained a <i>huge</i> amount on this course. I've thoroughly enjoyed it and I've gained a huge amount from it which I'm saying is that it's quite a strange one because...	sc		id
79	Mary	yeah	bc		
80	Sally	you're not learning....for example when you did your 730 <sup>23</sup> you were learning to teach, you see what I mean?	e		
81	Ken	mmhhmm techniques	bc		
82	Sally	yes and I guess there are techniques	bc		
83	Jill	and you could use it when you made lesson plans you could actually use them	S		ick
84	Ken	learning techniques	bc		
85	Sally	whereas for this, there are but ...they're far less tangible and you almost get there and don't realise you've got there until you stop and you look back. Do you see what I mean?	e		
86	Sally	and you don't realise what you've learned and the skills that you've got because there isn't anything <i>tangible</i>	e		
87	Emma	yeah...	bc		
88	Sally	You can't take a better photograph, or you know you	e		

		can't and it's only when you discuss it that actually .. or when you start to write that you actually understand that you've done that learning.			
--	--	--	--	--	--

Knowledge then is about useful 'facts' or strategies which can be directly applied to practice. To be tangible learning has to be useful. This is reminiscent of John's reflection in data set 1 and the Schonian dilemma described by Usher et al:

*'The Schonian dilemma of rigour versus relevance is a characteristic of the practice which is also found in the education and training of practitioners or in continuing professional development. Here the dilemma arises because continuing professional development has a rationale which is invariably 'practical' in the sense of helping practitioners to develop the skills and capabilities that will enhance their practice.'* (Usher et al 1997:132)

The discussion here makes an interesting contrast with data set 1 in which the participants seem to have changed their perspective on useful or tangible knowledge.

## Enquiry 5



The stimulus for the fifth enquiry was an A4 full colour poster of Tracy Emin's art work 'My bed'. I was surprised that the group were unfamiliar with it, but some later remembered the controversy it had caused. I chose this stimulus as a change from text and to allow the group to use both their imagination and possibly to link their previous enquiries to a new perspective. In establishing the question, links were indeed made back to enquiry 3 which explored the concept of multiple voices. The question selected was:

*'Are there several facets to an individual?'*

The first extract is taken from the beginning of the session:

1	Jill	I think there definitely are. Because there's a lot of people I work with their home life and their work life are very, very different and some people keep their...are very open about things but some people keep that side of it very separate	S		
2	Ken	do we not have to start by defining what a facet is? Because are we talking about personality or traits or behaviour?	Q e		

This is an interesting start because once again Ken has sought to \_  
define terms before exploring opinions.

3	Sally	I think all of the above.	S		id
4	Mary	I think it's all of those. It's how people present themselves isn't it?	e	↗	id
5	Sally	how they are perceived	e	↗	
6	Mary	it's don't judge a book by its cover basically isn't it?	e		
7	Sally	absolutely	bc		ics
8	Mary	that's what we're saying I think – you see somebody you may make a judgement.... you know you see someone you may make a judgement that fits something ...you know... from your perception	e	↗	ick
9	Jill	you could make a judgement of that picture	e	↖	
10	Mary	absolutely yes	bc		
11	Jill	that that person was untidy, messy	e		
12	Ken	Bridget Jones type person	e		
13	Sally	yeah, yeah	bc		
14	Ken	that's what struck me Bridget Jones type	bc		
15	Mary	yes	bc		
16	Joyce	I think there are countless facets to all individuals.....we see..we only see what we want to see.. you know..	e	↗	
17	Emma	or what they want to show	e	↗	
18	Joyce	yeah, we may work with someone or know someone for years but we only see what we want to see	e	↗	
19	Mary	your behaviour changes to fit whoever you're with	e	↗	
20	Sally	absolutely. when I'm with my team I have a certain persona that comes across as the manager of the team.	bc		icsk
21	Ken	so could you...	e		
22	Sally	...and then when I go home I'm the lovely, yummy cuddly mummy	s		id
23	Christine	that's not what you said earlier!	bc		

