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**An Autoethnographic inquiry into my practice
and experiences as a teacher trainer and
beginning principal at two international schools
in Sri Lanka**

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Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 My contribution to the field	2
1.3 International schools in Sri Lanka	5
1.4 1.4.1 The first school: Bellwood	11
1.4.2 The second school: Northcote	12
1.5 Myself	13
1.6 The thesis	14
Chapter 2 Literature Review	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 International Schools	17
2.2.1 Conflict in international schools	21
2.3 Best practice in in-service teacher development	23
2.3.1 ‘Qualifying to teach’	23
2.3.2 Continuing Professional Development	25
2.3.3 Early problems with in-service teacher development	30
2.3.4 Developing ‘best practice’	33
2.3.5 Components of a training programme	36
2.3.6 The importance of context	42

2.3.7	The nature of adult learning	44
2.3.8	Teacher involvement	46
2.3.9	The teacher as an individual	47
2.3.10	The role of theory and research	48
2.3.11	Evaluating the programme	49
2.3.12	Professional learning communities	52
2.3.13	Conclusion	53
2.4	Teachers	53
2.4.1	Teacher motivation and job satisfaction	53
2.4.2	Self esteem and moral purpose	55
2.4.3	Teachers' biographies	57
2.4.4	Beliefs about teaching and learning	57
2.5	Change and change agents	58
2.5.1	What is change?	58
2.5.2	Teachers' attitude towards change	60
2.5.3	Optimal conditions for change	64
2.5.4	Skills and qualities	67
2.6	School Culture	75
2.6.1	School culture and professional development	81
2.7	Teacher training in difficult circumstances	82
2.7.1	Untrained teachers	82
2.8	School management	83
2.8.1	The role of Principal	84

2.8.2	Transformational Leadership	89
2.8.3	Moral management	91
2.9	Autoethnography in Education	94
2.10	Conclusion	97
	Chapter 3 Methodology	98
3.1	Introduction	98
3.2	A qualitative study	98
3.3	A change of methodology	99
3.4	Ethics	101
3.5	Autoethnography	104
3.6	Ontology	111
3.7	Epistemology	113
3.8	Silencing the critics	115
3.9	Criteria for evaluating autoethnographic work	118
3.10	Narrative Inquiry	120
3.11	Writing the narrative	122
3.12	Interviews	124
3.13	Observation	131
3.13.1	Classroom observation	131
3.14	Analysis	134
3.14.1	Analysis of interviews	135
3.14.2	Analyzing the narrative account	138
3.14.3	Analysis of classroom observation data	139

3.14.4	From analysis to representation	140
3.14.5	Decision to use vignettes	142
3.15	A note on style	143
3.16	Conclusion	143
Chapter 4	First Narrative Account: Teacher Trainer	145
Chapter 5	Second Narrative Account: I become a Principal	219
Chapter 6	Teacher Development	236
Vignette 1:	Teacher improvement plan	236
Chapter 7	School Culture	256
Vignette 2:	Wesak suspension	256
Chapter 8	Leadership	270
Vignette 3:	C.A.S. coordinator	273
Vignette 4:	My departure from Bellwood	281
Chapter 9	Parents and Community	297
Vignette 5:	Death of a teacher	297
Chapter 10	Doing Autoethnography	307
Chapter 11	Conclusion	329
11.1	Contributions of the study	329
11.2	Limitations of the study and further research	333
11.3	Final reflections	337
References		339

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Declaration

I confirm that the research described in this thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for any purpose and is completely my own work.

Abstract

This thesis uses autoethnography to explore the process of leading a teacher training programme in an international school in Sri Lanka, as well as the experience of becoming a Principal of another international school. It comprises two narrative accounts: the first of 20,000 words, describes a year spent in one of the most prestigious international schools in Colombo, and the second of 5,000 words, describes my first three months as Principal of a school in another, smaller town. These two narratives describe events soon after they happened. In the case of the first narrative, I use reflective techniques and the passage of time to look back on the events and my reactions to them from a different perspective.

Using qualitative techniques of open and selective coding, the narratives as well as interviews with 15 teachers from the first school were analysed. This revealed the importance of school culture and of respecting the local culture, as well as the need for international schools to maintain contact with the local community. In terms of school leadership the thesis highlights the role of the school principal as the architect and nurturer of school culture, and highlights the role autoethnography can play in developing one's own leadership skills. I attempt to evaluate my own autoethnographic accounts in terms of criteria presented by Bochner and Richardson (2000), and demonstrate my own process of personal and professional development. The thesis presents a case for the application of autoethnography to the fields of teacher development and school leadership.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The main part of this thesis tells a story: the story of a year of my life. I was 40 years old, adrift after a 16 year career with the British Council, wondering if I would ever find anywhere else to belong professionally. An opportunity to join an international school as a teacher trainer arose about the same time as an idea to do a PhD. The school did not turn out to be my next professional home: rather, there followed a turbulent year in which I tried my best to work with a group of 53 teachers under what turned out to be very difficult circumstances. What I envisaged was a traditional piece of research shedding light on some aspect of continuous professional development. What emerged instead was something quite different: a narrative account – a story, essentially- of this emotional and eventful year.

Fortunately, the story has a happy ending. Two years after leaving the school I was appointed as Principal of a small international school, where for the last year and a half I have been happy and fulfilled. In this post, I have been able to put into practice what I learnt from my experience at my previous school and from my reading for this PhD. My second narrative account tells the story of my first three months in this post.

1.2 My contribution to the field

This thesis has a contribution to make both in terms of its methodology and its content. Autoethnography tends to be underused in education and I am keen to raise awareness of its potential as a way of gaining insights into the teaching and learning process. Most autoethnography is from fields such as Anthropology, Communication, Health and Women's Studies. These fields tend to lend themselves to this kind of work: they involve the study of people, including those in difficult circumstances. They have also tended to be at the cutting edge of methodology, for example embracing representation in a variety of forms such as poetry, drama and art. Education, in contrast, has generally been more conservative with most research using more traditional quantitative and qualitative methods. Education, however, is well suited to newer methodologies such as narrative inquiry. As educators we have stories to tell and, as Diamond puts it, '*the voices of teachers have traditionally been displaced by the purposes of others*'(1992:68) The diverse contexts in which we work are rich with research opportunities, and teachers are uniquely placed to tell us what goes on in their classrooms. Qualitative research is increasingly concerned with the everyday events which make up an individual's life as well as the more significant events which traditionally draw more attention. Therefore, recording the detailed and complex experiences of an individual educator can give us insight into the educational process as much as other methods such as interviews and questionnaires.

I worked as a teacher trainer based inside one particular school whose teachers were largely untrained. Although most of them were degree holders, for the most part they lacked any kind of teacher training. The challenge I faced was to help teachers develop on the job in a situation where they already considered themselves qualified (through their degrees). I describe the process of working with teachers who had been placed in charge of a class without the necessary preparation but who had varying levels of awareness about their own preparedness. My experience provides insight into working in a school setting with unqualified teachers, who had no background in reflective practice. From my work, the themes of school culture and leadership emerged strongly, and I offer insights into these areas too.

Scholarly work in Education in Sri Lanka has been limited mainly to the government sector. The main areas of inquiry are attitudes towards English (Canagarajah, 1993) and Sri Lankan English (Gunasekera, 2005). Hayes' work on teachers' lives (2005, 2010) is the closest to my own work. He interviewed teachers in the government sector about influences on their careers, their beliefs about teaching and learning and how the ethnic conflict had affected teachers and students. All of them were trainers on a project I worked on with Hayes in 1997, and they also spoke about how they became teacher trainers. In writing up his research Hayes has drawn on literature from outside Sri Lanka evidencing the lack of work from the country. Hayes worked with government school teachers from less privileged parts of the country who had often been directly affected by the war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government, and who had 'parallel careers' due to economic reasons.

Their schools were Sinhala or Tamil medium with English being taught as a second language. In contrast, my study is based on one of the most privileged international schools in the capital city, where English is the medium of instruction. Although I have touched on how the civil war affected the teachers, it did not, in most cases, have the impact that it did in the parts of the country where Hayes worked.

Research based on international schools is also limited. Dolby and Rahman (2008) point out that even on a global level, there has been very little research done and much of it relates to either defining international schools or considering the concept of 'third culture kids'. International schools tend to have a mix of teachers from different nationalities and there has been little or no research done on the difficulties or opportunities that this entails. Often the principal of the school will have been brought in from outside the country, typically from an English-speaking country, and the start of the appointment will be his or her first experience of the host country. With little knowledge of the language or culture of the country, he or she has to manage teachers predominantly from the host country but also from a diverse range of nations. Ethnographic studies can offer insights into this situation and help develop guidelines for those in such positions.

My work also offers insights into teacher development in difficult circumstances, not just in international schools but in any context. In my case, the prevailing school culture and atmosphere did not lend itself well to professional development activities. The lack of initial training of many teachers meant that they did not have

basic pedagogic knowledge to build on and certain assumptions I made about their awareness were inaccurate. Poor pay and lack of career structure added to the problem. At the same time I was able to undertake some initiatives which were helpful to some teachers. My study throws light on the experience of being a change agent and will, hopefully, be useful to those in similar circumstances.

1.3 International schools in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, international schools are mushrooming, with currently over 210,000 students studying at such schools. The first international school was the Overseas School of Colombo: OSC (then the Overseas Children's School: OCS) founded in 1957. It was and still is the most international of international schools, catering mainly to the children of diplomats and other expatriates. Fees continue to be charged in US dollars and are prohibitively expensive for all but a very small minority of Sri Lankans.

The 1980's saw the introduction of international schools that were aimed not only at expatriates but also middle class Sri Lankans who wanted their children to be educated in the English Medium. The introduction of English streams in private and government schools has not reduced the popularity of international schools, as one might have expected. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the private and governments schools continue to be bilingual, rather than English only. All children are expected to treat either Sinhala or Tamil as their first language, which would

make it difficult for children to switch back to a local school from an international school. Secondly, the demand for the schools where English streams have been introduced has always been extremely high. At Ladies College, Colombo, for example, in 1999, over 800 applications were received for 80 places in the pre-school, and this has continued to rise.

In Sri Lanka, there is a huge gap between the prestigious private and state schools, mainly based in Colombo and other cities, and the average school. This is caused by the dependence of schools for basic facilities on Old Boys or Old Girls Associations as well as wealthy parents of the current students. In the so-called 'Big Schools' (prestigious urban schools with an affluent study body), parents and former students provide the funds for science labs, computers, sports equipment, swimming pools and so on, whereas the village school is reliant on the meagre grants provided by the government. Those students who fail to gain admission to 'big' schools tend to turn to international schools rather than one of the mediocre government schools they may be assigned to.

Another reason for the popularity of international schools is that government policy is constantly changing. Although English medium education has been permitted since 1997, the government has recently introduced a policy that History be added to Sinhala/Tamil language and Religion as subjects to be studied compulsorily in the local languages. Many believe that this change is a fore-runner to other changes which will gradually relegate the position of English further.

Due to the war in the north and east, and the continued economic migration of rural populations towards Colombo, Kandy and Galle, the number of students in metropolitan areas has increased in the last 20 or so years. Priority admission to the top private and government schools is based on several factors, including a parent being a former student and the length of time a family has lived in the proximity of the school. These criteria can often mean the exclusion of the internal migrant community from such schools. The international schools, particularly the less exclusive ones, provide an important service for this group of students. A member of the board of a newly established international school told me in an interview that he was waiting for the 'rejects' from Royal College to register at his school; those who had failed to gain admission to the most prestigious government boys' school would be looking for a school and some of the more established schools in the cheaper price range did not have vacancies. A large number of new schools open every year and the market does not appear to be anywhere close to saturation point.

The more exclusive schools, such as Colombo International School and the British School in Colombo cater mainly to those students who are hoping to go to university overseas. This group is also growing due to the increased prosperity brought about by free trade and the end of the war, and the ongoing problems in the anti-elitist Sri Lankan universities. These schools also have a percentage of expatriate children, though the student bodies are still predominantly Sri Lankan.

In a country which endured 30 years of civil war, many have stressed the unifying potential of international education;

It is the international school that binds all ethnic groups in one class and fosters the understanding that is most needed today, when all other schools segregate on ethnic lines... (Letter to Mirror magazine, 17/07/97)

While the writer undoubtedly has a point, in the 14 years since that was written a large number of international schools have been founded to cater to individual ethnic groups, for example 'Jesus Calls International' for Christians and 'Crescent International' for Muslims. With the continued growth of international schools of all types, it seems this trend is set to continue.

Although the majority of people accept the need for international schools, there are some who feel that they have done more harm than good. Some feel that the support given to international schools led to a lack of attention to state schools. There are also ideological arguments against international schools that cater to mainly Sri Lankan students. In a letter to the Nation newspaper in October 2006, for example, Ramani Wickramaratne wrote:

while neglecting national school education, maximum patronage was given to establishing international schools throughout the country with BOI approval for foreign investment....Naturally, this has

drastically hampered our children from gaining a sound education locally and with a sense of national identity to become 'nobody' in somebody else's land...

www.nation.lk/2006/12/10/letters.htm

Similarly, JVP parliamentary group leader, Wimal Weerawansa, MP, in a parliamentary debate claimed that '*These (International) schools produce only persons who know about the Nile River but not about Mahaweli River*' (Daily Mirror, 21/7/07). Minister of Education, Susil Premajayantha pointed out that:

Various complaints have been received regarding the standard of some schools...there are problems regarding qualifications of the teachers working at these schools and whether students could benefit from studying under such conditions in those schools...

www.dailymirror.lk/2006/09/02/news/

JVP parliamentary group leader, Wimal Weerawansa, MP, agreeing with the minister about the serious concerns regarding standards in international schools suggested that:

The Ministry should either abolish international schools or bring them under its purview immediately...

(Daily Mirror, 21/07/07)

The fact is, however, that the majority of international schools are actually international in name only. In order to be exempt from ministry control, a school must call itself 'international'. Some schools actually claim to be very similar to the national schools:

The school's education system is closely linked to that of the public schools with as much emphasis on discipline and academic excellence as on sports and extra-curricular activities. (From the website of Amal International School)

http://www.amalinternationalschool.com/the_school.htm

My own experience as a teacher trainer in a similar school was that only two aspects of the school were 'international': the use of the Cambridge curriculum for some subjects, and the fact that English was the medium of instruction. In all other respects it was no different from the state schools I have visited. National languages and religions were an important part of the curriculum as were cultural and religious practices. Students still worshipped their teachers (that is, knelt before them to pay their respects), and Buddhist prayers were said at various points of the school day. Teaching methods were traditional, rules were rigid and corporal punishment was still unofficially practiced, a fact which led to my eventual disassociation from the school. With the exception of three or four schools in the Colombo area, the vast majority of international schools are very Sri Lankan in nature; by this I mean they use Sinhala outside of the actual instruction, sing the national anthem daily and practise and teach mainly Buddhist religion. This is probably why the minority

groups such as Christians and Muslims have felt the need to establish their own international schools.

1.4.1 The first school- Bellwood

The first school where I undertook my research is one of the top international schools in Colombo. Founded in 1994 it is an independent, co-educational school for 'academically willing' children aged between 2½ and 18(School website).

There are currently approximately 850 children in the school. I was appointed as Teacher Trainer to the Senior school, which has approximately 350 students studying in forms one to upper sixth (years seven to 13). The curriculum in the lower school is loosely based on key stage three of the UK national curriculum, while children in forms four and five prepare for Edexcel IGCSE and sixth formers can choose between A Levels and International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD). In the lower forms (forms one to three), students study Maths, English, Science, ICT, PE, Art, Music and a language (French, German, Sinhala or Tamil). They also study either a second language or EFL if they are weak in English. For IGCSE, students can opt for Business Studies, Economics, Accounts, Art or ICT. All three sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) are compulsory, as are English language and Literature, Maths and one language.

The school caters for the wealthier end of the international school market. Children come from business and professional families, including some who are the children of government ministers and celebrities. The majority are Sri Lankans from English-speaking homes. There are also a number of Maldivian, Indian, Korean, Chinese and Japanese children as well as a few British, German, French, Swiss, Croatians and other European nationals. Many of the Sri Lankan students have spent time abroad and, having lost their proficiency in their L1, have turned to international education.

1.4.2 The second school- Northcote

The school where I was appointed Principal is small: 150 children in Pre-school to A Levels. This means that there are approximately 8 to 16 children in each year group. It is the most expensive and exclusive international school in a Catholic fishing town and tourist resort about an hour's drive from Colombo. The school was begun by a small group of German parents and the land on which it is situated is owned by a German factory owner. Its proximity to a free trade zone means that it attracts many foreign nationals, whose children attend the school. The majority nationalities at the time of the study were Sri Lankan, Korean and German. All children are from high to medium social and economic backgrounds. Most of the Sri Lankan students or their parents have spent time abroad.

The school offers EdExcel IGCSE and A Levels, the latter having been introduced in 2009. During my first year there were only two expatriate teachers, both from India.

1.5 Myself

As an autoethnographic enquirer I take myself as the focus of the study. The narratives are my own stories of the year I spent at Bellwood school, and then the first three months as Principal at Northcote school. It is therefore relevant to give a brief introduction to myself here.

I was born in West Sussex in 1966 and grew up just outside Brighton. The proximity to France as well as the international atmosphere in Brighton probably influenced me to study languages (Spanish and French) at London University and then to do a CELTA course. After spending my year abroad and then another year in Spain, I came to Sri Lanka in 1990. I joined the British Council straight away and had a typical EFL career: DELTA after two years, followed by a gradual move into teacher training and management. After about ten years the fact that I was not 'globally mobile' (due to my marriage to a Sri Lankan) began to be problematic. I was no longer able to develop my career as I wished, saw others promoted above me and began to be frustrated. I struggled on for several years, becoming a CELTA tutor, DELTA local tutor and line manager, and achieving an MA in TESOL. Eventually, the combination of stress and poor rewards led me to leave the British Council in 2006. There were very few opportunities for expatriate teachers outside the Council and in desperation I tried the international schools in spite of their reputation for poor pay. I took the job at the school due to its intrinsic interest and

the opportunity to combine it with a PhD. In some ways I was in my element; in others, I was out of my depth. I had never taught at a mainstream school although I had had a lot of experience with young learners. The year was very much a learning process for me as I came to grips with the expectations and challenges of working in mainstream secondary education.

1.6 The thesis

This thesis is based on a 20,000 word narrative account of my year at Bellwood school, and a 5,000 narrative account of my first three months at Northcote school, as well as analysis of interviews with teachers at Bellwood school. This chapter is followed by the literature review in which I examine the existing literature relating to international education, continuous professional development (CPD), teachers' lives, change agents, professional culture and the role of the principal. I also consider some of the autoethnographic literature in the field of Education. After this comes the methodology chapter in which I give an introduction to autoethnography and how it relates to my work, as well as describing my use of interviews and observation. My main sources of data are the two narrative accounts, which form chapters four and five. From these emerge four main themes: teacher development, school culture, leadership and parents and community. Each of the chapters six to nine deals with one of these themes, and includes a vignette or vignettes which highlight some of the issues related to the theme. The chapter explores the theme as it has been highlighted through the narratives and also through interviews with

teachers at Bellwood school. Chapter ten is entitled 'Doing Autoethnography' in which I reflect on the process of undertaking an autoethnographic piece of research, and chapter 11 is the conclusion.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

My work touches on a wide range of themes within the area of teacher development. This literature review, then, is broad based, highlighting literature in the various fields my work covers. I begin by looking at literature related to international schools, which is a relatively undeveloped area. I then move on to look at various aspects of continuous professional development (CPD), starting with a discussion of whether it is possible to talk about 'best practice' in teacher development. This section examines the components of a training programme, the importance of context, the nature of adult learning, evaluating programmes and professional learning communities.

I then move on to a discussion of teachers: their lives, motivation, self-esteem and moral purpose, biographies and beliefs. Next comes a section on change and change agents. I was attempting to bring about positive change in the school so it is pertinent to consider the nature of change, teachers' attitudes towards change, optimal conditions for change as well as the skills and qualities needed by a change agent.

The area of school culture is dealt with after this. The significance of this area became apparent during my analysis of the data, and it is of central importance to the

thesis as a whole. I then consider teacher training in difficult circumstances, including dealing with untrained teachers. Next, I look at school management, which is another key area in my work. I focus on the role of the principal, transformational leadership and moral management. Finally, I review some literature which uses autoethnography in the field of Education.

2.2 International Schools

According to Dolby and Rahman (2008: 693) the strength of research on international schools is that it is practitioners who play the central role. Most scholars in the field hold positions in schools affiliated to I.S.A. (International Schools Association). Given that the divide between theory and practice is an issue in much educational research, the field of international education provides a 'model of engaged practitioner research' (ibid.) The limitation is that there are only a few scholars working in this field and so it has had limited impact compared to other related fields (ibid.).

In the literature on international schools there has been much discussion over the definition of an international school, linked to debate over which was the first international school. According to Hill (2001) an international school has a student population from all nations and the International School of Geneva, founded in 1924 was the first international school. This definition is not universally accepted, however. Sylvester claims that an international school is one that is established with

the goal of promoting cooperation between nations. Therefore, for him, the first international school was Spring Grove School in London (Dolby and Rahman, 2008: 676).

During the 1950's and 1960's organisations linking international schools developed, for example, the International Schools' Association (ISA) in 1951. In 1964 the ISA developed the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) programme and in 1968 the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) was founded. The aim of the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme was to provide an international curriculum that would be accepted by universities all around the world (Dolby and Rahman, p.676). By 2008, the IBD was offered in 2,220 schools in 125 countries, and in the 1990's the programme was expanded to include Early and Middle Years programmes.

In 1965, the Council of International Schools (CIS) was established with the goal of bringing together educators with similar goals. In 2006, James MacDonald of Yokohama International School in Japan used CIS data to estimate that there were 551, 232 students attending 907 international schools worldwide. Dolby and Rahman point out that this increase is due to parents, who are increasingly concerned for their children's economic security in a global economy, finding the value of international education.

There is also evidence in the literature of a shift in the international school population from expatriates to locals. For example, Yin (2006) found that in Malaysia the international school population had shifted from being predominantly the children of globally mobile expatriates to children from neighbouring countries (Dolby and Rahman, 2008:690). In my study, the student population is a mix of local and expatriate children.

According to Dolby and Rahman, the main research question concerning international schools is: What is or is not international education? They claim that this question has three facets:

- 1) How the question has been explicitly addressed in the literature;
- 2) Research related to 'third culture kids';
- 3) How international schools function on a structural level within national and global arenas.

(2008:691)

International schools respond to a need for 'worldmindedness' (Sampson and Smith, 1957) or an 'international attitude' (Hayden and Thompson, 1995), but the growth of the sector has been both rapid and ad hoc (Hayden and Thompson, 2001).

Hayden and Thompson's 2001 study attempted to define what it means to be international. They did so in response to evidence that there is no clear agreement as

to what the term means when applied to schools. For example, McKenzie (1998) found that in the IBO mission statement, the word 'international' was used with five different meanings (Hayden and Thompson, 2001:107). In the study a questionnaire was given to 1263 18 year old students from 43 international schools in 28 countries as well as 226 teachers. They were asked to rate how necessary certain factors were for being international. The following factors were found to be important: open-mindedness, flexibility of thinking and action; second language competence, positive attitude towards other value systems and cultures; respect for others; international experience/international-mindedness. They also found that students and teachers were broadly in agreement as to what it meant to be international. Factors found to be unnecessary including having parents of different nationalities and not having strong views of one's own (Hayden and Thompson, 2001:20/21).

Several other writers have contributed to the debate on what it means to be an international school. Haywood (2002), for example, suggested that the definition of international school must be an inclusive one which all schools who identified themselves as international could identify with. Hill (2000) prefers the term 'internationally-minded' as that would allow schools to offer curricula based on philosophies of international understanding whatever the nationalities of its students (Dolby and Rahman,2008:691).

Research into the populations of international schools has found that in many contexts a minority of students are the children of expatriate families (Hill, 2000).

According to Useem (1976) expatriate children become part of a 'third culture' and others have found that international schools create a space where this third culture is carried out (Hunter, 1982, Marchant and Medway, 1987, Dolby and Rahman, 2008).

Cambridge (2003) distinguishes between 'internationalist' and 'globalist' contexts for international education. The aim of internationalist education is to instil international-mindedness in students, whereas from a globalist perspective, international education is a commodity which is marketed for private economic gain. Yamato and Bray (2006), for example, draw our attention to the fierce competition for students which exists between international and local schools in Shanghai (Dolby and Rahman (2008:692).

2.2.1 Conflict in international schools

It has been acknowledged by several writers that the international school holds much potential for conflict (Hayden and Thompson, 2001, Cambridge, 2003). Among the causes of conflict highlighted is the differentiated salary scales which often exist in international schools (Richards, 2001). According to Richards, this situation has the potential for attitudes to develop into prejudice (2001:178). When local teachers are paid less, it can cause feelings of inferiority or even racism. A study of local-contract teachers in Africa showed that they faced classroom, administrative, pastoral and psychological challenges quite different from their western colleagues.

Richards found that, overall, the culture of international schools discriminates against teachers from less developed/non-western countries (2001:178). Cambridge also pointed out that power struggles tend to emerge from different cultural philosophies and economic backgrounds of the board of directors (2003:203). Richards, too, mentions tension and misunderstandings between 'philosophy-driven' school administrators and community reps. on school governing bodies. He also suggests that such tension can be a cause of the rapid turnover of headteachers (2001:176). Cambridge makes it clear that 'some effort must be made to understand how different philosophies and cultures could lead to misinterpretations and disagreements' (2003:203). My work sheds light on this area, as highlighted in chapters four to nine.

Hayden also points out the effects of culture shock, which affects administrators as much as teachers moving to a new country. It is true that administrators, like teachers, need support in adjusting to their new country and role, particularly if it is the first time in such a post (Hayden: 2006: 108).

Littleford (1999, cited in Benson, 2011:88) argues that '*too many international schools today are revolving doors for heads*'. Hawley (1994) agrees that the tenure of an international school head is typically short. In his research, the average was 2.8 years. Hawley (1994: 9) quotes one writer (Thomas 1985; no source provided) as claiming that short tenure of heads creates '*instability in the school, disruptions in programs, difficulty in recruiting faculty and lack of consistency*'.

Some of the causes of the short tenure of heads involve the board of directors (Hayden 2006:105). Hayden has raised awareness of the challenges of working in international school environments:

If headship in a national setting is demanding, how much more potential is there for different cultural practices, assumptions and expectations to lead to unanticipated challenges within an international school?

(2006:94).

According to Hayden, the job of leading an international learning community requires ‘very specific knowledge and skills attuned to ethnicity and multiculturalism’ (2006:97). She cites Shaw, who asserts that the potential for dissonance through misunderstanding is multiplied in an international school. In chapter seven I discuss the challenges facing the international school head.

2.3 Best practice in in-service teacher development

2.3.1 ‘Qualifying to teach’:

Qualifying to be a teacher, whether in ELT or mainstream education, has, for better or worse become a matter of being able to tick off competencies on a checklist of standards (Yandell and Turvey, 2007). Standards can be defined as ‘*simple,*

desirable statements of goals and outcomes' (Yinger and Hendriks-Lee, 2000: 95). Some argue that standards are good for the profession. Yinger and Hendriks-Lee, for example, promote the use of standards as a '*powerful tool in the development as teaching as a profession*', and see the '*abstract, decontextualized, almost unarguable*' nature of standards as a positive thing (2000: 94). Others would disagree. Yandell and Turvey (2007), for example, believe that the concept of 'qualifying to teach' encourages the view that teaching is reducible to a set of standards, denying the complexity of the process of acquiring professional and pedagogical knowledge. They say that trainee teachers are subject to '*mechanical assessment*' against each individual standard and develop a profile of '*context-independent strengths and weaknesses*' (2007:534). The use of teaching standards is questioned by others, too. Cochran-Smith (2004) argues against narrowing the conception of the teacher's role, and Korthagen (2004) and Bullough et al (2003) are concerned that the desire for certainty and uniformity denies the complexity of teacher education.

My initial concern in undertaking this research was with in-service professional development. However, it is clear that the concept of 'qualifying to teach' and the type of pre-service training teachers experience have an impact on their attitudes towards and expectations of in-service training. Ideally, teachers will have experienced pre-service training that is oriented to developing teachers as professionals. In such a case, teachers will have attitudes which favour continued growth and change and the skills to evaluate and implement new ideas (Pennington,

1990:134). The teachers in my study, for the most part, had not undergone any pre-service training.

Having lists of criteria for teachers implies the notion of 'best practice'. In this section I will examine the concept of 'best practice', looking at how far we can accept the belief that there is one ideal way of doing things in teacher development. While in general accepting the doubts put forward by Edge and Richards (1998), I suggest that there are certain guidelines which can act as pointers to teacher educators like myself who are charged with the task of developing programmes in specific contexts. This section critically examines the idea of 'best practice', but also considers some of the areas in which I have found it useful to have some kind of guidance as to how best to proceed in my own context. In Chapter Six I discuss how the idea of best practice affected my work at Bellwood.

2.3.2 Continuing Professional Development

It is important here to clarify the distinction between training and development. Mann (2005) does this by pointing out that training is to '*introduce the methodological choices available and to familiarise trainees with the range of terms and concepts that are the 'common currency' of language teachers*' (2005:104). Teacher development, in contrast, concerns professional and personal growth undertaken by the teachers themselves (ibid.). Mann makes a further distinction between Professional Development and Teacher Development, the latter being more likely to include personal and moral aspects of development (ibid.). For Richards and Farrell,

training focuses on a teacher's present responsibilities and is concerned with short-term goals (2005:3), whereas development focuses on a longer term goal and '*seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teachers and themselves as teachers*' (2005:4). According to Mann's and Richards and Farrell's definitions, much of my work was closer to training since it largely involved the imparting of knowledge and was not initiated by the teachers themselves. However, there were some teachers who did undertake Development.

One definition of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is: '*All the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designed to enhance their work*' (Day and Sachs, 2009:3). Day and Sachs warn us that this is a deceptively simple definition for what is in reality a '*hugely complex intellectual and emotional endeavour*'. Wallace (1991), for example, makes the distinction between 'received' and 'experiential' knowledge. Mann (2005) lists methodology, course design, materials and assessment as some examples of received knowledge. Experiential knowledge, on the other hand, is developed through experience and reflection on experience (Mann, 2005:106). Cochrane-Smith and Lytle (1999) classified teacher knowledge associated with learning and development into three types:

Knowledge-for-practice: formal knowledge generated by researchers outside the school

Knowledge-of-practice: generated by teachers critically examining their own classrooms and schools, alone or with others, in terms of broader issues of social justice, equity and student achievement

Knowledge-in-practice: teachers' practical knowledge generated through their own systematic inquiry

(Day and Sachs, 2009:8)

Day and Sachs add to Cochrane's Smith and Lytle's list with **Knowledge of self** which is '*generated by teachers engaging regularly in reflection in, on and about their values, purposes, emotions and relationships*' (2009:9).

Lieberman (1996) proposes an 'expanded view of professional learning' in which CPD takes place in three settings:

- 1) **Direct Learning** (e.g. through conferences, workshops, consultations)
- 2) **Learning in school** (e.g. through peer coaching, mentoring, critical friendships, active research, team planning and assessment, appraisal)
- 3) **Learning out of school** (through e.g. school-led renewal or reform networks, school-university partnerships, professional development centres)

(Day and Sachs, 2009:13)

According to Day and Sachs all of these forms of learning are essential for teachers to ensure their teaching keeps up with developments in society.

Day and Sachs consider that CPD aims to fulfil one of three functions:

To align teachers' practice with educational policies

To improve the learning outcomes of students by improving the performance of teachers, or

To improve the status and profile of the teaching profession

(2009:22)

Grundy and Robison claim there are three interconnected purposes of CPD: extension, growth and renewal (Day and Sachs, 2009:22). For Bolam and McMahon the aims of CPD are connected to what we learn from the school improvement literature: that

teachers in effective schools are reported to work collegially and to collaborate to achieve shared goals; they have high expectations of their students, teach purposively, monitor student work and give positive feedback...

(Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000, cited in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:36)

Over the last 20 years several trends in CPD have been identified, including:

- *From individual development to individual and organizational development*

- *From fragmented, piecemeal improvement efforts to staff development driven by a clear, coherent strategic plan for school district, each school and its departments*
- *From a focus on adult needs and satisfaction to a focus on student needs and learning outcomes and changes in on-the-job behaviours*
- *From training conducted away from the job to multiple forms of job-embedded learning*
- *From an orientation toward the transmission of knowledge and skills to teachers by experts to the study by teachers of the teaching and learning processes*
- *From staff development for individual teachers to the creation of learning communities in which all-students, teachers, principals and support staff- are both learners and teachers*

(Sparks and Hirsch, cited in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:40)

Sparks and Hirsch were working in the United States, but similar changes have occurred in the UK. The model of CPD resulting from these changes was:

Self-developing, reflective teachers, in self-managing schools with devolved funding and five training days, design, implement and evaluate professional development programmes aimed at meeting an

*appropriate balance of individual teacher, school and national needs
and priorities...*

(Bolam and McMahon, 2007:41)

Tools for implementing CPD under this model include professional development profiles (Day, 1999), action research (Elliott, 1991) action learning (Wallace, 1991), coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1988) and mentoring and peer-assisted learning (Bolam et al. 1995).

2.3.3 Early problems with in-service teacher development

Early efforts to define ‘best practice’ in teacher development took the form of developing ‘models’ which could be followed anywhere (e.g. The Long Beach Programme in the late 1970’s, Hunter, 1980, Griffin, 1986). Although each had its own merits, they soon came in for criticism on several different counts. The programmes tended to provide information rather than application of ideas and concepts in the classroom and were generally based on goals set at district level rather than within schools (Wood and Thompson, 1980). Some programmes (e.g. The Long Beach) consisted of teachers attending courses away from their schools, while others involved experts from outside the school coming in to train the teachers. Most programmes were short-term and lacked follow up (Richardson and Placier, 2001) and Meyer (1988) found that implementation levels were only about 15% (cited in Richardson and Placier, 2001). Other problems which plagued in-

service development were a lack of clear objectives, negative attitudes and a failure to take into account existing knowledge of how adults learn (Wood and Thompson, 1980). Morimoto (1973:255, cited in Richardson and Placier) claimed that another weakness was that teachers felt under pressure to change and therefore did not find teacher development programmes an enjoyable experience.

As early as 1968 Jackson called existing models of in-service development a 'deficit model', as it was assumed that such training needed to provide teachers with something they lacked (Day and Sachs, 2007). Day and Sachs, writing in 2007, believe that such a model is still in place.

The traditional view of the role of the trainee teacher is that he or she is to listen, accept and follow a prescription given by the teacher educator (Gebhard, 1990:16). There are several problems with this approach. Apart from it being in conflict with the way adults learn, the fact is that there is no proof that any one way of teaching is better in all contexts than any other (Gebhard, 1990, Dunkin and Biddle, 1974, Fanselow and Light, 1977). When the teacher educator takes all responsibility for the decision-making process, it is difficult for the trainee teacher to develop the skills which he or she will need on the job (Gebhard, 1990, Fanselow, 1987, Jarvis, 1972).

Ball and Cohen (1999) and Cohen and Hill (2001), working in the United States, feel that teacher learning is persistently superficial:

Although a good deal of money is spent on staff development...most is spent on sessions and workshops that are often intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented and noncumulative...

(Ball and Cohen, 1999, cited in Fullan, 2007:25).

Cohen and Hill found little collaboration between teachers and where it did occur, it did not necessarily result in improvement. In general, teacher development programmes did not result in opportunities for practice-based inquiry (Fullan, 2007:26).

Fullan argues that *'most professional development experiences for teachers fail to make an impact'*. The conclusion reached by Fullan in the 1970's was that one-shot workshops were ineffective and follow up support was rare. In 1993 Little reached the same conclusion (Fullan, 2007:285). One problem is that studies of impact tend to rely on self-report (Glover and Law, 1996, cited in Burchell et al, 2002:220). However, Burchell et al.(2002) found that it was possible to use stories told by teachers, as well as the reports of colleagues to gauge impact. In their study of two teachers they found that the impact of a Masters' programme could be clearly demonstrated

There has been a shift in teacher education from a behavioural to a constructionist perspective (Freeman and Johnson, 1998: 402). Teaching is now recognised as more

than the accumulation of knowledge on content and how to teach. Learning to teach is now accepted as a complex process which teachers enter with their own experiences, values and beliefs, and which is shaped by the context in which it takes place (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, Pajares, 1992, Lortie, 1975). To what extent, then, is it possible to prescribe to teacher educators how they should approach their work with teachers? The next section will discuss this question.

One of the problems with studying CPD is that the literature on it is so extensive and often contradictory. There have been various typologies of CPD but each '*start from their own assumptions and adopt their own focus*' (Bolam and McMahon, 2007: 52). Bolam and McMahon concluded that a broad framework or conceptual map is necessary to clear up the complexity of the field (2007:53).

2.3.4 Developing 'best practice'

'Best practice', then, is not a concept that is accepted by everyone in the field of teacher education. The notion of 'best practice' is thought to come from the fields of law and medicine. According to Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde (1993:vii):

If a practitioner is following Best Practice standards, he or she is aware of the current research and consistently offers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology and procedures...

While this definition makes the concept of best practice sound hard to fault, closer inspection shows that there are significant problems with it. Some argue that the very nature of the concept contradicts the nature of a field like teacher education. Edge and Richards, for example, feel it belongs in a rationalist paradigm where *'procedures are precisely specifiable and outcomes predictable'* (1998: 569). The concept of 'best' by definition implies that a particular practice is not open to challenge and they voice concern that pre-determining the 'destination' limits the potential for real investigation and development to take place (1998:571). Prahbu, too, agrees that the search for the best method is fruitless, arguing instead that it is the teacher's sense of plausibility that affects the success of the teaching act (1990:175).

It is undeniably true that we have learnt a lot about teaching and learning from research (McKeon, 1998:494); however, it is also true that research in our field can produce contradictory results. It is doubtful, therefore, that there would ever be complete agreement about which research is 'correct' at any given time. This raises the issue of who decides what best practice is. Typically, the answer to this question would involve a top-down flow of information, with the potential for those in power to exploit the coercive power of best practice (Edge and Richards, 1998:571).

McKeon advocates the development and use of strong networks of researchers and practitioners so that movement of knowledge is neither top-down nor bottom-up but circular (1998:500). The real difficulty is that as Carr and Kemmis (1986, cited in Edge and Richards, 1998) point out, the essence of good teaching lies in its

'continuingly emergent nature', which means we can never define 'best practice'. Kumaravadivelu, too, shuns the idea of best practice in terms of method, believing instead that teachers should create for themselves a *'systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method, one informed by principled pragmatism'* (1994:27). In Chapter Six, the question of whether we can ever capture what 'best practice' is in any given time and place is addressed in relation to my research.

Edge and Richards propose instead the notion of 'praxis' (1998:571) or informed, committed action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:190). In this construct, teachers are encouraged to investigate their own practice in order to better understand it. This proposal is supported by others, notably Johnson who believes praxis is an appropriate way to approach the preparation of teachers because it *'captures how theory and practice inform one another and how this transformative process informs teachers' work'* (2006:240).

It seems then, that we must be cautious when applying a term such as 'best practice'. However, I do not see any benefit in rejecting it completely. Rather, we should exercise caution in applying the term to a practice. An example of this is a use of the term in an article by Baily, Curtis and Nunan (1998). They apply the term 'best practice' in terms of teacher development to three practices- journal writing, videotaping lessons and teaching portfolios. While providing sufficient evidence to justify the use of these practices in their context, we cannot surmise that they are ideal in every situation. Some schools, for example, may lack the time and

resources to implement them. On the other hand, it is difficult to argue with the authors that teacher educators taking part in the same professional development activities as their teachers (1998:548) is a practice worthy of emulation.

In the following sections I review the literature on teacher development programmes in several areas: components of a training programme, suitable activities, location and context, the nature of adult learning, teacher involvement, the teacher as an individual, the role of theory and research, and evaluating the effectiveness of a programme.

2.3.5 Components of a training programme

Wilson and Berne points out that learning often goes on '*in the interstices of the workday*' *in conversations with colleagues, passing glimpse of another teacher's classroom on the way to the photocopying machine, tips swapped in the coffee lounge...*'. However, they agree with Lord that such opportunities are happenstance, random and unpredictable (1994:174). Teacher learning has traditionally been a '*patchwork of opportunities- formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned-stitched together into a fragmented and incoherent curriculum*' (Ball and Cohen, cited in Wilson and Berne, 1999:174).

Loucks-Horseley et al. describe teacher development as providing '*opportunities for teachers to engage in a wide range of growth experiences that have real meaning to them*' (1987:11). They compare a successful teacher development programme to a

healthy diet in that it should be varied and balanced; we should not limit ourselves as teachers to one type of professional development activity (1987:14). Likewise, Higgins and Leat (1997) stress the need for teacher educators to be flexible and informed in their choices of approach since no one approach is likely to meet all the needs of teachers.

Traditionally pre-service training in ELT has been divided into ‘Input’ and ‘Teaching Practice’ (e.g. CELTA). In-service training, on the other hand, consists of the input phase only, principally providing updates and information to practising teachers. In place of the ‘TP’ component, in-service teachers have evaluative observations once or twice a year, and these are typically divorced from the input sessions. This section deals with all components of training which are formative rather than evaluative.

Ellis (1986:91) describes the kind of activities and procedures that could be effective in teacher training sessions. He makes a distinction between ‘experiential’ and ‘awareness raising’ practices. Experiential include teaching practice, including ‘simulated’ practice such as peer teaching. Awareness raising includes comparing and evaluating lesson plans. He points out that the former tend to be more common in pre-service training, while the latter predominate in in-service situations; however, he adds that this is more a result of ‘convenience and tradition’ than principled decision-making. It is also possible for a single activity to combine the

two types of practice. He goes on to question the assumption that raising awareness automatically improves teaching in the classroom (1986:92).

Ellis's procedures are based on data from the classroom in the form of video/audio recordings or transcripts of lessons, lesson plans, peer, micro or classroom teaching, readings, samples of students' work, sample textbook materials and case studies. He provides a list of tasks that can be used to enable teachers to analyse and evaluate the data. These include ranking, selecting, adding, completing, improving, comparing, adapting and listing type activities. Finally, he suggests procedures that the trainer can use, such as lectures, group/pair discussions, workshops, demonstrations, elicitation and plenary/panel discussions.

Joyce and Showers divide training into a) tuning our skills and b) learning new skills (1980:380). They argue that the second of these requires more intensive training than the first. They developed two typologies: levels of impact and training components and considered how each component contributed to each level of impact. The levels of impact were:

- Awareness
- Concepts and organized knowledge
- Principles and skills
- Application and problem solving.

They claim that it is only after the fourth level of impact has been reached that we can expect to see an impact on the education of children.

According to Joyce and Showers' typology there are five components of training which, they claim, when used together, have much greater power than when used alone. They are:

- 1) Presentation of theory or description of skill or strategy
- 2) Modelling or demonstration of skills or models of teaching
- 3) Practice in simulated and classroom settings
- 4) Structured and open-ended feedback
- 5) Coaching for application (hands-on in classroom assistance with the transfer of skills and strategies to the classroom) (1980:381)

Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990:16) suggest the following components for a training programme:

1. teaching a class
2. observing the teaching act
3. conducting investigative projects of teaching
4. discussing teaching in several contexts (ibid.)

They also highlight the benefits of combining activities and encouraging teachers to make connections between the various parts of the programme (1990:17).

Wallace (1991: 29) advocates using a variety of 'modes' of teaching and learning in teacher education courses, since teachers have different learning styles and should be encouraged to experiment with different learning strategies. He points out that variety prevents boredom for tutor and teachers, helps the tutor get to know the teachers better and that different activities suit different purposes (1991:30). He highlights the point that as we wish our trainees to provide variety in the lessons, we need to model this in our training sessions. Wallace emphasises the importance of getting a match between modes (lecture mode or group mode) and the aspect of the academic process we are addressing: acquisition, reflection (*deep processing* and *active processing*), application and evaluation (*trainee evaluation of content and process* and *assessment*) (1991:34). In Wallace's typology activities in teacher training programmes are divided as follows:

1. Data collection and analysis activities
2. Planning activities
3. Microteaching activities
4. Supervised teaching
5. Shared professional action
6. Individual autonomous professional action (1991:91)

‘Microteaching’ is defined as a training context in which a teaching situation has been ‘*reduced in scope and/or simplified in some systematic way*’ (1991:92). There may be a reduction of teacher task, length of lesson or size of the class. ‘Shared profession action’ refers to auxiliary or team teaching and ‘individual autonomous professional action’ refers to a teacher working alone in his or her classroom.

Wallace’s typology of components appears to be the most comprehensive. The last item is not usually mentioned on lists of components, and it is an important one to include, as trainees frequently complain that they have not had an opportunity to ‘consolidate’ their knowledge by ‘going it alone’ in the classroom. In terms of dealing with in-service teachers without pre-service training it is essential to think of their normal teaching commitments as part of the programme as that is when they will have the chance to experiment with what they have learnt in workshops, peer observation and so on. In my programme, observations of teachers’ regular classes occurred alongside the development programme and data from the observations fed into the workshop activities.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) proposed five models of staff development: the individually guided staff development model; the observation/assessment model; the development/improvement process mode; the training model and the inquiry model (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:33).

2.3.6 The importance of context

According to Wood and Thompson, *'the largest unit of successful change in education is the individual school...'* (1980). Many programmes in various parts of the world have tended to have a district-wide focus, which results in them being distant from the needs of the school. In such programmes, teachers are provided with information and expected to put it into practice later in a different context. This, argue Wood and Thompson, conflicts with what we know about adult learning (see section 2.3.7). Duncombe and Armour also concluded that effective professional development is *'school-based, active, collaborative, progressive, focused closely on pupils' learning and embedded in teachers' everyday work'* (2004:141)

Keith (1987) promotes schools as places in which to establish connections among teacher education, teachers, schools, and learning, and Lange suggests that the school is the ideal site for teacher learning, and advocates integration of pre and in-service development as well as curriculum design within the school context. (1990:251). Likewise, research by Flores in Portugal found that a context-specific view of learning prevailed with the norms and values of the workplace being the key determinants of the nature and process of learning (2005). Teacher development programmes are not a 'one size fits all' nature and both design and content must take into account the context in which it takes place (Mohamed, 2006:54).

Wood and Thompson cite two pieces of research undertaken Rapport and Rapport in England and Tough in Canada, which suggest that adults prefer to learn in informal learning situations which allow social interactions among learners (1980:377). The implication of this is that in-service training should take place in the normal workplace setting.

