

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Faculty of Education

ACTION RESEARCH IN THE GRAPHICS CLASSROOM:
REFLECTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE INITIATIVES IN TWO SCHOOLS

Mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with a pediment and six columns.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

GILLIAN MARGARET COWAN

October 1990

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an account of my experiences as a Graphics teacher using critical action research to examine my educational practice while working with Standard Nine students in two white high schools in Cape Town. The subject that I taught, since it was predominantly a "practical" one, was primarily for students who were often labelled, not only by teachers but by the students themselves, as academically "weak" or "stupid" as well as "delinquent". While my initial intention was to try to improve my own educational practice and, as a consequence, be better able to help my students, it became apparent that I could not begin to understand the emerging issues in isolation from the context in which the research was undertaken.

Issues, which at first seemed relatively simple, became increasingly complex as the research cycles proceeded. Three particular issues are further discussed:

- i) The problems of qualitative research, particularly those of data collection and narrative language; The value of "thick" description as opposed to the surface representations of positivistic research modes justifies the difficulty of following the qualitative research method.
- ii) The ways in which the curriculum and school organisation can perpetuate social inequalities and injustices which may be further reinforced by student resistance; My experience of my project students strongly suggested that for whatever other reasons they were doing so badly at school, it certainly was not because they were academically "weak" or "stupid".

iii) The value that critical action research has as a form of praxis or critical pedagogy. By closing the gap between theory and practice, it has enabled me to come to understand better the ideological nature of organised education and the consequences thereof.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lucinda and Phillipa, thank you for all your support and for providing a sort of non-stop academic meals-on-wheels service during the writing of this thesis.

Owen, for removing the commas as fast as I put them in. Thank you for your careful supervision, your interest and hard work - and also for sharing your delight in English and your very funny puns.

Dirk, for removing yet more commas and telling me what to do with them! Thank you for your thoughtful comments and good humour.

Henry, for being a patient colleague and a supportive, caring friend.

Sue, for working with me and my students. Thank you for your friendship, for joining us in the research projects and finding the time to reflect further, long after the action was over.

Wally, for those late afternoon lectures - when I found out that what I thought I knew was objectively true turned out to be a positivist plot.

DiDi the eagle eyes. I can't imagine how many more commas you found ... Thank you for undertaking yet another edit and bringing to my attention instead, those little things that still persisted or remained unseen.

The Human Sciences Research Council for a study grant, 1990.

Finally, my special thanks go to the Standard Nines students from Regis and Park High Schools who participated in the research. Without their insight and frankness, their laughter, frustration and anger, the projects would not have been possible.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	1
1. ACTION RESEARCH THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	4
HISTORY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS	4
ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
2. A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS	26
REGIS GIRLS' HIGH: THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL ONE	26
THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT	
- PHASE ONE	34
- PHASE TWO & THREE	48
- PHASE FOUR	60
PARK BOYS' HIGH: THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL TWO	68
THE SECOND ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT	
- PHASE ONE	69
- PHASE TWO	78
- PHASE THREE	83
- PHASE FOUR	85
UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS: THE THIRD ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT	91
- PHASE ONE	91
- PHASE TWO	98
- PHASE THREE	99
- PHASE FOUR	102
3. RETROSPECTION	109
THE DILEMMAS OF REPORTING ACTION RESEARCH	109
THE IMPACT OF SCHOOLING ON STUDENTS	121
VALUING ACTION RESEARCH	127
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

PROLOGUE

Q: What do you think of Ms C as a teacher?

A: ... (pause) ... do you mean as a person or a teacher?

I have never regarded myself as a "mainstream" teacher but over the last two years or so I have come to realise that actually I was not very different to my colleagues when it came to knowing and understanding what, apart from classroom experience, informed my practice.

My reasons for thinking that I taught differently were based on my broad experience in several other professions which had enabled me to work closely with people, travel extensively in various parts of the world and generally gain insight into and enjoyment of cultures and lifestyles sometimes vastly different from my own.

I thought that what I offered to my students was a lot more than traditional "transmission" teaching, or "chalk and talk" as it is often called. Certainly the subject that I taught, Art, was usually regarded as "different" and I found that, in general, Art teachers had more freedom in their Art Room activities than the average subject teacher. Despite this, I still felt that I could offer my students something extra and more enjoyable than the daily routine and constraints of school, precisely because I, too, was "different".

Looking back, I would still say that I was never "mainstream" but now I have a sense of what I might call liberation from the past. There was so much of myself that was unknown to me and I had very little idea of what

I was bringing into my Art Room along with my conscious experience. I was unaware that so much of my past history had shaped not only my values, but also my knowledge and my actions as a teacher. Although I thought I taught well and the results "proved" this, I was always looking for ways of "improving". I was hazy about how I could improve but assumed that a further degree in my subject would provide me with more knowledge which would enhance my teaching. I am embarrassed now to think that I had so little insight into my practice and so little understanding of the concept of "knowledge".

In my concern to become a better teacher, I started looking around for something in education that would stimulate my interest and extend my teaching. I had considered various post-graduate options but there was nothing that directly linked my teaching subject, Art, with a research component. I was left feeling somewhat frustrated and I think my enthusiasm had started to flag. Another factor that contributed to my unfocussed state was the daily frustration and anger of living and working in an unjust and authoritarian society. As a teacher, I felt increasingly that I had a responsibility to involve myself in some of the efforts being made to challenge apartheid. It was during this period that I finally registered for a Masters' Degree in Action Research and School Improvement at the University of the Western Cape, a university which had a particular attraction for me because of its fundamental commitment to the "creation of a non-racial, unitary and democratic South Africa."

This thesis is about a research process, part of which concerned two research projects, conducted in two different secondary school Art Rooms, which set out to examine the problems and effects of attempting to introduce significant change in an educational context. In trying to make sense of what happened, it became a documentation, as well, of my personal journey towards change. It is, then, at the same time a record of the way in which the research method, critical action research, became an agent of that change.

Critical action research is a systematic investigation in which the participants conduct a careful and critical self-reflective enquiry into their educational practice in a democratic attempt to help create a more meaningful and just educational situation. Through this process, I was able to come to know the theoretical basis which informed my practical teacher-knowledge to the point at which I was able to critique its ideological basis. It enabled me to begin working in a transformative way and for me that was the start of meaningful improvement. Not only has it altered the way in which I teach Art but it has made me more aware of educational practice in general.

Two years ago, I was a long way short of beginning to understand the dynamics of my Art Room, which prevented me from having any reflective insights which would have been a catalyst for real change both in myself and in my teaching practice. I am not the same teacher as I was two years ago because in many ways I am not the same person. That, I think, is at the core of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

ACTION RESEARCH THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways ...
the point is to change it. (Karl Marx)

Since this thesis concerns the use of critical action research as an agent for transformative change, it would be appropriate at this point to take a brief look at its more recent history and a closer look at what it is and at why and how it should be used.

ACTION RESEARCH: HISTORY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The beginning of a serious attempt to use action research in education was given momentum in England when Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) encouraged teachers to view themselves as researchers. This was an idea developed in opposition to the dominant positivist paradigm in educational research (as in the social sciences) and typified by the preference for psycho-statistical methodology. Designed and supervised by experts who are primarily concerned with control and measurable learning outcomes, the theories that are generated are prescriptive and deny the teacher's own judgement and autonomy. Students are not seen as individuals with their own classroom life but as occupants in a laboratory situation where they are "researched on" while their teachers are technicians whose job it is to implement certain instructions from the educational "experts".

Stenhouse challenged the power relations inherent in positivist research by rejecting its traditional top-down approach. This gave the action research movement its impetus by extending the traditional boundaries of educational research and placing it in the hands of classroom teachers. Stenhouse (1984:69) wrote, " ... it is the task of all educationalists outside the classroom to serve the teachers; for only teachers are in a position to create good teaching."

Hopkins (1985:24) makes the point that Stenhouse's ideas were emancipatory in the sense that he encouraged teachers to link research to the art of teaching in a process which liberated them "from a system of education that denies individual dignity by returning to them some degree of self-worth through the exercise of professional self-judgement".

However, one of the problems for critical action researchers has been that Stenhouse, working from an interpretive paradigm, proposed as his theoretical framework Popper's model of scientific rationality which leaned heavily on the term "experimentation". Although Stenhouse used the term "dialectic" to define the unified logic of action and research, seeing research and action as belonging to the teacher, there was a weakness relating to the dualism in Popper's approach, where action and research are seen as separate. In addition, as Winter (1987:33) points out, whereas the notion of contradiction inherent in dialectic relationships was seen by Popper as a " ... symptom (indeed the symptom) of error; for dialectics it is a condition of understanding ... "

Since critical action research challenges the dominance of positivism through its dialectical view of rationality it can be seen that Stenhouse's use of teacher-based research fell short of the sort of action research to which this thesis refers. Nevertheless, Stenhouse's critique of the traditional approach to educational research generated further interest in the idea of the teacher as researcher, and a movement developed in education that was linked to contemporary research in the social sciences. It was called action research. Teachers who used it as an alternative research method were able to derive first-hand knowledge of their practice from their own experience of the classroom situation in which they worked. Theory, instead of being regarded as irrelevant and separate from the practice of teaching, became an integral part of that practice.

What exactly is action research? My own experience is that it is a way of liberating one's own teaching from perpetuating social injustices and inequalities that lie within the curriculum by engaging in action and reflection which attempts to understand the basis for the theories which inform one's practice. This process does not cease to exist the minute one closes the classroom door; rather, it becomes a means by which one critiques one's personal philosophy of life.

Hopkins (1985:32) defines it as

... action disciplined by enquiry, a personal attempt at understanding whilst engaged in a process of improvement and reform.

Action research is a way for teachers to undertake research in their own classrooms with the intention of improving the quality of their practice, and where the word "improvement" is not seen as a "refining" of existing educational practice but as the establishment of a radical pedagogical role for the teacher. It is crucial that words such as "improvement" and "reform" be contextualised within the emancipatory framework of critical action research because these words in any other context are not necessarily linked with liberatory or emancipatory practices.

Elliott (1989:4) considers that the fundamental aim of action research is

... to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. The production and utilisation of knowledge is subordinate to, and conditioned by, this fundamental aim ... improving practice involves jointly considering the quality of both outcomes and processes. Neither consideration in isolation is sufficient ... Both product and process need to be jointly considered when attempting to improve practice ... This kind of joint reflection about the relationship in particular circumstances between processes and products is a central characteristic of what Schon has called REFLECTIVE PRACTICE and others, including myself, have termed ACTION RESEARCH.

Elliott, in discussing the rejection by action researchers of the positivist paradigm with its interest in technical rationality, makes a crucial point when he warns that there are signs of the term, action research, being "highjacked" by positivist researchers as another means by which to control and shape the practices of teachers. Elliott therefore suggests that the time has come to find another term for action research, and he has started to refer to it as a "moral science". In this thesis I prefer to use the term, critical action research

because it is specifically associated with emancipatory practice and empowerment.

These sorts of issues have occupied the attention of many action researchers particularly in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, North America and, more recently, South Africa. While what one could call traditional action research in a specifically first world, anglo-saxon context has continued to focus on teacher "improvement", which is undoubtedly of great educational importance, its assumption about the normality of the socio-political setting in which the research takes place is a naive one. That is to say, the dominant political agenda which determines the structures and values of a particular society is left unquestioned. This agenda is seen as liberal and therefore benign, and takes for granted the assumption that education is neutral in its concern for the common good and welfare of all.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985:37) comment in this regard, that teachers should take seriously, "... the need to come to grips with those ideological and material aspects of society that attempt to separate the issues of power and knowledge". Similarly, Freire (1985:10) writes that "... the structure of official knowledge is also the structure of social authority".

There are many definitions of action research: probably the most well-known and useful one is that of Carr and Kemmis (1986:162), who say that action research is

... a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants

in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

Richard Winter (1987:viii), in a discussion of epistemological issues, suggests that

... action research addresses "head-on" social inquiry's fundamental problems - the relation between theory and practice, between the general and the particular, between common-sense and academic expertise, between mundane action and critical reflection, and hence - ultimately - between ideology and understanding.

Kemmis (1984:78), in discussing emancipatory action research or critical education science, states that action research

... has the aim of transforming education; in this view, educational change provides the essential impulse for educational understanding. Understanding education (as an aim for educational research), is therefore a moment in a transformative process, rather than a sufficient end.

Critical action research is a way of empowering teachers to effect transformatory change in their classrooms by way of becoming more critically aware of the theories that inform their practice. It involves reclaiming "teacher-knowledge" and, in that respect, may be regarded as essentially "activist" and emancipatory, for knowledge has a political agenda and teaching is a political act. For example, if one takes the view that schools are agents of cultural transmission, then their basic organisational structures will reflect those of the societies they serve. In the main, these are industrial and technological which value the positivistic emphasis on control, efficiency, predictability and certainty. As Hopkins (1984:4) puts it, "These values ... result in an

educational system which militates against uniqueness, creativity and individual autonomy."

Implicit within critical action research is the idea of praxis, which is fundamental to Friere's (1972:96) work, and which is seen by him as action-and-reflection. It is a process which recognises that meaning is socially constructed and not absolute, in which "the act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection, and from reflection upon action to a new action".

Critical action research, then, is a form of research which seeks a beneficial change in peoples' lives and, by extension, a change in the social system in which they live. For teachers, it is particularly appropriate because it provides a means whereby they can examine, as researchers, their actions and the theories that inform them, in a self-reflective and critical way, with a view to broader transformative change, for education has to be primarily understood in a socio-political context. Hargreaves (1985:21), remarks that

Organised education is a highly political affair. It shapes and channels life opportunities, it opens up and blocks off careers for those who work within it, it draws heavily on scarce resources from the state budget, and it is subject to a range of competitive pressures from all sectors of society.

Many critical action researchers have used the work of Habermas (1972) as a point of departure. His theory of "knowledge-constitutive interests" concerns the idea that all knowledge is founded on human needs and interests. These interests are more fundamental than knowledge and determine a certain view of knowledge within a society. For

Habermas, there are three basic interests, the technical, the practical and the emancipatory.

Educational research which follows the method of the empirical-analytic sciences, for example the psycho-statistical method, incorporates the technical interest and generates a positivistic knowledge which has, as Grundy (1987:12) remarks, a fundamental "... interest in control and the technical exploitability of knowledge". This form of research is hierarchical and maintains a separation between theory and practice, the researcher and the researched, and ultimately the individual and society.

This interest, argues McNiff (1988:xiv) has led to a situation where

teachers are being encouraged, systematically and deliberately, to de-skill themselves. Instead of being encouraged to build up the wisdom to judge their own practice in terms of its educational competence, teachers are expected to implement identified criteria of excellence, to which they and their children are expected to conform ... this view of teachers in their classrooms denies them a self-image of reflective educators, and turns them simply into highly skilled technicians.

The practical interest has as its key concepts, understanding, interaction and consensual interpretation as a way of generating knowledge. It takes into consideration the experiences and perceptions of those involved but without any deliberate attempt to contextualise this within an understanding of power relations within society. Grundy (1987:17) comments that while the practical interest has the potential for freedom, it proves to be inadequate for the promotion of true

emancipation because of the " ... propensity of persons to be deceived, even when understandings are arrived at in open discussion and debate".

The practical interest is radically different from the technical interest in that it recognises that the self-understanding of the participants is crucial to the generation of knowledge and, ultimately, that meaning and action are the bedrock of explanation. However, it is essentially a liberal construction which assumes society to be benign and chooses only to describe social reality, rather than criticise and transform it. One of the limitations of the practical interest is, therefore, that it does not make allowances for the possibility of a false consciousness existing in the participants, i.e. that despite the achievement of consensus through open debate, the real meaning of a situation could be obscured if the participants are unaware of the power relations which may manipulate their understandings.

The emancipatory interest goes further than the practical interest in that it insists on moving beyond self-understanding. While the technical and practical interests claim to be politically neutral, the emancipatory interest acknowledges its political agenda with the express purpose of criticising and changing social reality. It addresses the problem of false consciousness by engaging in a process of ideology-critique as a way of empowering individuals to effect beneficial changes in their lives.

If one takes the view that knowledge arises out of the interest in power and remains as a means of maintaining that power (Gramsci (1971); Bowles

and Gintis (1976); Bourdieu (1973); Giroux (1981) and many others], then education is a means of reproducing that knowledge. Teachers are often passive transmitters or active disseminators who tend, unconsciously or consciously, to maintain the status quo.

It is through the school curriculum that the reproduction of knowledge takes place. The curriculum informed by the technical interest and dominated by positivism, is intended to reinforce control over what is learned and how it is learned through pre-specified objectives. The students are seen as passive receivers of knowledge and the teachers as transmitters.

The curriculum derived from the practical interest, one which Stenhouse advocated, encourages interpretation, the exercise of personal judgement and the reaching of consensus through open debate between the participants, i.e. both students and teacher, but does not attempt to address the deeper ideological debates surrounding the nature of knowledge although the participants are encouraged to become active creators of knowledge.

The emancipatory curriculum which emerges from critical action research, goes beyond teacher and student judgement because it works towards freedom from distortions, which, according to Grundy (1987:19) involves

the participants in the educational encounter, both teacher and pupil, in action which attempts to change the structures within which learning occurs and which constrain freedom in often unrecognised ways. An emancipatory curriculum entails a reciprocal relationship between self-reflection and action.

In looking at the role which the curriculum plays in the reproduction of social inequalities, the importance of the organisational structure of the school within which lies the so-called "hidden curriculum" must not be overlooked. In particular, the work of Jackson (1968), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Willis (1977), and Apple (1979), has examined the ways in which the hidden curriculum reinforces conformity rather than creativity, and inequality and discrimination rather than empowerment.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal more deeply with these issues but it is important to stress that the often unquestioning acceptance by teachers, of the curriculum, both overt and hidden, is a situation which critical action research seeks to undermine.

Critical action research set in the authoritarian framework of South African society, in common with similar research in, for example, Europe United Kingdom, North America and Australia, does not make the naive assumption that the context in which it takes place is benign.

For teachers working in English-medium white schools, it is particularly important to recognise that the often "traditional-liberal" English public school models on which they are based, mask injustices and perpetuate the status quo as much as the Afrikaans-medium "Christian National Education" models do.

Since critical action research is not only concerned with the improvement of educational practice, it focuses on transformative change

by contextualising it within the abnormal and grossly unjust situation in which that practice occurs.

The socio-political context of South Africa is currently undergoing major change, and a "Brave New South Africa" is the password of the day, despite the continuing conflict. A critical action researcher would do well to consider, of the changes in education that are being proposed, which ones will indeed be transformatory and emancipatory, for example, "open" schools. Given that education is a means of reproducing the status quo, Giroux (1981:109), believes that

... reproduction is a complex phenomenon that not only serves the interests of domination but also the seeds of conflict and transformation.