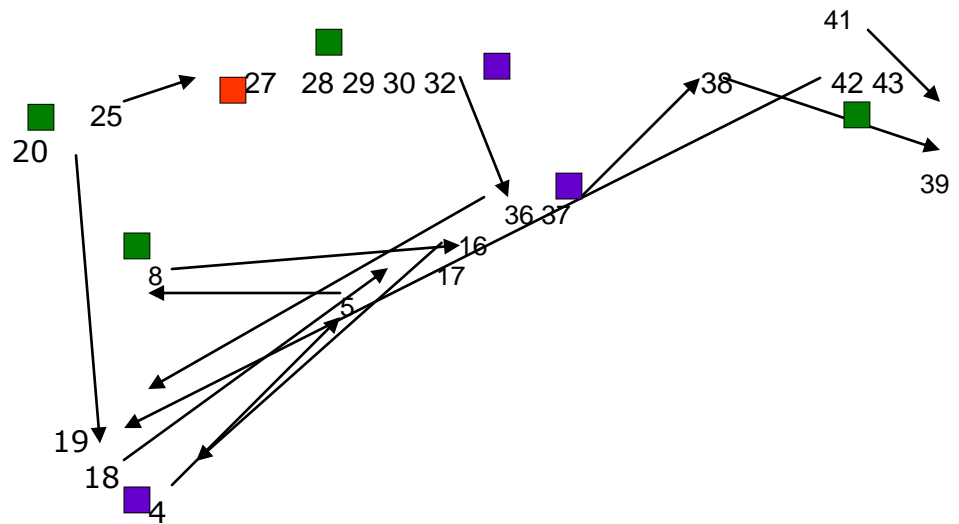
24	Sally	not then I wasn't! Laughter (Sally had recounted a row with her children before the session)			
25	Ken	so could you put them into classifications then? would you put them into classifications such as your work self, your home self, your social self?	e	↗	
26	Tina	Yeah	bc		
27	Sally	no, I don't think you can, because I think there are several work selves. I'm a different person with different people	bc		id
28	Ken	well then there are some classifications within that..	e	↗	
29	Sally	yes absolutely	bc		
30	Ken	but overall you have certain traits and certain behaviours at work that you wouldn't have at home?	e	↗	
31	Jill	and certain things that you wouldn't do or behave like in either	e		
32	Ken	and within those classification you have subclasses when for instance in a social situations with yourselves I could behave in a certain way but when I'm with my friends at the caravan at the weekend with a barbecue I'm a totally different person	e	↗	id
33	Sally	yeah	bc		
34	Tina	I bet you're not!	bc		
35	Ken	no, well... but do you know what I mean? But then when you get a different structure with a different set of classifications you....	sc e		
36	Sally	it depends on who you're with and how you interact differently with that person	e	↗	
37	Tina	I'm a different tutor with the students from XXX that I am With the students from XXX, completely different.			id
38	Ken	so with that respect is it not a case that there's more facets to an individual its...it's how you deal with other people is that	e	↗	
39	John	it's the environment	bc	↗	
40	Ken	it's the environment	bc		
41	Emma	and the pecking order	bc	↗	
42	Sally	it's almost a bit like a chameleon that changes its skin to suit the environment that they're in and in the same way we all as human beings change the way we are to interact with different people	e	↗	ids
43	Jill	I think you are exactly right with what you've just said. At work if you're quite an important person, sort of thing and you're in charge, and that sort of thing. When you're at home, I'm not saying someone should be in charge but, you might be a totally different personality and someone else may take the lead role or the other way around. You might work for someone and be ...not that you are...	e		ics

		but the bottom of the ladder at work but come home to be in charge of a very big family or a lot of... or you could run a club outside of work... or anything you could be in charge of..			
44	Ken	yes, yes is that not the system, the circumstances you find yourself in... driving that?	e	inter	
45	Sally	yes it's definitely environmental, without a doubt.	bc		
46	Ken	it's got to have some impact	bc		
47	Emma	social and cultural	bc		
48	Ken	mmhhmm	bc		

In this final extract from the enquiries the group has begun to explore 'identity' and influential factors in its creation. The enquiry gives rise to several lines of flight and examples of identity congruence and discongruence as illustrated below.