Teachers, as adult learners, need '*realistic, important, job-related, immediately useful goals*' and will only learn and retain that which they perceive as relevant (Wood and Thompson, 1980). This also seems to point to the teacher's own school being the most appropriate setting for teacher development to take place. If we also accept the claim of Joyce and Showers that 'hands-on, in classroom assistance with the transfer of skills and strategies to the classroom' is a necessary component of training, we have more evidence for suggesting the teacher's own school as the best site for training.

A study by Harris (2001) in Nottingham found that training and improvement drives at department level were an undervalued aspect of school improvement programmes. Involving Heads of Department in training, trialling innovations at departmental level, peer review and teacher involvement in reflection and research activities all contributed towards this success. Harris concludes that both the department and the school should be regarded as units of change.

Gusky (1995) claimed that *'because of the powerful and dynamic influence of context, it is impossible to make precise statements about the elements of an effective professional development programme'*, (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:53). However, Bolam and McMahon add that although some approaches may be limited to one context, certain developments appear to be similar across countries and some techniques can be adapted to different systems (2007:55). My research focuses on the school as the unit of improvement, though I also consider change at department level.

2.3.7 The nature of adult learning

A major flaw in many teacher development programmes, according to Wood and Thompson (1980), is that they did not incorporate existing knowledge on how adults learn, and in fact often conflicted with their preferred learning styles. Theories of adult learning generally reflect constructivist views of learning where learners acquire knowledge by constructing it for themselves (Mohamed, 2006:55). They prefer to be guided rather than told what to do.

Adults want to see results and be provided with accurate feedback. They have a wide range of existing experiences and knowledge and their ego plays an important part in the learning process: they want to be the origins of their learning and will resist learning which appears to be an attack on their competence or their current practices. Adult learning is enhanced by an atmosphere of respect, trust and concern

for the learner (Mohamed, 2006:375). Hoban (2002) identifies from the literature five key inter-related conditions for teacher learning: reflection, community, action, conceptual inputs and student feedback. Community here refers to the need for genuine sharing of ideas and experiences.

Smylie (1995) identifies five characteristics of adult learning: learning as a lifelong experience, it occurs across settings and circumstances, it is affected by the individual's past experiences, it is problem oriented and adults play an active role in their learning (Cited in Tuytens and Devos, 2011:892).

Adults generally have the option to learn or not. Some argue that voluntary participation in a programme is the best way to ensure success (Mohamed, 2006:55, Day, 1999), and highlight the consequences of imposed development, such as reinterpretation, subversion or refusal (Higgins and Leat, 1997). I was keen to make participation in the teacher development programme optional for teachers; however, the insistence of the Principal that all participated provided the opportunity to study the implications of forced involvement on teachers' levels of engagement with the development process.

2.3.8 Teacher involvement

According to Diaz Maggioli (2003) programmes which involve participants in all stages from planning to evaluation have more chance of success than those planned with a top-down approach (cited in Richards and Farrell, 2005:18). Teachers should be involved in discussions about what they will learn, how they will learn and how they will use what they learn. The programme itself should provide opportunities for participation and sharing (Mohamed, 2006, Hayes, 1995). Many teacher educators have identified co-operative learning (CL) as an ideal approach to use for teacher development courses. According to Johnson and Johnson, the five essential components of co-operative learning are: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face to face promotive interaction, social skills and group processing. There is considerable evidence that co-operative learning has a positive effect on second language learning (Kagan, 1995) and is seen positively by learners in a wide range of settings (Littlewood, 2001). It has also been shown to have positive social, affective and cognitive benefits (Willis, 2007). Based on this research as well as findings on adult learning, co-operative learning has been promoted as the best approach to teacher development courses (DelliCarpini, 2009).

Within the co-operative learning framework, one key approach is ‘loop input’, which involves exposing teachers to the approaches, techniques and activities we would like them to use with their students. According to Woodward (2003), loop

input *'integrates process and content in a way that provides experiential learning but with the added advantage of involving self-descriptivity and recursion'*. In my first narrative (Chapter Four) and discussion (Chapter Six) I consider the level of involvement of the teachers in the training programme I undertook at Bellwood school.

2.3.9 The teacher as an individual

Although it is possible to identify features of the way adults learn, it is also important to remember that, like other categories of learner, teachers may differ from each other in many ways. Some of these include: previous knowledge, intellectual skills, types and levels of motivation, interests, level of anxiety, preferred learning style and expectations (Entwistle, 1981, cited in Wallace, 1991:23).

One important aspect of seeing teachers as individuals is acknowledging that they come to an in-service programme with certain knowledge and skills. Some argue that in order to respect this existing skill set, the main aim of a programme should not be to discard existing practices but to work alongside them, aiming to expand and deepen awareness (Mohamed, 2006:54). However, others criticise the 'assimilative mindset' of continuing professional development activities (Richardson and Placier, 1998, De Sonneville, 2007) as not producing change. Whichever view you take, it is clear that each individual teacher joins a programme with a set of values, beliefs and experiences which result not just from their careers but from who

they are as people. In order to meet with success, a teacher educator must understand where the teachers' underlying beliefs and values come from and why they may resist change.

It has been mooted that one of the most critical skills needed by a teacher is responding to the needs of individual learners (e.g. Girod, 2002). Girod (2008) promotes a framework called 'Teacher work sampling' in which a teacher demonstrates his or her ability to take into account the context and learners and show evidence of student learning. If we as teacher educators are to model best practice, we must treat each teacher as an individual just as we expect teachers to do with their students.

Perhaps most importantly, reflection and action research have gained popularity among teacher educators as ways to provide individualised professional development to teachers.

2.3.10 The role of theory and research

In the past many in-service programmes were developed on a largely intuitive basis and relied on the energy, experience, personality and goodwill of individuals (Kennedy, 1987:163). It became apparent that it was necessary to pay more attention to theory and research both in terms of the content and the approaches used in such programmes. Kennedy, for example, pointed out that teacher development

programmes needed to take into account the principles of innovation outlined by Chin and Benne (1970). They identified 3 main strategies: power-coercive, rational-empirical and normative-re-educative. Kennedy and others (e.g. Mohamed, 2006:55) argue for there to be a strong cognitive component to teacher development courses. Others too, have advocated the normative-re-educative strategy (McNeil, 1986, Hayes, 1995), pointing out that schools are normative organisations and that coercion is incongruent with the psychological disposition of teachers (Blase, 1990).

It has been noted that teacher development programmes often rely on training teachers in procedures and techniques without reference to underlying theoretical assumptions (Ramani, 1987). Ramani points out that one of the problems trainers face is getting teachers to read. She advocates encouraging teachers to select their own readings based on their interests and examine their own theory against current theoretical understandings (1987:7/8). Others too point out the importance of relating practical skills to underlying theory (Hayes, 1995).

2.3.11 Evaluating the programme

It is not always easy to evaluate the success of in-service teacher development programmes. Loucks and Melle (1982) point out that the success of programmes is often decided on the basis of statements of participant satisfaction. Wade adds that while many write about staff development, few present concrete evidence of its effects on teachers and students (1984/5:48). There is also the problem that initial

change does not guarantee lasting change (Fullan, 1982, Stein and Wang, 1988, Stallings and Krasavage, 1986).

Indicators of improvement can be divided into ‘hard’ (e.g. exam results, attendance figures, national test results) and ‘soft’ (e.g. motivation, self-esteem) (1993, Boshier, 2001). Girod (2008:216) highlights the difficulty of generating evidence that critics might accept. This has been attributed to the complexity of the ‘chain of evidence’ needed to provide this evidence:

Teacher

Preparation → Teacher → Practice in → How much
Programmes Learning Classroom pupils learn

(Cochran-Smith, 2005)

This complexity has been seen as a barrier to efforts to develop empirically defensible practices in teacher education (Floden, 2001). One recent attempt to address all elements in the chain was Girod’s ‘teacher work sampling’ which has been endorsed by AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) and NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). This is an ethnographic approach, which assists teachers to connect their teaching with their students’ learning. As well as using video to deepen understanding of their own classrooms, teachers completed autobiographical analyses of their own school experiences to reveal the origins of their beliefs about teaching and learning (2008:224).

Guskey (2000) proposed five critical levels at which information for evaluating professional development initiatives needs to be gathered:

Participants' reaction; participants' learning; institution support and change; participants' use of new knowledge and skills; and student learning outcomes...

Guskey points out that evaluating just one of the levels will not give you information about the success of the other levels (Bolam and McMahon, 2007: 53).

Day and Sachs believe that there are signs that educators are starting to understand that there is not usually a direct 'pay off' of CPD in terms of classroom learning and student achievement. There are too many variables for the effects to be immediately apparent. Not enough is known about the impact of CPD on students and their learning and more studies are needed (2007:29).

2.3.12 Professional learning communities

I have included the literature on Professional Learning Communities as this is what I was trying to create through my work at Bellwood school. Although my attempt was ultimately unsuccessful, my first narrative account describes a programme which was hoping to turn the group of teachers into a learning community.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) ‘exist *where teachers and administrators seek and share ways to improve their teaching practice and the learning of their students.*’ (Kornelis, n.d, no page no.). The professional learning community can be a powerful strategy for school change and improvement (Hord, 1997:1). Kruse et al. note that there are five critical elements to effective PLCs: reflective dialogue, de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values. Fullan points out that two sets of conditions must be met: **Structural:** time to meet and talk physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment and school autonomy **Social and human resources:** openness to improvement, trust and respect, cognitive and skill base, supportive leadership and socialization (Fullan, 2007:149).

McLaughlin and Talbert found that PLCs ‘*build and manage knowledge; they create shared language and standards for practice and student outcomes; and they sustain*

aspects of their school culture vital to continued, consistent norms and instructional practice' (2006:5, in Fullan, 2007:150).

2.3.13 Conclusion

In this section I have looked at what the literature tells us about best practice in teacher development programmes. This was crucial to my work at Bellwood school as I attempted to implement best practice, while considering the lives, experience and motivation of the group of teachers I was working with. In the next section I look at motivation, as these clearly had an impact on my work with the teachers.

2.4 Teachers

2.4.1 Teacher motivation and job satisfaction

Huberman writes about the 'classroom press', which affects teachers on a daily basis. He summarises what he means as follows: The press for

- immediacy and concreteness
- multidimensionality and simultaneity
- adapting to ever-changing conditions or unpredictability
- personal involvement with students

According to Huberman this press has a range of effects on teachers, including giving them a short-term perspective, isolating them from other adults, exhausting their energy and limited their opportunities for reflection (Fullan, 2007:25). This clearly has an impact on levels of motivation and job satisfaction. Bishay surveyed 50 teachers to measure their levels of job satisfaction and motivation by using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). In this survey, teachers were randomly beeped five times a day for five days and completed surveys on mood and activity each time. This study found that all the teachers love to teach and those who had served longer as teachers had increased levels of job satisfaction. They also found that those who held positions of responsibility were more satisfied. When beeped during teaching the teachers reported feeling most involved and stimulated. During meetings and while doing paperwork, however, they often felt bored (Fullan, 2007:151) The study also found that teachers who taught at popular ‘magnet’ schools had higher levels of satisfaction compared to teachers in other urban schools (Fullan, 2007:153).

Teachers’ motivation has been seriously impacted by increased levels of stress and workload pressure (Travers and Cooper, 1996, cited in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:38). Huberman (1988) found that teachers’ psychological state can affect how he or she acts on or responds to improvement initiatives within the school (Fullan, 2007:96). A study of teachers in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the USA found that ‘erosion of the profession’ was occurring due to decreased status, external

interference, excessive change and increased workload (Scott et al., 2000, cited in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:38).

2.4.2 Self esteem and moral purpose

The literature offers support for the importance of teachers having good self esteem. Richardson and Placier (2001) emphasise autonomy and responsibility, and believe that the teacher's perception of him or herself is at the heart of all we do as teacher educators. If there are flaws in the self-esteem and self-image of the teachers we work with, any amount of training is not going to make a real difference. This became apparent in my work with teachers at Bellwood school.

Farber (1991, cited in Fullan, 1993) highlights the negative effects of what he calls a '*growing sense of inconsequentiality*' that teachers often develop over the course of their careers. (1993:12). He points out that many teachers begin their careers with a feeling that their work is '*socially meaningful*' and satisfying, but later experience frustration and lose commitment (ibid.).

Fullan believes that teachers generally have a '*moral purpose*' (ibid.), and that to continue to see their work as meaningful, they must combine this moral purpose with the skills of '*change agency*' (ibid.). He claims that there is a conflict between, on the one hand, the fact that schools are expected to engage in continuous renewal and, on the other hand, the way teachers are trained, schools are organised, the

educational hierarchy operates and political decision-makers treat educators. This, he argues, is unlikely to bring about change. This dilemma is at the core of my work.

Fullan argues for a *'new conception of teacher professionalism that integrates moral purpose and change agency and works on individual and institutional development simultaneously'* (ibid.). He stresses the importance of inquiry, which makes teachers into career-long learners and helps them to motivate students to see learning as a lifelong process (1993:13).

Fullan, like Richardson and Placier, emphasises the need for learning and inquiry to be going on at various levels: as individuals as well as members of groups. As he puts it, *'personal and group mastery thrive on each other in learning organisations'* (1993:14).

Research shows that good teaching involves both cognition and emotion (Day and Sachs, 2007:9). As Hargreaves (1998:835) put it, *'Good teaching is charged with positive emotion...Good teachers are...passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity and joy'* (Day and Sachs, 2007:9).

2.4.3 Teachers' biographies

The ways teachers teach are not just a reflection of the skills they have or have not learnt, they are also rooted in their backgrounds and biographies. The experiences they have had in their careers impact the kind of teachers they become as well as their commitment to and enthusiasm for CPD (Day and Sachs, 2007: 12).

Burden pointed out that it was essential for teacher educators to know as much as possible about a teacher and his or her stage of development in order to help them understand the needs of teachers at different points in their careers (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:48). Huberman, too, emphasized that a teacher's motivation for development will be affected by the stage and position he or she has reached in his or her career (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:49).

2.4.4 Beliefs about teaching and learning

Borko and Putnam (1995) had a perspective on the professional development of teachers that was grounded in cognitive psychology. They believed that it is not possible to just tell teachers how to teach differently: rather, they had to make the changes themselves. In order for this to occur, teachers need to acquire '*rich knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and subject specific pedagogy, and they must come to hold new beliefs in these domains*' (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:49).

Maurer and Tarulli (1994) studied the factors affecting the involvement in development activities of workers in general. These included their beliefs about the benefit of the innovation and about their own ability to learn new skills (Bolam and McMahon, p.50).

2.5 Change and change agents

I would now like to look at some of the literature regarding change and the change agents themselves. It is important in my research to understand why the planned changes did not come about and whether any factors relating to me as change agent were relevant to this outcome.

2.5.1 What is change?

Fullan points out that there are 3 dimensions to educational change:

- 1) Materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technologies)
- 2) Teaching approaches (new teaching strategies or activities)
- 3) The possible alterations of beliefs (pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programmes)

Fullan believes that all three of these dimensions are necessary but that there are some difficulties with them. Firstly, it is not specified whether the three aspects are decided on or developed by a researcher, an external curriculum developer or a group of teachers. Secondly, there is a tension between two different perspectives: the fidelity perspective and the mutual-adaptation or evolutionary perspective. The fidelity perspective is the assumption that a particular innovation should be implemented as it is, i.e. faithfully. The mutual-adaptation or evolutionary perspective implies that the user works with the innovation and makes changes as required according to the context. The third issue is that it is difficult to define what the change actually is given that they will be modified and developed during implementation. Fullan, however, believes that there is still value in conceptualising change in terms of the three dimensions (Fullan, 2007:31). Fullan reminds us that lasting reform is most likely to be achieved if changes in beliefs and understanding are made (2007:37).

Fullan points out that there are three broad phases to the change process:

Phase 1: Initiation

Phase 2: Implementation

Phase 3: Continuation

The total time from initiation until the change becomes institutionalised can be approximately two to four years or longer.

As early as 1977, Fullan and Pomfret pointed to the massive failure of reform, which showed that putting the process of change was more complex than was generally realized (Fullan, 2007:5). Fullan points out that a missing ingredient in many failed cases of change is the use of 'change knowledge' (2009:9), referring to eight 'drivers' of effective and lasting change:

- Engaging people's moral purpose
- Building capacity
- Understanding the change process
- Developing cultures for learning
- Developing cultures of evaluation
- Focusing on leadership for change
- Fostering coherence making
- Cultivating tri-level development

Of these Fullan claims the most important is focusing on leadership for change as leaders who inspire others to be leaders are needed for enduring change (2009:14).

2.5.2 Teachers' attitude towards change

The predominant view is that teachers tend to resist change. Richardson and Placier (1998) question this view. Having had wide experience of working with in-service

teachers, they found that *'teachers change all the time'*. (1998:1). Naturally, this led them to question how the belief that teachers are reluctant to change co-existed with their experience of teachers constantly changing. They developed the theory that this discrepancy may depend on who implements and leads the change process: *'Teachers often resist change mandated or suggested by others but they do engage in change that they initiate'* (ibid.).

Richardson and Placier point out that:

We need teachers who approach their work with a change orientation... that suggests constant reflection, evaluation and experimentation are integral elements of the teaching role...

(1998, Section: Vision of Teachers)

What is interesting about Richardson and Placier's work, however, is that they go on to question whether it is always a good idea for teachers to be acting alone in their reflective and experimental activities. There are, they believe, two main areas of difficulty here. The first is that if all teachers act alone, the experience of schooling, from the point of view of the student, could become incoherent and ineffective. The second potential problem is that a teacher acting alone may base their changes on 'unwarranted assumptions'.

Both these difficulties have led them to the conclusion that some kind of direction, support and encouragement directed to the staff as a whole rather than to individuals working in isolation would be beneficial. My own work at Bellwood school was directed at the whole community of teachers and, as well as encouraging individual reflection, I facilitated reflection and action at department and whole-school levels. My approach attempted to mirror the suggestion of Pendlebury (1990) that schools should be considered '*communities of practice, whose members are granted equal respect and concern*' and that there should be '*continual critical discussion about aims, standards and procedures*' (Cited in Richardson and Placier, 1998, Section: Vision of Teachers).

Change is only valuable if it is sustained in the long term. Stallings and Krasavage (1996:137) point out that the difficulty is likely to be in ensuring that teachers continue to use innovative practices after a programme is over. They claim that the need is to create excitement about learning to learn and to maintain momentum rather than just the learned behaviours.

Richardson and Placier describe reflective collaborative models of teacher development, which, they point out are designed to give teachers '*a more systematic and reflective approach to their own change process*' (1998: Section: Reflective, Collaborative Models). One example they give of this is Anders and Richardson (1994) who, over a long period, met teachers both in groups and as individuals in their own classroom. They videotaped lessons and used the recordings as a basis for

discussions with the teachers on their lessons. An important feature of this model was that the trainers did not specify in advance the behaviours they wanted the teachers to adopt but made suggestions based on need.

In this model, the success of a development programme is based on: *'the degree teachers take responsibility for actions, assume ownership of practices and are able to articulate actions and justifications to another person.'* (1998: Section: Reflective, Collaborative Models).

This was a three-year project, which led to teachers changing their beliefs and practices on the basis of the dialogues the trainers had with them. They found that two years later, the teachers were still modifying their practice, based on reflection and their students did better. The authors concluded that the teachers had developed a *'change orientation that led them to reflect continually on their teaching and classrooms and experiment thoughtfully with new practices.'* (1998: Section: Reflective, Collaborative Models)

Richardson and Placier conclude that we need to develop through our training programmes a *'sense of autonomy and responsibility that goes beyond the individual class and moves to school, programme and community levels'* (1998: Section: Community of Practice).

2.5.3 Optimal conditions for change

Several writers point out how difficult it is to implement change (Fullan and Pomfret, 1977, Elmore, 1995, Fullan, 2007). There have been many examples of failed implementation documented but very few successful examples, particularly on a large scale (Fullan, 2007:5). According to Elmore (1995) reasons for this include the complexity of the process of change, and the lack of incentives for teachers to change. Change usually involves intensive action over a number of years and often requires a change to the cultures of classrooms. Fullan points out that it is important to consider the phenomenology of change, by which he means how people actually experience change rather than how it is intended to be (2007:8). Participants need to have shared meaning of what the change entails. According to Fullan, moral purpose and knowledge are required for successful change (2007:21). Huberman (1988) found that a teacher's psychological state can affect how receptive he or she is to change initiatives (Fullan, 2007:96). As Soini et al. point out, teacher learning is linked to their *'pedagogical well-being', which depends on a 'sense of autonomy, relatedness, competence, belonging or lack of'* (2010:737).

Rosenholtz studied schools in Tennessee and divided them into 'stuck', 'in-between' or 'moving'. She found that schools in which teachers had shared meaning were more likely to implement new ideas connected to student learning (Fullan, 2007:38).

Marris (1975) points out that whether the change is voluntary or imposed '*all real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle*' and the typical response is ambivalence (Fullan, 2007:21). He too emphasizes the importance of shared meaning if change is to be successful. It is also necessary for leaders of change to accept the process of resistance which is likely to occur.

Fullan highlights two related problems with teacher change: the conditions for change being either 'too loose' or 'too tight'. If they are too loose they may have abstract goals which teachers are expected to implement, resulting in a lack of focus and clarity. The opposite, 'too tight' problem is associated with standards-based reforms which are too prescriptive (Fullan, 2007:28/29). According to Fullan, existing strategies for change '*fail to get at the day-to-day meaning and motivation of teachers*' (2007:29).

Fullan believes that it may be helpful to make clear statements about the goals and beliefs associated with new practices at the start of the innovation, but this will not eliminate the difficulties completely. He suggests that there should be mechanisms to address the ongoing problem of meaning at all stages of implementation (2007:39).

From the point of view of the leader, the main dilemma is whether to attempt to get the majority of staff to agree with the innovation. On the one hand, it has been shown that top-down change is usually unsuccessful. On the other hand, where

teachers do agree, their consent can often be uninformed or superficial (Fullan, 2007:82). Fullan believes that top-down leadership of change can work when a reform is good and when there are opportunities for staff to get involved and make choices later in the process.

Huberman and Miles (1984) claim that whether or not an innovation ends up getting institutionalized depends on whether or not the change:

- 1) gets embedded or built into the structure (through policy, budget, timetable etc)
- 2) has generated a critical mass of administrators and teachers who are skilled in and committed to the change, and
- 3) has established procedures for continuing assistance

The success of professional development is likely to depend on the following factors: *'the culture and ethos of the school, the quality of leadership and administration, the availability of resources, whether or not there is a calm and orderly atmosphere, the level of workload'* (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:46).

Berman and McLaughlin (1977, cited in Fullan, 2007:95) found that change initiatives were most likely to succeed when they had the 'active support' of the principal.

King and Newmann (2001) outline what they believe are the optimal conditions for teacher learning:

when teachers can concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in the specific contexts in which they teach; have sustained opportunities to study, to experiment with and to receive helpful feedback on specific innovations; and have opportunities to collaborate with professional peers, both within and outside their schools, along with access to the expertise of researchers...

(King and Newmann in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:47)

Smylie (1995) also found that opportunities to learn from peers in collaborative groups with open communication, experimentation and feedback formed the ideal conditions for teacher learning in the workplace (ibid.). In Chapter Seven I discuss why change was not possible at Bellwood school.

2.5.4 Skills and qualities

As an autoethnographer, I am concerned with assessing my own performance as a teacher trainer. In the last two decades there have been several attempts to create typologies of the skills and qualities which trainers need. Matthew Miles et al. (1988) conducted a two-year study of 17 change agents in three New York city improvement programmes, using interviews, observations and ranking data collected

from the change agents and school clients. They identified 18 key skills that were needed by educational change agents. These were divided into general skills, personal, socio-emotional process, task and educational content. The general skills were:

- interpersonal ease
- group functioning
- training/doing workshops
- master teacher
- educational content
- administrative/organisational ability

The specific skills included:

Personal: Initiative-taking

Socio-emotional process: Rapport building, support, conflict mediation, collaboration, confrontation

Task: Individual diagnosis, organizational diagnosis, managing/controlling

Educational content: resource-bringing, demonstration

(1988:158)

Miles asserts that these skills will provide useful criteria for selecting change agents.

In order to further refine the desired skills he studied the distinction between 'average' and 'outstanding' performance of change agents. He looked at critical

incidents and feedback from teachers and showed how critical incidents can be coded to show a range of skills.

As well as identifying a range of skills which were needed by change agents, he stressed the importance of 'style', which he defines as '*skills which are largely natural, even out of agent's awareness or control*'.(1988:191). This is exemplified by a comment made by one of the teachers in Miles' study: '*Her most important skill is her overall manner- the manner with which she speaks and deals with people*' (1988:170).

Miles has two main conclusions: firstly, that change agents need training, practice, reflection, support and feedback, and secondly, that more work needs to be done on change agent style. Studies like mine, which look closely at the style of a particular change agent, or teacher trainer, can clearly add to our knowledge in this area.

A more recent project which attempts to identify the skills of change agents took place in Austria in the 1990's (Ribisch, 1999). The Vienna School-Based Teacher Development Project (SBP) aimed to change teacher behaviour by setting up a supportive team of English teachers in each participating school. Up until the start of this project in 1991, in-service teacher training was 'almost totally optional' and was mostly limited to workshops without follow-up. Ribisch describes the Austrian education system as 'hierarchical' and observes that co-operation with colleagues was not actively encouraged. Both teachers and teacher trainers were dissatisfied with this situation, which led to the establishment of SBP. A continual theme, as we

have seen, is the need for teachers themselves to be responsible for the content of professional development programmes, and this was one of the key features of SBP too. Ribisch believes that the confidentiality of the meetings was one factor in SBP's success. Teachers were able to speak freely as details of discussions were not relayed to principals or school inspectors (1999:116).

The outcomes of this project were both tangible- such as the production of shared teaching schemes- and less tangible- notably positive changes in group dynamics. The role of teamwork was central to SBP. Both facilitators and participants took the 'Belbin self-perception inventories (Belbin, 1990) which helped them raise awareness of their strengths and weaknesses related to the various roles in a team (Ribisch, 1999:117).

The main advantages gained by the participants in SBP were an increase in self-awareness and self-confidence and a reduction in prejudices and anxiety.

Ribisch examined both the role of facilitators and the skills they needed to function effectively in this role. Interestingly, he found that it was advantageous that the facilitators were not part of the school hierarchy, but came from other institutions such as the university.

The facilitators' role was to act as 'catalysts and impulse-givers'. They had to bring and keep the group together and maintain a high level of professionalism. Ribisch emphasises the importance for facilitators of focussing on the positive and turning

complaints into solutions. He highlights the demanding nature of the job and agrees with Thomas and Wright that *'developing facilitation skills takes time and is subject to an experiential cycle of practice, trial and error, reflection, coaching, discussion and reapplication'*(1999:118).

Focusing on the skills needed by facilitators, Ribisch opines that the ideal facilitator will be able to *'sense the dynamic of the group and carefully nurture an atmosphere of openness, confidence and trust'*. (1999:119). In Chapter Seven I discuss to what extent such an atmosphere was achieved.

One of the problems facing facilitators is that teachers may feel threatened by being asked to question established practices and try new ideas. Ribisch suggests that gradually involving participants in peer observation and feedback may be a partial solution to this problem. The SBP facilitators needed further training in interpersonal skills in order to undertake this challenging role with greater success. Ribisch concludes by identifying the most important skills needed by facilitators:

- Good listeners
- Create a supportive atmosphere
- Be aware of the effect of different categories of interventions and use them as best suits the group
- Understand how people react to change
- Help groups develop strategies for change

- Identify natural team abilities of participants and put them to best use
- Gradually shift responsibility to participants while keeping sessions task and goal-oriented.

(1999:120)

The SBP facilitators were sent on a course with Adrian Underhill on ‘Six Categories of Intervention’ (Heron, 1987) to develop those skills. The Vienna study does not appear to question the validity of such training or whether such interpersonal skills can be developed. The expectation was that most school groups would work with a facilitator for three or four years and then function as autonomous self-help groups. It would be interesting to find out how far the momentum was maintained after the withdrawal of the facilitator. In my study I aimed to work with the group for at least two years, although in the end I only managed to stay for one.

Kennedy, writing in 1987, agrees that the personal characteristics of change agents have had major significance in in-service teacher development programmes. He believes that many programmes ‘*developed on an intuitive basis...success or failure depended on individuals’ energy, accumulated experience, personalities, goodwill...*’. While not dismissing the part played by personal factors, he argues for a larger role for what he calls the ‘**principles of innovation**’ as a more reliable basis for action and results. He suggests that change agents ask themselves what strategies they should adopt for successful change. He refers to three types of strategy identified by Chin and Benne (1970):

- Power-coercive
- Rational-empirical
- Normative-re-educative

Kennedy argues that of the three, it is the third strategy that is most likely to bring about lasting change, due to its emphasis on collaborative problem solving. As teaching is a cognitive, behavioural activity, it is necessary for a change in belief to occur if change in practice is to be sustained.

According to Kennedy, the 'Power-coercive' type of strategy is least likely to be successful as enforced change will usually lead to conflict. However, he warns that the idea of power should not be confused with support. The value of the support of those who hold power at various levels should not be underestimated. Change agents should, he suggests, make every effort to demonstrate to teachers that those in authority support the change process.

Kennedy finds the second strategy to be of limited value. This strategy involves providing evidence to teachers to support the change being implemented. This could involve information-sharing through seminars and newsletters, which may help but will not be enough to bring about change at a deep level.

The example Kennedy provides based on his work with teachers/materials writers in Tunisia showcases the need for a strategy which values difference and allows participants to come to agreement through collaboration. In this case, he as change agent, acted as a catalyst as well as an 'information-provider' when needed.

Kennedy concludes by emphasising the need for a 'strong cognitive component' to teacher development programmes to ensure that change goes beyond surface level, and advocates a collaborative, problem-solving approach which gives the teacher responsibility for change (1987:169).

More recently, Koster et al.(2005) considered what teacher educators need to be able to do. They found that as well as being able to provide a teacher education programme by evaluating teaching, giving guidance and developing materials, they should be able to work on their own development and that of colleagues. In addition, they should be able to take part in policy development. They should also be reflective and have excellent communication skills. It was also deemed necessary for them to be able to organise activities for and with teachers, select future teachers, work as part of a team, make contacts outside the institution and achieve work life balance.

In summary, the change agent or teacher trainer should have strong interpersonal skills and be able to gradually shift responsibility from herself to the teachers. I hope to contribute towards knowledge in these areas through my personal narrative

and my analysis of it. The autoethnographic nature of my work provides insight into my personal qualities (and weaknesses) as an agent of change as well as a detailed account of the context, activities and relationships of my training experience.

2.6 School Culture

School culture was one of the themes that emerged upon analysis of my narrative accounts and interview data. It became clear that any work on professional development needs to take account of the culture of the school and whether it is conducive to learning and development among the teachers. I have therefore decided to add the literature of school culture to this review.

Hargreaves (1995) points out that in the educational literature the term ‘culture’ is used in several senses (Nias, 1989) but most use it in the anthropological sense of ‘the knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, morals, rituals, symbols and language of a group’. Through culture people define reality and make sense of themselves.

Culture becomes ‘the way we do things round here’ (Hargreaves, 1995:25). One definition comes from Johnson and Scholes’ (1992) Cultural Web: *‘It’s that ethereal something that hangs in the air and influences how work gets done, critically affects project success or failure, says who fits in and who doesn’t, and determines the overall mood of the company’* (www.mindtools.com).

Hargreaves outlines two typologies for describing school culture. In the first, he refers to the 'instrumental-social control' domain and the 'expressive-social cohesion' domain. He describes four extreme types of school based on how high and low these domains are. The cultures at the extremes are described as formal, welfarist, hothouse and survivalist. Clearly real schools do not occupy any of the four extremes but could be at any point in the space between cultures. Hargreaves also points out that within an individual school different groups or subcultures could be in different positions. The advantage of this typology is that there is no continuum of best to worst so it recognises the complexity of the situation.

The second typology is based on the understanding that there are five underlying social structures:

1. Political
2. Micro-political
3. Maintenance
4. Development
5. Service

(1995:31)

The two extreme examples are traditional and collegial, though once again it is recognised that most schools will lie somewhere between the two. The traditional school is likened to a feudal kingdom, whereas the collegial school is based on participation by all stakeholders.

Hargreaves points out that over the last century there has been a general movement away from the traditional and towards the collegial culture (1995:36). Collaborative cultures are now seen as superior to non-collaboration as well as better able to support school improvement (1995:41). Another way of viewing schools is Rosenholtz's (1989) distinction of 'moving' and 'stuck' schools. Rosenholtz's ideas were expanded by Hopkins et al. (1994) who posited two continua: one of effectiveness and ineffectiveness in terms of outcomes, and the other from dynamic to static in terms of school improvement (Cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996:85). Stoll and Fink's model categorised schools in terms of effectiveness and whether they are improving or declining. They described schools as either moving, cruising, struggling or sinking (1996:86).

According to Hargreaves, no school or teacher culture can be proved to have a direct impact on student learning and achievement. However, the effects of culture 'trickle down through the architecture' (1995:43) Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex claim that *'school culture...has a profound impact upon how teachers value and apply prescribed as well as self-initiated changes'* (2010:268) and that *'a culture among the teachers that encourages and values collaborative learning is also necessary'* (ibid.) Hargreaves calls for improved techniques for depicting and measuring school cultures (1995:43).

Terms including ‘climate’, ‘ethos’ and ‘saga’ have been used to refer to school culture (Deal 1993, cited in Stolp, 1994). The notion of culture came to education from the corporate workplace and was adopted in order to improve the learning environment. Deal and Peterson (1990) define school culture as ‘*deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of (the school’s) history*’; while Heckman (1993) claims that school culture consists of ‘*the commonly held beliefs of teachers, students and principals*’ (Stolp, 1994:1). For Stolp, school culture is:

‘the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community’

(Stolp and Smith, 1994 in Stolp, 1994:1)

Stolp points out that healthy and sound school cultures have a strong correlation with higher student achievement and motivation as well as with teachers’ job satisfaction. Fyans and Maehr’s (1990) Illinois study found that in schools with strong cultures students are more motivated to learn. Similarly, Thacker and McInerney (1992) found that improving school culture had a positive effect on the number of students who failed a statewide test. Cheng (1993) found that stronger school cultures had better motivated teachers (Stolp, 1994:2).

Cambridge points out that in an international school it is possible for a state of Unitarism to exist. This is where one culture predominates. Those members whose cultures are not recognized or valued by the dominant organizational culture can become radicalized or alienated (2001:204). At a school in a state of unitarism, staff experience high levels of burnout (Friedman, 1991). Burnout is characterized by intense reactions of anger, anxiety, restlessness, depression, tiredness, boredom, cynicism, guilt feelings, psychosomatic symptoms or nervous breakdown (2001:325). According to Friedman, some of the main causes are role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity (2001:326). As Deal and Peterson point out, cultures can quickly become toxic (2009:166-167). They claim that leaders can 'unravel' a culture either by commission-introducing new values or destroying key symbols, or by omission- neglecting core values and allowing negativity to grow (2009:168).

One of the most difficult tasks a school leader can undertake is to change the prevailing school culture and it is not a task that can be done alone (Barth, 2002:6). Cultures are resistant to change. Barth suggests that school leaders should encourage teachers to be '*observers of the old and architects and designers of the new*' (2002:6). It is necessary to observe 'toxic' elements of the existing culture and focus on replacing them with healthy cultural norms, such as those identified by Saphier and King (1985, cited in Barth, 2002: 7): collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring celebration and humor, involvement in

decision-making, protection of what's important, traditions and honest and open communications.

Stolp suggests that leaders who wish to improve their school's cultures would do well to start by understanding the current culture, and that reforms '*should be approached with dialogue, concern for others and some hesitation*' (1994:2).

Failure to do so might result in changing routines or practices which are actually beneficial, such as shortening the time between lessons when this turns out to be when teachers share new ideas.

To improve school culture it is important to have a coherent vision which includes stating the values and beliefs that will guide policy and practice. Where principals are able to adapt their vision to incorporate new challenges the building of stronger school cultures is likely to be more successful. The vision of the principal should ideally be shared by other members of the school community, and creating this vision should be a collaborative activity (Stolp 1994:3). Changing the culture of a school takes prolonged effort by many individuals over a long period of time and it is possible to move backwards as well as forwards (McMahon, 2001, cited in Bolam and McMahon, 2007:46).

Deal and Peterson highlight the importance of symbols, rituals and celebrations of success in school culture. They point out that in toxic cultures there is a lack of ritual and ceremony (2009:166) and small successes are not recognized (2009:11).

Deal and Peterson also point to the existence of *'negative priests and priestesses, who constantly refer to the 'good old days' and 'fill the grapevine with innuendo and the latest dirt'* (2009:164).

Bolam and McMahon point out that a school is likely to have a number of subcultures reflecting the cultural differences between various groups and subgroups that comprise the school community (2007:46).

In Chapter Seven I discuss in some detail the importance of school culture as has been highlighted by my research.

2.6.1 School culture and professional development

School cultures can have either a positive or a negative influence on teachers' learning. According to Day and Sachs, most teachers work in isolation from their colleagues for most of the time. Although leaders attempt to promote collegial cultures, these tend to be at the level of planning or talking about teaching rather than giving teachers opportunities to examine practice (2007:10). Day and Sachs suggest that CPD efforts need to take account of school cultures which can encourage or discourage teachers' learning (2004:11).

Sparks and Hirsch (1997) claim that for sustained professional development to occur the development initiatives must impact on the school's culture. In particular, a

‘culture of inquiry’ needs to be created in which teachers are willing to try out new practices and hone their existing skills (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:34).

Joyce et al. described the cultures which are associated with teacher growth and learning as being ones in which:

teachers feel able to experiment and take risks, where collaboration is valued and time is allocated to facilitate shared work, where information is used as a basis for joint inquiry and investigation and where sharing and partnership rather than competition between teachers is encouraged...’

(Bolam and McMahon, 2007:46)

My first narrative account (Chapter Four) and the subsequent discussion (Chapter Seven) deal with impact of school culture on professional development within the school.

2.7 Teacher training in difficult circumstances

2.7.1 Untrained teachers

In many developing countries people become teachers without qualifications because they need work and there are too few trained people to staff the growing

number of schools (Kunje and Stuart, 1997:158). In such cases, teachers are often trained on the job. Studies from Lesotho, Tanzania, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Thailand show success in cases where there were strong management teams and intense supervision. A study conducted by Kunje and Stuart in Malawi found that in developing countries people become teachers without qualifications because a) they need work and, b) there are too few trained people to staff the ever-expanding schools (1997:158). In their study untrained teachers were coping but only on a superficial level. For example, they came on time, dressed appropriately and performed in front of the class. However, the level of teaching was not very high: they had a limited repertoire of teaching methods, group work was infrequent and useful feedback to students was rare. They found that most Deputy Heads did not have the necessary skills to handle the training of these teachers. Although trained teachers worked with untrained ones, this tended to be on an 'ad hoc' basis and systematic mentoring was rare. This study concluded by emphasising the role of the Head Teacher in setting up structures to support untrained teachers and in developing a conducive ethos. However, most heads were too busy to do so.

2.8 School management

Another theme that emerged from the analysis of my narratives and data was that of school leadership, in particular that of the Principal. The following section reviews the relevant literature.

2.8.1 The role of Principal

Leadership is the single most important factor in a school's success or failure (Haywood, 2002, cited in Benson, 2011:87). According to the South African Standard for School Leadership, the core purpose of a principal is

to provide leadership and management in all areas of the school to enable the creation and support of conditions under which high quality teaching and learning take place and which promote the highest possible standards of learner achievement...

(Cited in Bush et al, 2009).

Leithwood et al (2006) claim that leadership explains about 5 to 7% of the difference in learner achievement across schools, and point out that when schools make a clear improvement in pupil achievement there is almost always talented leader at the school (Bush et al., 2010:3). A report by the National Assembly of Wales (2005: 3) emphasizes that one of the major roles of a principal is 'leading learning and teaching', which involves setting high expectations and evaluating the effectiveness of learning outcomes (Bush et al, 2010:4).

A good principal should be able to '*know good instruction when they see it, to encourage it when they do not and to facilitate on-going learning for staff*' (2009:6).

Bredeson and Johansson identify four areas where principals have significant impact on teacher learning:

1. The principal as an instructional leader and learner
 2. The creation of a learning environment
 3. Direct involvement in the design, delivery and content of professional development
 4. The assessment of professional learning outcomes
- (2000:385)

However, it is also widely accepted that the majority of school leaders lack the necessary skills to perform these functions (Leithwood, 1992:86). Danielson, for example, points out that most administrator preparation programmes do not teach the skills of teacher development and evaluation (2010: 35).

Studies have found that in practice, principals only have a perfunctory role in overseeing teachers. Bush et al.'s work in South Africa, for example, found that some principals limit themselves to ensuring that teachers and learners are in their classrooms. Their findings, they claim, follow those of Henefeld (2007) in Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar, who found little observation of teaching taking place (2007:6). Stillwell (2009:353) points out that administrators have generally not been trained in observation.

Research has shown that the principal's job consists mainly of '*role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload*' (Whitaker, 1996:61). Welch et al. found that

'isolation inherent in the role served to discourage ties with teachers and students'.

Other causes were the amount of time and effort spent on the job and the frustrations inherent in working within the school system (Whitaker 1996:61). Whitaker's study found that eight out of the nine principals studied indicated that emotional exhaustion was a significant problem (1996:60).

Fullan claims that the role of the principal has become *'dramatically more complex and overloaded'* over the past decade (2007:156). In some ways, the principal seems to have *'the worst of both worlds'* in that he or she has to fulfil both the 'old world' expectations of *'running a smooth school'* as well as 'new world' expectations of continual improvements in test results (2007:157).

Halpin (1996) pointed out that school leadership provides 'structure' and 'consideration' (Griffith, 2004:1). By 'structure' he meant providing staff and materials which were needed for effective student learning. By 'consideration' he referred to *'the extent administrators developed mutual trust and respect and shared norms and values among school staff necessary for positive and productive social relations'* (ibid.). Blase (1987) claimed that according to teachers, effective principals had *'clear and well-articulated goals; delegated tasks to others; encouraged staff to participate in decision-making; incorporated others in problem-solving; treated staff fairly and equitably; and provided staff support in difficult situations'*. (Griffith, 2004:1). Blase et al (1986) found that when principals

displayed such behaviours, teachers found work less stressful and more satisfying (ibid.)

Hoerr points out that *'great principals help create a school culture in which everyone learns'* (2009:92). He claims that good leaders *'push people, including themselves out of their comfort zone'* (2009:93). Several authors have highlighted the need for school leaders to have strong relational skills (Donaldson, Marnik, Ackerman and MacKenzie, 2009, Bryk and Schneider, 2002, Fullan, 2003).

Donaldson et al. divide the skills needed into three clusters: acting as consultant to translate pedagogical knowledge into practice, mediating conflict and reaching consensus and valuing relationships (2009: 8). According to Cerit, principals should *'respect teachers, have a close interest in them, listen and pay attention to teachers' esteem and try to build a trustable school atmosphere in order to improve teachers' job satisfaction'* (2009:615).

A principal's responsibilities include *'leading change, creativity and innovation'* and *'strategies for developing effective teachers'* (National standards for Headteachers in U.K.). Fullan points out that the principal has an important role to play in terms of change in the school. Innovations are most likely to be successful when they have the active support of the principal (2007:95), for example when he or she attends training sessions (Berman, McLaughlin et al, 1979, cited in Fullan, 2007:95).

Principals also have a key role in CPD. As instructional leaders, principals are often expected to coordinate the professional progression of staff and use development as

part of school change (Bolam and McMahon, 2007:45). Tuytens and Devos emphasise the importance of school leadership for quality and improvement of teaching (2011:891). Robinson (227:21) stresses that student outcomes will be higher where there is direct leader participation in curriculum and professional development (cited in Bush, 2010: 163).

The turnover of teachers has also been shown to correlate strongly with the perception of a supportive headteacher (Mancuso, Roberts and White, 2010:306). Turnover is also linked to a positive work climate with teachers feeling appreciated and respected by colleagues and administrators (Odland and Ruzicka, 2009: 5).

In his report, 'What's worth fighting for in the principalship?' Fullan found that 90% of principals reported an increase in the demands made on their time over the previous decade. In addition, 61% reported a decrease in effectiveness, 84% noted a decrease in the authority of the principal and 72% reported a decrease in trust in leadership of the principal (1997:157). Fullan ultimately concludes that the principalship is not worth it (1997:159). Bolam and McMahon report that the number of vacancies for headteachers has increased due to early retirement for reasons of stress, ill health and workload pressure (2007:37). Chapter Five is a narrative account of my first three months as a principal and provides an alternative view of the principalship.

2.8.2 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) contrasts with the more common transactional leadership, which involves the exchange of incentives by leaders for support for followers (Keeley, 2004:151). According to Burns (1978), *'the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full person of the follower'*(ibid.).

Griffith (2004) studied the direct effect of principal transformational leadership to school staff turnover and school performance. He found that principal behaviours could be divided into the three components of transformational leadership: inspiration or charisma, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. According to Burns (1978) the leader should have the ability to make group members become less interested in themselves and more interested in the group (Griffin, 2004:2). Bass (1990) elaborated on Burns' definition of these characteristics: charisma is the ability to convey their own sense of mission to the followers, instilling in them loyalty and commitment; individualized consideration involves treating each member as a unique individual and delegating where appropriate; intellectual stimulation is providing opportunities for staff to think in new ways. Overall, principal transformational leadership was not directly linked with staff turnover or student achievement. However, there was an indirect link in terms of staff job satisfaction and staff turnover (Griffin, 2004:1).

According to Griffith, principal behaviours directly affect school staff, particularly job satisfaction, commitment and relations with each other. This was clear in my work at the Bellwood school. The principal also has a direct effect on communication between all staff, cooperation and collaboration, mutual trust and understanding, all of which can be linked to school performance. (2004:3) Griffith's conclusion was that where principals are considered transformational leaders, staff were more satisfied with their jobs and there was less staff turnover (2004:8).

In transformational leadership, values play a key part. A good leader has modal values, including responsibility, fairness, honesty, and promise-keeping. Transformational leaders convert their followers into leaders and become moral agents. (Ciulla, 2004:15). Leaders should not treat followers as means to an end but as an end in themselves (Bass and Steidlmeier, 2004:177). The labels transactional and transformational represent two ends of a continuum but the reality is that most leaders have aspects of both in their leadership profile (Bass and Steidlmeier, 2004:176). Bass and Steidlmeier warn against 'pseudo-transformational' leadership which endorses '*perverse modal values such as favouritism, victimization, and special interests*'(ibid.).

