Visualisation, Story And Metaphor As Tools To Build Self-Belief And Moral Awareness.
An Ethnographic Case Study With Disengaged Pupils.
Dissertation: Stephen Bigger 2008

One.
Context, Research Questions and Research Design

1.1 Context

The S* Youth Empowerment Project (SYEP) has since 2001 worked with a cluster of urban comprehensive and feeder primary schools in an urban disadvantaged area in Southern England. It received Excellence in Cities (EiC) funding, a national programme terminated midway through the fieldwork. SYEP continued with a range of other funding. The non-teaching role of the Learning Mentor (a core feature of EiC) changed as these staff were given more mainstream duties. SYEP started with 13 year olds and later included 9-10 year olds, targeting children identified by schools as disturbed and disaffected. They developed an action plan with a focus on the primary/secondary transition years (age 9 to 13) which received funding from a range of educational trusts (Lloyds Bank Community Fund; Zurich; Tudor Trust). Feedback from the Excellence in Cities government initiative, and later funders has been enthusiastic, recognizing it as an innovative new strategy to refocus and re-energize disaffected young people both in primary and secondary schools. There is an expectation by funders that at some point it will be mainstreamed and supported by the schools from their own budgets. These are explored further in the interim report (Bigger, 2005).

The project encourages young people with disaffected and challenging behaviour to reflect on their own behaviour, relationships and potential. The particular innovation of SYEP includes *guided personal reflection,* carefully planned and structured using visualisation, words and music in an ambient "tranquil" environment, called "the Tranquillity Zone", followed by focused activities to stimulate personal discovery through discussion, called "the Discovery Zone" (these are generally abbreviated here to TZ and DZ). The Tranquillity Zone consists of a tent of drapes with incense, flowers, candles and lights (see photographs). This is not meditation in any religious sense, nor silent contemplation: indeed the term 'meditation' is avoided. SYEP trained staff and coached them into confidence. These Learning Mentors and other education professionals in schools then run and evaluate sessions for pupils in their schools. The team wishes ultimately that all pupils might experience this as a mainstream classroom activity.

The project team use the phrase "dispirited pupils" for pupils who have never learnt to reflect on their self-worth and potential.
> "A dispirited young person, whether at school or home, lacks motivation to engage in learning or positive behaviour. Our purpose is to help restore the spirit in the young person so that he or she gains the motivation to engage in learning or positive behaviour". (Project Officer, 21.3.06, local newspaper.)

They view their programme as an example of secular spiritual education, although it has spiritual roots in the Bahai Faith. Pupils are stimulated to reflect in a non-authoritarian way on their attitudes, reactions, relationships and actions, to consider the consequences of these, and devise alternative life strategies. This is described as *reflection on* and *development of* their "higher nature" in ways designed to have a positive effect on relationships and self-esteem – alerting them to the dangers of their lower nature – anger, depression, cynicism and indifference. Participants are guided through a series of stories which provide the

plot of the whole experience, take a boat to Tranquillity Island where the participant meets his or her 'wise person' who converses with them in their thoughts. A second story tells a moral tale (there are seven stories in total on specific themes). For example, one story tells of a child who lost his or her temper, and every time had to hammer a nail into a fence. When this calmed the anger and the person made a pleasant response instead, a nail was taken out. But they noticed how damaged the fence was. This puts in visual form the hurt done by anger and provides a conflict resolution strategy.

It is important that this experience is discussed shortly after in the Discovery Zone, essentially a circle time or discussion group not only exploring the reactions of the pupils to the Tranquillity Zone, but also working through structured activities to help them understand their higher and lower natures. This inspires young people to move towards their higher nature through personal discovery and activities to develop and articulate their understanding and thinking. The project seeks to influence behaviour by addressing the root causes of personal insecurities and open up new possibilities, to replace self-doubt and despair with self belief. Influencing behaviour in this educational sense contrasts with *behaviour management*, which tends to be dominated by rewards and punishments.

1.2 The Bahá'í Faith.
SYEP is a creation of the Bahá'í Faith's local "spiritual assembly. Bahá'ís are committed to multi-faith dialogue and non-evangelical social action. Originating in Iran in the nineteenth century, some Muslims view the Bahá'í Faith as heretical, and Bahá'ís are currently persecuted in their spiritual homeland Iran. Its particular teachings include progressive divine revelation: all faiths and scriptures are respected as part of a continuing divine guidance for our world. No particular revelation is regarded as final, although Baha'ullah is regarded as the divine manifestation for our times. Bahá'ís work towards global harmony, equity, and peace, which was truly innovative in the nineteenth century, as was its demand for global democracy and international justice. Its own democratic structures model how the faith hopes humankind with evolve, with no hierarchy, an elected International House of Justice in Haifa, and democratic local, national and international spiritual assemblies. Significant recent policy documents include *The Promise of World Peace* (see Bigger, 1997). Bahá'ís are encouraged also to engage in social action to build a better world, and to model beneficial democratic and empowering strategies to help secular society to develop. External (non-Bahá'í) funding bodies have recommended that the team develop deeper public awareness of the Bahá'í religion. Beyond this case study, I surveyed in depth 20 Bahá'ís about their attitudes to social and global action. Their views have been presented in a conference paper (Bigger, 2003).

1.3 The Eighteen Principles
SYEP articulates its central philosophy through **The Eighteen Principles** relating to personal, moral, social and emotional learning, human empowerment, positive communication, and personal transformation. These were originally drawn from Bahá'í scriptures. This link is extremely important for the team, as the principles are an application of Bahá'í teaching; however in training sessions the principles were expounded and received as secular statements, as matters of personal philosophy and common sense. The elements are, in brief:

Figure 1

The Eighteen Principles

1 *People have a Light (positive) Side, and a Dark (negative) Side.
2 *We all have Inestimable Potential
3 We all have Virtues and Good Qualities.
4 We desire and work towards well-being and happiness.
5 *We are capable of Transformation.
6 We need to develop Self-awareness
7 We need to be Personally engaged in transformation
8 *Power of Good Example: we can be helped by role models, and help
    others.
9 Power of radiance.
10 It helps to Focus on Higher Nature – within and beyond ourselves.
11 Positive and uplifting words have great power.
12 Positive responses to negatives change our perspective.
13 We can be part of Creating a Cohesive Empowering Atmosphere, an
    ethos for good.
14 Calling on higher powers and inspirational writings.
15 We can be Conscious of our growth and evolution.
16 We can be aware of Challenges to our growth and be proactive in
    meeting these.
17 *Service to others is also empowering.
18 Listening carefully and with understanding is edifying, helping us to
    develop.

NB those marked * were later selected as most significant and the list
reduced to six for training convenience.

1.4 Values of researcher and project.

I selected this project out of many other possibilities because it focused on deep-down holistic learning as a key component of personal development. It is my belief that education should address the whole person, stimulate the deepest understandings of life and society and provide empowerment for those who for various reasons need particular support. This research, I felt, may have the potential to transform lives.

My previous experience working with inner-city Birmingham comprehensives with Birmingham Compact (1992-4, see Bigger 2000a) came from the same concern. This involves a concern for developing well-being (emotional as well as physical) to enable meaningful reflection on life, relationships and community, and on this basis encourage academic progress. This draws on humanistic psychology. Although an outsider to this project, being neither a team member nor a faith member, I felt at a humanistic level an empathy with project aims. . I wished also to explore synergies and tensions between secular holistic reflection, spirituality and religion, since the academic study of religion in society has been a long-term research interest (Bigger, 2000b). The values of SYEP are rooted in the Bahá'í emphasis on personal empowerment; for one founder member, strategies developed for his ADHD son (now at university) were generalized to other pupils; the other founder, a former journalist used to negative reporting of young people, wished to create something good to report about young people.

1.5 Research Paradigm and Design

This research is qualitative, naturalistic and anti-positivistic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:19-32):

"dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts, and where social scientists understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants; the participants themselves define the social reality" (p.19).

This means that we are not searching for proof, as in a scientific experiment, but illuminating our case both through its effects and its processes. Our case study focuses on the emotional and academic response of pupils to the SYEP process, to judge whether others might benefit more widely. This has not been an action research since as researcher I have not been instigator of change. Nevertheless, I am sensitive to transformations taking place in the project and in schools. There are aspects of critical action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) which I have found helpful.

1.6 Bias.

I was 'outsider' in various ways. Team members have personal ownership and changing a precious process does not come easily. They have an *a priori* conviction about its efficacy that I do not, although I am prepared to be persuaded by the evidence. Secondly, I do not personally benefit from the Tranquillity Zone as others claim to do. There may be interesting reasons for this; but it serves to remind me to confine myself to recording their experiences fairly. Thirdly I am not a Bahá'í, nor religious, nor a theist. I therefore have secular ways of thinking about theocentric language. Neither am I anti-religious but try to understand what religious language signifies. My training in the phenomenological study of religion, in which personal views are "bracketed out", helps to control a bias coming from my secular world view. Control of bias ultimately is a journey and not a certain formula.

1.7 Research questions:

The integrative research question that cuts to the heart of the educational process involved is:

> *To what extent can personal and social transformations take place if young people are encouraged to talk through their life choices conceptually using symbol and metaphor to generate mental pictures of potential.*

There are a number of sub-questions:
- What exactly is self-esteem and how does it relate to social and emotional aspects of learning? How does this relate to self belief and self worth
- Can processes of effective personal reflection be identified?
- How are personal agency and empowerment promoted or inhibited in pupils' lives?
- Are there implications for moral development and social action?
- To what extent is 'emotional development' linked with 'spiritual development?
- Are there implications for the whole education service?

1.8 Theorising and argument.

This research project explores the extent to which some young people can be turned from having no hope and motivation to become achievers, by being encouraged to develop positive mental attitudes. The project pre-existed this research (Bigger, 2005). This dissertation examines the educational processes underlying the project and its evaluation, seeking to determine whether some psychological and educational processes might be of more general application. There is particular emphasis on two:
  a) the emphasis on total positivity in pedagogy; and
  b) the process of deep reflection using thought-provoking imagery

The agenda know as critical studies (underlined in "critical action research") is that of equity, justice and transformation. This has been fused with ethnography (Fetterman 1984, 1993). This has informed our study.

We explore psychological, emotional and cognitive theoretical lines of enquiry, exploring self worth, personal, social and emotional education, social action and citizenship, and spiritual education. In particular, humanistic and educational psychology are important perspectives. This combination of theoretical perspectives will be used to assess the effectiveness of a new means of working with challenging pupils working on the causes of disaffection rather than the symptoms. That is not to say that treating symptoms (e.g. by giving a young person boundaries) may not still be needed: but a higher ambition is getting pupils to impose their own boundaries through an understanding of what kind of people they wish to become, and consequently a strong sense of agency (feeling of being in control rather than powerless) and feeling of self worth. It could however show the opposite, and suggest other mechanisms at work.

This study concentrates on theoretical discussion of processes underlying data that the ethnographer Clifford Geertz defined as "thick description". It seeks validity by ensuring that all theoretical viewpoints are openly discussed by the SYEP team, and agreements and disagreements noted. Data which pertains to educational progress are given priority in chapter four, and I give lengthy quotations in order to present the experience effectively. Other lengthy field data has to be embedded in discussions of context and development in more succinct ways. The literature review (chapter two) places the work in a broader theoretical context. The theoretical discussion (chapter five) uses SYEP data to add to these research fields. The concluding chapter assesses the potential of this work and suggests future actions for the project, and for educational research generally.

The Tranquillity Zone in the Central Office.

Annex 1: Data extract
BBC Television feature item July 2007:
Voiced over a clip of the Tranquillity Zone in a primary school:
"Children go on an inner journey in which they visualise their gems of inestimable value. These gems are personal qualities that each child possesses that make them unique and special, such as kindness, forgiveness, love and compassion."
Cut to Toni, age 12:
"Before I came here I felt angry and stressed but when I come in here I felt my bad emotions run out of my body."
Cut to Vicky, aged 19:
"I thought about ending everything, ending my life. When I came here I realised I didn't have to end my life but there is a life worth living. They taught me that."

Learning to soul-search is vital to development, looking inside themselves and unlocking potential that could have been lost for ever. This approach is backed by research from the University of Worcester.
Cut to Stephen Bigger:
"It's getting young people to change the picture of themselves in their heads, and say, Yes, I have potential, I can do something, by working hard I can get to University, or get the job I want, and make good relationships. Then all the things they couldn't do before become open to them."
Editing by Tony Arnese, BBC.

Annex 2: Data Extract
Publicity statements, SYEP
SYEP Promotional Video 2001.
The project creator said:

"The SYEP aims really at creating an environment for young people to start becoming aware of their potential and developing their potential. The way I look at it is that its as if every human being has a light that has to be switched on. ..
As the project expands, we need to have more and more people who can run the course with the young people with the right attitude, with the right motives, with a certain amount of power that influences these young people, but it's the power of example" **.**
The first co-ordinator said,
"The project is really a catalyst for self awareness. Once the young people have begun to understand their own value there are some really practical outcomes. For example, a lot of the young people feel more motivated to do well at school.
As the young people become more empowered, their desire to help other people really increases. Level 2 of the project is about nurturing this really powerful aspiration. The unique environment created by the Youth Empowerment Project has really benefited a range of young people. Now we really want to develop the project further by developing our sequence of courses, but also creating stronger partnerships with more schools and more youth organizations as well." .

Tranquillity Zones in Two Schools

Tranquillity Zones in Two Schools

Two
Literature review.

SYEP is an educational programme with psychological, emotional and cognitive roots. This includes philosophical enquiry into human meaning and moral judgement. This literature review covers this range. The project team claim that it contributes to spiritual education, so this will be explored.

2.1 Literature about SYEP.

In summer 2006 the local Education Psychology Service (EPS) commissioned a report on SYEP by two trainees (Barnham and Stanley-Duke, 2006). This superficial snapshot used a simple qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews. The pupils interviewed had limited experience of SYEP. They bemoaned the lack of pre-post data, which was in fact available. They concluded the project to be a social skills training intervention: the SYEP team view it quite differently as an emotional literacy/personal understanding intervention. The report recommended (based on a single parent comment) more liaison with parents, not triangulating this with the team's activities in this area. The project was viewed as working best with pupils of low in self esteem and self confidence. The report draws a positive conclusion:

> "This research indicates that the SYEP provided a safe, non-academic environment in which the children learnt about themselves, their feelings and shared valuable experiences with their peers. This appears to have provided psychological and behavioral responses that have diminished the potential for physical, emotional or psychological stressful events in their lives and appears to have enabled them to cope better in school". (p.31)

They note that they had not discovered the precise mechanism, suggesting only that feeling special (the 'Hawthorn Effect') may have been a factor.

2.2 Tranquillity and meditation

A scheme in Liverpool, 'The Quiet Room', was an early intervention therapeutic experience for the early years (Spalding, 2000) of which SYEP were unaware (see now http://www.aquietplace.co.uk). The room was designed to produce a multi-sensory experiences with different kinds of play spaces for exploration, story corners, murals and soft play areas. The room was managed by a range of therapists who used whatever therapeutic strategies they felt helpful, including visualisation, metaphor building, story, and relaxation techniques. It was rich in expertise and expensive in time and resources, and was short-lived. The children attended this room daily for a six week period, and parents could also take part. There will certainly be severe cases that require trained therapists to tackle: but like in other forms of therapy, there are things the generalist educationalist can do to sift out cases for the therapists. Some features are superficially similar, but age range and philosophy are different.