The first line of flight (see Figure 14 below) emerges from Mary's suggestion at line 4 that Ken's list of potential facets in line 2 (personality, traits or behaviours) may be based on how people present themselves. Sally suggests at line 5 that it may in fact be about how they are perceived. At line 16 Joyce suggests that 'we only see what we want to see' which creates a line of flight towards will. Emma redirects this at 17 back to 'what they want to show' which is a return to Mary's suggestion at 4 'how people present themselves'. At 18 Joyce returns to her point about seeing only 'what we want to see' and at 19 Mary introduces the idea of a chameleon like ability or tendency to change in response to others in which Sally concurs at 20. I have classified this as identity congruence. Ken moves the enquiry

at line 25 towards a classification of behaviours which Sally refutes at 27. I have classified this as an example of identity discongruence. Ken persists with his theory at 28, gains agreement from Sally at 29, and pursues it further at 30. Here I suggest there are further examples of identity congruence. At 32 Ken introduces the notion of subclasses and provides an example from his own life. At 36 Sally again returns to Mary's suggestion of adapting to others made at line 19, and Ken takes new line of flight at 38 and based on her comment Tina's example at 37 to suggest they are discussing how people deal with others. John takes a line of flight towards the environment at 39 and Emma takes line of flight towards 'the pecking order' at 41 which is not followed. At 42 Sally returns to the notion of the chameleon at 19.



**Fig 13 Rhizome 2**



## **The enquiries**

I believe the data from the enquiries presented above indicates both individual and group development in terms of critical literacy, and illustrates the fluidity and complexity of identity. It suggests also the power of enquiry as a learning tool which goes beyond the immediate learning environment. It is possible to detect '*long conversations*' which recall previous exchanges and builds on ideas and perspectives. What it also demonstrates though is the emergence and re-emergence of themes and examples of transgressive data which I have tied to capture rhizomatically in Figure 14.

I discuss these claims further in the next and final chapter.

## **'Learning to enquire or enquiring to learn?'**

### **Discussion**

I started my journey with a defined focus. It wasn't a simple task since concepts such as critical literacy and identity are somewhat intangible and open to dispute. However, I was clear that I wanted to explore the impact of a specific pedagogical device on the learning and development of a group of adult learners. What became clear was that the process is an ongoing one and the results are not conclusive or measurable in the tradition of much educational enquiry. What I believe I have started to do is open up a process to scrutiny and exploration rather than demonstrate an effective technique for teaching.

My exploration of literature on the topics of dialogue in learning deepened my understanding of its role but also introduced me to conflicting views and thus posed new questions:

- 1) Is enquiry achieved through dialogue or dialectic?
- 2) Is dialogue about epistemology or ontology?

My search for an appropriate research strategy and analytical framework led me to review the development of research philosophy and methodology. I was clear that I did not want to attempt to 'prove' that enquiry worked simply through demonstrating that my participants were able to 'perform' more effectively at the end of the course than at the beginning. This would be to demonstrate no more than that the students had developed during a course. I wanted to find some means of identifying points at which engagement with ideas and 'learning' became dynamic. I also wanted to involve the participants fully with my project. If there was an 'answer' it must be heard through the voices of the group rather than be identified simply through my heuristic interpretation of their words. I am of course conscious of my presence in the research process and the inevitability of my own interpretation of the findings in my presentation of this project.

I abandoned my initial attempt at devising and using a Torrance type of template to track contributions and therefore 'improvements', in favour of a rhizomatic perspective which I feel more effectively captures the movement of enquiry. Enquiry is not teleological. It has no end and in a sense no beginning. Enquirers do not come to the research site '*tabula rasa*' but bring attitudes, beliefs and the nested

perspectives that White (1992) describes, and perhaps the learning dispositions Hughes (2010) has identified. Consequently I came to believe that it cannot be explored successfully through a linear model. Support for this is found in Mercer's 'long conversation' in which ideas emerge, re-emerge and are recalled from previous enquiries. Links are made and new flights are taken. Therefore the 'length' of the long conversation doesn't mean to me linear development but rather suggests a rhizome.