Evans and Johnson found that principals' leadership behaviour was significantly related to job satisfaction and job-related stress of middle and high school teachers (1990: 11). Lee, too, found that teachers working under 'high consideration, high-structure' principals experienced lower levels of stress, higher job satisfaction and

higher job performance than those working under principals with other leadership styles (ibid.). Evans and Johnson found that 'interaction facilitation', which has been defined as team building behaviour which encourages people to exchange opinions and ideas (Bowers and Seashore (1966), was the strongest predictor of teachers' job-related stress.

2.8.3 Moral management

The education of children is by its very nature a moral activity (Dewey, 1932, cited in Greenfield, 2004:174). As relationships between people are a crucial part of the work of school administrators, we can consider school leadership a moral activity. According to Greenfield, when discussing leadership we are not talking about 'mere power-holding'. Moral leadership is

not mere preaching, or the uttering of pieties, or the insistence on social conformity. Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the follower... (2004:175).

According to Day, '*successful principals possess a strong and well-articulated values orientation that is related to clear instrumental and broad moral purposes*' (2007:13). He claims that '*school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and*

working conditions' (2007:22). According to Boyd (2011: 303), teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they perceive themselves to have autonomy and are able to contribute towards decision-making.

Schräg (1979) suggested four features of moral leadership for a school leader:

- 1) A moral agent must base his/her decisions on principles rather than whims.
- 2) He/she must consider the welfare and interests of all who stand to be affected by his/her decision.
- 3) He/she must base his/her decision on the most complete information available.
- 4) He/she must follow through on decisions taken after a full examination of a situation
(Greenfield, 2004:176).

Bottery (1992) suggests six questions that a school leader should ask him/herself:

- 1) Does the management of the school promote personal growth?
- 2) Does it treat people as ends in themselves or as means to ends?
- 3) Does it foster a rationality which is not only tolerant of criticism, but actually sees it as an essential part of school and society?
- 4) Does it repudiate the view of human beings as resources to be manipulated, and instead see them as resourceful humans?

- 5) Does it create an ethos where measures of democracy can be introduced to be replicated within the society at large?
 - 6) Does it foster an appreciation of the place of individuals as citizens within their own communities, states, and world?
- (Greenfield, 2004:174)

Greenfield recommends more contextually sensitive descriptive studies which focus on social relations between school leaders and others.

According to Ciulla, ethics is *'how we distinguish between right and wrong, or good and evil in relation to the actions, volitions and character of human beings'* (2004:xv). Since ethics are at the heart of all human relationships they also lie at the heart of relationships between leaders and followers. Ciulla points out that for Burns the values of moral leadership are those of the Enlightenment: Liberty, Equality and Community (2004:xvi). According to Rost, leadership is ethical if both leader and followers freely agree that the changes fairly reflect their mutual purposes (Ciulla, 2004:12).

According to Dewey, ethics is 'reflective conduct' and he distinguished between behaving ethically out of habit or custom and reflective morality (Gini, 2004: 27). Ethics tries to protect the rights and needs of one individual or group alongside another (Gini, 2004:29). Transformational leadership is moral in that it raises the level of conduct of both leader and led, converting self interest into concern for

collective wellbeing (Burns, 1978, in Keeley, 2004:151). In contrast, transactional leadership is *'immobilizing, self-absorbing and eventually manipulative in that it seeks control over followers by catering to their lowest needs* (Keeley, 2004:151).

Bass and Steidlmeier argue that the ethics of leadership rests upon three pillars:

- a) The moral character of the leader
 - b) The ethical legitimacy of the values embedded in the leader's vision, articulation and program which followers either embrace or reject
 - c) The morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue
- (2004:175)

In Chapter Eight I discuss the role of school leader with reference to my own work as well as the literature presented in this chapter.

2.9 Autoethnography in Education

In this section I look at some of the autoethnographic work that has been done in the field of education. Perhaps the most famous work and certainly the one that has had the most influence on me is Ellis' *The Ethnographic I*. This describes the teaching of a course on autoethnography at a university, and follows the lives of several participants on the course as they undertake their own autoethnographic work. It is an interesting work in that it teaches the reader about autoethnography through the

writer's descriptions of the course she was teaching. In a 2008 paper, Armstrong reveals that while researching his paper he was only able to find one other paper on autoethnography in education. That paper was 'A Woman's Life Remembered: Autoethnographic Reflections of an Adult Educator' by Chapman. Since that time, there have been several autoethnographies written by teachers inquiring into their own work. Jago's autoethnography (2008) considers the role of human relationships in the educational process. Ligia Lopez's autoethnographic account of her life as an E.S.L. teacher of Hispanic children in the United States describes the experience of being transformed through her engagement with her students and their families (n.d.). Grossi (2006) reflects on her work as a teacher in South Africa under Apartheid and during the post-Apartheid period. This is an intensely personal account in which her experiences of love, marriage and motherhood are entwined with stories from her teaching career. The theme of inter-racial tensions seems to be a common one in the field of autoethnography in education. The work of Charpentier (2007) explores the impact of race on education in Helena, Arkansas, and Pendlebury's (2007) autoethnographic work reflects on her racism as a classroom teacher, a researcher and a pre-service teacher educator.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition, Simon Maeda's book, *Being and Becoming a Speaker of Japanese* is a seminal work, which describes the author's life as a wife, mother and teacher, and how all these roles impact on her language learning process.

There have also been autoethnographies based on work in higher education. Duarte (2007), who describes herself as a 'neophyte Pedagogue on a Journey of Discovery', uses autoethnography to explore the process of reviewing and redesigning an Organisational Studies degree. Like others, she describes doing autoethnography as a developmental process which has empowered her (2007:10). Trahar (2009) used autoethnography to explore different realities and knowledges about learning and teaching in a UK higher education context.

One piece of work which has relevance to my own is Winer's (2010) autoethnographic account of overseeing the amalgamation of four elementary schools into one. Another, which is perhaps even closer to my own work, is Austin and Hickey's autoethnographic work with pre-service teachers. They highlight the potential for '*the engagement of socially emancipatory professional practices that identify difference and open opportunities for understanding the 'Other'*' (2007: Section: Conscientisation, Action Research and Social Betterment through Autoethnography'). There have also been a few autoethnographies of Principals inquiring into their own work. One of these is Boloz's (2008) study of his work on the reform of an elementary school. Another is Dethloff's *A Principal in Transition*, which uses autoethnography to study the researcher's move from one school to another.

2.10 Conclusion

This literature review has necessarily been broad. My focus was initially very much on teachers so I have explored the literature of both teacher development and teachers' lives. As my work progressed, the themes of school culture and leadership emerged as important areas, which made it necessary to present the literature related to these areas. Finally, I have looked at some of the autoethnographic work that has been done in the field of education.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter tells the story of how I came to choose Autoethnography as my method of inquiry. I will attempt to define autoethnography and explain its relationship to more conventional qualitative methods. I will also describe how I drew on some of those methods, namely interviewing and observation to support my autoethnographic work.

3.2 A qualitative study

This is a qualitative inquiry. As Richards points out, the qualitative approach is *'above all else a person-centred enterprise and therefore particularly appropriate to our work in the field of language teaching'* (2003:9). I would be working with a group of teachers from a variety of backgrounds with huge differences between them in terms of the amount of experience and knowledge they had. It was unlikely that numerical data of any sort would tell me what I wanted to find out.

When undertaking qualitative research we are attempting to *'understand the complexities of the social world in which we live and how we go about thinking, acting and making meaning in our lives'* (Ellis, 2003:25). I was under no illusion that the field I was entering would be simple. The teachers, apart from having

differing backgrounds, were likely to have differing attitudes towards the training process. I was being brought in from outside to improve their teaching. It was likely that there would be teachers who did not see the need for any such intervention or even some who resented my presence in the school.

Friedman suggests that *'we be humble in keeping with our ignorance of all that could be known and cultivate a rigour of uncertainty'* (cited in Bradbury and Reason, 2001:347). This was an appropriate stance for me. Having come from a background in ELT, most recently as a CELTA trainer, I would be working with teachers of all disciplines, from Mathematics and Science to Music, Art and Physical Education. I knew that as much as teaching and researching, I would be learning.

3.3 A change of methodology

In August 2007 I joined an international school in Colombo, Sri Lanka as a teacher trainer, having registered as an MPhil/PhD student at the University of Warwick. My intention was to do Action Research into my own practice as a trainer, experimenting with different approaches and recording the effects on the attitudes and classroom practice of the teachers. Action Research has been defined as *'a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes'* (Reason and Bradbury, 2001: 1). It seemed appropriate to my circumstances as it is *'simply an extension of the normal reflective practice of many teachers'* although it is *'slightly more rigorous'*

(Wallace, 1991:56). I was to have access to the classrooms of 56 teachers. If a significant number of them would agree to allow me to study their practice, I felt that over a period of two years I would be able to chart their progress based on my input in training sessions and feedback on lesson observations. This started well and almost half the teachers signed a consent form to allow me to use data on them in my research. The initial observations showed weaknesses that I felt I would be able to address both through training sessions and on an individual basis. In addition to training sessions and individual observation/feedback sessions, I initiated a number of action research cycles. These included teaching Spanish lessons to language teachers to model best practice, team teaching, peer observation and taking on classes of my own while using an 'open door' policy.

By my second term, however, it had become apparent that the situation in the school was such that continuing with my plan would be impossible. I had originally planned to spend at least two years studying the teachers' progress: this necessitated both me and the teachers I was studying continuing to work at the school. It also required the teachers to continue to be reasonably enthusiastic about the professional development process and willing to participate in my research. Neither of these appeared likely and I was increasingly unsure of my own position in the school. As a researcher I was faced with a difficult decision: give up or make radical changes. It was a frustrating position to be in: I was in a very interesting situation and had already collected rich data. I had read widely about Action Research and put a lot of effort into the various activities I was using with the teachers. My supervisor also

felt that I was in a very interesting place to collect useful data and did not want me to give up. He suggested some alternative approaches and the word 'autoethnography' came up. I began reading everything I could find on it and soon decided to give it a try. My first narrative account tells the story of how I made the change from one approach to another.

3.4 Ethics

As autoethnography has the self as the main focus of the study, it may seem that ethical issues are of less significance than in other types of study. The main source of data is my own narrative account, written in the first person: it is my story.

However, in reality, ethical issues can be of even greater complexity in autoethnography. There are many others interwoven into my story: those who play a significant role and those mentioned in passing (Chang, 2008:68). Some of these are portrayed in a favourable light; others less so. It is essential to respect the right to privacy of such characters. Some autoethnographers (e.g. Ellis, 2004) use composite characters, new characters made up from the characteristics of several actual characters, to hide the identities of the individuals concerned. I chose not to do this. I agree with Laurel Richardson that *'the power of the story is that it happened to you...if you make a composite character, you lose that power, you've written something different'* (Cited in Ellis, 2004:175). I wanted to tell my story as it actually happened, or rather as it seemed to me at the time of writing. The real names of participants in my account have not been used. They have been referred to

by initials, which are not their own. In addition, the school has not been identified. The nature of an autoethnographic account, however, is that it contains details which would enable someone familiar with the school to identify it. Again, I could have altered key details to avoid this possibility; however, as Dörnyei puts it, *'this can actually go counter to the core striving of qualitative research to capture particularity and context'* (2007:68). Dörnyei points out that there is no blanket solution to this dilemma- rather each case needs to be considered separately and with sensitivity (ibid.). In my case, there were several aspects to doing this. Firstly, as mentioned already, real names have not been used. Secondly, although the narrative is raw and emotional, the reflection on it found in the discussion chapters (Six to Nine) is more balanced, and the points of view of the other participants are considered. Thirdly, I attempted to get feedback from the main character who is portrayed negatively, the Principal. Unfortunately, he did not respond to several requests for such feedback.

Writing about those who do not consent to be written about is, perhaps, the greatest ethical concern of autoethnography. Denzin proposes that ethnographers should *'operate under an ethic of care, solidarity, community, mutuality and civic transformation'* (Ellis, 2004:149). When writing my narrative, I felt deep concern for the teachers who were working under such difficult circumstances in the school; when carrying out my teacher training activities with them, my aim was to empower them by giving them the tools of self improvement. In analyzing my own practice, I have pointed to areas where I now believe my actions to have been flawed, in the

hope that others will learn from them the way I have. I agree with Ellis that we have to be responsible to those we write about but also that in writing about others sometimes the greater good outweighs the harm it might do (2004:145).

The teachers who were interviewed and those whose observed lessons I have described signed a consent form in the customary manner. This form informed them of my original research intention of doing an Action Research project on my own practice. Dörnyei discusses the issue of informed consent and points out that there will always be reasons for withholding certain information from participants (2007:69). In my case, I did not formally let participants know that my research focus had changed slightly. I was still at the centre of the research as I had been at the outset, and the concept of 'autoethnography' seemed an overly complex one to share with them. While I was still at the school I did not myself have a clear view of how the research would evolve. The three participants I interviewed after leaving the school were fully informed of the change in focus and were very happy to participate.

Participants were given the right to withdraw from the research at any time. I communicated with all of them by email after leaving the school, to ensure they had my contact details. None of them expressed any wish for their information to be withdrawn from the study.

3.5 Autoethnography

Autoethnography, as its name would suggest, is a branch of ethnography. Ethnography originated in the field of anthropology and means a description of the way of life of a group of people (Woods, 1986:4). The aim of traditional ethnography is to study the way of life of a group of people from the inside, assuming that there is far more to a way of life than can be seen on the surface. A researcher undertakes a lengthy stay with the group in order to uncover the various layers and be in a position to represent the social reality of the group in its full richness (Woods, 1986:5). According to Van Maanen, ethnography is *'the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others'* (1998: ix). Although the researcher spends a long time in the community studied, and there were occasional reports of a fieldworker 'going native', he or she never really becomes a member in the same sense that those 'naturally' in the setting are members (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995:4). If we consider the early ethnographic studies within Sociology and Anthropology, it is easy to see why there is a clear distinction between researcher and researched. Foote Whyte's classic, *Street Corner Society*, for example, portrays the social world of gangs in an Italian American slum in the late 1930's. As Foote Whyte himself puts it, *'Respectable people have access to a limited body of information upon Cornerville'* (1993: xv) He goes on to point out that the 'information' such people do have is often inaccurate:

The middle –class person looks upon the slum district as a formidable mass of confusion, a social chaos. The insider finds in Cornerville a highly organized and integrated social system...

(1993: xvi)

Foote Whyte undertook this project because of his concern with the people he studied, and his writing had a lasting impact on the way poverty is understood. It also set a standard for both methodology (participant observation) and writing style (vividly detailed narratives) for ethnographic work. When Foote Whyte left 'Cornerville', he said he *'had never felt as much as though I were leaving home'* (1993:342). Nevertheless, he remained an outsider. He was an academic employed by Harvard University; the people he studied were members of street gangs. Foote Whyte wrote of his struggles to remain an objective outsider, occasionally finding himself taking a stance or trying to influence outcomes of events (1993:336-7). However, he continues to feel that it is not his role to do so.

Traditional ethnography, then, is based on detailed observation of a group and/or individuals within that group by an observer who spends time with the members but stops short of becoming one of them. The aim of studying one particular group is not simply to learn about that group, but to be able to generalise to wider society. As Van Maanen puts it, *'ethnography is...highly particular and hauntingly personal, yet it serves as the basis for grand comparison and understanding within and across a society.'* (1998:ix)

Hammersley points out that the approach to data collection in ethnography is ‘unstructured’ with no pre-decided categories: rather, data collected are ‘*in as raw a form, and on as wide a front as feasible*’. Ethnographers study people’s behaviour in everyday contexts rather than experimental conditions set up by the researcher, and such studies are usually small scale, sometimes even being based on a single individual. Hammersley adds that interpretation of the data collected usually takes the form of descriptions and explanations rather than statistical analysis, though the latter might play a minor role (1990:1).

According to Denzin, the difference between traditional ethnography and autoethnography is that in autoethnography the writer does not adopt the ‘objective outsider’ convention (Reed-Danahay, 1997:6). One key feature of the postmodern period is the growing acceptance of the individual in research (Muncey,2010:xii). According to Muncey, during this period:

provocative modes of discourse, writing and criticism have led to the abandonment of the search for facts and truths, challenging traditional boundaries between art and science...
(2010:95)

In fact, autoethnography can be seen as a research approach that ‘privileges the individual’ (Muncey, 2010:2). Reed-Danahay points out that we live in a

‘biographical era’ where the need to narrate our own lives is an integral part of the modern self (1997: 11, 99).

Austin and Hickey highlight some of the differences between ethnography and autoethnography. They point out that in ethnography truth is externally verifiable whereas in autoethnography *‘phenomenological constructions of Truth in identity construction feature as a key point of the research process’* (Austin and Hickey, 2007: Section:Features of Ethnography and Autoethnography). In addition, where ethnography includes a range of fieldwork techniques such as participant observation and interviews, autoethnography uses Memory Work and the *‘excavation of artifacts via the remembering of experiences of identity formation’* (ibid.).

It should be noted that autoethnography is different from autobiography and it is important not neglect the ‘ethno’ part of it (Ellis, 2004:200). According to one definition, autoethnography is *‘an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural’* (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739). Ellis points out that it is important that the story indicates what we have in common with others as well as that which is unique to our own story (2004:200). She agrees with Reed-Danahay that by exploring a particular life one hopes to understand a way of life (2004: xvii). She sees autoethnography as having multiple layers of consciousness:

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze: first they look through an ethnographic wide angle lens focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience, then they look inward exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations.

(2004:37)

Reed-Danahay describes the autoethnographer as a ‘boundary-crosser’ (1997:3), and believes that autoethnography ‘foregrounds the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life’ (ibid.). Kreb (1999, cited in Chang, 2008:28) called such boundary-crossers ‘edgewalkers’, describing them as people with good cross-cultural competence who maintained a healthy understanding of self. In autoethnography, the boundary that often has to be negotiated is from participant to researcher, a boundary that is, at times, imperceptible.

Bakhtin emphasises the importance of the small, prosaic events of everyday life, claiming that they can exceed the grand, dramatic or catastrophic ones in importance. His work created interest in the everyday world (Muncey, 2010:34). Autoethnography gives researchers the opportunity to explore mundane events, which had been considered inappropriate areas for research. Law (2003:3) points out that traditional research has been keen to steer clear of ‘messy worlds’ and that, as a result, ‘the complexity of individual experiences gets lost in the wash’ (Muncey, 2010: 28).

Autoethnography goes some way towards rectifying the *'disjunctions that occur between one's own experience and the official narratives set out to explain it'* (Muncey, 2010:10). She agrees with Potter (1996:138) that it is often cases that are deviant in some way which provide the most useful analytical phenomena (2010:5). According to Ellis, we *'need research that reflects peoples' lives not surveys and questionnaires that use irrelevant questions and dubious methods to test somebody's research hypothesis'* (2004:270). Kelly, too, focuses on what is inarticulate and on those whose voices go unheard (Muncey, 2010:19). Chang agrees that autoethnography is part of the postmodern trend of valuing the voices of common people (2008:32). In Sri Lanka we are in a peripheral context (Canagarajah, 1999). We have a system of unregulated international schools staffed by largely untrained teachers. Most of the work which has been published about CPD does not necessarily apply to us as it is based on the assumption of initial teacher training. In that sense my work attempts to bridge the gap between the mainstream work and the reality of our context.

The term autoethnography has been applied to a group of counter-narratives that resist representation by outsiders (Reed-Danahay, 1997:139). According to Muncey autoethnography provides a way for the researcher's vulnerable self could connect the *'practices of social science with the living of life'* (2010:35).

Given the importance of the self in autobiography, we should examine what is currently understood by the self. Muncey points out that our self image is *'a*

combination of whom we see in the mirror and the interaction of our physical, social, psychological and emotional sense of well being in respect of that image (2010:11). Although part of the self interacts with the outside world another part of the self is a *'private inner world of thoughts, feelings and fantasies which we only share if we choose to'*. Autoethnography allows access to that part of the self. However, Neisser refers to the 'oblivious self' and warns that as the self is a reconstruction, different versions of it may be conceived everyday (Muncey, 2010:15). Therefore, the self which is revealed through forms of self writing must be considered as partial. Muncey considers the self *'a process not a structure'* and argues that the *'process of becoming is always in motion'*. In that sense then, *'any evocation of an experience is always incomplete and in transition and at best can only be described as a snapshot'* (2010:23).

Mead (1934), drawing on James' (1890) distinction of I (self as knower) and Me (self as known) and Cooley's (1902) theory of the looking glass self developed an influential theory of self. The self is reflected in the reactions of others, who are the 'looking glass' for oneself. Through being an object to ourselves we can influence other people and act upon and respond to ourselves (Muncey, 2010:12). In this way, the self is continually changing. According to Muncey 'Who am I?' is the ultimate autoethnographic question.

In writing and later analyzing my narrative account, I engaged with the question 'Who am I?' The self I was when writing my diary during the experience and the

narrative soon after evolved into someone quite different by the time of analysis and writing up. From someone completely emotionally involved in the action I changed into someone who was able to look with objectivity at my account and my diary as if it had happened to someone else.

Naturally, autoethnography is not a homogenous entity. Autoethnographic work can be placed on a continuum with the more objective type (Anderson, 2006) at one end and the more subjective (Ellis and Bochner, Denzin) at the other. At this end lies the evocative, more emotionally engaging type of work. As my work deals with emotions and difficult situations, it is towards the evocative end of the spectrum. It is not, however, at the very extreme, since it does not deal with highly personal subject matter. Autoethnographies on bereavement, illness and similar topics are more likely to lie at the extreme end of the continuum.

3.6 Ontology

According to Sigman, ethnography is a *'framework for thinking about the world-holistically and naturalistically-and a way of being in the world as an involved participant'* (cited in Ellis, 2004:26). Autoethnography is part of what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have called the Fifth moment in the history of qualitative research. This is characterised by participatory research and experimental writing. Autoethnographers, in common with many other types of qualitative researchers, see reality as neither fixed nor entirely external but created by and moving with the

changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewer (Duncan, 2004). According to Spry (2001:711) in autoethnography the researcher '*is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns*' (Muncey, 2010:28). In this type of writing and research, the personal is connected to the cultural, placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Researchers use their own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions (Holt, 2003). Since ethnographers '*share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it*' (Schwandt, 1994, cited in Richards, 2003: 38) they typically situate themselves within the Constructivist paradigm. They see people as individuals with biographies who create meanings from events and interactions within particular contexts (ibid.). It is also possible for ethnographers, including autoethnographers to operate within the Critical paradigm. Researchers within this paradigm see reality as 'essentially coercive' and the research process therefore must be 'transformative and emancipatory' (Richards, 2003:40). During my research there were certain power structures within the school hierarchy that I wanted to change. In interviews, the teachers often came across as powerless and disenfranchised. As a teacher trainer in the school, I was in a position to question certain practices, if not to completely eradicate them. However, as my overall mission was to understand rather than to change the school, my research can be considered as within the Constructivist or Interpretivist paradigm.

Within this paradigm, I identify myself with the Symbolic Interactionists, with their emphasis on the interaction between group members and the belief that this interaction **forms** human conduct (Blumer, 1969:8- my emphasis). Symbolic interactionism stresses the **meanings** which actors attribute to actions, and sees meanings as *'social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact'* (Blumer, 1969:5-my emphasis). The interpretation of meanings is a formative process in which the actor *'selects, checks, suspends, regroupes and transforms'* (ibid.) the meanings in the light of the situation. Since human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them (Blumer, 1969:2), it is useful to know what those meaning are. In my work, for example, it helped to realise that the **meaning** the professional development programme had for the teachers and how they **interpreted** my presence in the school would affect their actions.

3.7 Epistemology

One characteristic of all ethnographic work is the desire to accommodate the worldview of others, which suits a Postmodern sensitivity, in which no one right form of knowledge exists and multiple viewpoints are valid (Duncan, 2004). In autoethnography, according to Denzin, the important characteristic is that the writer does not adopt the 'objective outsider' stance of more traditional ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997:6). Rather, the assumption is that including the subjective and emotional reflections of the researcher is a positive way of adding context and

'layers' to the story (Ellis,2004:62). The 'lifeworld' and internal decision making of the researcher are considered valid and noteworthy (Duncan, 2004). As far back as 1958, Polyani wrote of the impossibility of removing the passion and commitment of the observer, feeling that they were essential to experiencing and investigating the world (Duncan, 2004). Laslett believes that the autoethnographers' vantage from the intersection of the personal and societal enables them to offer a unique contribution to social science (1999, cited in Wall, 2008:39).

Autoethnography values a variety of ways of knowing and inquiring (Wall, 2008:39), including documenting the moment-to-moment concrete details of a life (Ellis, 2004: xvii). Ellis also sees writing as a way of knowing (2004:171). She echoes Richardson, who claims '*How we are expected to write affects what we can write about*' (2000:171). This accounts for the emphasis on alternative ways of representing knowledge in autoethnography or, as Bochner and Ellis put it, '*a desire to break down the walls between social science and literature*' (1996:9).

Tierney, too, believes that autoethnography challenges dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim representational spaces (1998, cited in Holt,2003). Kelley suggests that 'nuggets of truth do not lie out there waiting to be discovered (1970:1): rather, it is negotiated and contested, provisional and subject to revision (Muncey, 2010:19).

3.8 Silencing the critics

As an unconventional research method, autoethnography has naturally come in for criticism. Of these, the most common is that autoethnography is narcissistic and self-indulgent. Critics believe that putting oneself at the centre of one's research is ego-centric and that such texts fall short of the standards of validity expected of academic endeavour. In response to this autoethnographers emphasize that choosing to foreground one's own voice does not diminish the value of the work. Ellis and Bochner, for example, point out that it is possible to learn about the general from the particular and that the self is a social phenomenon (2002:216). They call autoethnography 'vital intellectual work'. Others too emphasize that autoethnography is not easy and is not something that can be done by everyone (Muncey, 2010:35). Telling a story so that it captures the imagination of the reader is difficult and telling the whole truth is 'not for the faint-hearted' (Muncey, 2010:94). Autoethnography requires 'courage, self-insight and an ability to articulate feelings' (Ellis, 2004:296). In Ellis' experience it is a form of research that women take to more than men (2004:339).

Sparkes blames the common criticism of self-indulgence on a '*deep mistrust of the worth of the self*'. He argues that autoethnographies can encourage '*acts of witnessing, empathy and connection that extend beyond the self or the author and contribute to sociological understanding in ways that are...selfknowing, self-respectful, self-sacrificing and self-luminous*' (Muncey, 2010:93).

The criticism that autoethnography is overly concerned with the self must be answered by pointing out that the self is an extension of a community rather than a self-sufficient being. This means that by analysing the self we are extending our understanding of culture and society. As Chang argues, '*the study of self-narratives through self-reflection is beneficial to cultural understanding*' (2008:34).

Some critics are concerned that the blurred relationships between the researcher and researched may lead to problems with reliability and validity (Borbasi, 1994).

Although traditional criteria for evaluating validity may not apply to most autoethnographic work, researchers such as Bochner, Richardson and Sparkes have generated new criteria which can be used to evaluate this type of research. We will consider these in the next section.

It has been argued that an insider does not necessarily offer an unchallengeable 'truth', and that insiders may be blind to certain assumptions about social action that are 'the hazards of intimate familiarity' (Hayano, 1979:102, cited in Muncey, 2010:33). Autoethnographers tend to be more aware of this than anyone. As Ellis points out, the truth is that we can never fully capture experience (2004:116). One of the standards of judging an autoethnographic text is whether all stakeholders' views are represented in the text (2004:124).

Some of the criticisms levelled against autoethnography can be justified; therefore, it is essential for the autoethnographer to beware of certain pitfalls. Chang highlights some of them:

- 1) Excessive focus on self in isolation from others
- 2) Overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation
- 3) Exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source
- 4) Negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self narratives
- 5) Inappropriate application of the label 'autoethnography'

Chang also points out that multiple sources of data can allow for triangulation, thus increasing the accuracy and validity of the writing (2008:55). I see my own autoethnographic account as only part of the picture. Interviews with teachers provide a different perspective on many of the events which took place. In addition, in my analysis I have considered my narrative account from a different perspective: myself, the researcher, looking back over a period of two years from when the events took place.

Autoethnography has several other advantages. As an insider, the researcher is more likely to have a full awareness of the history behind the research questions (Rudge, 1996, in Muncey, 2010:33). It is reader-friendly as the personal style of writing tends to be engaging for the reader. It is also researcher –friendly as the researcher has easy access to the primary data (themselves) (Chang, 2008: 52). Both reading and writing autoethnography promotes self-reflection and self-examination (Flori-Ruane, 2001, Nash, 2002, cited in Chang, 2008:52). Another positive point is that

'one's unique voicing -complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationships and emotional expressiveness- is honoured' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:14). According to Ellis and Bochner, this gives the reader a sense of the writer *'as a full human being'*.

3.9 Criteria for evaluating autoethnographic work

Clearly, traditional criteria for evaluating research are unlikely to be of much use when evaluating autoethnography. Some researchers have specified criteria which can be used specifically for this purpose. Richardson and Bochner have each spelt out five criteria, which can be compared as follows:

Laurel Richardson (2000)	Art Bochner (2000)
Substantive contribution	A standard of ethical self-consciousness
Aesthetic merit	Structurally complex narratives
Reflexivity	Author's attempt to dig under the superficial to get to vulnerability and honesty
Impact	A moving story
Lived experience	Concrete details

Bochner also adds a 'tale of two selves', which means that the main character should be transformed by the experience in a believable way (Ellis, 2004:254).

Although Bochner has spelt out criteria in this way, he, along with Clough, questions the need for specific criteria as this could signal a move back to ‘methodological policing’ (Ellis, 2000:252). In this he agrees with Ellis who believes that validity means that your work ‘*evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible*’. She suggests applying the following questions to a piece of autoethnography:

Do our stories evoke readers’ responses?

Do they open up the possibility of dialogue, collaboration and relationship?

Do they help us get along with each other?

Do they help us change institutions?

Do they promote social justice and equality?

Do they lead us to think through consequences, values and dilemmas?

(2000:195)

To sum up Ellis’ position, she argues that ‘Good autoethnographic writing is truthful, vulnerable, evocative and therapeutic’ (Ellis, 2000:135).

For Muncey, an autoethnographic account must be ‘plausible and trustworthy’. Like Bochner, she feels that this type of work can be evaluated in terms of a ‘gut reaction’ - an impression that it ‘just makes sense’ (2010:91). She agrees with Sparkes that to judge a piece of writing we should use the literary criteria of

‘coherence, verisimilitude and interest’ (2000:29, cited in Muncey, 2010:94).

Muncey also point that even if an account is embellished or fabricated, it can still be valid for research purposes (2010:43). Angrosino would agree: *‘I think we can count ourselves successful to the extent that we get the reader to stop asking “Did this really happen?” and start saying, “I understand what these characters are going through”’* (Ellis, 2000:331).

For Anderson (2006) the criteria for evaluating autoethnographies are slightly different as he represents the more objective end of the continuum. For him, the autoethnographer:

1. Is a complete member in the social world under study
2. Engages reflexivity to analyse data on self
3. Is visibly and actively present in the text
4. Includes other informants in similar situations in data collection
5. Is committed to theoretical analysis

(Chang, 2008:46)

In Chapter Ten I evaluate my own autoethnographic work in terms of these criteria.

3.10 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative refers to the way people organize their experiences into *‘temporally meaningful episodes’* (Ellis, 2000:195). According to Clandinin and Connelly we

understand the world narratively, and therefore it makes sense to study the world narratively (2000:17). They argue that '*narrative is both the phenomenon and the method of the social sciences*' (2000:18). Ellis points out that narrative can be both a '*mode of reasoning and a mode of representation*' (2000:195). According to Richardson, the narrative mode looks for particular connections between events in contrast to the logico-scientific mode which looks for '*universal truth conditions*' (Ellis, 2000:195). When used to represent reality, narrative uses literary conventions such as a plot, character development and scene setting. Chang points out that educators are increasingly engaging in self-reflective narration and predicts that this interest will continue to grow as teachers face growing cultural diversity in the classroom (2008:38).

Several writers distinguish between narrative and storytelling although there is no universal agreement on how these differ. For Frid et al (2000:695) a narrative is a version of events personally experienced by the narrator while storytelling is telling or reading of a story by those other than the narrator. For Denzin, the narrative is 'a story that tells a sequence of events that are significant for the narrator and his or her audience (1989:37, cited in Muncey,2010:43).

For me, it made sense to narrate the events which happened during my year at the school because it would allow the recipient 'access to the inner story that cannot be told by other more conventional means' (Muncey, 2010:56). I realized that the experience I was having was unique: it is not common for a school to employ a

teacher trainer; it is not usual for a researcher to have access to a group of unqualified teachers teaching academic subjects through English; research such as mine had certainly not been done in Sri Lanka. Therefore, telling my unique story in my own unique voice seemed to be a worthwhile activity. Muncey argues that rather than attempting to 'filter out' your own experience, it is better to acknowledge the link between your research and your life and if possible to build it into your work. According to her, the 'most interesting' path is to make yourself the focus of the study (2010:2).

3.11 Writing the narrative

I wrote the first narrative account, which is approximately 20,000 words, soon after leaving the school. I wrote it fairly quickly over a period of a few weeks, with few revisions. It is an unapologetically subjective narrative which aims to allow the reader access to my experience in the school. It is an autoethnographic account according to the criteria laid down by Ellis:

the author usually writes in the first person making herself or himself the object of research. The narrative text focuses on generalization within a single case extended over time. The text is presented as a story replete with a narrator, characterization and plot line akin to forms of writing associated with the novel or biography....

Their goals include evoking emotional experience in readers, giving voice to stories and groups of people traditionally left out of social

*scientific inquiring, producing writing of high literary/artistic quality
and improving readers' participants and authors' lives...*

(2004:30)

Later, Ellis goes on to claim that good autoethnographic writing is '*truthful, vulnerable, evocative and therapeutic*'. My account is certainly truthful in the sense that I have written the truth as I saw it at that time. Autoethnographers acknowledge that one's own viewpoint is only one way of seeing (Ellis, 2004:287). It is also true that '*memory is not always a friend of autoethnography*' as it '*selects, shapes, limits and distorts the past*' (Chang, 2008: 72). Although I used my diary to help me construct the narrative, it has to be acknowledged that I also relied on memory, which is not always reliable. In my narrative I also made myself vulnerable by admitting to several weaknesses in terms of my own actions and reactions in the story. At the same time, looking back I can see that I also used protective strategies, such as justifying my own actions and promoting the voices of those who agreed with me. Certain sections of the narrative are evocative as they help the reader to imagine what it was actually like to be there. For example, the weather, the background noises and smells are described. Writing the narrative was certainly therapeutic for me. I was badly shaken up by my experiences in the latter part of my time at the school. Although the end had been coming for some time, when it arrived I was not ready for it and was upset by the way I had finally left the school. Writing the narrative helped me to process the experience and understand the way events had been building up to an almost inevitable departure. At the same time I

am aware that in order to be therapeutic it was necessary for me to write the experience with myself as the ‘good guy’. It is only looking back from the perspective of two years later that I am able to appreciate the positions of others in the story and see the account for what it was. In spite of this, the account, I believe, remains useful. It reveals what the experience of trying to train teachers in that school at that time felt like. The difficulties and frustrations are made apparent in a way that would have been difficult through any other type of inquiry. Having analyzed it from my current perspective and in conjunction with the data from interviews as well as emails, letters and my diary, it can make a valuable contribution. The process of doing autoethnography is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

3.12 Interviews

According to Bell (2005:157), one of the main advantages of interviews is their adaptability. Unlike questionnaires, the interview gives the researcher the opportunity to probe and clarify and can reveal information and attitudes that a written response might conceal.

We live in an ‘interview society’ (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, Richards, 2003, Dörnyei, 2007). This means that the interview genre is usually shared cultural knowledge. People are aware of the etiquette, expected participant roles, turn-taking conventions and even certain linguistic phrases used in interviews (Miller and

Crabtree, 1999, cited in Dörnyei, 2007:134). Researchers differ as to whether they consider this a positive or negative situation. Dörnyei, for example believes, '*It is exactly because interviewing is a known communication routine that the method works so well as a versatile research instrument*' (ibid.). The familiarity of the interview, however, can make it easy for both interviewer and interviewed to 'play a part'; resulting in data that is less than the 'pure' resource it purports to be (Richards, 2003:8).

According to Kvale, 'interviewing is a craft but one that rests in the researcher's judgement rather than following 'content and context-free rules of method' (1996, cited in Richards, 2003:51). I read this early in my research but it was not until I had completed my data collection that I understood it. Having been trained as an IELTS interviewer and to recruit trainee teachers, my approach to interviewing was to construct strict rules which had to be adhered to. Looking back, I can see a progression in my interviewing style as well as the way I defined and perceived interviews. At the beginning, I wrote a list of questions with potential follow up questions, made an appointment with a teacher and recorded and transcribed the interview. This kind of interview has been called 'formal', 'direct' or 'structured' (Chang, 2008:104) or semi-structured (Bell, 2005:159). Within this kind of interview format, I used a range of techniques, such as beginning with 'grand tour' questions, such as 'Could you tell me about your teaching in the school?', and progressing to 'mini tour' questions' seeking more detailed information (Spradley,

1979, Chang, 2008). I learnt as much as I could about interviewing in order to make my interviews as effective as possible.

Patton (2002, cited in Dörnyei, 2007:137-8) highlighted six main question types that it is possible to ask on any topic. These focus on:

- a) experiences and behaviours
- b) opinions and values
- c) feelings
- d) knowledge
- e) sensory information
- f) background or demographic information

Dörnyei also highlights the importance of the first few questions for setting the tone and creating rapport and the final question for eliciting important information that has not yet been volunteered (ibid.). He further provides useful advice on using 'probes' to increase the richness and depth of the responses (ibid.) and using different types of feedback and reinforcement (2007:142-143).

Although I worked to improve my interviewing skills through reading a range of authors who offer excellent advice, I was aware of Richards' warning that a good interview *'doesn't rest simply on the mastery of a range of different techniques...it calls for a sensitivity on the part of the interviewer that can be developed only*

through time and honest self-evaluation' (2003:58). In keeping with my reflexive approach to the entire study, I monitored my own performance as an interviewer and developed my technique. I also began to have a broader definition of what an interview was. In common with most researchers, I had begun to find formal, structured interviews time-consuming (Bell, 2005:157). While most of the teachers I worked with were prepared to give me one interview, I was reluctant to encroach upon their time by asking for a series of interviews, even when, having listened to the original interview I felt that a follow-up would be useful. At the same time, I was working with these teachers on a daily basis, and we regularly chatted over coffee in the staff room or discussed issues in workshops, in lesson feedback or just in the corridors. I began to feel that these opportunities to find out about the teachers' experiences and attitudes were being lost. It was liberating, then, to gradually start thinking of these exchanges as interviews. Just because the tape recorder was not running and I did not have a list of questions in front of me, the valuable data that emerged did not have to be wasted. According to Richards, *'talk becomes an interview when the researcher designs their contribution to elicit responses focused on a particular topic'* (2003:51). If we accept this definition, there is no reason why this should not happen informally as much as in more structured interview settings.

Another major issue that researchers need to consider when conducting interviews is the whole area of neutrality. Traditionally, bias has been seen as the enemy and researchers have been offered advice on how to avoid it (e.g. Bell, 2005:166-7). For

Dörnyei, neutrality means creating a space for interviewees to share their experience freely whatever the content (2007:141). As well as avoiding bias oneself, he claims we as interviewers must create an environment that encourages sharing even 'socially less-than-desirable' information or attitudes (ibid.). While it is inarguable that we should not influence the responses of interviewees, the issue of interviewer 'bias' is more debateable. Some argue that it is impossible to avoid bias and that we should acknowledge and work with our bias. The very fact that we are researching a particular topic means that we are likely to have strong views on it. Therefore, some promote 'emphatic interviewing', in which the interviewer takes a stance. Fontana and Frey (2005), for example, see interviewing as a co-constructed social exchange in which it is not possible to avoid taking a stance (Dörnyei,2007:141). It can be particularly helpful in a situation where the topic is sensitive and it can help for the interviewer to be perceived as an ally.

From an autoethnographic perspective, the researcher does not aspire to be neutral since he or she is an active participant in the research. Chang suggests that interviews are not a method commonly associated with autoethnography, due to its focus on the researcher's own life (2008:106). I would disagree with this generalization, since we study how we live our lives in conjunction with others in a social context, and interviews are a good way of gaining understanding of that context and our co-participants. However, it is true that interviewing takes on a slightly different flavour in autoethnography. Kiesinger, Tillmann-Healy and Ellis call this 'interactive interviewing' and define it as an interview in which all those

participating act as both researchers and research participants (Ellis, 2004: 64). According to Ellis, this approach is most useful when all participants have had experience of the topic under discussion and is particularly suitable when researching personal or emotive topics that benefit from reciprocity and building of trust (ibid.). As I progressed in my study, this approach came to be more and more appropriate. In interviews, teachers often spoke to me of feelings of being undervalued, frustration at not being able to do their jobs as they would like, and even a desire to leave the school. As an employee in the school, I could relate to these feelings and interviews increasingly became a process of sharing our feelings and experiences. As I read more on autoethnographic methods, I became more comfortable with this as a valid approach to my research, and I stopped differentiating between such conversations and more formal 'interviews'. All my interactions with teachers became a form of interactive interview.

Peterson and Langellier point out that context and power relationships are important considerations in interview situations (Ellis, 2004:61). As teacher trainer I was in a position of authority over most of my interviewees. Although I encouraged them to see me as a researcher rather than the teacher trainer in that context, I must accept that in several cases this power imbalance would have had an impact on the content of the interview.

I acknowledge, too, that the interviews I conducted while I was at the school lack a clear objective. I was still observing classes and keeping a diary; I had not yet

written my autoethnographic account. There is a discrepancy between the questions I asked and what, with hindsight, I needed to know. For example I asked questions which attempted to elicit feedback on the professional development process:

Now we're coming to the end of the academic year and the training programme so I just wanted to get some of your impressions about how it's gone and your reflections at this point.

(Interview with German teacher, on 25/05/08)

When we think about PD, does that have an important role in your professional life?

(Interview with History teacher, on 26/11/07)

In spite of this, several interviews which took place while I was still at school yielded useful data. These are valuable as they reveal what teachers actually wanted to talk about rather than being directed by the interviewer. Several interviews were conducted after I left the school and these are much more focused: I was interested in finding out what had gone wrong and why.

It should be noted that the teachers who were interviewed do not necessarily represent the full teaching cadre. I had the opportunity to interview mainly teachers who were particularly interested in the professional development programme. These teachers tended to speak to me on a regular basis about their teaching and learning and a rapport developed between us. Those I spoke to after leaving the school were long term teachers who were especially frustrated with life in the school and keen to

talk about it. In that sense, the interviews cannot be said to be representative of the teaching staff as a whole.

3.13 Observation

I was a part of the everyday life of the school and in that sense I was observing what was going on in the school all the time. To record my impressions I kept a diary for most of the year. The notes I made cannot be considered as field notes as they contain subjective and emotional responses to events I witnessed and experienced.

3.13.1 Classroom observation

Until my research changed in focus, my main source of data was to be classroom observations of teachers. These were undertaken as part of my normal duties as Teacher Trainer. There were 3 main types of observations in the school:

- 1) Formal observations
- 2) Informal observations
- 3) 'Drop-ins'

These were decided on within the Professional Development Team, which consisted of the Principal, Deputy-Principal (Academic), Professional Development Coordinator and myself as Teacher Trainer. Formal observations were to take place

once or twice a year, the second being contingent on the outcome of the first, that is, less experienced or proficient teachers or those whose first observation had not gone well were to be observed a second time. Formal observations would require a lesson plan and all materials for the lesson to be submitted to the observer 24 hours in advance. They would last an hour and the teacher would be required to fill in a reflection form with his or her impressions of the lesson. A face-to-face feedback session would take place one to three days later in which the emphasis would be on the teacher reflecting on his or her lesson with the observer guiding him or her with questions, and finally pointing out strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. After the meeting, the formal observation report form would be completed and filed. The report form was a combination of tick box and comments with space for the teacher's comments at the end.

Teachers were told at the beginning of term the week in which their formal observation would take place and could usually choose the day, time and class of their observation. Informal observations usually took place before a teacher's first formal observation in order for them to get acquainted with the process before the more onerous formal observation. The approach to feedback was less rigid with most teachers being given brief written comments as well as oral feedback though they could request to have just one or the other. No lesson plan was required. An informal observation could also take place on the teacher's request or if there was some special reason, such as a complaint from a parent or student.

'Drop ins' are a rather controversial topic. I was in principle not in favour of coming into a teacher's classroom unannounced. Having worked for most of my career at British Council Colombo, where such intrusions were considered almost unethical, it was one of the Team's decisions I found hard to accept. I cannot deny, however, that from a researcher's point of view, I saw it as a delightful opportunity to see what was really going on in the school.

While these were the accepted methods of observing and recording data on classroom teaching in the school, I also had to consider how to approach observations for research purposes. The main issue was an ethical one. While I had free access to the classrooms of 52 teachers, I could only use data from those who had signed permission forms. I also had to be careful not to spend more time with those who had signed than with those who hadn't. There was a very thin line between my work-related duties and my data collection as a researcher at this point. There were teachers who had not signed who were interesting from a research perspective, and I had to be careful to avoid pressurising them. I deliberately spoke very little about my research at work, although it was always foremost in my mind. When I initially gave my permission forms to the teachers, I handed them over personally and explained my purposes. I always gave them time to read the form and consider whether or not they were willing to sign. Interestingly, all the foreign (British and French) teachers signed immediately, as did a few of the Sri Lankans. After giving the others a few days, I approached them again and often found that the form lay forgotten on their desks. Most then read it quickly and signed, with or

without asking questions. The difficulty lay in those who asked, at that point, for a few more days. Culturally, Sri Lankans are unlikely to give an outright refusal to a request, so it was unclear whether they were unwilling to sign or actually wanted more time. I was reluctant to ask more than once more for fear of being seen as intrusive.

Overall I collected 43 formal observation reports, – informal observation reports and reports on drop ins. In the end, these did not play a significant role in my research, though the observation reports on one teacher were used in Vignette One.

3.14 Analysis

According to Coffey, *'analysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques: it is imaginative, artful, flexible and reflexive. It should also be methodical, scholarly and intellectually rigorous'* (1996:10). Undertaking analysis of one's data, then, is arguably the most challenging part of the project. Ely (1991:87) feels that it is like a *'simultaneous left-brain right-brain exercise'* in that it is both creative and methodical.