Encouraging pupils to meditate has been attempted in the past, usually to develop understanding of religious meditation. This has been referred to as 'stilling' (Beasley, 1992) drawing inspiration from Christian retreats. Silent contemplation has been explored in religious education (Stone nd [1992]). Both used relaxing mind imagery, story and 'debriefing' – discussion after the experience. One story involved 'the wise person'. [1] SYEP draws inspiration from

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[1] Buddhist meditation is included in religious education syllabuses. SCAA promoted 'learning from religion' as an attainment target (which I would argue is more accurately articulated as 'personal and social learning derived from aspects of the study of religion'). Of course, personal learning ought to include examples of harmful religious doctrine and practice, as well as good.

religious teachings whilst ensuring that personal learning is open and critical, with educational purpose.

2.3 Educational parallels
Circle Time.

One popular method of eliciting discussion is through circle time. The narrowness of the National Curriculum led to attempts to promote informal curriculum such as personal and social learning about relationships, and emotional well-being. Since the 1988 Education Reform Act starts with the words 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural education', these central themes are required to permeate subject teaching (Bigger and Brown, 1999). Circle Time structures opportunities for discussion (sitting in a circle) on personal, moral and social issues. Often this had a therapeutic function, that is getting pupils to reconsider their attitudes and behaviour. A Birmingham LA scheme called it 'Mediation'. Jenny Mosley devised 'Quality Circle Time' (1996), with practical publications for teachers. SYEP was not derived from this, but approaches group discussion in similar ways: a 'magic pencil' gives participants permission to speak, as a toy or stick is used in circle time.

2.4. Psychological perspectives
Humanistic Psychology

Maslow's pursuit of self-actualisation and self-realization (1971) is complex to achieve. He reports (1971:71f) research by Jones on group therapy with young people after which they ceased to be prejudiced (although prejudice had never been an explicit topic of the discussion). Carl Rogers shifted the power in a counselling encounter from the therapist to the 'client', changing the diagnosis-treatment process to a personal development and growth process. He applied this to other areas of life ('person-centred approaches'), including education in which power becomes shared between teachers and students, who are encouraged to become more responsible for their curriculum and progress (Rogers, 1978:69-89). There is a great emphasis 'on becoming a person' (Rogers, 1967). Opening up students holistically could benefit their relationships (Rogers, 1978:78-9). John Holt, (1984a, 1984b) and Ivan Illich (1971, 1974) critiqued education as failing pupils, producing dependent, non-thinking adults by authoritarian methods based on fear and compliance. Rollo May, R. (1969) emphasized free will (that is, independence). Deci and Ryan (1985) propounded the self-determination theory of motivation and personality, which involves the internalizing of understanding and agency:

> "We pointed out that in schools, the facilitation of more self-determined learning requires classroom conditions that allow satisfaction of these three basic human needs—that is that support the innate needs to feel connected, effective, and agentic as one is exposed to new ideas and exercises new skills." (Ryan and Deci, 2000:65).

These psychological processes are fundamentally central within SYEP. "Connected, effective, and agentic" provides a helpful theoretical tool to analyse the underlying process.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) or Emotional Literacy.

Kathryn Weare (2004) argues for the emotionally literate school. Disenchantment with the narrow IQ test as the only means of measuring a person's abilities led to broadening the concept of intelligence to include multiple intelligences, and emotional intelligence (EI). Multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983, 1993, 2000) is better described as multifaceted intelligence. EI was first proposed in the scientific work of Salovey and Mayer in 1990[2], and popularised by Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998) as a tool for identifying and developing business leaders. It became

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[2] Further developed into MSCEIT version 2 (the Mayer, Salovey, Carusso EI Test).

a poorly defined 'bandwagon' based on unreasoned claims (Murphy, 2006 pp. 41, 301). Bar-On (2000) talked of Emotional Quotient (EQ) and produced an extensive list of traits and intra-personal and inter-personal abilities to manage stress and mood.

Murphy et al (2006) sets out (with 26 academics from applied psychology) to salvage anything worthwhile about EI[3]. The 15 chapters covered definition, measurement; limits; and improving EI research and applications. The case for saying that EI is an *intelligence* is denied. Brody shows that general intelligence (*g*) is the only accurate predictor of performance. Spector and Johnson (chapter 14) argue: "To some extent, the debate over whether it is appropriate to call EI an intelligence … is a rhetorical issue that distracts from the more important questions" (p.341) about understanding the emotions. The measurement scales of EI are held to be generally meaningless as they hide too much variation with over-broad criteria with test answers based either on expert judgement (mostly white male) or on broad consensus. Such judgements are rarely unanimous and unproblematic. High scorers will be conformists who give the usual answer. Many of the Goleman and Bar-On criteria coincide (p.72) with Costa and McCrae's (1992) 'Big Five' personality factors (agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience). Catherine Daus sees emotional abilities as separate from personality and cognitive tests and predict a person with positive social relations and robust mental health. So, there are important general issues with emotional understanding, but how these might be measured and distinguished from other measurements of ability and personality are now only just being researched.

Zohar and Marshall (2000, 2004) proposed a model of spiritual quotient (SQ) and 'spiritual intelligence' applied to management. This Jungian-based psychotherapy model is a development of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (2004:38-39). The broad secular definition of spirituality is "that which gives life and definition to our humanity …to place our enterprises in a frame of wider meaning and purpose" (2004, p.29) with an emphasis on reflection, transforming and improving. "sensitive to the deepest meanings of human life"; and "higher motivation" (p.29-34). They list positive attributes, some relating to personality, others to moral awareness, pointing to attitudes of helpfulness rather than exploitation.
Marshall's Scale of Motivation (p.39) is a 16 point negative and positive continuum explicitly derived from Maslow. The top three are in descending order: *enlightenment*, *world soul* and *higher service*. Spirituality, as distinct from piety, personality and moral awareness, is viewed as positive and helpful.

Goleman and The Dalai Lama (2002) explore how to overcome destructive emotions, showing how brain science, properly conducted, will have a future contribution to make. Ryback (2006) from the field of humanistic psychotherapy, points to two concepts newly emerging in this field – mindfulness, and deep empathy. Mindfulness uses (Buddhist) meditation to relieve stress in acute medical cases (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Ryback comments:
> The main purpose of this article is to highlight a new acceptance of and interest in brain function because brain structure itself can be influenced by how we think and feel. Self-determination, a keystone of humanistic psychology, still rules. (2006:476)

and
> Mindful practice, stable attachment, and effective therapy, all three are basics of the coherent brain leading to an awakened state. These are and have been the values of humanistic psychology all along—known as

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[3] I review this in detail in the Journal of Beliefs and Values, http://eprints.worc.ac.uk/63/

individual integrity, social harmony, and open-hearted empathy. (2006:289):

The use of mindful meditation and yoga to prevent counsellor burnout is discussed by Christopher et al. (2006).

Self esteem

Raising self-esteem is a frequent educational and self-help aim (e.g. Bracken, 1996) but is imprecise. It is confused with self confidence; and it is linked with depression and low expectations linked to socio-economic status. Blascovich & Tomaka (1991:115) view self esteem as "the extent to which one prizes, values, approves, or likes oneself". Measures of self-esteem include the superficial but common Rosenberg's Scale (1965) and Coopersmith's Inventory (1967, based partly on work by Carl Rogers), a 'like me/not like me' instrument with 50 questions (there is a 25 question version). Self esteem scores reflect the instrument's assumptions, generally based on western individualism, and have to be treated with caution.

There are crucial issues of definition, in that self esteem, self worth, self importance and other effects are mixed. Bagley and Mallick (1997) for example use the standard tests statistically: but "I think bad thoughts" is said to indicate low self esteem; Catholic children unsurprisingly confessed to more bad thoughts and are scored lower on self esteem, although it might suggest that they are higher on self-awareness. We need new discussion on definitions: uncritically following old instruments is a mistake.

Mruk (1999) emphasises (after Branden, 1969) that both self worthiness (feeling worthwhile) and self competence (able to achieve and solve problems) should be developed side by side. He uses phenomenological method – that is studying the phenomenon (self esteem) through many cases and seeking generalisations. He distinguishes 'authentic' self esteem from 'defensive' self esteem which hides inner insecurities. A lack either of worthiness or competence, and unconscious self-deception to cover this up, may reveal itself in arrogance or anger. His model (p.165) uses *worthiness* and *competence* as two continua (Figure 1 [his figure 5.5]):

Figure 1. Mruk's model 5.5 of self esteem.
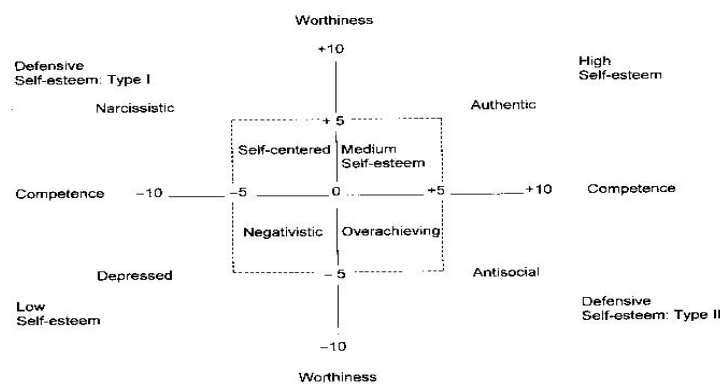
SYEP   is

FIGURE 5.5   Clinically significant self-esteem problems.

particularly concerned with 'self-worthiness'. Of this Mruk says:

> "We know that the worthiness dimension of self-esteem is much harder to envision, mainly because it is more experiential and deals with more subjective matters, such as self and social values. But values are judgments of merit or worth in a given domain, which means that one either rises above some standard or falls below it.." (1999: p.157)

Insight from research on this could therefore be valuable. Mruk also views self esteem as developmental. His enhancement scheme (pp. 210-216) works through positive feedback, cognitive restructuring and pattern breaking. After this, competence is developed through problem-solving leading to a self-esteem action plan. These are contained in SYEP which 'scaffolds' self esteem development through discussion (feedback), metaphors and "visualisations" (cognitive restructuring), and activities challenging preconceptions (pattern breaking).

2.5 Developing thinking

SYEP invites pupils to think about the foundations of self knowledge. Metalearning (learning about learning) has always high on the curriculum agenda and education. Lateral thinking (De Bono, 1968) instrumental enrichment (Feuerstein, see Sharron and Coulter, 1994), creativity (Ambrose, Cohen and Tannenbaum 2003) and learning through experience (Dewey 1938) has all been influential. Meaning-making is a rational process: Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) 'zone of proximal development' describes the enhancement that a mentor/teacher gives to personal development. Our mental 'paradigm' needs revising or replacing in the light of new knowledge (Kuhn, 1962 used the term 'paradigm shift'). SYEP encourage pupils to think deeply and critically about life issues and moral scenarios. Antagonistic to the view of young people being told what to do, it encourages pupils to think for themselves and through discussion. Facilitators are instructed to be non-directive, keeping power relationships as neutral as possible, eliminating negative evaluations of young people. A positive way of responding has always to be sought, a way which will promote thinking. Thinking skills literature usually focuses on cognitive skills; holistic thinking is an aspect that needs greater attention.

2.6 Visualisations and stories

Relaxing visualisations are used therapeutically to reduce stress, but SYEP go much further. For our study, we have an interest in how the self comes to terms with personal and relational issues. We depict our understanding through visual models, and exemplar stories. SYEP asks pupils to visualise story metaphors such as the mine of gems of inestimable worth (i.e. one's personal qualities). Pupils visualise scenarios which show the consequences of action and behaviour. Our mental models structure what we call reality. We tend to model ourselves on other people's expectations. The social psychologists Smith, Bond and Kagitçibasi, (2006:102-126) use the term *self-construal* for how we make sense of our world: *autonomous, independent,* and *interdependent self construal* (pp.102f). Making our own decisions after listening to others is *autonomous-relational self construal* (p.110). For Bandura (2002), collective efficacy and self efficacy need to work in combination.

Self construal might be negative or positive, and this research seeks ways of turning the negative into a positive in individual lives. Fromm (1965) after analysis of Nazi psychology used the terms *biophilia* (loving life) and *necrophilia* (loving death). A contemporary holocaust survivor, Jacob Milgram (1974) persuaded volunteers to give electric shocks to others in a neighbouring room on the orders of the researchers. It covertly studied people's obedience under orders. Most administered sufficient voltage to kill. A 1971 Stanford University

scenario study of relationships between prisoners and their guards (Zimbardo, 2007) showed that a system can cause most people to become repressive. A minority only, 'heroic resisters', campaigned against the orders given. SYEP encourages 'heroic resistance'.

SYEP is also non-authoritarian and promotes **empowerment** and **agency**. The term empowerment is the political dimension of collective self worthiness, used for people being involved in their own affairs and in decisions affecting their futures in ways which are open, democratic and which encourage feelings of agency – that is that they can proactively change their lives. Paulo Freire (1970) mainstreamed politicising empowerment (consciousness raising) by problematising all power relationships. Learning is ascribed personal/political motivations and goals: the knowledge that we can make our lives better gives us precise goals which we pursue with urgency. Critical analyses of **power** and **influence** ask who benefits, whose discourse will be heard and whose will be silenced? (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Education should benefit the learner cognitively, socially, emotionally and politically. It should open up a future that would not otherwise have been possible.

The heart of SYEP strategy is to tell a story in such a way that the pupils personalise the theme, seeing things through the words of their 'wise person'. Psychoanalysis call this "introjecting the good object", for example visualising internalised attachment or mentor figures (Storr, 1997[1988]:19). Children become part of stories they read, engaging with it at a level between reality and pretence. Armitt (2005:196) on fantasy fiction notes, after Todorof and Marin, that readers enter a 'between worlds' location, a neutral space, where they are involved and not spectators. The story is existential inasmuch as it explores human experience. Children identify and empathise with characters: it is easy to enter into a fictional family and community, readers becomes fellow traveller with the fictional characters. At this level, existential stories are about ourselves, encouraging us to reflect. *Social stories* are used with children on the autistic spectrum (Howley and Arnold, 2005) to give them a way of visualising social processes.

2.7 Moral development
In evolutionary terms, humans are aggressive (Lorenz, 1966) animals with self awareness (Fromm, 1965: 116f) who understand something of cause, effect and consequence, even if they misunderstand more than they understand (Wolfert, 2006). The need to avoid anarchy and to balance power is an amoral social process. Morality may have emerged as a survival strategy, winning friends aiding survival better than making enemies. However, virtues are different. Erich Fromm (1986[1949]:7) argued that the
> "sources of norms for ethical conduct are to be found in man's nature itself; that moral norms are based upon man's inherent qualities; and that their violation results in mental and emotional disintegration".

He contrasted humanistic ethics with authoritarian ethics, where norms come from outside. He concludes that ethical norms come from within:
> "Love is not a higher power which descends upon man nor a duty which is imposed upon him; it is his own power by which he relates himself to the world and makes it truely his" (p.14)

Faith in one's inner potentiality (pp.197-210) is a 'character trait' and not obedience to an authoritarian doctrine. Adolescent moral development is dominated by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), building on Piaget's foundation. This proposed developmental stages in moral thinking, along a continuum from egocentricity to universal altruism. This itself became the basis of the spirituality stage theory of James Fowler (1981). However, that there is a

developmental pattern is problematic (Carr, 2002, 2004; Alexander and Carr,, 2006).