Evidence for this exists within all three the data sets and is reinforced in the final discussion (data set 1) in which participants describe continued discussion outside the enquiry and indeed the heterotopia. Jill for example discussed 'voices' with her family, Joyce continued to 'argue with herself' long after the enquiry was 'complete.' Sally, Tina, Mary Joyce and John discussed changes in their behaviour at work; Gary and Emma experienced profound changes in their relationships with students.

Kang created 'rhizoactivity' from the rhizome and activity theory and he describes it thus:

*'Rhizoactivity sprouts or pops up at any place in any time of one's life to make connections to whatever is available. It is not a linear activity. It opens itself to any possibility. There is no beginning and ending. It is "the lines of flight"'*

*that are drawn on the leaking and amorphous surface.*  
(Kang 2007:206)

Holquist suggests that for Bakhtin the site of knowledge is never unitary and the basis of dialogism is the consciousness of 'otherness.'

The differential in fact, '*between the centre and all that is not its centre.*' (Holquist 1990:19)

As Bakhtin himself describes it:

*'the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousnesses around the given object or an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.'* (Bakhtin 1981:276)

A crucial aspect of learning on the course was of course the reading which the group were required to do. However the skills developed during enquiry I believe helped them to learn to read critical literature and to read literature critically. In their reviews and reflections they don't always separate aspects of their learning. I think this is right. If enquiry is a separate 'thing', a discrete activity that they do, it is not achieving its goal. Jill's comment early in the course on her friend's description of enquiry: '*it was horrible, everybody worried about them all week and the enquiries were torture*' (pilot data) illustrates this effectively I think.

Ken seemed particularly receptive to enquiry and recognised the 'tangibility' of the learning which took place during the course much earlier than the others.

Foucault has influenced my work. I find his theory of power persuasive and it seems apt for the context in which my learners live and work as do I. That power is internalised is I think apparent from the current state of the sector and is illustrated by many of the comments made in the first and final reflections. The existence of the 'Reflect' programme used by the IfL seems a perfect example of a contemporary panopticon. However power is productive and shouldn't simply be viewed as a negative and repressive force. For Foucault power is not a capacity to be owned, it is what O'Farrell describes as a '*relation*' between individuals and groups which exists when it is being exercised (O'Farrell 2005) and as such it can only be exercised over free subjects. Freedom presupposes that there is potential for acting and reacting. As Foucault describes it: '*There is no power without potential refusal or revolt.*' (Foucault cited in O'Farrell 205:100) There is evidence I think of some resistance amongst group members to the hegemony, and refusal and revolt took many forms. Examples include Mary's change of employer in order to find one who would allow her to exercise her view of the primacy of the learner in the teaching and

learning relationship. In order to do so she found herself changing a culture. The following comment is an extract from her dissertation:

*'It appears to me that although the whole prison system is designed to be 'joined up'; the outcomes of each department are aligned to vastly differing goals. This creates a dichotomy, in my view, in that the men are expected to behave and react in an observable 'docile' and 'conformist' manner; to prove that their behaviour has changed, yet as teachers we are trying to encourage active and self-directed learners.'*

Her experience in gathering data to an agreed project was frustrated by prison regulations:

*'Among the problems and pitfalls associated with undertaking research in the secure estate include: first proposal refused, being unable to speak to the right person, negotiating security clearance, sample attrition and obtaining an adequate sample size.'*

To combat these constraints Mary circumvented the restrictions by using 'post it' notes to record comments and take breaks in her car to write up field notes.