Although analysis can be seen as a distinct stage in the research process, it is also something that is happening, in one form or another, throughout the whole research process' (Richards, 2003: 268). As soon as data has been collected we naturally start trying to analyse it, and as Coffey points out, *'analysis is inseparable from*

writing and strategies of representation' (1996:23). This very much mirrored my own experience.

3.14.1 Analysis of interviews

In this section, I give a brief summary of the process of analysis that I went through before deciding to present my findings through vignettes. This is to give the reader an idea of the process that I went through in deciding how to represent my work.

I began my analysis with my interviews. My first strategy was to use 'open coding', which is '*the process of breaking down the data for the purpose of categorising, conceptualising and comparing*' (Richards, 2003:276). I read through the interview quickly, writing key words or phrases in the margin. Sometimes these would be summaries of the text and other times ideas that occurred to me as I read. According to Richards, '*the aim here is not to produce a set of categories but to generate a set of labels from which categories can be derived*' (2003:273). After an initial fast-paced coding, I read through each interview more slowly and carefully, adding more labels. Although it is not essential to code one's entire data set in this way, in my case, my set was relatively small, so I decided to use open coding on all my interviews. Altogether 87 separate labels emerged from this process. These included 'favouritism', 'school as business' and 'resources'.

At the second stage of the coding process we want to '*go beyond a mere descriptive labelling of the relevant data segments*' (Dörnyei, 2007:252) and notice patterns and connections between different parts of the data. When looking at all the accounts we have coded we will inevitably find closely- related labels which can be joined into one broader category. In the light of our new list of categories we might want to recode some data. We can also create hierarchies at this stage to show how categories relate to each other. At this stage, I worked with the long list of themes which had emerged from my initial coding of the interview data. I wrote each theme on a small piece of paper and laid them out on the floor. I then moved them around attempting to categorise them under broad headings such as 'teachers', 'management' and 'professional development'. These were further subdivided, for example under 'teachers' came 'emotions and feelings' and 'positive aspects'. Although these were not final categories the process of sorting them in this way helped me to think about the data and see them in new ways. I typed up my initial categorisation for future reference, and decided to take a break from my data. I was aware that the process of analysis is complex and that my own natural urge to 'get on' and start writing was a potential threat. After several weeks, I returned to my set of labels and tried to organise them again without reference to my initial categorization. At this stage, I felt that though there were useful themes emerging, but they were somewhat decontextualised. I decided to return to the original interviews and read them again, this time taking into account their chronology. Although my analysis was not complete, I was already thinking about ways of representing the data, and it was starting to seem logical to present it as the story of

my year in the school, starting at the beginning of the academic year and finishing at the end. It was therefore important to be aware of **when** events which caused certain reactions in teachers occurred. At this point it was important to analyse my narrative account in terms of the interviews. I read through the account carefully and matched key themes or events to sections of the interviews where there was an intersection. This was initially done by using the cut and paste function in Word.

At the final or 'selective' stage of coding '*a central category (or explanatory concept) is identified, in terms of which other categories can be refined and integrated*' (Richards, 2003:277). I decided that the overall concept was my gradual realization that the situation in the school was deteriorating to the point where the teacher training programme was untenable. Although I had many quotations signalling the declining situation at the school, they were insufficient to create a coherent picture of the situation. It was at this point that I decided to represent my work through autoethnography. I would be able to give a full account of a whole situation and interview data would be a useful secondary source. My challenge was to tell this story in a way that was as unbiased as possible, allowing the voices of the teachers to be heard. A major difficulty was that one of the major actors in the story, the Principal, had declined to take part in the research, both while I was at the school and after I left. I sent my completed narrative to him by email and when there was no reply, sent it by post. I never received a reply. An important part of my analysis then was to stand back and try to see the situation from his perspective. This was particularly challenging as, at the time I had seen him as one of the main causes of

problems in the school. I had had interactions with teachers who were generally speaking 'anti' the Principal, which tended to confirm my own negative opinions. This situation was a potential threat to my research. Although I acknowledge that it would have been preferable to have had the Principal's voice in my research, the next best option was to make a genuine effort to understand his views and motivations. My attempts to do so are described in chapters eight and ten.

3.14.2 Analyzing the narrative accounts

Alongside the analysis of the interviews I undertook the analysis of my own autoethnographic account of the year spent in the school. One of the features that distinguishes autoethnography from autobiography and other forms of self-narrative is its willingness to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008:43). Two years passed between writing the narrative, just after I left the school and analyzing it. During those two years I had moved on in my professional life. I had spent two years as Director of English for Academic Purposes in an institute of higher education and become Examiner Trainer for IELTS at the British Council. Both of these roles were free from the emotional intensity of my year at the school. I had just been appointed Principal of a small international school and was preparing for the challenge of taking on that role. I was able to look back at my highly emotional account with detachment. The self I had become was very different from the one I had been at the time and I felt genuinely able to examine my text dispassionately. I was able to read the text as if it had been written by someone else,

considering the other points of view and noting where the language chosen was loaded with additional meanings. This process formed part of my analysis and preparation for telling the same story from a more neutral perspective.

3.14.3 Analysis of classroom observation data

An important part of this story is to understand why a teacher trainer was appointed to the school in the first place. By analyzing the data from the formal observations and drop ins we understand the need for an intensive training programme like the one I conducted. As a 'way in' to the data, I began by highlighting the text I had written on the formal observation reports in different colours according to whether the comment was positive, negative, neutral or a recommendation. The comments were clearly subjective but were based on criteria for lesson observations agreed on by the members of the Professional Development team. I then counted the number of lines of text written for each of the sections of the report. This information mostly revealed my own priorities in terms of professional development. I should stress that the process of numerically evaluating text was a way of understanding the data better rather than part of the final analysis. The numerical data was useful in ascertaining such information as which teachers had the most positive and negative comments and which subject groups ranked highest and lowest in terms of different criteria.

I then analyzed the comments made on formal observations much in the way I handled the interviews. I read them through noting key points in the margin. I then made a list of the most frequently occurring points. As Delamont suggests, when doing qualitative analysis we should be looking for '*patterns, themes and regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities*'. (Cited in Coffey, 1996:47). I was not, therefore, only interested in the most common comments but those which in some way stuck out as being remarkable in some way. For example, although most teachers had good rapport with their students, the exceptions were somewhat shocking and clearly worthy of mention.

3.14.4 From analysis to representation

Having generated a list of themes based on my first narrative account and interviews (appendix 1) I attempted to categorise these under broad headings (appendix 2). The first and most obvious 'Global theme' (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was Management or Leadership. Under this heading were several 'Basic themes' (ibid.), varying from rewards and recognition, ethics and discrimination to school as business and 'factory mentality'. The number of Basic themes which came under the heading of Management or Leadership, extracted both from the interviews and the first narrative made it clear to me that I needed to explore this theme. The dominance of this theme made it an obvious choice as a Chapter heading (Chapter Eight).

The other three ‘Organising themes’ at this stage were School, Teachers and Professional Development. Working through the first two enabled me to identify Basic themes like loss of purpose, lowering of standards, low morale, sadness and isolation. Following standard practice in thematic analysis, where the objective is to summarize particular themes in order to create larger, unifying themes that condense the concepts and ideas mentioned at a lower level (Attride-Stirling 2001:393).

Analysing my narrative accounts alongside my interview data I attempted to identify cross-cutting themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). By this I mean both themes that cut across the Organising themes and those that cut across my different types of data.

The most prominent cross-cutting theme was Culture. Each of the Organising themes contained sub-themes which could also be categorized under Culture. For example, under Professional Development were the sub-themes of ‘teacher roles’ and ‘need more time for sharing’. Under the Organising theme of Teachers were ‘factory mentality’, ‘shock’ and ‘lack of ownership’. Themes from the interviews, such as low morale and isolation were linked to the prevailing culture of the school, while the first narrative clearly told the story of a school whose culture was making it difficult for progress to be made. This theme seemed dominant enough to merit a chapter of its own.

Although teacher development was no longer the central theme of my work, it was still the basis on which everything else rested, and the theme of at least the first half of my first narrative. I had also generated a list of themes related to my ‘drop in’s or unplanned classroom observations. These had been categorized into Organising

themes such as atmosphere, teaching skills and classroom management (appendix 3). Much of my first narrative deals with the process of trying to develop the teaching skills of the teachers at Bellwood school. Being a teacher trainer based in school with largely untrained teachers was a fairly innovative concept, and I did not want to discount this part of my work. I, therefore, felt that a chapter should be devoted to discussion of my teacher training work.

The final discussion chapter, Parents and Community was chosen as there had been several items in the original list of themes that did not fit in with the others, including Parents Concerns and Wider Context. The death of a teacher incident was the most significant in narrative 2, and while it could have been covered under Culture, I felt it provided an ideal opportunity to explore the important area of links with parents and the local community.

3.14.5 Decision to use Vignettes

It eventually became apparent that there were certain incidents which had happened during the period of research which I wanted to highlight as being particularly significant and I decided to use a series of vignettes to do so. One use of vignettes is to '*summarise a particular theme or issue in analysis and interpretation*' (Ely et al., cited in Spalding and Philips, 2007: 955). I chose these incidents because they were in some ways representative of certain themes or issues which had emerged as significant. For example, the incident of a parent objecting to the school closure to

mark the death of a teacher was typical of the conflict that existed between local and international cultures in the school. Taken as a whole, the vignettes bring out some of the key themes I identified through my analysis. At first I planned to present all the vignettes in a separate chapter, but during the process of revision it became apparent that a clearer representation would be achieved by linking each vignette with a section of analysis. I thus decided to present my discussion as four chapters, one for each theme, and each one containing one or two relevant vignettes.

3.15 A note on style

As an autoethnographic text, the writing style of the thesis switches between the academic and the narrative. While Chapters One to Three are academic in style and Four and Five are narrative, the discussion Chapters, Six to Nine draw on both styles. While much of the writing in these chapters is academic, there are parts where a more narrative style seemed more appropriate. It is also a feature of the vignettes that there is some repetition of text from the narrative accounts. This is intended to aid the reader in following the story without the need to revisit the narratives.

3.16 Conclusion

According to Mykhalovskiy, '*to write about the self is to write about social experience*' (Ellis, 2004:34). Acknowledging that my autoethnographic account is

and can only ever be one version of the truth I have attempted to extend the view provided by it through analysis of interviews and other data. Still the view is obscured by the absence of the input of all stakeholders. Nevertheless, I offer this picture of a school attempting to better itself in difficult circumstances.

Chapter 4 - First Narrative Account: Teacher Trainer

As I'm sitting at my computer I think back to a conversation I had a few days earlier at a friend's party. Another friend had suggested I contact one of the international schools to offer my services. It was a possibility of course but they didn't pay well and after 16 years at the British Council, joining a mainstream school was not really part of the plan. But what was the plan? I didn't know anymore.

Why not?' I wonder, suddenly, thinking I had nothing to lose. I look up the school's email address and whizz off a note to accompany my CV. 'I am a CELTA trainer and would be willing to do some teacher workshops at your school'. I press 'send' and forget about it. A few hours later an error message appears in my inbox. 'Message undeliverable'. 'Well, that's that' I think, not interested enough to try again.

Weeks later, I receive a call from the school secretary asking me to come in and meet the principal. I don't believe in things being 'meant to be' but it seems strange, given that the message was supposed to have been 'undeliverable'. Without great enthusiasm, I put on the only dress I own and drive the short distance to the school. I am kept waiting in the huge internal courtyard around which the school is constructed. It is break time and children of all ages in grey and white uniforms sit at picnic tables eating or queue up at the counter where food and drinks are served. A bell rings and teachers start shouting for students to get to class.

'Mr KH will see you now' the receptionist smiles at me. 'This way, please'.

I follow her a short distance to an air-conditioned office, which feels deliciously cool after the stifling heat of the courtyard. A middle aged white man, dressed, in spite of the tropical heat, in a plain grey suit and tie holds out his hand. 'I'm KH', he says, unsmilingly. 'Come in'.

Sitting on the plush black leather sofa in his office, I find myself selling my wares with an enthusiasm that somehow returns instantly after my months of leisure-induced stupor.

'Teachers talk too much', I announce, 'Quite often they don't know what else to do. That is what they have experienced at school and university themselves. That is what they feel they are paid to do. Children get bored and teachers don't seem to realise that that is normal. They misbehave because they have nothing to do. Teachers get angry and think they are trying to be difficult. There is a breakdown of the relationship and no one enjoys the process of learning'.

'So what's the solution?' asks Mr KH, stretching his arms and folding them behind his head in a gesture that is to become familiar to me in the coming months. He is beginning to look interested.

'Training,' I reply, without missing a beat. 'We have to give them alternatives to just lecturing all the time. Teachers need a full arsenal, a full range of activities and techniques in their repertoire so that children are active and don't get bored. Being

active not only keeps them interested, it also helps them internalise what they are learning. For example, if you ask a student to give a presentation on a topic, or peer teach what he has learnt to another student, he is much more likely to remember it than if he just listens to the teacher’.

‘Most of the teachers here haven’t had any training.’ Mr KH points out. ‘They are well qualified in their subjects but have little idea how to get their knowledge across to students’.

‘Well, my workshops could give them lots of ideas.’

‘Yes, I’m interested in workshops but it has to go beyond that’. How can we make sure that they implement what they learn?

‘Well, that’s more difficult’ I respond. ‘I suppose the answer is motivation. You have to go beyond the superficial level of *training*- teaching them specific games, techniques or activities – to *education*- getting them to understand why it is important to do things in a certain way. That being active in class actually helps students to learn. Physical activity can aid the memorization process, for example. It is not just about having fun. Though that is important too. If children enjoy learning, they will definitely take more out of it’.

‘Yes, that’s true, but when I walk around the halls during lesson times, teachers look so inactive. They’re usually sitting behind their desks and talking or the children are working alone.’

‘Well, you could have observations. Are your teachers observed regularly?’

‘No. I have dropped into a few classes but there have not been any formal observations since I got here a year ago. Or even for quite a few years before that, as far as I can tell’

‘That’s one solution then. Set up regular observations by senior staff and also peer observations. Get them to sit in on each others’ classes.’

‘I’m sure that would be very unpopular’.

‘Not necessarily. It depends how you sell it to them. You’d need to set up a training session on the benefits of observations. It helps everyone think about what they should ideally be doing. You’d need some observation criteria- what you’re hoping to see in each lesson-for them to measure their teaching against. Some teachers might need to be taught how to do a lesson plan- that’s another session. It’s important that they see the positive side – the benefits for their teaching and their career too since observation reports can be used as the basis for annual evaluations and references.’

‘All the things you’re suggesting really need to be done. Would you consider joining us full time for the next academic year?’

So, that’s how it began. An offer is made. It is ridiculously small compared to what I was earning at the British Council. I reject it. Another offer is made. It is still much less than I hoped for. However, in the intervening weeks, I’ve had an idea. Is this my long-awaited chance to do a PhD? I’d hopefully have access to lots of data. A big part of my job would be observing teachers and giving feedback. These were teachers who were largely unqualified, teaching an academic subject they knew well through English, their second or even third language. There were language teachers as well as teachers of many other subjects. Surely there is potential here.

Then, flicking through the Teacher Trainer one day, I see an advert for PhDs and EdDs at Warwick. I send an email and get a surprisingly quick and positive response from one of the lecturers, encouraging me to apply. Things seem to be falling into place. By the time I start work as the Teacher Trainer at Bellwood school, I am also a PhD student at Warwick.

August arrives and it’s my first day. The academic year will start with a 3 day training programme at which I am to give 4 sessions. These have taken me several weeks to prepare. First impressions are going to be important and I want to come across as friendly, approachable, inclusive, open-minded, and knowledgeable. I

want the sessions to be interactive and fun, providing new knowledge and transferable activities that the teachers can use in their classrooms.

I have to find subject matter which is going to interest everyone, whatever their experience or subject. These weeks are spent reflecting on what I have to offer. I am an English Language teacher and a CELTA trainer. I have not been inside a secondary school since I left my own run down, former secondary-modern comprehensive 24 years ago. Do I really have anything to offer these people? At times my stomach twists with apprehension. But then I remember the principal's concerns that the teachers are inactive and talk too much. After 20 years in ELT my TTT is well under control and my repertoire of activities impressively broad. The doubts remain though as I settle down to work.

I decide to call my first session 'Introduction to Professional Development'. I base it on an article called 'Meaningful Professional Development' by Natasha Mohammed, which sets out in a clear, concise way some of the 'ideals' of a PD programme. I decide to make it a model reading lesson. There will be pre, during and post tasks and opportunities to use different reading styles. The participants will bring their own ideas to the text, have group discussions and get out their seats for a 'mingle'. In many ways it is a classic ELT training session, but one that will give teachers a chance to think about the programme we are beginning together and a chance for me to get to know them. It will also provide a few new techniques for them to use in their classrooms.

The training room is large and windowless with chairs arranged in rows. I hastily rearrange them into groups and hope the artificial light won't give everyone a headache. We start with throwing a ball around to learn names, which clearly isn't what they are expecting.

'I hope you're not a P.E. teacher' I quip as a young female teacher is the first to drop the ball. She laughs, which breaks the ice. Others drop the ball, forget names and laugh at themselves and others. I'm not the only one who doesn't know anyone; there are 5 or 6 teachers who are new to the school and this gives everyone a chance to learn everyone else's names.

We return to our seats and I ask how else throwing balls can be used in class. No-one is sure so I make a few suggestions: for quick-fire mental arithmetic in Maths, for story telling and vocabulary practice in languages.

'What does Professional Development' mean to you?' I ask the group. 'What do you want to get out of this programme? I'll give you a few minutes to talk about that with the person next to you'. After the time is up the answers come back.

'To become a better teacher'.

'To get some practical ideas for our classes'.

'To help us get through the syllabus on time'

‘To get ideas for teaching exam classes’.

‘To improve our students’ exam results’.

I accept these without comment and give out a list of sentences for them to mark ‘True’ or ‘False’ according to their ideas. They will then compare their answers with the answers given in the text. The cut up and enlarged text is blu-tacked around the walls and I tell them it is a ‘race’. They have to run around the room and ‘scan’ the text to find the answers as quickly as possible. When they finish I give out red and green cards to each group. When I read out the statement they quickly hold up red for false or green for true.

When they finish, they work in groups to discuss the differences between their answers and those in the text, and see if they have changed any of their ideas. I ask which of these ideas they wish to use for our programme. They all agree that it is they, the teachers who must decide what topics will be covered and how the programme is to be organised. Several areas of controversy emerge. Mohammed states that ideally, participation in any training programme should be voluntary. I feel for the first of many times the tension between my own views and that of the Management. This programme is not going to be voluntary. Attendance at all training sessions will be compulsory for all staff. I soften this news with the promise that they will have input at all stages and will enjoy the sessions.

Another area of disagreement is ‘Who is an expert?’ It is clear that they see me as an expert and would be willing to consider one or two others, including Professional Development Coordinator, Simon, as experts. But all teachers as experts? They make it clear that they do not want to spend their Wednesday afternoons listening to other teachers.

I finish by getting them to reflect on the ‘shape’ of the session. I elicit that the session included a variety of activities to stop them getting bored. It introduced new knowledge by building on existing knowledge (something else recommended by Mohammed) and participants were active throughout. I point out that just as I allowed their ideas and active participation, they should do the same for their students.

For my next session, which was to follow soon afterwards I choose the theme of ‘Reflection’. I believe this is at the heart of all learning experiences whether in or outside the classroom. I want to make all of my sessions models of good practice, so start each with a game or other warmer to get them interested. I also want to introduce the idea of competitiveness as a form of motivation when teaching children. We start with the game ‘Slap the Board’ as it is lively and fun. As usual, it brings out the worst in adult participants and they shove each other and cheat unashamedly. After the game I point out that they have not only learnt some terms related to Professional Development (reflection, self-evaluation, peer observation, feedback, teacher diary, learner-centredness, teacher talking time (TTT), learner

autonomy, self-awareness, defensive), they have been ‘warmed up’ or motivated to participate actively in the rest of the session.

In this session I want to find out the teachers’ perceived strengths and weaknesses both to get them used to reflecting and to find out how self aware they are. I will use these when I start observing them in class.

Two more sessions follow on ‘What is a good lesson?’ and ‘Writing a personal development plan’. They include games, personal reflection, discussion and identifying the teachers’ wants and needs for the programme. After all the sessions are over, I ask the teachers to write feedback on a piece of flip chart paper.

Comments are all positive though most are non-specific, such as ‘Excellent’, ‘Very good’ or ‘Interesting’. Many teachers note that they had particularly enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues. One points out that it was ‘*nice to see the trainer was interested in teachers’ ideas*’. Several participants ask for more opportunities to interact with colleagues in this way.

Another sheet of paper asks for suggestions for sessions to be held over the rest of the term. Most want ideas for teaching exam classes and older students, such as those doing the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Overall, the lack of new ideas is disappointing.

Over the three days, I have bonded with the teachers. They are, in the main, affable and good humoured. I have started to learn names and match faces to names and subjects. Several approach me and ask about courses they could do and tell me about their plans for further education. I sit in the staff room and drink tea, joining in their complaints about the 'rocket fuel'. The ladies ask about my children and I ask about theirs. We discuss clothes and shopping. I tut tut over the newspapers with the men, moaning about Sri Lanka's performance in the cricket and the antics of the politicians. Before the students arrive I feel I belong.

For some reason, the prospect of the students' arrival terrifies me. I feel that familiar knot of anxiety in my stomach. It is not that I suspect they will be badly behaved. It is just that I have no idea how I should interact with these students in this setting. In language schools we don't have anything to do with 'other people's students' in the corridors. We build up rapport with our own students, smile at others we recognize but there is no question of imposing rules. I have never been a disciplinarian, I realize. I am not sure what the rules are here or how strictly they are enforced. What am I going to do if I see students running in the corridor? Can I bring myself to bother about the wrong colour socks? But what if other teachers see me ignoring misbehaviour when I'm supposed to be training them how to manage students?

The first day of school and I dart into the office I'm to share with 3 other 'senior staff', avoiding the swarming students in the halls. At 7.30 in the morning the heat

in there is already unbearable. Within minutes, sweat breaks out on my face. I switch on the desk fan I've brought from home.

'They promised to air condition this place in the holidays' I complain to KQ, who sits opposite me.

'Oh, you believed them did you?', he replies dryly. 'You'll get used to that. They promise anything to get you in but won't spend any more money than they have to'.

'Sounds typical', I laugh. Oh well, at least I have nice roommates.

I go back to my desk and switch on the computer. I don't have much to do. I have been told to 'get to know people' for the first few weeks. I realize this is a luxury, *I* am a luxury. I decide to take a walk around the school. It's spacious and airy with its inner courtyard, but it's hot and noisy too. Windows open onto the busy city streets below where the sound of horns from cars, buses and trishaws is constant. I peer into classrooms and see that classes are small with anywhere from 2 to 20 students. This is a traditional school. Desks are arranged in rows with a teacher's desk at the front. When teachers enter a room, the students leap to their feet and drone 'Good morning, Mr...'. There's a detention list in the staff room ready to be filled with the names of miscreants.

I roam the school at leisure. The facilities are impressive. I have never seen such a huge gym and am surprised to find another one, an indoor basketball court, on the

other side of the school. There's so much space inside: squash courts, table tennis room, a mirrored dance studio, music room, laboratories, computer rooms, art rooms, libraries and an auditorium. Outside, some junior school children are having a lesson in the swimming pool while others play in the jungle gym. I forget for a while that I'm in Sri Lanka.

I hear the bell for break and make my way down to the staff room and a chance to interact with the teachers. It's not a work room- each department has a faculty office to teachers to work in. The staff room is for meetings and relaxing. As the only air conditioned space teachers have access to, it's a popular meeting point. As I enter I'm greeted by everyone I see. The tea may be evil, but the atmosphere is friendly and relaxed. I think I'm going to like it here.

In the queue for tea, an elderly man approaches me with a smile. He is 'PS', the oldest teacher in the school. Small, grey-haired and frail, he seems much too old to be teaching.

'I loved your workshops', he says, in his quiet voice, waving his hands around with enthusiasm. 'It's just what we needed. I'm so glad you came. Will you come to my class tomorrow?'

'Thanks, I'd love to. Let's see if you can teach me some Maths. No-one else has ever managed to!'

'Don't worry, you'll be alright with me' he grins.

The next morning I arrive in the Maths class before the students. After a few minutes 17 or 18 boys and girls drift in, chatting and laughing, and take their places. The classroom is arranged in rows and each desk is separated from the others. It looks like an exam room. The students are form 1 (year 7) and this is their first Maths lesson in senior school. Outside the monsoon rain is like sheets of glass. The nearby buildings are invisible and the roar almost drowns out the noise of the students. I realize it is going to be difficult to hear the soft-spoken teacher. As he arrives, the students rise to their feet and greet him. He tells them to sit and I strain to hear his words.

To my surprise, the lesson is fun. There are games and tricks with numbers. Children use their names to calculate numbers and are excited at the results. Mr PS sets out his expectations for this new class and tells the students that they will need to practise new skills and review their lessons every night. He builds on their existing knowledge and the students enjoy the lesson and have a sense of achievement. The lesson is teacher-centred. Students do not break into groups or interact much with each other. Still, I leave the room happy. Maybe this will not be so bad.

Gradually more teachers approach me to visit their classes for informal observations. I work with the Principal, Vice Principal and Professional Development Coordinator to develop observation criteria and we present this to teachers so they have input into

how they will be assessed. Some teachers want to do 'formal observations' as early as possible to 'get it out the way'. I conduct several in the first half term and they go well. I pass the reports onto the Principal and a few days later he calls me to his office.

'These are very positive', he says.

'Yes, I'm really pleased. I've seen some good teaching. There are points to work on, of course, but overall they were sound lessons'.

'Well, I'm rather surprised by them, to be honest. They seem a bit, well, a bit too good'.

'What I think is happening' I reply, 'Is that at this stage observations are on a voluntary basis and it's the best teachers who are coming forward. The weaker ones are trying to put it off as long as possible.'

'Well, maybe'. He sounds doubtful. 'But I think you're possibly being a bit, erm, lenient. I mean, praising people is all very well but they need to be told what they're doing wrong'.

'Well, as I've said before, I believe in emphasizing the positive. That will develop their confidence and enable them to share the things they're doing well with others. They will be more open to observation if it is a positive experience and be motivated to work harder. I don't think we should give them more than a few points to work on. We need to select one or two areas they are ready and able to work on.' I try to keep the defensiveness out of my voice.

‘If they get too confident they will think they have nothing to learn’, he counters. I feel anger rising inside me.

‘I’ve given all of them action points’, I retort. ‘They know they have things to learn. If I mentioned everything, it would become overwhelming. But as I say, these are clearly the strongest teachers. I mean, take CM (the History teacher from France). He has a PGCE. He knows what he’s doing.’

He gives me a doubtful look and I feel the urge to shout at him, which I quickly repress.

‘Don’t worry’, I say, hiding my irritation. ‘I’m sure you’ll see plenty of bad reports as the term goes on.’

He seems unsure if I’m being sarcastic or not and this becomes one of the patterns of our interactions.

‘Oh and another thing’, he adds, ‘Try not to mention British Council so much in sessions’.

‘Why?’ I manage, suddenly unable to articulate more than the single syllable.

‘You’re not at British Council anymore’.

‘I know, but...’ is all I manage. I feel my lip quivering and my face turning red.

‘Ok, then’ is the shortest acceptable answer but it is not what I want to say. I’m angrier with myself than I am with him. Why couldn’t I find words? I’m 41 years old, educated, articulate, far from shy, but I can’t say what I want to say. KH is only a few years older than me, less qualified, as a teacher and trainer at least, less sociable and less articulate. He finds it difficult to interact with teachers, students

and parents, while I talk confidently with everyone. He stutters when he makes speeches and people find him dull and colourless. Although I have, in a few short weeks, convinced myself that I am more than his equal, I am suddenly floundering, feeling hopelessly inadequate in the face of his criticism.

I want to tell him that, much as I want to, I can't shake off British Council that easily. I stayed too long there and, ultimately, compromised who I was, but I learnt so much of what I know from the many fascinating people who passed through its doors during the years I was there. Besides, there isn't a single teacher in the school who does not know and respect the British Council name. It is virtually impossible in Sri Lanka to work in education and not have some contact with the place. And, I know that it is my association with the British Council that makes me instantly acceptable as a trainer to these teachers.

I never say all this to him and it never bothers me that I don't. What plagues me long after the incident is my inability to articulate my defence in the case of criticism I consider personal, particularly when it comes from those in authority.

In the staffroom over tea I rail to TI and 'get it off my chest'. TI has no idea why mentioning the British Council should be a problem. He agrees that Sri Lankans have nothing but respect for the institution and anyway, can't remember me mentioning it more than once or twice in passing in workshops.

I never use the words British Council again in workshops and forget the incident quickly. Much later, though, I suspect it has been added to some invisible pile marked 'things I have against the Principal'.

I soon realize that some teachers have high hopes of me beyond their own professional development. The two TEFL teachers are quick to inform me that the School's provision for children with special needs is non-existent. I spend time with them and realize that children with autism, dyslexia and a range of learning difficulties have been 'dumped' in the TEFL department, with two excellent EFL specialists who have had no training in dealing with special needs. They try their best with these children but feel frustrated and inadequate.

Head of TEFL is a feisty lady called KL. She is intelligent and articulate, and clearly highly competent in both ELT and literature. She is known for her contempt for both the Principal, with whom she frequently has fiery battles, and the Vice-Principal, who she completely ignores. I have been told that everyone in the school from the Principal downwards is terrified of her. Her temper is notorious; she can regularly be seen huffing and puffing her way down the corridor muttering curses under her breath, and her rants, usually about some decision that has been taken by the Principal, are legendary. During the Principal's 'briefings' in the staff-room she very deliberately turns her back on him and busies herself making tea, while everyone else pays him their full attention. In HOD meetings, she rolls her eyes and tuts loudly whenever the Principal or Vice-Principal speak.

I admire her quick brain, her passion and her integrity. She used to be an actress and comedy is clearly her strong suit. She impersonates her enemies, usually the Principals, in the staff room and we laugh until tears roll down our cheeks. She is fiercely independent and appears not to have any friends among the staff, although she is close to EU, the other EFL teacher. EU is KL's opposite: quiet, gentle, kind and easy-going. She is a kind of 'buffer' between KL and the rest of the School, calming her down and frequently preventing her from barging into the Principal's office to rant when her anger is at its peak. KL is still on a warning, having been suspended the previous year for publicly shouting at the then Principal, and accusing him of racism because her House didn't win the drama competition. This makes EU particularly nervous of KL's temper, which she predicts will get her fired one day.

I want to get KL on my side. She is a sceptic, and wary of anyone in authority. I give her well-deserved excellent feedback on her teaching, and get hold of resources and materials for her. When she approaches me about the special needs issue, I want to help, not just because KL is the one asking me, but because I feel strongly that it is wrong for a school to take in children they are unable to adequately support. I have heard that the school has an educational consultant in the UK and one of the teachers tells me the name of the consultancy and the school's contact there. I email the contact, introduce myself and make some general enquiries about special needs provision. In particular, I ask whether there is a course we can send one of our teachers on. To me this seems very much to come under the remit of the teacher

trainer. I have shown initiative and plan to come up with a solution to present to the Principal rather than just raising the problem.

To my surprise, the consultant is not happy. He asks me whether I have spoken to the Principal about it and what his opinion on it is. He implies I have no right to contact him directly and I feel that I have broken some protocol I had not been aware of. The next day I am summoned to the Principal.

‘How do you know about John M?’

I pause. What is this man’s *problem*?

‘Well, from the teachers.’

‘Who?’

I am not going to play this game.

‘Several people’, I answer with deliberate vagueness.

He looks confused.

‘But I don’t understand. Why were you talking about him?’

‘It just came up. What’s the problem?’

Then, raising his voice, ‘I’m the Principal here! Only the governors and I deal with the consultants!’.

‘Why? I wanted to ask about training for special needs.’

‘That’s not your concern!’

‘Training is my concern. The teachers need training in dealing with special needs kids so I tried to find out how we can get it. I was using my initiative.’

‘Special needs is not a priority here. You were hired to train the teachers how to teach normal children. Less than 10% have special needs here. I’m interested in the 90% who don’t’.

I’m so appalled I can hardly believe what I’m hearing.

‘So why have you taken them into the School? Now that they are here you have a duty to them and to their parents, who are paying high fees for an education that is not right for them. It doesn’t matter if it’s only one child or hundreds. It’s just wrong!’

Emboldened by anger I speak my mind and I know this is the start of his disillusionment with me. It is not the first time I’ve come into the orbit of a Manager who wants people to work independently, but only up to a point.

‘Special needs is not a priority right now’, he repeats, ‘and don’t contact John M again’.

I leave the office without a word and spend the next half hour at my desk fuming. How dare he disregard the special needs students? How dare he offer them places at the school knowing full well he is unable to cater to their needs? How dare he ‘divide and rule’ like this, keeping me away from ‘his’ consultants, who are paid to offer advice to the school on matters such as training? How dare he put down a member of staff who is just trying to help the teachers and students in the school?

How dare he decide what is and is not priority with no input from the teachers on the front line?

I also realize that I have failed KL, who was relying on me to get help for her and EU to assist these students. When I tell her what has happened I know she is disappointed in me as well as enraged by the Principal. I have known the Principal long enough to realize that it is useless to press him further on this issue. I am sad for these children who don't have the support they need and sorry for the teachers who have to struggle with their difficulties. Reluctantly, I drop the issue.

Not long after this, I start working with NY. She is a 25 year old pianist who has just been employed to teach Music to forms 1 to 3 (Years 7 to 9). Music is not an option at GCSE, which means most students don't take it seriously. The Vice Principal has expressed her concern about NY's ability to teach and control her classes and I arrange to observe her informally a few days later. I enter the Music room to find about 15 form 3 (year 9) students sitting in two rows facing the board. NY is writing Music notes on the board and the students are copying them down. At least some of them are. As I take my seat, some of them turn round and grin at me. 'Hi, Miss Claire', A few of them know my name now and know I don't expect the usual formal greeting.

NY keeps talking about crotchets and quavers. It takes a few seconds to note what she is doing, after which I turn my attention to the students. Only a few look

interested; the rest look blank or bored or are creating their own interest by whispering to each other or passing notes. I expect her to do something different with me in the room but she just goes on talking and trying to keep order. When she speaks to the children her tone is pleading and she speaks to them as if they are 6 instead of 13 or 14. I realize she has no idea what to do with this class and I'm sorry for her. I'm also frustrated. NY has been to all my workshops so far. I've spent several weeks talking about the importance of reducing teacher talking time and making the students active. I've demonstrated five or six games, two or three different reading activities and at least four different writing activities. I've stressed the importance of changing the focus often in class and including group work and activities that enable students to 'process' or 'internalise' information.

This first lesson with NY is a learning experience for me. I have assumed that teachers are able to adapt activities to their own classes after being exposed to them in a workshop, that they can make the leap from a reading race on teacher development to a reading race on composers or types of music. After every activity in training we discuss how it could be adapted to each teacher's class but I suddenly realize that it is not enough. I am going to have to go a stage further in helping them make the connection between advice and activities in workshops and what they do with them in class.

I am not sure how to approach feedback with NY. She is easy going and pleasant. She still seems baffled to find herself in the school and in front of a class of

teenagers. I know she has been given the job because there were no other applicants and the Vice Principal knew she was not the ideal person. She has had neither experience nor training in dealing with students or teaching music. I realize I am as far out of my depth as she is and decide that I'm going to focus on her for the rest of the term and equip her with some basic tools.

I meet her in her office in the music complex and we chat about music in general. I ask about her experience as a pianist and her interest in classical music. I tell her about my musical family and joke that the musical gene gave me a miss. I played the flute in the school orchestra, I tell her, but was usually a few bars behind everyone else. I realize I'm deliberately emphasizing my lack of talent in her field to reassure her that she is the expert as far as music is concerned. I want to separate teaching as a skill from music as an area of knowledge as a kind of preliminary for what I'm about to suggest.

'How would you feel about me teaching a class for you?'

'In Music?'

'Yes. I think I know enough to teach form 3 and you'd be there in case they ask any questions I can't answer.'

'What about? About music notes?'

'Well no, probably not that' I laugh, 'I can't remember much about that. Show me the syllabus or scheme of work and I'll choose something'.

‘Well, I’m not really sure what syllabus I’m meant to be using but this is what the last teacher was using.’ She brings out a yellowing sheaf of papers.

I look down the list of topics.

‘The orchestra’ I say. ‘What about something on the woodwind section?’

‘Perfect’, she agrees.

I realize that this is a perfect chance to do Action Research for my PhD. I will try different ways of helping NY and reflect on them, get feedback from her and try something else. I explain this to her and she signs a permission form for me to use my interactions with her in my research. I am excited. I’m sure that this is going to be ‘it’ as far as my PhD is concerned. I read everything I can find on Action Research. I get onto Amazon.co.uk and get books sent to Sri Lanka, which is expensive and is going to take time. In the meantime I discover Jack Whitehead’s Living Theory website (<http://people.bath.ac.uk/edsajw/living.shtml>) and spend all my free time reading AR theses. I decide that as well as working with NY in this way, I will do the same with other teachers and am confident I will find the right combination of demo lessons, team teaching, observations and workshops to have made a difference. I am only a few months into my PhD but feel it is ‘in the bag’.

A few days later I find myself in front of a class at the school for the first time.

Before the class I arrange the chairs in a half circle and when the students arrive they are excited by the new arrangement. At 13 or 14 they are nearly all taller than I am. They ask me what we’re doing and whether I’m teaching them. They seem pleased

when I reply that I am. The lesson is well planned and there is a variety of activities. We start with a miming game on different instruments. They are in two teams and are very competitive. When we finish they ask to play again. I refuse saying we have other things to do. I write two headings 'woodwind' and 'other' on the board and give out board pens. They make two lists of the words from the game under the headings.

I then give out a paper with questions on instruments and ask them to read through and see if they know any of the answers. They then go to the texts on the walls and race to find the answers. I have deliberately chosen an activity NY has done in a teacher training workshop to show her how it can be adapted to music. The students take the 'race' part of it much more seriously than the teachers did and race around excitedly. I tell them the answers have to be correct or they won't have won the race. The question paper requires them to do a passable drawing of some of the instruments too. As they finish I award them places.

We finish with a quiz to make sure they have taken in the information. They choose their own teams and give themselves a name. I ask questions on the instruments from the groups in turn and record the scores on the board. They are able to answer the questions and they have really learnt something. They are happy and interested.

The challenge for me has not been to teach an interesting and enjoyable lesson. It has not even been to teach a subject I'm not qualified to teach. It has been to keep

control of a class who are used to doing as they please during music lessons and to do it in a way that I would like NY to copy. I have been reading Lee Canter's 'assertive discipline' and make a point to praise the students often, use their names and move towards groups who are being rowdy. It is not really a problem I've had before. At British Council, even the Young Learners were highly motivated and well behaved. They came mainly from the strict government schools and only met each other once a week so didn't know each other as well as groups at school do. This lesson seems to confirm what I believe to be true- that keeping students active and involved in lessons prevents bad behaviour to a large extent.

After the class, I ask NY to analyse it for herself and identify exactly why it was a more successful lesson than hers. She is overwhelmed and says it was 'brilliant'. She asks me to repeat it with her next group to which I reply that the whole point is that she now teach that same lesson to another group. She agrees but asks me to teach another lesson with this class to demonstrate another type of activity. This seems to make sense and I agree to it. Meanwhile, I get her to explain why the lesson was 'brilliant', what precisely made it so and what she could take from it. She says it's just me, my personality and my experience. This makes me think. I have been teaching people techniques and act as if they can be learnt in a few sessions, whereas the confidence I have cannot be taught.

Half term is approaching. I'm enjoying my work in the school. Most of the teachers are like friends. I know about their interests in and out of school, whether they are

married and have children and how long they have been in the school. We sit in the staff room and talk about the bombs which are going off on an almost daily basis, the military offensives in the North, the heat, the torrential rain and the cost of living. We moan about our salaries, the cost of the inedible food in the tuck shop and the evil tea served twice a day. They are fascinated that I'm married to a Sri Lankan and have children in a 'local' (Sinhala medium) school. They like to test my Sinhala (which is hopeless) and ask me which cricket team I support. They ask for advice about their teaching and tell me about things they've tried in class. I celebrate their successes and offer practical suggestions. By half term, they have started to confide in me the things that have upset them. The Principal and Vice Principal feature equally in these, which surprises me as I'd had them down as 'good cop (the Vice principal) and 'bad cop' (the Principal). I realize they are saying things to me which they need to be saying to the Principal but can't. With their permission I start to bring them up with the Principal, who usually wants to know how I know about it and what my interest is. I sense he thinks I'm going beyond my remit again. I can't tell him that they tell me things because I'm approachable and he isn't but that is certainly the way it seems.

The next Music lesson I teach is based on the piece of music called Peter and the Wolf by Prokofiev and allows the students to react to the music in any way they like. Some sit quietly and listen to it and others act out the story or dance to the music. One picks up a board pen and draws the story on the board. They have flashcards of the instruments and hold them up when they hear each one.

Afterwards they order the story which I have cut up and for homework write the story, adding and changing details as they wish. They enjoy the lesson and learn about a well known piece of music and add to their knowledge of woodwind instruments.

NY feels she's ready to plan lessons for herself and I arrange to come and observe the following week. She does well. She plays games I have demonstrated in training workshops and gets students reading and giving mini presentations on the information she wants to present on the string section of the orchestra. Finally there is a quiz which motivates students. It has been so easy. I'm naïve enough to think she's 'got it'.

I have enjoyed teaching Music so much I wish I could teach every day and decide that this is essential to my job and my research. I will operate an open door policy and get all the teachers to observe me and then get feedback on the effect these observations and this approach has on their own teaching. I feel that not only will they pick up tips and techniques from me, but they will also benefit from my openness- that I can be observed at any time on any day – not because I teach perfectly every single lesson but because I am always willing to learn and to make myself vulnerable.

I offer to teach Spanish, which I have a BA in. I think I can be of particular benefit to the language department by teaching a language, because they are clearly the most

in need of a positive role model for their teaching. The Principal refuses to introduce Spanish at any level on the grounds that it is virtually impossible to recruit Spanish teachers locally should I leave (Interestingly, the first job of the next Principal was to advertise for a Spanish teacher). I then suggest mainstream English, since TEFL is taught to small groups only, which would not be typical of the school as a whole. He agrees in principle and asks the VP to look into it. A few days later she calls me into her office and says she has arranged for me to teach Form 1 but needs to get official approval from HOD English, TD.

I assume this is going to be a formality and rush back to my office to start finding out everything I can about Form 1 (year 7) and the books they are studying. I download lesson plans and think of adjustments I can make to them. I even make a notice telling the teachers when my classes are so that they can attend them. It never occurs to me that the English department will be anything less than thrilled to have a new member to share ideas with.

One thing worrying me slightly is that the only two people who have been less than welcoming and receptive towards me are both in the English department. One of them is the Head of English, TD. She is a Sri Lankan woman in her Mid 30's, who is separated with no children. Her English is excellent and she is a graduate of University of Colombo. She is a competent but uninspired teacher. I learn that she was forced into being HOD, which probably explains why the English Faculty room is bereft of materials, schemes of work are out of date and lacking in teaching ideas

and the room itself usually uninhabited. The rest of the department have other responsibilities: SB is Deputy Head (Pastoral), TI is Head of Sixth Form and PD Coordinator, EU teaches mainly T.E.F.L and TT is CAS Coordinator. The only exception is WX, an attractive young Sri Lankan woman whose thinly veiled hostility to me is initially hard to fathom.

I am still surprised, however, when RG, the Vice Principal, calls me in a few days later and shows me an email from TD. It is full of venom about how the class that had been assigned to me was WX's favourite and she had bonded with them. It is full of irrationality saying that she is being disrespected as HOD by this decision, which had not in fact been made but was being put to her for her approval. RG is baffled by her attitude and wondered if I have given them bad observation reports. I show her the reports I have done on the two of them which were exceptionally positive. RG is willing to let me go ahead with the class but I say I do not want to under the circumstances. I write a curt note to TD saying that given her attitude I am withdrawing my offer to teach a class in the English department.

I confide in TI, who knows TD and WX well. He apologises for them and is at a loss to explain their reactions. He tells me I am wonderful and that the work I am doing is so important and valued by the vast majority of the teachers. I make it through the rest of the day and go home and cry. I have always been a teacher. I have always been in the classroom for up to 25 hours a week. I have always had excellent feedback from students, line managers and peers. I haven't taught

mainstream but have taught so many different courses within ELT that there is no reason to think I would not be able to adapt quickly and easily. I feel hurt to the core. TD and WX have rejected me based on what they have seen of me and that is my training sessions. All this time I thought the teachers were enjoying them and benefiting, at least two were not. I have tried to be open and approachable, I have invited feedback after every session and they have not come forward. But they think I'm not good enough for their department. The carefully constructed uber confident persona I have perfected over the years starts to crumble. I question why I ever left the comfort of ELT and thought mainstream was a world I could easily enter. The sadness stays with me, tainting my weekend with my family. I dread Monday, but somehow don my joking, devil-may-care mask, which has been my protection from the unbearable sensitivity of my nature throughout my career.

People I have told about teaching in the English department come and ask me when I start and I say plans have changed. When they ask why I tell the truth- that TD doesn't want me and they react with surprise. It is some comfort that several respond with stories in which TD is portrayed as either incompetent or vindictive.

I start a series of demo lessons in Spanish for the language teachers and anyone else interested. I use only Spanish and lots of gesture, pictures, modeling and repetition. The teachers love them and greet me in Spanish whenever I see them. I spend more time in the language department, watching Japanese, Tamil, Sinhala, French and German lessons. I take the weaknesses of the classes I observe and incorporate the

lessons to be learnt into my Spanish lessons. After the lesson we discuss the techniques I've used and how they can use them. I also do theory lessons for language teachers on 'How Languages are learnt' and 'Adapting the coursebook'.

Gradually I observe small changes in the lessons. The French teachers speak more French, The Japanese teacher models new language three times, The German teacher rearranges her classroom so she can 'move in' and make eye contact with her lively year 7 class more easily. The Sinhala teacher incorporates an 'information gap' activity' and starts ensuring the students have a complete written record of every lesson. Head of Languages, DM, a bubbly blonde Frenchwoman becomes an ally. She is new to the school and has realized for herself that her department is weak. It has also been left in chaos by the previous postholder, and she is a perfectionist who, unable to bear the disorder, stays in school working til 7or 8pm.