Teachers engaged in critical action research, which stresses participation and collegiality, need to pool their knowledge and create a "community of researchers" who are committed to an educational practice which is transformatory rather than focussed on domination or conflict. In other words they need to take cognisance, continually, of the context in which they work, for major change in the socio-political order, and the power struggles that ensue may not necessarily lead to liberatory practices either in the macro-context of society or the micro-context of the classroom.

The idea of a "community" of transformative researchers has implications for the traditional methods of teacher improvement through INSET (in-service training). There is a need to reject INSET courses that are run in a "top-down" and prescriptive manner with teachers being seen as

ever-more efficient implementers of a curriculum devised by external policy-makers. Rather, thinking teachers need to see the potential for liberation in classroom research with themselves as researchers, and need to be able to engage in dialogue with their colleagues in an attempt to resolve problems of practice. McNiff (1988:140), in discussing the potential of the INSET revolution, considers that

... the two sides of the coin are an enhancement of the quality of education in terms of personal and social benefit for the clients, and an improvement in the quality of education in terms of understandings and explanations for the teacher.

Thinking students, too, need the support of similar classroom situations as much as teachers do. INSET which seeks to engage not only teachers but students as participants in critical action research, stands a better chance of attempting to resolve problems of practice through the broader notion of "collegiality" which the idea of "classroom communities" suggests.

At this point, it is necessary to take a closer look at the methodology of critical action research as a way of attempting to resolve problems of practice.

ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods of critical action research are part of the critical ethnographic research paradigm which has as its purpose, qualitative "research with" rather than quantitative "research on" its participants. Without wishing to get unnecessarily involved in the complex debates

that surround ethnographic research, it is important to note that it shares a concern for the realities hidden beneath surface appearances with critical action research, as well as a commitment to the participants in the research process. In addition, reflexivity is a crucial partner to the rich descriptive qualities of both research methodologies. Theory and practice, the researcher and the researched are engaged in a dialectical relationship in which the action and reflective understandings of the participants form a central part of the process towards a hoped-for transformation.

How is critical action research done? The methodology is often quite simply summed up as being an interlocking four-phase process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. However, in practice, it is much more complex than that and almost defies coherent description because these phases cannot simply be regarded as separate events. The open, flexible nature of action research is one of integrating and interweaving rather than of compartmentalising and it moves back and forth from the micro to the macro-situation. Reflection usually leads on to refinements of the initial plan and a further process can be initiated. This methodology takes cognisance of the fact that the situation or problem being researched will inevitably release a shifting, multi-layered investigation. In fact, the structure of the action research process is often visualised as a spiral with no fixed end-point, and which allows one spiral of research to lead to another or to precipitate further spirals in apparent digressions or excursions. These can be either simultaneous or serial. It is these spirals that provide the means to shift from one layer of understanding to the next.

Ebbutt (1983:14) has questioned the usefulness of the spiral as a metaphor, suggesting that it does not capture the "messiness" of the action research process. He thinks of it as " comprising of a a series of successive cycles, each incorporating the possibility for the feedback of information within and between cycles".

I think there is a basic problem in trying to visualise such a complex process, one that lies within the positivist notion of regarding a diagram as unequivocal. Although the words "spiral" or "cycle" are suggestive of a dynamic process which can be subjected, at any time, to changes of direction, it is difficult to conceive of an effective visual equivalent of the word "messiness" without causing great confusion.

Therefore, without resorting to the use of a diagram, with the double possibility of causing either confusion for the more literal reader or a prescriptive framework for the more technological, I shall now attempt a discussion of the different but interlocking stages. However, before doing so, there are two points that I would like to make about critical action research relating to further issues that Ebbutt has discussed.

In looking at the nature of the dynamics that drive the research process through its successive cycles, Ebbutt (1983:15) talks about having also to consider the "imperative for change" of participants in the research. He cites as an example the motivation experienced by black minority groups in seeking ways to improve their situations. I would develop that idea further by commenting that in any critical action research situation, the participants often do not see the need for any change and

thus lack feelings of motivation or urgency, partly because they may be unaware of any injustices. Even if they are aware, they may well resist those changes and it is this point that I would like to examine further. In the apartheid society of South Africa, many white parents, teachers and students, as they move closer to an "open" society and non-racial education, may experience anger and a feeling of being threatened and as a consequence may well resist the "imperative for change". In addition, the virtually total rejection of State-controlled education by blacks has resulted in at least a generation of educationally-resistant, angry youth who identify with the cry "no education before liberation". Various organisations now unbanned, together with People's Education initiatives, have sought to address this crisis while some black leaders, parents and teachers have, without much success, called for a return to the classroom.

I believe that participating in critical action research should become part of preparing students and teachers for a non-racial and democratic society. If this is so, one of the first problems to be faced is that of motivating not only the confidence and trust of students and teachers but also regaining their will to change. Entrenched attitudes of superiority combined with fear hardly generate the imperative for change in whites. In the same way, blacks in their daily experience of continued oppression, humiliation and anger may well resist what Ebbutt has idealistically called the collective wish "to improve one's lot".

The other point which I want to mention briefly concerns teacher autonomy. Ebbutt (1983:15) comments that this can serve to isolate and

insulate teachers from the "imperative for change" for, no matter what the wishes of the majority may be, behind the closed doors of the classroom, those wishes can cease to exist. Elliott (1989:3) sees this claim to the right to privacy as part of the "traditional craft culture" of the school, remarking that the guardians of this sort of practice could find the communal and participatory nature of critical action research very threatening. I shall return to this issue in Chapter Three.

PHASE ONE: Planning

There does not necessarily have to be a specific problem to investigate. The plan can focus on something that a teacher would like to alter in his or her practice. Before the action phase can commence, however, several aspects have to be considered. First, it has to be established whether critical action research would be more appropriate than using a quantitative methodology. Secondly, the plan may initially seem to be simple but, as it is looked at from a variety of perspectives, it often turns out to be quite complex and in need of honing. This stage of planning has been referred to as "reconnaissance". Thirdly, the teacher-researcher has to negotiate with everyone who will be involved, for this is a democratic procedure and a very important part of the action research process, emphasising its interactive nature ("research with" rather than "research on"). Understanding and agreement and, therefore, support for what is to take place must be reached by all concerned. Fourthly, there must be confidentiality in respect of the data. If it is to be made public, the agreement of all the participants must be

obtained. Fifthly, another aspect that requires some thought and preparation is logistical in terms of the sort of resources that may be needed and the time structure appropriate for the research. For example, it must be decided whether the physical organisation of the classroom is adequate or can be arranged in a way that will facilitate the action, and whether the action will occupy one lesson or several. Finally, a decision about data collection must be made, based on particular needs or preferences.

During all these activities, teacher-researchers should draw into the research the assistance of a colleague, or someone from "outside" whom they trust and with whom they can work openly without threat. The feeling of threat, however, often does occur quite unexpectedly and this is why it is crucial that the issue be addressed and discussed. This is not as easy as it sounds for it may take a long period of time before the teacher-researcher or the colleague can admit that it has occurred and feels able to talk openly about it. The intention is that the relationship should be an equal one, not to be confused with the sort of observer who is actually an "outside researcher" directing, and indeed "owning", the proceedings. The colleague or person who takes the role of what is called a triangulator or facilitator in action research, functions as a co-observer and has a very important part to play in the observation of and reflection on the 'action phase' of the research. Often, the triangulator is also involved with the planning as someone with whom the teacher-researcher can sound out ideas and discuss problems. If the triangulator is experienced, she/he may suggest particular ways of collecting data which may be of considerable help to

the teacher-researcher in their joint planning. It is important that the triangulator be regarded as a participant in the research, not only by the teacher-researcher but also by the students.

Data can be gathered in many ways, but some are as basic to action research as they are to ethnography, for example, the keeping of reference notes during the reconnaissance, and (during the observation and reflection phases) log books, diaries, interviews, anecdotal records (i.e. verbatim quotes from the participants), questionnaires, tape-recordings, video-recordings and still photographs/ slides. Tests are used, when appropriate, as a means of assessing how the students are coping with new approaches to learning and assimilating information.

PHASE TWO: Acting

The teacher-researcher, having carefully refined the plan and having co-ordinated it with the triangulator, who will be present, implements it. There should be a measure of flexibility built into the time allowed for the activity because there might be unanticipated events to be taken into consideration. For example, an activity planned for one lesson might spread into two or three.

PHASE THREE: Observing

In watching what happens and recording these observations, all the participants engage in trying to make sense of and capture what is happening from their own, subjective perspective.

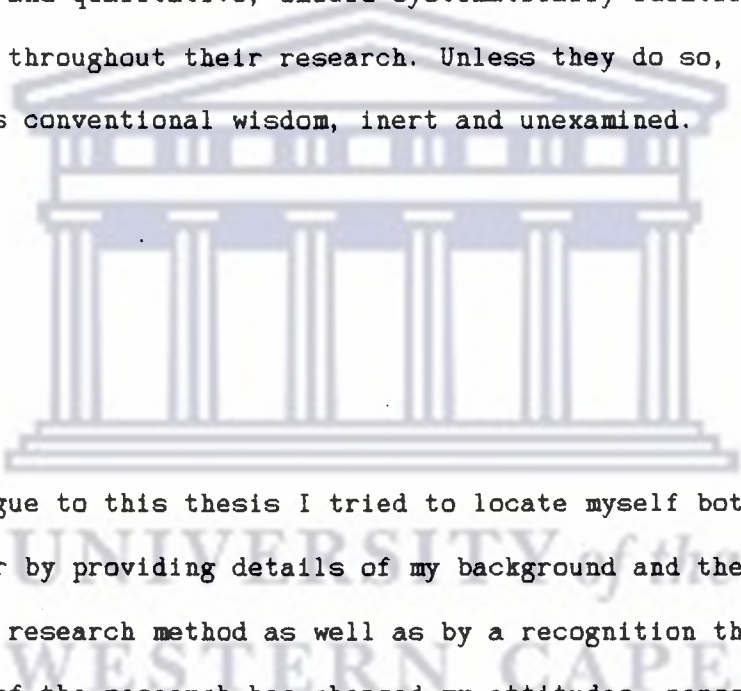
PHASE FOUR: Reflecting

By evaluating all the data made during the action phase, and comparing it with what had been planned, teacher-researchers can come to some understanding of what actually did happen. This critical reflection is a crucial part of action research because the accounts of what happened do not always coincide with one another. These discrepancies are integral to the dialectical nature of action research. Contradictions are part of the dialogue by which understanding of the action is reached. By taking note of their own responses and by engaging in dialogue with the triangulator and students, teacher-researchers are given different perspectives which will enrich their insight and understanding. It is at this point that another action research spiral could be planned, based on those insights and understandings reached during the first spiral. This second spiral can then be implemented in the following lesson or series of lessons.

Eisner (1988:15) questions to what extent the research methods we use shape what we learn about educational practice and goes on to remark that " ... theories of nature and of culture provide powerful agents for guiding our perception. These theories are, in the sciences, propositional languages about how the world is and what is worth attending to." He comments further that in educational theory and research, there is a hegemony of propositional discourse, where its language suggests a separation of the knower from the known by objectifying and depersonalising. To try to comprehend classroom life,

or indeed any form of social life, in such terms is at best limiting and partial.

Critical action research engages teacher-researchers in a form of praxis which is essentially ethnographic and qualitative. The language which is used acknowledges the subjectivity of the participants by attending to it in a meaningful way. Peshkin (1988:17) argues that all researchers, quantitative and qualitative, should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout their research. Unless they do so, all that can be claimed is conventional wisdom, inert and unexamined.



In the prologue to this thesis I tried to locate myself both as a person and a teacher by providing details of my background and the reasons for my choice of research method as well as by a recognition that the undertaking of the research has changed my attitudes, personally and as an educator.

Chapter One has given a brief history of the action research movement and attempts to define and contextualise critical action research, together with an explanation of the methodology.

Chapter Two, in which I write about the research projects undertaken in two white high schools where I taught, highlights one of the major

problems of critical action research, that is, how to present the findings or "my story" in such a way that it does not lose the liveliness of the action while simultaneously seeking authentication. I refer to this more fully in the planning stage of the narrative for the first action research project (pp 39-40) since it was an integral part of my record of the research experience.

In the final section, which is Chapter Three, I examine more closely three of the major issues which emerged from these research projects. The first concerns the dilemmas of reporting action research while the second deals with the impact of schooling on students. In conclusion, I discuss the value of critical action research and how it has enabled me to close the gap between theory and practice and to come to understand better the ideological nature of organised education.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

CHAPTER TWO

A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

"People see you as being below them if you don't do Maths. Everyone implied that I was stupid when I couldn't do Maths."

1988 was an unsettled year for me, culminating in decisions to change schools at mid-year and, towards the end of the year, to join the University of the Western Cape as a part-time Masters' student in Action Research. My new school, quite unexpectedly, turned out to be the first of two that I was to teach at during the following eighteen months. This thesis concerns those two schools and the separate action research projects that I initiated in them both as part-requirement for the Masters' degree and because I was searching, more reflectively through my practice, for a better way of teaching.

N.B. All the names used in the action research projects are fictitious.

REGIS GIRLS' HIGH: THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL ONE

Regis Girls' High, a racially segregated "white" school, was not only in a different suburb of Cape Town from the school I had just left, but operated on a very different set of assumptions. I was, therefore, very unprepared for the culture shock that I initially experienced at the time of change. The school had a reputation for being "academic", a sense of social superiority pervading it as well. This combination made

it a much sought-after school. In fact, its feeder area was in demand as a residential area because of the proximity of educational institutions such as Regis and a University. One of the senior staff, during a meeting, referred to a student who was not doing well at the school as having "parents who had come up in the world", which explained, according to that teacher, why she was having problems at Regis. There was tremendous pressure on staff and the "girls" (never "students") to achieve excellence. The number of "A's" that you got in "your" matriculation results as a subject teacher was a matter of concern for all. "A's" were a visible symbol of good teaching, the results being posted up on a corridor notice board to emphasise the school's academic preoccupation. At the first staff meeting of the new year, you were congratulated, or ignored, on the quantity of "your A's".

My earliest impression of teaching there was that classwork, in many cases, was a relentless pursuit of the syllabus in order to cover enough work for the many tests that had to be given as part of the school's academic programme. I had joined the staff as a Graphics teacher and most of my students were regarded as academically "weak". When they came to my classes, they were always pre-occupied or anxious about forthcoming tests in their other subjects - as one of them said, "We're always so busy learning (for tests) we don't have time to think."

I had been told by the principal that Graphics was originally introduced as an alternative subject choice at Standard Eight level for "weak" students who had failed Maths and who were not doing well in other academic subjects. Most of these students also took Home Economics, and

some of them Needlework. These students did not consider Graphics to be an art subject and, similarly, it appeared that very few people in the school, students or staff, regarded it as such, despite the fact that some of the Art students also did Graphics. In their case, the subject had a different name and a higher status although the practical component of the course was exactly the same. This was due, it appeared, to the fact that students who took Art as a subject choice were from the academic streams and did Maths or Modern Languages as well.

Status seemed to figure importantly at Regis High. In an early conversation with the school psychologist, I established that the students who chose Maths and Physical Science were regarded, and indeed regarded themselves, as the top academic students. The less scientific, who were more inclined to select, apart from Maths (sometimes at a lower grade level), various humanities subjects (such as Latin, French, German, Art or Music) were also seen as academic but more "average". The leadership structure of the school, among the students, was built from these two groups. The "weakest" students were steered towards a limited choice of non-academic courses (i.e. subjects that were largely practical) such as Home Economics, Needlework and Graphics. It was among these students that a lot of behavioural problems were experienced.

In the staffroom, too, status served to define the power structure, with the Maths and Science staff at the top and the non-academic teachers such as myself, Home Economics and Needlework staff at the bottom. At one stage I wondered whether this was age-related, although I and several other lower-status staff were neither young nor inexperienced.

However, it looked to me, as time passed, that the politics of power that dominated the staffroom was extremely complex, with everyone, senior staff included, seeming to be fearful of the principal and reluctant to disagree openly with her. If they did, it usually caused unpleasantness and tension. The atmosphere, both in the staffroom and within the school, contrasted gloomily with that of my previous school, which had a more open, tolerant and mutually supportive organisational structure, despite an autocratic principal. One of my colleagues, a woman who joined Regis some time after I did, said to me one day with desperation in her voice, "You know, there is no joy here."

At this point, I think it is useful to explain exactly what Graphics is, because there is endless confusion about it whenever it is discussed. The term Graphics is generally used when referring to an Art subject in which the practical component is Printmaking. It can be offered on the Higher Grade in conjunction with History of Art Higher Grade, but is more usually offered as a Standard Grade subject when it is called Art Standard Grade. It can also be offered as an additional Art subject for those students already taking Art Higher Grade with painting as the practical component. In this case, the subject is called Graphics Standard Grade. Regis High offered the latter two choices but they were officially referred to, by the school, as "Graphics" and were not associated with "Art". This type of confusion, it seemed to me, revealed a certain indifference to the subject. In fact, I was told that once some "Graphics" students had been incorrectly registered for the matriculation examination subject.

I have identified two "streams" who took Graphics as a subject. The "Art girls" mostly had the advantage of having done Art since Standard Six and they had a strong interest in the subject. It seemed that being able to choose an additional subject like Graphics was, for them, the cherry on the top, despite their being unable to see it, in practice, as an extension of Art.

Conversely, the students who drifted into Graphics at Standard Eight, with a poor academic record and failure in Maths, chose the option because there was little else for them. Usually, they had not done Art before and seemed to be unaware that Graphics was an Art subject. It was the opinion of the staff to whom I spoke, especially the teacher-psychologist, that Graphics was a useful "dumping ground" for students who couldn't manage in other subjects. Certainly, the students saw themselves as failures and "doffs". I was informed by my Standard Eight group that the Maths/Science girls were the school "boffins" because the subjects they did were "tough". I asked them what they meant by "tough" and the reply from them, almost in chorus, was "... the marks are hard to get ... you've gotta have brains." When I asked them why they thought themselves to be "doff", I was told that subjects like Graphics, Home Economics and Needlework were seen as "free subjects". They explained that the "boffins" thought that "marks" were easily acquired from such subjects and "... you don't have to have brain-power to get an "A" ... " hence the jargon-word "free". This was said with indignation, and, as one of them added, "... we work as hard for our marks as they (the 'boffins') do."

These same students asked me, just after I started at Regis High, if I were a "proper" teacher. It seemed that what they meant was, did I have any qualifications? They showed surprise when they heard that I had several. One remarked in amazement, "You mean you are the same as Mrs Brown (the Art teacher) downstairs ... a degree and things? Why do you want to be a Graphics teacher then?" When I told them that I had been an Art teacher for eight years and I felt like a change, they obviously thought I was mad. I realised that the Art teacher, like the "Art girls", had a higher status in their eyes than I did. They didn't think much of themselves or Graphics, so probably I slotted in at their level of the hierarchy, too. It was a further indication of the ways in which certain subjects transferred prestige, or otherwise, on the teachers and students.

