RaY

Research at the University of York St John

**Integrating first, second and third person research
to lead the creation of a learning organisation**

A dialogue between doctoral supervisor and student

Joan Walton and Nigel Harrisson

Introduction

We, Nigel and Joan, have been working together for four years in our respective roles as PhD student and supervisor. In his position as leader within children's services in a UK local authority, Nigel was interested in researching how he could influence others to create a learning organisation which increased the inclusion of children in schools. He did not find that third person research into either leadership or learning organisations was useful on its own in helping him improve his leadership practice, and was attracted to a form of first person research which would allow him to inquire into his own values-based practice in his unique professional environment.   Joan was working in an academic context which did not value first person self-study research, and privileged traditional methodologies which perceived the researcher as investigating a reality that existed independently of her/himself. Joan herself was engaged in a critical re-questioning of the relationship between research, knowledge and professional practice. She was exploring the ways in which first, second and third person approaches to research could be integrated to allow knowledge contributing to the public good to be grounded in researching personal and collaborative practice.   This chapter tells the story, in the form of a dialogue, of the evolving supervisory relationship between Nigel and Joan as they shared each other's ideas and experiences, with the aim of enabling Nigel to make an original contribution to knowledge based on his own individual and collaborative practice, which others could use and build on in their professional settings.

Setting the context

We met at a British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference in Manchester, UK, in 2009. Joan's early career was as a social worker, followed by many years in the education and development of adults working in education, health and social care settings. She had recently been appointed as an academic in the Faculty of Education at a UK University, with a remit to set up the Centre for the Child, Family and Society. Nigel having started his professional life as a science teacher, then became a qualified Educational Psychologist, gaining extensive experience of working with children excluded from schools.   He was now Education Inclusion Manager within Children's Services in a local authority in the south west of England. We were introduced by Jack Whitehead, who had been Joan's PhD supervisor; and who attended Nigel's 'conversation café', a small group of about 10 people who met on a weekly basis to discuss issues of mutual professional interest.

At the time of meeting, we had a considerable amount in common.   We were both in our mid-50's; we had had interesting and successful careers; we were generally more motivated to engage in action that was meaningful and of social value, than that which led to higher income or improved employment status; and a shared aim was to improve the well-being and life chances of children and young people. In addition we had both come to the same view that there was more to understanding the world than traditional research methodologies permitted.

Nigel was attracted to the idea of undertaking a PhD; not for the qualification in itself, but because he considered that he was creating useful knowledge in his work as a leader of children's services, and was interested in exploring how to articulate this, and make a valid contribution to relevant academic literature. Although in his role he was five steps removed from children and young people, Nigel was committed to influencing the practice of the staff whom he managed, with the ultimate goal of improving the inclusion of children in schools.   He had for many years been reading about theories on leadership (Adair 1983; Bass and Avolio 1994; Kouzes and Posner 2002), and 'learning organisations' (Argyris 1999, Senge 1990); and his aim was to play a leadership role in creating the service he managed as a learning organisation.

Joan had made the decision to enter the academic world, as she considered there were many professionals, like Nigel, who were generating valuable professional knowledge in their work with children and families, as they engaged in dialogue and critical reflection in the course of their working lives; but this knowledge, deeply embedded within them, was often lost when they retired, because they had not had either the time nor the encouragement to articulate it in a form that was seen as a credible addition to knowledge within the academic world.   Indeed the academic world tended to be critical of such forms of research and knowledge creation. In the meantime, much research undertaken within universities was generally not relevant nor practically useful to professionals in their daily lives.

Both of us had come to the conclusion that there was a significant gap between the knowledge produced by 'academic research' which generally valued third person research methodologies, and the application of that knowledge in day-to-day practice. Joan's interest was to supervise professionals interested in grounding their doctoral research in their own practice, and to generate knowledge that would be of value to other practitioners as well as to academics.

This, of course, had major implications for the research methodology chosen; and demonstrated the great divide between the academic and the professional world. Universities are still dominated by the idea that the world exists independently of the observer, and that a researcher can only gain valid knowledge if investigating from a third person perspective. Such a view remains firmly grounded despite considerable evidence which challenges it from, for example, research findings in quantum physics, which suggests a participatory universe where everything is interconnected rather than separate. (Wallace 2007, Wheeler 1994).