Emma acted outside of her role to assist a learner she felt was disadvantaged by the system:

*'In terms of the experience of Grace it seems that we are so focussed on targets that often we forget that we have the skills and knowledge to support people who actually need it. On a personal level although I am unable in my capacity help Grace I managed to keep my promise and got her the help she so needed. Grace is now being tutored by a literacy charitable organisation and yesterday, seven*

*weeks on from our initial meeting, I met with her and her tutor to see what progress was being made.'*

Gary recognised the need to hear the voices of his learners in an environment which doesn't traditionally reflect this perspective:

*'I regretted the time that I had spent pursuing an ideologically inspired research proposal concerning the relationship between students and tutors. I had to change my proposal quite considerably as I realised a desire to use research on students with learning difficulties would not feel right without their input into the agenda.'*

I have found Foucault's concepts of archaeological and genealogical approaches to knowledge which privilege the exploration of strata rather than the simple teleological or 'Whig' interpretations of historical development useful. *'In short, archaeology is about the 'conditions of possibility' which give rise to knowledge, whereas genealogy is about the 'constraints' that limit the order of knowledge.'* (O'Farrell 2005: 69) The uncovering of the layers and the sediment can result in the discovery of *'a model of what has happened that will allow us to free ourselves from what has happened.'* (Foucault cited in O'Farrell 2005: 69)

His concept of a heterotopia I believe encapsulates the experience of the learning group. The data traces the creation and consolidation of the group and its relationships to the wider society of which it is undoubtedly a part, but for the duration of the course at least a



separate part, which functioned with its own discourse. That the boundaries are permeable is illustrated by the examples given by the group in which they have taken their enquiries into their homes and their learning into their workplaces.

The image of the rhizome as a social conception originates with Deleuze and Guattari and has been used in a variety of research contexts. Some observers might doubt the legitimacy of my use of it here. Gregoriou for example suggests:

*'it often appears pedagogically tempting, at least from the viewpoint of philosophy of education, to name, codify and qualify the rhizome.'*  
(Gregoriou 2004:240)

It has certainly been 'researchically' tempting to name, codify and qualify the rhizome.

However, she also suggests:

*'The goal is not to represent the rhizome but to implant it in thought. The effect they are after is not the understanding of the rhizome but a functioning, a whole apparatus that connects disparate, linguistic and non-linguistic things.'* (ibid)  
*'They are just moments in becoming'* (ibid:241)

I hope that's what I have achieved.

A final graphical representation of the rhizome would include all the transgressive data from the reflections, all the lines of light leading to concepts and ideas, beliefs and attitudes which would erupt and form plateaus of intensity. It should also include things to come which connect the individuals and all aspects of their lives. The rhizome is created within the heterotopia and grows both outwards and inwards. Sermijn likens the image to a patchwork quilt: *'Just like the motif of a patchwork quilt, a postmodern story is characterized not by an embroidered, continuous pattern but by the juxtaposition of more or less disjunctive elements.'* (Sermijn 2008: 635) This makes a summative diagram impossible. *'A rhizome is an underground root system, a dynamic, open, decentralized network that branches out to all sides unpredictably and horizontally. A view of the whole is therefore impossible.'* (ibid 637)

Kang (2007 p.206) has also suggests that *'Rhizoactivity is still an experimental concept that needs more concretization.* He describes it as follows:

*'The researcher, like a detective following leads, may approach one image at a time and construct as many images as he or she can.' [...]. Researching rhizoactivity is similar to making maps with multiple figurations in a sense that a map is produced from the real but there is no map exactly representing the real. Maps cannot be finalized, since the object of any map is ceaselessly*

*changing. Any map has its flaws. But a good map is always a great guide.'* (ibid)

I hope I have started to map out the movement of enquiry in this project.

That it is an ongoing process has I think become apparent. The findings of the research point towards the dynamic effects of dialogue in a learning process and its implications for an ever changing identity.