As my first term progressed, I built up a picture of a school that was structured around competitiveness. In the Graphics Room there was endless quibbling over "marks" which often turned into quite aggressive confrontations between the students themselves or with me. In the school at large, I was placed in the uncomfortable position of having to defend both my subject and my students at a parents' evening, where the choices for Standard Eight were defined in detail. I was under the impression that I would simply have to bring clarity about what Graphics was, but found myself, as the second-to-last speaker (the Home Economics teacher being last), having pointedly to refute that my subject was for the "also-rans" of the school. I noted, with irritation, that the Maths, Physical Science and Latin subject heads openly stressed the need for superior intellect in girls choosing these subjects. I do not know why I

marks
quibbling
confrontations
also-rans
superior intellect

should have been shocked, because all the signs of this sort of elitism had been there for me to see. That was Regis Girls' High.

As the final term of the year drew to a close, after six months at Regis, I had time to reflect on the sort of teacher that I wanted to be. I say, wanted to be, because I began to understand that I was not free from elitism, myself, in a myriad of ways that I'd never really thought about. It was during this period that I commenced the first readings for the course-work section of the Masters' degree for which I had been accepted, and settled down to give them some attention.

In that first six months I had become more familiar with the ways of Regis High, I had found one of my Standard Eight groups particularly difficult to work with. This group was now in Standard Nine, bringing with them a renewed lack of enthusiasm for school and sense of injustice about their position. Many of their comments were prefaced by, "It's not fair ... " Several had scraped through the end of year exams and the others had mediocre results. The absentee rate was high, a few spent a lot of time in detention, and I rarely had a class with everybody present, let alone a lesson that began on time. They would wander in, or pause outside the room, lean over the balcony and chat, or just stand and stare into the empty quad.

I had noticed that it was common for some teachers to line up their students and lead them in to the classrooms in silence. Others officiously checked hemlines, ear-stoppers and hairstyles. I wondered whether the slowness which my students showed was a reaction to this

sort of discipline or whether it had something to do with Graphics. They avoided getting started and used all sorts of delaying tactics such as wanting to go to the toilet or searching for pencils. Since I arrived, they had responded to my practical lessons negatively, claiming that they could **only** draw with the help of tracing paper, from photographs or photocopies because they " ... were **not** artists, like the others ... (the Art girls)". They had, I was informed, been in the habit of transferring these traced drawings, with the help of carbon paper, onto a surface suitable for printmaking, which they worked with cutting tools in a simple way to produce a print. They did not like what they called "my way of doing things" and resented having to draw in any other way.

During the History of Art classes, their lateness and restlessness became worse. It was common for some of them to appear to fall asleep, while one student in particular always managed to drop her files and paper on the floor, causing a flurry of activity accompanied by giggles. Another student would avoid looking at me, or anybody else for that matter. She would enter the room frowning and with an air of tension, sit down and stare out of the window, refusing to engage in any activity until she felt ready to do so.

When it came to tests, not only for my subject but generally, the absentee rate for these students soared. We did not get much of the official syllabus completed, and what was done I was very unhappy with, in terms of what had been assimilated. Nevertheless, when we were in a situation where "real" work was being sidestepped, I found their conversation to be full of insightful and stimulating observations. I

encouraged them to talk in this informal way during lessons, gradually throwing in some History of Art or practical work, hoping that I could increase their confidence enough to start what they called "real" work. Frequently, the dialogue was so rapid and energetic that they left me feeling as if we'd been caught in a whirlpool.

So, at the beginning of 1989, I sat with a puzzle that had gradually taken shape during the previous term. Why were these students doing so badly at school? I could not believe that they were really academically 'weak'. I thought that maybe if they were, they wouldn't be so discontented and troublesome although, given the extraordinary competitiveness of their environment, they would have good reason to feel insecure and be difficult. It was this puzzle that was to become part of the reason for my first action research project.



THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

PHASE ONE: The Plan

As I started to write about this part of the thesis, I was reminded of one of the difficulties of this type of research. Partly because of my readings for the Masters' course and partly because I had already started "sassing out" my new working environment (which most people would do in order to assess where they "fitted in" with an organisation) I had already commenced the process of action research by engaging in

reconnaissance of a very general kind. This eventually lead me to a particular problem which was then looked at in an action research cycle.

My plan involved working with the students, now in Standard Nine, who were puzzling me. We had established a good, informal relationship in the time that I had been at Regis High and I felt that we could work together as a group to try to deal with some of their stress and negative attitudes. As I started to plan the first research cycle, I realised that what was bothering me was the comparison that I kept making between these Standard Nines and the sort of Art students that I had been used to teaching at my previous school, where only Art Higher Grade was offered. I felt that there was no clear academic reason why my Standard Nines should be so weak. Certainly, I had built up a picture of them that was different, in terms of their achievement and behaviour, from students at my previous school. There, Art Higher Grade was the only Art choice and my students' programmes had varied from full academic ones to the more specialist ones like Music and Ballet or to the commercial ones where they did subjects such as Shorthand, Typing, Accountancy or Home Economics. In other words, my classes at my previous school had been quite diversified in the types of student who opted to take Art. Nevertheless, my previous students had also called themselves "doff" and most of them did not do Maths, they were not as seriously "weak", nor did they appear to have the same problems or behave in the same way as my Standard Nines at Regis High.

I tried to develop some clarity about what it was that I wanted to do with my Standard Nines. This process was assisted by the meetings I had

to attend where we, as Masters' students, were starting to share and discuss ideas for our action research projects. Associated with the course and experienced in action research was a person I shall name Jo, who was prepared to be a triangulator for a small group of us, including myself. Jo and I had already established a good rapport and we both felt that we could work very well together. From that time onwards, Jo and I were in regular contact, to share ideas about planning the project and following it through.

Early in the first term of 1989, I asked my Standard Nines whether they would like to be involved in some research with me. When asked why, I replied that I would like to make school a more enjoyable place to be and commented, " ... maybe we can try to find out why you are not doing so well with History of Art, for example...?" I explained that someone called Jo would be joining the classes periodically to see what we were doing and that she would want to interview them. I asked them how they felt about it. This was received quietly, so I emphasised that most research did not include asking the students their real opinions whereas what I wanted to do directly involved them and, in fact, their personal comments were crucial to the research. "You can be absolutely frank," I told them. "Really ..." was the ironic reply from one of them, supported by facial gestures and generally affirmative sounds. I mentioned using a tape-recorder, and asked them if they would be prepared to have their interviews taped. I also suggested using a video-camera, which elicited some laughter and another said, " ... not on me, I'm too fat."

Generally, the plan was greeted with caution. They recalled experiences of what they identified as "tests" rather than research, although they made the necessary connections. One said, "... remember that boffin-type (an educational psychologist) who brought cards we had to stick holes in ... ?" "Yes," interrupted another, "... and we all gave up and just stuck holes in anywhere to pass the time." Someone else added, "... and do you remember how cross Mrs Smith (teacher-psychologist) got!" All these comments were accompanied by much laughter and falling on one another.

I repeated the idea of research a few lessons later, having asked them to think about it and discuss it. Nobody indicated any reluctance to get involved. Interestingly, the video-camera had become a tangible focus of the research for them and had generated excitement. The question "Can we take the film with us to show at home?" started a hustle for who was going to be first. When I said, "... hold on - we haven't even made a final decision yet, let alone do anything to film", they all laughed and someone said, "Well, aren't we enough on our own?"

My next step was to ask for permission to do the research. These negotiations with my principal, with whom I had a frank but basically tense relationship, were formal. With her, I often felt that I was "back at school" rather than a colleague. This was not a unique experience, although more marked at Regis High, for I had found that women teachers at girls' schools where I had worked tended to be treated like "the girls". We were neither totally free to take our rightful place as adults and professionals, nor, like "the girls", were we expected even

to think we had any critical or effective decision-making roles to play. The principal listened to me carefully, her major concern seeming to be that I would be working with such "weak" students. I received the impression that she was keen for them to do better and if that was what the research was for, that was fine; I also had to get permission for Jo, as an "outsider" to have access to the school at a time when there were severe restrictions placed, by the State, on visitors to schools. (This was related to the "state of emergency" that had been proclaimed in South Africa). My interview with the principal was not a difficult one although I gained the further impression that, since what I planned to do did not have all the trappings of empirical research, she tended to disregard it as not being "real" research.

I think it would be useful, at this point, to define clearly the position of the students with whom I had negotiated to participate in the action research project.

1. The group comprised 14 students, most of whom came from the same Standard Nine form, known as 9D, which was openly considered to be the "doff" form as well as the most badly behaved, by staff and other students alike.

2. These 14 students took Art Standard Grade, i.e. Printmaking and History of Art Standard Grade. As was the custom, they called this subject "Graphics" like everyone else did, and, curiously, did not regard it as Art.

The Graphics Room was close to the teacher-psychologist's office, and it used to be the old Guidance Room, with the name still on the door. When I first got to Regis, the teacher-psychologist passed by one day and said with a smile, "What an apt name for the Graphics Room." It was to her that I then spoke about my research plans. I tried to find out more about my Standard Nines, the majority of whom came from the same form, which was the bottom stream of the standard. She made some observations about the form in general, which corresponded with impressions I had got from my particular students, saying, "... things that work with other classes never work with them ... they are always having a crisis which seems to affect everyone whether they are directly involved or not ... they all yell at the same time and it gets to be total chaos ... "

The planning phase of the action research spiral often overlapped with other phases, so, for example, the negotiating had elements of observation and reflection within it, which is typical of the "messiness" of action research to which Ebbutt (see p17) refers. I had already started collecting data, by recording comments, impressions and observations, in a notebook which I tried to keep with me. If I did not have my notebook, I made records on any scrap of paper that was available, ranging from the edge of someone's discarded crossword puzzle to anything usable lying around or in waste paper baskets. It is appropriate, here, to comment on one of the major problems of action research in connection with data. In order not to lose the liveliness of classroom life and the spontaneity of comments made by students and staff, I have not indicated in the text my precise source of data for a particular quote. However, from the point of view of authentication, it

is important to emphasise that all quotes are from my personal diary, taped interviews, Jo's written comments on lessons and our discussions, and my own records of those meetings, either in writing or on tape. While short remarks were easy to write down, in the case of more lengthy ones, I would ask if what was said could be repeated to me so that I could accurately record it in writing. Apart from using a sort of shorthand, one that I had developed attending university lectures, I tried to indicate the nuances of what was being said, because as Geertz (1988:61) has pointed out, "... the separation of what someone says from how they say it ... is as mischievous in anthropology as it is in poetry, painting or political oratory".

As the data obtained from my colleagues started to build up, I sometimes felt like a spy as I started to realise the significance of what was being said. Although I knew of the debates in action research methodology concerning the ethics of data collection, it worried me. However, I realised that it was also, paradoxically, a way of keeping me aware of my subjectivity. There were other reasons for my concern as well. It was believed by many of the non-senior staff that there was a staff "spy" who kept the principal informed of what was said and done in the staffroom or classrooms. It was believed also that there was a government "spy" or "plant" on the staff, and this tended to make teachers, for the most part, avoid expressing overtly critical political opinions. At times, therefore, I felt almost as if I were abusing the trust of my colleagues with whom I socialised in the staff room, even though the data I was recording had nothing to do with our mutual macro political fears and concerns.

I shared with Jo, therefore, my experiences of the students, the principal and other teachers, and I began to explore the growing sense I had of not really "fitting in" to Regis High. I complained that the school had made me become aggressive about issues with which I could not agree. Jo remarked, "Well, maybe, you feel aggressive when you're only actually being assertive." This valuable insight was to become an important factor as the research progressed.

I continued to ask staff about my students, and their last Maths teacher said of them, "... really, I taught the best I could, but they were all such oafs ... I liked them and I was kind to them but they just couldn't cope." The Form Mistress of 9D (and last year as 8D), to which most of my students belonged, commented, "... they are incredibly selfish ... trying to get them to work together as a group drove me mad ... and they won't lend anything or share ... I suppose it's their home backgrounds, I've never known a class with so many home problems. They get so little they hold on to what they've got."

I also gave the students a questionnaire in which I asked what optional subjects they did, apart from Graphics; why they had discontinued with Maths; what did they like most and least about Graphics; and finally, how other students regarded Graphics. Some of the comments were as follows: "... people see you as being below them if you don't do Maths ..."; "At first I was reluctant to do Graphics ... people think badly of you if you can't do Maths. Everyone implied that I was stupid when I couldn't do Maths"; and, in a taped conversation which followed up the

questionnaire, "You don't get to be a prefect if you're in our form ... we're doffs."

From what my students said, the status that Maths conferred on its students seemed to be associated with the obvious feelings of inadequacy that they were expressing in a variety of ways and seemed to be compounded by the almost forced choice of Graphics as an alternative subject.

Since starting to plan in a formal way I had, during the course of my lessons, been trying to decide whether I was going to involve my students in a Practical or a History of Art activity, using it as a means of getting them to work together. They were adept at collectively avoiding work and I felt it would be important for them to channel that energy into understanding and enjoying Graphics. I hoped that by sharing ideas, information and equipment in a joint project they would gain more confidence by getting in touch with themselves and their abilities. I believed their potential was often dissipated in efforts to disrupt "the system" by being unco-operative, bunking lessons, being absent when there were tests, or simply by being absent for several days at a time. This behaviour was counter-productive because it reinforced staff antagonism and effectively caused them to drop further and further behind with their work.

In the end I decided against using History of Art because it was the academic component of Graphics. Anything academic provoked the same sort of problems, for which they seemed to have developed knee-jerk

solutions. I felt that their bad behaviour and poor results had become reflex actions, making them kick out against anything or anybody causing them to feel insecure. As one of them remarked before a test, "I never bother to learn for them because I always fail anyway, so why waste time." This elicited a sharp reply from somebody, "Yah well you don't even come (to tests) ... " In addition, their attendance was even more irregular than when I'd first arrived, so trying to centre research around an academic area would more than likely have made things worse.

While my Standard Nines did not like the way in which I was dealing with the practical work, I could see that there had been an improvement in their ability to express themselves, even though it was generally thought that what I considered to be drawing, was for them, "a complete mess!" I discovered later that they thought I was "completely mad" when I became excited about somebody's work or refused to let them throw work away. Once they decided to make a start, they became more involved during the practical lessons, almost in spite of themselves. Deadlines meant nothing to them, however, because the absentee rate was so high that it became almost impossible for those who were continually away to complete their projects. I was very reluctant to penalise them by having a cut-off point after which the work would have to be marked. I somehow felt that I did not want to compound their problems by behaving in the same way as most of their other teachers seemed to do. I was not keen, either, on too much marking. I wanted to keep marks right out of it for the time being, unless absolutely necessary for one of the school's "mark-reading" (subject-test series) deadlines.

After another meeting with Jo, in which we "walked through" the possible action research plan, I followed up our discussion by finalising a practical activity. These students of mine had been disempowered in a myriad of ways, and one way I proposed dealing with their situation was to attempt to move right outside the academic constraints and norms of the school. I hoped my Standard Nines would become so involved in a group printmaking activity that they would want to finish it, and that this would diminish some of their problems as they started to see the tangible results of their artwork taking shape.

Jo and I agreed that she would observe a series of lessons over a six week period, which I estimated was a reasonable length of time for them to complete the process. We would both keep written notes, mine in the form of a diary. To record our reflection sessions I would either make notes or tape-record what was discussed. Later, I started using the tape-recorder to make "verbal" notes, as soon after the lesson as I could. These tapes could then be played back as often as I needed, when I could sit at home and try to pick up the nuances of what I had said. As the Nines preferred talking to writing, Jo said that she would interview them, using a tape-recorder. I had already asked them to complete a questionnaire which had provided me with some useful data. I thought it was better not to ask them to keep diaries because it was going to be difficult enough to get them involved without additional burdens to hamper them. I had decided against using my own 35mm camera, mostly because of the lack of space, but I thought that the video-camera would be useful at the end, when there would be more room to move

around, printmaking having been completed and the work benches pushed to one side.

The Printmaking Activity

I chose a fairly tightly structured process for my Standard Nines comprising four clearly defined stages which had to be completed sequentially. The source material was based on drawing the shapes and textures of different trees in the school grounds with the intention of using ideas generated by these drawings for a woodcut. The drawings would make the students deal with various ways of looking and which would probably cause them to make a "mess" and make "mistakes". The subsequent printmaking would enable my students to make a series of individual prints for themselves, as well as prints for a group activity. These latter prints would be assembled collectively by the students to form a montage, which could then be exhibited as a unified, large scale work.

1. The students would have to make drawings in the school grounds, using paper and charcoal. I anticipated that this would give them a great deal of freedom as well as frustration, because charcoal cannot as easily be "controlled" as a pencil or pen drawing. Working outside was important, too, for it was something they enjoyed. Also, I wanted them to see that I did not think it necessary that they should be under constant surveillance. I planned to move among the students during the course of their lessons and, since the grounds were big, we would often not be in sight of one another.

I was concerned with several major issues. One was to wean them from what I called "formula" drawing (in other words, tracing and copying from photographs) by forcing them to start looking for themselves. Another was to encourage them to make personal decisions about their drawings because I hoped they would realise that they would not have the time to sit and wait for me to appear, armed with "solutions". Third, and connected with that, I wanted them to understand that, to a large extent, I expected them to be responsible for organising themselves and their work for in this way I thought that we could build up an atmosphere of relaxed involvement and trust, as well as completing the work for this part of the process.

2. The students were required to work in the Graphics Room from this point onwards, although they were free to go outside again in order to confirm details for an idea that might have developed from their original drawings. They had to do the following:

a. Draw "freely" with an indelible pen on their wood blocks, without the assistance of carbon or tracing paper, while referring to their drawings for ideas;

b. Using woodcut techniques, they were to make a series of four-colour prints. I hoped that they would develop their own ways of working and would come to realise that they could create new techniques for themselves, often by "accident" and without my having to show them. As they were often so edgy about making "mistakes", almost to the point of paralysis sometimes, I felt it was important for them to see that the

"accidents" which inevitably occurred with this process, and over which they had no control, were often a source of creativity rather than of cataclysm.

c. Since the Graphics Room was very small, badly ventilated and poorly equipped, my students were going to have to find a way of working with one another as a group, sharing what there was and taking joint responsibility for cleaning up. They were also going to have to arrange the available space to suit their changing needs as well as reach agreement on how best to plan and implement all this. I was also hoping that they would start sharing not only the colours they had mixed but, also their ideas and discoveries as the process continued.

3. The students would be involved in an organisational activity where finished prints would be selected for the group montage. I hoped that it would reinforce the co-operative focus of the project, for if anybody had not reached this point in the process by the due date, the success of the whole printmaking activity would be jeopardised.