The university where Joan was appointed supported third-person research, showing little interest in developing research undertaken from a first person perspective.   However when given permission to start the Centre for the Child, Family and Society as a research centre specialising in action research, Joan requested that Dr Jack Whitehead [1] be appointed for a period of time as an adjunct professor to help her with the development of the centre. The request was approved, and Whitehead fulfilled this role for 3 years.

Whitehead has developed an approach to research which he terms 'living educational theory' (1989).   This approach focuses on a self-study of the researcher's own practice. Their aim is to hold their lives to account by producing explanations of the educational influences in their own learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How can I improve what I am doing?'   Evidence of an original contribution to knowledge is usually through the researcher creating a personal 'standard of judgement' to which their claims to an improvement in their practice will be judged and evaluated. Although the researcher is encouraged to include an explanation of "the educational influences of individuals…. in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work" Whitehead (2008:105), there is little attention placed on methods for inquiring together with others, nor in ensuring that their research results in findings that have social value which can be built on. The focus is on the first person experience of the researcher, and the knowledge that emerges in the course of their practice, which leads to an improvement in their practice.

Our joint aim here is to present some of the questions, challenges, tensions and resolutions that have arisen in the process of Nigel pursuing his doctoral study.

The use of dialogue

In this chapter, we are using dialogue as a literary device which enables us to present the essence of each of our perspectives, and our influence on each other's thinking, as our ideas evolved over time in a mutually informing way.

Dialogue has been used extensively as a literary device in fictional literature, allowing the actual voices of each character in a story to be heard in a way that is congruent with their individual personalities. The 'to and fro' of the exchange of information, ideas and thoughts that exist within the minds of the characters can be presented in an animated and conversational way.   By emphasising the human interaction, dialogue prevents literature from becoming an extended list of descriptions, analyses and actions. We believe it has a comparable role to play in communicating research.

When conversing, we have not been aiming to achieve final and absolute conclusions. Lyotard (1979) contends there has been an abandonment of any attempt to find a 'grand narrative' which allows for the accurate prediction of human behaviour. We welcome such an abandonment, as the participatory world view which informs our research challenges it as a possibility. We are, though, in accord with Rorty's response to Lyotard, when he says: "we want to drop meta narratives, but keep on recounting first-order narratives" (1992: 60).

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[1] Formally a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Bath

However although narrative has been widely used as a method of presenting research (Clough 2002; Czarniawska-Joerges 2004), the use of dialogue as a means of representing an exchange of narratives, has not been so commonly adopted.

In this chapter, we are focusing on a topic that was part of an ongoing discussion in supervision – that is, the place of first, second and third person perspectives in research, and the relative value of each. The role of researcher was a key issue for Nigel from the outset, given his early experience as a science teacher privileging third person methodologies, and his current situation where he was in a weekly group that approached research from a living educational theory (Whitehead 1989) perspective, which is undertaken from an 'I' perspective.

What is often missing from textbooks on research methodologies are the values, assumptions and world views that inform different approaches. As the conversation progressed, Nigel and Joan realised how choices of methodology are greatly influenced by the world view of the researcher. The more implicit the values, assumptions and world view, the more it can be 'taken for granted' that a particular approach to research is the 'right' one. It was our experience that these elements need to be clarified and made explicit.

In discussing key issues such as these, the nature of the supervisory relationship was influenced by values shared by both Joan and Nigel, which included mutual respect and inclusiveness. In reflecting how we could express these in our co-writing, we thought that rather than just talk about our values, we would use dialogue as a means of demonstrating our commitment throughout our supervisory relationship to truly listen and be responsive to each other's contributions. We hope that you, the reader, reach the end of the chapter feeling that we have achieved this.

Nigel
I have a background in the physical sciences, and grew up with the positivist assumptions of the physical sciences; that is, that the world is made up of the building blocks of matter, and that we generate knowledge through what we can observe and measure; indeed, even now in my work on education inclusion, I live in a world that values measures, SMART[2] targets and psychometrics. Throughout my educational experience, I have been taught, and have taken for granted, the belief that only third person research will provide the objective and impartial evidence required to discover the 'truth' about the world.