This emphasis on people developing moral standards has taken a practical form in *restorative justice* which, asserts Strang and Braithwaite (2001), that punishment does not help a child to learn social skills, change their attitudes, neutralise their anger and turn them into positive members of society, but rather creates resentment and defiance, and an anti-authoritarian sub-culture in which an anti-social act becomes a triumph, with the victim's feelings not recognized. Restorative justice deals primarily with offenders, asking what is the best way to minimize the likelihood of it happening again, through intervention and support to explore the consequnces of actions. This is applied also to everyday life and school. It offers six principles:
1. Foster awareness of how others have been affected
2. Avoid scolding, as this causes defensiveness
3. Involve offenders actively
4. Accept ambiguity (fault may be complicated)
5. Separate the deed from the doer – a bad deed does not mean a bad person.
6. See every offence and conflict as an opportunity for learning – look to positive outcomes, learning rather than control.

Disaffected pupils have often experienced the opposite of these six principles. They have little awareness of consequeces; they block out criticism; they are punished and feel it unfair; they feel branded as bad, useless and stupid; and they have no way of moving forward educationally. This situation is a natural result of teachers feeling that control is their prime concern; however, confrontation is likely to cause problems rather than resolving them. SYEP's emphasis on disaffected pupils puts this project firmly in similar territory. Pupils involved were underperforming at school, and disengaged from learning. I consider later how SYEP extends the basic process of restorative justice.

2.8 Spiritual development, spiritual education.
SYEP sees itself as a *spiritual education* intervention. Spiritual education is on today's political map of education (Marples, 2006 opposes this) and is relevant to the secular as well as the religious[4] . A significant new research text from applied psychologists (Roehlkepartain *et al.,* 2006) provides a comprehensive collection of new studies on spirituality and religiosity.[5] Although emphasising that spiritual development could be religious or secular, it generally overlaps the two. Much of the underlying research was on the development of religiosity and not valid for spiritual development. Moreover, since religiosity involves accepting dogma rather than free exploration, it can be viewed as *counter* to broad spiritual development. One helpful definition given by Wagener and Malony is:
"Spirituality …is the essential potentiality for addressing the ultimate questions that are intrinsic to the experience of being human". It is personal, experiential and integrative including transcendence, morality, belonging, connectedness, meaning and purpose (Roehlkepartain *et al.,* 2006:139). Coles (1990) links this with life-coping and transformational strategies.

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[4] Bigger (2007) explores this further. I briefly set out the agenda in the introduction to Bigger and Brown (1999).
[5] It and the companion encyclopedia of religious and spiritual development, launched the Search Institute's *Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* in Minneapolis, USA. This proposes *40 developmental assets* that young people need if they are to grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible individuals are available on http://www.search-institute.org/assets/40AssetsList.pdf (accessed 10.2.2007). I reviewed both works in detail for the *Journal of Beliefs and Values.*

Sir Alister Hardy argued in detail that spirituality is biological and evolutionary (Hardy, 1975, 1979, 1984). William James (1982) had in 1902 studied it as a psychologist; and Rudolph Otto (1918) had viewed "the holy" as a human phenomenon. The evolutionary biologist Wolpert (1966) sees belief in the supernatural as the abuse of causal thinking. Richards and Bergin (1997) applied the concept of spirituality to therapeutic counselling. The 'sacred' are those precious things beyond negotiation, on which people base their lives. Some visualise these theocentrically; yet a pacifist vegetarian declares clear secular sacred ground. We need to research how atheists can express integrated holistic thinking on human potential. Peter Reason, on participatory action research, argued that "meaning and mystery are restored to human experience, so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place" (Peter Reason 1994: 10). SYEP would echo the phrase by Benson (p.488): "spiritual thriving as an active process". It will be interesting for future research to consider the process whereby symbolic visualisations become reified into a belief of reality. Rosalind Pearmain (2005) studying personal transformation at two religious summer-schools (Society of Friends and Hindu) emphasised the 'safe haven', or place of safety, our sense of home deep in our psyche. The spiritual domain is often linked with education for the whole person (Erricker et. al, 1997; Zohar and Marshall, 2000, 2004). Maxine Green (2006) applies this to Youth Work .

2.9 Summary of chapter.
I have brought together a cluster of theoretical constructs to illumine the question of how emotionally disturbed children can be given the tools to transform their lives. We are also interested in whether the processes involved can be generalised to all pupils.
This dissertation seeks to make a contribution to the following fields:
   a) emotional literacy, intelligence and psychological wellbeing (developing tools to develop healthy positive minds).
   b) Self-worth (seeing value and richness inside oneself leading to control, independence, autonomy and aspiration
   c) Moral education and development (making a contribution to the community; positive dealings)
   d) Spiritual education (holistic self-actualisation which bridges theistic and non-theistic philosophies).

Three
Methodology.

3.1 Qualitative Research.

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, focusing on quality of processes and effects rather than measuring indicators statistically. The data will come from observation, interviews and forms of feedback which is then discussed and interpreted, drawing on a variety of perspectives, before reaching informed conclusions. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring and analysing qualities and quality, values, processes, relationships and vision.[6]. There were many experiments in qualitative design in the 1960s and 1970s, including action research (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliott, 1991), case study research (Yin 1992) and illuminative evaluation (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). All use similar methods in different ways and for different purposes. Qualitative method does not claim hard reproducible experimental proof but illuminates process by collecting multi-faceted data. Its conclusions attempt to explain rather than prove.

In identifying this study as 'case study' (Yin, 1992; Stake, 1995), I am making it clear that generating change has not been my responsibility (although change has been generated within the case being reported), and that project evaluation has not been my main concern, although in doing my work the project has separately been evaluated and been taught to evaluate itself (Bigger, 2005). This demonstrated that the SYEP strategy in generalworked; my concern in this dissertation is to discover why. Case studies are over time synthesised thematically. Our distinctive theme is about empowering pupils to become effective and emotionally fulfilled individuals, and could be set alongside other cases with the same aim. I hope therefore that this study will encourage others to study this theme in their own way.

3.2 Ethnographic Case Study
The case study is an example of practice, with clear boundaries, which can be observed and reported. Sample sections of the field-notes are presented as Appendix A, covering meetings, training, interviews and school-provision. Various theoretical perspectives can be applied to it so that processes and significance can be opened up and the 'case' interpreted. Some case studies are descriptive and relatively untheorised, offering illustrations of practice, telling it 'as it is'. Analysis can move towards an interpretative framework, asking questions rather than describing. This case study has clear boundaries, a project which began in 2000 and is still continuing, working with schools in economically disadvantaged areas. A case study describes in depth and explains a set of circumstances. A case study can take many forms: I have approached my material ethnographically through observation and interviewing over four years, coming to terms with explicit and tacit theorising, multiple perspectives, and a potential conflict between the researcher's (etic) and observed (emic) points of view [7]. A researcher needs a voice to explain, interpret, consider and wrestle with difficult data and concepts. The data is also full of other voices, some loud and others nearly silent. Research has to deal with complexity and ambiguity: the researcher has to avoid gullibility and simplistic assumptions, or hijacked by a

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[6] Its development was a response to crude positivism drawing on John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of education as democratic experiential involvement; and C Wright Mill's seminal *Sociological Imagination* (1959) against sociologists' positivist objectivist assumptions. Bryman (2000) has collected four volumes of papers on ethnographic methodology.
[7] These terms were created by Kenneth Pike (1967) modelled on the linguistic terms phonemic and phonetic and borrowed by the social sciences.

particular power group. Each 'voice' has its own way of theorising in different ways which have to be navigated. Many arguments have to be weighed before conclusions are made.

The ethnographer Clifford Geertz (1975) first defined this analytical process as 'thick description'. Description is valid in research where data is insufficient to theorise but can never be simplistic; the data is itself complex and implies relationships, processes and structures. Description has to be multi-layered and to recognize underlying complexity, the larger cultural networks. In my study, 'thickness' of description incorporates potentialities stemming from explicit discussions of religion, theology, psychology, philosophy and education. It is about human development and society more than about targets and performance indicators. Hammersley (1999) rightly criticises overambitious claims that ethnographic description can theorise, and the simplistic assumption that these accurately reproduce the circumstances studied. Claims of researcher objectivity are false (Van Maanen, 1988; Goldbart and Hustler, 2005 [8]). Rather, we have to ensure that the argument is explicit, coherent and rigorous. Ethnographers can be outsiders or insiders; each have to control for bias. In this study the ethnographer is an outsider to the project although treated as a team member whose detachment was valued.

A case study over time records a dynamic process, diachronic rather than a synchronic snapshot. In the current project, developmental change takes place, not under the control of the researcher but instigated by the team. Suggestions drawn from the research or researcher are not privileged. 'Participative action research', (PAR, Reason and Bradbury, 2001) is not an appropriate framework simply because I, the researcher, was an external observer rather than an internal driver – but the consultative strategies within it have been applicable and helpful. The SYEP project has changed over time; the ethnographic case study allows me to chart the causes, processes and implications.

Commercial evaluations determine the extent to which a funded project has met objectives. It is interested in targets, performance indicators and value for money (Patton, 2002). The qualitative 'illuminative evaluation' (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) and 'empowerment evaluation' (Fetterman, 1984, 1993) investigated processes in ways which would empower the people involved democratically. Fetterman's work is commercial, the external paid consultant avoiding telling people what to do but seeking to empower them to evaluate themselves. I similarly have facilitated self-evaluation, which will sustain itself after my work has finished. In this dissertation I examine the whole process analytically to seek to explain why it has the effects that have been clearly reported.

3.3 Theorising, interpreting and reflecting.
Researcher objectivity (including in experimental science) is now problematised and researcher subjectivity and reflexivity taken more seriously. The term 'reflexivity' refers to the process accounting for subjectivity and controlling for bias. The researcher interprets an informant's information subjectively, and from this dialogue 'knowledge' is claimed. Good research draws on many perspectives, providing balance. For Whitehead and McNiff (2006) "Living Theory" happens when researchers learn about themselves, as well as their objective world, developing theory to live by.

Research does not 'uncover' hidden facts and certainties, **but seeks better explanations and interpretations**. They may wish these to be predictive and

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[8] A wide spectrum of papers (four volumes) on ethnography is collected in Bryman (2000).

test this experimentally – to claim that the approach can be replicated.. Generalisability may require some degree of predictivity, showing that a set of circumstances researched might explain other situations and suggest solutions that could work there also. The researcher should grow in understanding and constantly return to the data and to the field. Informants modify their opinions over time, even as a result of the research dialogue. What an informant says once in an interview is partial, possibly inauthentic if they have another agenda, such as the desire to impress, to hide faults, or to justify. Some echo what they have heard recently. Some are opinionated, others malleable. The researcher needs to catch this entire process.

Whilst I the researcher am an outsider, full access has encouraged participation in the programme *as though an insider*. The insider/outsider tension is apparent in ethnographic studies generally (Powdermaker's "stranger and friend", Atkinson et al. 2001:32): the early customs of social anthropology that the 'educated western outsider' was a 'better' commentator has not stood the test of time but is now seen as cultural and academic imperialism. In order to understand in depth the people and circumstances being studied, the researcher needs to cast aside prejudices, assumptions and presuppositions that may be neither recognized or articulated, to see the issue as though through the eyes of the target group. Studies of theists by non-theists are at least as difficult as studies of racists by anti-racists, or of cannibals by non-cannibals. To achieve rich data, the researcher has to be deeply embedded; tenable conclusions will only come when insider perspectives and outsider detachment are in some sort of balance and harmony. This concern for understanding daily experiences, in partnership with those doing the experiencing, places this study at the *ethnomethodological* end of ethnography (Atkinson et al., 2001:118-135) where trying to understand matters from the insiders' points of view is considered crucial. In achieving this it draws on phenomenological method, particularly of Schutz (1967).

3.3.1 **Phenomenology**
Phenomenology has been widely used in academic religious studies to find a methodology to understand faith and belief. Phenomenology itself is more general (Atkinson et al., 2001: 136-144). The method requires the researcher to remove from consideration ("bracket out") their own assumptions of truth and understand the issue as though from the perspective of those researched. As a philosophy it asserts both that there is a real world to be glimpsed, and that we only have our imperfect sense perceptions. Its goal was *eidetic vision*, that is a glimpse of 'true knowledge' lying behind the phenomenon manifested. The phenomenon is the outward 'appearance' or 'manifestation' of something deeper. That truth is discernable beneath appearance was the complex transcendental philosophical position created by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20th century and elaborated by Schutz (1967). This led to an interest in everyday life experience, that is best developed in Garfinkel's *ethnomethodology* (ref). Psychologists have developed this into Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) through talking therapy. Seidman (1998:3,9) spoke of 'phenomenologically-based interviewing'. Phenomenological existential therapy (Straus, 1966; Moustakas, 1966, 1994) is important for our discussion – psychologists who work from the patient life story rather than through Freudian or Jungian analytical assumptions.

Seeing as others do (the plural here requires there to be multiple perspectives) does not remove the necessity of the researcher having to form a view which will be informed by seeking to discover what other people mean by terms and ideas. This has implications for Bhabha's discussion (1992: 37) of "third space" of enunciation. Bhabha is focusing on inequities and status differential between colonials and colonised, where true dialogue is only possible when the fixed agendas of one's status is left behind. The third space is a discursive process of

regarding all signifiers as non-static and non-fixed but available for people to use when creating or recreating their identity. There is thus no status quo because all power/status assumptions are fluid. This debate is specific to colonial relationships, and generalisation will be not without problems (Childs and Williams, 1997). The third space resembles Kurt Lewin's notion of unfreezing and refreezing opinion: making all certainties uncertain is the only way of establishing a new consensus. It also resembles Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, that process of making sense of life with the help of others. One's own point of view is reassembled with the help of others to enhance understanding and development. These cognitive processes may help us understand what is happening in SYEP.

Dialogic interviewing is an interview which is a dialogue and discussion as much as a collection of 'facts'. The interview is a social encounter and problematisable – not a straightforward transfer of information. The interviewer has to be skilled in listening and probing, in ways which neutralise power differentials between interviewer and interviewee. Fontana (2002:161-175) explores interviews as problematic accounts, citing Norman Denzin and Marcus and Fischer's dialogic approach; Eder and Fingerson (2002: 181-201) in make similar points about interviewing children and adolescents, calling interviews 'interactive' with a need for reciprocity. The purpose of such interviews is not to obtain information but to explore ideas. They are akin to philosophical dialogues.

This enables us to appraise the issue of multiple voices in research. 'Informants' can easily become co-researchers, fellow travellers towards understanding. Whilst the researcher has the dominant voice, in that their study privileges their conclusions, there needs to be a recognition that with this privilege comes responsibility, to fairly represent the views of others within the case researched. I have sought out therefore the view of young people, parents and trainees as well as team members.

3.3.2 Perspectives and voices:

Controls for bias are needed to balance the researcher's (*etic* or "imposed *etic*") voice with the *emic* voices of those researched. A general rule is that the research fairly represents many voices, making transparent what the researcher has done with these views. Readers may find insight from some of these voices even if they disagree with the researcher's conclusions. These voices need to be representative, and broaden the data: the current concern for including the voices of the powerless, and of children, are examples of this. In this study, my *etic* argument takes account of *emic* perspectives and are discussed transparently over time with team members. Comment is made where we disagree.