### *Critical literacy*

McKinney (2003) suggests that critical literacy is not 'one thing.' It has she suggests, diverse intellectual roots and a complex relationship with pedagogy. The root she describes which I think is most appropriate for my work is the link with Freire who saw literacy itself as a tool for 'conscientisation' which he describes as:

*'The process in which people, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.'*  
(Freire cited in McKinney :190)

Building on Freires' ideas, Giroux offers this definition for a contemporary setting:

*'the opportunity for students to interrogate how knowledge is constituted as both a historical and social construction'*

which should provide them with:

*'knowledge and skills necessary for them to understand and analyse their own historically constructed voices and experiences as part of a project of self and social empowerment.'* (ibid)

The data I hope demonstrates the growth and development of that ability culminating in changes some of which were far reaching, and which impacted on both work and personal life of the participants. It also I believe started a process of thinking about what can be known and how it can be known, a view of epistemology. The group explored on more than one occasion the issue of 'tangible knowledge' and there is evidence that for at least some views changed over a period of time and through the experience of enquiry. Ken's reflective comment: *'I found myself trying to put a value on "knowledge"'* was made early in the project and was followed later by discussions and enquiries which attempted to explore the nature of knowledge, 'value' originally being defined in terms of its applicability to practical situations, but later recognising it as something less 'tangible' but more far reaching.

## *Identity*

*‘Identity categories are positioned as multiple, fluid, and often contradictory, both internally and externally.’ (Lather and Ellsworth 1996: 70)*

I believe the data has demonstrated this perspective in more than one way. The participants made identifications of themselves. Those identities changed, developed, reverted at times and the transgressive data is particularly important here. Data sets 1 and 2 explored the emotions and pressures that contribute to identity. In data set 3 Enquiry 5 dealt specifically with the topic of identity and demonstrated an interesting exploration of its composition through the perspectives of the group.

Rhizomatically all of these facets exist and will irrupt at different ways and times and circumstances always linked to something else.

## *Dialectic or dialogic?*

My initial understanding of the terms dialectical and dialogue appears now to be rather simplistic. I understood dialectical

exchanges to be based on contrasting or conflicting positions;  
and I understood dialogic exchanges to *build* on ideas coming  
from the other or others in an exchange which are not  
necessarily in conflict.

I suspect Lipman uses the terms interchangeably.

*'A C of I attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads[...] A dialogue that tries to conform to logic, it moves forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process it comes to resemble that of thinking it self[...] The C of I wants to build a system of thought. It begins with a provisional scaffolding made up of the relevant beliefs that are already held, the aims of the project, and the values that are to be upheld. The procedure is dialectical: specific judgements are molded to accepted generalisations, and generalisations are molded to specific judgements. Considerations of value are weighed against antecedent judgements of fact. The goal is a system of thought in reflective equilibrium.'* (Lipman 2003: 103)

For Bahktin, dialectical is about overcoming difference:

*'cram everything into one abstract consciousness—and that's how you get dialectics.'*

whereas dialogue is:

*'the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousnesses around the given object or an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.'* (Bakhtin 1981:276)

Freire sees dialogue as criticality:

*'Born of a critical matrix, dialogue creates a critical attitude.'*  
(Freire 2003b:44)

Wegerif (2008) contrasts dialogic and dialectic by suggesting that whilst the dialogic is often included as part of the sociocultural position frequently sourced to Vygotsky, Vygotsky is not in fact a dialogic thinker as is Bahktin but rather a dialectical thinker influenced by Marx and Hegel, Wertsch argues that this is an essentially modernist approach. Whereas Bahktin:

*'goes beyond epistemology, or the issue of how we know things, into the realm of ontology, or the issue of the ultimate nature of things. Bahktin concludes that the world for us, that is the world of meaning, is essentially dialogic.'* Wegerif (2008:349)

My goal is using enquiry is to stimulate the ability and perhaps ultimately the *need* to enquire amongst my learning group. Resolution of conflicting positions is not my concern. In this perhaps I differ from Lipman. Adding to the concept of dialogism the image of the rhizome makes *'equilibrium of thought'* impossible because it no longer travels in the linear movement seeking resolution.

*Epistemological or ontological?*

Sidorkin sees dialogism as an ontological concept and the role of the teacher is to create opportunities for dialogue which is an end in itself rather than use it as a teaching tool. Used for something else he suggests, it ceases to be dialogue.