However in the regular 'conversation café' conversations with Jack Whitehead, and talking with others who have been engaged in living theory approaches to action research, I became attracted to first person research, and believe that there are grounds for challenging the supremacy of third person research. It was not that I was hearing about this for the first time; but what we discussed was resonating with an 'unease' I had felt for a number of years. That unease derived from a belief that there were different ways of

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[2] SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time limited

knowing, but that if I had mentioned these in the past, they were quickly dismissed as not being 'objective' or 'scientific', and therefore of little worth.

One particular influence was reading work by Wolff-Michael Roth (2012), a mathematician steeped in third person thinking, who then came to embrace the praxis of first person research, and apply it to his understanding of the world of mathematics and how mathematics is taught.

I began my PhD, feeling a tension between a belief in how knowledge was acquired that I had learned about throughout my early education, which was, and continues to be, sanctioned academically and socially; and a growing belief that in fact such research does not recognise the uniqueness of the life experiences, values and work context of the committed professional wishing to make a positive difference in the world; which is what I strive to do.

Joan
Yes I can see the tension that this creates for you Nigel. But cannot you do both third person and first person research? And indeed, whilst we are looking at this, how about considering where second person research fits in?

When I was developing the Centre for the Child, Family and Society, I was supporting research that was grounded in a person's own practice, as I too had a strong belief in the value of subjective experience. However, I am in accord with Reason and Bradbury (2001, 2003) who consider that good action research should integrate first, second and third person forms of inquiry. They write as follows:

> In the course of our work we have come to believe that first person inquiry is the foundation for all good action research; however, second person inquiry is the arena where the most energy and practical opportunity for really impacting practice occurs – while third person work is, finally, the most important, as it affects the conditions which ultimately shape the future context in which first and second person work can occur. Keeping an eye to integrating the three modes, and always being concerned with working in at least two modes, is especially important.
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> (Reason and Bradbury 2003: 169-170).

In this context, it is important to differentiate between the grammatical usage of 'second person', which applies when addressing another, from its meaning within the action research literature. In action research, it commonly means 'me with you', as in a co-operative inquiry, which often in practice becomes simplified to 'we'. However focusing on the idea of second person, rather than first person plural, emphasises the inclusion of the other as a conscious choice. In making this choice, attention is paid to the quality of relationship between 'me' and 'you', where each of us makes ourself open and vulnerable to the other.

My commitment to the integration of first, second and third person forms of research began with the writing of my PhD thesis. As part of my doctoral inquiry, I initiated a co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996), where I co-researched with others about what could be done to create positive change in the world, at a time of many local and global crises. At an early stage of the enquiry, group members concurred that the only person one could change was oneself; so was born the phrase: 'transform the world through transforming self'.

Consequently, it was agreed that for any researcher wishing to make a positive difference in the world, it was important they start with researching their own lives and professional practice (first person). Then in dialogue with others, and through sharing experiences, reflections and learning, a form of collaboratively created knowledge emerges (second person), which may be worthwhile presenting in a form which is of value and relevance to others (third person). This can then be used as a resource by individuals engaging in their own subjective inquiries, and so a circular process is created whereby the 'I', 'we' and 'them / it' are engaged in a mutually informing and growing body of embodied, tacit and explicit knowledge.

Nigel
I can see the attraction of that, Joan. I need to think through, however, how I enable that integration.

Although I am critical about the dominance of third person research, I am not saying I don't accept its value. It has served me well over the years in my work as an analytical chemist and science teacher.

However it does not feel appropriate for me in my current situation where I am dealing with people who live by their values, who are serving people vulnerable to failure in the education system, and where positive, meaningful relationships are paramount to effective practice. Most of my initial reading on leadership and learning organisations was on traditional research, which usually takes an 'outsider' perspective from which the focus of investigation is other people, phenomena or events. Traditional researchers often offer explanations for how others are behaving, but aim to do so from a detached, 'objective' perspective. They are reflecting the positivist scientific perspective, where the belief is that they will be able to produce theories that have a generalizable application.

It is in this context that I think first person research needs to be considered. Human beings are not replicable, mechanical objects; we are not machines, to be observed, manipulated and controlled.   Each one of us is unique, and there are things which are vitally important to us in everyday practice that are not easily measured. For example, how can the love and care I have for my children, and the children for whom I have responsibility, be measured? An obvious example of our uniqueness would be in recognising the different values we each hold, which inspire us to live and work in a particular kind of way.   Mine happen to include fairness, caring, compassion, and inclusion. These influence my decisions and actions every day and in everything I do on a moment-by-moment basis. This is not to say I get it right all the time, but the way I am in the world, and the actions I take, are influenced by the values that are meaningful to me.