I keep in touch with NY, the music teacher often. I download lesson ideas and music from Limewire. I have fun preparing a lesson on types of music with clips of Heavy Metal, Classical, Kanartic, Bhajan, Gospel Rock, Pop, Jazz, R and B and Rock n Roll which we teach together. I can often be found in the Music complex, where she works with the choir and Music groups. She is interested in things we are doing in training and asks me endless questions. I am informal and relaxed with her. We talk about fashion, my kids, going abroad, the political situation and sit together at her computer looking for activities and songs online. In my meetings with the PD team I tell them she is one of my success stories. I help her get ready for the

Christmas concert, which though not ambitious compared with previous years, is a great success.

As Christmas approaches I am still happy in the school. I have come to terms with TD and WX. I have avoided TD; she has given her resignation and will be leaving after Christmas. I drop in on WX's class one day and find a complete contrast to the class I observed before when she knew I was coming. This time the room is silent and WX, not noticing me enter the open door, is texting on her mobile phone. The atmosphere is tense, the children seemingly afraid to even discuss the work with each other in whispers. She doesn't respond immediately to my presence in the room but after about 5 minutes gets up and starts to monitor the students' work. Her gestures seem to discourage interaction between the students. One girl is reading a book, one of her set literature books, which WX snatches from her hands and puts down on the desk, losing her page. I stay for about 20 minutes and can bear it no longer. This is the first time a teacher who has been 'caught out' by a 'drop in' has not immediately changed the activity and atmosphere of the lesson. I know that she is fully capable of teaching well- I have seen it, but I think that, after 'winning' the battle over the Form 1 class, she no longer cares what I think.

Days before the holidays, I am approached by RG, who tells me I will be taking that Form 1 class after Christmas as they have not been able to recruit a replacement HOD or even a classroom teacher. She also tells me I will be teaching Forms 3 and 4 temporarily until a teacher can be found. Meanwhile, TI tells me that the search

has been called off for a teacher as none of the applicants had an acceptable level of English. The irony of this is not lost on me. I was rejected even as a teacher for Form 1 6 weeks earlier but am now being asked to teach 3 classes, including an IGCSE class. I toy with the idea of refusing but I want to show the English department that I can not only manage these classes, but excel at them.

I spend more of the Christmas holidays than is good for me reading *Macbeth*, *Goodnight Mr Tom*, *Stories from around the world* and the IGCSE language and poetry anthologies. I plan fun lessons with games and activities the students will enjoy. I type up my timetable and on the first day back put it up on the staff room notice board. I also spend time reading and writing about Action Research. I'm convinced that my teaching in the school is going to be the main thing that makes a difference to the teachers, that it is how I can have the greatest and most positive influence in the school. I can't wait to meet my classes. I already know some of the Form 3 (Year 9) students from the Music lessons and the Form 1 children have spoken to me in different lessons. In true ELT style we start with a 'Find someone who...' activity and negotiate a class contract. I ask them what they expect of me and tell them what I expect of them. In the first lesson with each class we play games and get to know each other. They seem nice kids though the Form 4 students are rowdy and some of them a bit sarcastic. We play the name game and my ball goes flying out the window into the courtyard below and the boys run down to get it. I realize I'm going to have to be careful about this kind of thing in case they meet the Principals or sectional heads in the corridor.

The weeks go by and it's clear it is going to be a while before a new English teacher can be found. I am working hard to keep up with these classes while still finding time for my work as teacher trainer. I have to give up one of my private classes and miss some IELTS sessions, and I miss the extra money. We do some fun activities in class. We act out 'Dulce et decorum est', being battle weary soldiers trudging through the mud, blinded by gas attacks. I invent 'the poetry game', which I play with all classes. It involves reading out a poem and stopping suddenly for them to complete the next line- competitively, of course. I wonder why they enjoy it so much since it basically involves memorizing a poem.

With Form 3 we lie on the patch of grass at one side of the school building and read Macbeth, me struggling to explain it in words they'll understand. We roam all over the school making a 'picture story' with my digital camera. I marvel at how inventive they are. We take pictures with the school skeleton and by the pool. We borrow tomato sauce 'blood' from the tuck shop and I bring in my daughter's toy dagger. They experiment with narrative techniques and dialogue. On Friday afternoons I buy them ice creams and we have debates.

I let Form 1 lie on the floor or sit on the tables to read Goodnight Mr Tom and we do webquests about world war 2. We do spelling races, play back to the board, the definitions game and noughts and crosses. Every lesson starts with a game. We write poems and make Valentine cards, do group writing on OHTs and compete over everything from number of words written to behaviour. We use the garden, the air-

conditioned upper floor of the library, the cafeteria and the IT labs. I buy stickers for their books and sweets for prizes. They have P.E. after English and ask if they can come to class in P.E. kit since they act out scenes and sit on the floor. I tell them it's a great idea and for several weeks they appear in their grey shorts and school T-shirts.

One day they come in back in uniform and tell me their Divisional Head has told them it is against the rules to wear P.E. kit outside P.E. lessons. After class I go straight down to the Principal's office. He is sitting at his large desk, which is strangely clear of books, paper or any of the usual rubble on a working desk. Just sitting. I walk up to his desk.

'Hi, K', I smile, 'I just wanted to get permission for my Form Ones to come to class in P.E. kit.'

'What a bizarre request', he frowns.

My heart starts to beat faster. 'Oh hell', I think, 'this is not going to be as straightforward as I'd hoped'.

'It's a perfectly normal request, ' I begin, my voice quivering. 'As you know, I believe classes should be as active as possible, particularly something like English and particularly with Forms 1 and 2. You know what my beliefs are and you seemed to have been supporting me. So, are you saying you don't really?'

'Not at all, but what's has what they wear got to do with it? We have school uniform here.'

‘Yes, I noticed but the P.E. kit is uniform too.’

‘For P.E., yes’

‘But it’s not fair on the girls. They can’t sit on the floor with those straight skirts.

It’s much easier in shorts.’

‘But why are they sitting on the floor?’

‘Well, when we read they can sit where they feel most comfortable. It is easier for them to concentrate. And sometimes they sit on the floor to make a poster or we go to the garden...’

‘Well, I’m not sure that’s such a good idea either...’

‘What? We had this discussion with TI and RG the other week. They think it’s a great idea to have lessons outside.’

‘Anyway, no P.E. kit in class.’

‘Right, whatever.’ I’m defeated.

Once again, I leave the Principal’s office with smoke coming out of my ears. ‘Why is he such a boring stick in the mud?’ Once again, I tell TI though he is not as sympathetic as usual. I feel isolated and long for British Council for probably the first time since I left a year and a half ago. I want to be with others who think that it doesn’t matter what students wear and who love to experiment with any idea that occurs to them without having to worry about girls being able to get on the floor in their tight skirts.

And at this stage, I come and go as I please. Between classes I jump into a trishaw and meet my British Council friends at coffee shops partly to get the frustrations of school out of my system. I moan about detentions, uniform, bells, having to sit in the sauna-like gyms watching teachers make children pick teams, teachers who talk too much and seem to dislike kids and the utter inflexibility of school life. They moan about performance management, job plans, antisocial hours and standby. I sit in the staffroom at the British Council and my former colleagues seem impressed as I talk about Macbeth and IGCSEs, T.O.K, I.B and C.A.S, the new jargon I've acquired in a few short months.

Back at school I start working with a French teacher called IW. She is a young married Sri Lankan woman with a new baby. Both DM and I have identified serious problems in her teaching. She is a pleasant lady with passable French but appears to have little idea of the fundamentals of language teaching. Her classes take advantage of her inability to control them. Her classroom has a party atmosphere, with children not bothering to lower their voices to talk to each other and all work seeming to be optional. Her lessons consist of following the coursebook, and the children seem to know pitifully little French. I barely know where to start.

I ask her to write down the aims of her lessons retrospectively. She agrees but never does it. She observes DM and copies some of her games, but the rest of the lesson continues as before. Finally, the Principal issues her with a warning letter, outlining what she needs to do to keep her job. I ask her to come to my English lessons but

she doesn't. I compare her with NY, who seems to have been an easy case. IW has been teaching for a few years and is well established in her routines. She is coping but unpopular as a teacher; there have been complaints from parents and students, which she is aware of but doesn't seem to be able to address.

I have had a few visitors to my classes but the response has been disappointing. I repeat the invitation at workshops, ask Heads of Department to remind their teachers, do a more eye-catching notice for the staffroom notice board and send emails. The teachers who come are some of the best: OQ, the Chemistry teacher who helps me with workshops, LE, the German teacher trained in Germany and the Goethe institute and CM, who has a PGCE. The Japanese teacher comes and benefits from it but fails to give back the feedback form in spite of many reminders. Many others express interest but there is either a clash of timetables or they never get round to it.

By the beginning of February I'm starting to feel demoralized. I have plenty of observation reports but not enough evidence from my Action Research endeavours to make a dissertation. I'm putting huge amounts of effort into my teaching but am still teaching 3 classes instead of the one I offered to do and no-one is coming to watch. I am popular with students because of the way I teach. Coming from an ELT background, I'm friendly and fun and my approach is laid back. Students from other classes ask if they can join my class and children from the forms I don't teach come and ask why I don't teach them. Though this boosts my confidence, it also worries

me. I started teaching by choice, even though I am not contractually obliged to do so in order to help the teachers but their being compared unfavourably with me was not part of the plan.

TT, one of the few British teachers in the school starts to resent me. She is a qualified nurse who originally joined the school as junior school nurse. At the time they were so desperate for English teachers that she began teaching in the Senior school. She is good with children, firm and kind, but is clearly out of her depth teaching both language and literature. She compensates for her lack of knowledge and education with a false confidence I see through in seconds. She talks loudly and endlessly in the staffroom, boasting about her kids and exaggerating wildly on every topic. She starts conversations by saying something to no one in particular and lots of people refuse to make eye contact, not wanting to be drawn into a conversation in which they know they won't be listened to. I begin to be one of those who look away.

She teaches Forms 1, 3 and 4 too and has heard the talk. The students talk about games we've played and fun activities we've done. Her students start to wish they were in my class. TT can be creative. I know this because she talks about projects she's done with classes and colourful work done by her students covers the walls of her classrooms. But on a daily basis she is not. She talks too much in class and doesn't prepare her lessons. My Form 3 class had her last year and tell me she's boring. I face a new dilemma. The closer and more friendly my relationship with

my classes gets, the more they confide in me. They talk about other teachers, which I instinctively react against as being unprofessional and inappropriate. But at the same time, I want to know what they think as its important to my research. In some ways it seems a form of triangulation but, on the other hand, it is, as it is, information I can't use.

I decide to get permission from the parents to get the children to fill out a questionnaire and be interviewed. I wonder whether the Principal will give me permission given his attitude to various things I've approached him over recently. Surprisingly, he allows me to interview a limited number of kids and I opt for Form 3 – there are only 11 students, who mostly come from the wealthy upper echelons of Sri Lankan society. They are well traveled and sophisticated, and I'm enjoying them immensely. I love being what I am to them: the liberal, open-minded teacher who makes learning fun and is 'there for them' but doesn't intrude in their lives. We cover all the work we need to and more and still find time to bond. They moan about unfair detentions, petty rules and excessive homework. I find out which teachers are popular and which they consider mean, incompetent or mad.

We've finished Macbeth by now and have moved on to 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. One day, we are discussing prejudice and discrimination, when Nishi, a very mature 13 year old suddenly pipes up;

'Miss, is it a sin to be gay?'

‘What do you mean? Where did that come from? I counter her question with some of my own.

‘Miss QL says being gay is a sin and I was just wondering what you think?’

‘No, of course its not. Are you sure she said that?’

‘She did, Miss’ join in some of the others. ‘She said its worse than murder because God will forgive murder.’

Shit! Miss QL teaches History. She’s Indian, unmarried, pushing forty and has told me she has four degrees, including a PhD. She’s a bit of a rebel, unpopular with the Principals and the faculty room she shares with the other History and Geography teachers is a hub. Strategically located just above the staff room, teachers gather there to gossip and bitch. I enjoy her lessons; she talks too much but she makes history interesting and relevant, tells it like a story. She’s short, dumpy, plain and bespectacled, usually dressed in shalwars from her frequent trips to India. Her views stem from her unique blend of Catholicism, feminism, communism and, judging from this latest pronouncement, fascism.

‘Miss, my Uncle’s gay’, puts in one of the students.

‘Yeah, Miss, and my Dad’s best friend.’, adds another. ‘Will they go to hell?’

‘No, of course not.’ I reply, quickly, not knowing where this conversation can or should go. I decide to keep it general. ‘Discrimination is still alive and well’, I start, ‘in Mockingbird, as you know, it was racism. Fortunately, that particular form of discrimination is unacceptable in most places now, but there are lots of other forms that are alive and well and homophobia is one of them.’

‘What’s homophobia, Miss?’

‘Hating gays.’

‘But why? They’re nice people’

‘Well, they aren’t nice or not because they’re gay. It’s just that, according to their religious beliefs, some people believe homosexuality is wrong. And they may feel threatened by behaviour that doesn’t conform to the norms of society.’

‘Well, that’s dumb, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, but it’s more helpful to try and understand people with these views rather than getting angry with them. I think we should try to learn from what happened back then, when *Mockingbird* was set, and be more tolerant of difference.’

‘Yes, Miss, that’s what I think’, says one, and the others agree. In a strange way, I’m happy with the way the lesson is going. Their bringing up what Miss QL said, has allowed us to explore these issues in a more meaningful way. I sense real learning going on at a deep level. Children are considering who they are and what their beliefs and values are. I don’t want to impose mine on them. I save my rant about bible bashing bigots for TI.

On February 1st a new English teacher joins the school. LV is an attractive young woman with a degree in English from Colombo University but no teaching qualification. She has taught briefly in another school but as soon as we start to talk I can tell she lacks confidence. We decide that I will continue to teach form 3 while she takes the form 4 as well as a form 1 class taught by one of the Deputy Heads, who is overworked. She will also ‘team teach’ form 5 with WX, which I’m not too

enthusiastic about. I suggest to the other teachers she is taking over from that she observe us for a few days before taking over the classes, which they agree to.

I decide that I will have her observe me teaching for a few weeks, after which we will team teach for a while until I feel she is ready to handle the class alone. The first lesson of mine she observes is based on a poem called 'The Geography Lesson'. I teach it as a true ELTer, starting with a 'mingle' to elicit the students' opinions on the various themes covered in the poem. The students are out of their seats and fully engaged within minutes of the lesson starting. I have set up Google Earth on my laptop and had the IT people set up a projector. The students take turns to find places in Colombo: the school, their homes, major landmarks. Its 2007 and several of them have never seen Google Earth before. We look at Colombo from different heights, finally going up to the height of a plane. At the appropriate height, we read the relevant verse of the poem. I elicit the surface and deeper meanings of the poem and we play the 'Poetry game' with it.

LV and I stay in the classroom after the students have left and I ask her to talk about my lesson.

'Well, its very different from WX's lesson', she began, 'She was doing the same poem with form 5'

'What did she do with it?'

‘Well, she seemed to go into more depth. She kind of analysed the poem in detail, you know, kind of *explained* more...but your lesson was good, too’, she added quickly.

With this new teacher it hits me with more force than ever before how difficult my job is. When I plan a lesson, my first thought is *how* I’m going to teach. I think about what type of lesson the subject matter lends itself to. My main question is ‘what will the students be doing?’ For a long time I had not had to worry much about the subject matter. Teaching literature, my knowledge was limited, but I was still putting methodology first. After planning the activities I would look up the poem on-line and get ready for the ‘explanations’ or handling students’ questions. I’d been teaching and training others to teach this way for so long that I had stopped conceiving of any other way of doing it. With LV, the subject matter was the only thing that mattered. Her main concern was the subject matter and, as I would realize when she began to teach, her other concern was her performance. The things that mattered to me didn’t seem to register with her, didn’t feature in her feedback on me at all: my rapport with the students, the fun we had together in class, the fact that students were active, engaged and enjoying the lesson, that I included all students and valued their contributions.

I wonder whether seeds of awareness are being sown, though, when, before leaving the classroom, LV muses, ‘You know you’re the first teacher I’ve ever seen who

doesn't tell students to shut up'. I want to shout 'YES, and WHY is that, do you think?' but I know we've had enough for today.

She observes me throughout the next week and I use a range of activities deliberately chosen to demonstrate many techniques. Every lesson starts with a game and involves group work and lots of discussion. Sometimes it ends with another game. I'm putting a lot of time into preparation and am teaching the best I can with my shaky knowledge of English literature. The language lessons are better and it is a joy to teach students who are essentially native speakers. This class is challenging me, though. They are high maintenance. Thushitha is the top juvenile golf player in Sri Lanka, Sujeewa's family own the largest chain of bakeries in the country. They are wealthy, well-travelled and sophisticated. LV is none of these things and I feel for her.

I have asked LV to give me written feedback on each of my lessons. She has to be reminded several times and I start to feel angry with her: she is being paid to teach these lessons which I am teaching and only has one class of her own and one shared class. When the feedback finally arrives it lacks awareness and there is little evidence of reflection. She calls my lessons 'perfect' and says I will be a 'hard act to follow' but is unable to say why she thinks this. I realize that this exercise, which is hard work for me, is not necessarily the best approach for LV. While observing an expert appears to be an ideal way in to the job for inexperienced teachers, the reality is somewhat more complex. I had wanted to show her how to handle this

particular class, but had not given sufficient consideration to how she would be perceived by the students as a beginner teacher. I had actually created a larger gap between us than if I had simply handed over the class to her.

Around this time I'm reading a lot about teaching people to reflect. I learn about various types of reflection and different techniques which can be used. I wonder whether some people are just naturally more reflective than others or whether it is a result of upbringing and experience. For whatever reason, LV is not reflective beyond the superficial level and I feel disappointed. I'm still thinking in terms of Action Research and feel my first cycle has not been an unmitigated success. I wonder if I can help her by sitting in on her classes once she starts teaching. This is nothing new, of course, except that I'm planning to sit in on all her classes with form 4 until I'm satisfied she can plan and teach effective lessons with them.

Again, I've failed to envisage the possible disadvantages of this. She will get lots of feedback and hopefully improve her teaching within a short time. On the other hand, she will be seen as less than fully competent, not only by the students but by other teachers, who are only observed occasionally. I was so obsessed with making better teachers that I forgot to ask 'at what cost?' LV should still be a trainee teacher but in this context she is not considered one, and to treat her as such, while well-intentioned, is diminishing in her eyes.

There follow several weeks when I observe every lesson she teaches with form 4. It is a hard time for both of us. She prepares her lessons thoroughly by reading the poem, short story or section of the play in detail, annotating it and asking the other English teachers the meaning of sections she is unclear about. TI, TT and SB are generous with their time, but it is WX she becomes close to. WX is one of the few people in the school I have serious doubts about. I wonder why she became a teacher and suspect it's the hours and the holidays; as a mother of Kindergarten-age children, she can rarely be seen at school after the 2.30 bell has rung. She is unpopular with the students and can never be seen preparing materials or heard chatting about teaching. I hope she will not exert her influence on LV, but it soon becomes apparent that that's exactly what is happening. The two of them become closer by the day. Both glamorous young mothers with high heels, straightened hair and their mobiles always in their hands, their similarity attracts them to each other.

LV's lessons are painful to watch. The students look at me and roll their eyes. I look away, feeling that I am betraying them but preferring that to betraying my colleague. She makes basic mistakes when writing on the board and her insecurity means that she gets angry when the students point it out. She tries a game but she hasn't thought it through and I end up having to get up and rescue it. She struggles over the students' questions and I fear they are asking hard ones deliberately to trip her up. They put on their innocent voices and ask questions they know will embarrass her. I'm ashamed of them but part of me can't help sympathizing. I sympathise

with LV too; she is not ready for this- for these sophisticated children from English-speaking homes, whose confidence exceeds hers.

This is my Action Research, my PhD, and I desperately want it to work, to see an improvement which I have brought about through my feedback, my demonstrations and my training sessions. I'm not sure why but it isn't happening. She and WX are always together and, strangely, they start wearing the same clothes on the same day: elegant sarees one day, jeans the next, smart trousers and blouses the next. The students notice and I hear my form 3 classes laughing about it.

One day LV comes to my office and asks me not to come to the class every day, saying she needs time alone with them. I feel at the same time a sense of rejection (they are *my* class after all) and annoyance with myself for not realizing this for myself. I even question whether I have been unethical and wonder if I would have approached things in the same way had I not been doing my PhD. I agree at once and ask her to come and see me whenever she wants to.

This is a turning point in my PhD. I start to question whether Action Research is the right approach. I begin to read on other approaches but continue with Action Research for now. The current cycle has not been a success but months later I wonder if perhaps some good has come out of it. LV has seen far more expert teaching than any other newcomer to the school. Some seeds may have been sown, even though she was not able to implement much of what she learnt immediately.

She remains on good terms with me until I leave the school, frequently consulting me on various problems. I realize that WX was probably behind LV's request to 'go it alone' and wonder if things would have turned out differently without her interference.

Within days of my withdrawal from the Form 4 class, I hear from TI that there have been complaints about LV and requests for me to teach the class again. With me out of the picture, she has become stricter and rearranged the desks into rows, separating friends and putting the 'naughty' ones in the front row or sitting at her desk. The students besiege me in the corridor and come to my office to complain about her. She gives them homework they don't understand and then puts them in detention when they don't do it. They beg me to come back.

Both TI and I have realized that LV has problems with her written English, spelling in particular. This is apparent on the feedback forms she has given me, her writing on the board and from comments students make when they come to my office to moan about her. Parents have been in to see the principal, complaining about her. English teachers are very difficult to find here. We are one of the top international schools so are better off than other schools. Our teachers have degrees, but the pay is much less than in other jobs so the best graduates tend to enter management training programmes or join NGOs. He reassures them that teachers are supervised and we have an ongoing teacher training programme. The parents have little choice but to accept the situation.

Meanwhile, my discontentment with my job grows. WX is sent to India for IB training. I don't hear about it until she is there. This has become a pattern. I am the teacher trainer but have no input into who is sent for outside training. WX has been on a local training programme in the last few months and has not cascaded her training and apparently has not implemented what she has learnt. Why is she being rewarded with another course- this time an overseas one which she will treat as a shopping expedition? The lack of communication within the school astounds me. I feel increasingly marginalized, pushed into a narrow role of delivering training on Wednesdays and conducting observations. Talking with the Principal has become a chore. He seems threatened by my ideas and suggestions. More and more often I get the message 'Stick to your role'. From thinking about staying in the school and developing a teacher training programme for outside teachers, I begin to question whether I want to be in the school at all.

I start to conduct interviews with teachers and find them deeply unsatisfied. All of them have tales to tell about feeling unappreciated and being mistreated. I have suggested to teachers and the Principal that they start a Teachers' Association. It doesn't happen. No-one is confident enough about hanging onto their job to antagonize management. The Principal says the teachers are welcome to start one, knowing full well that they won't dare to.

Meanwhile, scraps of information about NY, the Music teacher have been reaching me, mainly from students. She has asked them to bring in DVDs of movies with music in to watch in class. The students are not sure why they are watching so many movies and not doing any work. I decide to check it out. When I enter the Music room, a few days later, the children are indeed watching a DVD of High School Musical. As most of them have already seen it, they are chatting among themselves. I ask NY what the aim of the lesson is and why they are watching movies all the time. She doesn't have an answer. I tell her it is fine to watch clips or even a whole movie with a specific aim in mind which supports the objectives of the syllabus, but not to just put on movies every lesson to avoid teaching. She doesn't seem happy.

I drop in again the following week. There is chaos in the classroom. Two of the form 1 girls I teach are in tears. I put my arm round them both and ask what's wrong. NY has put them in detention for forgetting their books. They are bright, highly motivated girls, an absolute pleasure to teach- the kind of student who should never be in detention. I'm so annoyed with NY I barely manage to ask her to come into her office adjoining the classroom to ask her what she is doing putting that kind of student in detention for forgetting their books (for the first time ever) when she has done nothing but put movies on for the last few weeks. I tell her I'm going straight to CD, (Head of Lower Division) to get the detention revoked. We part without an amicable resolution.

This is a crisis in the year for me. I thought I had 'done' NY. Of course I knew she would continue to need support, but while my attention has been focused on LV, IW and others, NY has lost her way completely. Unable to control, interest or motivate her classes, she had given up and resorted to the tried and tested babysitting technique: TV. I realize that she is just not interested enough to make the effort. She has once confided that she likes pre-school children better and that is what she really wants to do. I wonder how we can prevent this kind of situation in the absence of pre-service teacher training. Completing a year-long course at least helps an individual decide if he or she really wants to be a teacher of this subject and age group. Here we had a teacher deciding on the job that it was not for her, leaving students with a babysitter instead of a teacher.

The relationship between me and NY never recovers. I feel that I have given her enough to survive with and she has let me down by not trying harder. She resents my going to the Divisional Head to get her detentions cancelled, but I do not apologise for putting the children first. A few weeks later NY gives in her notice; she is emigrating to Australia with her family, which must have been in the pipeline when she applied for the job. She has allowed us to invest heavily in training her while having no intention of staying in the job. With this incident, and LV and IW both failing to make significant progress, I am feeling demoralized.

This story takes place against the backdrop of the civil war in Sri Lanka. It permeates our lives. It's a period of frequent bombings in Colombo. Our school is

next to the country's main cemetery and every bomb blast is followed by emotional scenes there, which we see on our way in and out of school or looking out from the Primary side of the school. The two main undertakers are opposite the cemetery and white flags remind us constantly of the turmoil all around us. We all have news alerts on our mobiles to find out where the latest bomb has gone off and check up on our loved ones quickly. Somehow it makes us closer and the staff room is a comforting place where you can let out your feelings of horror, shock and solidarity. I miss that staffroom for months after I have left. I'm part of it and proud that I'm treated as one of the teachers, sharing in their worries about the war and moans about the skyrocketing cost of living.

One day a bomb goes off at the main railway station, killing 7 members of the baseball team from the nearest school to ours. The war has come closer than ever and we cry for those lost children and their parents. The funeral is on a rain-drenched Wednesday afternoon at the cemetery next to our school and opposite theirs. The road leading to the cemetery will be closed for this high profile funeral. Killing innocent children belonging to a leading Sinhala Buddhist school has taken the anger of the Sinhalese to a new level. These are dangerous times. Many teachers want to go to the funeral to show their respect for the neighbouring school; the others, particularly the Tamil ones, want to get home early to avoid the inevitable trouble.

Wednesday afternoon is teacher training and from the time I arrive at school at 7.30am, a stream of teachers approach me to ask me to cancel the training. I reply that of course it should be cancelled as a mark of respect to the dead from our neighbouring school. At morning break in the staffroom I ask RG, the Deputy Head, while most of the teachers are in there drinking their tea. Her response is curt and without emotion: training will be held as usual. There is a brief silence, broken by the shocked mutterings of small groups of teachers. I forge on through the silence.

‘I’m not comfortable training teachers under these circumstances. They’re not going to learn when they don’t want to be there’.

No response. TI looks at me grimly and I sense his support. RG is not going to reply. Feeling the anger rise within me, and not trusting myself to speak, I get up in silence and leave the room.

Back in my office I rage to my colleague KQ about the colonial mentality not being dead. It is not *our* country being torn apart by a hopeless but deadly war and it is not *British* children being laid to rest just next door, cut off in their prime by one of the vicious attacks that have become an almost daily occurrence. Why can’t we feel and empathise with the pain, anger and grief of our Sri Lankan colleagues? What does the ‘business as usual, stiff upper lip’ approach really have to offer to anyone here and now? I go to class and teach with energy and passion, which I do when I am consumed by the righteous anger which so often becomes a teacher’s lot.

At lunchtime I come back to the staffroom to find that the Principal has capitulated and the teachers can leave school at 2.30. Training has been cancelled, but the bad feeling lingers.

I decide that my next move will be to get the teachers involved in Action Research. I have decided that it is unlikely I will stay on next year and want to leave them with the skills to continue to grow and learn. We have a training session in which I introduce them to the concept of AR, give them some suggestions and put them into groups to decide what aspect of their teaching they're going to research. I give them 3 weeks to conduct their research and be ready to feedback to us. We have a free session next week so that they can get together and plan. I emphasise that they don't have to report back a successful AR cycle; it could just as easily be a failed one in which they learnt something.

Most teachers seem to be excited by the whole AR concept. I hear lots of talking about it in the staffroom. Maths, Science, Art, Languages and Humanities all have plans which include the whole department. Only English remain silent. LV and WX are rarely seen in the staffroom and when they are, the talk is about things outside of school. I realize that getting teachers to communicate, to think and talk about their teaching is probably my biggest achievement. I leave articles lying around in the staffroom with the newspapers and email links to groups of teachers. Teachers tell me that, before I came, they had not really spoken to teachers from other

departments, but the training has brought them closer together and they realize they have lots of common problems and experiences.

In May it is Wesak, the main Buddhist holiday. We have holidays on the Monday and Tuesday. EU is a devout Buddhist who goes on a 4 day meditation retreat every Wesak. She needs to take the previous Friday off for this and puts in her leave request in good time. On the Thursday, she leaves school at the usual time and drives herself to Kandy. It is a strict ashram and she keeps her phone switched off for the entire weekend, in keeping with the code of conduct. She does not then receive the call KL, her HOD, tries to make on Thursday evening, telling her that her leave has not been approved for the Friday. Later, she tells me, that having arrived in Kandy after 4 hours driving, she would not have returned to Colombo, even if KL had managed to reach her.

The following Wednesday I look for EU in school but don't find her. At lunchtime, she comes to the staffroom with her lunch as usual.

'I hear you've been fired', I joke across the room from where I'm sitting with my own rice and curry.

'Yes, that's right. You heard?' she said, obviously not joking.

The smile disappears instantly from my face.

‘What? No, I was joking’, I choke, leaving my lunchbox and hurry across to where she stands by the microwave. ‘You’re not serious?’

‘Well, yes, he told me I’m fired. He didn’t approve my leave and I went anyway’.

‘He can’t do that’. By this time, others join in the conversation, others who have a better grasp of local labour laws than I do.

‘On what grounds?’

‘Why?’

‘That’s not fair. It’s your religion’.

‘Take him to court!’

‘English teachers are the hardest to find!’ ‘He’s mad!’

‘Bastard!’

Everyone has an opinion and the solidarity with my friend is comforting but we have to fight it. I picture a strike, a protest, teachers and students united in a just cause. But EU is in a panic.

‘Please don’t do anything,’ she begs us, ‘It’ll make things worse if he knows I’ve told you. Just don’t say anything.’

Others seem as frustrated as I am. I am itching to march into his office and tell him what I think, and that I will leave if EU is fired for practising her religion. But I have promised her and I bite my tongue and keep well out of the Principal’s way. EU is

the only teacher I already knew when I arrived at the school. She was the Self-Access Centre assistant at the British Council when I first worked there, and she did the CELTA there. She has been a great support to me since I joined the school and I am determined to support her now.

Later that day, the Principal has sought legal advice and realizes he does not have grounds for dismissal. EU is suspended without pay for two weeks. The exams are around the corner and it is the students who will suffer. I call EU and she tells me she will return to school and finish the school year but will not be back in September. She has been at the school, first as the librarian and later as teacher of English and TEFL for 13 years.

During her suspension the atmosphere is tense. EU is a popular member of staff. She is a kind, sincere middle-aged lady who is known as a devout Buddhist and caring teacher. The teachers consider the suspension a political act, and politics is a deadly game in Sri Lanka. They respect EU's wishes, however, and the rage bubbles just below the surface. The school secretary, a pillar of the school community, gives her notice after 14 years of service. Everyone knows the reason but it is not, of course, openly acknowledged. As the end of the school year approaches, the resignations increase. TT is leaving after 10 years, SB, the Deputy Head, is returning to the Maldives, and at least 6 others announce their intention not to return in September for unspecified reasons. The Principal has decided to fire two

teachers: CE, an older lady in her first year at the school, and RX, a young Biology teacher.

I have reported that RX has improved his teaching and is working closely with more experienced colleagues. The decision surprises me, as does the fact that I am not consulted on it. The students start a group on Facebook called 'Do not fire Mr RX'. I do not disagree with his decision to let CE go. She does no preparation and makes hurtful, personal remarks to the children. What I disagree with is that it is May and she has still not been told. It is only fair to give her enough warning so that she can find another job. Times are hard and there is no unemployment benefit here.

The school appears to be falling apart. EU's suspension, the firings and the resignations have all taken a heavy toll on morale. Teachers talk variously of going abroad, doing further studies or moving to another school. There are only a handful of teachers I have not heard considering their options. I talk with EU every day and she has not been told whether or when she can return to school. The Principal is making her sweat. She has been in consultation with her lawyer. During this period I'm trying to motivate teachers to work on their AR projects, but there is too much on their minds. They put in so many extra hours on sports activities, clubs, concerts and all the other events that make up the life of a school. The bombings have started to occur on buses and this extra work means they are forced to use rush-hour buses, which have been targeted the most. I hear less talk about teaching in the staffroom and more complaints and talk of moving on.

With TT's resignation, the post of C.A.S Coordinator becomes vacant. She has done this job since the start of the I.B. programme, and it is a position that suits her outgoing, talkative and adventurous personality. It involves arranging visits to children's' homes for students to teach English to the disadvantaged youngsters, taking the students to a polluted waterway to clear up the environment and other such tasks. It is a job she does well, but one she moans about constantly.

Inadequate funds are provided by the school and she has frequently found herself out of pocket. It also eats into her weekends. The post is advertised internally but no-one applies for it. Everyone knows it is a lot of work for a tiny extra sum in your pay packet. The Principal is worried. Without a C.A.S coordinator, the lucrative I.B. programme is in jeopardy.

He approaches two teachers who would be ideal for the post. They are young, active and outgoing. Both of them are Heads of Houses who have shown their ability to organize events and manage students. They both decline the honour. He approaches several more teachers, but none of them accept the challenge. He starts to worry. TI and I suggest he advertises it as part of one of the teaching posts or offers more money, two suggestions he rejects. He has his own plan. The probationers are the most vulnerable teachers in the school. They are in their first year and he does not have to give a reason for not renewing their contracts.

Of the probationers, he picks on CP because, as he tells her 'Sinhala teachers are easy to find'. The other probationers are saved because their subjects are hard to

find teachers for. First he offers CP the job of C.A.S coordinator, which, predictably, she declines. She is young, married just a month earlier and doing her Master's in her free time. She is quiet and timid, and on so many levels not right for the job, a fact she is well aware of. Then the Principal makes his move. If she does not take the job, she will not be needed next year. She keeps her dignity, asks for a few days to think about it and leaves the office in silence. Within hours, the news is all over the school, and a sense of outrage pervades the faculty rooms and staffroom. It is likened to kicking a kitten in the face.

There are one or two teachers who remain unaffected by all that is going on around them. One is the elderly Maths teacher, Mr PS, who has been my greatest support and shown the most enthusiasm for the programme. He continues to talk animatedly about his lessons and the training sessions. He genuinely loves teaching and I'm moved by his ability to ignore the negativity around him. OQ, my other supporter, still chats about teaching, invites me to her laboratory to observe her and reveals her love of teaching in many other ways. She is, however, deeply affected by what is going on in the school, and has a problem of her own: she is being 'bullied' by another Chemistry teacher, who is jealous of her hard work and success. Neither her HOD nor the Principal has taken this seriously. She has come to me as the only one who will listen, but without their support I don't know how to handle it. The Principal has repeatedly told me to stick to my own area and I know this case would be no different. All I can do is affirm my faith in her as an excellent teacher and encourage her to believe in herself.

The negativity in the school threatens to overwhelm me. I ask my supervisor at Warwick for advice. I am now only in the school for my PhD. I have told the Principal I will be leaving at the end of the school year in June but offer to come back to do the occasional workshop or consultancy. I do not yet conceive of the possibility of leaving the school without the option of returning because I need the data. I need to follow up on the progress of the teachers 6 months and a year after I have left. I want to know whether I have made any long-term impression on anyone. That is what my thesis rests on. At the same time my morale is at an all-time low. I have worked so hard but feel unappreciated. I still have a very rigid brief, and my decision to teach and team-teach has not had any great influence on the teachers. I wonder if I have actually created more problems than I've solved by demonstrating expert teaching to children who are unlikely to experience it again, and to teachers who lack the skills, experience and motivation to emulate it.

Keith (my supervisor) gives me huge support during this time. He validates my feelings about what is happening at the school. I tell him about EU and CP and various other crises in the school. He understands how difficult this is for me and we start to discuss the effect it will have on my PhD if I get out of the school before I planned to. He suggests autoethnography and I start to read everything I can lay my hands on. My understanding grows as I stop thinking in terms of having to portray in my thesis what an unmitigated success my year as a trainer in this school has been. I realize it is okay for it to be a complex, messy situation, and

autoethnography starts to seem the best way for getting this complexity across to others.

In spite of this, I did not expect the end to come so soon. In the end, I had left the school for good before EU returned after her suspension. The atmosphere was tense and I was well aware that one more act of aggression by the Principal could push me over the edge. Keith had calmed my fears over the future of my PhD but I had come to the stage where the PhD could not continue to be the only factor affecting my decisions. The Principal was behaving in a way I couldn't comprehend, and I was sitting by helplessly watching him destroy people's confidence and self-respect. He had created an atmosphere in which it was impossible to motivate the teachers; life in the school had become a quest for survival and the programme was starting to seem irrelevant.

I enter our regular Thursday meeting angry and resentful. It is hard to say when things changed but I feel the Principal knows I am no longer batting for his team. I later learn that I have spent the year sharing an office with a 'spy' and that my rantings in my office to KQ, OQ, EU and other trusted friends have been faithfully reported to him by ZD, the American Biology teacher. But on this day, which is to be the last time I see KH and RG, I am unable to fathom his attitude.

We carry on the meeting with reasonable civility but there is little eye contact between anyone except TI and I. It is the very end of May and the following

Thursday is my second daughter's seventh birthday. I have promised her I will pick her up from school on that day as I rarely get the chance to. I am careful with my promises to my children, believing as I do that a promise to a child must be kept. I do not anticipate any problem. I have been free to come and go all year, popping out to the shops or to meet friends between classes. KH or RG frequently miss or reschedule the meeting for reasons they do not divulge. Besides, it is coming up to the exam period and, apart from the Action Research project, there are no more training sessions coming up. We have very little to discuss and even this meeting has lasted no more than twenty minutes. It is therefore with confidence that I say, as we are all preparing to leave the office,

'Oh, by the way, can we reschedule next week's meeting? Maybe start half an hour earlier, or I'm free all day on Friday? It's just that it's my daughter's birthday and I promised to pick her up from school'

There is a moment's silence, during which KH and RG exchange a look.

'Why?' asks the Principal, and, sensing trouble, my heart starts to beat faster.

'Well, it's important to her. I hardly ever get to pick her up and the poor thing always has school on her birthday. Her sister's birthday is in the holidays, which doesn't seem fair.'

‘That’s a very bizarre request. No, I don’t think so.’

I’m speechless but manage to turn to RG and say, rather stupidly.

‘Do you think the same way?’

‘Yes,’ she replies, ‘That would not normally be a reason to take leave in a school. I know you have worked in different kinds of organizations before so you are not aware of this.’

When I started at the school I took days off to go to another school for ‘research purposes’ and frequently did IELTS examining during school hours. When had things changed? Was this connected to EU’s suspension?

The hardest part of this whole episode for me is that when I turn to TI for support he lets me down. He has been my rock the whole year, we think the same way about everything and he adores my girls. He is human, he has suffered at school this year as much as anybody else.

‘T, what about you? Do you agree?’ I ask in desperation.

‘Yes. Leave would not normally be given for that kind of thing’, he admits, at least with some kindness in his tone.

Suddenly, I am the outsider, the one who comes from a different world which plays by different rules. There is so much I want to say but I realize the end has come. Good English-speaking teachers are hard to come by in Sri Lanka; experienced English-speaking teacher trainers impossible. I have done so much for the school for so little money. It cannot be possible that they are going to risk losing me over an hour's leave I have requested in good time for a personal reason.

'Well, let me put it another way.' I manage. 'I'm picking my daughter up from school next Thursday. We can rearrange the meeting or just cancel it. It's up to you.'

'There will be consequences', says the Principal, without emotion.

Suddenly I feel tired. I know how in demand I am here. Offers of work have been coming in all year. I'm not prepared to go through the farce of being suspended for picking my daughter up on her birthday. It is not an option to give in to him. My second child spent years in and out in hospital, her toddler years were marred by life-threatening asthma and disfiguring eczema. At 17 months I nearly lost her; the trauma of rushing her to hospital by ambulance and seeing her hooked up to machines in the ICU has given me sleepless nights until this day. Severe allergies mean she lives on a very restricted diet and will not taste her own birthday cake. Until she was 5 she had never tasted ice-cream or pizza and had to stand on the side of the pool watching other children swim as her skin was always infected. She never

complains about the pain of injections and the restrictions in her life. She has asked me to pick her up on her birthday, and I am going to do so.

‘Fine’, I say enigmatically, and leave the office. I make it to my office before bursting into tears. I start packing up my things and call a taxi. It is lesson change time and I meet some of my students to tell them I’m going and hand them my phone number. They are upset and I hear later that the form one girls were crying in the corridor after school and were told to stop crying and go home by the Principal. I feel some satisfaction in knowing he has seen the students crying for me.

I go home and reflect. Have I done the right thing? I keep coming back to the fact that I did not have a choice. I am already working my notice and there is less than a month left til the end of my contract. If I stay on he will suspend me next week for missing the meeting with him. If I take Thursday off he will ask me why and I will not lie. There is an important principle at stake here. Teachers, like any other workers are human beings with lives and commitments outside of school. Some holidays need to be available during term time for whatever an individual cares about most: religious activities, children, research or whatever. It is not for a Principal without children and without faith to judge the value of another’s priorities.

It was not the right time for me to have to stand up and fight for a principle. I wanted to focus on my PhD, but I knew I would not be worthy of it if I put it before the beliefs and values that I live by.

The next few days the phone rings regularly and I receive emails and text messages from so many of the teachers, saying they will miss me and thanking me for all I have done from them. They apologize on behalf of the school for how I have been treated and reassure me that the work I have done will go on. My form 3 class comes over for several 'revision classes' but each time stay on for hours playing with my children and dogs. LV is teaching them now and their parents have complained.

I write a letter to the Board of Directors explaining my decision to leave. I do not receive a reply. The school is up for sale. Two of the directors, a married couple, have lost interest in the school; their youngest child has just finished her IB and they have decided to go abroad with her.

In the next few months several of the teachers contact me for references because the word has gone round that the Principal writes negative ones for no good reason. Others call or email to see how I am or to tell me they are leaving the school. They tell me that I did make a difference to them and to the school. For some, I made them think about teaching for the first time ever; for others I rekindled their interest, a few enough to have motivated them to apply for a teaching diploma. Some

mention specific techniques and approaches I introduced them to. Some just say I was a good colleague and friend. TI is continuing the good work with monthly workshops, but as he is still Head of Sixth Form and Head of English, there is not time for much else. I have not been replaced.

At least half of the teachers I worked with have left the school. There are advertisements for teachers in the Sunday newspapers nearly every week. Even TI is planning to leave at the end of the year and American ZD, who spied for the principal, has given her notice.

So what conclusions do I draw 6 months after leaving the school? What difference can one person make in a school in one year? I would like to be able to say the school is completely different thanks to me, but I can't. I tried to live my educational values in the school but it was incompatible with them, to a large extent. The tension between my aims and values and the managements was too great. Their aim was to make money, and teachers and students were exploited to that end. The directors needed a principal who was willing to support them in this. The previous five principals had left due to conflicts with the directors; this one survived because he followed their directives. I know I could have achieved more if the teachers had been happy and felt appreciated. By the end of the year I had largely lost them due to their disaffection with the school. They were underpaid, undervalued and utterly dispensable. They knew they would not get a reference from the school when they

left. Training came to be just another burden they had to bear like supervising after-school clubs and detention.

This situation exists because it can. International schools are not inspected or regulated. They are businesses and everyone involved- students, teachers and parents- is there to make profits for the owners. Ultimately, it doesn't matter if teachers are trained or not. The desperate need for school places and for English means the demand for international schools continues to grow, while no progress is made on their quality. Most schools prefer to spend money on facilities, such as swimming pools, to impress potential parents and get them to hand over their money.

Seven months have passed since I left the school. A plastic Christmas tree decorated with pink fluffy baubles twinkles in the corner of my living room. The table is piled high with books on autoethnography and qualitative methods, and the disorganized notebooks of quotations, fieldnotes and the general ramblings of a PhD student. Mr PS, the elderly Maths teacher whose class was the first I visited almost a year and a half earlier, sits on the scruffy armchair of the suite I've been meaning to replace for years, drinking his second cup of sweet, milky tea.

'You sharpened our skills', he repeats. He has taught for probably fifty years. His Maths and Science quizzes and experiments appear in the children's' supplement of the local Sunday Times every week. His former students are in the N.I.E. and the

Ministry of Education. He is as proud as he would have been of his own children. He is a lesson in humility and dedication and I think to myself that the year was worthwhile just to have met a man like this. 'You reminded us of the need for meticulous planning and breaking the lesson down into stages'; he becomes more specific after a little coaxing from me. 'Everyone got something out of it'.

I learn that training is now once a month and led by heads of department. There is more group planning though in the Maths department, it seems that PS does most of it and acts as a Mentor to the young teachers. We ponder the question of 'what makes a teacher?' His mother was a Maths teacher and he talks at length of the inspirational teachers he had at Royal College (the world's biggest school) over sixty years earlier. His desire to make a useful contribution to my research moves me again as he heads off into the hot, humid afternoon, refusing my offer of paying for a taxi to take him home.

I head back to my laptop and watch my two Labradors fighting playfully in the garden, while musing on my discussion with PS. I check my emails and find one from OQ, the Chemistry teacher who was another enthusiastic participant in the training programme. She has sent me a summing up of the situation 6 months post training. She writes very positively of the training period: talking together about teaching and learning, an attitude of experimentation and sharing, identifying weaknesses without feeling threatened, better inter-department relations and having a trainer to consult. In contrast, the current situation, she feels, is that teachers have

reverted to being simply information providers working in isolation from each other.

She sums up as follows;

'I see a marked difference in the attitudes of staff towards the learning and teaching process during the time of training and 6 months after training. A few have made a change for the better, promoting good and progressive practice in their classrooms, but some have abandoned them for old and more habitual practices of the individual. Many are indifferent towards the whole process and the new staff definitely need a comprehensive teacher training programme for their personal and professional development.'

The reality seems to be that you can only reach some of the people some of the time. Maybe it depends who it is and when it is- what else is going on in the lives of the people concerned. As I end this narrative, I'm grateful to have had this experience, painful though it was at times. I value the enduring friendships with the teachers I have kept in touch with and continue to help some of them in their professional journeys. I left the school wiser and more committed than ever to my educational values.