4. The students would have to arrange the prints that had been previously selected in such a way as to make an interesting and visually exciting montage. This would be a difficult task because it required that the students use their initiative and personal aesthetic sense, despite their fear of making "mistakes" or taking risks. They were also going to have to be sensitive to one another's feelings if prints were rejected by the group, for what ever reason. I hoped it was going to be challenging and illuminating for all of us. So often, when artwork comes

under the critical scrutiny of others, the maker becomes defensive and chooses to see it as a "mess", "stupid" or "childish".

PHASES TWO and THREE: The Action and the Observation

I am combining these phases because that is what happened. As with the planning phase, I realised that again I had involved myself, almost simultaneously, in several phases of the action research cycle. I think that this is important to explain and record, otherwise the narrative ceases to be authentic. It also emphasises the complexity of the research process, and to try to make it conform strictly to the methodology of the action research cycle would have turned it into a positivistic, artificial and prescriptive exercise (see p 17). Human activity is a messy process, and as an observer, you are also part of that activity and you will often experience a sense of disorder and conflicting detail as you try to record events. You have to be able to "freewheel" intellectually and be prepared to feel "all over the place".

I had observed, right from my first contact with the Standard Nines, that they became very distressed, if not angry, when I made them draw in a way that they regarded as being "messy". If they made a line that was less than "perfect" or, as they put it, "not neat", they would want to tear up the paper and start again. If, by chance, the line became smudged or uneven, they would bewail it as a "complete mess". They were afraid that what they regarded as imperfections would lose them marks. This attitude was not unfamiliar to me, nor to any art teacher, I would

think. Students soon learn, in other subjects, that "messiness" costs them marks while "accuracy" and "precision" are highly rewarded.

The reinforcement of the school ethos through the awarding of marks had disastrous effects for my students. They had developed a resistance against doing any form of work that was going to be marked by being absent from school or by not revising for tests and being able to say, "what's the point of studying - I always fail anyway." It seemed to me that these Standard Nines, with their rich heritage of failure and little experience of Art, were actually wanting confirmation that they could not draw, in the same way they had shown that they apparently could not succeed in many things at Regis. Significantly, they saw themselves, and were regarded by others in the school, as "drop-outs" and "doffs"; why else were they doing Graphics? It was far easier for them to take no responsibility for their work and to use the poor marks or criticism that they were given as "proof" that, indeed, they were failures. Furthermore, by insisting on applying the same criteria for marks that were in operation in other classrooms, they placed themselves in a "no-win" situation - a sort of "heads you lose, tails you lose" response to my different criteria for marks.

They told me that their Geography teacher had commented that they were "useless" at drawing maps because they were so inaccurate, while their Biology teacher had said she considered their diagrams to be more "artistic" than "accurate". "Don't you give me that arty stuff in exams", she was reported to have said. I also knew, from my own experience, and from their workbooks and comments, that these students

were required to spend time and effort, for marks, carefully copying drawings and diagrams from textbooks and blackboards or overhead projectors. It was not surprising that they were so reluctant to draw "from life" because the end results were precisely those for which they were always being penalised in other classes. What they produced they invariably saw as, simply, "wrong".

In schools, except but not always in art classes, it seems that visual accuracy and realism is rewarded at the expense of other ways of seeing. Obviously, it would not do, in Geography, to have a map of Africa looking like anything other than what it does, but it is restrictive and, to my way of thinking, impoverishing to suggest, as teachers often do, that the same criteria apply to all forms of visual representation.

Among the Nines were students who started to draw instinctively, before showing despair at what they had done, while the others consciously tried to be as accurate as they could possibly be, using the eraser continually, before also giving up on their attempts. I wondered, as I watched them, how much they had been socialised to denigrate any form of personal expression of their emotional response to what they were drawing.

In my attempt to understand the dynamics of the problems my students were confronting in this project, I referred to Lowenfeld's (1975) work in art education in which he discusses "visual" and "haptic" forms of expression in art. It was his view, based on work that he had originally done with the visually handicapped, that two types of art expression can

be distinguished from about the age of twelve onwards, the visual and the haptic. These types refer to what Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975:275), described as the preferred "... mode of perceptual organisation and conceptual categorisation of the external environment." The visual type is primarily an "observer", relying only upon her/his eyes, while the haptic type is more concerned with the subjective experiences and body sensations which s/he feels emotionally. It was Lowenfeld's view that most children fall somewhere between these two extremes. Predominantly visual types may dislike and reject a haptic rendering of the world where little or no concern is shown for "accurate observation", i.e. art which "distorts" and "changes facts" in order to capture the essence of the subjective experience. The visual type may also regard haptic work as "unskilled" because it does not reproduce "reality" and is therefore worthless, while the haptic type might consider "accuracy" as superficial, impersonal and limiting.

Read (1970:90), in referring to Lowenfeld's work on visual and the haptic types, remarked:

Interesting as this discovery is, as a differentiation between two manners of representing reality, it gains much wider significance in that Lowenfeld has been able to demonstrate that the two types of representation do not necessarily correspond to the degree of visual acuity.

While space does not allow me to examine this theory, or associated ones concerning Right-side of Brain Function [Sperry (1968) and Edwards (1979)] in great detail here, I think it is worth emphasising the overriding concern that positivistic education (i.e. educational knowledge informed by the technical interest) shows for "objectivity", "precision"

and "efficiency". Given this situation, it is hardly surprising to find that teachers generally, and at a "taken for-granted" level, or, as Peshkin describes it, using "conventional wisdom" (see p24) accord greater legitimacy to "visual" realism, with a corresponding penalisation of the more "haptic" type of realism. If children are encouraged to become more "visual" by rewards in the form of marks, the more "haptic" child may well experience great frustration and anxiety, as a result of her/his attempts to adopt an "accurate" and "objective" reality, which has been presented as "normal". It is also, to my way of thinking, symptomatic of the sort of "de-skilling" that the technicist approach to education continually reinforces with its emphasis on pre-designed curriculum "packages" and impersonal approach to learning.

It is interesting to comment, in passing, that when I discussed it with them, two other art educators both supported the visual/haptic theory on the basis of their own experience. One, a school teacher who works with the visually handicapped, confirmed that some of the children she taught displayed a strong tendency towards visual realism, despite the fact that they had been blind from birth, while others showed an equally strong haptic sense in the work (sculpture) that they did. The other, a college teacher in charge of an art programme for Primary School Teachers, said that she had been aware of children becoming markedly visual in their approach to realism at an earlier and earlier age. Whereas a few years ago, it had been around about the age of eleven or twelve, the time a child would be entering high school, now it was closer to the age of seven. Obviously, there is much research still to be done in this area because there does seem to be evidence for the

stressing of the purely visual approach at the expense of the more haptic, or emotional, approach.

I speculated that some of the Nines at Regis High were in a state of conflict caused by a clash between their haptic inclinations and external attempts to make them conform to certain positivistic norms. On the one hand, in their other subjects, they were being exhorted to be "accurate", or at least neat and tidy, while I was trying to get them to be seemingly messy and inaccurate. No wonder they thought I was mad.

To return to the project, one of the problems in action research is that events, interactions and reflections happen so fast and simultaneously that things get missed. If I tried to impose a tighter structure, I think I might have inhibited the process, although in so doing I might have been able to gather more information. However, when triangulation was taking place, we had a better chance to notice different aspects and undercurrents which could be compared afterwards to enable us to reach a finer understanding of what happened.

Initially, when I worked on my own with the students, I was sure that I was missing important things because I was so anxious to get started. I also realised that I had a habit of reflecting on events almost as soon as they had happened. This had the effect of altering my immediate perceptions, so that although I felt clear about what I was thinking at first, I could not be so sure as I reflected more deeply. The point is that things become less clear and more complex as one moves from the theoretical stage of planning to the reality of practice. While

reflection, I am sure, is part of what most teachers habitually do, the heightened nature of sustained and critical reflection is typical of the action research process, resulting in a deeper understanding of the educational process for the participants.

The first stage of the activity took more than three weeks to complete, mainly, I think, because they struggled to move beyond their stereotypes of what constituted "real" drawing. The mass of smudgy squiggles and fragments of objects that were made - for I would not let anything that I saw be thrown away - were for me, their first "real" drawings. My enthusiasm was greeted with giggles, tantrums and disbelief. "You've got to be joking ... this doesn't look like the trees ... any tree!", one of them said, half angrily. Another complained, "This is ridiculous. It's not even all on the paper ... it's all gone off the edge." A third student summed up the mood of the group by saying, "This is just scribbling. How can you mark this?" I tried to reassure them about the marks which I knew were of major importance to them. They had wasted no time in telling me that I marked "much harder" than their previous teacher, expressing their mistrust in me and their anxiety by remarks such as, "It was the only subject that I passed well" and "Graphics pulls up my aggregate but it won't this term ..."

Another factor that resulted in the first stage taking longer than I had anticipated was that some students, the usual ones, were continually absent. I noted that the first "test cycle" of the term had started during this period, and made a connection between their absences and the tests. I was reluctant to penalise them and, since I felt that the rest

of the students would continue to benefit from further drawing, I allowed the deadline to be moved on.

At the beginning, when I walked from one student or group to another, I would see someone staring into space or lying down "catching a tan", paper and charcoal untouched beside her. At other times, intense discussions would be underway which did not cease as I approached. Often, I was invited to join in and asked for an opinion before they would consider starting to work. I usually went along with this behaviour, feeling that it was giving them some sort of necessary space, but I still insisted on drawings being made. If it was close to the end of a lesson, the drawings became frantic "scribbles", a "mess" to them but for me, always fresh and sometimes very exciting. We limped, ever more despondently for them, through the drawing stage. When I finally issued a deadline for putting up work in the graphics room, they were surprised to see that a considerable amount of drawing had actually been done.

The idea of having work up was not popular, initially. "Everyone will see them ... they'll see how bad we are" said Jan, my resident prophetess-of-doom. Still, once up, they started to consider one another's drawings after having defensively dismissed their own as "the usual mess", I was interested to see how supportive and perceptive they were. Comments that were made were "Hey, Jan's is really good ... she really has improved," and "It's a pity Anna's always away ... her drawings could be really good if she'd do some (more)." Both the students to whom the others referred, were, I felt, essentially haptic

types who were very critical of any drawings that I got enthusiastic about. Both were very "uptight" and anxious students, one prone to migraines and the other to asthma. Jan responded to the praise in her usual manner, frowning and stomping over to the window, turning her back on everyone. Anna, of course, was absent although her drawings were present.

The first lesson of the second part of the activity started late, as was usual for all their lessons with me. Three students were absent and the rest drifted in more noisily and fidgety than usual. I wondered, initially, whether this was because Jo was present for the first time. She was greeted politely but instead of showing more interest in her presence, as I would have expected, they seemed pre-occupied and edgy and I could feel their tension. I knew, from my past experience with them, that I was going to have to deal with the cause of their present mood before getting on with the lesson.

Without much prompting from me, I was told, by way of a "post-mortem", about their Standard Nine dance, which had been an unofficial affair off the school premises. From what they chose to tell me they had got themselves into serious trouble. When we did get started with the lesson, time was too short to do much more than a little explaining of the process they were about to commence. Also, I was surprised when I saw them next, to be asked where Jo was. I had assumed they were so involved with their own lives during that first lesson that they had forgotten about Jo's presence.

This section of the activity took an additional three weeks to complete, mostly because of absences and upsets. Other problems faced them too. They were unhappy about the "imperfections" in the wood, for example, and wanted smoother" or "straighter" or "cleaner" pieces. Could they sand the wood down? They just did not want to get started, continuing to procrastinate. They looked at me dubiously when I assured them that potentially interesting textures could come from the surface irregularities caused by the wood grain, textures they would never think of or be able to make for themselves. I also told them that they would frequently cut lines unintentionally and these "mistakes" had the potential to give them new ideas and unexpected effects.

The same students continued to be absent, there were fights about the cleaning-up and other organisational things. Part of the tension was caused by the totally awkward and inadequate workroom, about which nothing could be done. One student finally became so angry that she turned to me saying, "Why do you keep repeating yourself? Let them sort themselves out ... I'm tired of hearing the same old thing!" I suddenly saw that what I thought were reasonable requests for individual responsibility in the workroom were being seen by some as "nagging" and "weak" and to be ignored. "You see," she continued, "You must have a list of cleaners, who work in rotation, then you know who's responsible for the mess." I disagreed, reiterating that everybody was responsible for cleaning up and storing their own work. It was a serious problem and I just did not know how to solve it, other than do as had been suggested. That, however, went against the grain for me. I could not accept anything other than what I believed to be a fair solution, so the

room remained exactly as it was left. This, of course, caused outrage in the other students who also had to use the room and its facilities. That was not fair either.

The printmaking proceeded in fits and starts, students often forgetting their cutting tools or woodblocks at home. The usual absences continued. Anna, when she was in class, sat hunched up, either suffering from a headache or a spastic colon. Jan fought with everyone. Nessie took over the role of cleaner, co-opting people here and there. She said, "I can't work with too many people, I'd rather come after school and work on my own." Gradually, she started to hang up the wet prints, which meant she would be late for the next lesson, saying " ... it doesn't matter if I'm late ... she'll (her teacher) be glad I'm not there anyway."

Nessie came back after hours, or during breaks, but she could not be persuaded to work in class. Three of her friends started to join her and, by the third week, there was a hive of activity in the Graphics room. The prints that were made during this time were more advanced than those of the other Standard Nines and, when they saw them pinned up, it seemed to shock them. Nessie explained, "I need space," in reply to a question about where she had "found the time" to get so far ahead. This, somehow, was the catalyst.

Suddenly, I found most of the Standard Nines working at odd hours, when a teacher was absent or they had a free lesson, as well as during breaks. They arrived in the room before I did sometimes, and I would find them busily cutting or printing. They would show Jo their work and

if she walked around - or, rather, squeezed past them - they would stop and talk to her, explaining what they were doing. After she had gone, they would express the hope that she did not think them "mad" when they fooled around.

There was less absenteeism as the pace hotted up and the prints started to "look like real art", according to Nessie and her friends. I began to put pressure on them to finish before the end of term. The final weeks of the term were charged by the arrival of new inks - " ... unpolluted!", they said excitedly as the lids were lifted to reveal glowing primary colours. I don't think I had ever seen my Standard Nines so pleased. They all wanted to experiment and started to show one another what colours they had created by mixing. "Can I have some of that?" and "You can have some of that," became regular comments. Distinctively personal ranges of colour started to emerge, and I saw that they were very absorbed with their work. The arrival of the new colours had, it appeared, released some of their inhibitions. I had not heard the words, "it's a mess," for a long time, except when referring to the workroom. As the final prints were pinned to the boards or hung from lines by Nessie, all of us, the students and Jo and I, started to admire everybody's work. We were caught up, not only with the obvious pleasure that they were feeling, but with our own sense that these Standard Nines had "got something together".

PHASE FOUR: The Reflection

The reflection phase of critical action research, like any of the other phases, is not exclusively confined to its formalised place within the cycle. It has been my experience that the act of reflection accompanies every other phase because, as a participant in the research, you are part of the overall action. Reflecting on what has happened, or what is happening, as you go along with the events you are observing, provides you with some feedback that might modify subsequent events during the process of the cycle or necessitate your moving "outside" of the research. The formal act of critical reflection, has been, for me, more of a re-reflection at a temporal distance from the other phases, by which I have gained a deeper understanding of what has occurred through the re-telling of my story.

During the latter part of the research project, I was pre-occupied by an offer of a similar teaching post at a nearby Boys' High School which, if accepted, would commence in mid-year. I had to make a decision at short notice, which forced me to focus on myself and my working environment in a very critical way. At the same time, the course work that formed the theoretical basis for action research was continually expanding my boundaries and shifting my consciousness. It made me feel unsettled, insecure, liberated and excited all at the same time. When it came to the reflection phase, I therefore brought several agendas to it, very consciously. With Jo, I tried to sort out what the data we had collected

might mean. Trying to understand what we had observed became an on-going process as the many issues that emerged were continually being re-appraised.

I found that issues of power and control, and the "norms" that reinforced them, had significant effects on both me and my students. It was clear that the Graphics Room was run in a very different way from most other classrooms in the school. Although this could be explained, in part, by the nature of the subject, it did not alter the fact that the students experienced far greater personal freedom, both within the subject, and as autonomous individuals within the group, than was the "norm".

Different power relationships were set into action when the students saw that I neither spoke like, nor conformed to, their image of a "normal" teacher. While it took some time for the students to understand and accept a more democratic form of communication without regarding it as "abnormal", the unfamiliar way in which I presented Graphics caused them to regard it as an entirely "new" subject for much of the research cycle, contrary to what they were used to and therefore "wrong", threatening and associated with failure. Failure, or "doing badly" was, for them, a "norm". That is, after all, why they were doing Graphics in the first place. My version of Graphics was threatening because I took away rigid structures that had reproduced order and accuracy while demanding nothing of themselves. They were offered, instead, individuality, creativity and freedom of expression. More significantly, however, they were expected to take personal responsibility for their

work, something which they were very adept at avoiding. Not only did they have to alter their perceptions of "right" and "wrong" but they had to begin to participate in the Graphics Room activities in a way that ultimately was going to be beneficial to themselves.

The power relationships that structured the organisation of the school were so alien to my experience and became so offensive to me, that I also found myself in a state of conflict. Looking back now, I think the conflict that I experienced was caused not only by having to work in what I believed to be such an unjust structure, but also by the fact that I had begun to recognise and understand more deeply the nature of power and its effects on individuals and communities.

I suddenly recognised that I had been struggling to maintain a sense of individuality and self-worth within that context. I was often made to feel "out of line" and in order to hold on to what I thought was "me" and what I thought to be worthwhile, I challenged the status quo more aggressively - or was it assertively?

I saw that in much the same way as my students had become disempowered, so had I, and we reacted in similar ways. They became "delinquent" because they could not conform or aspire to the school's norms, a reaction which I thought had its roots in feelings of inadequacy and despair. I became increasingly critical and un-cooperative, refusing to conform to practices which I thought were discriminatory or out-dated. Other staff who felt the same way shrugged at my frustration, claiming that there was nothing to be done except to find another job. One

teacher said to me, " ... anyone looking for promotion wouldn't cultivate your friendship!"

As I continued to reflect on what had happened to me, I was able to make a connection with the work of Apple (1986:31-37), who feels that the de-skilling of teachers is facilitated not only by the increasing demands of test requirements but also by the fact that teaching is a predominantly female occupation. While my students resisted the continual tests that they were expected to write, I felt "de-skilled" by the way in which patriarchal relationships were reproduced and used as a model for the organisation of the school.