'Voice' is dynamic rather than static. People alter their views after thought and discussion in ways which are crystallised as constructionism, as Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) *zone of proximal development*, and Bandura's social learning (2002). Conversation and dialogue are crucial for the building up of ideas and conceptual frameworks. In group interviews, co-construction can be seen and recorded as it happens.

3.3.3 Knowledge and truth.

To say we 'know' something does not mean it is wholly and absolutely true. We test and revise what we 'know' constantly. Knowledge is built up by interpretating the information we regard as evidence. We call this evidence *facts* but there are no facts we are absolutely certain about. A fact is something *we believe to be certain*. New evidence may in time change our minds. The study of *how we know what we think we know* is **epistemology.** The study of the reality underlying our lives is **ontology,** literally, 'the study of being'. By testing the reliability of the

evidence, we work towards the truth – but ultimately truth may not be reachable and we have to work with ambiguity. Of course 'believed to be true' is not the same as the uncompromising 'true', but each might be a different observer's interpretation of the same thing.

In education, the question "How do you know something works" is very difficult to answer; we have to put together the most persuasive case we can. This research discusses a programme that either works or doesn't – thus generating new knowledge. In reality, it may work for some and not others; and there may be constituent parts which are effective and others which are incidental. People involved may have views on these, which provide raw material to be interpreted rather than being definitive. The creation of new knowledge generally uses the language of reliability and validity. Research adds to knowledge and contributes to general understandings in the field of study. In the physical sciences, knowledge is a new explanation of things observed, which will then be further tested and developed. Knowledge changes over time, so what we now 'know' is more developed than what we once 'knew'. It is dynamic and not static. Therefore, knowledge does not mean 'things discovered' as much as 'things explained'. To be sure there may be a degree of discovery when new planets or previously unknown species are found; but *discovery*[9] is really the gateway to knowledge rather than the knowledge itself.

3.3.4 Sound and sufficient evidence
The evidence base for our argument needs to be persuasive, accurate, relevant, complete, sufficient and clearly understood. Our conclusions may stand or fall on this issue.

Reliability is the amount of confidence we can have that evidence was honestly obtained and whether other researchers are likely to have achieved similar results. These matters become very complex in qualitative research, when the circumstances being researched are dynamic, when dialogue creates a welcomed researcher effect that is not problematic in research terms, and when the knowledge generated is about issues and processes. A poorly skilled researcher may not have achieved so rich data. Reliability in this context is sought through openness, transparency, and the ability to check and track data.

Validity refers to the need for the data to be logically appropriate to the discussion. The conclusions should not be based upon data which does not bear the weight of the interpretation placed upon it, or indeed be evidence of something different.

Triangulation is often misunderstood.[10] It is an analogy taken from surveying and navigation where a value of the unknown (e.g. a height or position) is derived from measurements of the known. Massey (1999) objects that triangulation only works in positivistic cases, and that triangulation is wrongly used as the basis of proof claims in the social sciences. Qualitative research is not positivistic: triangulation cannot give us new values but we can improve the richness of our data, and hence validity of our conclusions, by increasing the variety of data sets, sampled over time, space and methods. We may interrogate the data with different theoretical assumptions and by using various investigators (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:141-4). Data richness depends entirely on the project, stimulated by the desire for the data sample not to be too narrow. For example, observing as well as interviewing strengthens our data as one confirms

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[9] An emphasis on discovery is a feature of *heuristic research*, related to the Greek work *eureka*.
[10] In educational research, the classic account is given in Cohen and Manion (1994).

or contradicts the other: but finding truth behind either is troublesome. Similarly, interviewing several times over a year or two ("time triangulation") offers a degree of diachronicity in which change and dynamic might be captured. Interpreting the data through the lenses of sociology, educational psychology, spiritual development, emotional literacy ("theoretical triangulation") shines a range of spotlights on possibilities. I do all these things in this dissertation to enrich the basis of my conclusions. Methodological triangulation resembles positivist triangulation: in my discussion on whether SYEP is effective, to say yes as all involved have observed it is one method; to say yes because academic and vocational results demonstrate it is another: these two could uncover a third value, that is the mechanism that makes it work.

3.3.5 Access and ethical issues.

Access was gained through invitation. SYEP wished to enhance their self evaluation processes, and I offered to help. There were threats to this potential research relationship: I do not share their religious convictions; and I do not gain personal benefit from their central activity, the Tranquillity Zone. I remained interested because young people involved clearly did find it beneficial. I wished to consider the process holistically and consider whether linked developments might also be beneficial. Although no mind is fully open, this tension between support and personal detachment was conscious, often discussed with the team, and helped to control bias. The team prized the outsider status and did not try to change this.

The three year relationship involved the team bidding for new and continuation funding and used my data to evidence their effective practice. My reports were not written primarily as political documents although I had some awareness of my underlying contribution to their funding. I was careful not to hold back negative data. Access to the project, schools and pupils involved was negotiated at the beginning of the research and renegotiated continually. The research was designed to bring benefits for each side: the project wished to develop their own data collection processes and learn how to evaluate their work; also they saw benefits in disseminating their work to a wider audience. The schools benefit in that the project works with pupils with whom every other strategy has failed. This is not to say that there might be potential benefits for *all* pupils; but its credibility has been tested with needy pupils.

Ethical issues for the project has to be separated from ethical issues for the research. For the project, the project staff have continually to negotiate with headteachers and governors, so are subject to constant ethical scrutiny. They are responsible with schools for the selection of pupils, and for decisions to withdraw pupils from some lessons for this alternative work. This research will explore the extent to which the project has acted ethically.

The research uses the common strategies of confidentiality and anonymity, particularly when concerned with personal testimony of life trauma and relationships. Some pupils for example claim to have been pulled back from the brink of suicide. However, many of those involved do not seek anonymity and have been interviewed and named in television and newspaper items in which they tell their story, which is therefore on public record. There are other ethnical issues that arise in interviewing when personal biographical information is disclosed. The reflective process and subsequent discussion can prove intrusive as people wrestle with personal issues. In interviews there comes a point when it becomes improperly intrusive to probe too deeply, or to report in transcripts. Any such conversation that is entered into the data has been done with special permission, sometimes with the insistence of interviewees who wants others to know.

The root of ethics is for research to attempt to be beneficial and not personally harmful to those involved. The Nuremburg ethical code after the second world war was designed to prevent experiments that contravened human rights. This is difficult to apply to non-experimental research in education. The decision on how much information to give can be controversial, if the results will be affected by this prior information. This however was not an issue in this research, where the whole process has been transparent to all involved. All people contacted were volunteers. The research was potentially beneficial with no possibilities for personal harm.

If it is an ethical concern to refrain from research which is harmful, it is also an ethical issue when potentially helpful research is prevented. I shall estimate in the conclusion where the balance lies in this case. Guidelines such as offered by BERA (2004) address the whole research industry, including not passing off the work of others as one's own. My research has included the element of developing a research capacity in the project team, to encourage them structurally to collect naturalistic data. Where I use this, I indicate its source. Equally in their own reports the project may use my data and my conclusions: again I try to make this transparent.

3.4 Data collection strategies, data sets and timeline: summary
The data collection/fieldwork took place over a three year period. Although the timeline contains overlapping of activities but the main order was:
1) Telephone and email interviews with leaders of the Bahá'í faith (to establish a context).
2) Observation and participation in planning and management meetings, the Tranquillity Zone and DZ; and training meetings, with DVR recordings of key elements;
3) Documentary analysis of project papers;
4) Development of data streams from and about participants;
5) Semi-structured interviews with staff responsible for the project in their schools, managers and politicians;
6) Dialogic interviews with central team members and key stakeholders;
7) Semi-structured interviews with children and young people;
8) Final assessment of benefits of the work for individual children.

Parents have been the hardest to reach. The school-based practitioners have been asked to survey parent opinion in whatever way they can and report this in interviews.

An ethnography requires *fieldnotes* which are computerised. A selection is included in the appendices. Field observations covered key meetings and events over a three year period. Field observations by team members also were encouraged, in order to move the project towards a research culture. I, the chief researcher, have been a 'fly on the wall', but a fly which asks questions and makes suggestions (not all accepted), a deliberate 'researcher effect'. The ethnographer in the field is similarly engaged in dialogue, and should not claim objectivity (van Maanan, 1986). This is a **naturalistic inquiry**. Being embedded with the project team has provided access and enabled data collection. This has meant being present when decisions are made, rather than having them reported later. I as ethnographer was an outsider without responsibility or project ownership for any part of the action, but not '*disinterested*'. Conclusions and recommendations that will be made in the final chapter will have been rehearsed with the team on many occasions, and some adopted in the course of the project development. The purpose of this research has been to generate, support and disseminate change in educational provision. It is in line therefore with the spirit of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work which has developed and refined into the

qualitative practice-based research that is dominant today (fully described in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The outside researcher can read into the project documentation, listen to discussions, and speak with all involved without having potential unreasoned convictions that the insiders have.

The dialogic interview.
Interviews vary in type and style (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). The usual types noted are structured, semi-structured and unstructured. I would describe my interview type as 'loosely structured', not as formalised as a semi-structured interview and following the flow of the speech, but certainly not without structure. The interview style is not often discussed: it can be

- inhibited or uninhibited,
- inhibiting or uninhibiting,
- natural or unnatural,
- interviewer dominated or not,
- receptive (to receive information) or discursive (to discuss information and issues),
- empathetic or adversarial.

I aim to be uninhibited and uninhibiting, natural, discursive and non-adversarial as the best way of obtaining rich data, with the interviewer never putting words in interviewees' mouths or suggesting answers, but still prepared to challenge and seek clarification where answers are not full or clear. Long experience of vocational and research interviewing feeds into this expertise. The interview is a discussion, but one in which the interviewer's own views do not impinge as the interviewee's views are explored in depth.

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Where possible interviews are conducted face to face but telephone interviews were also used. The telephone interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim as with face-to-face interviews. Permission was sought and granted so that the phone call was not a surprise. Respondents were informed about the recording and permission to record was always sought. One particular structured interview schedule required interviewees to think before response. These informants received the schedule in advance which has the added advantage that the informants may discuss the questions in their family or study group so that the interview itself gives various perspectives – for example from their children.

Group interviews included meetings with the project management team. These explored the aims, vision and operation of the program and discussed research methods and data. Group interviews with pupils were hard to manage but produced worthwhile data: in general individual interviews were preferred.

Observation evidence is being gathered through participation in events such as training, management groups and school sessions.

3.5   Analysis of data.
Substantive open coding (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004) was used, derived from Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin (1997), K. Charmaz, 2005). The process of GT is constant comparison, with patterns identified through emergent theoretical codes which build up from substantive to formal – that is, from the specific to the general. This may lead to illumination but not to proof, and results (as in most forms of research) have to be regarded as tentative. We will ask when concluding this single case study what level of generalisation and theorisation is possible. GT was designed to appeal to positivist peers and the interpretative developments of Charmaz (2000, 2005) which still

causes tensions.[11] Adele Clarke (2005) proposed a situational matrix to bring some structure (see Appendix 2). Thomas and James (2006) problematise the notions of ground, theory and discovery, arguing that we should describe our analysis simply as qualitative, to avoid positivist misapprehensions: this I have adopted.

Open coding marks portions of data with a transparent summary or label noting its potential significance. These can be relational, bringing together different data-bits in interesting ways. For example *personal qualities* are a common theme of which *valuing through metaphor* is an interesting combination. This for example marks the use of the SYEP phrase *humans are a mine of gems of inestimable value*. Hycner (1999:153) demonstrates coding in phenomenological analysis of interviews ending with "determining themes" of his interview: the tremendousness of looking; realization; its effects; inability to move; interpersonal dimension.

Focused codes: the most significant codes are:
*   *valuing through metaphor,*
*   *personal agency through service,*
*   *self control through self understanding,*
*   *self diagnosis through visualisation,*
*   *self understanding through dialogue,*
*   *empowerment through confidence,*
*   *building confidence through positive communications,*

Axial codes: material can be gathered under open and focused codes, but is atomised and disparate. Axial codes look for coherence and draw the argument together. The argument being constructed has to do with self development taking place through dialogue, discussion and social action, in which symbol and metaphor are used to create mental success pictures. The three themes of self, service and symbol may help me to organise these points.
*   **Self** leads to *agency*, dealing with our *personal world.*
*   **Service** leads to *social action*, dealing with our *social world*
*   **Symbol** leads to metaphor, story and visualisation, dealing with our conceptual/intellectual meaning-making world.

Theoretical questions: Glaser in particular looked beyond the particular to see how the study can drawn from and contribute to wider theory. This is not in contradiction to the call to 'ground' the conclusions on the data itself. In one sense it is a further step once the coding of the particular case has been completed; in another sense the researcher needs to be 'sensitised' to know what to look for and hence not miss any significance. I discuss this below in '**sensitising concepts'**.

The following theoretical codes may be relevant to my study:
*   Causes: what is the cause of low self agency?
*   Contexts: are the features discussed generalisable to all contexts or limited to a few?
*   Consequences: can we demonstrate self control, esteem, purpose, wellbeing and other life consequences?

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[11] The difference lies in the level of 'truth' that is produced – for Glaser the data is a puzzle with a definite answer, which if done rigorously can be considered proved; for the constructivists, GT is a form of argument that moves understanding on but has no definitive answer.

- Conditions: are there variables that influence effectiveness such as positive relationships that would have an effect no matter what procedures are used?
- Interactive: what is the part of dialogue and co-construction of ideas?
- Strategy: can the procedure become wider strategy? Is it enhanced or hindered by strategic forces?

I would add a number of theoretical codes which have suggested themselves through the data and coding:

- Therapy: can the procedure be described as therapeutic and if so how and why?
- Emotional literacy: is this a means of developing emotional control?
- Holistic integration: are the concepts of educating the whole child/person helpful in our discussion?

Sensitising concepts.

Sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954) can help the researcher to focus and interrogate the data. Researchers are expected to be well-informed and sensitised through knowledge of the field and the literature. Sensitising concepts are applied tentatively in the early stages based on initial analysis in the light of broader understandings, about development and justice for example. Open coding takes place from the beginning and throughout the data collection process. Examples of sensitising concepts relevant to us are: self esteem and personality; emotional literacy (Goleman, 1995); moral and spiritual development within developmental psychology (Roehlkepartain, 2006); the management of educational change (Fullan, 2001); power, reproduction of social expectations and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1992) [12] ; and equity (Freire, 1970; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Wrigley, 2003) [13].

At a simple level, analysis can ascertain whether the people involved consider the programme to be effective. There is a deeper level, on which I focus, examining the processes involved both in the problems and in the solutions, and considering whether broader theories of development and social agency can illumine the discussion.

Summary of the chapter.

This dissertation focuses on the processes and factors involved in project outcomes. When asked whether the programme was effective, it was simple, based on feedback, to say yes; when asked Why? proved more difficult, and this is attempted in this dissertation. The research will continue, focusing on whole class year 6 pupils. A wide range of data collection strategies have been used, and creative ways developed of encouraging SYEP participants to be co-researchers in ways which will strengthen the project into the future. The team have been collecting pre- and post intervention data on pupils over the three years, so can describe pupil progress systematically.