Chapter Five - Second narrative: I become a Principal

‘Out!’ I yell at the 9 year old boy who is hell bent on disturbing my class. ‘Why me? It was him!’ he argues, refusing to budge. Resisting the temptation to grab his arm and pull him out, I point at the door and repeat the order. The classroom, built for the tropical heat, has only half walls and Tobi continues to taunt his classmates from outside. ‘Go and stand outside my office!’ I bark eventually. Tobi refuses, stubbornly sticking to his vantage point outside the classroom. I repeat the order trying to sound increasingly ferocious. It’s not working. Somehow these kids, for Tobi is not the only offender, have got the measure of me. I’m the Principal but I’m just not scary enough. What gave me away? I wonder. The 2pm bell finally rings and I retreat to the air-conditioned sanctuary of my office feeling beaten. I am the ultimate authority in the school. The kids have to respect me or I am nothing. I have no one to turn to for I cannot admit my failure to anyone. I long to let off steam but it all stays inside.

It is my fifth week as Principal. The first was sheer terror. I developed a twitch under my eye with the stress. Everyone who walked through my door had a problem, most of them with the timetable and many of them insurmountable. My mind could not handle the puzzle of timetabling and there was no one to guide me. My brain ached from trying to juggle so many conflicting demands. I kept finding out about new limitations: the teacher who left early to breastfeed; the teacher who didn’t work Tuesdays. I cursed my predecessor who had not filled me in on it all. I

ran a training session that first week but it seemed irrelevant in the struggle to get everyone in a classroom with a teacher every lesson. I talked about positive reinforcement and assertive discipline like an expert. (When will they find out I'm a fraud?) I spent my career in EFL with students who wanted to be there- I know nothing, in practical terms, about dealing with naughty boys. I feel so guilty. I want to set an example to the teachers – I owe them that. I am their leader. Do I really deserve to be? I already feel a fierce protectiveness towards the school and a determination to do my absolute best. That's why it's so frustrating to admit to myself that I am not good enough at handling discipline.

Back at my housing scheme where I rattle around in a huge, empty house I walk off the frustration. The 'scheme' is half built with many deserted plots returning easily to jungle in the fertile tropics. The salty air carries a faint smell of fish and the breeze from the sea makes it a good few degrees cooler than Colombo. I try to reflect on the positives: most of the students are polite and well behaved. I am enjoying teaching General Knowledge to Year 5 who are curious and fun. I have revived the defunct house system and the children seem motivated by points added and taken from Ruby, Emerald and Sapphire houses. I've got children doing assemblies and have decided to replace exams with 'project week' for years 1 to 5. We are having Art and Photography competitions and UN Day with everyone coming in national dress and sharing food from their countries.

In week 6 I have to fire a teacher. There have been complaints about him from students and parents. He is rude to students and several children are refusing to come to school on days he teaches them P.E. The children don't understand his Maths lessons and he refuses to help them. The entire P.T.A. crowd into my office demanding his removal. One Korean mother promises to introduce other children to the school if she is satisfied with it and this teacher is a stumbling block. With student numbers down we have to recruit as many as possible and I can't have a teacher with a different approach standing in the way. He is still on probation so technically it is easy enough to get rid of him, but what I have read about transformational leadership keeps coming into my mind. Do I treat people as a means to an end or are they ends in themselves? I feel for this teacher who wants to improve and has a family to feed. But I know the parents are waiting for me to act decisively. Should I give him more time? But he is teaching Maths as well as P.E, and children at a crucial stage are getting behind. It is my job to do what is best for the school but everything in me recoils from the task of taking a job from a family man. Eventually, he agrees to resign for a month's salary and I am saved from both the labour tribunal and the P.T.A.

I answer my mobile to Tarushi telling me in Sinhala that she is bringing me dinner. Tarushi is a Mum from the school who lives on the scheme. She has taken it upon herself to bring me food or drink every day that I stay at the house. As a Mum she understands how much I miss my own kids left behind in Colombo with their father and her generosity is overwhelming. As I eat the spicy and delicious 'kottu rotti' I

feel a mix of gratitude and unworthiness. They, the parents, have placed their precious children into my care. It is an honour I strive to be worthy of. I am ashamed at how much dislike I felt for Tobi earlier today.

That night the kottu rotti keeps me awake. The chillies make my chest and stomach burn and in the morning I find it hard to get out of bed. But somehow I do. This is a day I would have taken off sick in any of my previous jobs, but responsibility calls and I make it in clutching my aching stomach. During the day my head starts to spin and I feel faint, but going home is not an option. I'm glad I stick it out. Three teachers have taken 'sick' or 'casual' days and cover has to be arranged. Tobi's mother comes in during the morning, slightly tearful and very apologetic. It is clear the problem does not lie with the home. We discuss Tobi at length and I think we both feel better. In the afternoon some prospective students come and we manage to recruit them. It is staff meeting day and I teach the teachers how to play blockbusters.

I genuinely like most of the teachers in the school. Dana, in particular, earns my respect. She is Indian with two sons at the school and is the class teacher of the 'naughty class'. She handles them with an authority I lack. She is creative and communicative and we chat often. Rishni is another teacher who is always ready to give suggestions and listen when I want to bounce ideas off her. I feel their support and appreciate it. I remember to tell them so regularly. I still feel slightly surprised when teachers come and ask my permission to go home early or change a class. The

authority I have feels new and strange, and slightly uncomfortable. I grant their requests without much hesitation and then wonder if I am too much of a pushover. Do they sense how unworthy I feel to grant the permission they ask for? No-one calls me by my first name, and for the first time in my life, I don't invite them to. I need to feel more comfortable with my authority. In spite of my chatty teachers I feel very alone.

School fills my head. Back home in Colombo at the weekends I can think of little else. Conversations replay over and over again; decisions are second-guessed; problems mused over; the school song gets stuck on a loop and my brain is constantly scanning for new ideas. Never before has work consumed me so totally, and I realize that I'm starting to love my job. A workaholic who has never quite found a niche I wonder hopefully if this is finally it.

The following week I meet Tobi's class with trepidation. I have decided to ditch the grammar based traditional lesson and get the class to work in groups to produce picture stories. Whether it's the more motivating activity or my tough stance last week Tobi is a changed boy. He stays in his seat and works enthusiastically with the two girls he has been grouped with. I feel like a believer who has found proof of her own doctrine.

In week 6 I become aware of trouble between some of the teachers. The year 2 class teacher has to be taken off teaching English as I realize her own language is

inadequate. Instead I assign her to Science and Social studies for KG and Year 1. She agrees to do it but refuses to liaise directly with the class teachers concerned. I'm an intermediary, passing information and materials between the teachers, aware of the ridiculousness of the situation. She also refuses to allow her colleagues into the classroom while she is teaching their classes, saying that they are on the look out for mistakes ready to broadcast them around the school. I wonder what my role should be. Should I intervene? It's impossible to say who is to blame but it is affecting the work of the school. I want to give the message that such childishness is unacceptable but need to remain aloof from it all.

There is also a dispute between the two KG teachers, one of whom believes children need to be 'ready for group instruction' and the other who believes they should do individual work. To me it seems that they both do too much formal work, but I am aware of my lack of experience. I have to lead in an area I essentially know nothing about. To settle it I call my daughter's former pre-school teacher, an American lady I consider to be the country's leading authority on pre-school and set up a meeting.

Rabbit fever overtakes the school. I have bought two baby rabbits and asked the children to think of names for them. Before school and at break and lunch Coffee and Cream hop happily around the lawn and get more love and affection than any rabbits could need. We sit on the steps and watch them, bonding over chats about rabbits in general and Coffee and Cream in particular. In the afternoons between 3 and 4 the school is quiet. The children and teachers have gone home. I take the

rabbits from their cage and put them on the lawn, picking them up occasionally to stroke and talk to them. I find being with them therapeutic and enjoy this way of unwinding.

It is the week of field trips. Three teachers have taken the older students on a residential trip for 3 days; another group has gone on a day trip. I'm 10 teachers down and it's all hands on deck. I put myself down to teach French and Music. For Music I decide to get students to make up a dance routine to Katy Perry's Hot and Cold. They are Year 5- a bright funny group of 9 to 10 year olds- I know they will love it. I hastily google the lyrics, print them off and get them copied, then move onto preparing a French lesson for the same group. I locate the song on my MP3 player and then, to my horror, as I am giving out the papers I realize the words 'You PMS like a bitch' are in the first verse of the song. It is too late to tipex it out. There's no choice but to apologise and ask them to ignore it. The lesson is fun. The girls make up a cute routine and perform to the class. The boys express themselves to the music and make us laugh.

The next morning there is a letter of complaint. Strangely enough, it is an Australian couple who complain about their son being exposed to inappropriate language. I am frustrated that I was caught out. Once again, my desire to make things fun has taken over from common sense. The kids loved the lesson but that doesn't matter now. It's all about that one word. I am learning all the time. I have not spent enough time teaching kids to be careful about these things. Is my background totally wrong for

this job I wonder? My priorities are different and they need to change. Child protection trumps communication, active learning and fun.

The number of teachers absent is getting too high. I am told that last year it was much worse and the previous principal let it go on in order to 'keep teachers happy'. I muse that the teachers can be divided into two groups – the committed and the uncommitted- and it's the committed group I want to keep happy. They will be happy when the uncommitted are kept in check and their own commitment is appreciated. I bring in a new rule that they have to talk directly to me when they are calling in sick. It is too easy to call the girl in the office and just say 'I'm not coming today' and hang up. When they call me I ask them for explanations and the marauders are put off. I start to use my right to deny 'casual leave' and enforce the rule that a week's notice must be given. The absentee rate drops drastically. At staff meetings I remind them that it is all for the good of the school and that I impose the same standards on myself. I am careful to appreciate any extra effort they put in and show that I am working hard for the school too.

It surprises me that I have nothing to do sometimes. It is a first for me after the absolute grind of 25 hours per week in the classroom. It is 9.45 in the morning and I go onto the Warwick library site and start browsing through Qualitative Inquiry. I come back to this narrative and write a few lines. Sonia, the school maid, brings me a cup of tea and I stare out of office window at the rabbits munching on a huge bunch of kankun hanging from the roof of their cage. The nature of the job seems to

be that everyone thinks I am busy all the time but often I'm not. I remember my former principal sitting at his empty desk twiddling his thumbs and know that it's not just me. I'm glad of the PhD to keep me busy and wish I was in one of my more productive phases.

Its week 10 and I'm sitting in my office shaking with rage. The school is closed for the day due to the sudden death of our P.E. teacher the previous day. He had a heart attack while on duty at school a few weeks after I had persuaded him to come out of retirement and teach part-time. After 8 years at the school he was loved by students and colleagues and the directors and I had conceded to a request by the teachers to shut the school as a mark of respect, and so that everyone could attend the funeral wake. I sent a note to the parents asking for permission for the children to be taken to the wake. Two emails arrived, one of which had infuriated me:

'With all respect, but this decision is disproportional and I am fully upset that an International School is supporting the local culture - for full standstill - when somebody passes away...You got here the chance to prove your worth as a western principal. I am sorry you just gave in to the tradition. Be reminded this is a secular school'

I had written my reply straight away:

As an international school, I do not believe we live in isolation from the local culture but bring the best of the west to our school. I have to get the best performance out of the teachers and I know they feel strongly about such local customs. We would have

alienated 22 teachers by leaving the school open. By closing we have upset a few expatriate parents. There is obviously no way to keep everyone happy and I am sorry the choice that was made did not suit you. Every decision will be opposed by someone but you have elected the board of directors to act for you and they have selected me to act for them. There are times that our decisions will not be agreeable to you. However, I do believe we have acted in favour of the majority. I do not believe I would have 'proved my worth' by ignoring local culture- that is definitely not the kind of principal I aim to be.

May I also remind you that we plan for 184 teaching days in the year whereas we are required to provide 180. This means we have 4 days for emergency and unexpected situations. This is one of those days. Therefore, you have not lost any of the teaching that you have paid for.

The funeral was an important experience for the children. The grief-stricken widow was next to the open coffin, pleading with her husband to get up, the daughter howling like a wounded animal. There was a book where the children wrote their messages to their beloved teacher, tears streaming down their faces. Our French teacher, a Protestant pastor, led prayers and hymns (the deceased was a Catholic). It was moving and tragic and brought us all closer together.

Arriving back at school I checked my emails and found another from the same father. This one was a diatribe on the 'lack of mental strength' of the Sri Lankan people. It made me shake with rage for several hours:

'The people have no mental strength at all. No ambition, no vision, no future, no truth. They are dependent and fully unable to abstract. They get shaped in the first line by us the parents and later additionally through the education system. If kids see us or the institution named school as their example they get shaped in that way. To argue with locals has a certain pattern: first it will be argued with the word respect, when respect does not take effect they argue with culture, when culture does not take effect then finally "it is my country" just to justify their unrational (sic) doing'

Maybe I had been fortunate but I had not come across this attitude before. It hurt me deeply. The email went on in similar vein ending with another personal criticism of me:

One more personal point. I have seen you several times, but never could talk to you as you are passing without looking. There is no good morning or hallo from your side.

As someone who smiles and says hello to everyone this surprises me. He strikes me as a person who wants to place the blame for everything somewhere.

Gradually the teachers leave school and others sit around chatting waiting for their lifts. It has, in a strange way been a nice day. I've spent a lot of time chatting with the teachers and students and we've shared a very real experience. One of the teachers comes into my office to tell me she's leaving. To my surprise, she hugs me and thanks me for being so understanding and nice about the whole thing. I know that if I had pleased the German parents (for all 3 complaints received came from

Germans), I would have lost something important in my relationship with the teachers: as it is we have grown closer.

I realize the vulnerability of my position. Many people are waiting to criticize me for any real or perceived mistake. I feel worse this time believing myself to be in the right than I did when I knew I was in the wrong over the song lyrics.

Gradually my confidence increases. I start to believe in my own authority. Two more rabbits, Cookie and Speckle, join Coffee and Cream and I spend even more time chatting with the kids near their enclosure. We plan a pets' day and discuss breeding the rabbits when they're older. The pet's day is a great success with the little ones all falling in love with my overweight black Labrador, Treacle, who lumbers around looking for attention and food. There's a basket of daschund puppies we all coo over, a huge cat who hisses menacingly at the dogs, bowls of goldfish and beautiful star tortoises. We talk about the Pet's day for weeks, reliving it and planning the next one.

Most of the children come and chat to me, tell me their news and show me things they've made. A few of the boys are regularly in my office for fighting. I get them to write about the consequences of their actions. They do the time and then chat about something else, leaving my office without resentment.

I am constantly aware of the fact that we need more students. The school is still not breaking even, and I know the directors are looking to me to build the numbers. One of the parents puts me in touch with a Korean man, Mr Dan, who is bringing kids over from Korea for English courses. They want to team up with us to offer experiences of an English medium school. I worked in Korea for six weeks last year and embrace the opportunity to work with Koreans again. They want to send us nine children for a month, but it's right at the end of term so it turns into just two weeks.

The children are between 9 and 12 with elementary levels of English. They will do normal lessons with Years 4, 5 or 6 and I will teach them ESL for an hour after lunch, followed by an hour of activities. The five girls and four boys arrive jetlagged and disoriented, but settle down quickly, make friends as only children can and are soon laughing and running happily round the school. I am touched by the way they bond with me, the girls coming and laying their heads on my shoulder when they're tired, the boys coming and checking in with me many times a day. They have come with the mother of one of the boys; the reports from the kids have obviously been good as she smiles at me constantly and tells me the children are 'very happy'. It's just before Christmas and we are rehearsing for the Christmas concert. The Koreans want to join in, and some of our older Korean students offer to train them to sing some Korean carols to perform. They also join the choir and become obsessed with the song 'Go tell it on the mountain' which they sing all day, even in class.

They are exuberant and exhausting. In ESL they enjoy playing games but it is difficult to get them to work. I get them to interview different children and be interviewed to practice speaking: friendships are made, and email addresses exchanged. When they leave we hold a 'closing ceremony' and give out gifts and certificates. Everyone is satisfied and the Mr Dan promises to send me twenty students for a month next time. I face a dilemma. Nine students for two weeks on one occasion was a positive experience for our kids, didn't impose too much on our teachers and made some money for the school. Twenty visiting children would be different. Can I justify that much disturbance to the school? On the other hand can I afford to refuse that much money?

In January 2011 I start the new year with confidence and enthusiasm. I will be teaching every day this term. I have taken over Year 6 English after the teacher I hired for Drama failed to cope. I realize I have made a mistake in hiring her, and that I did so mainly because she was disabled and I wanted to give her a chance. I confess that my personal feelings got in the way of my decision. Since my father was paralysed in an accident in 2000, my empathy with the disabled has grown, and I am painfully aware of the discrimination faced by differently abled people in Sri Lanka. I knew that no-one else was likely to give Danushki a chance and her English was excellent. She was taken on to teach Drama, which had not been on the syllabus before, and English to Years 2 and 6. Neither set of parents were happy with her and I knew I had to act. As she was on probation it was not difficult to fire her but it remains one of the most painful decisions I have had to make.

In the meantime, I had to deal with the situation in Year 2. Of the 7 children in the class, 6 of the parents had complained about the class teacher and asked me to change her. The complaints, I knew, dated back to the time of my predecessor, a kindly man who refused to take them seriously. During my first term I realized that Thanusha had problems controlling the class, made grammatical mistakes when she spoke English and factual mistakes while teaching. I observed her, pointed out mistakes and gave her some strategies to improve classroom management. However, the complaints continued and were accompanied by threats to remove the children from the school. I knew that one child in her class had already left as a direct result of what the parents considered her incompetence just before I started, and I needed to prevent any more following suit. Finally, in January, three weeks into the term, I hired a new teacher and Thanusha was relegated to doing cover, helping with the Kindergarten and supervising the A Level students study periods. There is pressure from the directors to get rid of her while avoiding a law suit.

The French teacher decides to reduce his commitment to 4 days a week. I advertise for a part-time French teacher but those who apply know less French than I do, so I decide to teach French to Years 4 and 5 myself. It is 22 years since I have studied French or spoken it on a regular basis. Most of the students have no interest in or aptitude for French: France is too far away and they can't see the relevance of the language. I am unable to put into practice teaching French through French, due to my own lack of fluency and the children's inability to understand. I introduce some basic instructions and feedback words but otherwise stick to English. My

knowledge of language teaching is crucial, however: I stick to a very limited amount of language per lesson, give clear, manageable tasks and recycle often. Strangely enough, I enjoy it and even the dreaded year 4 class behave.

Teaching English to Year 6 is also a joy. They are receptive and easy to manage. We do lots of creative writing, and I can see them improving their writing skills, and they are always willing to contribute to discussions. Somehow it just feels right to teach. I need to be doing what I am asking teachers to do on a daily basis. I decide I should also fill in the weekly plan and record book, just as I ask them to do.

By spending time at the 'chalk face' every day, I seem to feel more worthy of my authority. Having started by trying to be liked, I now try to tighten things up. I introduce after-school detentions on Fridays for persistent offenders. I get teachers to send me students who have not done homework. I strictly enforce the ban on mobile phones. I am closer to what I want to be as a Principal. I want the students to trust me and confide in me: one girl with family problems is already telling me things she has never told anyone else; at the same time, they should know that there is zero tolerance for bad language, fighting and bullying. I know that keeping the balance right is an ongoing process.

I know that for the teachers too things have toughened up. I now expect them to get approval for all photocopying after the privilege was abused by several of them. As a teacher, I would have resented it and felt that the Principal was being too

controlling. I still don't know if the money saved is worth the possible resentment of the teachers and I will review the decision, possibly just doing spot checks on photocopying. So far, the teachers have not openly voiced disapproval, which of course does not mean it doesn't exist.

Ironically, my total absorption in my job has pushed the PhD to the sidelines. I am living life between two cities and my time at home, which used to be dedicated to my PhD, needs to be spent with my family. I have also made the decision that rather than aiming for an academic post in the future, being a principal is the life for me and I plan to continue as a practitioner until I retire. Nevertheless, I aim to finish the PhD, because I really believe that autoethnography has much to contribute towards the field of education. I have learnt a lot: about myself as well as about autoethnography and teacher development. I feel that this kind of writing will be with me for life for the therapeutic value and knowledge of self it offers.

Its now the end of January, five months since I took over as Principal. I am the happiest I've ever been at work. I can't get over how lucky I am and I don't want it to end. In many ways this is a good place to leave my story. I am not naïve enough to believe that my working life will end with this 'happily ever after'. The school is in financial difficulties and I don't doubt that they will replace me with someone cheaper at the end of my two year contract. Still I am determined to enjoy it while it lasts.

Chapter Six – Teacher Development

This chapter begins with a vignette which gives the reader a flavor of the work I undertook with teachers at Bellwood school. Later in the chapter I consider the programme as a whole, examining the limited success I had as well as the failures and reasons for them. I examine my role as change agent, discuss the concept of ‘best practice’ and assess the role of culture in teacher development.

Vignette 1: Teacher improvement plan

As a teacher trainer, my aim was two-fold: to develop the staff as a whole through a series of workshops, and to focus on individual teachers who were in need of improvement. One such teacher was a French teacher called IW. She was a young Sri Lankan woman, and in my narrative I described her as follows:

‘She is a pleasant lady with passable French but appears to have little idea of the fundamentals of language teaching. Her classes take advantage of her inability to control them. Her classroom has a party atmosphere, with children not bothering to lower their voices to talk to each other and all work seeming to be optional. Her lessons consist of following the coursebook, and the children seem to know pitifully little French. I barely know where to start.’

(Narrative p.180)

I observed IW several times over the year, including unannounced ‘drop in’s. The ‘To consider’ section of feedback on a lesson (informal observation) on 10th September 2007 was as follows:

- *How much practice did students actually get in this lesson? Think of ways to maximise each student’s use of French. Eg The story – model and drill (‘listen and repeat’) each section. Do this as Teacher – whole class- groups – then individuals. Only after this process students should be called upon to read aloud individually.*
- *More of the lesson could be in French – say it in English and French to make sure they understand – gradually reduce the amount of English*
- *Exploit the coursebook material more fully. The story was nice and lent itself well to more activities – eg photocopy and cut up – students match parts of the story with the pictures, order the story etc. All students could have built from passive listening, repeating, to telling the story in their own words. Did they even get the chance to conjugate the verbs?*
- *Your classroom management needs work. You don’t seem aware of what is going on in all parts of the classroom at all times, leaving students to chat among themselves. You ignore students who are not on task. Instructions need to be given more fully, clearly and at the appropriate moment, not while the students are working but before they start.*

A drop-in on 22nd November did not show a dramatic improvement: ‘When I entered it was unclear what was happening, Some students were working, others were

talking to the teacher and others were chatting and laughing with their friends’

However, some progress was noted: ‘The teacher used a little more French than during my last (informal) observation’. However, there were still ‘serious concerns about classroom management’.

The teacher’s formal observation on 12th December showed that she had made progress in some of the areas where problems had been identified: ‘In this lesson you showed that you are now using much more French in class and giving more opportunities for oral practice’. However, as may be expected, there were areas where development was insufficient: ‘Discipline, adapting the course book and more focused work on pronunciation are areas to work on’.

A drop-in on January 25th noted more good points than previous occasions:

- *It was good to see that you have rearranged the seating to split up the disruptive students – the class definitely works better like this, though Jodie should probably be seated closer to the front.*
- *The new students, M and Z were included and you gave them extra practice*
- *The lesson was purposeful with all students on task*
- *All students were included – you used their names and made them all feel part of the lesson*
- *The students had oral practice*

There were still several causes for concern, however, including the following:

- *Always introduce new language **in context** in order to make it memorable. Vocabulary lists are for students’ reference but are not meant to be drilled.*

- Establish the meaning of the language before starting pronunciation work.
- The spoken form should be introduced before the written form. Drilling should be done when the students can't see the written form as the spoken and written language are so different.
- When drilling, model each word or phrase at least 3 times. Use a gesture to show students that they are expected just to listen and another for when they have to speak.
- Always allow students to practise the new language as a class and a group before calling on individuals. One student was put on the spot and couldn't cope.

By Feb 2008 an informal observation noted

'You have clearly tried to take on board feedback given and techniques you have observed while observing CS (HOD). For example, you began with a game of Slap the Board to review colours and other adjectives introduced previously. This went well with all the children enjoying it and participating actively. At the end, they asked to play again, which you did, adding some extra adjectives to increase the challenge.'

You extended the activity by adding the feminine forms of the adjectives and asking students to match them to the masculine forms already on the board. This was a nice link into the next activity'

However, the rest of the detailed feedback focuses on area for improvement. Some of the main points are listed below.

'I'm still concerned about the issues of pronunciation and context'

'Classroom management is still a major problem...Although you make attempts to discipline the students, they do not appear to take these attempts too seriously...You use students' names to warn them but repeat the same names over and over with no further action. Be very clear about expectations and consequences...and apply them when necessary'

'There was a little too much time wasting in the lesson'.

'We talked about your need to use assertive discipline and you are currently reading Lee Canter's book on this. When applying this technique you need to use praise when students are on task. You must praise good behaviour not just good work. I didn't hear you praise anyone for either'.

A formal observation on 13th March showed improvements in some areas, but there were still weaknesses. I was able to provide her with practical suggestions once again:

'There was a friendly atmosphere in the class. It was the last lesson of the day and you started by asking them, in French whether they were tired. You modelled the question and provided a variety of

answers, giving all students the opportunity to answer. You wrote up the word for tired 'fatigue', but make sure all of them make a note of it.

You then introduced the conversation by talking about your own dog. Before you did this, you got them all paying attention and stopped those students who were sticking something from the previous lesson into their books. You asked students whether they had a pet. Some of them just said 'Non'. Make them give you a full answer as they need the practice. It was good to ask students about each others' responses as this ensured they listened to each other'.

'I liked the way you got students to speak about their own pet but many of the students don't have pets. There are several foreign students who have just arrived and live in flats so that is to be expected. You could hand out the cards and the pets on the cards they get are 'their' pets. They have to make up a name and description for their pet. They could then have a conversation with their partner and mingle to have conversations with others, perhaps recording each others' information in a table. Overall, the students did not have enough practice in asking and answering about their pets either as mechanical drills or meaningful practice'.

The final time this teacher was observed was a drop-in on 16th May, which was reported as follows:

'Students were involved in oral practice on festivals. The teacher wrote the vocabulary on the board as students required it. Students answering mainly in English and teacher told them how to say it in French. Students following a worksheet. Students seemed interested in the lesson. Student wrote answers in preparation for speaking and teacher listened to oral work of individuals at her desk. Students relaxed and willing to ask questions, which teacher answered well.'

This teacher had been identified as one of the weaker teachers in the school. The programme enabled me to monitor her closely and provide detailed feedback with suggestions for improvement. Over the year, she showed improvements in some areas but there were still considerable weaknesses in her practice. Getting her to use more French was one achievement; another was providing more opportunities for oral practice. By the end of the year, she was also able to keep the students' interest in the lesson. Undoubtedly, she would have benefited from close monitoring over the following year too as well as further training in language teaching. I had hoped to keep working with teachers like IW in my second year, even if I was not working at the school full time. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to my premature departure from the school and the fact that I was not replaced.

The work I did with IW is typical of the approach I took to teacher development as teacher trainer at Bellwood school. It is a prescriptive approach, where I told her what was wrong and how to correct it. This approach is in conflict with 'best practice' which tells us that a teacher should reflect on their teaching and make changes (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Hatton and Smith, 1995). Although at the time I had not consciously begun to question the concept of 'best practice', I was already adopting practices which seemed to be the most appropriate to my own context (Prahbu, 1990, Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Nevertheless, having been trained as a teacher trainer within a very specific model (CELTA), I believed that, by studying the latest research, I would be able to select a model that was currently considered the most useful. The model I chose to implement reflects the later work of Kuijpers, Houtveen and Wubbels (2010), who built on approaches by Joyce and Showers (1980, 1988, 1995, 2002) and Pajak (2000). The model developed by Joyce and Showers is described by Kuijpers et al. as a technical-didactic approach as it assists teachers to acquire a range of strategies and skills that help students to learn effectively. The Pajak model, in contrast, is described as a developmental-reflective approach, as it focuses on the way teachers think (2010:1688). Kuijpers et al. support Hopkins (2001), who suggests that for optimal school improvement, aspects of both models need to be present. Drawing also on the work on Glickman (1990) and Costa and Garmston (1994), Kuijpers et al. develop a model which includes nine aspects: presentation of theory, demonstration of skills, practice in a secure environment, pre-conference, observation, post-conference, creation of the appropriate conditions, introduction of an evaluation and monitoring conference and

a focus on goals at school, teacher and student level (2010:1691). Whereas the first three were taken from existing models, the last three were added by Kuijpers et al. The model arranges these nine aspects into two 'intermeshed cyclic processes' – the individual coaching cycle and the team monitoring and training cycle (ibid.). The model I introduced also consisted of two cycles which fed into each other: the observation/feedback/goal setting of individual teachers and the workshops, where the whole group practised skills and was exposed to both theoretical and practical ideas. The content of the workshops was influenced by the observations and the goals set by individuals.

In my programme I tried to incorporate characteristics of adult learning in the workplace (see section 2.3.7). For example, I was conscious that learning takes place both formally and informally so I made an effort to talk to teachers at every opportunity. I left reading material in the staff room in the hope that they would read and discuss it over coffee. I talked to teachers about my classes, which I took on specifically to be in a position to share the experience of teaching at that particular school with them. I was also aware that teacher learning needs to be active and so I made my workshops extremely 'hands on', and got teachers to assist in delivering them. I also took steps to involve teachers in the training through peer observation and getting them to lead or co-present workshops.

Having taken the time to research and implement 'best practice', I could perhaps have expected greater success from my programme. However, there are clearly

several reasons why what is considered optimal in one context will not necessarily be so in another. First, though, I would like to consider what was successful.

Through my workshops and feedback I succeeded in getting teachers to use more group and pair work and to try out a range of activities I had demonstrated in workshops. The majority of teachers were willing and able to take on board feedback and most made some progress over the course of the year. It was apparent that the training process had sparked the interest of quite a few of the teachers and there appeared to be a lot more discussion about teaching and learning issues in the staff room (Narrative 1 p.169). A small number made documented progress, such as in the case of IW. Some decided to go on and take teaching qualifications after the programme showed up the need for further training. I believe the process of being observed and receiving feedback made teachers more aware of their teaching behaviour, and for some, caused them to reflect on their practice for the first time. It is possible, however, that some teachers 'put on a show' when they were observed but did not teach that way on a regular basis. There is evidence of at least one teacher doing so (Narrative 1 p.175, Interview with KL, p.7). Overall, though, the concept of having a full-time teacher trainer based in the school is a good one for international schools with untrained teachers. With a better school background and some adjustment to take account of local conditions, I feel it could have worked well. For one thing, it overcame the problem of training being decontextualised, as discussed in my literature review. It also overcame the problem of training being

short-term and lacking in follow up (Richardson and Placier, 2001). It had the potential for Practice-based inquiry to occur (Fullan, 2007).

My experiences in the two schools and my journal also highlighted some problematic aspects of 'best practice' models as applied in teacher development in the Sri Lankan context (See 2.3.4 for a discussion of the notion of best practice). For example, although the 'Master-apprentice' model is no longer considered best practice (Sparkes and Hirsh, 1997, Gale, 1997), I had most success with this type of approach, and when I modelled activities in sessions the teachers began to use them. A good illustration of this is that when I ran a beginner's Spanish course for language teachers using only the target language this had an effect on the amount of L2 used in the classroom. There are, of course, several limitations to the Master-apprentice model, including the fact that mere imitation separated from an understanding of purpose can be ineffective or even harmful (Gale, 1997). I would agree with Gale that it is inadequate as a model. However, it does enable teachers to get started in the classroom (Gale, 1997) and in my case, it provided useful techniques to teachers. In the traditional model, practice is divorced from theory, often due to time limitations (Gale, 1997). In my programme, however, I often explained the underlying theories, rather than simply modelling the activities.

While the above example illustrates how approaches that find no place in best practice can be effective in practice, there was also evidence that approaches regarded as best practice proved to be of limited value in the Sri Lankan context. Perhaps the most striking example is to be found in my attempts to adopt best

practice by encouraging teachers to reflect on their teaching before receiving feedback from me as the supervisor. This did not meet with any kind of success in Sri Lanka, where teachers have not been prepared for self-appraisal by the education system. It may be that certain aspects of practice are so entrenched as 'best' that as teacher educators we are unable to conceive of the possibility of rejecting them and that reflection on practice is one of these. Although I do believe that, ideally, teachers should reflect on their practice, I also now realise that it is something that is extremely difficult to learn to do (Lyons, 1998:116), and therefore should not necessarily be made a compulsory part of a training programme. As can be seen from my work with IW, I found that the teacher's level of knowledge of teaching was such that telling them how to solve their problems was more productive than encouraging reflection.

As my research progressed, I became increasingly sympathetic to the views of Cochran-Smith(2001:180), Korthagen (2004:78-79) and Bullough and Gitlin.(1994:70) that reducing teaching to a set of standards denies the complexity of the act of teaching. Although best practice is not one of the core issues emerging from my research, it does raise interesting questions that could benefit from further research in this context.

I believe, then, that the programme could have been made more suited to the teachers concerned if I had had the confidence to reject the concept of best practice and consider what was appropriate for the particular group of teachers. However,

the fact remains that even with a more appropriate programme, the potential for success was compromised by the cultural background of the school. The atmosphere was bordering on toxic, particularly by the end of the year. My interviews showed signs of anger and cynicism among teachers. (Interview with TI p.1, interview with KL p.3, interview with TT p.2). Those who had been there a long time were aware that things were not as good as they had been. (Interview with TT p.2) The focus of the school on profit had led, in some cases to role overload (Friedman, 1991). This could be seen in the case of TI who had 3 separate roles: acting Head of English, Professional Development Coordinator and Head of Sixth Form. He expressed feelings of anger and sadness as well as unfulfilled ambition (Interview with TI pp.3-4). One teacher expressed regret at the way the school had turned out, focused on profit rather than education. She was planning to leave before she became bitter, though one senses she was already feeling some bitterness at the situation (Interview with TT p.2).

As discussed in 2.6.1, such factors tend to make for poor conditions in which to conduct teacher development. In addition, there were factors in the local culture which made the process less likely to succeed. The change process I tried to undertake involved teachers' active participation. I encouraged them to contribute towards training sessions both by being active participants and by leading sessions on occasion. I found that teachers were keen to take a passive role in training sessions. This may have been due to the fact that the sessions took place after a tiring school day, but there is also a cultural aspect to it. Teachers in Sri Lanka have typically learnt through a transmission model and expect the trainer to take the

active role. Although there is nothing in the literature to cite as evidence in relation to Sri Lanka, we can examine the literature from other Asian countries. Campbell and Zhao (1993), for example, found that teaching in Asia is still mainly '*didactic, product-oriented and teacher-centred*' (Cited in Liu, 1998:5). Chen (1987) and Romaine (1986) argue that in many Asian cultures students are not inclined to challenge the teacher's authority (cited in Jones, 1999:247). My own experience of teaching Sri Lankan students and teachers as well as having children in school here would lead me to the conclusion that Sri Lanka is no different from the other Asian contexts described. As Hammerness points out, these preconceptions about what teaching is can make it difficult for the teacher trainer (2005:369). The implication here is a focus on learning to learn may be appropriate in this context in order for teachers to get used to learning in more exploratory and active ways.

In terms of the observation of lessons too, I found teachers to be passive. Most of them had little or no experience of reflecting on their own teaching and tended to make superficial remarks which were either under or over-critical (Narrative p.168, 184-186). This was partly due to a lack of initial training, which meant that they lacked knowledge of teaching and learning through which to evaluate their performance. It was also due to a lack of experience in demonstrating self-awareness in respect of their own professional performance. Culturally, there was an expectation that training was a process that takes place before beginning one's professional life. The concept of on-going professional development is relatively new to Sri Lanka and some teachers did not accept the need for it.

Research from Malawi on untrained teachers (see 2.7.1) labelled them as such and contrasted them with qualified teachers (Kunje and Stuart, 1999). Unqualified teachers were found to be coping but only at a basic level. They had a limited repertoire of teaching methods, used group work only infrequently and rarely gave useful feedback to pupils. The qualified teachers who worked alongside them were ready to help but there was a lack of any systematic arrangement for this to happen. In contrast, at the Bellwood school, there was no clear distinction between trained and untrained teachers. In fact the norm was that teachers had not undergone initial teacher training. Being untrained was not in any way stigmatised; rather, it was accepted that a degree was the qualification one required for the job. This was probably due to the high level of the qualifications they did have, in contrast with teachers in Africa who only had secondary school qualifications. The belief that pre-service training was unnecessary concurs with the view of Tatto et.al. that traditional beliefs that teaching is a natural gift have led to a lack of confidence in the efficacy of teacher education (1993:43). Like the teachers in the African study, the teachers at Bellwood had a limited range of teaching methods. As teachers were not labelled trained or untrained there was no cooperation between the two groups

My role as a change agent in the school was an interesting one. As teacher trainer I was performing some of the functions normally reserved for the Principal or Vice-Principal. As I was given authority to enter classrooms at will and evaluate teachers, it would have been easy to have seen me as part of the hierarchy. Undoubtedly, some teachers did see me in that way, but from the beginning many did not. I behaved as one of the teachers. I went to the staff room at break times, had tea and

chatted with the teachers. I became very friendly with them, getting to know about their families and interests. I joined in their ‘grumbles’(Kainan, 1994) about the state of the canteen and the nation. The fact that the civil war was in an active phase meant that there was a certain camaraderie as we worried about bombs being planted on buses and around town (Narrative 1 p.169). Soon I became a focus for various complaints that the teachers had about the principal and became known as someone who was on the side of the teachers rather than the management. It is unclear whether teachers believed I genuinely had influence on the principal or whether I was just considered as someone neutral to let off steam to. In the case of the teacher who wanted me to help push the special needs agenda with the Principal, she seemed to believe I had influence (Narrative 1 p. 160), which of course I did not. Another teacher who came to me about being bullied by another teacher probably did not expect me to be able to do anything for her but just needed someone to talk to (Narrative 1 p.204).

In many ways the close relationship I developed with the teachers was advantageous; they opened up to me and this made my job easier. On the other hand, the distance or respect that exists between teachers and the principal, for example, was missing. When I wanted teachers to conduct their own action research projects, they felt comfortable enough to avoid completing the project. As a principal, although I have a close and friendly relationship with my teachers, they respect me far more than I was respected as a teacher trainer, which means it is easier to ‘get things done’. If I ask them to undertake a project I know they will try to do it at least at the surface level. However, clearly professional development is

not merely about teachers following instructions. The teachers themselves need to have the motivation to change and put in the necessary effort.

When reflecting on my position in the school, it is also pertinent to point out that I occupied an 'intercultural space'. I was a white woman in a context where 'western' or 'white' people enjoyed a high status. However, I was married to a 'local' and had lived in the country for over 20 years. In reflecting on my narrative and experiences, I have to acknowledge that I was in a privileged position. If I had been a Sri Lankan or even a non-white foreigner, I would not have enjoyed the same status, and would undoubtedly have been questioned more as a trainer. At the same time, my closeness to the culture, my Sri Lankan surname and my ability to speak Sinhala helped me to be accepted by the group of teachers. Both my nationality/ethnicity and my marital status definitely worked to my advantage.

As discussed in 2.5.4, the change agent needs a variety of skills and qualities. One of these is the ability to create excitement about learning to learn (Stallings and Krasavage, 1986). He or she also needs a high level of interpersonal skills and needs to be able to '*sense the dynamic of the group and carefully nurture an atmosphere of openness, confidence and trust*'. (Ribisch, 1999:119). Although these are undeniably important skills, there is evidence in my data that achieving these outcomes can be seriously undermined by a less than positive atmosphere in the school. As time went by, the positive atmosphere I had tried to create in workshops declined. Some teachers failed to pay attention and cooperate fully with the sessions. This mirrored the deterioration of the general atmosphere in the school

(Narrative 1 p.202). It was particularly marked at the end of the year when a teacher was suspended for going on a retreat without permission (Vignette 2). After this event, it was virtually impossible to create a positive atmosphere in training. Although the animosity was not directed at me, the morale of the teachers was too low for them to participate with enthusiasm in the development process (Narrative 1 p.202). The willingness to change depends on teachers being valued (Richardson and Placier, 2001) and the teachers, by this stage, felt that they were expendable.

Miles (1988) believes that the skills needed by a change agent are largely natural rather than learnt. To some extent, this is true. One needs a huge enthusiasm for teaching and training, the ability to inspire others and to give feedback in a way that motivates rather than depresses. Having analysed my own performance in the role I believe that I possess these abilities. However, my role was so complex that these skills were not sufficient. I made many mistakes, some of which are discussed in chapter ten. I believe that the skill of cultural competence needs to be added to the various lists of change agent skills in the literature. In Miles et al.'s list it could join the skills of rapport-building, support, conflict mediation, collaboration and confrontation listed in the area of 'socio-emotional process' (1988:158). Although there may be some overlap with areas such as rapport-building, my research points to the need for cultural competence to be considered a separate skill. Its relevance is not limited to international contexts since it does not just refer to the ability to understand different cultures, but also to the ability to read and understand the culture of the school and act accordingly. In spite of having been trained as a

teacher trainer, I was not aware of the importance of school culture and did not at first demonstrate cultural competence in terms of understanding the role of school culture. Through the process of doing autoethnography I came to understand that the existing culture of the school was going to affect the change process, and that I would need to act accordingly.

It is interesting to speculate on how I would or could have acted differently had I understood the school's culture at the beginning. The literature does not provide any inspiration as to whether a teacher trainer like myself could or should have an effect on the school's culture; generally, it is considered to be the role of the school leader to work on improving the culture. It would not, for example, have been my job to instigate celebrations of students' achievements or introduce a school song. In fact, as teacher trainer, I had very little to do with the students. I could, however, have spent more time on improving teacher morale. Nevertheless, ultimately, the teacher trainer could not have replaced the principal's role. It was his approval the teachers needed. His active participation in the training process would not have been sufficient; they needed him to value them on a daily basis.

Culture is underpinned by values (Stevick, 1993, Edge, 1996). In Bellwood, there was a conflict between the values of the teachers, who prioritised education and the directors, for whom profit was the priority. Like Fullan (1993:12) I believe that teachers generally have a moral purpose. This was increasingly threatened by having to work in a school that was cutting corners in order to boost profits

(Interview with TT, p.2). The teachers were detached from the directors; most of the teachers had not met any of the directors as they rarely came to school and they perceived the school management as distant and unfeeling (Interview with OQ, p.2). The main reason for the frequent turnover of principals was conflict with the directors over educational concerns versus profit, with profit inevitably winning. This backdrop undoubtedly had a negative impact on teacher morale. Northcote school contrasts markedly with this situation; it is a not-for-profit school whose directors have no financial stake in the school. There is no conflict between the value of the directors and the teachers. This model seems to have a more positive effect on school culture and morale.

In this chapter my work as a teacher trainer at Bellwood school has been examined. We have seen that school culture had an impact on the efficacy of the programme. In the next chapter we will examine the importance of school culture in more detail.

Chapter Seven – School Culture

Discussing the concept of culture is not unproblematic. As Straub et al. put it, *‘each individual is influenced by a plethora of cultures and sub-cultures—some ethnic, some national, and some organizational’* (2002:13). In this chapter, I am aware that culture cannot be equated simply with national culture. The school has its own ‘culture’, meaning the *‘deep patterns of values, beliefs and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school’s history’* (Deal and Peterson, 1990), and within this there are, of course, the subcultures of various groups of teachers and students. In addition, the national cultures of various members of the school play a part, though aspects of these get mixed up in the melting pot of the international school. ‘Culture’ then, remains an elusive concept and it is with in mind that I embark on this chapter.

The chapter begins with a vignette which concerns the tensions which can exist when the school leader does not share the same (national) culture as other members of the school, and lacks sensitivity to their culture. Later in the chapter I take the Johnson and Stoles model, the Cultural Web (2001) and relate it to the two schools studied.

Vignette 2: Wesak suspension

In May 2008 the teachers, like the rest of Sri Lanka, prepared to celebrate Wesak: the commemoration of the birth, death and enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. One

teacher, EU, had the habit of going on a meditation retreat every Wesak and this year was no different. The following extract from my narrative account explains what happened:

‘She needs to take the previous Friday off for this and puts in her leave request in good time. On the Thursday, she leaves school at the usual time and drives herself to Kandy. It is a strict ashram and she keeps her phone switched off for the entire weekend, in keeping with the code of conduct. She does not then receive the call KL, her HOD, tries to make on Thursday evening, telling her that her leave has not been approved for the Friday.

Later, she tells me, that having arrived in Kandy after 4 hours driving, she would not have returned to Colombo, even if KL had managed to reach her. The following Wednesday I look for EU in school but don’t find her. At lunchtime, she comes to the staffroom with her lunch as usual.

‘I hear you’ve been fired’, I joke across the room from where I’m sitting with my own rice and curry.

‘Yes, that’s right. You heard?’ she said, obviously not joking.

The smile disappears instantly from my face.

‘What? No, I was joking’, I choke, leaving my lunchbox and hurry across to where she stands by the microwave. ‘You’re not serious?’

‘Well, yes, he told me I’m fired. He didn’t approve my leave and I went anyway’.

‘He can’t do that’. By this time, others join in the conversation, others who have a better grasp of local labour laws than I do.

‘On what grounds?’

‘Why?’

‘That’s not fair. It’s your religion’.

‘Take him to court!’

‘English teachers are the hardest to find!’ ‘He’s mad!’

‘Bastard!’

Everyone has an opinion and the solidarity with my friend is comforting but we have to fight it. I picture a strike, a protest, teachers and students united in a just cause. But EU is in a panic.

‘Please don’t do anything,’ she begs us, ‘It’ll make things worse if he knows I’ve told you. Just don’t say anything.’

Others seem as frustrated as I am. I am itching to march into his office and tell him what I think, and that I will leave if EU is fired for practising her religion. But I have promised her and I bite my tongue and keep well out of the Principal’s way. EU is the only teacher I already knew when I arrived at the school. She was the Self-Access Centre assistant at the British Council when I first worked there, and she did the CELTA there. She has been a great support to me since I joined the school and I am determined to support her now.

Later that day, the Principal has sought legal advice and realizes he does not have grounds for dismissal. EU is suspended without pay for two weeks.

The exams are around the corner and it is the students who will suffer. I call EU and she tells me she will return to school and finish the school year but will not be back in September. She has been at the school, first as the librarian and later as teacher of English and TEFL for 13 years.