My students and I, in our own ways, were resisting the social relations determined by the school structure. I think we had in common a "reactive" rather than "conscious" opposition to that which we did not like. For example, my students found learning to be an alienating experience and reacted against it by spending a large amount of time on creating what Everhart (1983:125), calls "regenerative knowledge", which he defines as knowledge" which is imbedded in the constitutive processes that make history and, in opposition to reified knowledge, is generated by social groups as a natural process." This has a close connection to the work of Willis (1977) and Habermas (1972) (see p.10) and will be explored further in Chapter Three.

The personal freedom that my students were given in the Graphics Room was in contrast to their normal school experience and, while they might have wanted it, they also found it confusing. I got the feeling that

maybe they thought it was just another trick to get them to work and that "normality" was being temporarily obscured by the novelty of a new teacher, rather than really being challenged.

Their endorsement of the changes was shown by the way in which the Graphics Room gradually became a sort of haven for them "out of hours" as well as a place of legitimate, enjoyable and often noisy activity. Another visible symbol of this was the arrival of a kettle and coffee mugs. They also tried to protect me from inadvertently breaking school rules, thus clearly indicating that they saw me as "at risk" and as being as restricted as they were. That there could be successful, alternative ways of classroom management was a constant thorn in the side of a school ethos which valued hierarchical control, conformism, discipline, submission and silence as the hallmarks of "good teaching" and "good pupilship". Nevertheless, my students continually found themselves in a state of tension between what was the norm for the Graphics Room and me on the one hand, and the accepted norms of the school on the other. As they experienced conflict, so did I.

During the research spiral, I repeatedly had difficulty in identifying the difference between assertion and aggression within myself. My students at first saw what I thought was assertiveness as merely ineffectual repetition, so used were they to authoritarian and patriarchal methods of control. I saw myself as aggressive and hard when forced to put pressure on them to complete tasks or to clean up. Jo said she felt that I often confused the two forms of communication; what was really happening, she thought, was that in my efforts to be democratic

and considerate to these particular students, I frequently did not provide them with clearly defined boundaries and came over as "soft". My students did not see me, at Jo's interview, as "weak", although it was felt by some that on occasion I should be a "bit more firm". Nessie's opinion, that I was "... strong but not hard-handed ...", found support as well. It seemed that what I represented, in terms of an authority figure, indicated that there had been a shift in their perception of power and control from one of domination and submission, and modelled on the patriarchy, to one where personal needs and consideration of others had started to feature.

These "norms" had been particularly destructive for some of my students. Nessie, for example, by not doing work at the "right" time, was actually struggling to find herself. She saw herself, and was seen, as "doff"; as a result, she was not doing at all well, compounded by the tremendous academic pressures of the school where performances that were "average" came to be regarded as "poor". The classroom highlighted that pressure, so that somewhere during her time at Regis Nessie had opted out by refusing to participate in the classroom, an activity which was threatening to her. She preferred to do nothing rather than continue to do something "badly" - hardly surprising since the school's idea of success embodied "correctness", both academically and personally. This, of course, caused her to fall behind with her work and further reinforced the image she, and her teachers, had of her. She was regarded as being "uncontrollable", spending many afternoons in detention. Behaviour such as Nessie's, for me, strongly supported the notion of a

"culture of resistance" as did Jan's sulks and tantrums or Anna's absences and migraines.

Ironically, by initially rejecting what I believed to be the potentially liberating but "abnormal" situation in the Graphics Room, Nessie was doing the same thing as she had done elsewhere and so she fell behind, lost confidence and regarded everything she did as a "mess". Once she had been given the freedom to work when she wanted to, she started working consistently "out of hours". She had acquired the personal space to learn how to emancipate herself from the "norms" which had alienated her. Once she started to make prints which she valued, she felt secure enough to return to the Graphics class, continuing to work "out of hours" as well. Her actions, quite unconsciously I think, encouraged others in the class, and this eventually enabled the group as a whole to take responsibility for generating their own sense of confidence in and commitment to the project.

Jan's black moods and tantrums, Anna's and Lana's prolonged absences, Amanda's giggling and Sarah's acts of aggression were all, to my way of thinking, methods of "opting out" of a larger system which had made them feel inadequate. As they became more involved in printmaking, gaining confidence in their abilities to make art, so their perception of worth changed. Attendances were more regular, headaches remained but were better managed, moods became funny rather than divisive experiences, and a strong group sense of value in what had been achieved, emerged. Ideas of "perfection" and "correctness" were relaxed to accommodate more

"messy" and emotive views of the world. Six of the students, ones who had signalled their frustrations in the ways I have recorded above, became sufficiently confident to allow themselves to make work that was, to my way of thinking, predominantly haptic. "Art's a window into one's soul ... " announced Nessie to Jo during her interview, " ... everyone has the potential to draw ... " This was something she would not have been capable of saying a few months previously.

Disjointedness gave way to co-operation, in both the sharing of process and product. Punctuality, improved attendance and the discarding of inhibiting norms provided them with an unexpected spin-off, that of **achievement**. The difference, I thought, was that it was self-motivated, not enforced. I was convinced that the students, especially Vanessa, were not as resistant to working in the Graphics Room because they no longer felt so alienated. The "knowledge" that they had had a hand in creating, literally, was very much akin to the way in which they had previously created their own "regenerative knowledge".

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

PARK BOYS' HIGH: THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL TWO

"But how do we know that what we see is
what you want us to see?"

"Idiot, nobody can look for you!"

I joined the staff of Park Boys' High in the third term of 1989, feeling rather demoralised and yet excited at the prospect of working there. Park High, like Regis, was a racially segregated white school in the same affluent suburb and which during the course of my teaching career, I had visited frequently, either in an official capacity or for social events. Whatever the occasion, my impression of the school was always the same. It seemed to have an energy about it and there appeared to be an unusual degree of informality between the students and many of the staff. There was always a buzz of activity and feeling of warmth whether it was break-time or class-time and I was struck by the contrast to Regis High's silent and cold, repressed atmosphere.

I was particularly interested to find strong support for cultural interests and the way in which these were accepted, by teachers and students, as equal and alternative activities to those of sport, the traditional bastion of boys' schools. This was not without its problems, however, for tradition, in any school, is a powerful structural factor and the move to acknowledge culture alongside sport still caused logistical difficulties. There was a structural constraint, for example, in that while it was agreed that cultural activities were very important they were subject often to awkward time restraints which periodically caused disruptions and difficulties for those who were

involved. Nevertheless, I found Park, a boys' school with strong sporting traditions, to be exceptionally enlightened in this respect. In addition, despite the difficulties, and even danger, of living in a society controlled by a state of emergency, a group of teachers and students maintained a fairly regular, informal contact with the staff and students of a black township high school.

It was in this environment that I started to think about my second research project. Not only was it a further course requirement but also, with the first action research project still very much in my mind, I wanted to find out if anything similar was happening to the Park Graphics students.



THE SECOND ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

PHASE ONE: The Plan

I found out that Graphics was structured in the same way as at Regis High but with one significant difference - that it was school policy to encourage all students to continue with Maths, however poor their results were, because nearly all the parents insisted that their sons should continue with the subject. There was a general feeling among the students, too, that they had to have Maths in order to secure a "good" matriculation certificate and a "good" career. Nevertheless, Graphics had been introduced, like Metalwork, for students who apparently could not "cope" with Maths or who were doing badly in many or all of their

other subjects as well. Graphics, it was thought, would provide these students with a basically practical subject which would be easier for them.

The endless confusion that was created by the blanket term "Graphics" was the same as that experienced at Regis High. Interestingly, it was the Art Standard Grade students who were the most muddled about the name of the subject because they kept on telling me that "... they did not do Art".

I decided to work with the same standard and with the same type of students as I had at Regis High, namely those taking Art Standard Grade only. There were fourteen students in this group, as at Regis, but who shared their lessons with a further eight students who did Graphics Standard Grade, as an extra Art subject in addition to Art Higher Grade.

During the first week I could see that there was tremendous antagonism between the two groups of students. I was sure that overcrowding was a factor because the Graphics Room was small and the students were big, much bigger than those at Regis High. There were just too many of them working in a confined space. They spilled over into a nearby corridor, which led to arguments about who should or should not be in the room. One reason that was always advanced, quite angrily, was that the "art guys", as they called them, had another room downstairs, the Art Room, while the Graphics Room was the only official room for the "standard grade guys".

I soon sensed other reasons for the tension that existed between these students. There was rivalry between the activities of the Art Room "downstairs" and those of the Graphics Room "upstairs". The "art guys" felt themselves to be superior to the "standard grade guys". They followed a more academic programme and most had taken Art since Standard Six. They brought to the subject a measure and sense of expertise and knowledge gained from "downstairs", where their Art teacher not only had status within the school but also had acquired a reputation as an established artist in his own right. It seemed that they assumed their Art Higher Grade somehow transferred its own superior status to Graphics Standard Grade. I found this ironic, since the practical requirements for the two groups were, in effect, exactly the same.

The "standard grade guys" had no such support. Like the students at Regis High, they had no previous Art experience and had more or less been forced to do Graphics because there was no other subject for them to take. It seemed that they had a sort of "refugee" status, having moved from one subject to another in the hope that it would prove easier to pass. They were considered by staff and other students alike to be "doff" and "skommy". In direct contrast to Regis High, however, some from this group still did Maths, although they said it was difficult and " ... they didn't know what was going on half the time ... "

Another source of irritation for the "standard grade guys" was that they had to do History of Art with me, in the corridor which could be darkened for showing slides, while the "art guys", during this time, were able to continue with their practical work in the Graphics Room.

For them, there was no formal History of Art component - their History of Art lessons were held "downstairs" as part of their Art Higher Grade course. The "standard grade guys" felt that this "extra" practical lesson gave the "art guys" an unfair advantage because they had more space and time in which to get the same practical projects completed, thus potentially enabling them to get higher marks.

There was so much resentment about the weekly History of Art lesson that it became a flashpoint for arguments and scuffles. They were, however, always extremely polite to me on these occasions even though when the group eventually gathered in the corridor, still with a few missing, it was often almost too late to get much done. One student, when I asked him why he never came to History of Art classes but instead sat doing practical work in the Graphics Room, insisted that he didn't know that he was an Art Standard Grade student. This was repeated every time we had such a lesson and I wondered whether he was simply taking advantage of the extra space to get ahead with his practical work. Another student had a string of reasons for being absent, while yet another had always " ... just been to look for the (missing) others."

I also discovered, both from these students and from the Art teacher whom I shall call Simon, that there had been minimal contact between the Graphics and Art departments. Mr Brand, the previous Graphics teacher, Simon explained, had fostered a "them and us" relationship with the standard grade students, implying that he was the only teacher who would willingly have them in his class. "This," Simon said, "gave them a separate identity from the Art kids and ... what he offered them in

terms of marks, if they obeyed him, made them far more accepting of his very tight control."

Another factor which complicated the dynamics of the Graphics Room was that the "art guys" were used to a very informal interaction in the Art Room, where there was a sense of individuality and freedom of expression, and so they resented Mr Brand's control. Like the "standard grade guys", they did not see Graphics as Art. This seemed to be because what they did "upstairs" was very different from what they were encouraged to do "downstairs".

There was little doubt in my mind that the students who did Art Standard Grade were, in terms of status, at the bottom of the Standard Nine structure. They had a reputation for "roughness" and trouble. Their academic records were poor and I had noticed, from their report cards, that they were often referred to as "restless", "unmotivated" or "under-achieving". Some had repeated a year, and certain students were often sent out of classes and reported to the principal for "rudeness" or "insolence". However, some of these same students had status derived from their non-academic activities and from representing the school in various sports. While this alleviated their position, informally, within the school, it was often a different story when they were in the classroom. There, these students generally sat with negative labels, regardless of whatever else they had achieved.

In terms of elitism, although there were top "streams" at Park High, in which those students who did Maths and Science featured most strongly, I

never got the impression that it was an overwhelming source of power or status within the school structure, either for the staff or students. It was common for those students sometimes to take Art Higher Grade, as in fact several of the top Standard Nine Maths and Science students did, or another Humanities subject as well. I had a strong sense of an order that was generally more tolerant and less academically status conscious than that of Regis High, and yet my students had shown by their behaviour that they felt inadequate and discriminated against.

In addition to the problems I had observed, the time-tabling for Graphics gave the students only one double lesson of slightly less than an hour per week, the remainder being made up of single lessons. For a subject that was predominantly practical, this presented difficulties in respect of organisation and required the students to work after hours, like the "art guys", in order to complete projects on time. For students who already had great difficulties in coping with school, and for whom sport, for example, or going to the gym was a more important interest, to stay behind after school was "not their scene". Nevertheless, during lesson times, they would "waste" valuable working time by not doing anything other than following their own interests, which usually had nothing to do with what I wanted them to do.

I had a feeling that these problems were surfacing not only because I was looking at their situation but also because the Graphics I taught was nothing like Mr Brand's version of the subject. I was an entirely different person who did not want to enforce rigid control over them.

This sudden freedom appeared to make the frustration and animosity in the Graphics Room overt.

From this point onwards, I shall refer to the students with whom I worked during this action research cycle as the Art Nines, because the subject they were doing was called Art Standard Grade. The other students, who were not a direct focus of the research but who were involved because they shared the same lessons, will be called the Graphics Nines, because that was the name of the subject they were doing.

I had found the Art Nines usually to be frank and easy in their relationship with me, and yet they were also watchful. When I discussed the idea of working with them on a research project, one of them said immediately, "Oh yes, like the one you did at Regis?" while another said, " ... we've heard about you ... " Questions were asked concerning the purpose of the research and what they would have to do. When I said, " ... nothing except tell me how you feel about things as we work through a project ... " they all laughed and someone commented, " ... just don't give us a hard time ... " They thought that questionnaires, rather than diaries, were, as a student remarked, a good way of writing about " ... things that we think ... " When I asked them about having Jo as an observer, the first question was "Is she sexy?" to which I replied, "What on earth does that have to do with it?" I gave them a few days to think about the research project and discuss it among themselves and at home, after which they confirmed their initial agreement to become involved.

During my interview for the post at Park High, I had given the principal a comprehensive background to the nature of the research that I was doing and had indicated that I wanted to continue with it. He was intrigued by the whole idea of action research although he could not quite relate it to what he knew about research. When I went to see him again, we had a long discussion about the problems of interaction, data collection and meaning-making, and I left the office feeling, as I always had, that he regarded his staff as colleagues and genuinely wanted to share in what they did.

Jo had agreed to be the triangulator once again and we decided to collect data by using questionnaires, taped interviews, observation notebooks and taped "notes". Again, for the same reasons given in the first action research project, I have not indicated the data sources within the body of the text. (See p39-40)

As far as the plan was concerned, I decided to work with the Art Nines in a History of Art activity. I felt that this would give me a chance to be alone with them and to see if their situation could be improved. It turned out, however, that their practical work was the area in which they showed the most insecurity so while completing the first action research cycle, I was already planning a further cycle of research that I felt was crucial for all of us.

This shifting of perspectives is typical of action research (see p17) because problems often do not simply unravel themselves in smooth and linear progression. Often you are confronted by events that force you

to change direction or move "outside" the research cycle in order to explain and understand more fully what is actually happening.

During the first few lessons with my Art Nines, I was told that "Mr Brand didn't teach us (History of Art) ... " This remark was qualified by a student who said, "Well, like he just sort of gave us notes ... then he read them out to us, so we all understood ... then he showed us slides and it was dark so we all fell asleep you know." His voice took on the drone of boredom and sleepiness.

When I asked them to tell me about what they knew, one of them, Vaughan, started with biographical details of " ... this guy ... I dunno, some guy who painted ... what was it ... uh ... " he paused, looking around at us all. Nobody was able to help him out until I suggested that maybe he was talking about Leonardo. It sounded as if everybody agreed because there was a chorus of " ... oh yah, yah that must be him!" When I asked them how they had done in their mid-year exams, they laughed and one said, "What exams?"

I said to them, puzzled, "well, where are all your notes... don't you have folders?" I was shown a few damaged, photocopied notes which were mostly torn or disconnected.

The History of Art Activity

In view of what I had observed in lessons such as the above, I planned a short project in four stages:

1. A discussion lesson with slides on the Renaissance;
2. Group work research and making notes;
3. Presentation of research and distribution of notes to other groups;
4. Open Book test.

Since there was only one double lesson a week which would provide us with the necessary time for this type of work, I decided to allow a month for the research spiral.

PHASE TWO: The Action

Lesson One:

I asked them to get into four groups, which they did quite quickly and willingly once everybody had arrived in the corridor: possibly their curiosity made them more punctual for once. All the groups were given a list of Renaissance artists from which they had to choose four to find out as much as they could about them. I said I would be available to help them to start with, particularly in the library, where I could show them where to find various useful books.

The students in one group, after examining at the list, shook their heads and sat, hands in their pockets, looking around at the others. Steve said, "The librarian won't let us in so we can't do it." He told me they had been banned from the library since the beginning of the year. "Ma'am ...", my informant continued, "you've got to be really dead to work in there because that's the only way you won't disturb her."

The rest of the lesson was spent in looking at slides of paintings and sculptures and I encouraged a discussion of the work. I suggested that they make notes of things that were said that interested them.

Reservations were expressed about this, such as Vaughan's "... will we get notes ... real notes?", and "Do we **have** to give our notes to the others ... what if they (the group with the banned students) don't do as much as we do?"

I negotiated with the reluctant librarian to allow the banned students to use the library and organised their first visit for the next day's practical period, which for once they did not object to missing. I made sure that I was with them because my Art Nines were apparently not in the habit of using the library and I felt that they should have not only help but support from me. The librarian was openly critical, immediately calling them 'rude and unco-operative' and then grumbling that they were all there 'under sufferance' She stayed crossly behind her counter for a while before moving out among the students and guiding them to various shelves of books.

Lessons Two and Three:

The next two weeks were marked by absences from the fourth group, among whom were the once-banned students. The others had got their notes sorted out and borrowed books from the library to assist them in their presentations. There were bitter fights with anybody who was present from the fourth group. "You're letting us all down", and "You just want us to do all your work", were two typical complaints. They swore at one

another, postured and exchanged aggressive insults. At one stage there was a scuffle which involved a student falling to the floor but they all laughed and the lesson continued.

Despite these problems, I could see that they were actually becoming interested in what we were doing. The books and slides generated so many questions that nearly everybody wanted to talk at once and I found it difficult to establish a system by which they could speak individually and be heard. Virtually every question was relevant to their own experience or to something they had seen or read. I found myself looking at the Renaissance through their eyes and was excited by their involvement although I knew that there were still a few who stood apart from the lessons muttering flippant or provocative asides.

Lesson Four:

We were behind schedule because the fourth group still had not provided their section of the notes. The irritation increased, the general restlessness re-appeared. As we sat in the darkened corridor trying to look at slides once more, most of the research having been completed, I could hear shufflings and laughter and grunts behind me, as one student would hit another or deliberately knock another's notes to the floor.