Other people live by different values, and will make different choices in similar situations. Traditional social science research does not allow for this, as some researchers recognise. For example, Argyris (1999), in his extensive work on learning organisations, questions its effectiveness when studying how organisations learn. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that new forms of research are required…

> …the criteria for (objectivity, precision and completeness) should take into account the features of the way the human mind works when human beings try to use the knowledge that social scientists produce. (p 428)

In addition, Argyris (1999) explicitly addresses the issue of 'values' which he says are…. "often recognised but rarely addressed"… and the constraints traditional social science research places on researchers not on what to study but on **how** to study, which indirectly may influence the choice of what is studied…

> …less attention may be paid to the possibility of developing normative views, views that not only question the status quo but produce knowledge about how to alter it. Further, less attention might be paid to the possibility that research designed to produce understanding on an issue may be designed quite differently than research on the same issue designed to produce understanding for the purposes of action…
> … It is not true, I believe, that social scientists are neutral about the kind of society in which they live. Even the most 'anti' applied researchers value a society in which they are free to conduct research. Such societies would have to value experimentation and learning, which, if truly unfettered, would also require the valuing of risk taking and trust. Such a society, in turn, is unlikely to come to exist without human beings who are willing to accept personal responsibility for their actions. (p 429)

So I can see that both first and third person research play an important role in different kinds of knowledge generation, and it seems to me that there are traditional scientists who understand the value of the subjective perspective. However in my experience, it has tended to be an 'either/or', with no integration; nor indeed does it include the second person.

Joan
Actually, Nigel, I think you are doing yourself a discredit here. Or perhaps your perspective is slightly different to mine.

In your research, you are engaging with your colleagues in order to learn how to create a learning organisation. Now you may just see that as focusing on yourself, on first person research, as you are improving your practice through living your values in your relationships with others. However my understanding is that you are focusing on others in addition to yourself; in other words, you are inquiring with them in relation to how you can work collaboratively to improve the inclusion of children with whom you work. It may be the 'I'

who is thinking about how to improve your practice in relation to engaging others; but once the 'I' has been successful in that, it becomes the 'we' who are inquiring into what you can do together. The attention then is placed on issues such as improving teamwork, and making better use of meetings.

So in writing your thesis, I would suggest you pay attention to the collective dynamic of your work. Don't just see this as 'I' seeking to put my values into practice, and providing evidence of my influence in relation to others. In the kind of research you are doing, I would see this as necessary but not sufficient. In addition, ask yourself questions such as: "what needs to happen for the 'we' to work together as a team?" What are you asking of other people, and what are the key elements of your collaborative practice that you believe are contributing to the creation of the learning organisation? There is a saying: "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts"; and you are aiming to facilitate a process whereby everyone takes responsibility for the creation of the whole; where everyone involved is approaching what they do as a 'we' as well as an 'I'.

This may seem a subtle distinction; but that is why I talk about 'integration', because when both the 'I' and the 'we' are seen as equally important, a different kind of theory emerges than when either is given predominance. For example, conventional theories of teamwork are qualitatively different to any theory which focuses on an individual skill such as counselling. In your work, you will be aiming to create a theory of practice that explains and improves the connection between individual and collaborative practice.

If an integration of research which includes both the 'I' and the 'we' can be achieved, you can provide evidence of how effective this approach is to the creation of a learning organisation, in which the inclusion of children is demonstrably increased. The third person dimension is introduced by writing up your research in a way that enables others to understand how they too can create learning organisations using this methodological approach. There is no currently no research that has been undertaken into creating learning organisations that uses this methodology; consequently you will be making an original contribution to knowledge, which is a requirement of your doctoral thesis. Given that there is considerable interest across many sectors as to how to create a learning organisation, you will be offering research that has substantial social value, which others can use and build on.

Nigel
I am beginning to understand what you mean by integrating first, second and third person perspectives, and how this can be achieved through my own research.

But this whole dialogue is making me question even more radically the forms of research we privilege in our western society. The more I explore the nature of research, the more I become puzzled about the apparent dichotomy between first person and third person approaches; and in the meantime, second person seems even more neglected and marginalised than first person.