During her suspension the atmosphere is tense. EU is a popular member of staff. She is a kind, sincere middle-aged lady who is known as a devout Buddhist and caring teacher. The teachers consider the suspension a political act, and politics is a deadly game in Sri Lanka. They respect EU's wishes, however, and the rage bubbles just below the surface. The school secretary, a pillar of the school community, gives her notice after 14 years of service. Everyone knows the reason but it is not, of course, openly acknowledged. (Narrative 1 p.199-201)

The atmosphere in the school at the time was extremely tense. It did not seem to matter that EU was, in fact, also in the wrong. She had gone on leave without permission being granted. What mattered to the teachers was that EU was a hard working and likeable colleague who had wanted leave for religious purposes. Leave had been denied by the Principal, who was a foreigner and not of their religion. Buddhists are particularly sensitive about their religious rights as they were overlooked during the colonial period. Foreign rulers had imposed their religions in various ways for hundreds of years, and Buddhists were keen to show that Sri Lanka was a Buddhist country which respected all religions but gave a special place to

Buddhism. The teachers were upset about the reason for the suspension as well as the severity of it: two weeks without pay.

There are several aspects of this incident which I wish to highlight. Firstly, there was no policy regarding leave for religious purposes. As EU pointed out:

'I have worked for 14 years in this school, earlier as a senior librarian, and when such things happen, I applied for leave and none of the principals found it strange'.

(Interview with EU, p1)

The precedent was that leave was usually granted in such cases. However, *'the problem was that he felt that he should not grant leave for religious purposes'* (Interview with EU, p.1). This appeared to be based on a personal belief rather than a policy that had been agreed by members of the management team. Secondly, the principal encouraged EU to lie about her reasons for wanting leave. This happened both at the time of requesting leave and after she returned:

'Then he said why you can't say you're falling ill or something like that. I was quite surprised that, you know, telling a lie, I mean he encouraged me to tell a lie which I said, well, I'm definitely not going to tell a lie that I'm going to fall ill for those two days because I, I know I'm going to meditate and also, telling lies defeats the purpose. Right. One has to be truthful to oneself.'

'And, then he looked at me and he told, he said oh Mrs EU, you're back. I said yes, I'm back. Then he said were you ill? Then I said no, Mr H...I wasn't ill, I went on my meditation retreat'.

(Interview with EU, p.2)

The Principal was clearly trying to avoid what he saw as the necessity of taking disciplinary action and was offering her a 'get out clause'. Thirdly, the teachers appeared to be unanimous in ignoring the fact that EU had done something wrong in taking leave without permission. She had verbally been told that he did not approve her leave so, although she did not receive the letter denying leave, such a letter was to be expected. She pointed out that when she had discussed the leave with him, 'the conversation ended up, well, he was not giving in and neither did I, so we parted company'. When she got home 'at about 5 O Clock, I get a call from KL saying that there's a letter in my pigeon hole that had been put after I left'. Therefore, EU made a conscious decision to go on leave without approval. What is interesting is that this did not alter the outrage felt by the staff on EU's behalf. Next, EU made a conscious decision not to take legal action against the school in spite of her lawyer's advice:

'the lawyer told me that the procedure they had followed was wrong, considering the fact that I was, that this had happened for the first time, they should have warned me... They can't ask an employee who has been working for something like 14 years to leave like that. You see... first they should have asked to show there were certain criteria like, show cause. They should allow me to, you know, give my written

submission...it would have been taken as obstruction of, you know, to one's practice of one's faith. I mean, if I wanted to the lawyer said I could take it up as an issue, but at that time I was very weary and also by the period I was at home I was reflecting on all the things what happened to me and all the happy times I had with my previous employers'

(Interview with EU, p.7)

EU did not want to harm the school in any way and decided not to make an issue of it. She returned to work after two weeks and gave in her notice to leave at the end of term a few weeks later. Another point is whether the incident reflected 'a general toughening up', as EU believed, or whether EU was singled out for some reason. Her line manager, KL, felt that '*he didn't crack down on everybody*'. Certain teachers '*were allowed to do pretty much as they pleased*', possibly those who were 'non-confrontational'. '*Anybody else who he kind of suspected was a bit rebellious was dealt with harshly*'. In the case of EU,

'I think EU does obviously gives as good as she gets, I don't think EU does take things lying down. I think he just kind of felt annoyed as EU was taking leave despite the fact that (puts on Principal's voice) he had said that no, you cannot go on this meditation retreat or whatever, and he felt that she had sort of defied him, whereas she felt that lots of other teachers were just taking leave, you know, who were just taking leave for no particular reason whatsoever, pretending to

be sick. I'm sure she felt that she was entitled to do the same thing too, and so, he just, cracked down on her, I mean, treated her harshly because he felt it was another challenge to his authority'.

(Interview with KL, p.5)

Clearly the principal felt he had no choice but to take action against a teacher who had deliberately disobeyed his orders. EU felt this to be the case:

'Well, he'll take up the position that he did the right thing, that he maintained discipline and did the necessary, the right thing by taking disciplinary action against me so that others would not resort to this kind of thing, like to teach me a lesson and, you know, that others will get the message loud and clear'.

(Interview with EU, p.9)

However, those who knew that others were getting time off by lying felt strongly that EU's case was unfair.

Finally, the strength of the impact the suspension had on the rest of the staff needs to be highlighted. The solidarity they felt with their colleague was moving. TI, in a text message to me wrote:

'It is all so fucking awful. The man is not human'

The fact that the Principal kept her in suspense as to whether she was going to be allowed to return to school at all only served to strengthen feelings further. The

following extract from my narrative account portrays the suspension as a contributing factor to a general feeling of negativity in the school:

‘The school appears to be falling apart. EU’s suspension, the firings and the resignations have all taken a heavy toll on morale. Teachers talk variously of going abroad, doing further studies or moving to another school. There are only a handful of teachers I have not heard considering their options’.

(Narrative 1 p.202)

This incident is an example of a case in which an in-depth interview was a useful addition to the narrative account. I was obviously just an observer of the incident, albeit a sympathetic one close to the source. The case was the focus of a great deal of gossip and hearsay in the school and the interview enabled me to hear from the person who was actually involved in it.

Overall, the incident served to make the staff more resentful of the Principal. It gave a ‘push’ to certain members of staff who had been considering leaving, and it certainly contributed towards my leaving when I did (see Vignette 4). Although it was probably intended to strengthen discipline in the school, the punishment given was too harsh and the victim too popular to have that effect; also, the perception that it was unfair meant that it failed to have the desired effect.

The above vignette demonstrates what can happen when a leader shows a lack of sensitivity towards the culture and religion of a staff member. The issue became

much broader than the individual concerned and had a negative effect on morale. The fact that religion and culture were involved probably made the reaction of the other teachers stronger and served to underline the differences between the Principal as a foreigner and the local teachers.

In the context of an international school, it is important to consider the role of the various national cultures that make up the school, and the place each one occupies. According to Sylvester, '*The school is a microculture where the cultures of students and teachers meet*' (1998:194). Ideally, in a school acculturation should take place, with teachers and students assimilating each other's cultures (ibid.). In Bellwood school there was a lack of emphasis on celebrating national cultures, and there was evidence that the Principal was orienting to British norms of behavior in his determination of what was acceptable in school. The school had been started under a British Principal, although under Sri Lankan management. The school followed the British education system and emphasis was on students proceeding to higher studies at British universities. Events that were important in the local (Sri Lankan) culture were not celebrated and the following of local cultural norms was discouraged, such as in the case where teachers were prevented from attending a funeral that according to local custom they would be expected to attend. Northcote school, in contrast took pride in the nationalities of its students. Flags representing the students' countries were displayed at the entrance. United Nations day was celebrated by students dressing up in the national costumes and sharing food from their countries. Vignette 5 demonstrates how, as Principal, I let local norms and customs dictate how we react

to special circumstances by closing the school for a day in honour of teacher who had died. As the teachers were mostly Sri Lankan, and as we were based in Sri Lanka, I felt it made sense to celebrate local occasions. At Northcote, we held a 'Dansal' (free food stall) at Wesak and held games and a party for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. We also acknowledged Independence Day with a special assembly. These events were not recognised at Bellwood. Before I joined Northcote, there had also been events to celebrate the cultures of foreign teachers, such as French or German Night. This is a tradition I hope to continue.

Cambridge highlights the importance of recognising and valuing the cultures of members of the school community (1998:204). As Sri Lankan teachers working in their own country with foreign students, my teachers are happy to share the celebration of national events with their students. I feel this contributes towards the higher morale that exists in Northcote in comparison with Bellwood. It was my own experience, for example, that morale was very badly affected when the teachers were not permitted to attend the funeral of children from a neighbouring school who were killed by a terrorist bomb (Narrative 1 p.196). They also had an extreme reaction to the suspension of a teacher for attending a Buddhist meditation (Vignette 2). My autoethnographic work made me more aware of these reactions, and reflected on the importance of giving due recognition to Sri Lankan culture in my own school.

While there are a number of factors influencing school culture, local cultural norms are likely to play a significant part. In some schools teachers and parents feel that

their own national cultures are being marginalised by the western liberal humanism which is the dominant cultural style of the international school (Cambridge, 1998:199). My research has made me aware that respecting local culture and the culture of the teachers and students in the school is crucial in achieving a positive school culture. This position gains support from Pearce, who claims that schools which deliberately modify their culture in this way show their sensitivity towards the importance of shared culture and show respect for more than one formula (1998:47).

A valuable way of understanding school culture is provided by Johnson and Stoles (see 2.6). The Cultural Web consists of six elements which make up a 'Paradigm': stories, rituals and routines, symbols, organizational structure, control systems and power structures. There is clear evidence in my own data of the explanatory power of this model. For example, the stories that are told and retold within the school have an important role to play. In Bellwood school, there were many stories about 'the good old days' when two of the early principals were in the school. These were contrasted with the less positive present time.

The routines of the school also help define the culture. For example, at Bellwood, there were 'briefings' twice a week, at which there was one way communication from the principal to the teachers (Narrative 1 p159). The fact that these were held at morning break was significant: there was no time for a two way discussion. There were rarely opportunities for teachers to express their views (Interview with QL, p.5). This aspect of the culture of Bellwood may have contributed towards the

negativity of the staff. In contrast, at Northcote, there is a weekly staff meeting which takes place after school and allows for genuine two-way communication. The smaller size of the school may help facilitate discussion between teachers and Principal. However, my research has also led me to understand the importance of listening to the teachers and maintaining open channels of communication. Deal and Peterson emphasise the importance of symbols, rituals and celebrations of success (2009:166). Comparing the two schools, Northcote placed more emphasis on this aspect of school life, and as Principal, I nurtured and further developed these traditions. Although elements such as singing the school song, celebrating birthdays, producing a school magazine and awards for teachers and students do not seem important, taken together such cultural artefacts can boost morale and help build a shared culture.

In terms of organizational structure, Bellwood had two separate categories of teacher: local hire and overseas hire. (Hayden, 2006:81). Teachers hired overseas, as well as enjoying a greater status and popularity, also received a higher level of pay and other incentives such as free housing, which local teachers did not get. There were several expatriate teachers who received salaries up to four times higher than the 'local' teachers. I agree with Richards (1998:178) that this can *'hardly be a unifying factor for the school staff'*. There is evidence of teacher resentment of this in the interview with OQ (p.1). Linked to this is the fact that international schools tend to favour teachers from the developed world (Richards, 1998:178). This was true in both schools, but had more serious implications at Bellwood, since there were

a mix of teachers and the discrimination was felt (Interview with OQ, p.1). Interestingly, an expatriate teacher also pointed out the discrimination he experienced as a 'minority' in the school (Interview with CM, p.1). Another issue which affected both schools is the economic differences between teachers and clientele (Caffyn, 2007:348). Teachers pay was very low in both schools and both schools catered to the higher economic level of their respective communities. There is some evidence of the social and economic gulf that existed between teachers and students at Bellwood (Narrative 1 p.188). This may have had an effect on teacher morale and motivation. However, more research needs to be carried out to be certain about this.

Considering control systems and power structures, Caffyn claims that international schools need to impose culture from above since their diversity creates an inability to create consensus. (2007:347). This may be true of a school like Bellwood, where there were signs of fragmentation (Caffyn, 2007:243). Caffyn argues that the fragmentation which is occurring in international schools (2007: 338) is closely related to the fact of isolation which is typical of such schools (ibid). According to Caffyn:

Isolation creates cultural polarities, exaggerates cultural perspectives and encourages the development of new cultures and subcultures within schools. This results in positioning and exaggerated cultural differences, thus fragmenting school cultures

into splinter cultures where survivalist strategies and cultural isolation deepens differences...

This mirrors the situation that existed in Bellwood school, where many members of staff had broken into groups or balkanised (Hargreaves, 1995:2). This fragmented professional relationships making it hard for teachers to collaborate (Caffyn, 2007:347). This became evident when I tried to get teachers to work together on Action Research projects (Narrative 1 p.202).

The mix of national cultures of staff and students as well as the nature of the community to which the school belongs has an impact on the school's culture (Allan, 2007:427). As Allan points out, there are a variety of situations which involve crossing cultural frontiers, and these 'are bound to engender cultural dissonance, if not conflict' (2007: 428). Bellwood school was located in a culturally mixed community and teachers came from the various religious and cultural groups of Sri Lanka. There is evidence of conflict between teachers and between teachers and the Principal (Interview with CM, p.1, Interview with TI, p.1, Narrative 1 p.160). Caffyn agrees with Allan that such conflict is inevitable where there are diverse cultural backgrounds (2007:342). As Deal and Peterson point out, cultures can unravel and become toxic quickly (2009:166/7). There is evidence of a more cohesive culture at Bellwood just a few years earlier (Interview with TT, pp.2-3).

I disagree with Caffyn that there will necessarily be conflict within all international schools. Northcote, for example, is small enough for there to be a degree of cultural consensus. The school is located in a predominantly Sinhala Roman Catholic community and the majority of teachers are either Catholic or from another Christian denomination. This tended to have a cohesive effect on the staff as a whole. Nevertheless, there were conflicts between staff on occasion (Narrative 2, pp. 220-221) and between parents and the School authorities (Vignette 5).

Cushner (1990, cited in Allan, 2002:94) claims that schools often fail due to the incompatibility between the culture of the child and the culture of the school. This occurs when national cultural values are undervalued or ignored by the school (ibid). By valuing and celebrating the students' and teachers' cultures this does not need to occur. Walker (2000:83) describes the 'powerful influence' of the school culture. If the school manages to incorporate the cultures of the students and teachers within it, or at the very least a genuine acceptance and respect for them, there need not be dissonance. It is important, however, to ensure that the cultural acceptance is not merely superficial, as in the 'saris, samosas and steel bands' metaphor often used to imply skin-deep intercultural 'understanding' (Cambridge, 2009:80). As Renaud (1995, cited in Walker, 2000:82) suggests, international 'understanding' rarely gets beneath the surface and may even be paternalistic. As a Principal, I have become aware that various events which celebrate diversity, while pleasant and a positive part of school culture are only the visible tip of a very large cultural iceberg that is a complex amalgam of different elements and not reducible to the sort of national

characterizations that are implicit in events such as UN Day. We need to somehow incorporate the aspects of the culture which lie at the level of values and beliefs. If we can develop consensus at this level, much conflict could be avoided.

The Johnson and Stoles model, then, can be further developed by the addition of two other elements: a consideration of the nationality and culture of the members, and beliefs and values. The elements covered in the model are all clearly visible on the surface. If we probe beneath the surface and uncover the beliefs and values which inform the surface elements we can gain a clearer understanding of a school's culture. It is only by understanding the culture thoroughly that positive change can begin to occur.

It would be interesting to carry out further research into the impact factors such as pay inequality and lack of acknowledgement of their national culture actually have on teachers. However, it is clear that international schools need to pay particular attention to developing a positive and strong school culture which takes account of the national cultures of students as well as the range of other factors which contribute towards culture.

In the next chapter we will consider the role of school leadership.

Chapter Eight - Leadership

Educational leadership involves a wide range of skills and competencies, but a key aspect is the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships. Successful leaders '*constantly work on developing relationships at all levels of the organization*' (Fullan,2001:14) and '*show respect for staff and concern about their feelings and needs*' (Leithwood, 2003:4). The chapter includes two vignettes, the first of which was chosen to illustrate an aspect of decision-making and its effect on relations with staff. The second serves as a reminder of the circumstances of my departure from the school. Between the two vignettes I highlight what can happen to relationships when incidents like this accumulate. Later in the chapter I consider various roles of the Principal, which emerged from my data as significant. These include leader of teaching, learning and professional development, shaper of school culture, change agent and transformational leader.

Vignette 3 : C.A.S Coordinator

One of the teachers who resigned towards the end of the year was British English teacher, TT. She was also the Coordinator of C.A. S. (Community Action and Social Service), an integral part of the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme. This involved organizing charity work and visits to places outside the school and 'it is a position that suits her outgoing, talkative and adventurous personality' (Narrative 1 p.203). The post became vacant with her resignation. The following extract tells what happened:

'The post is advertised internally but no-one applies for it. Everyone knows it is a lot of work for a tiny extra sum in your pay packet. The Principal is worried. Without a C.A.S coordinator, the lucrative I.B. programme is in jeopardy.

He approaches two teachers who would be ideal for the post. They are young, active and outgoing. Both of them are Heads of Houses who have shown their ability to organize events and manage students. They both decline the honour. He approaches several more teachers, but none of them accept the challenge. He starts to worry. TI and I suggest he advertises it as part of one of the teaching posts or offers more money, two suggestions he rejects. He has his own plan. The probationers are the most vulnerable teachers in the school. They are in their first year and he does not have to give a reason for not renewing their contracts.

Of the probationers, he picks on CP because, as he tells her 'Sinhala teachers are easy to find'. The other probationers are saved because their subjects are hard to find teachers for. First he offers CP the job of C.A.S coordinator, which, predictably, she declines. She is young, married just a month earlier and doing her Master's in her free time. She is quiet and timid, and on so many levels not right for the job, a fact she is well aware of. Then the Principal makes his move. If she does not take the job, she will not be needed next year. She keeps her dignity, asks for a few days to think about it

and leaves the office in silence. Within hours, the news is all over the school, and a sense of outrage pervades the faculty rooms and staffroom. It is likened to kicking a kitten in the face.

(Narrative 1 p204)

This incident occurred very soon after the suspension of EU; in fact, she was still under suspension when it happened. The tense atmosphere worsened, and, as I wrote in my narrative, 'The negativity in the school threatens to overwhelm me':

'The Principal was behaving in a way I couldn't comprehend, and I was sitting by helplessly watching him destroy people's confidence and self-respect. He had created an atmosphere in which it was impossible to motivate the teachers; life in the school had become a quest for survival and the programme was starting to seem irrelevant'.

(Narrative 1 p.206)

The staffroom talk consisted of even more complaints. One of the teachers I was closest to, OQ, was one of those who was 'deeply affected by what is going on in the school'. In addition, 'she is being 'bullied' by another Chemistry teacher, who is jealous of her hard work and success. Neither her HOD nor the Principal has taken this seriously'. I was keen to help but 'the Principal has repeatedly told me to stick to my own area and I know this case would be no different. All I can do is affirm my faith in her as an excellent teacher and encourage her to believe in herself

(Narrative 1 p.204)

Personally, I was keen to confront the principal but did not know where to begin. There seemed so much I wanted to say to him but none of it directly affected me so I felt I had to keep quiet. It was increasingly difficult to work with him with resentment against him building up all the time. I felt that 'one more act of aggression by the Principal could push me over the edge' (Narrative 1 p.206). Looking back, he was obviously trying to do what he felt was right for the school. He wanted to maintain discipline among teachers and support the IB programme by appointing a new coordinator. His general lack of interaction with the teachers meant that he may well have been unaware of the atmosphere of tension that prevailed in the staff and faculty rooms. My biggest regret in this project is that I was not able to interview the Principal at any point to find out his motivations and feelings about the various incidents that took place.

As a principal, I find this a cautionary tale. I accept that there was no bad will on the part of that principal: yet, his staff were disaffected and a tense atmosphere prevailed in school. What I learn from this is to always create an atmosphere in which staff can give feedback without fear of negative repercussions; to always reflect on the implications of every action for everyone concerned and how motives might be perceived; to explain decisions and be willing to reconsider once feedback is given. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn this before starting as principal. In any case, the size of the school makes it easier to communicate with everyone on a daily basis. I am happy when I get negative feedback as it is proof

that teachers are not afraid to give it. However, I am aware that it is hard to achieve the balance between maintaining authority and being approachable enough to be given negative feedback. One teacher told me that I singled two teachers out for praise during a meeting, when they were not the only ones who deserved it. After listening to this feedback I started to praise individuals privately, giving only generalized praise during the meeting. I believe there are still teachers who are not confident enough to tell me directly when they think I have done something wrong, so there is still work to do in this area.

The leadership style described above tends to exacerbate existing differences between staff members and provoke extreme reactions. It certainly served to increase the animosity that existed between the Principal and me. My own history of conflict with him dated back to the early days of our relationship. In fact, the first incident was when he saw my first set of feedback reports on teachers and found them to be 'too positive'. This incident began a pattern of less than satisfactory interactions with the Principal, which could possibly have been avoided. On the same occasion he told me not to 'mention British Council' so much. I genuinely wanted to know the reason for this, but was unable to elicit an answer from him. My reaction to his comment shows that I was lacking confidence in myself and over-sensitive to criticism:

'I know, but...' is all I manage. I feel my lip quivering and my face turning red. 'Ok, then' is the shortest acceptable answer but it is not what I want to say.

(Narrative 1 p.157)

There must have been a reason for him to say what he did. Did he feel, for example, that international schools rather than British Council would have been a more suitable background for the teacher trainer? If I had known his reason I might have understood and been less resentful. As it was I interpreted it as him wanting me to lose part of my identity:

I can't shake off British Council that easily. I stayed too long there and, ultimately, compromised who I was, but I learnt so much of what I know from the many fascinating people who passed through its doors during the years I was there...

(Narrative 1 p.158)

There was clearly a lot that was assumed on both sides, due to that lack of proper communication. Another pattern was that after an incident of conflict, I tried to find support from an ally who would tell me that I was right and the Principal was wrong. Often, this would be TI:

In the staffroom over tea I rail to TI and 'get it off my chest'. TI has no idea why mentioning the British Council should be a problem. He agrees that Sri Lankans have nothing but respect for the institution and anyway, can't remember me mentioning it more than once or twice in passing in workshops...

(Narrative 1 p.158)

He did the same when he had conflict with the Principal and in this way, we cast ourselves as the ‘good guys’ and him as the ‘baddie’.

These incidents meant I started to interpret the Principal’s actions in a negative way.

I described the scene in his office as follows:

He is sitting at his large desk, which is strangely clear of books, paper or any of the usual rubble on a working desk. Just sitting...

(Narrative 1 p.178)

The implication here is that he does not do any work. Clearly, the scene could have been interpreted in different ways: that he is tidy, well organized and up to date with his work. Since becoming a Principal this comment had haunted me, and I often ‘look busy’ when I actually have nothing to do.

The next direct conflict I had was when I started teaching English to Form 1 and found that the straight grey skirts the girls wore were impractical for active lessons. The class happened to have P.E. the lesson before, so I suggested they came to English wearing P.E. kit, which made it easier for them to sit on the floor. The Head of Year told the girls this was not allowed, so I decided to seek permission from the Principal. I went into his office quite confident that he would agree to my request, but in fact his reaction was ‘What a bizarre request!’ This comment had more impact on me than a straight refusal would have done. It seemed to be a rejection of my whole approach to teaching – an active approach in which it would be preferable for the children to be dressed comfortably. There is also the implication that the

request is somehow a threat to the very fabric of the school: ‘We have school uniform here!’ Trying to see this incident from his side, I conclude that he did, in fact, see the request as a threat. His role was to maintain discipline, which included school uniform, and he obviously felt that I, coming from outside the mainstream system, did not see the value of uniform. To some extent he would have been right about this: my priority was making learning active and fun. I was focused on ridding the school of boring, unmotivating teaching and I had no interest in maintaining discipline through school uniform. If I thought about discipline at all, it was to get teachers to prevent bad behavior by making lessons interesting. Once again, it was a case of differing emphases bringing us into conflict.

Again, looking back, my own reaction was excessive:

Once again, I leave the Principal’s office with smoke coming out of my ears. ‘Why is he such a boring stick in the mud?’

(Narrative 1 p.179)

I completely failed to see the Principal’s point of view or even concede that he had one which could be as valid as mine. Even TI’s lack of support (‘he is not as sympathetic as usual’) did not make me question the rightness of my position.

Instead, I became nostalgic about British Council:

I want to be with others who think that it doesn’t matter what students wear and who love to experiment with any idea that occurs to them without having to worry about girls being able to get on the floor in their tight skirts...

(Narrative 1 p.179)

This episode shows the difficulties of moving from an ELT context to mainstream education. In addition to it being, on occasion, problematic for me, I can now see that it was difficult for the Principal to have brought in someone from a different context with different values. Working as a Principal in a mainstream school now, I can imagine that one of my former colleagues from British Council would not necessarily slip seamlessly into a role in my school, and that there would be certain adjustments to be made. At the time of writing the narrative, I did not appreciate the fact that I was probably a threat to the Principal in some ways: I was confident and knowledgeable in an area he should have been in charge of. Perhaps had I understood that at the time, I would have been more sensitive towards his position.

Vignette 4 My departure from Bellwood

In this vignette I describe the incident that led to me leaving the school prematurely. It is also the hardest for me to write about dispassionately. I didn't have a job description and no-one had told me I was expected to be on school premises at certain times:

‘And at this stage, I come and go as I please. Between classes I jump into a trishaw and meet my British Council friends at coffee shops partly to get the frustrations of school out of my system. ‘

(Narrative 1 p.180)

I had even taken time off ‘for research purposes’ which in fact meant visiting another school as a teacher trainer. I assumed that a reasonable amount of leave would not be a problem, but in the absence of a job description, this was never made clear. When I asked to reschedule a meeting with the Professional Development Team to pick my daughter up from school on her birthday, I just assumed that it would be acceptable. I was so sure about this that I had already made a promise to the child. Once again, it was the Principal’s assertion that it was a ‘bizarre request’ that caused me to over-react. How could wanting to spend time with your child on her birthday be considered ‘bizarre’? The situation was also made worse for me by the Deputy Principal agreeing with the Principal, saying:

‘That would not normally be a reason to take leave in a school. I know you have worked in different kinds of organizations before so you are not aware of this.’

(Narrative 1 p.208)

I had worked collaboratively with her for 10 months and it upset me that she was stressing my ‘difference’ and my ignorance of school rules. The worst part of the whole incident was TI, my close friend and ally, siding with the Principal, who he considered ‘the enemy’ as much as I did.

My reaction was, looking back, hugely exaggerated. It was, of course, that this came on top of building stress from EU’s suspension. I genuinely believe that

before that happened, the Principal would not have come down so harshly on me. Nothing in the way I had worked prepared me for a direct refusal of a few hours' leave for personal reasons. Without the tension from the suspension, I would perhaps have stayed at school and spent time deciding what my next step would be. I also question now the idealism that led me to reject the easy option: taking the day of my daughter's birthday off 'sick'. I know from the fact that the Principal offered this option to EU that it would have been a way for us to have avoided confrontation. I was devoted to my daughter but also to the truth, and there was no way out that would have allowed me to be honest. Now, I wish that I had been less idealistic and more practical: I could have stayed at the school until the end of the year and been able to visit the school and follow up on areas of research after I left. As it was I was officially 'persona non grata', though I kept in touch with TI on a personal level and several teachers both professionally and personally.

By my reaction, I had remained 'true to myself' but I paid too high a price for it. Of course, there is rarely a simple cause and effect relationship between events, and my decision to 'walk out' was certainly influenced by the years of suffering I went through with my daughter's ill health. A sickly child usually demands more of a parent than a healthy one and the level of sacrifice required is higher. Leaving a job a few weeks earlier than planned did not at the time seem too much to ask to make my daughter happy; however, with the benefit of hindsight I wish I had found another solution.

This vignette shows that despite my unique qualifications, I was not valued as a staff member and was easily dispensable. As a Principal I would have assumed there were underlying reasons for the extreme reaction of ‘walking out’, arranged a meeting to discuss the issues and tried to reconcile. KH was clearly out of his depth and did not know how to react. A more experienced person might have probed beneath the surface and tried a little harder to find a solution that everyone could live with. At the same time, the possibility that I was a threat to him probably prevented him from trying to redeem the situation.

In the rest of this chapter I use the frameworks of Leithwood’s transformational leadership and Fullan’s (2007) Cultural Change Principal to discuss the vignettes and other incidents from my data. I propose additions to Leithwood’s framework based on my work.

In the 1980’s Instructional Leadership was considered the model of choice according to research on effective schools (Hallinger, 2003:329). This was identified as ‘strong, directive leadership focused on curriculum and instruction from the Principal’ (ibid’.). However, during the 1990s, dissatisfaction with this model grew as it focused too much on the Principal as *‘the centre of expertise, power and authority’* (Hallinger, 2003:330). As discussed in 2.8.2, the concept of transformational leadership entered the educational field from the general leadership literature during the 1990s (Hallinger, 2003:335). Leithwood et al. (1982) developed a model for the application of transformational leadership to education,

which includes seven components: ' *individualised support, shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewards, high expectations and modelling*' (*ibid*). These provide a useful framework within which to consider leadership issues arising from this autoethnography, though the framework benefits from additional consideration of the qualities Fullan identifies as characterising the successful 'Cultural Change Principal': *moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making* (2002:17).

Individualised support involves leaders paying attention to the needs of followers and supporting their development (Bass, 1999:11). There are several examples of the Principal of Bellwood applying the rules without considering individual circumstances. My own departure from the school was one of these (Vignette 4). It was clear that for KH rules and policies were more important than individuals and their real lives and issues. Another example was the case of the teacher who was suspended for going on a religious retreat (Vignette 2). He emphasised his own authority over consideration of that teacher's needs. Although KH was not indifferent to the need to help teachers develop professionally, he saw this as arising from the need to maintain standards and attract students to the school rather than as a response to individual needs. As teacher trainer, I had the opportunity to give individualised support to teachers and did so in the case of the teacher described in Vignette 1 as well as the cases of NY and LV in the Narrative. However, I was not

the school leader, and it was the support of the Principal that the teachers wanted (Interview with KL, p.3).

There is wide recognition that the principal and teachers of a school benefit from being part of a professional learning community, where they work together around issues of practice (Louis,n.d:3). There is evidence that this can improve student achievement (ibid). Louis emphasises the need for trust, while claiming that schools typically have low levels of relational trust among the adults (n.d.:8). In particular, teachers trust administrators less than they trust each other, which means there is a tendency to look with mistrust at initiatives that are started by administrators (n.d.:9), and the principal's insistence on rules and procedures at the expense of working to *improve relationships* with his staff underlined his administrative role. This can make it difficult to create *shared goals*. At Bellwood, the Principal decided alone on the goals of the development programme. Although it has been found that top-down initiatives generally do not work (Fullan, 2007:81), there is some possibility that they can be made to work if the idea is good and there is empowerment and choices as the process develops (Fullan, 2007:82). The teachers were given some degree of empowerment by leading workshops and choosing the content, though overall this was limited by the compulsion to attend all workshops and have their lessons observed. Such collegiality as existed was largely contrived (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006:252).For example, teachers were expected to peer observe as part of the development programme, and they had to work together to

produce an item for a workshop. When left to their own devices, collaborative initiatives were rare.

Charisma is described by Bass (1985, cited in Griffith, 2004: 334) as the leader's ability to convey their own sense of mission to the followers, instilling in them loyalty and commitment. Charisma equates to Leithwood's *shared goals and vision*. Assessed in these terms, the principal of Bellwood school, could be said to lack charisma. It was his first post as Principal and most teachers did not expect him to stay long, but rather to treat the post as a stepping stone to a better school (Interview with KL, p3). No-one was really sure of his mission and one did not sense his own loyalty and commitment to the school. The narrative provides a good example of his failure to communicate any sense of mission or strategic vision. The goals of the training programme were never specified beyond the initial conversation I had with him (Narrative 1 pp.143-145), during which vague notions of improvement were discussed.

The transformational leader should provide *intellectual stimulation*, which Bass defines as opportunities for staff to think in new ways (1990:21). Both KH and I tried to do this through training programmes. In addition, as principal I encourage teachers to take on learning opportunities, such as M.A.s or additional training courses. It is important as a leader to demonstrate one's own continued learning as I am doing through this PhD. I very much see my one of my roles as 'chief learner'

(Kelleher, 2002) and I talk with my teachers and students about my own learning process.

One of the main ways in which a school leader provides intellectual stimulation is by creating a culture in which everyone learns (Hoerr, 2009: 92). At one level this involves the practical elements of arranging and facilitating professional development activities, calling for an *understanding of the nature of the change process*. Although Ribisch found it advantageous for the facilitator to be from outside the school hierarchy (1999:119), Sri Lankan teachers would typically expect the principal to be the leader of the training process, and several writers have highlighted the importance of the school leader to the process of change or development. Berman and McLaughlin (1978:viii), for example, state that the active support of the principal is needed. For them it is not necessarily hands-on, or as they call it, 'how to' leadership, but rather moral support and giving legitimacy to the project (ibid.) Similarly, Fullan points out that leadership is important for school improvement since leaders are in a position to facilitate or inhibit the creation of a learning community in their schools (2009: 162). Even more importantly, who they are and what they believe greatly affects professional development (Bredeson and Johansson, 2000:390).

At Bellwood, the principal showed his commitment to the teachers' professional development and to *knowledge creation* by bringing me in as teacher trainer. He also attended all the workshops and met with me weekly to discuss the progress of

individual teachers. He was clearly committed to the process. However, his role was not, in the eyes of the teachers, an active one. He did not lead any of the workshops and did not conduct any observations. I do not believe that this was necessarily a problem; many Principals admit that leading teacher development is not something they feel capable of performing well (Holland, 2008-9:16). By recognising his own limitations and bringing in someone suited to the job, he was showing good leadership. On the other hand, the Principal's role needs to be active since the influence of outside experts often disappears when they do (Powell, 2000:97, cited in Hayden, 2007:228). Leaders must build teacher learning into the 'everyday fabric of school life' since deep changes require deep learning (Lashway, 2001, cited in Powell, 2007:355). While KH showed interest in individuals through his conversations with me, teachers were not aware of this interest. He did not discuss their learning with them as part of a collaborative learning partnership. As a result, the benefits of this interest were not experienced by the teachers.

For me, it is absolutely crucial that I personally take responsibility for the professional development of my teachers. While I fully accept that at larger schools it may be necessary for the principal to delegate the role, it would not be a satisfactory solution for me. In my experience, working with teachers on their professional development creates a bond of mutual trust; it is particularly rewarding to develop this kind of bond between teachers and Principal. By working with teachers in the classroom I know them better and understand what will work for them professionally.

I would now like to move onto a discussion of the Principal's role in *culture building*. Developing a culture where everyone learns is not just a matter of leading or facilitating professional development activities. Learning will not take place if the culture is not right. Teachers need to feel valued by the school leader (Northouse:2009: 147-147). This is not a job that can be delegated to someone else. As principal, I need to personally ensure that each member of staff feels appreciated and is sufficiently satisfied to undertake the learning they need to improve their performance. My commitment to this was reinforced by my experience at Bellwood.

At Bellwood the teachers did not feel close to or appreciated by the principal. In interviews, several mentioned that they did not feel their work was valued (Interview with LE p.1). The Principal found it hard to communicate with the teachers. In this chapter I have described in detail my conflict with him, and at least two other teachers described their own lack of consensus with him (Interview with TI p.1, Interview with KL, pp.1-2). Teachers spoke to me about their problems because he was not approachable (Narrative 1, p.204). This picture of the principal tallies with the point Welch et al.(1982) make about the isolation of the principalship, which discourages ties with teachers and students (cited in Whitaker, 1995:288).

The blame for the poor state of the school's culture cannot and did not lie entirely with KH as principal. The school had had a long succession of principals who had stayed for only two years each. Individual principals had not had the time to

consolidate what existed of the school's rituals, symbols and ceremonies, which could have reinforced positive school culture (Stolp, 1994:3). This frequent turnover of principals is not uncommon in international schools (Hawley, 1994, Hayden, 2006:105). Although it is common, insufficient attention has been paid to the effects of the phenomenon on school culture, and therefore teacher morale and potential for professional development. I would welcome more research in this area.

Principals need to be aware that school culture is the key to improvement and growth (Habegger, 2008:1). According to Leithwood and Jantzi, some of the ways in which Principals can strengthen school culture include engaging in direct and frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs, sharing power and responsibility with others and using symbols to express cultural values (2006:269). Teachers at Bellwood complained about the lack of communication with KH generally (Interview with KL p3, Interview with DM, p.1) so we can assume he did not engage in communication about culture with them and he did not do so with me. Power was shared through the usual posts such as Head of Division and Head of Department. However, crucially, it was not shared in terms of professional development and school improvement initiatives. For example, heads of department were not given responsibility for observation and feedback. As we saw in Chapter Seven there was a lack of symbols used to express cultural values at Bellwood, whereas Northcote had plenty of them.

Another feature of transformational leadership is *rewards*. Some of the teachers at Bellwood expressed the absence of these from KH's leadership. In an interview with KL (pp.2-3), she points out that teachers were affected by the lack of rewards for achieving good exam results. There is also little evidence of *high expectations*. Evidence from my narrative account shows that his expectations of teachers were low, since he was surprised by the positive comments I had made in my feedback on teachers (Narrative 1 pp. 154-155).

Stolp agrees with Leithwood that one of the most effective ways to change school culture is by *modelling* the values and beliefs which are important to the institution (1994:3). What the Principal says and does is seen by others as 'what is important'. Therefore, acting with care and concern for others will help to develop a culture with such values (ibid). KH's isolation from the staff failed to provide a model of collegial behaviour for the teachers, which may have contributed toward the reluctance they showed to work together. It also created a barrier to the *sharing and coherence making* that Fullan (2002) identified as important for transformational leadership.

Having reflected on his leadership style as part of my autoethnographic process, I have tried hard to avoid the isolation which can be inherent in the role of principal. I am fortunate that my school, being small, lends itself to a closer rapport with teachers and students. However, there has been a conscious effort on my part to integrate and form close relationships with the members of the school, which is a direct result of my learning for this PhD. I use break and lunch times to mingle with

students. I introduced rabbits to the school as one way of creating a bond and shared interest with the students (Narrative 2 p.221). I make a point of talking to every teacher every day and asking them about their families and ‘real’ life as well as discussing school matters. In this way I am also modelling behaviour I would like teachers to adopt with students. I have taken on board Peterson’s assertion that *‘every interaction with a staff member or student is a chance to reinforce the culture’* (n.d.:113).

I would add the elements of moral purpose and commitment to Leithwood’s elements of transformational leadership. According to Evans (1996: 76), authentic leadership *‘comes from the core commitments that lie within the leader’*, the first of which is caring. As my second narrative describes, I find myself feeling very committed to the school right from the beginning, and care passionately about doing my absolute best for the school. I have spent a lot of time rallying teachers to being loyal, committed and hard working. This is linked to the celebration of success and the use of ritual. The school song, for example, which we sing every Monday, encourages students and teachers to ‘hold up the name of Northcote’. At my school there is very much a feeling of ‘us’ and ‘our way of doing things’, which I encourage and nurture.

Moral purpose, omitted from the Leithwood et al. model but important to Fullan’s identification of the qualities required of an effective principal, is clearly an essential component of transformational leadership (Bass, 1999:181). Moral leadership *‘emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations*

and values of the followers' (Greenfield, 2004:175). I take this to mean that everything I do needs to be fair and just in respect of my staff. My actions should promote inclusion and social justice. At Bellwood, there were several incidents which I feel conflicted with the need of the leader to act morally. One of these was the occasion when a teacher was coerced into taking on a role she was ill-prepared for, an incident which is described in vignette 3. The teacher was treated as a means to an end rather than an end in herself (Bass and Steidmeier, 1999:182). Reflecting on this incident through my autoethnography made me determined to avoid behaving in such ways. However, actually taking on the role of principal made me somewhat less idealistic about the possibility of always behaving in a way that is clearly fair and just to all. Some situations a principal faces are complex and there is no easy solution. I faced such a situation during my first few months as Principal. I had to let go a teacher who was not performing well (Narrative 2 p.218). He was a father of a young child and I had no way of knowing if he would find alternative employment. There is no unemployment benefit in Sri Lanka and so taking a job from a man with dependents does not feel like a fair and just way of behaving. However, as principal, my first duty is to the school. Despite warnings and advice, the teacher was not meeting the required standards. I do not regret what I did. However I am not satisfied that my actions met my own standards for moral behaviour. As this example demonstrates, the role of Principal is one filled with paradoxes. For example, they need to create communities that 'learn with heart' while 'running a tight ship' and 'lead with soul' while making hard-headed decisions about hiring and firing (Evans, 1996: 77).

As well as providing professional development for the staff, a school leader needs to consider his or her own professional learning. As Boerema points out, new leaders need to be nurtured (2011:555). Becoming a principal for the first time, I have had the benefit of the learning I have undertaken for this PhD. I have realised the important role I have to play in terms of nurturing and developing school culture. Although I have had the chance to meet other principals through events organised by Edexcel and Cambridge International Examinations, these have been information giving rather than developmental. As a reflective practitioner, I am learning through my own mistakes and experiences, but would very much welcome the opportunity to learn from a more experienced leader, for example, or to share others' knowledge through workshops. Untrained principals are as much a part of the international school phenomenon as untrained teachers. For example, several writers have commented on principals' lack of skills in teacher development and evaluation (e.g. Leithwood, 1982:332-33). However, more research is needed on the need for principals to develop cultural competence and the ability to positively shape school culture, as well as develop relational skills.

The importance of good leadership cannot be overstated. Leithwood et al. (2006) claim that about 5 to 7% of the difference in learner achievement across schools can be explained by leadership (Bush et al., 2009: 163). Poor leadership also causes an increase in teacher turnover, which can impact on student learning (Mancuso, Roberts and White, 2010:306-7). More importantly, good leadership can create

positive school cultures and cooperative learning communities which really make a difference to the learning and well-being of all members of a school community.

Although there is training available for international school Principals in some parts of the world,(Hayden, 2006 :107-108), this needs to be more accessible to those in the less prestigious schools which are not under the auspices of the I.B.O. This could potentially help raise awareness of the need for Principals to develop positive school cultures and take an active role in professional development. If Principals are to be transformational leaders and cultural change Principals, the need for appropriate training is paramount.

In the next chapter, the last of the discussion chapters, the role of parents and community is considered.

Chapter Nine – Parents and Community

This theme relates most closely to my time as a Principal at Northcote school, where one incident in particular, described in the Vignette, brought into focus the role of the parents and the wider community. The overall picture is of schools, particularly in the case of Bellwood, isolated from their local communities. In this chapter I discuss the role of the international school within the community to which it belongs.

Vignette 5: Death of a Teacher

Soon after I started as a Principal in my second school, one of the teachers tragically passed away from a heart attack that took place on the school premises. The teacher concerned had been in the school for over 8 years and was a popular figure. He taught P.E. and had briefly retired, only to return to school after his successor turned out to be incompetent. As a school, in addition to our grief, we felt guilt that this had happened at school after he had returned from retirement to help us out. The children were disconsolate, and the teachers were determined to mark the occasion with a proper show of grief. The death itself happened in hospital early one Thursday morning, the day after the heart attack at school. I heard the news from one of our directors when I was on the way to school. As I arrived at the school the news began to spread and soon teachers and students were huddled in silent groups in shock and disbelief.

As soon as I heard the news, after the shock came the feeling that this was not going to be an easy incident to handle. Did we close the school? Did we try to carry on as usual? My intuition told me that I was not going to be able to please everyone. I was right. Soon the directors arrived at the school and we discussed what to do. Some teachers wanted to close there and then but others reasoned that the body would not be available for viewing at the house until the evening. The Sri Lankan directors had the dominant voice, confidently asserting that we should stay open that day but close on the Friday and provide a bus to take those children who wished to go to the funeral wake. The teachers agreed with this; everyone seemed satisfied so we decided to go ahead with that plan. It did not occur to me to oppose this. The German director was not present: apart from the two Sri Lankans, the other two present were also Asians, from the Philippines and India respectively. I was the only Westerner present, and what had been decided seemed perfectly reasonable to me. As well as being the only non-Asian, I was also the person who had known the deceased for the least amount of time. In spite of being the Principal, I felt no urge to take the lead: accepting the majority decision seemed the right thing to do.

The complaints, via email, came in both that day and the following day. There were only two but they were strongly worded, particularly one of them, which read:

'With all respect, but this decision is disproportional and I am fully upset that an International School is supporting the local culture - for full standstill - when somebody passes away...You got here the

chance to prove your worth as a western principal. I am sorry you just gave in to the tradition. Be reminded this is a secular school'

(Narrative 2 p.224)

This immediately reminded me of the incident from Narrative 1 when the Principal did not want to cancel a training session to allow the teachers to attend a funeral: Sri Lankans wishing to mark a death and show their respect being opposed by westerners who wanted to carry on as normal. It also struck me that in both cases I was on the side of the Sri Lankans rather than the Westerners. It is interesting that in this email, the German parent makes certain assumptions: that a 'Western principal' should oppose local culture, and that marking a death is somehow not 'secular'.

Another assumption is that I 'just gave in': it does not occur to him that, as a Westerner, I could actively support the 'standstill'. Linked to this is the differing approach to death and funerals of different cultures which this incident revealed. Most of the Sri Lankan children were sent to the wake; most of the foreign children were not. One Argentinean mother said she would not allow her daughters, aged 11 and 12 to see a dead body. A British mother with a 14 year old son and 9 year old daughter agreed. They preferred to 'remember Mr Hemal as he was'. For the Sri Lankans paying the last respects was crucial: many parents came to the funeral house with their children and attended both the wake and the funeral mass.

Looking at my own reaction to the emails I received, the dominant one was anger. I was angry on behalf of the Sri Lankans that Westerners should look down so

arrogantly on their culture. I was also angry about the assumptions that were made about me. I made a conscious decision to support the majority view, rather than ‘giving in’ to it. I am satisfied by the way I handled the incident, however. The following is part of my response to the first email by the German father:

‘As an international school, I do not believe we live in isolation from the local culture but bring the best of the west to our school. I have to get the best performance out of the teachers and I know they feel strongly about such local customs. We would have alienated 22 teachers by leaving the school open. By closing we have upset a few expatriate parents. There is obviously no way to keep everyone happy and I am sorry the choice that was made did not suit you. Every decision will be opposed by someone but you have elected the board of directors to act for you and they have selected me to act for them. There are times that our decisions will not be agreeable to you. However, I do believe we have acted in favour of the majority. I do not believe I would have ‘proved my worth’ by ignoring local culture- that is definitely not the kind of principal I aim to be’.

(Narrative 2 p.225)

His response to this was what can only be described as a ‘diatribe’ on the ‘mental weakness’ of Sri Lankans. This is a passage taken from it:

'The people have no mental strength at all. No ambition, no vision, no future, no truth. They are dependent and fully unable to abstract. They get shaped in the first line by us the parents and later additionally through the education system. If kids see us or the institution named school as their example they get shaped in that way. To argue with locals has a certain pattern: first it will be argued with the word respect, when respect does not take effect they argue with culture, when culture does not take effect then finally "it is my country" just to justify their unrational (sic)doing'

(Narrative 2, p.226)

I reflect in my narrative that up to that point I had been fortunate not to have met people with such attitudes before. I still read it with disbelief, especially when one considers that the writer is married to a Sri Lankan lady and has three bi-racial children. There was so much that I wanted to say in response but I ultimately decided not to reply. I believe that keeping quiet in response was the right decision. This father was very respectful in his dealings with me after this, and on several occasions expressed his appreciation for my work in improving discipline in the school.

This incident as well as the case of the teachers wishing to attend the funeral in Narrative 1 raises questions about the role of an international school within a particular community. There is no agreement as to what an 'international school' is

or should be and the definition varies enormously according to context. The decision to have a Principal from the culture where the curriculum comes from (usually British or American) does not mean that the school culture is fully shaped by the culture of that country. The host country does and should play an important role in shaping the school's culture, as does the nationalities of the teachers and students. As a Principal, I do not wish to impose my views in non-academic matters. I am happy with my decision to support my teachers and would do the same again. I am also grateful for my experiences in my previous school which gave me the opportunity to reflect on the Principal's role before it was mine.

One major responsibility of the Principal is communication with parents and the local community. This is a crucial element of the job. There is considerable evidence that increasing parent and community involvement in education can lead to improvement in student achievement (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, Gordon and Louis, 2009). At first view, international schools would seem to avoid some of the difficulties of parent-school communication experienced in mainstream schools. The majority of international school parents are well educated, professional people (Hayden, 2006:21), who would be expected to share the middle-class norms of the school. However, borrowing the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) from the literature on mainstream education, we can see that some international school parents would possess more of this than others in terms of the linguistic and cultural norms of the school. This would enable them to communicate more effectively with the school (Lareau, 1987). English as the main language of the school is one

obvious example of cultural capital which affects many international schools, but there are cultural barriers which are just as difficult to overcome. International school parents often expect to be empowered (MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson, 2003:300). When this does not occur, conflict can occur and this is seen as a real possibility in international schools, as discussed in 2.2.1.

MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson claim that when parents enroll their children in an international school they are looking for the 'known' rather than the novel and original (2003:310). Many believe that being international is not incompatible with 'promoting' or 'defending' one's own culture (Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000:116). The incident described in vignette 5 shows that the parent was expecting to see his own culture reflected in the school's. In his view, his (German) culture was synonymous with international culture as contrasted with the 'local' (Sri Lankan) culture. Several aspects of this incident are significant: firstly, the parent saw 'international' and 'western' as synonymous, whereas it seems more logical that international in that context would mean a melding of the cultures represented by the school. Secondly, he was effectively treating German and British culture as one and the same, implying that any differences were insignificant when compared with the chasm between us and the 'local' culture. Thirdly, the parent assumed that I, as a 'Western' principal must have been 'giving in' to pressure from the local culture rather than making a conscious decision to support it.

The surprise that some of the parents felt at my decision to close the school to mark a teacher's death clearly indicates that I had failed to communicate my values to the parents. I was clear about the fact that I was the kind of principal who listened to my teachers and was guided in such matters by the local sensitivities. Having been in the country for 20 years and being married to a 'local', I was unlikely to meet the expectations of parents who labelled me as a 'Western' principal. However, I had never made it clear to parents who I was and what they could expect from me. This has clear implications for the way international school heads communicate their values to the parents. The decision as to how much to incorporate local culture into school culture will clearly depend on the individual context. However, the willingness to communicate the decision-making process to the parents can help to avoid unpleasant surprises and potential conflict. The incident also resulted from the lack of previous contact with the parents, as evidenced in Narrative 2, p.226, where the email from a parent accused me of not greeting him when he saw me. I had been rather passive in my relationship with the parents up to that point. I had got to know the ones who had come to see me and not bothered very much about the others. As Bryk and Schneider point out, in the absence of prior contact members of the school community will make assumptions based on the general reputation of the other as well as on the basis of race, gender, age, religion or upbringing (2003:41). This is clearly what happened in this case. This incident made me realise that I needed to develop relationships with parents to prevent conflict occurring. As Hayden points out, 'Western' parents may make assumptions about the international school based on their previous experience of schools at home as well as other international

schools, which might turn out to be unjustified (2006:32). The solution is to give the parents the opportunity to get to know the school's culture for themselves.

Both the principal of Bellwood school and I were lacking in terms of developing connections with the local community. This is typical of international schools generally, which often tend to have 'tenuous or practically non-existent' links to the local community (Hayden, 2006:147). In Sri Lanka, as in other developing countries, the international schools can sometimes be 'private islands of plenty in contrast to an impoverished local education system' (Cambridge, 1998:205 in Hayden, 2006:147). A survey of international school students and teachers found that contact with the local community was ranked of lowest importance (Thompson,1998 in Hayden, 2006:151). However, one attempt I made to interact with the local community was very successful. We ran a free food stall or 'dansal' at Wesak. We set up the stall outside school and handed out drinks and biscuits to school children and other passersby. We really enjoyed meeting members of the local community and they were particularly impressed by so many foreign children working on the stall on this very Sri Lankan occasion. Although we as a school are clearly different from the local community, it showed that we have a role to play, perhaps by giving the local community access to the international community in our city. For some of our students this was one of the few opportunities they have had to integrate with the local community, since they have parents who do not integrate. It is important, therefore, for us as a school to provide such opportunities, as they are a good way of encouraging multiculturalism (Allen, 2002 in Hayden, 2006: 152). I

plan to work on developing more opportunities of this type for our students, both in order to enrich the children's education, and to avoid us being seen as elitist by the local community.

Chapter 10-Doing Autoethnography

A note on style

This chapter is presented as an essay. It is a reflection on the process of doing autoethnography and as such, cannot be divided clearly into sections. The division of text into sections aims to make writing clearer to the reader. In this case, sections would be arbitrary and confuse rather than aid the reader.

In this chapter I reflect on the act of doing autoethnography, on what I have achieved and how different working in this way has been from the alternative. I compare my two narrative accounts, written three years apart and from very different places in my life, and evaluate them against criteria suggested by experts in the field. I look at what I have learnt through this experience.

As Muncey puts it, autoethnography aims to address ‘the muddled, idiosyncratic, florid eccentricities that make us unique as opposed to part of a population’ (2010: xi). This appealed to me particularly, as my situation was unique. Schools do not typically employ a teacher trainer to work with established teachers, nor do they typically employ unqualified teachers. In addition, my situation was unique in that I was an ELT teacher coming into a mainstream international school with a very loose brief. As autoethnographers our ultimate research question is ‘Who am I?’ (Muncey, 2010:xvi). It is not as simple as it may seem to answer that question. An important part of the answer relates to how others see us. Mead (1934) maintained

that other people act as the 'looking glass' for oneself. The self is a process rather than a structure and is always in the process of becoming. (Muncey, 2010:12). Two key ways of viewing the self are the Humanist and post-Humanist. Whereas the Humanist notion is based on '*coherence, centering, singularity and authenticity*', the post-Humanist emphasizes '*fragmentation, multiplicity, contingency and partiality*' (de Freitas and Paton, 2009:484). Lending support to the post-Humanist view, Denzin and Lincoln state that '*the time of the fiction of a single true, authentic self has come and gone*' (de Freitas and Paton, 2009:485). In my work there is evidence of a fragmented self, but also of the unity and continuity of experience which the ego theory of self emphasizes (Muncey, 2010:12). Asking of the reader of my work 'who is she?' would elicit a multiplicity of responses. I am a confident, almost arrogant trainer, a loyal friend, someone damaged by past experiences, a quitter, a phoenix rising from the ashes and a fulfilled and happy woman. Yet, there are elements of continuity: the self-doubt, for example, is a constant. Being someone who is from outside but who identifies more strongly with the local community than her 'own' continues from one narrative to the other.

Sacks (1985, cited in Bochner and Ellis, 2002: 107) refers to the 'narrative need' which, according to him is stimulated by '*complex and painful emotional experiences and inexplicable events*'. While such situations are most typically encountered in fields such as Health and Counselling, there is no reason why they should not occur in Education. In fact, there are multiple scenarios within the field in which one can imagine the narrative need arising. A teacher struggling in a class

of behaviourally challenged teenagers; a teacher trying to integrate a child with learning difficulties; a principal facing a mutinous group of teachers: all of these could give rise to a desire to *'make the unintelligible and the painful, comprehensible and meaningful by contextualizing lived experience within one's larger life story'* (Harvey, Weber and Orbuch, 1990, cited in Bochner and Ellis, 2002:107). While I agree that the narrative need often arises out of painful situations, in my own experience it also arises out of joyful ones. The need to narrate my painful experience in my first school was admittedly greater, but I also experienced the need to document the joy I felt at finally having a job I loved in my second school.

Svensson also speaks of the 'necessity' of narrating our own lives in the modern world. By telling our own stories we construct ourselves as mainly 'good selves' as the alternative is to be constructed by others as 'bad selves' (Reed-Danahay, 1997:11). I was certainly conscious of this need towards the end of my year as a teacher trainer when I started to think about writing my story. At the same time, I was aware that constructing a narrative in which I was the 'good guy' while others were portrayed negatively would be dishonest. Evaluating my first narrative I can see that there was a good deal of self justification- of portraying myself as the 'good guy'. One example of this is on pages 157 and 158 when I am criticized by the principal for talking about British Council too much. There is no attempt on my part to consider why this criticism was leveled against me. I am very sure that it is unjust and try to gain support from others, succeeding with TI:

'He agrees that Sri Lankans have nothing but respect for the institution and anyway, can't remember me mentioning it more than once or twice in passing in workshops'.

Narrative 1, p.158

A weakness of the narrative is that I don't have access to the principal's point of view. Although I did later try to elicit his reaction, at the time of writing there is often little desire to appreciate the other side. Another example of this is when I contact the school's consultant in the UK about special needs. At the time of writing I was absolutely convinced of the rightness of my position. I saw the principal as unreasonable and controlling. Writing this reflective chapter three months into my role as principal, I can see his point of view. I would not be happy at the undermining of my authority in this way. I would feel threatened and I now suspect that that is how he felt.

It is only looking back from a perspective of years later that I can see how the narrative failed to see events from multiple perspectives. Reading back the story of the Head of English who didn't want me to teach in her department it is easy to sympathise with her, particularly when it was revealed that she had been a teacher trainer herself, a role which had been discontinued. It is easy to see myself as a threatening presence in the school, though I was not able to conceive of myself in that way at the time.

One incident I have reflected on is where the principal refused permission for the children to wear PE uniform in English class. As a principal I would probably give permission. However, I can see how another might refuse. There are times when upholding discipline seems like the most important of our roles. There is a feeling that once you lose your authority it is hard to get it back. I can certainly see how he saw the authoritarian role as his primary one at that time.

It is liberating to look back at a situation I was in three years ago and see it from all angles. While I have learnt to acknowledge the principal's point of view on many incidents, there are some where there remains a gulf between us. EU's suspension is the most striking example of this. I wonder, though, if it's my long experience in Sri Lanka that has made me sensitive to the religious tolerance needed to survive in this highly spiritual yet multicultural environment. I would not feel comfortable refusing leave on religious grounds. However, having done so, I now have some understanding of why the principal felt the need to suspend EU for undermining his authority.

Another incident from my first narrative that I have not changed my perspective on is when the teachers asked to cancel training to attend a funeral. This incident has its parallel in my second narrative where we closed the school to mark the death of a teacher. Culturally, the cancelling or postponing of activities as a mark of respect on the occasion of a death is deeply entrenched. As principal, I sided with the Sri Lankan directors and teachers and agreed at once to the closure, a decision which

made me unpopular with some of the German parents. My perspective, whether as staff member or principal remains unchanged: we do not live in a vacuum; I believe then as now that local culture has to be honoured.

The incident which is hardest to reflect on is my own departure from the school. Deciding what does and does not constitute a reason to be off school are some of the most controversial decisions I have to make. Take a wedding, for example. How do you make judgments about how close a relationship is? A cousin can be as close as a brother or as distant as an acquaintance. Who am I to make that call? If I refuse leave, there is going to be bad feeling, but if all leave is granted the normal running of the school is disrupted. I encourage teachers not to ask for unreasonable leave for non-essential reasons, but I would have had sympathy with a mother wanting to spend a few hours with her child on her birthday. Nevertheless, I understand the need to crack down, enforce rules and maintain discipline. It hurts to acknowledge that there is another perspective to that situation.

Carolyn Ellis has been my inspiration in undertaking this project. Ellis (1997:123) shares with us her difficulties in writing about the fisher folk she studied using conventional social science categories. Although at that stage of her career she kept herself invisible, she used vignettes which 'breathed some life' into the 'passive telling and categorizing' of the lives she studied. Later in her career, she made herself the object of her research and breached other traditions of research while writing *Final Negotiations*, the story of the illness and death of her partner, Gene.

This was groundbreaking work: *'the mode of storytelling fractured the boundaries that normally separated social science from literature'* (ibid.). In this text, Ellis focused on 'telling an evocative and dramatic story' rather than getting all the details right. In that sense, her work differs from mine. I have tried to keep as close as possible to what actually happened, though I have reconstructed dialogues from memory. Ellis' aim in writing evocatively was to enable the reader to participate in the emotional process of the story. She wrote from the heart as well as from the head, and I have tried to do the same. She became more concerned with 'narrative truth' than 'historical truth'. Reflecting on my main narrative as teacher trainer, I feel that a greater concern with 'narrative truth' than with 'historical truth' could have improved the story. Ellis' work benefits from greater clarity of purpose than mine. At the time of beginning my narrative I did not have a purpose in mind. There is too much of a desire to justify myself and my actions rather than to simply 'share' what happened. Although I did, to an extent, make myself vulnerable, there is also a very human and understandable desire to protect myself from criticism. Starting the second narrative three years later, with some knowledge of autoethnography, a clear purpose to my writing and I hope, greater maturity, the difference is clear.

Ellis, in writing *Final Negotiations*, attempted to get her readers to *'connect to what happened to me, remember what happened to them, or anticipate what might happen in the future'* (1997:131). I believe that by writing about my experiences in Education I can do the same. My experiences are unique, but I believe that others

working in international education will find my story resonates with them. Although autoethnography is most commonly associated with emotive topics such as illness and bereavement, it lends itself well to education too. As teachers we bring our whole selves to the teaching and learning process and make ourselves vulnerable. Many of us in international education have left our home countries and moved to places where we are the outsider. Accounts of teaching need to include the struggle of adapting to a new culture and learning new languages. We need accounts of the intercultural conflict that can occur when on a superficial level things are harmonious. Autoethnography offers the opportunity to experience the life of a teacher in a country which is unfamiliar to us, and to explore the similarities and differences between their experiences and ours.

I believe that by writing in the way I have I have given the reader the best possible opportunity to know what it was like for me in the two circumstances I found myself in: moving from ELT to an international school as teacher trainer, and becoming a principal. Rather than try to isolate what could be common to others in similar circumstances, I have written about the unique experience that I had. Describing smells, sounds and the weather, while not conventional, helped the reader to share the whole experience.

Ellis emphasizes how difficult writing autoethnography is. As she puts it, '*just when you think you can't stand the pain anymore-that's when the real work begins*' (2004: xviii). One aspect of this is the sheer vulnerability of not being able to take back

your story or control how it will be interpreted by the reader. Had I read this before I began, it is unlikely that I would have even started. I personally found it very painful to relive certain episodes through my writing. During the period of my first narrative I often felt helpless and dependent on somebody else's whim. I received negative feedback and what was worse, realized for myself that some of my actions had caused pain to others. Many incidents were bad enough the first time around without committing them to paper and reliving them endlessly. I am sure I would have suffered less if I had not written the first narrative; however, there is also a sense in which it was therapeutic. The sense of loss I felt when I left the school was lessened somewhat by having the story as a kind of souvenir. It has also been strangely soothing to gradually come to the realization that this is just one imperfect account of a series of events- it is partial and subjective, and maybe it was not like this at all.

So how can I decide if I was successful in my autoethnographic writing? Obviously, conventional criteria for evaluating research cannot be applied here. Holt (2003) points out the inappropriacy of traditional qualitative criteria, drawing on his own experience of having work rejected by publications. The journals in which he sought to publish, for example, used the ethical and content guidelines of the American Psychological Association publication manual (APA, 2001). These include such questions as 'Does the research design fully and unambiguously test the hypothesis?' and 'Is the research at an advanced enough stage to make the publication of results meaningful?' (2003:21). Such questions bear no relevance to

autoethnographic work. Holt's work was rejected on grounds such as failing to produce work that could be replicated, when clearly autoethnographic work, by definition, cannot be. We clearly need to look elsewhere for useful criteria for evaluating autoethnographic work.

Several researchers have suggested ways of judging the value of autoethnographic writing. For Ellis, the main criterion is whether the story evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is '*authentic and lifelike, believable and possible*' (2000:133). Ellis outlines the questions she asks herself when evaluating an autoethnography. She questions the goals of the writer and whether he or she has achieved them, and whether the writing has the potential to stimulate social action (2000:275). She also asks about ethical considerations, for example, whether those portrayed in the story had a chance to contribute their perspectives.

Another key figure in the autoethnographic literature is Arthur Bochner. While making his contribution to the debate on criteria, he questions the need for criteria which he feels reflects '*the desire to contain freedom, limit possibilities and resist change*' (2000:266). He believes that it is impossible to '*fix a single standard for deciding the good and right purposes, forms and practices of ethnography*' (2000:268). Bochner feels that good narratives help the reader to understand and feel the phenomenon being discussed. First he looks for '*abundant, concrete detail*', which includes everyday trivia as well as feelings and emotions. Second, he looks for structurally complex narratives that move between past and present, reflecting

'*the curve of time*'. Third, he expects the author to '*display the self on the page*', revealing his or her '*emotional credibility, vulnerability, and honesty*'. Fourth, Bochner prefers a '*tale of two selves*' - a transformation from who the writer was to who he or she now is. Fifth, he expects to see ethical awareness in the writer. Like Ellis, Bochner wants a story '*that moves me, my heart and belly as well as my head*' (2000:271).

Richardson, another key figure in autoethnography believes in holding all ethnography to '*high and difficult standards*' (2000: 254). Her five criteria have been matched to Bochner's. She looks for substantive contribution, and asks how the writing contributes to our understanding of social life. Secondly, she expects aesthetic merit. Thirdly, like Bochner, she looks at ethics, hoping for self-awareness and self exposure. Fourthly, she considers the impact of the piece- how it affects her as the reader emotionally and intellectually. Lastly, she looks for realism, a '*fleshed out, embodied sense of lived-experience*' Richardson believes we should look at the text through the lenses of both art and science.

So how do my accounts match up to these criteria? I am not, of course, the best person to judge my own work. However, for now I have no other critics. One of Bochner/Richardson's criteria that I believe I have met is 'concrete detail'. In my narratives I try to help the reader imagine what it is like to be there with me in the schools. For example,

...air-conditioned office, which feels deliciously cool after the stifling heat of the courtyard...

(Narrative 1 p.146)

It's spacious and airy with its inner courtyard, but it's hot and noisy too. Windows open onto the busy city streets below where the sound of horns from cars, buses and trishaws is constant...

(Narrative 1 p.153)

I have gone into lots of detail, reconstructing dialogues and even whole training sessions in the first narrative. I have also revealed feelings and emotions, as Bochner expects to see under this first criterion:

'I feel anger rising inside me...and I feel the urge to shout at him'

'I feel my lip quivering and my face turning red'

(Narrative 1 p.157)

'The first (week) was sheer terror. I developed a twitch under my eye with the stress'

(Narrative 2 p.216)

'I am the happiest I've ever been at work'

(Narrative 2 p. 132)

What Bochner looks for secondly is 'structurally complex narratives that move between past and present, reflecting the curve of time'. In terms of this criterion my narratives have failed. They are both written chronologically. The first tells the

story of one academic year and the second the first few months in a new position. Attempting to meet this criterion of Bochner's could have made the stories more aesthetically pleasing and possibly more evocative. Having now reached a greater understanding of evocative autoethnography I could have focused more on the literary merit of my stories. However, at the time I was focused on getting across the truth as I saw it at the time more than creating a good story.

Thirdly, Bochner expects the writer to display the self on the page by demonstrating honesty and vulnerability. I believe I have succeeded in this to some extent. In both narratives I show my weaknesses: in the first, for example, I reveal my inability to overcome my emotions and avoid revealing them to the principal:

‘Why couldn’t I find words? I’m 41 years old, educated, articulate, far from shy, but I can’t say what I want to say.’

(Narrative 1 p.157)

However, I do not make myself completely vulnerable: I attempt to regain face by asserting that I am easily the principal's equal:

‘KH is only a few years older than me, less qualified, as a teacher and trainer at least, less sociable and less articulate. He finds it difficult to interact with teachers, students and parents, while I talk confidently with everyone. He stutters when he makes speeches and people find him dull and colourless’.

(Narrative 1 p.158)

Another example of this is when I reveal my shattered confidence over the Head of English's reluctance to let me teach in her department. Although I let it be known that my 'devil may care' attitude is 'just a mask', once again I build my own image back up by criticizing the other party: 'It is some comfort that several respond with stories in which TD is portrayed as either incompetent or vindictive' (Narrative 1 p.173). In this way I avoid revealing the full extent of my own vulnerability.

In my second narrative I feel I succeed slightly more in laying myself bare. I admit to a weakness which no principal would want to admit to: a lack of authority: 'The kids have to respect me or I am nothing. I have no one to turn to for I cannot admit my failure to anyone' (Narrative 2 p.217). In terms of honesty, I also admit to feeling 'dislike' for one of the pupils, which is not something I would normally want to be known about me.

When my two narratives are taken together they reveal a 'tale of two selves', Bochner's fourth criterion. As teacher trainer I am constantly frustrated by my lack of authority. I resent the principal who has authority I believe he does not deserve. I want to change things I believe are not right but am often not able to. I position myself on the side of the teachers, who I portray as downtrodden and unappreciated. In my second narrative I am finally happy and fulfilled. I don't know if this would count as the kind of transformation Bochner is looking for. I am transformed not by

suffering or soul-searching, but by the sheer luck of finally getting the position I aspired to.

The final criterion Bochner looks for is ethical awareness in the writer. It is particularly difficult to evaluate one's own writing in terms of this criterion, as one naturally assumes oneself to be ethically aware. In my first narrative there are definitely examples of times when I tried to behave with regard to ethical considerations. One example is when a teacher was coerced into taking on a coordinator post that she was not ready for (Vignette 3). I was aware that this was a case of using people as a means to an end which a transformational leader should avoid, and I opposed it. Similarly, when a teacher was refused leave to go on a religious retreat I was prepared to help her fight the ensuing suspension. However, there were also instances where I disregarded ethics in favour of self-interest. One example of this is when I observed a new teacher's every lesson in order to try to make a PhD case study on her development. Although at the time I thought this was useful to her, it actually resulted in her losing face with the students. A deeper consideration of the ethical aspects of the case would have avoided this. Where my first narrative would definitely fail is in terms of allowing the perspective of the other person to be taken into account. The principal is the 'bad guy' of my story and he doesn't get the right to reply. However, the narrative accounts need to be read alongside this commentary. The fact is that I tried to elicit a response from him and failed. I sent the story by email and hard copy and to be frank, I was not surprised that there was no reply. However, looking back from a vantage point of three years

later, and being a principal myself, I have seen and put across what I assume to be his point of view.

I believe there are aspects of my story that would move Bochner 'heart and belly', but it would certainly not fulfill all of his criteria. Turning now to Ellis, she wants a story to be '*authentic and lifelike, believable and possible*'. My stories are based very closely on what actually happened and so do, I believe, meet this criterion. Next, she asks about the goals of the writer and whether she has fulfilled them. This is a difficult one as I am not sure what my goals were in setting out. Being completely honest, my main one was to rescue my PhD. Secondly, I simply wanted to tell it as it was from my perspective. I hoped the reader would learn something about the difficulties of working in an international school, run as a business, with local teachers and an expatriate principal. Ellis wants to know if the writing has the potential to stimulate social action. Again, this is a difficult one to self-evaluate. I believe both narratives help raise awareness of the need to be culturally sensitive when we are in another country. The first narrative in particular raises the issue of unregulated schools run as businesses in countries like Sri Lanka.

Anderson presents criteria with a slightly different focus. For him, the autoethnographer must be a complete member of the group under study, must engage reflexivity to analyse data on themselves, must be visibly and actively present in the text, must include other informants in similar situations in data collection and must be committed to theoretical analysis (Chang, 2008:47). I

certainly fulfil the first and third of these criteria. Since my work is part of a PhD thesis, it was necessary for me to engage reflexively with the data, collect data from colleagues and to involve myself in a certain amount of theoretical analysis. However, Anderson seems to be defining autoethnography, whereas Ellis, Bochner and Richardson are defining *good* autoethnography. I feel sure then, by applying Anderson's criteria that I am doing autoethnography. What is less clear is whether I am doing what would pass for good autoethnography, according to Bochner, Ellis and Richardson.

As an alternative to considering what to look for we can consider what we as autoethnographers should guard against. Chang spells out the potential pitfalls:

excessive focus on self in isolation from others; overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self narratives and inappropriate application of the label 'autoethnography' ...
(2008: 54).

Chang believes that additional sources of data can enhance the validity of autoethnographic writing as they allow for triangulation (2008:55). My first narrative is supported by interviews, which give credibility to certain incidents, such as the suspension of EU, and also bear witness to the sense of frustration and lack of satisfaction experienced by the teachers. However, others would argue that an

autoethnography stands alone without need of triangulation as it '*celebrates rather than demonizes the individual story*' (Muncey, 2010:2). It sets out to be an individual's perspective and does not pretend to be anything else. I confess that, in moving towards the unknown territory of autoethnography, the desire for triangulation was strong: I lacked the confidence in my own story that would allow it to stand alone.

In terms of genre, in spite of the difference in length, my first narrative bears some resemblance to Ellis' methodological novel. For example, both contain descriptions of classes interspersed with mundane details of everyday life. They both tell stories with a kind of 'how to' discourse spun into them. Interestingly, I first read Ellis' 'novel' after completing my first narrative, and was struck by the similarities. Her classes on autoethnography had something of the experimental quality than my teacher training workshops had. Where hers is superior is in the multiple perspectives it offers: the voices of several others – her students- are clearly audible in a way that is lacking in mine. It is also more structured, being organized around her course of lectures, with each individual's storyline developing alongside the main plot. Mine is a narrative, not a novel, with a series of events being told as they actually happened.

When writing about autoethnography it is impossible to ignore the charge leveled against us that our work is self-indulgent or narcissistic. Mykhalovski argues that such a concept relies for its existence on '*the conventions of a traditional masculine*

academic discourse' (1996:131) and the *'fiction'* of the *'abstract, disembodied voice of traditional academic discourse'*(1996:134). When analysed in such conventional terms, autoethnography will always disappoint. Instead, we should be aware that there is no segregation between the self and the social. To write about the individual is to write about the society. As Bannerji (1991: 85, cited in Mykhalovski, 1996:142) put it, *'a whole social organization is needed to create each unique experience'*. In my case, I write about the experiences I had with colleagues and students: without them there would have been no story. I often write about the experiences of others, but acknowledge that I write from my own perspective as colleague or friend. I do not try to create the *'fiction'* of an impersonal narrator, but rather acknowledge the pain of being close to those who were suffering difficult situations.

This is a story of development at the personal, professional and academic levels. In this section I look at what I have learnt through the process of doing autoethnography. When I was writing my first narrative I did not know much about autoethnography. When writing the second, I knew a great deal. The difference is apparent when comparing the two.

Clearly, one of my major learning points has been connected to the ethical perspective. I wrote my first narrative with little regard to certain others in my story, particularly the Principal and a number of teachers who are portrayed less than sympathetically. Since it was my story, I did not see the necessity of considering

their perspective, and that is a failing of the account. Although I later tried to elicit the principal's point of view, I did not make any attempt to allow those teachers who I portrayed negatively to respond.

The second narrative has less criticism of others and more of myself. Although criticism of the German parent is inherent in the story, his voice, through his emails, is heard. When I criticize the pre-school teacher for being too formal I hedge and admit my lack of expertise: 'To me it seems that they both do too much formal work, but I am aware of my lack of experience' (Narrative 2 p.221). When criticizing teachers for being at loggerheads I admit that 'It's impossible to say who is to blame'. In my first narrative, in contrast, I was more than willing to place the blame and it was rarely on myself.

I also come across as more vulnerable in the second narrative. Although I show vulnerability in the first, it is only in minor areas like not being able to express myself coherently when I am angry or hurt. In contrast, in the second narrative I admit to failing in two major areas of my job: enforcing discipline and administration. I come across as less sure of myself and more open. For example, in the first narrative, although I doubt my approach to mentoring the English teacher (Narrative 1 p.191), I am sure that another teacher has put LV up to it when she asks me not to come to her class. I speculate that, left alone, LV might have acted differently, i.e. have wanted me to continue coming to her class. In this way, I express the view that I was not really in the wrong to have sat in her class every

lesson. In contrast, I am more ready to admit my wrongdoing in narrative two: 'Is my background totally wrong for this job I wonder? My priorities are different and they need to change' (Narrative 2 p.223).

Professionally there is a clear development between the stories. In the first I am frustrated by a Principal I consider obstructive, and in the second I reach fulfillment in terms of my professional goals. In the first I am putting into practice skills learnt in an earlier role as CELTA tutor, whereas in the second I have the opportunity to learn new skills.

On a personal level I am much happier by the time of the second narrative. In the first I am still plagued by a daughter with multiple health issues. By the second, she has recovered sufficiently that I am able to stay away from home during the week and concentrate on my career.

In academic terms, I have learnt a whole new way of doing research. I am still very unsure about my methodology in the first narrative. I am doing interviews that I am not sure I will use. I believe I need some kind of triangulation to provide support for my narrative. By the second, I have studied autoethnography in some depth and am confident about what needs to be done. I know what a good autoethnography should look like, and understand my purpose in writing. I have confidence that my narrative can stand alone as what it is: a first person account and that it has value on

its own. I no longer question the value of a narrative account or think of it as being somehow less academic.

Chapter 11 - Conclusion

11.1 Contributions of the Study

This has not been the thesis I set out to write. It started out as an Action Research project but due to the situation in Bellwood school I took the decision to adopt autoethnography as my methodology. From wanting to do something very conventional, albeit in a relatively under-explored setting, I ended up charting unknown territory by applying autoethnography to the field of teacher development. Although I have made contributions to various areas in the field, it is my achievement in terms of methodology that remains, in my view, the most significant.

My work has shown how autoethnography can be applied fruitfully to the fields of both teacher development and educational leadership. This is probably the first time anyone has written an autoethnographical account of their experience running an experimental in-school teacher development programme. The role I was in as Teacher Trainer based at an International School was an unusual one: in the literature I have not been able to uncover anything similar anywhere in the world. My second narrative account was similarly unique. This is probably the first autoethnographical account of a beginning Principal's first three months in the job. As has been shown in the last chapter, these accounts together with interview data were able to contribute towards an understanding of school culture, leadership, school and community and teacher development. My initial project would most

likely have made a stronger contribution to the field of teacher development.

However, it was unlikely to have revealed so much, if anything, about the other areas mentioned.

As an autoethnography this work is significant partly because of the lack of similar work in existence. Perhaps the two closest works are Ellis' *The Ethnographic I: A methodological novel about Autoethnography* and Simon Maeda's *Being and Becoming a Speaker of Japanese*. Ellis's work describes the process of teaching a course on autoethnography, while also describing her feelings and life outside of work. Simon Maeda's work, as the title suggests, describes the long process of becoming a Japanese speaker, which is intricately tied up with her personal life as the wife of a Japanese man. What raises it above the level of an autobiography are the technical details of second language acquisition, which mean it is aimed at a professional rather than a general readership. Whereas Ellis is involved with pedagogy as well as transmitting knowledge about autoethnography, Simon Maeda is focused on Second Language Acquisition. My work, in contrast, involves teacher development and school leadership, areas two areas which have yet to be combined in an autoethnographic treatment. In this way my work offers a unique contribution to the field of education.

I would also like to emphasise the contribution autoethnography has made to my life on both a personal and a professional level. The process of using my narrative accounts, written in the heat of a situation, to reflect on and understand that situation

from another perspective later on has been invaluable to me. Although I have written about my professional life, it has also been helpful in areas which touch on the personal, such as relationships with those I work with. I am now able to look at myself with greater objectivity, an attribute that is valuable in my personal as well as my professional life. As a result of this research, I am more able to stand back from a situation and view it from multiple perspectives before making a decision. As a Principal, this has been most useful. The implication of this is that autoethnography can be a useful tool for others in the field of education, particularly for teachers, trainers and principals who are facing challenging situations in their schools. Although writing a personal narrative is not for everyone, many would benefit from at least keeping an autoethnographic journal during difficult periods.

While the narrative accounts are valuable in themselves, it is the analysis and discussion which reveal how my work, in spite of its lack of conventionality, has made several conventional contributions to the field. My work has put the spotlight on the importance of school culture for teacher development. I have shown the necessity of honouring and celebrating the cultures of the students and staff, and how this makes for a more positive school culture. Through my work I have further developed the model of Johnson and Stoles who presented the notion of a Cultural Web, by adding a consideration of the culture and nationality of the members of a school and also by probing beneath the surface to uncover beliefs and values. In terms of international schools, particularly those located in less developed countries, I have highlighted the need for contact with the local community, which will be

beneficial both to members of the school and the local community. My work's contribution to the field of educational management is not just limited to the international school community, but could be of wider relevance. It highlights the role of the School Principal as the main architect and nurturer of school culture, and the importance of developing and maintaining relationships with teachers and students. My first narrative presents an example of what can happen when the Principal fails to engage in meaningful interactions with the teachers and to let them know that they are valued. My second narrative provides a unique insight into the experience of a beginning Principal and shows how the learning undertaken for this PhD makes a real impact on my work as a Principal.

My work also has implications for those involved in Teacher Development. It reveals the potential influence that a teacher trainer based in a school can have on the work of unqualified teachers. This insight is potentially of interest to those working in under-developed countries where the need for English medium education has led to the mushrooming of international schools staffed by unqualified teachers. The thesis also adds to the voice of those who question the concept of 'best practice' in teacher education by showing that what works in one context will not necessarily work in another. Further, and perhaps most importantly, this study emphasises the need to focus on developing a positive school culture as a necessary foundation for successful teacher development initiatives.

11.2 Limitations of the Study and further research

My research clearly has a number of limitations. It is constrained by the fact that my narratives were not written with any specific purpose in mind. I simply wanted to create accounts of the period of my professional life that I was living through. When trying to make use of my narrative accounts as data I found that it was difficult to find relevant examples. For example, the second account did not contain many positive examples of me as a leader. Had I set out to write it knowing that I would need to find such examples, I could have consciously included some. At the same time, this is the strength of my narrative accounts. They are honest accounts, which do not necessarily seek to portray me in a positive light. The interviews too, were not conducted with a specific objective in mind. The early ones were focused on the professional development programme, while some of the others were virtually without focus as I was unsure about my research at that time. I simply aimed to obtain some comments from the teachers about their lives in school. The lack of a clear focus in both the narratives and the interviews meant that it was difficult to analyse and discuss the data. Although these issues have made this a challenging thesis to write, I nevertheless feel I have finally made sense of my data and made a useful contribution.

A further limitation is that certain key points of view are missing from my account, most notably that of the Principal of Bellwood school. Although he was sent the narrative account and invited to comment on it, he chose not to do so. Looking back

from the perspective of several years later, I have been able to consider what his position might have been with some objectivity. Although the narrative itself does not necessarily portray him in a positive light, the subsequent analysis in Chapter Eight offers a less biased view of him.

Although my study only relates to two schools, this would not be considered a limitation in autoethnography. It deals with my own experience, and I could obviously not be expected to be in several places at once. The strength of the method lies in its detail, encompassing feelings, everyday observations and unremarkable events as well as the more significant events which would normally be described in research findings.

Autoethnography has developed from the growing acceptance of the individual in research (Muncey, 2010: xii), and it is a method which celebrates the individual story (Chang, 2008:49). As Muncey points out, the individual case is more than just a consideration of deviant cases: *'It can shed light on the silent majority of people whose individual voices are unheard'* (2010:8). It is important to remember that an individual does not exist in a vacuum but is part of a society. By reading about the individual we are learning about the society in which he or she lives. Chang emphasises the importance to autoethnography of recognising that the self is an extension of the community since the analysis of the self will lead to understanding of the community (2008:26). Sometimes an individual case can have more impact than a piece of research which represents hundreds of cases:

The powerful moment, the moving insight (though sometimes just from one person or even a handful) is sometimes enough to create dynamic involvement in those who have access to it. (Schubert 1990: 100)

This study set out to find out the impact a teacher trainer working as part of the full-time staff could have on the performance of unqualified teachers in an international school. The initial idea was either to stay in the school full-time for two years, or to spend one year full-time and then visit regularly in the second year to record teachers' progress. The one year that I did spend in the school was insufficient to discover how much progress the teachers had actually made, and I only provide very limited evidence that some progress was made by some teachers. Although it would be useful for the initial plan to be put into practice again, it is all too likely that similar factors would once again derail the programme. The time I have spent researching in international schools in Sri Lanka has made me realise that much more preliminary research needs to be done in this context in order to understand better the conditions under which a successful teacher development programme might be developed. New international schools are opening throughout the island on a very regular basis, and these schools are completely unregulated. These schools offer a wealth of research opportunities in terms of both cultural factors and educational and linguistic ones. The whole area of leadership in such schools should be investigated; in particular, it would be interesting to compare the leadership of local and foreign Principals. I would certainly

expand on Dolby and Rahman's description of the research that needs to be done in the arena of international education. They narrowed the research question down to what is or isn't international education, breaking the question into three main areas:

- 1) How the question has been explicitly addressed in the literature;
- 2) Research related to 'third culture kids';
- 3) How international schools function on a structural level within national and global arenas.

As I have intimated above, there is a lot more than this to investigate.

In terms of leadership, it is clear that more insight of how leaders operate could be gained from further autoethnographic studies. It would be particularly useful to study the process of becoming a leader in this way, and such work could help in the training and development of leaders. Autoethnography can paint a detailed picture of a particular working environment, including capturing insights into the culture of the workplace. An analysis of such a narrative account could clarify which leadership processes worked well in the context and which didn't. Comparing a range of similar accounts could shed light on which factors influence the success or failure of different approaches. It is my view that autoethnography could make a useful contribution to research in various areas of education in general and TESOL in particular. Accounts of teaching in various contexts as well as the process of

acquiring a foreign language would surely add to our knowledge in these areas. I hope my work will encourage others in our field to consider this method of inquiry.

11.3 Final Reflections

The strength of this thesis lies not just in the contributions it makes to our understanding of several areas of education, but in the clear evidence it provides of an educator undergoing a process of personal and professional development. From believing strongly in the rightness of my position at the time of writing the first narrative, I moved on to questioning my own actions and motives a year later. From a simplistic view of teacher development I developed a deep understanding of the various complex factors involved in successful change. From resentment of my former Principal, I grew to acceptance and understanding through a process of deep reflection. From teacher trainer I moved to leading my own school, which took me from mild interest to passionate involvement. The process of writing my narrative accounts and later analysing them has been challenging as it has involved so much self-examination. On many occasions I felt that it would have been easier to have been writing about other people rather than myself. I often wished that I had been doing a more straightforward project in which I could be 'just' a researcher. Nevertheless, now that the process is almost at an end, I am grateful for the opportunities for learning and growth it has given me. It has helped me to deal with the difficult time I had at Bellwood school and to understand what was happening there. It has helped me with the challenging experience of becoming a Principal

with no real training or induction. I am glad that the happiest time of my career was captured in my second narrative. A year on, my halcyon days continue, and I have agreed to renew my contract for a third year. Autoethnography has got me hooked. I am planning to write a further account of my experiences as an international school Principal, possibly focusing on the social and educational implications of the recent influx of refugee children to our school.

I hope this thesis will help raise awareness of the potential of autoethnography as a research method in the field of education. Not only can it provide valuable contributions in conventional terms, but it also has the power to transform the researcher through deep reflection and self-awareness. In the field of teacher education, with its emphasis on reflective practice, it is a particularly useful tool, which I hope will find wide acceptance among my colleagues. In the meantime, I plan to continue to use this methodology to enrich my professional life and make further contributions towards our knowledge of international education, leadership and professional development.

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APPENDIX 1

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Emerging themes from analysis of interviews

- Favouritism/unfairness
- Ethics
- Awareness of local laws, culture, religion, procedures
- lies/honesty
- Low morale, lack of motivation
- communication- lack of, ways of
- Solidarity/support among colleagues
- Teacher training programme (negative and positive aspects)
- Recognition/rewards
- Importance of interpretation: symbolic interactionism
- Need for challenge
- Leadership
- Principal's insecurity
- Humour as a coping strategy
- School as business
- Accountability/regulation
- School's culture
- Teacher/student relations (positive)
- Teachers' qualifications and English
- Beliefs about teaching and 'good teachers'
- Transparency
- Divide and rule
- Racism, sexism
- Shock
- Unhappiness
- Principal out of touch
- Wider context
- Positive aspects of school
- Feelings about teaching
- Being inexperienced
- Cooperation, teamwork
- Influence of own schooling/background on teaching style
- Professional development (outside programme)
- Teaching yourself to teach
- Good qualities of staff
- Lack of planning
- Ownership (lack of)

- Losing students to other schools
- School 'falling apart'
- Resources (lack of, use of)
- Enjoying teaching
- Encouragement (lack of)
- Nostalgia/ 'harking back'
- Support (lack of)
- Teachers' own children
- Special needs
- Change: Improvement and deterioration
- Changes/interruptions to leadership
- Inexperienced leaders
- Lack of career path
- Frustration
- Factory mentality
- Teachers not treated as individuals
- Isolation
- Job satisfaction (lack of)
- Anger/resentment/bitterness
- Discrimination
- Feeling undervalued
- Teacher/Principal relations (poor)
- Too many roles
- Overwork
- Self-esteem (lack of)
- Staff turnover
- Poor pay (effects of)
- Sadness
- Wanting to leave the school
- School's loss of purpose
- Personal issues (of directors) affecting school
- Problems caused by directors
- Lowering of standards
- Praise for 'middle' managers
- Comparison with other schools
- Learning in school (style of)
- Reputation of school
- Coercion
- Pastoral care (inadequacy of)
- Financial support for teachers' studies (lack of)
- Reflective practice
- More time for sharing
- Interest in subject (as reason for teaching)

- Independent learning
- Learning as fun
- Confidence (as a teacher)
- Teacher roles
- Fear
- Poor management
- Fast expansion of school
- Use of emotive language
- Parents' concerns over school
- Workers' rights (abuse of)
- Inefficiency (of admin, management)

APPENDIX 2

AXIAL CODING:
MANAGEMENT

PRINCIPAL	DIRECTORS	MIDDLE MANAGERS
Leadership Cultural awareness Inexperience Ethics Coercion Lies Teacher/principal relations (poor) Support (lack of) Inefficiency Communication (lack of, ways of) Unfairness/favoritism Discrimination Insecurity Workers' rights Staff turnover Teachers not treated as individuals* Changes/interruptions to leadership Transparency Divide and rule Out of touch Recognition/rewards Encouragement (lack of) Factory mentality*	Problems Personal issues Lack of or too much involvement School as business Fast expansion	Praise for Too many roles Lack of career path Need for challenge*

SCHOOL

Loss of purpose Reputation Learning in school (style of) Pastoral care (inadequacy of) Lowering of standards Comparison with other schools Change: improvements and deterioration Parents' concerns Resources (lack of, use of) Special needs Wider context

'falling apart'

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Outside school
No support given
Unable to afford it
Reflective practice
Need more time for sharing
Development programme (positive and negative aspects)
Teacher roles
Being inexperienced
Teaching yourself to teach

TEACHERS

Feelings/emotions	Positive aspects of school	Other
Anger/resentment/bitterness	Enjoying teaching	Teachers' own children
Low morale	Feelings about teaching	Beliefs about teaching and
Isolation	Learning as fun	'good' teachers'
Nostalgia/'harking back'	Independent learning	Poor pay, effects of
Undervalued	Interested in subject	Influence of own
Unappreciated	Cooperation/teamwork	schooling/background
Lack of ownership	Solidarity/support among	Job satisfaction
Confidence	colleagues	Humour as coping strategy
Frustration	Teacher/student relations	Teachers' qualifications and
Shock		English
Overwork		Recognition/rewards*
Fear		Need for challenge*
Not treated as individuals*		Factory mentality*
Wanting to leave the school		
Self esteem (lack of)		
Unhappiness		
Sadness		
Encouragement (lack of)		

* = appears in more than one category

APPENDIX 3

Initial grouping of categories emerging from analysis of ‘drop in’ reports

Atmosphere	Teacher Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone, harsh • Interest • Atmosphere- tense • Engagement • Rapport • Frustration, threats • Overreaction • Reactions/responses to students • Boredom • Praise-lack of • Labelling students • Friendliness • Atmosphere- relaxed, happy • Enthusiasm • Praise • Students asking questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject knowledge – good • Relevance of content • Exam-focussed • Familiarity with syllabus • Responses to students’ questions
Teaching skills	Classroom management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of info- manageable • Thinking time • Question types • Explanations-clear • Monitoring- lack of • Demonstrations • Group work • Games- missed opportunities for • Pace- students working at own • Whiteboard- use of • Variety- lack of • Activities – missing opportunities for • Links between lessons • Putting students on the spot • Questioning techniques • ‘Question and Answer’ (transactional) • Timing • Written record • Checking understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher in control • On/off task behaviour • Instructions- unclear • Undisciplined, chaotic • Arrangement of classroom • Teacher-centred • Teacher-fronted • (lack of) group work • Instructions- clear • Monitoring- active • Individual working • Teacher activity • Use of students’ names • Checking students’ work • Students passive • Independent working • Participation • Lack of control • Organization and lack of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between theory and practice • Visually-supported explanations • Time to answer/compare answers • Revision- ways of doing • Order of activities 	
Language teaching	Teacher qualities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation • Meaningful practice • Context – lack of • Establishing meaning • Use of L2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Confidence • Cooperative working (of teachers) • Progress (of teacher) • Changing due to visit