At Jo's suggestion I moved the venue for History of Art from the corridor, which was rather like being in a train, to the Graphics Room. The Graphics Nines, who were not using any printing equipment at the time, moved reluctantly into the corridor, complaining about being

thrown out of "their room". This caused an argument at the doorway to the room, with some of the Art Nines pushing to get in while others from the Graphics Nines blocked their way. After a few minutes, partly at my insistence, the two groups went their separate ways.

The change in atmosphere was astounding. We worked from large glossy art books, which they for the most part had borrowed from the school library or brought from home. Grouped around a centre table, in bright sunlight, the students gathered around, or stood on chairs to look at the various art works under discussion. I found the fast exchange of questions and comments more easy to regulate, and for the most part every student was listened to, without a continual background buzz.

Lesson Five:

A week behind schedule, the open book test was held. The students from the fourth group had finally got some research notes together the day before the test, and these had been distributed to the other groups. Most of the students were on time and had brought their files and writing equipment along. They were allowed fifteen minutes to discuss the questions with whomever they wished and forty-five minutes in which to complete their individual answers. Nobody wanted to work with the students in the fourth group because, as somebody remarked, "... I'm not giving them any of my marks ... why should I?" Another comment, made quite angrily, was, "You, you guys never bothered ... we all did, so why should we help you?"

I intervened and said to them that unless the preparatory work had been done and everyone had been at all the lessons, the discussion part of the paper would be helpful but there wouldn't be "much to build on". The answers to the test, I continued, would develop from a combination of shared ideas and individual insights.

They were silent for a moment before Vaughan replied, "Yes but still you know, it's not right," to which another student responded, " ... Yah but it's not a real test is it ... anyway I mean, this is, well, sort of cheating?" Those who had not brought their files looked bored. One student, Ricky, rested his head on his arms, eyes closed throughout this exchange. Vaughan said despairingly, " ... but how do we know that what we see is what you want us to see?" Finally, a remark was made that seemed to put most of the students at ease: "Idiot," said Sam, "nobody can look for you."

Eventually all the students settled down, not without the grumbles, and worked solidly for the rest of the hour, most of them wanting to continue after the lesson bell had gone. Said one, quite amazed, "I've never written for an hour ... I always finish in fifteen minutes." Several of the others asked me if I would mark the test that day, after having made sure that I knew that the reason they hadn't finished was because " ... there was so much to say." They seemed to be surprised that for once they had not had to sit around waiting in bored silence for the test to be over. It was very important, I felt, to get their marked papers back to them as soon as I could in order to maintain their feeling of accomplishment.

There were, however, still a few students who were not happy and would not accept the fact that what they had just reluctantly attempted to do was "a proper test". It was further dismissed by Ricky, with rested head and closed eyes, who said, "Agh ... it's rubbish anyway ... we've never had to do stuff like this before ..." With that, he and the others who had come unprepared got up and walked off noisily, shouting and shoving one another with their book bags without bothering to give me their finished tests.

PHASE THREE: The Observation

I had noticed within the Art Nines that two sub-groups had emerged. The students in the one responded very positively to the "new" way of teaching and frequently brought me articles and books that they had been reading on the subject. Within a few weeks they were asking if there was any chance for them to "move up" to Art Higher Grade for their Standard Ten year. I enquired whether this was possible, found that it had never been known to happen and was told by Simon, the Art teacher, that the senior teacher in charge of planning the school timetable would probably not view the idea favourably. While it was not uncommon practice for very weak students to be "dropped" to Standard Grade, for some strange reason the reverse was rarely done. Simon and I discussed their request and we decided to go ahead with it "unofficially" and suggested to the students that they become equally involved in their practical work before we made a formal application on their behalf to the principal.

The students in the other sub-group which included Vaughan, Steve and Ricky, were considerably less interested although they did make some effort during the lessons to ask questions. I noticed that after having done so, they would very often lapse into sarcastic asides, usually at the other students expense, or they would start punching and scuffling. They were still the ones who came late or had to be looked for, or who disappeared altogether. This created angry responses from the ones who wanted to get on with the lesson. As a result, the Art Nines started to become as resentful of one another as they were of the Graphics Nines in general. Although the open book test had enabled them to write fairly well about what they knew, considering their attitude and lack of involvement in the whole project, they maintained a surliness which became increasingly more apparent and problematic in the practical classes.

It seemed to me, and Jo agreed, that the change of emphasis in the History of Art lessons from something that was predictable and passive to something that expected them to relate the subject to their own experiences and observations had proved stimulating for them. They were now in possession of knowledge that they had found out for themselves or had derived from sharing ideas. Also, that process had been legitimised by having a test on it. For those Art Nines who were not threatened by the whole experience, it had been the catalyst which had enabled them to acquire the confidence to want to tackle the subject at a higher level as well as to view it in an entirely new light.

For the other Art Nines, however, although they had shown some interest almost in spite of themselves, it seemed that they found the change in attitude and progress being made by the others totally threatening. The only way they could really and effectively upset what had been achieved, I thought, was by continuing to delay the start of History of Art lessons and by intensifying their animosity in the practical classes.

The ramifications of this unexpected division among the Art Nines forced me to start planning a further action research spiral in order to focus on their practical work.

PHASE FOUR: The Reflection

I had experienced a great deal of difficulty in establishing, among the Art Nines, the sort of interaction that I preferred. Jo and I discussed this after every lesson that she attended. On one occasion she wrote

What I observed was an ethos of rebellion ... not rude or disrespectful, but it felt more to me like a 'let's get away with as much as we can' attitude. And Gill comes from a tradition which values an approach which is non-authoritarian and hoping to achieve self-discipline among the students as opposed to teacher-imposed discipline ... in her attempt to be democratic, fair and kind, (she) was negotiating the boundaries rather than defining the boundaries and negotiating within them ...

Simon, the Art teacher, believed about their practical work that

Mr Brand was very good for these limited students in one way ... by ultimately controlling everything through highly structured processes which guaranteed an end-product in a practical, non-aesthetic series of simple formulae ... which not-so-bright kids feel secure with ... he anaesthetised (them) by pre-empting any decision-making ... they didn't challenge him because it was not worth their while to do so ... they knew that if they did as he

told them, they would produce what he wanted and that got them good marks ...

While what had happened certainly supported the notion of students used to being rigidly "controlled", I could not accept, with the possible exception of one, that these same students were "limited" and "not-so-bright". They had made some very interesting and original contributions during the discussions of various art works and artists, and for most of them the open book test had been something they had enjoyed. Participation was now a regular if rather chaotic feature of the lessons.

Ironically, by providing the Art Nines with unaccustomed space to participate as individuals, to make their own decisions and to find out things for themselves, I had made a few of them very resentful. Instead of taking the opportunity to liberate themselves from the label of limited student, they actually reinforced it by remaining rebelliously passive for the most part. I felt that they were rejecting a chance to show their real potential because it was far easier to do nothing than to have to take any responsibility for their work.

Contrary to Simon's view, I felt that Mr Brand had not "been ideal". By denying students like these their basic rights to be thinking individuals, he had coerced them into an attitude which maintained the idea of themselves as "doffs". I also saw the behaviour of the second sub-group as a reactive response to the system that sought to control them. For example, they came late to class assuming that they would be "thrown out", as was the normal practice. When I delayed the start, not

only did the other students become angry but the late-comers also became cross at the prospect of having to join in. On the one hand, the interested students rightly felt they were losing valuable time. On the other hand, the obstructive students were doing their best to waste time, penalising not only themselves in the process but the others in their class. This might have contributed to the rift which developed among the Art Nines.

In this latter group were the two students who had not been allowed to use the school library since the beginning of the year because of "bad behaviour". This had resulted in their being excluded from an activity which could have been helpful and enjoyable, and which could have involved them actively in the process of learning. Furthermore, the less than enthusiastic response to a request made, quite casually by one of the two Art Nines, to a senior teacher that he would like to try Art Higher Grade, was a further indication of how "trapped" by the label these students all were.

Together with the others in the group, these students had acquired the reputation of being "not-so-bright" and "problems" somewhere during the course of their academic life at school, either at Park High or elsewhere. This label was continually reinforced not only by the structure of the school, liberal as it was, but also by the students' own negative response to their inferior situation.

To add to the complexity of these issues; at the outset, Jo identified a need for me to be more firm. In my attempts to develop self-esteem among

the Art Nines I had neglected to develop a structure within which to work. I was so anti-authoritarian that I allowed my students "to do their own thing" to the point where everyone talked at once, unintentionally also letting the unco-operative students continue to avoid participation.

As I became more clear about the boundaries I wished and needed to create, I was able to be more assertive without confusing such action with being authoritarian. However, the few students, Steve and Ricky in particular, who refused to participate in the new approach remained a problem which worsened and was to affect all the Standard Nines during the practical classes.

During Jo's interviews with the Art Nines, she was often given two answers about what they thought of me, the most common reply being "... do you mean as a person or a teacher?" They felt that I was "nice but too soft" and "should be much more strict". However, when asked whether they would prefer to go back to the former way of being taught, they mostly said emphatically, "No!" Mr Brand, it was generally agreed, was "... a teacher you didn't argue with ..." and "... you didn't have any choice with him, he was a very moody person." One of the most profound insights came from a student who had been very responsive to the change:

If there's a change that you thought you might like to try but it's not within your power ... it's a lot easier to accept when the chance comes along ... for people who haven't thought about change it disrupts their system and it's very threatening - they can't accept it.

Jo felt, as I did, that my move towards a clearer set of expectations, both in terms of the organisation of the History of Art lessons and the participation of the students, had resulted in a process of gradual transformation. Whereas earlier she had spoken of an "ethos of rebellion", after the open book test she noted that

... those that tended to be ... disruptive are being checked for this, and responding. It seems that almost in spite of themselves, they are being drawn into the subject matter and asking interesting and searching questions. The ethos no longer feels like one of resistance.

We both agreed, and received corroboration via the interviews with the students, that the teaching/learning situation had been transformed to a considerable extent, although it was an unfinished and ongoing process.

For example, I had unintentionally created a rift among the Art Nines by trying to get them to feel that what they were doing was worthwhile, while leaving unaddressed the issue that was originally identified - that of the relationship between the Art Nines and the Graphics Nines. In fact, the relationship worsened, probably as a direct result of the behaviour of those students who were most threatened by the new way of teaching.

The research cycle had several effects on the participants. I began to understand how to be assertive without feeling guilty or aggressive. Some of the Art Nines started to realise their potential. Others resisted my efforts and tried, quite unwittingly I believe, to prevent any further progress being made by anyone, but as a result only fell further and further behind with their own work.

While Jo and I continued to reflect on the research, I found myself planning a further cycle which was directly related to that of the first. It was part of a crucial process for the Standard Nine class as a whole, for the animosity between the "downstairs" Graphics Nines with the "upstairs" Art Nines was coming to a head as they mutually rejected my different approach to drawing and printmaking.

Jo and I had got the clear sense that, for the Art Nines, Art History was becoming a process of looking at art and talking about it in an attempt to contextualise what they saw. "Why were women always painted so fat?", was typical of the sort of question that was asked and which could easily be discussed, not only in terms of images of the past, but as a way of analysing the power of dominant social constructions, both of the past and the present.

That these lessons came to be seen as "real" and the associated test taken seriously, was for most of the Art Nines, and for me, a rewarding experience. Their continued participation, even getting library books to bring to further lessons, unsolicited, was proof to me of a new interest in the subject. As far as the test was concerned, the fact that I used the marks as "proper" ones, to be included in their term's record, made it legitimate and not a form of sanctioned "cheating". Said one student, "Are you sure that we can have those marks?" I remember replying, "The sort of things you have found out for yourselves won't be found in any text book ... does that make them 'wrong'?"

UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS:
THE THIRD ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

"Eh, my man, so that's a drawing ... "

PHASE ONE: The Plan

While working with the Art Nines on the History of Art activity, I had introduced new ideas about various methods of printmaking to the combined Standard Nine practical class. These had been met with a sceptical reception. I could see that they were not keen on changing their system of working, which appeared to be limited to one particular "foolproof" method.

I had discovered that, like the Regis High students, the Nines had been taught to make prints by transferring traced drawings from photographs or photocopies to the surface of lino or a metal plate in order to get an image. The Art Nines felt very secure with this method because it eliminated the need to display any sort of "artistic" activity or "talent". The Graphics Nines, on the other hand, did not seem to be able to make a connection between what they did in Art downstairs and what they did in Graphics, upstairs. As far as they were concerned, Graphics was not Art, either, but for different reasons. The rigid techniques they had been taught for printmaking were foreign to the very personal and experimental methods encouraged in Art. When, for example, I tried to get them to draw from life, my attempts were met with polite surprise, " ... but we do drawing downstairs - we've never had to do it

up here." They did, however, settle down and draw, even if with some reluctance.

The Art Nines remained very unhappy, despite my explanations and assurances, and usually wandered around and fiddled with equipment, muttering comments to one another before attempting to draw. It seemed that they felt incapable of drawing, and that whatever they did, despite my approval, was never "as good as the Art guys". As the practical classes continued, the obvious ability and experience of the Graphics Nines further fuelled the Art Nines' resentment which, I could now see, was a particular emotion that continually flared.

My interest in getting the Art Nines, in particular, to develop a more personal way of seeing and visualising seemed to have backfired. In the same way, my attempt to make the Graphics Nines associate their Art experience with that of printmaking was viewed with suspicion by the Art Nines as yet another example of being made to feel inferior. Vaughan, who was easily frustrated by his drawings (he also showed the same frustration with History of Art), complained to me after yet another uneasy lesson, "You see, I was doing well ... and then you came ... and then I wasn't."

During a lesson in the fourth week, Chris, a Graphics Nine, suddenly looked up and said to me, "we all draw downstairs, surely we should be printmaking up here, not drawing?" Then Vaughan threw down his pencil, saying 'This is a mess ... it's not normal drawing so that it looks real ... this is a mess. It's wrong, it doesn't look right!'

This outburst was the signal for a heated exchange about the nature of "real" drawing. "The drawings you make us do look like messy scribbles," said an Art Nine, " ... it's not real ... I don't like things that aren't right." All their comments were centred around judgements about "real", "right", "wrong" and "messiness". It seemed that the Art Nines could not accept "mistakes" or "imperfections" when it came to putting what they saw down on paper. They could not trust themselves but would rather rely on tracing in order to obtain what they regarded as a "perfect" drawing. It was difficult for them to accept drawing in any other form. The Graphics Nines refrained from commenting and I was reluctant to involve them in case it made their relationship with the Art Nines even more threatening to the latter.

Lessons became difficult as the same students who were causing a rift between the Art Nines in the current History of Art activity brought their confusion and what looked like resentment into the practical classes. Again they delayed the starts by being late or by disappearing. Sometimes they stood, hands in pockets, outside the room, staring in but not moving. Periodically they interrupted lessons by fighting and scuffling in such a way that tables or stools got knocked over or moved, which disturbed the other Nines. They could also be insulting, speaking in way that was not intended to be amusing beneath the laughs. Ricky, for example, would lean over somebody's shoulder at random and remark, "eh, my man, so that's a drawing" in an exaggerated English accent. I took this to be aimed directly at me, particularly since he emphasised the accent.

There was very little ease in the Graphics Room now and I realised that my attempts to change what I had seen as an undesirable situation had actually worsened it, not just for those students who felt the most threatened, but for everyone in the class.

In the process of trying to decide what to do, I asked students to bring their work to my office individually, and to sit and talk about how they felt. I recorded some of their comments in a notebook that I always had with me during their classes. Vaughan told me, " ... with this new drawing thing ... the marks worry me a lot ... if these (drawings) turn out out wrong then I'm going to lose marks ... and I rely upon my Graphics mark to pull up my average." Alex, also an Art Nine, complained, "You are asking us to fail Matric (possibly meaning either failing the final Art Standard Grade exam or failing that and the whole examination itself, in which a certain minimum aggregate had to be achieved in all the subjects that were offered) by wasting our time on drawing ... we should be etching by now ... the Matrics had already started etching by this time last year ... " (I felt that etching had status in their eyes because it was the main technique used by Mr Brand's students for their Matric exam). A Graphics Nine to whom I spoke remarked that he could see what I was offering them and was taking advantage of it but "a lot of those guys (Art Nines) just don't understand."

These interviews seemed to be very constructive at a personal level for some of the Art Nines, who gradually started to become more involved with their drawings and allowed me to interact with them more easily.

These same Nines were the ones who were also showing greater interest in the History of Art. However, there were still those students, the late-comers, who, I noted with interest, were always polite and softly-spoken when in my office, but continued to be aggressive and destructive out of it. They damaged and "lost" cutting tools, chipped into work surfaces, stuffed food remnants into other students' lockers, or used anything else that came to hand (including cool-drink bottles) as "missiles" to be thrown around the Graphics Room or out of a window at students in the quad below. This behaviour irritated and angered the majority of the Nines, but any challenge from them usually led to a slanging match or a fight, so they usually withdrew from any contest. They were acting, as Peter from the Graphics Nines remarked, as if they were "really skommy."

The situation came to a head when the Graphics Nines asked Simon to intervene "upstairs." Simon and I had often spoken about the sort of students I was teaching but we had not actually sat down and thought about doing anything other than working through the changes that I was trying to implement. Now the situation had to be looked at again because the Graphics Nines had expressed concern, saying that some students were "disrespectful." More importantly, Simon said, they felt that their success in Graphics was being jeopardised by "what was happening."

As we grappled with the causes for the problems in an attempt to try and resolve them, Simon commented, "... he (Mr Brand) anaesthetised the kids by pre-empting any decision-making or individual creativity ... they didn't challenge him because it wasn't worth their while to do so." Simon also felt that I was not "interventionist" enough in my

interaction with them, explaining that he thought I should be more forceful with them.

We decided to hold a joint meeting "upstairs" in which we would offer the Nines a "package". The Art and Graphics departments would be run as one unit, interchangeable in terms of facilities, students and teachers. Simon and I would plan joint practical projects which would be assessed by both of us while the students could have access to either department and teacher, as required, during the process of the projects.

We hoped that this merger would enable the Graphics Nines to see Printmaking as part of their creative experience and that the Art Nines would come to feel that they were an equal part of a larger art community within the school. We also hoped that through our individual roles we would offer the students different ideas and perspectives about the same project, encouraging them to make their own decisions rather than follow a single "recipe" for obtaining an end product. In short, we wanted to emphasise process rather than product and participation rather than obedient rule-following. In order to reinforce this new perception, we decided that we would work together in a very overt way, with Simon taking some of my classes and my taking some of his, at the same time maintaining our personal teaching styles.

The Practical Activity

We planned a practical activity of three stages, which would be exactly the same for Simon's Art Higher Grade students, some of whom were also

the Graphics Nines, and my Art Nines. It emphasised the process of making art rather than the end product and was structured as follows:

1. Drawings from life, based on architecture, related to a current Art History project being done by all the Nines (i.e. Simon's and mine);
2. Collage made by selecting aspects from drawings;
3. Print and/or Painting based on 1 and 2.