*'In dialogue we transcend our immediate situatedness, and get in touch with what is essential about us as humans.'* (Sidorkin 1999:)

I agree. However I also believe that Sidorkin deals in absolutes. For a piece of practical research or for a teaching strategy there must surely be some starting point. My original focus was to use enquiry and therefore dialogue as a pedagogical device, and as such it was at least partially epistemological. What has become clear however, is that enquiry is indeed ontological. That deeper questioning which resulted through and indeed since enquiry is evidenced by the participants own comments and by the changing perspectives they describe.

'Situatedness' is important, however, particularly for groups of adult learners who expect their experience to be recognised and valued. The context in which they operate I have argued



is very influential on their understanding. That this can be ultimately be transcended however has been demonstrated I believe in this data.

The title of my project is '*Enquiring to learn or learning to enquire?*' I hope I have demonstrated that when people enquire to learn, they learn to enquire.

The following observation by Sellers and Gough expresses my final views effectively:

*'if there is a message to leave here, it is that education is a collaborative act for recognising and furthering thinking differently. Thinking differently offers capabilities for recognising and understanding that worlds of flux always already are operating in ways that are forever changing and that this is not problematic but generative.'* (Sellers and Gough 2010:609)

## ***Afterword***

Mary was awarded a first class degree and has continued to the MA programme. Sally, Tina, Joyce, Ken, Sylvia and Gary were awarded 2.1's; Joyce and Gary gained promotion in their workplaces and Matt and Ann gained 2.2's John withdrew from the course; Jill and Emma submitted late dissertations due to changes at work changes and personal circumstances. However both kept in contact both with the group and with me and both have returned to complete their dissertations.

As a group most are still in contact and organise reunions. They have returned to the college to describe to new students their experiences on the course and provide advice and reassurance.

Apart from describing how much they had gained from the course personally and professionally their comments included '*I would do it all again.*' Several of them use the community of enquiry in their own teaching and training. These are the endorsements which I think say most about the process.

I have re-launched a research group through which new researchers meet those more experienced to share ideas and experiences and the group members have expressed enthusiasm to contribute to this and possible take on further research if we can attract funding. We have also started an in-house journal for the publication of research articles by staff and students.

I prefaced my work with a quote from Sextus Empiricus and I'd like to end with another:

*'When people are investigating any subject, the likely result is either a discovery, or a denial of a discovery and a confession of inapprehensibility, or else a continuation of the investigation.'*

(Sextus Empiricus 1994:3)

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Core reflective process (task & focus)	<p>Task – students complete an extended task (eg keeping a reflective diary) or series of tasks (eg incorporating a cycle of activities or a progression in the level of challenge)</p> <p>Focus – the task is focused on specific areas (eg an aspect of professional practice, development in relation to sat of personal goals, or a form of disciplinary expertise); whether in relation to the area itself, its foundations, or the accompanying reflective process</p>
Social basis	Dialogue plays a key role in sustaining a focus on problematic issues, with a role of the voicing of a range of views and experiences, modelling of good practice, challenges, prompts, questioning, crossing of boundaries, insights from literature, specialist language, technology and feedback.
Personal basis	A reflective process is directly affected by the way in which a person engages in it, becoming inherently different as individual abilities, qualities and identities vary. Ownership, level of experience, personal and professional identity, and roles are all important factors in this.
Wider context	The context in which the reflective process unfolds (of programme, workplace, discipline and institution) affects, for instance, the scope to introduce change of to engage in dialogue.
Intended outcomes	Covering changes in practice or expertise, and ability to engage in reflective processes; at both personal and collective levels. Close alignment is required between the focus of the reflective process and the intended outcomes.

(Khan 2007)

## **Appendix 2**

*What have you learned?*

*What implications does this learning have?*

Talk about the experience of learning itself e.g.

- *Was it comfortable?*
- *Was it challenging?*
- *Where you surprised by anything?*
- *Confused by anything?*
- *Disturbed by anything?*
- *Annoyed by anything?*