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[12] Relationships and status are reproduced through the *status quo*. within a climate ('habitus') of expectation and deference.
[13] All people, however disadvantaged, should be encouraged and enabled to be political awakened and take responsibility for their own learning. Knowledge is not 'given' and 'banked' but constructed patiently through understanding of the real world. Literacy, for example, needs to be a mechanism for emancipation.

Four
Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Effectiveness of the programme

Feedback[14] from young people and staff trained on the project was positive and enthusiastic. At the beginning of the research, the team had run regular tranquillity and discovery zones, and were now training learning mentors within the Excellence in Cities initiative to be responsible for these. The feedback for these sessions was outstanding – in the words of the EiC manager (BS in the data cited below), this was the best feedback for any course he had experienced. The LMs were beginning to try it out at the point I interviewed them. They reported positive results in pupils even in these early stages. Their definition of effectiveness was:

- More emotional stability,
- better behaviour
- academic progress

Pre and post teacher assessments were made routinely to give a clear story of any changes in attitude or behaviour. Where possible, parent assessments were also taken. The hypothesis emerging was that greater emotional stability might lead to better behaviour, leading to academic progress.

4.2 Issues emerging from interviews
4.2.1 Space for a purpose.

I was concerned to discover whether the ambient space is a significant factor, or whether similar effects could be achieved in a normal classroom.

OP argued that schools need to break away from the normal classroom space with blackboard, which carries negative connotations for children, and that a special space for thinking, meditation and discussion is helpful. She felt that being white and without distraction is important, although she clearly accepted that lamps help. She noted that even difficult children settle over time and relax and meditate without needing to be told.

BS, the overall coordinator, said

> Textiles, incense, flowers and candles… it's a different world. Which, once experienced – where you had a wall now you have a door. You push it ajar, and some kids will say, OK, I'll walk through there. Walking into that interior and having that experience for an hour, all of this transports little units of meaning and values that are being imbued in people. And are very positive. And I think to contribute to that shift in mindset, shift in attitudes is what it needs.

He thinks having a special place is "really important". The town itself is not inspiring and it's easy to fall into the view that nothing can be changed. This special place, the TZ, has a wow factor:

> And to walk into a room that simply has a wow factor, wow, this is so different, To physically experience this I walk through these doors here and close this curtain and I'm in a different world and a different state of mind. And then to think, How did they achieve that, how did they build a different world? Well we took £200 pounds and a weekend and made what was before a mobile classroom into something that beautiful. That is a statement. That is physical, concrete, that you can experience with your body and that you can recreate for yourself. You know it cost almost nothing in terms of money and time. All it takes is a little bit of creativity. And I can totally transform my environment. And that is the first empowering experience. And at the same time you understand that by transforming my environment I can take steps to transforming my mind. I may be empowered to do something with my life.

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[14] FM, VB: SYEP leaders; BS: EiC coordinator; OP: learning mentor coordinator; LL, CB, SH, JD: learning mentors; V*, K*, P*, C*: pupils

> And yes I can go back into the little room that I have and I can change things around a little bit. So I do think its really important.

He explained the TZ as a "centre", a focal point, something to concentrate the mind. He saw the transformation of the environment in the TZ as a symbol of transformation of the mind – one does not have to accept the dreariness that one encounters in the streets or on the media.

All the schools who which operate the TZ have a purpose-designed space. L* School who are delivering the TZ to whole classes plan to turn their normal classroom into a TZ area, with drapes, fragrance and lights. **LL** described the music as calming (although she was initially worried the children would not appreciate it). The pupil V* described it thus:

> Its an ordinary room, with curtains and things, but when you're in there you click, your mind just goes, you are relaxed as you walk in, its like walking into a different world. When we got in there we were all hyper, ten 13 year olds all hyper, yet we come out and sat there (audible outbreath), folded (?), it was strange but as we were getting on it was more better, we knew what to (expect). We had a programme of it, I think it was about 8 weeks, once a week we would come, and when we would go back we was all silent, and peaceful, it was lovely.

JD had created a low-ceilinged intimate space with a wooden framework for curtaining in a very high-ceilinged room. This was used both for the TZ and for general chilling out, being recognized as a safe space.

4.2.2 Enthusiasm

This shows a clear enthusiasm for the experience, and feelings that it was meaningful. **OP** described herself as being skeptical at first, but very quickly seeing the results and becoming very enthusiastic – to the extent that she arranged for all the learning mentors to have a taster, and that she put herself forward for facilitator training. Many Learning Mentors were won over from skepticism to enthusiasm by the response of their pupils.

C, a businesswoman and an outside observer in the early stages, said:

> I remember the very first Tranquillity Zone that we had, and I was actually outside, and as the children came out they'd listened to this wonderful story about the jewels inside of them and how precious they are I can remember the door opened and these bright-eyed children came out into the hallway and they were saying things like Wow! That woman reading the story, she was so right, her stories are so true, Wow, its so amazing, and it made me so happy to think that they hadn't just sat and listened to a story and gone away, they'd actually gone away thinking about it, and marveling about the effect of the story, it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

BS reported the "unusually high" participator feedback from the training sessions – in his experience of staff development, this exceptional in educational CPD generally. My interviews with school staff revealed enthusiasm at the highest level. **CB** praised the main facilitators who ran training sessions:

> The training was absolutely amazing, I wish it hadn't stopped. I know it is continuing. I really enjoyed it. I have been on lots and lots of courses, but this was all well planned – the room, the food, the book you took away, it was all covered with material, and that makes the book special, you don't chuck it around, I guard it with my life in school, its in my drawer, when its home I make sure the cats don't sit on it… the training was very good, and the message was very clear, not complicated, easy to pick up.

This was expressed by all of the staff interviewed, and on feedback forms.

4.2.3 Developing motivation to learn

Low esteem and low expectations: BS felt that the three central issues in pupils' lives are problems at home, bullying, and low self esteem. Of these, low self esteem is key as other issues flow from it. Linked with this is the lack of life aspiration:

> Low self esteem is a big category, and lies behind cases of bullying (victim and perpetrator) and family problems at home too, self esteem plays a part. So its such a root cause. And then talking with staff and headteachers also I hear one of the biggest problems we are battling with is poverty of expectations in the community. So this [SYEP] seems to address the problems, the issues that we have from a real important root.

He saw it as a movement from materialism and consumerism:

> But it is possible to introduce some ideas that have the potential to act like a positive virus leaven working through organically) and I think in terms of that cultural shift that one would like to see here – this poverty of expectation and low self esteem is due to the fact that at the end of the day a collective identity built on this consumerism and materialistic angst is too empty.

CB, working in a very challenging comprehensive serving a council estate saw the TZ as a solution to problems of low self esteem:

> I think it will be terribly good because so many of the children have such low self esteem, they dont really realise that there is a future for them. Hopefully, after the TZ there will be some improvement. Normally I get to deal with the worse case scenario in school, the more naughty child, the more disruptive child, the child who is failing. I am going to use this as another tool for my groupwork, in fact it will be at the centre of my groupwork.

She saw close links with circle time, and had been trained by Jenny Mosley.

> I do a lot of circle time, group work, anger management... working with children to get them to speak, improving their listening skills really.

SH commented that it was often surprising who benefited from this – sometimes the last person one suspected.

Motivation: **OP** described difficult year 5 children as becoming self motivated. They willingly came in without demur and settled down. She described one child diagnosed as ADHD as focusing for 25 minutes, being in a meditative state, and then being able to talk about the experience. She described this as "incredible". Her very challenging pupils began asking if they could go into the Tranquillity Zone, so it had clearly inspired a great deal of motivation in the pupils. **OP** herself became highly motivated, and enrolled on a facilitator's course. **BS** said he had become aware of the TZ when his pupils said: "Its wonderful. We go there every day, every week." He also made the point that staff too can get stressed and need some form of release. For the benefit of the pupils, he said "We have a responsibility to relax."

Discussion: OP thought that the success of the process lies in the children discussing personal experience and life issues, and that this discussion makes a difference. This willingness to discuss was part of what first amazed her about the response of her challenging pupils. She makes a special case of a pupil diagnosed with ADHD who showed rare engagement with discussion.

4.2.4 Scaffolding the inner voice
Imagination, visualise issues: The SYEP process encourages pupils to set out on an imaginary life journey, and visualize their qualities and barriers to progress. **OP** gave a case of a very challenging year 5 girl who swore and threw chairs.

> "Tranquility was one of the strategies that was put in place for her behaviour. She got a silver award for behaviour last year, Christmas gone. This was

unheard of. It was a managed move, she was just about to be kicked out. There is no way she would have got this [without Tranquility]. Unthinkable. She just blossomed. *She was able to talk quite openly about what she thought in her imagination, about where she went, Tranquility Island. It seemed to be a place where she could just be, and speak. Its hard to put your finger on it. The children are very relaxed there, when they learn how to relax."* [my italics].

BS commented that the guided visualizations should lead to inner calming. The use of symbol provides a beginning:

> I think that it teaches the powers of symbolic structures to focus the mind… but it should help the pupil to develop a mindset change, an inner sense of calm and control: it's a different world."

The pupil V* was very positive:

> The stories were really good, I can't (remember them all). There was one I really remember about the nails in the fence, there was a boy that was angry and his dad said to him, every time you are angry put a nail into the fence. He got less angrier and one day his dad looked at him and said, Look, that's what you've done, you've scarred the fence, and it made him realize that he can take it out on other things, and I think that was one of them that I remember really well. The stories were really good. Knocks you for six!

The pupil C* (age 14) described the butterfly story:

> There is the butterfly one. There are two butterflies in their case, trying to get out. [The first] can't, so the little boy helps it with scissors. It comes out but it can't fly. The second one opened, and it could fly. This is how we grow … that you have to struggle until you are strong enough to achieve.

She ended: "we do get something out of it but its not something that is easy to explain. Meeting new people, make new friends, thinking about the inner self…".

The Inner Voice: For **OP**, this focus on their inner thoughts without distractions was an important function of the Tranquillity Zone. This inner voice is beginning to emerge from discussion as a consequence of reflecting on personal attitudes and choices. For **BS**, the curriculum needs to focus not on assessment and knowledge but on growth:

> This is a shift to more lasting values and making them experiential could go some way to helping people find some different orientation and guidance in life. There is a connectedness to each other, to the environment, to one's own inner self. That is a potentially different path for life.

CB reflected on the central ideas expressed in the 18 Principles

> The Eighteen Principles? If we all followed those in life, we would live in a fantastic world wouldn't we? Some you have to read again because you are not sure what they mean, but once you get into the flow, it really rings home, you feel we ought to be practising what we are reading.

She thought the ideas are common to all faiths that many non-religious "good" people showed that people can be spiritual without formal religion.

The internalized personal 'mentor' is "the wise person" visualized by the pupil. This can be a real person, a loved relative for example, or an imagined one. The internal mentor is "the wise person" visualized by the pupil. This can be a real person, a loved relative for example, or an imagined one. For some, this was a profound experience:

> One girl joined because she had emotional barriers. She missed her dad, he passed away when she was six. She was really happy because mum had remarried, and she had a sister, but she was so sad all the time so I did choose her. And her wise person was her dad, and she was so pleased. She was, absolutely, couldnt believe it. She didn't *choose* her dad, her dad

> *came* to her. We were a bit concerned it might be too much for her, but she said, no, I'm so pleased he really came to me. Its normal for them so say that their wise person *comes to them*, coming to meet me, they say it's nice. They might have a grandfather, an uncle that had passed away, and it was all really happy, they couldnt wait to start. They just wanted to..like..they just loved it. It was just amazing really. [LL]

The pupil V* had done SYEP five years earlier as was then in FE College. She said,

> I've not come for a while but I want to get back into it, because it helped me a lot, like when my little brother was ill and so on. I was getting angry and I didn't know how to take it. When I come here it taught me how to relax and see it from a different point of view [discussion of brother's cancer and heart transplant] it helped me look at it from a different perspective.

On her wise person, she said,

> I can always see my wise person.… I always have someone different every time. They just come sometimes, but when my brother died [elder brother] and my gramp died, I think they were my wise people. Always the old, the males in my family.

Of course, SYEP always expresses itself in gender neutral terms. This is a form of cognitive and emotional scaffolding, giving the pupil a strategy for thinking through emotional problems and finding a resolution. **FM** reported that one pupil, having lost her temper and stormed out of the lesson, was found sitting quietly "talking to my wise person to sort this out". She soon returned calmly to the lesson. Interviews with pupils involved five or more years ago reveal this to have a lasting effect.

4.2.5 Parents' reactions.

V*, from the first school group doing SYEP, said,

> People say to me that I am really helpful, caring and considerate, I think that's partly where that's come from. When I'd been coming here my mum saw a different side of me, more chilled and that, I talked with her and she said, that seems really chilled! I think she come once, and she said Woah! Like I said, it was so good.

She described how a very positive bond with her mother had developed. V* has spoken up for SYEP on video, television and the press. **OP** reported one mother's reaction:

> "There was one child – her mother came back in to me and said, What have you done with me kid? Its amazing. She was a little brat and now I cannot believe the change in her."

R*'s mother said:

> I wasn't aware of what Richard was doing until one day he came home and he told me he'd been to the Tranquillity Zone. I said, What on earth is the Tranquillity Zone? And Richard's words were, Its beautiful Mum. And I said to him, what do you mean its beautiful? There's candles, there's big floor cushions, the room's scented, and he even suggested at one point I could have my own Tranquillity Zone at home. And I was thinking, This is not the Richard that I know! But its obviously working.

R* said, "When I was in the TZ I just felt that I had no worries or anything
I feel school is more important than it used to be". K*'s mother said:

> K* wasn't very confident before, he is now! Its really done him good in doing it really. Its really helped him think and try and help other people who have been in his position as well. He helps his sister, and me! Its really helped him think more about his self awareness and other people's awareness as well.

K*, now at university, said:

> The information it gives you is absolutely brilliant. You are told you are something. You are told you aren't a useless person, you aren't going to fail all your exams, you are brilliant, you are rich in these gems, you are wonderful. And that its up to you to show that as well. … And it boosted my confidence as well. It made me feel really good about myself. And the feedback I got from my Mum and Nan who came to the Zone was brilliant, they basically couldn't stop praising me."

At D* Primary School, an Asian mother described about how her son jumps out of bed with great enthusiasm on the morning of the TZ and is really excited about coming. She said: "He helps me with my problems and shows me the little gem cave and helps me to think through things. He talks about the gems and making the right choices". She said that her son's learning had improved, bringing him As and Bs in his class tests. Another boy said that the most important thing he had discovered was his gem of honesty and talked about how he uses it at home and school. Later, his father described the great honesty his son had developed from TZ and how that helps him to really talk about his challenges and own up to things when he's done something wrong. A mum described how she now really likes her daughter's company since she had done the TZ and wants her to do it again. She said: "My daughter is a different child " describing the before and after effect of TZ. That same girl said that the TZ experience stopped her from going down the road of becoming a bully: " I would have been a school bully had I not discovered some of my gems". The Head of C* Secondary School reported that the parents of a boy who had done the course at Drove Primary with us, and is now repeating it at the secondary school, said that their son has started talking to them for the first time since doing the TZ/DZ course. (Information from LM).

4.2.6 Transformation
It was a common experience that the LMs did not expect the process to work. They knew their pupils and were skeptical. **SH** said,

> At first I didn't believe in it at all, but after some weeks of watching her work with them…She is so positive with these negative kids, that's what she is all the time, positive, its really interesting.

FM described her first TZ in P* Primary School with ten children behaving very disruptively. They gradually settled down, and she described the atmosphere:

> I could not believe the change in the room … it had transformed from a mad Zoo to a spiritual place in minutes. When the session was over, everyone walked respectfully to a room across the corridor, to the DZ, which LL had prepared very nicely. Was this the same group that I had met half an hour ago? Were these the same kids who couldn't stop talking and moving about, and who were now peaceful, quiet and reflective? Could such a dramatic change take place in front of my eyes on the very first session? I had witnessed a miracle and I was stunned.

OP is certain that transformations took place in troubled children, whilst also saying that not everyone benefited so quickly. **CB** noted that an agrophobic adult friend had really benefited. **D*** declared that SYEP

> "helped my whole life really because some of the things that the TZ has taught me will stay with me so that I can help either myself and my problems or my Mum's problems and feelings and anyone else I know.
> Thanks to the TZ and DZ, I have more self peace than I have ever had in my life and I think that the days I was going there I was a lot calmer, I was thinking about everything before I had done it, I think that it helped me kind of doing things but only if it was the right decision to do at that time. After the programmes I do think I had less problems, because before I didn't care about them but now I'm thinking, if I carry on doing bad things, I'm not going to end up being able to have sports cars like my

brothers, or nice houses, or girlfriends, instead of being sat behind a college desk where I want to be, I'll be sat behind bars. So I want to choose the right choices rather than the wrong choices.

V*, a pupil in the first phase and now in vocational training in FE, replied when asked about how SYEP had benefited her,

I don't know where I'd be, to be honest. I think I would have been stressful, now I think about what I do, and say No, stop, think about it, and then take it in a different way. If the TZ hadn't have come, I think I'd have been a nervous wreck, I wouldn't know how to take it out I think I had a lot of anger in me. I was a lot like, where my mum and that was away I couldn't talk with my mum and now we have a close bond relationship. And I tell my mum everything, well mostly everything

I'm just patient, and considerate, I'm always positive towards the kids, …
I think I am more positive as I've done this (TZ). I've come out of my shell. When I was at home and at school I was always shy, but now I've done this I am a bit more bubbly, I've come out of my shell a bit more. I used to keep a lot of stuff in, but now if I've got something wrong, I say, if I've got a problem, I don't keep it in I just say, let it all out and I feel so much better. I used to bottle a lot of things up, when my mum was away with my little bother and stuff. I think I am more confident in myself. As the years have gone, over the past 5 years, I've got more confident. I'm more positive towards the children. If they say 'I can't do it', I say 'You can', and give them praise and stuff. You focus more on the positive than you do on the negative.

Earlier (2003) she had said:

I was having a lot of problems at the time, my life was basically going downhill every day, I thought that I'd just end it. But I came into the Tranquillity Zone and it was like, now there's a reason to live, I am a good person, I can turn my life round. And I did. My friends think I'm more upbeat, my teachers think I'm more confident, people think its changed me, I'm more mature. And my behaviour is a lot better. …But now I feel, I need to go to school, it's education I need, and basically I'm a lot more focused in lessons. I'm able to do the work with a lot more proficiency and I enjoy the work a lot more than I ever did before.

She felt that making this a social activity would have great benefits, and said she had enjoyed taking the message to others.

If they came here they would be a lot calmer, and a lot more willing to talk about what's bothering them. I think it would make a great difference to the atmosphere. They'd be a lot happier and calmer…. I think it would be a great help to people to have more YEPs. It means a lot more young people could be reached, and it would make a great difference. And I'd love to be one of those people making a great difference.

One LM (**LL**) explained how her interest in the programme came from the personal benefit she had gained from the TZ which had "given me more strength, seeing things differently". She said "you only get confidence when you realise what is holding you back". She gave detailed accounts of how her pupils had benefited.

There's a boy was on the programme recently, he had a trauma in his life with his grandmother, and the dad was very concerned and told the head, the head had a word with me and said, Could you see if you could get something out of him? I said, you can just go up and say What's all this then. If its going to come out it will come out in Tranquillity. And it did. It

> came out in such a nice way that he could handle it and talk about it, and deal with it, and move on a little bit as well.

She described him as borderline ADHD and very hyperactive, "like a puppydog". After his first experience of the Tranquillity Zone,

> he said, By golly, What's happened to me? I said What? He said, What is this, its brilliant. I want this every day, this is brilliant. I've never felt so good in my life. Its brilliant. It was really nice because he is always getting told off, for being silly, and inapproriate like, you know. … I've not heard him being told off for a long time.

She emphasized the importance of building bonds with some girls which formerly would have resulted in him hitting out, but he just smiled and walked away. Asked if any child involved had failed to benefit, she said No, they were cross it had finished and the rest of the year group also want to do it, but can't because of curriculum time. Therefore they had focused in disturbed children as an experiment. She noted also that girls benefited similarly, and attempted to explain how the process worked on their self esteem:

> one girl was really really feisty, she'l be a really good leader one day. But she was too much because she was too angry, too fiery, and she's calmed down a lot. I catch her now with other children and watch her, and she's really nice, and I say, I saw that! That's good. Well done. Much better than you did before. I know, she said! That's why this programme is so good, because they learn to understand themselves, and what's going on. Sometimes for children its hard to recognize their own feelings, like jealousy, but this programme helps them realise, and makes them more aware of themselves and who I am. One girl was so shocked, because part of the programme we done is going around and writing nice things about each other, she was in tears, she couldn't believe that people had written so many nice things about her. She said, I've never had that before.

She explained the importance of giving the girls confidence in year 6:

> If they understand how they are feeling in yr 6, they will understand a lot more about their hormones, they will be more positive in themselves once they know. The girls get their boyfriends, and have more control, more faith in themselves, more confidence. Lessons don't work, but their emotions control them. Tranquillity works on the emotions. [LL]

There are other examples of academic progress resulting. In D* Primary School, a girl said with low grades began receiving As, Bs and Cs after her TZ experience.these children for the TZ to work best. One example shows that academic progress can result:

> One boy comes into my head straight away. He's always had some barriers to learning. He can't read very well and to hide that he just plays up in class. Last year he was absolute…really hard work, he would run out of class, run under tables, jump out of the window, he was year 5 then, big lad as well. He was really unhappy, didn't have much friends at all. Quite isolated. He would hit out really easily. I had a bond will him and said, I want you to come. He was getting a lot of help with his reading. Volunteers giving their own time. He said, no, I don't need it, writing, a load of rubbish. He came to Tranquillity. He said, Oh, this is really good. And it was amazing. When we done Tranquillity with him first time, what he could see, and in the Discovery Zone what he sas saying was ..like.. unbelievable. You wouldn't think it possible for a child to realise so much about what he did, after only one session, I was really pleased, and - anyway he kept going and I noticed that between the six sessions he was calming down a lot, not hitting out so much in the playground. After we'd finished the six sessions, I was in here doing the paperwork, quietly on my own, the door was open, and he came in with his head down, shuffling along. He had some books in his hand, I said, Hi, how're you doing. He

said, Alright, alright. I said, What's the matter then. He said, I want to read now. He showed me the books. They were quite low level, from the library. I said, That's brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. Now he's asking people to help him and he's trying really hard.

She described an incident in which he was goaded by some girls and managed to smile and turn away, whereas previously he would have hit out.

4.2.4 Change of school climate.

BS argued that this refusal to be authoritative should become part of school culture. The process may be stimulated by the TZ but the real goal is to show more respect to pupils and their life journeys. Once this process is achieved with needy children, it should be cascaded to all children as a way of helping their thinking. He compared this with Philosophy for Children (P4C) and the G&T agenda – having worked out how to benefit the gifted target group, the important next step is to benefit all pupils. **SH** focused on the positivity of the facilitators – in sometimes difficult circumstances. In time even difficult pupils respond. She said that her non-problematic group responded "fantastically well".
OP felt the need to be authoritarian to keep order, but recognized that she had to move away from this ideally so that the children can build their own inner sense of self-authority. She found they could do so, and was "amazed" (although noting that it is not a magic cure and there might still be challenges). Empowerment means helping children to be in control of themselves and become independent, so authoritarian habits which create dependency need to be avoided.

BS, the Excellence in Cities Coordinator linked this change in ethos to positivity, emphasising that maintaing staff positivity is all important:

> "They do amazing work in our schools and day to day they are exposed to really difficult issues. And a lot of negativity that they work through. This gives them access to something that has really the potential to cleanse and transform some of that negativity into something positive and shining is rather important I think. Not just in terms of their job satisfaction but as a way to recharge their batteries and to maintain the enthusiasm and the positive energy. Thus my hope is that as this begins to emerge in our schools that it is really, it is a subtle but potentially powerful way of sending an indirect message into school itself. Its different. People will be curious. Too often I find that in the educational world people work incredible hours, and often the positive motivation to make a positive difference to children becomes an incredible pressure, they beat themselves out for not having achieved enough, and they work harder and harder and it becomes counter-productive. What you get is a lot of really stressed out highly strung people who have lost touch with their inner energy and strength and enthusiasm. Exactly, and sometimes I think less is more. We have a responsibility to relax."

4.3 Involvement with the management team

Most team meetings with me were recorded and transcribed. Some meetings planned future events, some went over trainee feedback. A sample transcript is given in the fieldnotes (Appendix 1C). I produced periodic interim evaluation reports. The period of ethnographic fieldwork coincided with an emphasis on fundraising, as resources have been barely sufficient to pay salary costs and most are volunteers. Significant funding was achieved by 2007, thanks in some part to the team's growing concern for self-evaluation processes. Discussions with the designing team have focused on the following.

4.3.1 Curriculum and age range.

- **Social and emotional aspects of learning.** The team recognised the importance of this current government priority and are aware that SYEP is able to make a substantial contribution to this current government initiative. We explored ways in which the philosophy and process might be made more generally available.
- **Spiritual education.** The team recognise that spiritual education in its broadest sense is another government, OFSTED and school priority and wish that the SYEP process is seen as a contribution to this also. This is highlighted by the use of the term 'dis-spirited' (lacking in spiritual maturity and awareness of meaning) for 'disaffected' (lacking in feeling, motivation and engagement). Disaffection is viewed as a symptom of spiritual emptiness. Dispirited in this sense makes no religious assumptions.
- **Citizenship education and the active citizen –** the initiative has given impetus to the local Youth Parliament and consultation events with young people.
- **Primary School focus –** it has been agreed that the transition years of 9-13 are crucially important. We have discussed the shape of new materials for younger children, including story material for the under 9s, and incorporating drama activities.

The team were anxious to find an argument to present to headteachers concerned with the use of school time for curriculum subjects: I presented this model of how their work fulfilled some often problematic curriculum needs.

At the beginning of my research, there was one primary school with an active programme, and I interviewed the learning mentor involved. This involved a small carefully chosen group of children with difficulties. The view of mentor and parents were that several children were enabled to make fresh starts and make personal and academic progress. This indicated that there was potential to apply the programme to younger children and work began in three other primary schools. The format was exactly the same as with the older pupils; the facilitators found a comparable response in years 5 and 6. I was told by mentors, however, that some were too young or immature to benefit, which suggested that a simpler format might be needed with younger children, based for example on a mix of story and circle time. One primary school group voluntarily ran a TZ for the rest of their class, an interesting model that they group are continuing.

4.3.2 Political Networking

The SYEP team has engaged in networking with local politicians and gained many influential friends. The Deputy Lord Mayor indicated to me that rollout of SYEP will be a strategic objective during his period as Mayor, 2008-9. An influential cluster of schools in the town support the initiative at the highest level.

The SYEP team met Baroness Andrews, parliamentary under-secretary for community and family on 16th August 2007 with council leaders and Children's Services Advisor, Government Office SW, and myself (see fieldnotes, Appendix 1). The Baroness declared SYEP strategies to be important contributions to various aspects of government work with regards to children, young people and offenders. Herself a PhD and active academic, she was interested in the evaluation. She was surprised that more schools and groups were not queuing to take part (but recognised the nature of school pressures), but pleased to note that the approach was already extremely effective in developing youth work, and that the council leaders were most appreciative and aware of its potential. The Baroness felt that young people are not encouraged to explore what it means to be human, how to promote good relationships and positive community. She was very taken with the term 'dispirited', stressing that the human spirit is the basis of happiness, morality and social progress.

4.3.3 Involvement in training

I observed and participated in a complete three-day training programme with Youth Workers, including educationalists working in theatre. They learned by doing, by discussion of principles and learning about self, and through the TZ. Various activities for young people were trialled, including art and the use of masks to explore body language (one of the group was an expert). The discussions were open rather than instructional, although the basic 18 principles were stressed – so that the experience for young people will be about *positive thinking*. Each trainee was given a beautifully bound file of materials, deliberately created to stand out on the shelf as quality rather than dumped and never referred to again. The trainee feedback was excellent – the more so since they had able to argue and shape the message to their own needs. Longer term feedback suggested that they were using the positivity message more than the TZ activity

4.3.3 Positivity.

A central pillar of SYEP is positivity - getting pupils and teachers to see the positive in their lives, learn to deal with negativity, and make positive responses so that any guidance is positive and constructive. This is linked to rigorous self reflection, leading to self-critique and self-discipline. OP noted:

> "It's about showing the pupils they all have something in them that's worth a lot. Once they have gone through the programme we see such a difference in the pupils. They are just so much calmer." (*Evening Advertiser,* 21.3.06*).*

In addition to calming pupils down, negative attitudes and self constructs need replacing with positive ones which are more likely to promote learning, relationship and self esteem.

The basic philosophy contained in the Eighteen Principles promotes positivity, and this is particularly true of the top six now selective for emphasis:

1. We have a light, positive, side, and a dark, negative, side and need to ensure that we are not pulled down by selfishness, pride and greed;
2. We all have (gems of) inestimable potential which will help us throughout our lives;
3. We are capable of transformation by choosing the positive and not the negative;
4. Good example has great power: we can be helped by mentors, and can help others;
5. Positive and uplifting words have great power so choosing positive words will help us, especially in response to negative ones;
6. Service to others is empowering, so positive choices lead to moral action.

This positivity is empowering. Each individual becomes responsible for the health of the whole:

> VB You know, I think we are in a universal revolution but don't realise it, and that is a revolution that is going from being dependent on leaders and those that are so-called experts, religious ministers, politicians, those that form people's opinions and manipulate them, we are going from that to empowerment of people at grass roots level. And that is a significant revolution that is taking place. What we can see is all manner of resistance to that, because those people in authority want to hang on to that… (Fieldnotes, 8.11.2005)

There is idealism here which stems from the view that the authoritarian status quo has no further contribution to make.

Pupils are encouraged to:

- understand positive and negative feelings
- have agency, with a feeling of empowerment
- develop understanding of self and the world

A negative approach to life would be:
- angry (expressing feeling using confrontational language);
- bullying (using violent behaviour to get own way)
- selfish (understanding of self as the only one that matters).

This is the starting point for many troubled youngsters, either as perpetrators or victims.

SYEP practice develops these three together - thinking about themselves in their world and their potential, their values and attitudes is part of the development of emotional understanding leading to control of behaviour. Behaviour improves *because they have risen above it* in SYEP philosophy, not because it is *managed*. Their deepened thinking includes empathy with others and therefore considering their feelings. This was found in particular to benefit home life and relationships with parents and siblings. This in turn is encouraged by an emphasis on *service to others and the community*, making a contribution of which they can have just pride. This makes them active citizens. The overall ambition might then be expressed as: developing judgement; an internalised value system; and expertise in/mastery of skills for living.

4.8 Summary.

This chapter has focused on substantial themes within the data. In order to truly represent the tone of the participants, it relies on many of the actual words spoken. It is thus multi-voiced to bring together collective wisdom on this project. It demonstrates that the people involved, be they school staff, pupils, parents and the team, regard the SYEP activities as effective and beneficial to pupils. However, it has never escaped from the margins, and has not featured strongly within the school curriculum, being instead an extraction activity for difficult children, or a lunch-hour or after school activity. Currently, it is moving towards a whole class activity used to support the curriculum. The researcher's ghost, my own, can be seen in the selection and organisation of the material. The researchers voice, attempting to offer explanations, comes in the following chapter.

The data has shown that visualisation of emotional scenarios – a case full of gems (personal qualities), a wise person, an orchard full of fruits, all set on Tranquillity Island – has proved helpful to pupils aged 9 upwards in coping with emotional difficulties, building self belief, and beginning to develop a sense of reasoned moral decision-making. This visualisation is in story form, acted out mentally in a meditative state. Other stories with personal and moral themes were built into the experience and strengthened the effect. These develop a metaphorical language for the children to express and discuss their inner thoughts and choices in ways which have proved to have a lasting effect.

Five
Discussion and Reflection

This chapter discusses why these strategies have the effect they do. SYEP seeks to develop *affective* strategies to come to terms with emotional turbulance, in order to develop effective life skills, in order to strengthen academic/cognitive progress. This is in line with Bloom's learning domains of cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Bloom *et al*, 1965). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis clarifies what people mean by their descriptions of psychological phenomena, in this study focusing on the human spirit, self-worth, self-esteem, moral choice and service.

5.1 Affective: emotional self discipline, empowerment and agency.
5.1.1 Self worth
Many of the young people involved had no sense of self worth, linked to difficulties at school, and no future aspirations. They are held back by the negative picture of themselves they hold in their head. The metaphor of people as mines of gems of inestimable worth, with positive personal qualities helps to break this down. A team member said: young people should rise above their problem rather than 'manage' it, since then the problem will have simply gone away. SYEP provides a mechanism for young people to think about themselves and their potential, to realize that their lives can be meaningful and that they can have a successful future in which they contribute to their community. It is a "talking therapy", a triage at school level with the potential to sort out most youngsters, identifying which need specialist counseling. Talking therapy

> "is usually seen as a means of unblocking and reorganising past experiences, enabling the child to identify choices and their consequences, and recognizing and reordering thinking patterns and their consequences, and many other variants" (Oates, Hoghughi and Dallos , 1995:297).

The SYEP approach offers pupils the conceptual tools to take this development forward. The adult facilitators show respect and belief in the young person's potential, not making negative judgments. This is cascaded to other school staff. For young persons to visualize themselves as failures, victims, helpless, controlled, or stupid will greatly affect their low expectations of themselves: SYEP challenges such self-labels.

The young people interviewed expressed strong views that this approach "turned them around" from failure to success. The sense of failure was a dominant mental picture they had based on lack of confidence and self esteem, which led to a vicious cycle of underachievement. SYEP deals with this negative picture and not with the symptoms: change the mental framework to one understanding self worth and potential contribution, and the symptoms will simply disappear. The self-worth way of thinking leads to high agency – they not only can but expect to be agents for change. They become 'driven' to make their world better, the more so because they remember their earlier distress and despair. This also affects aspirations: self belief in their ability, agency and potential gives them a goal and the determination to achieve it. The emphasis on positive values through discussion helps to ensure that they aspire to contribute to creating a better world. The young people from the early sessions interviewed expressed ethical and socially aware views.

5.1.2 Personal agency
Individuals are able to take control of their lives. Principle 7 speaks of personal engagement in transformation – that is both our inner transformation and the transformation of society. This means independent action rather than dependency. For Maslow (1970:xiif) basic needs can be met only with others, and self actualizing people are always compassionate social activists. The aim of SYEP

therefore is no less that self-actualization. Independence has to be taught, preferably from infancy, if it is to be learned: a person maintained in dependency will not easily become so. An independent person in a controlling environment will be considered a headstrong rebel. Society tends to expect people to conform; yet it is independent activists who move things forwards and prevent stagnation. Adults need to resist controlling behaviour and encourage the young to take responsibility. This includes responsibility for their own learning, socially aware behaviour (social responsibility), and positive attitudes to themselves and their health and wellbeing (personal responsibility). These develop gradually over time and need to be nurtured.

SYEP involves young people in their own transformation. Recognising that people desire to be well rather than ill (i.e. have wellbeing) they undertake a self-audit on a scale of light to dark (lower nature to higher nature) to judge whether there are factors in their lives that could helpfully be adjusted. These are visualised as burdens impeding growth and progress. They plan their lives accordingly (a free process, not imposed upon them). When they see their lives differently, they rise above the issues they had previously. There is no need for self-imposed control and discipline, although this may be its effect: the trigger points are simply not there any more.

The heart of the cognitive (thinking) process is the use of metaphor to explain and guide, a vivid visualisation having an effect when a lecture might not. The term 'therapy' may suggest the need for a trained therapist, but there are various levels of therapy. Most people do not go to a trained counsellor when in difficulty, but to a friend. The therapeutic process relies on self-diagnosis, called 'insight' – until the patient has this self awareness of the problem, no cure can move forward. Insight can come from many quarters and it is the claim of the project team that they contribute to this. Many people respond better to concrete situations and pictures than abstract reasoning, and young people need their learning to come concretely. This may explain why the middle years (8-14) have been particularly fertile in the project.

We learn about ourselves by conversing with other people. The 18 principles use the word 'edifying' to describe the potential of discussion to foster growth and development, 'uplifting' to describe positive emotional responses and 'radiance' to describe the positive effect of this on others. These are mechanisms for people to be involved in their own transformation. All this describes how people need to be proactive in their growth, that is in a constant state of learning.

There are points of contact between SYEP and the six principles of Restorative Practice which emphasises offenders learning about personal and social responsibility in a non-threatening and non-judgemental way. The six principles are:
1. Foster awareness of how others have been affected
2. Avoid scolding, as this causes defensiveness
3. Involve offenders actively
4. Accept ambiguity (fault may be complicated)
5. Separate the deed from the doer – a bad deed does not mean a
     bad person.
6. See every offence and conflict as an opportunity for learning – look
        to positive outcomes, learning rather than control.

This involves offenders (and people generally) in their own transformation (SYEP principle 7) helping them to face up to their actions and attitudes *and rise above them.* To avoid scolding are SYEP principles 11-12, on speaking only positively to enhance learning. That all people have the potential for good is SYEP principe 1.

5.1.3 Empowerment, confidence, and service

Lack of confidence is a barrier to learning and growth. The SYEP Eighteen Principles deal with this in several ways. Positive communication helps to build a positive picture of ourselves, whilst constant criticism asserts a sense of failure. Positive communication means replacing every criticism with a combination of a positive statement and guidance for development. This contrasts with a culture of control by reproof and sarcasm. This in turn changes the desire for control into to desire to be a role model to help young people to feel empowered and therefore motivated to learn. *Service* means becoming ethically engaged. The young people involved learn, sometimes for the first time, how to relate to others positively and to make a positive contribution.

The project as originally conceived moved the young people from *receiving* to *organising* activities for others, for example in a local hospital. This active engagement gives their learning a new dimension, and builds confidence and agency. Trainees go through the same process, leading up to being in charge of the process with children in their school. There was a degree of nervousness about this, so the team recorded a musical track and some stories to get them started.

5.2 Psychomotor: Personal Development of Skills for Life.
5.2.1 Realising Self worth

Self esteem is a difficult concept to apply since it may be hard to distinguish between authentic and problematic forms (narcisistic and antisocial forms of self esteem, dominated by self pride, and controlling tendencies), so we focus on feelings of self worth (see Mruk above). Authentic self esteem is not asserted at other people's expense but is a genuine appraisal of one's worth and capabilities, positively asserted. Realising self worth means both recognizing it to be so; and regarding it as dynamic and not static – that is that self worth has implications for action, behaviour and attitudes. People express worth in the contribution they make. The contribution will depend upon physical factors (size, strength, mobility, sightedness for example) so we can only judge contribution in terms of potential, that people contribute as much as they are able, and build on their particular strengths. [15]

5.2.2 Building Resiliency

Resiliency is the development of wellbeing in adverse circumstances. Most children overcome difficult childhoods (Werner and Smith, 1992) but some do not. Schools could help:

> Schools that "really trust" their students – schools that value, respect, and know their students – are schools that foster relsilency for their students. Such schools are full of adults who believe that all students are capable of learning the habits of mind to use their minds and hearts well. These adults understand how important it is for student learning and student hopefulness that all students know that they are cared about, that expectations are high, that purposeful support is in place, and that their participation is valued.
> To do so, schools must also be full of adults who value, respect, and know each other well… Resiliency factors need to be in place for the adults as well as the students. (Krovetz, 1999)

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[15] We should avoid a deficit model emphasing what people cannot do – being 'disabled', or 'handicapped' for example. Considering someone to be disabled is the disabling factor.

In SYEP, the young people tend to open up and use the opportunity to address their own concerns and issues, and 'nourish' their own futures. The emphasis on positivity in human relationships develops trust and thereby resiliency.

'Not-wellbeing' or 'unwellbeing' is damage to or absence of agency, belonging, having a voice, or having sound health. 'Unwellbeing' is referred to in Buddhism as *dukkha*, usually mistranslated as *suffering*. Its solution is to rise above cravings or unsatisfied desires by 'right' living and thinking. In SYEP 'right' comes from our higher nature, is individualised and problematised through discussion and is not imposed from outside. The effect of this is to blame discontent such as could be described as 'unwellbeing' on wanting things inappropriately. This leads to self-centred attitudes rather than an engagement with others. Unsatisfied wants cause anger which leads to poor relationships. Ambition for power for its own sake leads to tyranny. To rid oneself of 'wants' is to be always satisfied by what one has personally. In that frame of mind, the distribution of whatever is available can be achieved fairly according to need, and one's life can be devoted to ensuring that there is enough for everyone's needs (as opposed to 'wants'). This demands ethical and social engagement, called in SYEP 'service'. So we speak with others empoweringly and humbly; we have careers and livelihoods which benefit people and so on. Being successful does not mean being self-centred and acquisitive. Resiliency does not mean being aggressively assertive. 'Discovery' concentrates on wellbeing – physical in the sense of considering how they treat their bodies, emotional in the sense of learning to feel proud of themselves and their relationships, and spiritual in the sense of shifting totally their way of looking at the world and their values.

5.3 Cognitive
5.3.1 Vygotsky, Constructivism and Activity Theory.
This section questions whether SYEP assists the construction and co-construction of knowledge, and whether visualisations through tranquillity, picture and story are 'tools' to personal development. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) emphased the importance of social interactions for intelectual development, pointing to a (metaphorical) zone of proximal development (i.e. the extent to which discussion enhances development). Constructivism emphasises the nature of meaning-building and development of understanding through evidence building, activity and discussion, learning by exploration rather than by instruction. George Kelly (1955) had applied this psychologically as Personal Construct Theory. Activity Theory (Langemeyer and Nissen, 2005) focuses on the tools which enhance development.

In SYEP, personal and moral development is built on the visualised meeting and discussion with one's 'wise person', the metaphorical association with one's gem cave, the viewing of life problems as burdens to be removed, and the stories of decision and moral action. Life is viewed as a sea journey to Tranquillity Island, at which personal reflection is encouraged and facilitated. These tools involve imagery, story, and metaphor and analogy. They are linguistic tools as well as visual ones, giving the young people a language to talk about these issues. One primary teacher said by way of feedback, focusing on the teacher's role:
> "Main things to take back to school: vocab, vocab, vocab. Modelling vocab for a healthy human spirit, not fuelling the vocab for an unhealthy spirit when in times of teacher frustration. And to develop my own healthy human spirit, so that this language comes more naturally." .

Pupils have a mental picture of what kinds of people they think they are and would like to be. They are informed by the opinions and expectations of others (e.g. peer pressure, parental or teacher expectation): indeed they may define themselves through this. To define oneself as a failure or a potential success is a

crucial starting point. If a failure (as may disengaged young people do) there has to be a journey from failure to something more positive. If negatives can be named, they can be tackled. A vision of positives can become an aspiration. Using activity theory, we can track the effectiveness of the tool, for example that personal qualities are valuable gems (leading to positive development of those qualities); and the wise person, leading to an enhancement in personal wisdom. The young people involved each tell their own positive story about how these tools have benefited them. Imaging 'wisdom' is difficult but it helps to personify it in role models we have known. Having a negative 'unwise' role models (there are plenty with celebrity status) will hinder development and will have to be talked through. Role models can also come from stories or television where which young people can identify with.

5.3.2 Thinking: Philosophical issues.

Thinking skills should be deeper than logic and involve thinking for life. Tallis (2004) argues 'That I am this' is not absolute: I am limited in horizon to what I define as 'this'. There may be achievements I believe I cannot make because I perceive success to be beyond my reach. There is therefore a role for expanding horizons and aspirations: in so doing we are expanding self-belief. Our horizons are affected, positvely or negatively, by the expectations of others until we learn to rise above this and set our own agendas. Free will is not amoral: part of the process is to think through how our freedom might affect others. We can view this not as constraining (i.e. being prevented by others) but as empowering (the greatest freedom coming when everyone is free). For Heidegger (2002) *human being* holds past, present and future in relation and tension. Human being is a series of accidents and choices which move us from the present to our future, affected by our past choices and experiences of the choices of others. The 'event of Appropriation' marks how being and time need to be regarded together. This helps us to define a SYEP outcome: the central focus is the *potential* of human *being*: human beings create their future by the choices they make. These choices are not reasoned or articulated, and maybe not recognized as explicit choices. For Heidegger, by developing personal agency (or Appropriation) "the unconcealedness of what–is-present" (p.79) (that is, "truth") is a phenomenological and transcendental process. For Schutz, (1967) we can be 'shocked' into instant change [16] when new symbolic visualizations strike us and replace older erroneous or limited ones. SYEP offers such a conceptual shock.

5.4 The human spirit.

SYEP is said to meet the needs of the human spirit by team members and practitioners from a range of religious and secular persuasions. All agree that this is spiritual education in the broad sense defined by OFTED guidance. The project accepts that spiritual education is for anyone and has secular and religious faces. The team see the programme as religion in action. School practitioners interpret this in a variety of ways, but never in a religiously partisan way. SYEP stresses that children need a vocabulary to talk about issues of the human spirit, including well-being and meaning-making, so the discussion time in the Discovery Zone is crucial. They are encouraged to see through social pressures and stereotypes and look deep inside themselves, looking for positive qualities, attitudes and relationships.

Maslow, as part of the general concern for self-realisation, argued that spiritual transcendence is biologically natural[17]:

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[16] Thomas Kuhn's (1962) paradigm shift.
[17] What would today be considered inappropriate use of gendered pronouns in the original have been retained in quotations.

"Man has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his essence, i.e., his biological nature as a member of a species which has evolved" (1970:xvi).

and (1970:xiii)

"small r religion is quite compatible, at the higher levels of personal development, with rationality, with science, with social passion. Not only this, but it can, in principle, quite easily integrate the healthily animal, material, and selfish with the naturalistically transcendent, spiritual, and axiological".

The team interpreted spirituality as religious, and used language of God and prayer. My own approach is, like Maslow, to see spirituality as a secular process, a form of human thinking capable of being studied psychologically. This difference mirrors the confusion in this field of study. The most substantial collection of research (Roelkepartain et al, 2006) affirms secular applications but reveals that most current research on spiritual development is actually on religious development: my detailed review of this research (Bigger, 2007) contributes to a more secular turn.

My view as secular researcher is that God-language is symbolic and capable of philosophical, psychological and sociological study. All religions consider human language about God as inadequate. This view considers God-language as 'real' in the sense that it presents the supreme values of the person: 'God' thus symbolises supreme values. Whether, aside from this process, there is an objectively real God is an entirely different question of little relevance to our study here. Divine guidance from the believers point of view, is direct, deliberate and objective. On the symbolic view, such guidance is the proper and authentic application of one's highest values to the problem at hand. Authority to the believer comes from scriptures and figures of authority; on the symbolic view one's personal quest is enhanced by various external sources we value as helpful, and form a personal 'canon'. Particular writers may influence us, including scriptures; or we may be 'inspired' by secular texts. Many scholars use the writings of Marx, Freud and Jung in this way.

5.5 From Self-worth to Moral Choice and Service.

We saw in chapter two, through the work of Mruk in particular, that self-esteem has negative and positive faces, and the positive aspect of self-worth is under-researched. This project has much to contribute to both theory and practice of self-worth. It presents a structured process of building up a language of self-worth based on the phrase from Bahai scriptures: *each person is a mine rich in gems of inestimable worth*. Gems as a metaphor a central to the developing conceptualisations of the pupils. This may be the first time the child has viewed themselves as having any qualities or worth, certainly when dealing with dysfunctional children. Other children also write down their gems, helping children to see some of the positive things others think about them. This is often a moving moment, and the gem card is something they can treasure. Children receive a number of mementos which they can treasure. As children now have a language to talk about their positive qualities, discussion becomes very rich. The have now become *expressive* about themselves, which is a step on the route to creativity.

Self-worth in action is outgoing, the self in community, in partnership with others to create a better world. The communitarian John Macmurray (1957) described this as *The Self as Agent*, emphasising the importance of action and reflecting on action, that life is about *doing* rather than *being*. Reflecting on the 'light' aspects

of human nature leads to the child learning how to move away from the 'dark' side, to recognise its pull, and move beyond it so it is no longer a temptation. This recognises in the actions of others a failure to do likewise and a concern to help them do so. This is what 'service' means. One early SYEP pupil said:

> If a lot of people did decide that this was something I am going to do, and we had a lot of people coming, I think it would be brilliant, I think the town would be so much more relaxed, especially with the youths and yobbery that is associated with most young people. If you got to calm those people down, and make young people more respected, I think that would be a great thing, I think not only a great thing for [the town] but a great thing for the whole country.

5.6 School Ethos.

Positivity means that schools should remove anything from their structures and strategies that devalue pupils' worth and hinder learning – behaviour such as sarcasm, bullying, and belittling. The aim needs to be a caring, positive, can-do, problem-solving ethos even for (or especially for) the most dysfunctional children; and also for this to be consistent from infancy to College. This lays down in pupils' psyche the expectation that they can and will achieve, and that hard work for the common good is worthwhile. Geert Hofstede proposed a five-dimension model - 'software of the mind' - of work culture which is instructive (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).

Criterion	SYEP position
1: Power distance	SYEP emphasizes equality of all stakeholders, particularly pupils
2: Individualism	SYEP emphases collective social responsibility
3: Gender values	SYEP emphasizes empathy and cooperation rather than conflict and assertiveness
4: Uncertainty avoidance	SYEP emphasizes empowerment and problem-tackling
5: Long Term Orientation	SYEP links pursuing long term personal goals with working towards the common good.

SYEP represents the positive polarity of ethos, that representing equality, involvement and caring which may involve adjusting existing programming and expectations. Community is built from the inside, and not imposed from the outside.

Six
Conclusions and recommendations.

> My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing
> Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, [18]

6.1 **Effectiveness**

All concerned have the highest opinion of the effectiveness of this project in transforming pupils lives and giving them a sense of direction, agency and aspiration. This is rooted in positive can-do relationships between adults and pupils, the opportunity to relax, chill out and reflect on their own personal attitudes and choices, the vocabulary to articulate their inner struggles, and the excitement of first glimpsing their potential. Although children vary, from age 9, the school staff and parents report rapid change which works through to academic progress as the dysfunctional behaviour becomes functional.

Confidence that this is so must come from the views of the pupils, their parents and their educators. Long-term tracking is vital to build up the evidence base, and it was important to interview not only current pupils but also those from five years ago. I have encouraged the project team to set up long term evaluation and tracking processes so that this enquiry continues.

Evaluation, (Kirkpatrick, 1994) operates on four levels – reaction, learning, behaviour and results. The reaction of stakeholders to SYEP shows that all concerned have a high opinion of its effectiveness in terms of increasing the personal confidence of disaffected young people and giving them a sense of direction, agency and aspiration. We can define learning as what the young people learned, about themselves and their relationships; and how the team have developed the idea. Both reveal a high level of learning. We see changes of behaviour (the application of the new ideas) both in how the young people are transformed, and how educators have modified their practice. The positive results can be tracked through the success of the young people, measured against predictions of their progress made at the beginning. Kaplan and Norton's (1992) "balanced scorecard" evaluates success by stakeholder feedback, (which has been positive); by internal processes,(which have been robust and democratic); by learning/growth (creativity and developmental activity have been very apparent); and sustainability (funding has been raised to cover the next three years, and many influential friends have been won). On both of these evaluation schemes, SYEP can be accounted successful. I suggest (with Fullen 2001) a difference between *implementation* in the short term, and *institutionalization* for the long term. Institutionalization will have succeeded when reflective tranquility is a strategy educators generally use as a normal strategy: this remains an aspiration both only of the team but of the politicians.

The approach has produced a three-stage model of learning:
- develop self worth – which leads to
- empowering and dynamic personal learning – which leads to
- behaviour change and social action.

This project is unique. It touches other approaches, such as restorative practice and circle time, but its emphasis on developing positive and socially aware thinking is different. The young people they have worked with have done much to rescue and shape their own lives.

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[18] Harmondsworth 1973 p.59

6.2 Motivation to learn

Learning is rooted in curiosity and motivation so young people (and old) need to want to learn. Learning is dynamic, growing through interactions, discussions and cooperative enterprises. They learn, as John Dewey (1938) argued, by linking learning to life experience. We have been able to track the academic progress to the early cohorts which has revealed that raised understanding of self worth and potential has made the young people participants in further and higher education. Given these were originally identified as dysfunctional, this is evidence to turn-around. The schools involved have used SYEP as a way of engaging the disengaged pupil. It focuses on children with problems of attitude and social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. Schools are tracking the progress of these pupils carefully.

6.3 Psychological issues.

This discussion of SYEP contributes to our understanding of adolescent psychology, and in particular authentic self worth. It lays a foundation for *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL), providing a strategy to deal rationally with emotions. Sometimes this is the first time the young person has thought seriously about themselves in an analytic way, and the effect can be immediate; but of course this is a life journey requiring patient continuing reflection.

There are other possible personality factors that we should take account of. *Reliability* is a result of personality integration. *Fair-minded* or equability suggests a balance between self and other. *Resilience* is the person's ability to fight back, to overcome obstacles, to bounce back. Confidence in the possibility of success can be eroded, and self confidence can be built up by competent nurtures and mentors. SYEP makes all of these elements explicit and is therefore *personality building*.

6.4 Spiritual development

This study has implications for our understanding of spiritual development. The project was energised by the notion that disaffected young people were in fact 'dis-spirited' – out of touch with their own human spirit deep down, frustrated and lacking fundamental aims and vision. The team believed that many assumptions and pressures in today's consumer world inhibit deep personal reflection and encourage pursuit of the superficial. Children therefore need to be encouraged to see things differently, and develop ways of understanding and critiquing their world and lives.

There is no necessary link between spiritual development and religion, so that spiritual development refers to an integrated development of the human spirit or human being. SYEP has a curious place in this continuum. Its 18 Principles come from Bahá'í scriptures, but are set out in a secular way in that they address the human condition in a naturalistic way without reference to God. The project aims at personal transformation of thinking, being and becoming, through self-reflection.[19]

Service is to emphasise working with others in cooperative and empowering ways. It implies common everyday attitudes of helpfulness to others. The evidence of school staff and parents emphasized that the children often had a new spirit of helpfulness, certainly in little ways like helping at home, and sometimes in dramatic ways by stopping confrontation. They reported that children were better able to communicate, and in particular better able to defuse

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[19] The Bahá'í Faith originated in the 1850s as a protest against a corrupt and dogmatic form of religion, promoting instead personal and social justice.

situations calmly whereas before they would have blow up into a temper. Several parents reported that their child had changed. The visualization of their wise person in particular gave them an inner voice of reason which enabled them to calm down and behave responsibly and with dignity. The concept of service (relating positively to others) is an essential balance to self-worth as it keep this authentic rather than defensive or manipulative. Older youngsters talked about positive behaviour being consistent and part of one's nature, and not a tool for manipulation to get one's own way. We have defined this further in constructivist Vygotskian terms, in which SYEP activities have scaffolded deep learning.

The limitations of the study are that few young people are available to be studied who have been involved for over five years, so progress has been sought for smaller step change also. Discussions with parents have also not been easy, as I regarded a questionnaire as inappropriate. The various implications for psychology and spiritual development require further study globally; my findings therefore are part of a broader dynamic, and are not claimed as a magic cure for the disaffected.

6.5 Implications for learning.

SYEP talks about the spiral of growth and learning. Realising self worth leads to a greater understanding of one's higher nature which itself builds on a recognition of personal worth and potential contribution to their world. Pupils see themselves as active players rather than dependent passive recipients. All actions are the result of choices, whether the free choices of individuals with personal agency, or the forced choices of people led by peer pressure or individuals holding power. Informed choices come from making one's thinking explicit, so encouraging thinking skills. All this leads to an enquiring mind which is the prime constituent of motivation for learning – not only in childhood and youth but also throughout life. Such learning is active and social, recognising that we learn with and through others (co-constructivism) in ways which help others to learn to. In other words, such learning is infectious. SYEP Principle 13 speaks of creating a cohesive empowering atmosphere, an ethos for good. This also implies that positive involvement with others will have mutual benefits and be a natural desire, edifying all parties. SYEP refer to this as 'service' – not an obligation but a natural process of encounter and contribution.

These are elements of moral, social and citizenship education. A major purpose of the work with young people was to get them to look outwards, beyond themselves to others (described in psychological literature as *transcendence*). Discussion is as much about empathy with others as about self understanding, about feeling good about other people. One story used in SYEP described a man forgiving someone who had opposed and harmed him. Many situations are about conflict and how it can be avoided. The assumptions of the project emphasise fairness and equity, with special reference to gender and race [20].

6.6 Implications for schools and society.

Children hold a picture of themselves in their heads, from an early age. This can be helpful or harmful. Freedom and exploration through problem-solving and active participation are important. Control comes in many forms and are often unnecessary and unhelpful. Those that are necessary, for health and safety for example, can be taught positively from the beginning so they become self control as early as possible. The encouragement of self-control from the beginning will influence later attitudes and behaviour. Much anti-social behaviour is a protest at unreasonable control: unfortunately the unreason then multiplies on both sides.

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[20] These are key beliefs within the Bahai Faith.

Positive communication is a way forward, since there is then nothing to rebel against. This bases education on the belief that children are people in their own right with ideas and a right to be heard and express themselves. Equally their contribution should be recognised, encouraged and praised, which will lead to deeper and more active contribution. This reminds both children and adults that education is about real life and real issues, not just getting through set information and exams. This encourages full participation and involvement: *We can be conscious of our growth and evolution; and we can be aware of challenges to our growth and be proactive in meeting these* (Principles 15 and 16). This grounds education in real life and real choices, producing motivated responsible pupils capable as adults of thinking creatively and contributing to social good.

6.7 Recommendations and further research potential
The first group of recommendations are with reference to the programme:
1. That the revised principles of positive thinking are adapted into a range of different forms, some of which can be used in normal classes.
2. That materials are produced that enable school staff to try out and build confidence.
3. That primary school practitioners are brought together to develop age-appropriate materials.
4. That the children write stories too.
5. That the element of learning cooperatively together and teaching others ('service') is further developed.
6. That clear and simple forms of feedback and reporting loops are further developed to feed into self-evaluation.
7. That young people taking part are tracked and interviewed in later years.
8. That the project works towards mainstreaming the central ideas of the approach.
9. That funding for further research is secured.

These are being developed as a result of this research. The current drive (recommendation 1) is to trial SYEP in year 6 whole classes, in order to better prepare pupils for transfer to secondary school.

Further research is urgently needed with regard to how pupils and students can more generally develop positive attitudes to life and study, and how education staff can support them. This may link with what Maslow called self-actualisation, and Kohlberg's (1981) universal altruism as the highest stage of moral development, and Fowler's (1982) world soul, as the highest spiritual stage (also Fowler and Dell, 2006). We need also to clarify links to psychological studies of non-religious spirituality (Roehlkepartain *et al.,* 2006).

Current concerns to motivate the unmotivated in schools demands rapid development work with infant and junior schools, so that children at risk can be turned around in early intervention and go on to reach their potential at 16 and beyond. The project is focusing on the 9-13 year old group, which is important; but so is the 3-9 group, with whom very different approaches will be needed, but within the same spirit.

Part of this future development will bring together aspects of work which already contribute to this end. I have for example discussed circle time above (chapter 2). However we also need to examine those aspects of schooling that militate against autonomy, independence, motivation and creativity. Unfortunately, modifying teacher behaviour is easier than modifying national policy.

A potentially important further development is to link psychological wellbeing with creativity. Maslow (1971:70) found the criteria for self actualisation, fully

functioning [Rogers], individuated [Jung] or autonomous [Fromm] virtually identical to Torrance's criteria for creativeness. He argued that creativeness is a general sign of good mental health, after removing emotional blocks (1971:78-91). SYEP make a link between their work and creativity (and use art, drama, mime, music and story) which may have value for arts education.

Creativity is however an attitude of mind with holistic scope: how we think and view the world depends on our facility with language, the visualisation of symbols, and imagination. I reported (Bigger, 1987) work with 9 year olds on the nature of wisdom based on the Hindu visualisation of wisdom, the goddess Saraswati. Today, the academy recognises that the development of wisdom is more significant than the development of knowledge (Sternberg, Reznitskayab and Jarvina, 2007; Maxwell, 1984) [21]. A National Curriculum based around wisdom and not knowledge could be an interesting future consequence.

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[21] The whole issue of *London Review of Education* Vol. 5, No. 2, July 2007 discusses the meaning and development of wisdom.

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