Simon, as a co-worker, became an observer as well. He did not participate as a triangulator in the same way that Jo had done because he was not only a colleague but also a head of department and a senior teacher at Park High. This would make him much more closely associated with the events he observed. In addition, although he also taught the Graphics Nines "downstairs", the joint activity we had planned was the first opportunity, ever, for him to participate "upstairs". He said that he had never been able to establish any form of working relationship with Mr Brand, apart from a tense administrative one, and that was why there was such a separation between the two departments.

Since the activity we had planned was based on trying to address the unsolved problems which were revealed and which had worsened during the first spiral, I started to record our own comments and responses during discussions of the lessons, either in my notebook or by making "taped" notes. We also decided to record verbatim quotes made during classes, as well as our observations, in the same way. (see also pp39-40)

As a theoretical exercise, I tried to separate the phases of the action research cycle in the writing of this narrative but I found it almost

impossible to do so. I think that this experience, as with the other action research cycles, again emphasises that, in practice, there cannot be such an idealised separation of events.

PHASE TWO: The Action

When the activity was introduced, all the Nines were reluctant to start. They were free to do the one thing that they had wanted to do all term and now seemed at a loss to know how to go about it. They appeared to have great difficulty in structuring the activity around their own observations and decisions now that they were unable to rely on "pre-digested" traced photocopies. Apart from this being a new departure for them, they also seemed confused by being presented with the challenge of an entirely new medium, the woodblock. Like the Regis High students, they wanted to sand and polish the surfaces "to get it perfect" and got frustrated by having to rely upon their own drawings of buildings, which they regarded as "a mess."

The Nines were further upset when they were asked to use indelible ink to make the final drawing on the wood prior to cutting into the surface. The thought of making a "mistake" was almost too much for Vaughan and he refused to use anything other than a pencil on the wood so that he could "rub it out if it goes wrong". They could not accept that we wanted them to make very free interpretations of their preparatory work and were not concerned with "accuracy".

When printmaking eventually started, some of the Art Nines indicated, by their attempts to clean the wood, that they were especially upset by the staining that the inks caused on the surface of the wood. Most wanted to start again with new wood. The first prints elicited panic because, as Ricky put it, they looked "childish and stupid".

Only three of the Art Nines finished the complete activity on time, in marked contrast to the Graphics Nines. Ricky, Vaughan and Steve abandoned the activity entirely and produced woodcuts made from tracings of old Cape houses instead.

PHASE THREE: The Observation

Although the Graphics Nines were reluctant to start the activity, once they had made their first prints they started to use their Art experience gained "downstairs" to make a series of increasingly complex and varied prints. Several of the Art Nines observed their progress and went to them for help with their work. When they were offered colours that had been already mixed and used, they were accused of "cheating" or "copying" by the other "Art Nines" who had floundered and seemed quite incapable of making any decisions about their work once it became apparent that the reluctant drawings they had made did not translate into "perfect" prints. Instead of letting Simon or me help them through this stage or getting ideas from the Graphics Nines with whom they shared the classroom, they delayed any action so that by the time the deadline was reached they were only at a very preliminary and often discouraging stage of the printmaking activity.

For Steve and Ricky, the activity was especially unsuccessful. It seemed that they were threatened by the different approach that it required and evaded it by reverting to the familiar and reassuring method of tracing, which guaranteed a "perfect" end result and which in the past had given high marks for little effort.

I rejected the first stage of their activity on the basis that the drawings were not their own, i.e. done from "life" but rather, tracings of photographs obtained from a book on architecture. They apparently were unconvinced or maybe not prepared to exert any personal effort. Discussion was not possible because they listened in silence, agreed with me when I asked them for comments and generally continued to resist any suggestions or advice on how to continue with the activity. From then onwards they avoided contact with me. This was easy to do because of their habit of arriving well after the lesson had started, by which time the other students were occupying my attention.

These two, however, were angry when we said that we had a problem in assessing their projects because they had ignored the specific structure within which they had to work. They could not accept that their method was not what was required. I tried to explain that the project was planned in such a way that the woodcut prints would come, rather, from their direct experience of making drawings from "life" with all their "mistakes" and "inaccuracies".

Simon thought, and I agreed with him, that these students were unusually secure with the "recipe" for instant success that tracing had previously

given them and they were not prepared to cope with anything that was open-ended and demanded some level of personal involvement. It was one thing, technically, to cut out pre-determined lines and quite another to draw them from "life". Simon suggested that only if they were given very low or no marks at all, would they start to deal with change.

The end of this practical activity coincided with the end of the History of Art activity. It was clear that the Art Nines who had managed to deal with the new situation in an integrated way were also the ones who initiated contact with the Graphics Nines during the practical activity and were prepared to learn from them as well.

I noticed with interest that four of the students amongst the Art Nines had started to produce work that was more haptic, or a more emotional response to the activity. One of them, Sam, had called me over and explained by means of a lengthy story, in which he seemed to be re-living the events, how he had come to make his drawings and prints develop in the way he wanted. I could see that he was excited by what had happened and was fascinated by his own almost childlike enthusiasm.

The tension between the two groups had been lessened considerably by the interaction that the activity had promoted. However, the rift among the Art Nines increased as Ricky, Vaughan and Steve in particular expressed themselves unable to do what the others had attempted. Vaughan constantly became frustrated at his inability to "draw perfectly". He had said to me repeatedly during classes, "I hate mess." I wondered whether he would ever be able to relax sufficiently and stop being so

critical of his efforts to draw freely. It seemed that, for him, being "perfect" was expressed by making neat, careful drawings which were lifeless. This was his only consolation and protection, because in the past he had been given high marks for such work. His anxiety was compounded by his practical mark, which was considerably lower than usual. He complained bitterly to me, " ... but I worked so hard ... " Steve, although he seemed unconcerned about the lack of a mark, made no comment but pointedly ignored me. Ricky reacted by avoiding me, then by being absent from class for several lessons. When he did return, he was even later, and more disruptive and aggressive than usual.

The marks that the other Nines were given were also lower than "normal". However, I felt so concerned about what had been happening to my students that I decided not to use the marks for any official purposes. This was met with a generally positive response and it appeared to have the effect of endorsing the idea of "experimentation". Nevertheless, Ricky and Vaughan appeared to be annoyed and I overheard them remarking, "this was all a waste of time."

PHASE FOUR: The Reflection

It was apparent to both Simon and myself that the degree of control that had been exerted over the Nines in the past had been extreme. There had been little if anything in their experience of Graphics that had provided these students with the space to develop a sense of personal involvement or even to make decisions.

The constant emphasis on product - typical of most schooling and society, too, I would say - achieved by a series of rigid and efficient technical steps, had certainly produced end results of which the Nines were proud but it did not allow them to explore their world and themselves by experimenting with creative processes. There was no room for making the "mistakes" that are so often a crucial part of being creative. For students like Ricky, this was possibly a way of continuing to resist the school organisation while being given marks without having to take much personal responsibility for them. Vaughan, unlike Ricky or Steve, really did try his best to follow the project's structure, but could only be secure, it seemed, within very tight and prescriptive structures, where he was not required to take responsibility for the end result. This had significance in terms of his overall aggregate marks, where his "Graphics" results in the past had ensured that he would obtain a certain number of "guaranteed" marks which improved his overall aggregate mark.

This essentially technicist approach to teaching conformed to the dominant educational interest in precision, efficiency and product. Students whose intuitive way of expressing their world was through an emotional, essentially haptic response to it, were encouraged in the name of objectivity and proficiency to make representations that were accurate and concise, and which eliminated subjectivity. This approach was rewarded by marks and supported the idea that only facts could be visualised. Apart from having been a feature of the Graphics room, the use of marks as a controlling factor is a feature of the technicist interest in education generally.

It was hardly suprising that the Graphics Nines saw the subject as separate from Art. Their singular way of making visual images had nothing in common with what they associated with Art. The way in which they were taught, too, was very different from their experience with Simon. In addition the lack of contact between the two teachers must have further emphasised the separateness of the two subjects, especially as there was no doubt in their minds that Art had a higher status than Graphics.

For the resistant Art Nines, then, it appeared that control was reassuring. If they were compliant, they would achieve success. As students who were not doing well at school, they saw it as a way of improving their overall mark with minimal personal effort. Besides that, the subject as it was constructed denied them any real responsibility for their work because all the decisions were made for them. The distinction between "right" and "wrong" was totally clear, "mistakes" were eliminated and "success" guaranteed. This approach prevented them gaining knowledge through their own experience while the personal space that I had offered them in the classroom was something which at first they tended to resist. Far from their being unusually secure with the "recipe" for instant success, they appropriated it into a "culture of resistance" which recalled that of Willis' (1977) "lads", an issue that I shall discuss further in Chapter Three. For some of the other Nines, it was beginning to become evident that getting good marks was their responsibility because, after the completion of the project, they came to me with ideas and suggestions which ranged from how to approach the next project to re-organising the graphics room for optimum use.

As these Art Nines were to discover, especially Alex and Sam, freedom was liberating and gave them a new sense of potential, which they were keen to explore in the next project. For Vaughan, however, freedom was possibly a daunting prospect and he had struggled with the changes that were taking place, although his poor marks jolted him into the view that he would have to work even harder to improve. I could not get him to understand that it was not simply a question of working "harder" or "improving" but rather a matter of being more relaxed.

Ricky, on the other hand, finally chose to opt out altogether and, by missing many of the remaining lessons that term, became further disadvantaged by excluding himself from the atmosphere of change. He was a familiar figure in the corridors of the school, having been sent out of, or having been late for, one class or another. Since his tactics of being late to my class did not have the same effect, the only way he could retaliate was by not coming to classes at all. Of all the Art Nines he was the one student who resisted completely the chance to develop his potential creativity.

It was no coincidence that there were many similarities between the students of Park and Regis High. Simon commented that teachers shape their subject by their attitude and that

... if you're conscious about it you are confronting the essentially political nature of educational knowledge and you are committing a conscious political act when you do or do not create a personal and liberatory space for individuals in your classroom. It is easier to deny them that right than to provide it.

In Graphics I was dealing with students who for whatever reason had fallen foul of the system and who, in the past, had been given a calculated chance to reintegrate with it through compliance. However, both Simon and I felt that the displays of aggression that were released in my classes were related to the enforced discipline that they had experienced in the past. I came to see their annoyance at having to take some personal responsibility for their work as being typical of the "culture of resistance" to which I shall again refer in Chapter Three.

It was not easy for them to accept what I was trying to offer, even those who had experience of it in another subject such as Art. For example, the Graphics Nines were generally more successful than the Art Nines and did not have the same problems in relation to the school structure, and yet still had to be encouraged to put their creative experience to use.

I was made aware of the power that teachers, often unknowingly, have over their classes when they reinforce societal "norms" related to an over-riding technicist interest in knowledge for efficient productivity. Even more awesome was the resistance that I encountered in trying to introduce a liberatory praxis into my classroom because it did not correspond to what my students understood as "right". At Regis, this had been threatening to the whole organisational structure of the school, while at Park it highlighted the plight of students who could not conform to certain expectations, whether of academic achievement or of a specific kind of "Park" behaviour.

At a personal level, I had become more certain of what it was that I wanted to achieve in my classroom. While at Regis High I had begun to see the issues relating to power and knowledge more clearly, and at Park High my focus sharpened. The liberal attitudes that were absent from Regis were a feature of Park High, revealed in its concern to address such issues as diverse yet as interconnected as racial discrimination, gender discrimination, the equality of culture with sport, personal freedom and so on.

As a workplace for liberatory teaching, Park held considerable attraction because the idea of justice and emancipatory practice was a strong feature of the school's ethos. However, the action research projects that I worked through with my Graphics students indicated to me that despite Park's ethos, discriminatory structures still existed, causing certain students to resist conforming to the pursuit of learning "reified knowledge". Instead, they occupied themselves in the production of what Everhart (1983:125), has called "regenerative knowledge" in which their resistance could be seen as more of a "reaction" rather than a "conscious opposition" to the basic organisational structure of the school (1983:129). (See also p63)

I became more comfortable with being assertive and no longer confused it with aggression. As a consequence, in my own practice I was better able to define certain boundaries within which I wanted my students to work and intervene more forcefully, without being prescriptive and limiting.

At Regis, I was made aware of, and at Park, I began to realise how the social structures which determine appropriate gender behaviour can be reinforced by "normalising" it at schools; submission and a sense of being a "minor" for the girls and their teachers, assertion and domination for the boys, with aggression being condoned, and hopefully channelled off into various "safe" sporting activities.

Certainly, the Art Nines' assertiveness had been suppressed during their classes with Mr Brand because they had no choice but to submit, the trade-off offered to them consisting of "good marks". They were effectively disempowered by it. I think also that the knowledge that they were in a dependent position made them aggressive.

This thesis has been about my experiences as a teacher-researcher working within two different educational contexts. At the beginning, I tried to provide the reader with a brief personal history, a short formal theoretical background to critical action research and a description of its methodology. Throughout the writing of the narrative, I have tried to make it clear that participation in critical action research has been a form of critical pedagogy and curriculum critique, probably best summed up as praxis. In the final chapter, I shall focus on some of the issues that emerged for me during the period of my research.

possible. Nevertheless, during the process of observation when data are collected by recording what is done or said, how it is done or said, and in what context, we still construct our own "reality" of the situation which may or may not be shared by the other participants. In practice, the whole process of observation and data collecting is such a delicate, complex and messy activity requiring honesty, openness, flexibility, skill and a sense of ethics on behalf of the enquirer. Sometimes, the things that are heard and the events that occur are very threatening for the enquirer, making the research an uncomfortable experience, one which would rather be forgotten or ignored, but which must be recorded.

In filtering and manipulating information on many different levels, what we choose to see, what we exclude and what we accidentally miss, can only provide a part of the whole, for to observe is to interpret. To further complicate the problem, we have reasons for selecting what we see, not all of which are obvious or even conscious, and in so doing, we often form a confusing amalgam of facts and values. While critical reflection provides a way of burrowing more deeply in an attempt to provide an authentic picture of social "reality", there are often data within the realms of "private" knowledge which may be withheld and not surface until later, if at all, which alter the understanding of "reality" yet again and again.

Associated with these mutable complexities, Connelly and Clandinin (1990:10), in a discussion on narrative inquiry, refer to the multiple "I's" which participants bring to research. These various "selves" that exist within a person have different qualities which cannot be separated

from the research process, regardless of which "self" is seen to be playing the leading role. Peshkin (1985:270) refers to this as follows:

... behind this I are one's multiple personal dispositions ... that may be engaged by the realities of the field situation. Because of the unknown and the unexpected aspects of the research field, we do not know which of our dispositions will be engaged.

How do critical action researchers go about recording and telling the story of their classroom research experience? For example, how do you accurately record the bodily gestures which accompany what is said, the tones of voice in which the spoken word is delivered and the pauses and hesitations between words or sentences? How do you, in the writing of your research, bring out the contradictions between what is said, the way it is said and the way in which you personally respond, particularly given the power relations involved, such as between teacher and students?

Two useful concepts elaborated by Geertz (1973) are of help both in the observation phase and the writing of critical action research. They are expressed by the terms "thin" and "thick" description, which relate to the problems of interpretation by addressing the cultural loading implicit in certain actions, for example, a wink, a shrug or a subtle change of intonation which accompany words and which can alter the apparent meaning of what is said. As an observer you try to be aware of body language and nuances and to record them in a way which captures the "reality" of the moment, while at the same time acknowledging that such understandings which are reached can never be final. As a teacher-researcher, for example, when I engage in a dialectical relationship

with my students, sharing a "public" culture determined by our common context, the classroom, I also have my own "private" culture as do my students and which often remains outside of the research process because they are obscured. Therefore, our shared understandings reached by being part of a community always have within them inherent contradictions which continually shift and slide as we try to grasp the significance of them.

Teacher-researchers working within the framework of critical action research are engaged in a form of narrative inquiry, the writing of which requires a particular form of language. The word "I" can refer to one of many "selves" although the distinctions between them, in practice, are more blurred. Nevertheless, I have to ask myself, when I write, am I the person always the same I the teacher or the critic? In whose voice do I write?

Eisner points out that most educational inquiry has been dominated by a research language composed of linguistic conventions which suggest that what has been observed, has been observed both objectively and neutrally. He says (1988:18), "We write and talk in a voice void of any hint that there is a personal self behind the words that we utter." He refers to what he calls the hegemony of positivism, where the methods and principles of research in the natural sciences have been applied to the classroom and school, as if what is observed exists outside and independently of the researcher, the purpose being to objectify through depersonalisation. Discoveries and findings are reified rather than

acknowledged as social constructions and, as Eisner (1988:18) later comments,

Legitimacy is conferred upon those who belong to the same church. The politics of method breeds a sense of community among those who adhere to its principles. For those who do not, it can breed a sense of alienation.

Critical action researchers are often academically alienated precisely because they are concerned with the primacy of subjective experience.

Eisner (1988:19) says

when I talk about the politics of method, I do not simply mean matters of position, authority, or professional socialisation in the narrow sense, but rather the ways in which the mind is shaped and beliefs are fostered. The politics of method ultimately has to do with the politics of experience. Method influences how we think and what we are permitted to feel.

The point that Eisner is making is that while all methods and all forms of representation are partial, the politics of method has imposed a notion of a single version of "truth" which is derived from only scientifically acceptable research methods that are "objective" and "neutral".

As a consequence, critical action research has been variously regarded as "soft", "subjective", "unreliable" and "unscientific" and not of any real value. Not only are the methods of data collection criticised but also the way in which the research language acknowledges personal experience and the "subjectivity" of the participants. We cannot rely on the language of science and propositional discourse in trying to understand how our classrooms and school work and how we, as teachers, understand the theory that informs our practice, and which brings us

directly into the political arena because it enables us to address the relationship between knowledge and power. The language which gives voice to the primacy of experience threatens academic hegemony and the accepted way of generating educational theory. Eisner quotes Nelson Goodman (1978) as saying, "There may be one world, but there are many versions of it ... and there are as many versions as there are languages to describe them."

This is not the only hegemony to be threatened. Elliott (1989:6), in a discussion of the action research movement, sees teacher-researchers as embodying a new concept of professionalism by attempting to transform what he calls the "traditional craft culture" in schools. He defines this as the intuitive craft knowledge which teachers have about the realities of their own practice which remains separate from educational theories and is regarded as private. Elliott argues that for those teachers, whom he calls the "guardians", anxious to maintain this sort of culture, action research is even more threatening than traditional "outsider" research.