Surely it makes more sense to engage in research that assumes the circular and dynamic interconnection between the individual, family, local community, and planetary community.

Joan

Part of the problem, Nigel, is the world view that informs the way research is currently practiced in mainstream western academia. Traditional research, even in education, is informed by classical Newtonian science; that is, the world is perceived to operate as a machine. It is believed that reality can be broken down into separate, discrete parts, and manipulated into different, pre-determined forms. There is a conviction that the behaviour of the different parts which make up the whole (with each individual human-being constituting a 'part'), can be observed, measured, predicted and controlled.

The assumption here is that there are laws built into the universe which regulate what can happen. The aim of research is to discover what those laws are, so that all behaviour can be anticipated and managed.   This forms the basis of much educational research that is undertaken, even in our classrooms; for example the belief that if we set educational targets for children, we can then discover the methods that will enable those targets to be achieved, as though the children themselves are little machines that can be observed, analysed and controlled.

However, although most researchers in universities have not realised or acknowledged it, the Newtonian world view can and has been challenged, even from within science itself. For example, quantum theory has revealed that the observer, the observed and the act of observation are intricately interrelated.   John Wheeler, a theoretical physicist who was a colleague of both Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr, stated:

> Useful as it is under everyday circumstances to say that the world exists
> 'out there' independent of us, that view can no longer be upheld. There
> is a strange sense in which this is a 'participatory universe'. (1994: 126)

Wheeler suggests that, rather than being passive bystanders in the world, we are instead active participants, who create rather than discover the universe with which we are interacting: "Directly opposite to the concept of universe as machine built on law, is the vision of a world self-synthesized" (1999: 314)

If we accept this participatory world view, as educational researchers such as Reason and Bradbury (2007) and Heron (1996) have done, the nature of research is transformed. There is a recognition of the interconnection between all living things, and the impossibility of observing one part of the universe, including human beings, as though each exists independently of all else.

Researching from a participatory world view suggests that the question should not be: "What methods can we use to discover the 'truth' about the universe?"; but rather: "What kind of world do we want to live in, and what research methods will help us generate the knowledge we need to create that world?"

It is in such a context that the kind of research that you are doing, and other research that is grounded in first person practice, will prove not just valid, but hugely significant in enabling

us to learn how to create a world where all people can live in peace and harmony, and can flourish, individually and collectively.

Nigel
This all makes a lot of sense, Joan.

I have had two experiences which I think are relevant to this conversation. The first was an incident in my late teens, the impact of which has, I believe, had an influence on all that I have been and done since then. It was in 1972, at the time of the Vietnam war, and I saw what has now become an iconic photograph, of a young naked girl running down the centre of the road, in horrendous pain as her clothes had just been burnt off her after a napalm bomb had exploded in her village. It was not just the anguish of the child that struck me; it was the fact that in the photo, there were also several soldiers, who were not doing anything to help her. My immediate response was: "I'm buggered if I am going to be a bystander and watch children get hurt!!"

Since that time, my passion has been to improve the life chances of children, and to ease any suffering they may be experiencing.   This has often led me into conflict with people who have different sets of values. I think this next incident, although seemingly simple, highlights the kind of issues involved.

I was driving my car through a busy urban street in the middle of the day. The traffic came to a standstill due to temporary traffic lights at roadworks.   As I waited for the lights to change, I saw a woman on the opposite side of the road struggling with a wheelchair which had a child sitting in it. She crossed the road in front of me, then attempted to get the wheelchair up the steep kerb onto the pavement. Aware that the lights might change, and I might generate the wrath of other drivers by holding up the traffic, I nevertheless jumped out of the car. I lifted up the wheelchair on to the pavement, made sure the young person was okay, empathised briefly with the woman about the difficult situation she had been in, and returned to my car. In that brief episode, I felt I created a connection with the woman and child, where they experienced being recognised and valued. In that moment, I felt I was sharing my humanity – and for me, it was an important thing to do.

I am seeing my research as an autoethnographic study, and this incident, which has remained a highly significant one for me, has helped me reflect on personal thoughts, feelings and values which have motivated my actions on a moment-by-moment basis, in the context of the values and attitudes of mainstream society.   Immediately before jumping out of the car, I was aware that there were risks of going to the woman's help, in terms of the responses of other people held up in the queue.   You have been talking of a mechanistic worldview; and yes, most people around me would be seeing the situation in somewhat mechanical terms – traffic lights turn to red, cars stop, drivers focus on when lights will go green, so that cars can start moving again.   Any event that delayed that process would be seen in negative terms – the machine was failing to work. There would be a search for the cause of that failure (in this situation, the driver who had left his car), and when they identified that cause, they would probably engage in action to remedy the situation – for

example, press their horns, or open the window and shout at him – actions which would have the aim of pressurising him to return to the car.

This envisaged response reflects the mechanistic paradigm which you have just been talking about, and which dominates our western scientific culture, where reality exists independently of the observer, and self is separate from other. One of the reasons why I am attracted to autoethnography is because, according to Ellingson and Ellis (2008), it rejects these deep-rooted binary oppositions. In this narrative, I am showing how I am challenging them. Even as my rational mind was registering the possible thoughts of those who saw me as 'other', I was moving towards the woman and child. Driving me was my empassioned mantra "I'm not going to be a bystander and watch children get hurt". My values of inclusion, fairness, caring and compassion led me to see the two people and the wheelchair as an inclusive part of the immediate environment, where they had as much right as anyone else to continue their journey, and I was in a position to help them do so.

Joan
That is an interesting event, Nigel. In acting in this way, you were being a role model for the world view and values that you live by. Leadership is one of the key concepts and practices you are exploring in your inquiry; and although this incident happened within your personal space, you were demonstrating your belief in the fluidity and dynamic interconnection of all aspects of life by playing a leadership role, in that you were 'modelling the way', which is the first practice of exemplary leadership according to Kouzes and Pozner (2003). You are also reflecting Robert Greenleaf's idea of 'servant leadership', in which the focus is primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. Robert Greenleaf writes: "This is my thesis: caring for persons…. is the rock upon which a good society is built." (1977:49).

In this brief moment in time, it seems you clearly saw two different kinds of worlds; one in which inhabitants identify as separate players in a context where each player prioritises their own interests, and is governed by laws and measureable standards of behaviour; the other where individuals see themselves as interconnected within an ultimate unity, and act in ways that are in the best interests of all.

Nigel
There is a critical difference between those two very different perceptions, one which reflects the mechanistic worldview, the other reflecting a participatory one. Is one 'true' and the other not? If so, how do we discover which is more valid than the other? Or, as you were suggesting in your analysis of different world views, rather than reality defining whether the universe is mechanistic or participatory, is it in fact we who have the power to decide which kind of universe we want to live in, and then make choices which help create that kind of universe?

I agree with you: I believe it is the second. So the question I was asking myself as I continued with my journey was: "What needs to happen to get to a point where I could be comfortable going to the help of the woman and child, knowing that all other participants in the situation would take the time to understand the total situation, would recognise and appreciate that I was caring for another human being's welfare, and would be prepared to

act themselves in the service of others if they could see a way to do so?"   What approach to the creation of knowledge do we need if we are to learn how to craft that kind of world? Is this not the kind of knowledge that urgently needs creating?

Reflecting on this apparently simple incident has led to me recognising a relationship with my professional work. I am employed in an organisation which reflects the mechanistic world view, and where people are managed through a process of organisational rules, and measurable targets. However I perceive the organisation and all those it serves as an interconnected unity, where everyone involved should be committed to improving the inclusion of children and young people in ways that enhance their wellbeing and life chances. I care deeply about the wellbeing of all participants involved in this process; and through seeking to live my values of compassion, fairness, caring and inclusion in all aspects of work, there has emerged a form of practice which I term 'caring leadership'.

Joan

I can see how this incident with the woman, child and wheelchair has served to clarify for you the two different world views that I am exploring in depth. They represent very different, and mutually exclusive ways of responding to the same situation, and provide a living example which enables a discussion of the implications of each world view. In reflecting on this situation, you have been able to articulate for yourself what kind of world you believe in, why you believe in it, and how you can play your part in contributing to the creation of this kind of world.

Nigel

Further, In developing my idea of a 'caring leader' and telling the story of what this means for me in the development of myself, my staff and my organisation, I am showing how my values have become so deeply embedded that they spontaneously influence my behaviour even whilst sitting in a traffic queue.   In the writing of my thesis, I am also telling the story of how I have learned to live my values out in practice in ways that have contributed to the achievement of my guiding vision – that is, to enhance the inclusion of children in school, and in so doing, to lessen the level of hurt in children's lives. I hope that in the process, I am demonstrating the dynamic interconnection between my practice, the collaborative practice with others, and the emerging knowledge that is shared and developed in forms that enable others to learn and use for themselves if they wish.

Joan

Yes Nigel. And in the co-writing of this chapter, although it is portraying our work together through the medium of a brief conversation, it does in fact reflect a dialogue which has evolved over four years.

In it, we have shown how my interest in bringing together first, second and third person research has been enhanced through traveling with you on your journey to develop yourself as a leader of an organisation which is actively learning how to improve the inclusion of children. From your perspective, you have resolved the tension you felt existed between first and third person research, created by the belief that you had to choose between them.

However there is a final point I would like to raise before we finally bring this dialogue to an end. The reviewers of our chapter have asked us to comment on the process that lead to this written piece, to include a consideration of how the institutional power imbalance and difference in our role has influenced that process.

I can respond to the first part of this request, by explaining that I wrote the initial draft based on my understanding of both our perspectives, then sent it to you for your feedback regarding accuracy, and to make as many changes and additions as you felt appropriate. We continued that process of exchange over a period of about two months, which included two meetings where we were able to discuss the content in some depth. The completed draft was sent off; then when comments were received from reviewers, this iterative process was re-instated and continued.

I know that in writing this chapter, I took a lead role; and readers might wonder if you felt pressurised to accept what I had written. I don't feel that was the case; but we have agreed that, given the nature of the question, it is important that you take the lead role in responding to this point!

Nigel

Reflecting on the process Joan, I think we would agree that the relationship between us, built over a four year period, was an important factor. When we met in Manchester for the first time, you had just started work on the Centre for the Child, Family and Society and I was working in a Local Authority as Senior Leader for Inclusion. I felt there was a resonance of values between us and I immediately felt relaxed in the presence of a kindred spirit. That relationship continued to develop, not despite the fact that you were an academic and I was a practitioner, but because of it!

I also know that part of what we shared was the frustration that third person explanations did not always fit with our lived experiences as practitioners; somehow we were driven to find explanations for our own thoughts, feelings and behaviours that made sense to us, within our world view. Importantly, although our job roles at the time were different and there was inevitably a built in 'tutor-tutee' power relationship, I consider our relationship to be based primarily on shared values and principles – that is, doing the right thing for children and families.

To spell this out a little more, I think we both brought different, but equally valuable, perspectives to the relationship and the interactive dialogues which meant, because of our backgrounds and shared understandings, we were able to challenge and counter challenge each other in a professional and meaningful way that enabled us to genuinely listen to each other (Rogers 1967) and reflect on our practice (Schon 1991).

Within our professional relationship I consider you, Joan, to be primarily an academic, and coming from that first person perspective in our work together; but as you had been a practitioner for many years working with vulnerable children and families, you had an

understanding of my worldview. For me, the situation was virtually reversed; my first person perspective is primarily as a practitioner, but I have experience of the academic role – for although I had not worked in any substantive academic post, my studies have been extensive over a long period of time and I have an insight into the world of academia.

In 'I' and 'you' working together in our complementary capacities, with our shared value base of fairness and inclusion, together we were able to support and challenge each other in a way that was able to create knowledge.

I know you wrote the first draft of this paper Joan (and I'm grateful for the time you committed to it); however, when I read the draft I was delighted, but not surprised, with your depth of understanding of my perspective. I'm sure that was only possible through a genuine shared, collaborative and meaningful process that is fully accepting of different perspectives, and which has the potential to lead to new understandings.

Joan
Thank you Nigel.

I think we can say little more at this stage, other than to suggest that if others are interested in engaging in a similar model of self-study, there would need to be a confidence in the nature of the creative relationship, and a recognition that agreeing and living out a shared value base would be an important factor in ensuring a good outcome.

In writing the chapter for inclusion in this book, my hope is that we have provided an illustration of how, in each of us making our individual contributions in a dynamic exchange where we have each been responsive to the other, we are communicating the learning that has emerged from our collaboration in a form that others can learn and benefit from.   We can therefore offer this as providing a further example of how it is possible to integrate the I, we and them within a research context.

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