The idea of a unified, reflective and emancipatory educational practice committed to worthwhile change cuts through an educational system which is committed to the maintenance of hierarchical control and technicist efficiency. Teacher-researchers engaged in critical action research become colleagues who are prepared to share and reflect collaboratively on the experience of their classroom practice in a conscious attempt to recognise, change and transcend the structures which shape that practice. This sort of "improvement" in teaching is empowering and a far

cry from the limited, isolated and un-reflective practice of teachers for whom "improvement" is seen as a technicist emphasis on increased skills, greater efficiency and control, and better results. As Elliott points out, teacher-researchers engaged in action research are actually studying and reflecting on the ways in which curriculum structures shape educational practice. This sort of research has enabled practitioners to explore the ways in which the curriculum, overt and hidden, has been used to exploit carefully constructed forms of knowledge in order to restrict, for example, individual potential and critical thinking, and to maintain social inequalities and discriminatory practices in society - in short, the perpetuation of domination in the service of vested interests.

Research, which Simons (1985), quoted in Elliott (1989:9), defines as a " ... process which embodies the values of openness, shared critical responsibility and rational autonomy ... ", clashes with what she argues are the primary values which regulate school life, namely privacy, territory and hierarchy. The issue here is that hierarchies can transmit power with authority based on the "expertise" and "experience" of teachers. Authority usually comes from "expertise" and, if it breaks down, then authoritarian force is co-opted to maintain the balance of power. In this sort of structure, teacher-researchers would be regarded as potential sources of disruption and would constitute a threat to the continuance of the existing power relations vested in the "guardians" of traditional craft culture.

At this point, I want to refer specifically to some of my own experiences as a teacher-researcher in an attempt to pull together some of the threads of this thesis.

During the process of the action research projects at Regis and Park, I made a conscious attempt to record what I sensed, saw and heard as accurately as I could. Maybe because of my particular background in Fine Art and the arts in general, as well as experience in the paramedical field, I had well-developed observational skills that I could put to use. Despite that, I found that I had missed many things which Jo as triangulator or Simon as a colleague noticed and noted. The intensely critical reflection that we undertook made it clear to me how contradictory and precarious our immediate conclusions are and how complex and different our realities are.

Certain ethical issues of action research became a significant focus of my attention, for while I wrote I continued to reflect and ask myself questions such as, "Did Messie/Ricky really say that?"; "Was that the way in which this was said?"; "Did I really feel that?"; "Did I have a unacknowledged private agenda about Regis that distorted my research?"; "Should I use this or that particular information?" Periodically, I would 'phone or visit Jo and ask for her comments, while at Park I spoke to Simon. In this way, I tried to craft verbal images of my experience although I was continually frustrated by the knowledge that we do know more than we can tell. The language that I used, despite its conscious personal voice, often restricted my attempts to affirm my experience. I knew but I could not find the words. The more I tried to retain the

freshness and immediacy of my experience the more I was aware of the difficulties into which language lead me as I tried to transfer into written form what had been seen, heard and reflected upon. In short, I had to be prepared to follow my nose, resulting in a story of two schools that functions as an argument, " ... in which," according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990:8), " ... we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived."

In terms of the dilemmas that teacher-researchers face in the field, Elliott (1989:10) mentions several that created personal difficulties for me at Regis where the traditional craft culture of teachers was strongly reinforced by an admiration for the technician "expertise" which gave considerable power and authority to some members of staff. For example, my teaching style contrasted greatly to the norms of the school in which a noisy class was seen as one where the teacher had "no control". Right from the beginning, the noise generated by my students' activities was seen as unnecessary and, as the research proceeded, classroom activities became more and more lively, creating a situation in which the noise we made seemed worse than it really was because most other classes were quiet.

Another effect of the research was that my students became accustomed to working in an entirely different way. They started to participate much more and to assert their individuality as well as to be critical of various things that I tried to introduce. It was interesting to see how they monitored one another's remarks, however, and sometimes when it was felt that somebody had been rude, the group would be very critical.

However, this freedom was not well received in certain classrooms where my students, if they continued this practice, were considered to be badly behaved. The problem became very serious when students who were asked to leave a class, instead of standing outside the classroom for the duration of the lesson, came to me and asked if they could continue with their Graphics work. As these students were usually the ones who bunked or stayed away, I felt that because they asked if they could be with me instead of remaining where they were, I was helping them to make something positive out of a potentially negative situation. In the past, they had usually wandered off and sometimes found themselves in further trouble.

My attempt to explain this to their teacher and to suggest that we try to work together to find a more happy solution for these students since we both taught them, was rejected. She seemed very threatened and agitated by what I had done and by what I had proposed, despite my good intentions. Later, I was called to the principal's office and asked to provide an explanation for my unprofessional behaviour. While I took the opportunity to discuss the issue with the principal, it seemed that nothing that I said made much difference or would encourage open debate about this sort of problem.

While I allowed students to continue coming to my class whenever they were asked to leave others, my research subsequently became threatening. Whereas before it was of no consequence, now questions were asked, although never of me directly, about whether my research was going to be detrimental to the school's good name. I had openly challenged the power

structure embodied within the "guardians". The values of my emergent, potentially transformative culture of reflective practice clashed with those of an authoritarian craft culture which sought to perpetuate what Elliott (1989:18), calls "technocratic systems of surveillance and control". Many of the Regis staff were de-professionalised and effectively disempowered by this sort of attitude. It was almost as if the "guardians" assumed a patriarchal role in the protection of their craft culture which placed both teachers and students alike in the position of "minors". I think that the incident to which I have just referred, one of several, certainly highlights the essentially political dilemmas that teacher-researchers often have to face in trying to establish a reflective community and a sense of collegality within both the school's overt and hidden structures.

I began to understand, from my research experience at Regis, that teaching for transformation is not just about change or "improvement" of your own practice. It is about taking a critical look at yourself and reflecting on the way in which you use power and authority in your practice. In other words, it is about a reconceptualisation of the notion of authority. For many teachers that is very threatening because it forces you to look more closely at the reasons for the ways in which you control your students, as well as the reasons for the ways in which you, or other teachers for that matter, are controlled.

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOLING ON STUDENTS

Externally, Regis and Park looked similar. They had imposing buildings, large grounds and gardens, and a presence that one might well associate with that of an English public school. They served the same feeder area, shared the same and at least superficially "progressive" political constituency, and many of their students were related in some way or other. They were, however, entirely different in ethos, Regis being very conservative and self-consciously academic while Park was more relaxed and democratic, often innovative, and given to questioning what it represented.

The students with whom I worked, the Standard Nines and the Art Nines, however, were remarkably similar in some ways. One thing that that they had in common was behaviour similar to Willis' (1977) "lads" in their resistance to the authority of the school system. Willis was concerned with the way in which the cultural forms produced by the "lads" in their resistance to the authority of the school system reinforced the school's role in social reproduction. Pertinent, too, is Everhart's (1983) focus on the way in which students' non-academic life can lead to the reproduction of existing social relations, aside from their curricular experiences.

My Graphics "lads and lasses" produced their own private forms of knowledge which for them were equally as real but more important than the "official knowledge" transmitted through the usual channels from teacher to student. While this ultimately disadvantaged them in terms of

academic learning and success within the school, they experienced very real power through being able to create an alternative culture of resistance about which teachers could do very little. The Nessie's, Anna's and Lana's who often stood outside classrooms, failed test after test, bunked and stayed away, and seen as "dof" were accompanied in spirit some four kilometers down the road by the Ricky's, Steve's and Vaughan's.

They also resisted school culture in other ways, such as in matters of dress and appearance. They came late to class and either had something very urgent to do "elsewhere" or just sat, watching me or chatting with one another. They sometimes slept their way through lessons or distracted other students.

There were differences too, which seemed to be directly linked with gender socialisation. For example, the lasses tended to be resentfully submissive while the lads were often aggressively confrontational. Disagreements at Regis could become icily verbal, while at Park they would become physical. Rather than do any Graphics, the lasses would try to write letters or make cards, or finish some charity work such as knitting blanket squares, while the lads would find a locker hinge to fix or adjust, "pick" padlocks or "re-align" the printing presses. All of these activities provided them with the means of public resistance to "official" culture during the time which was set aside for it while simultaneously creating their alternative "private" culture.

Another interesting point was that whereas the lasses got little credit for anything they might have achieved outside of academic matters, the lads were acknowledged when they were good footballers, athletes, or sportsmen in general. Sport at Regis, while certainly important in terms of the school's successes, did not have quite the same pay-off as at Park. At Park, you could be forgiven a lot if you could play a handy rugby game or bowl like a demon, while at Regis the important eggs were almost all in one academic basket, that of Maths and Science.

It seems ironic - but probably isn't - that in a girls' school, of all places, appears the spectre and maintenance of gender discrimination behind the interest in technicist values. By that I mean that Maths and Science were seen essentially as providing competitive access to the "male" professional world and as conferring power and authority on those who were good at them. Home Economics and Needlework were seen as "female"; accordingly, those who did them, even if outstandingly well, were given little credit or status - "expertise", in this instance, conferred no power. The lasses, already disempowered academically, were left to mark time in subjects which were regarded with little respect and which reinforced the low intellectual status of women's work.

In terms of appropriating certain aspects of official knowledge for their own benefit, there were also similarities between my two sets of students. They were all angry with me at first for forcing them to take personal responsibility for their own art work. The technicist formula which had been so usefully co-opted by them, particularly the lads, had provided them with an easy and fail-safe means of getting a "perfect"

remained the only real way of creating useful knowledge, so that they continued to resist the official system.

The Park lads were rather different, but possibly that was due to the fact that Simon and I had altered a part of their "normal" school structure by breaking down the barriers between the Graphics Room ("upstairs") and the Art Room ("downstairs"). I think also that academic pressure was diffused in a milieu of cultural, sporting and extra-mural activities. Of all the Art Mines, only one student, Ricky, continued ostentatiously to develop his own private culture - one of body building, gym training, and the public consumption of "power" food such as vitamins, pills and bananas (the skins of which he threw at other students or dropped on the floor) - while continuing to resist that of the school. Another, Steve, opted out most of the time and created a culture out of doing nothing, which for him was very important.

Another point here is one that Giroux (1983:285) has made in connection with the resistance theory. He notes that this theory fails to enable us to discriminate between deviant behaviour which is "resistant" and that which may be retreatist or rebellious. While it is not possible within the confines of this thesis to explore Giroux's ideas further, it seems to me that, despite the similarities, the individual ways in which my lads and lasses resisted both the school ethos and my attempts at change, were certainly qualitatively different in some respects.

I think that what is particularly germane here is the fact that all these students are white South Africans at schools which are prestigious.

Regardless of whether they, like Willis' (1977:3) lads, have disadvantaged themselves academically, these students are unlikely to be occupationally damned. The apartheid system of the State ensures that they will not find themselves later in the subordinate, working class positions of their counterparts in England. The lasses, however, will still face the same sorts of gender discrimination, in spite of the relative privilege of being protected by apartheid, and because they have been socialised into submission through the power of the hidden curriculum.

If I needed some sort of visible "proof" of beneficial change, then my students' final exhibition gave Simon and myself a chance to participate in a retrospective viewing of what had been achieved. As we looked at the range of work on display, it became apparent, despite the variations in quality of the work, that their art had become their "own". For the most part, "recipe" solutions had been put aside for an individual expressiveness which ranged from sensitively handled visual renderings to strikingly intuitive and emotional work.

For some students, it was clear that they had embarked with increasing confidence in search of a personal style in which the exploration of subject had become much more important than the mere development and control of technical skills. Others, such as Vaughan and Steve, had struggled to move beyond what they felt secure with and for them the work that they displayed gave them great pleasure. Vaughan had kept his first project, commented that he still thought it was good but that the later work was better, while Ricky, apart from doing one project in

which he had started to break away from "recipes", had almost nothing to exhibit. The project for which he had been given no marks was given pride of place, alongside his examination work in which he had continued to apply those "recipes" he had originally been taught and with which he felt secure. For Ricky, the changes had been detrimental: he had continued to resist any form of participation or negotiation, either with me or his fellow students. He was especially angry with me because I had destroyed possibly his only way of achieving an improved aggregate result. His tatty, carelessly presented display was an eloquent symbol of what he thought of it all. It served as a cenotaph to the risks inherent in trying to facilitate educational change.

VALUING ACTION RESEARCH

How many of the beneficial effects of change that most of my students ultimately experienced were as a result of the processes generated by my action research cycles? I believe that participation for most of my students was a liberating experience in that it provided them with a sense of personal worth and creativity. Five of the Park students felt sufficiently confident of their own abilities to ask if they could change to Art Higher Grade, with which three of them have managed very well.

When I returned to Regis recently to examine the Matriculation examination art work, I was able to see for myself that some of them, particularly Nessie and Anna, had carried on producing a great deal of strongly individual and exciting art while others such as Jan and Lana

had been unable to continue developing the potential they had shown earlier. However, I was unable to establish any sort of democratic working relationship with the Art teacher, which I think limited the creative potential of all my students by denying them access to the "official" art community of the school as well as maintaining the feeling that Graphics was inferior to Art.

At Park, Simon, the Art teacher, had been prepared to share in the research, participate as an observer and be a colleague with whom I could discuss my problems and to whom my students could talk. Although we frequently disagreed over interpretations of events, together we were able to alter previously disempowering structures such as the separation of the "upstairs" Graphics Room from that of the "downstairs" Art Room. This made it possible for the Graphics students to develop a widened range of responses to projects as they became absorbed into the wider art community.

What has critical action research done for me? Quite simply, by enabling me to link my actions with systematic reflection in the form of praxis, I began to question issues that I had previously taken for granted or, worse still, not even thought about. I started this thesis by explaining that although I thought I was a good teacher, I wanted to "improve" my practice. In trying to do so, I put myself on a journey which has led to personal growth and development in directions that I could not have anticipated. I started to question openly the effects of my socialisation, beliefs and values. It is one thing to recognise such

On the micro level, I gradually realised that the time had come for me to assert myself in respect of what I believed was educationally just and worthwhile, and to reject actively that which I saw as discriminatory and elitist.

At the same time, to paraphrase Hargreaves (1985:25), I was beginning to hear the macro order tick. The sense of disempowerment that I began to experience was partly because Regis seemed to me so deaf. Also, I was often made to feel as if I were being thoroughly aggressive, rather than assertive, about what I believed. This I think was due to the fact that Regis was run on very patriarchal lines within which submission was the name of the game for those who had no power. For most of the time, I was in a state of conflict about what I wanted to do and what I was expected to do.

My move to Park and the sort of interaction that I developed with my students and the staff clarified the difference between assertion and aggression, once and for all. It was entirely "normal" to be assertive and nobody confused it with aggression. In becoming comfortable with being assertive, which I had to be if I was to go to teach boys successfully, I saw how much damage gender socialisation does. By discouraging girls and women from being assertive, they remain submissive, even if resentful, a situation which is seen as "normal": possibly because of this, assertion is confused with aggression. Boys and men, on the other hand, are expected to be assertive and are "labelled" or bullied if they cannot show such a quality. For those students, aggression often becomes the best form of defence.

At the macro level, critical action research as a radical alternative to the traditionally hierarchical approach to in-service teacher education could be one way of transforming educational practice in South African schools and creating a more just and fulfilling society in which to live. Most of the alternatives, to quote a famous phrase in our political history, are rather too ghastly to contemplate.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Apple, M. (1979) **Ideology and Curriculum**, London, Routledge and Keegan Paul.
- Apple, M. (1986) **Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education**, London, Routledge and Keegan Paul.
- Aronowitz, S. & Giroux, H. (1985) **Education Under Siege**, London, Routledge and Keegan Paul.
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1976) **Schooling in Capitalist America**, New York, Basic Books.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973) "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In Brown, R. (Ed.), **Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change**, London, Tavistock.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986) **Becoming Critical. Education, Knowledge and Action Research**, Lewes, Falmer Press.
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, D. (1990) "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." **Educational Researcher**, Vol 19, No 6.
- Davidoff, S. & van den Berg, O. (1990) **Changing Your Teaching: The Challenge of the Classroom**, Pietermaritzburg, Centaur in association with the University of the Western Cape.
- Ebbutt, D. (1983) "Educational Action Research: Some General Concerns and Specific Quibbles." **Cambridge Institute of Education**.
- Edwards, B. (1984) **Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain**, Glasgow, Fontana.
- Eisner, E. (1988) "The Primacy of Experience and the Politics of Method." **Educational Researcher**, Vol 17, No 6.
- Elliott, J. (1989) "Studying the School Curriculum through Insider Research: Some Dilemmas." Paper delivered at the International Conference on "School-Based Innovations: Looking Forward to the 1990's", Hong Kong.
- Everhart, R. (1983) **Reading, Writing and Resistance**, Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Friere, P. (1972) **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Geertz, C. (1989) "Being There, Writing Here." **Dialogue**, No 82, 2/89.

- Giroux, H. (1981) **Ideology, Culture and the Politics of Schooling**, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.
- Giroux, H. (1983) "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education." **Harvard Educational Review** Vol 53, No 8.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) **Selections From Prison Notebooks**, New York, International Publishers.
- Grundy, S. (1987) **Curriculum: Product or Praxis?**, Lewes, Falmer Press.
- Habermas, J. (1972) **Knowledge and Human Interest**, London, Heinemann.
- Hargreaves, A. (1985) "The Micro-Macro Problem in the Sociology of Education." In Burgess, R. **Issues in Educational Research: Qualitative Methods**, Lewes, Falmer Press.
- Hopkins, D. (1984) "What is School Improvement? Staking Out the Territory." In Hopkins, D. & Wideen, M. **Alternative Perspectives on School Improvement**, Lewes, Falmer Press.
- Hopkins, D. (1985) **A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research**, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Jackson, P. (1968) **Life in Classrooms**, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Kemmis, S. (1984) "Educational Research is Research for Education." In Flanagan, W., Breen, C. & Walker, M. **Action Research: Justified Optimism or Wishful Thinking?**, Cape Town, University of Cape Town.
- Lowenfeld, V. & Brittain, W. (1975) **Creative and Mental Growth**, New York, Macmillan.
- Lynch, K. (1989) **The Hidden Curriculum**, Lewes, Falmer Press.
- McNiff, J. (1988) **Action Research: Principles and Practice**, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Nicolson, S. & van den Berg, O. (1989) "Teacher Transformation in the South African Context: An Action Research Approach." Paper presented at the International Conference on "School-Based Innovations: Looking Forward to the 1990's", Hong Kong.
- Peshkin, A. (1988) "In Search of Subjectivity - One's Own." **Educational Researcher**, Vol 17, No 7.
- Read, H. (1970) **Education Through Art**, London, Faber.

- Shor, I. & Friere, P. (1987) **A Pedagogy For Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education**, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Sperry, R. (1968) "Hemisphere Disconnection and Unity in Conscious Awareness." **American Psychologist**, No 23.
- Stenhouse, L. (1975) **An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development**, London, Heinemann.
- Willis, P. (1977) **Learning to Labour**, Aldershot, Gower.
- Winter, R. (1987) **Action-Research and the Nature of Social Inquiry: Professional Innovation and Educational Work**, Aldershot, Gower.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE