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Conversational Uses of the Repertory Grid

for

Personal Learning and the Management of Change

in

Special Educational Needs

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

An action research design, incorporating the repertory grid as a framework for Learning Conversations, is used to examine the management of change for a group of teachers and their schools. The study sets out to analyse how individual teachers, from twelve primary and middle schools, in three outer London boroughs, learnt about managing change in their schools, in relation to children with Special Educational Needs. To study how the school supported these individuals, Headteachers and Deputy Heads were also included in the research.

The sample of teachers was chosen from those who had attended either of two sets of in-service courses on Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools. The first set of teachers had recently completed their course; the second had completed courses between five and eight years previously. This gave an opportunity to compare short-term and long-term learning outcomes from these courses.

As the study progressed, so did the development of the use of the conversational techniques. Flexible Learning Conversations, which went beyond the repertory grid techniques, were developed, and the evidence showed that this improved individuals' ability to reflect on their work, thus gaining confidence for future action in their schools.

It was also possible to develop a procedure for small groups of participants to share their own constructs, elicited from personal grid conversations. This led into a Group Learning Conversation, which also included future action planning.

The research also examines the interaction of action research and the Learning Conversation using the repertory grid, in helping to develop reflective practitioners and effective schools.

As co-ordinating tutor for both sets of in-service courses, as a co-ordinator of LEA support services in two of the LEAs, and in the role as action researcher, my personal learning has formed part of the research outcomes.

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Theme table

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chap 2		Action research literature review.		
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chap 8	LEA's future role in supporting Special Educational Needs.	The reflective practitioner: relationship to effective schools development.		Personal views. Implications for the future.

Chapter 1

Background & Rationale

This chapter describes and explains the background from which the research developed. Themes are introduced and outlined which will be explored further in later parts of the study. These include:

- A) Changes in Organisation and Delivery of In-service Education for Teachers in the Last Decade.
- B) Change in the Policy and Practice for Special Educational Needs, and related Changes to In-service Education for Teachers concerned with Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools, in the same period.
- C) The One Term In-service Courses, for Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools, which were tutored by the author.
- D) The School-focused Project and Tutorial Work.
- E) Evaluation and Follow-up Issues.
- F) Personal Questions for Research.

The last 13 years have seen increasing legislation for education in England and Wales. From 1980 to date, four education acts concerning schools have become law, and a further act is due in 1993 (App 1i). Of these acts, two have particular significance to this research. The 1981 Act (DES 1981) was concerned with reforms in Special Education, many of which were recommendations of the Warnock Committee Report (DES 1978). The Education Reform Act (DES 1988) brought in the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools (LMS), as well as the possibility for schools to opt out of local authority control and become grant-maintained. Indications from the recent white paper (DfE 1992) and Audit Commission reports (HMI 1992) are that the new legislation due later in 1993 will require a thorough review of the policy and provision for children with Special Educational Needs.

A) Changes in Organisation and Delivery of In-service Education

This decade of major educational reform also saw huge changes in the delivery modes of in-service education (INSET). There has been a change in the location of training, and there have also been changes in the focus, content and methods of training. Every teacher has to take part in five statutory training days, initially known as "Baker Days" after the Secretary of State who brought in the legislation on training (DES circular 6/86). There was less chance to attend courses based at Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), but there were more opportunities to attend short courses based at professional development centres, run by LEAs.

INSET often takes place in the school itself, and addresses those issues chosen by senior staff as their priorities for the school's development. Most funding of INSET is led by government priorities for development of the National Curriculum and its assessment; for information technology; and for management issues necessary to the implementation of LMS. To this has recently been added teacher appraisal (DES Circular 12/91). However, since 1983, money is still allocated to Special Educational Needs, including Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools (SENIOS), although this may change in the near future.

Courses run at IHEs are often taken by teachers seeking to gain further qualifications such as Advanced Diplomas and Master degrees. These are often paid for by the teachers themselves, although some boroughs still find money for bursaries. They almost all take place in teachers' own time, after school hours. There are very few remaining secondments for a year's course at an IHE. Of the few left in 1992, some were for specialist training for teaching the deaf, the blind and the mentally handicapped. Short courses of a few days or less duration are becoming more difficult for teachers to attend, as INSET money is reduced, and cover for the teacher's class cannot be afforded by either school or LEA.

The focus as well as the location of INSET has changed. Up till the 1980s, in-service had largely been aimed at enhancing teachers' knowledge of their subject or whatever was the topic of the course. It was essentially aimed at the individual, and although it was assumed that practice in schools would be affected, the school's development was not the major consideration for course providers. Teachers were away from their place of work for a long time, sometimes a year, and not much evaluation took place other than assessment of student learning through essays or exams and a pastoral type of interest in the teacher's progress and career planning.

Another feature of INSET that has changed over the decade, along with much else in education, is the amount of control exercised by government as to the content of INSET. Ten years ago IHEs chose their content on academic grounds, and LEAs ran courses dictated by local priorities. Funding for long courses came from a national pool.

In 1983, the government introduced the first ear-marked funding for INSET in the form of four national priorities, of which Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools was one. By the mid eighties, ear-marked funding dictated the use of half the grant, while local priorities used the other half. By 1990, local priorities had been removed and only national priorities remained. To date these still include SENIOS. Initially the shift in funding was welcomed by LEAs, because ear-marked funds were 100% grants. Gradually the proportion of grant dropped, and now 60% comes from the DfE and 40% is paid by LEAs. The DfE monitors uses of grants through the bid

system and audited returns. By 1992 individual needs of teachers had become more difficult to meet, despite this being one of the stated aims of teacher appraisal. There is now little time and less money to spend on such needs, unless they are covered by school or national priorities. Areas which are increasingly difficult to cover in course programming are those related to personal and social development, and the skills of handling children and young people in classrooms and schools. Children's needs as learners are hardly addressed, other than tangentially as part of National Curriculum training. The National Curriculum is largely taught by subjects, so the cross-curricular themes are vulnerable, as are those which lie outside its priorities.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of in-service is itself important to providers and users. Follow-up studies are of a varied and patchy nature. A great deal of in-service goes on, with very little quality evaluation, especially of a long-term nature. Many INSET courses have short evaluation sessions of between 5–15 minutes built into their programme, concerned with the popularity of the various sessions. School INSET planners and providers use this feedback information to plan other courses and improve delivery style. There is usually neither time nor personnel to do much more than short-term feedback on course delivery. The longer term effects on classroom practice and personal development are difficult to evaluate, as is any effect on school development. It is particularly difficult to judge the causes of change, or to sort out the multi-faceted reasons for individual and school development.

Against this general background of the changing forces in education, and in teacher in-service in particular, the field of training related to Special Educational Needs provides a particularly interesting one to study and to attempt to evaluate.

B) Changes in Policy and Practice for Special Educational Needs

Before looking at these training needs, it would be useful to spend time examining the term Special Educational Needs (SEN). The term began to be used after the publication of the Warnock report. In-service training on the new SEN approach began in 1978, and many LEAs ran courses to raise awareness of the needs of the range of pupils with learning difficulties or disorders.

Prior to this, children had been diagnosed using a medical model defining the category of their disability or disorder. The 1944 Education Act (DES 1944) defined children in need of special education as "those children with disabilities in mind and body". Categories included physical and sensory conditions such as deafness, blindness, physically handicap or language impairment. The Warnock report recommended the abolition of categories which were felt to be unhelpful. The old categories of mental handicap were "educationally subnormal, (moderate) or (severe)". These terms in

particular were felt to have negative labelling effects, as was the term “maladjusted”. The new term Special Educational Needs was intended to remove the stigma of the medical labelling, allow for continuity of need from severe to mild, and for the interactive nature of within-child difficulties with "context-induced" problems (Wedell 1980). The 1981 Act defines a child with Special Educational Needs as - *those whose learning difficulties call for special educational provision and those whose disabilities either prevent or hinder him from making use of educational facilities of the kind generally provided in schools in the area of the local authority concerned with children of his age.*

This definition of Special Educational Needs also introduces the concept of “learning difficulty”, without defining clear criteria for identification. The relativity of the definition, suggesting a connection to compensatory resourcing, has not been very helpful to those in schools and to LEAs who make decisions about provision for individual children (Goucher et al (1988)).

As well as those groups of pupils who usually attended special schools, many schools had departments which dealt with pupils whose work fell behind that of their classmates. These pupils were often labelled as "remedial". The segregation within a school of pupils whose ability seemed to be low or whose motivation was poor, often led to an even less motivated group, whose curriculum was narrow and unbalanced. However, there were examples of good specialist classes, some of which were well integrated into the mainstream schools.

Integration

The other major initiative behind the 1981 Act was to encourage schools and LEAs to integrate pupils with the full range of difficulties into mainstream education and move away from the segregation of pupils with SEN into special schools. Not only were the boundaries between handicaps and disorders to be blurred but so was the demarcation between the locations in which education took place. Those children segregated into special schools had been approximately 2% of the child population. The new term SEN was to include these, but also the much larger group of remedial or disaffected pupils to be found in mainstream schools. These were thought to be in the region of 18% of the population. The Warnock report stated that it could be expected that one in five pupils at some time in their schooling would have Special Educational Needs. These needs, however, would not necessarily be permanent. In fact, the 2% plus 18% = 20% had arisen first from the Rutter (1975) Isle of Wight study, which had looked at the full range of needs in the whole child population of the island.

The 1981 Act was also concerned with human rights issues. But, unlike its American equivalent (Public Law 94-142, 1975), the Act for England and Wales was largely one of enablement. This made it less powerful, and although the rhetoric of the Act

was to give parents and their children more choice over placement, the practice varies greatly from LEA to LEA. Placement and provision choices could depend as much on where a family lived as on the child's actual needs or the parents' wishes. There are for example, great differences between metropolitan boroughs and rural counties. Historical provision may also dictate choices available to LEAs. For example, those LEAs with a wealth of specialist provision, such as the now-extinct ILEA, found it difficult not to use these schools rather than integrate pupils into mainstream schools. The Act, therefore, allowed an LEA to integrate pupils with SEN into mainstream schools, but did not legislate that it must.

The Comprehensive Principle

The 1981 Act can be seen as the last to enshrine the comprehensive principles which had been built up since the 1944 Act. However, some LEAs had kept 11+ selection, and had kept grammar schools which took pupils on selection. Those LEAs which had an admission policy based on the right of children to attend their own neighbourhood schools, despite ability or disability, probably found it easier also to adopt the philosophy of integration of children with SEN. However, where it is seen that selection by aptitude should be the way of choosing which child goes to a particular school, special education in special schools is not likely to decrease.

Statutory Duties

The statutory duties defined in the 1981 Act gave the responsibility to LEAs for identifying pupils with SEN, through a multi-professional assessment. This could lead to a statement, or as is the term in Scotland, a record, of that child's needs. If such a statement has been drawn up, and parents have approved of the provision given, the LEA must then provide for that pupil additional resources as seen to be appropriate to meet his or her needs. These resources may be made available in local mainstream schools or in special schools, usually those maintained by the LEA, but sometimes by buying places in out-borough special schools run by other LEAs or by charities or private institutions.

The multi-professional assessments must have reports from a doctor, a psychologist and the child's parents. If at school, then the teachers also adds their report. These reports are all available to the parents who can comment on any of them. The multi-professional team work built into the 1981 Act procedures is a very important feature. It brings together the different views of the child's needs and should help inform the LEA on the best way to meet these needs. Other professionals may have reports of their work with the child and family, eg social workers and therapists. Each child with a statement should have his or her needs reviewed annually. The 1981 Act states that at 13+ every statement must be reassessed to help plan for later school years and beyond.

None of this legislation has been changed by the 1988 Act. The LEAs still need to take full account of their responsibilities for SEN (DES Circular 7/91). Indeed it could be argued that the entitlement aspect has increased:

in both ordinary and special schools practice is most likely to be advanced when all members of staff are committed to the same aims: providing a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum, and raising the standard for each of the pupils they teach. (NCC 1989e)

This curriculum may be modified or, in rare cases, certain parts may be exempted (DES 1989). The principle, however, is that pupils' needs should be met within the National Curriculum by differentiated teaching. This has meant all teachers are encouraged to examine their practices in classroom organisation allowing for group work, pupil autonomy and a variety of teaching approaches. Much of the in-service that relates to SEN also relates to helping teachers adapt their teaching styles to differentiate for the wide range of pupil aptitude, experience and motivation found in mainstream classrooms.

Governors' Responsibilities

Governors have always had a general duty for all pupils in their schools, but the 1981 Act spelt out these in more detail. Governors must ensure that all staff are aware of each child's SEN, make sure the correct provision is made, progress fully monitored and the child's parents are informed. They also have the duty to ensure that the child participates as fully as possible in all aspects of the life of the school.(ACE 1988). There have been fears that under local management, schools might find it increasingly difficult to resource the needs of children with a range of difficulties. This seems to have led to pressure to ask for multi-professional assessments and statements for a larger proportion of pupils. In some LEAs in 1992 the proportion was rising nearer to 4% rather than the preferred 1.5%–2% anticipated in the early period after the 1981 Act was made law.

Support Services and Systems

Some support for pupils with SEN has come from specialised teachers employed by the LEA. Such learning support teams usually visit schools on a weekly basis to teach, assess and advise on pupils with SEN. In the past all this work was aimed at pupils who attended mainstream schools and were not the subject of statements. Gradually as more statemented pupils were integrated, support staff were pulled over to help with these pupils and support for the 18% was eroded. Special school populations have shrunk very little, though a few special schools have released some staff and resources for work as outreach for pupils integrated, especially part time, in local mainstream schools. However the reduction in the special school population is not as great as had been expected. This means LEAs are having to fund both special schools and special support services for mainstream schools.

In 1994 special schools will be given local management status, taking them into the LMS scheme. It still remains to be seen what happens to support services. These support teams, along with the few advisory teachers for SEN, have often been the in-house LEA providers of much special needs INSET. The personnel to deliver INSET in future are being eroded away by present financial management strategies and the cutting back of LEA staffing and budgets.

Changes in In-service for Special Educational Needs

All of these changes in provision for Special Educational Needs have resulted in a greater requirement to train all teachers to provide for a wider range of pupil needs within their classrooms. Integration does not only mean more pupils with SEN are placed in mainstream school buildings, it also means they are placed in classes alongside their age-related peers and expected to gain access to the curriculum being offered. The more severe the child's need, the more the challenge to the teacher to provide the curriculum entitlement for each pupil. Teachers have had to learn to work in different ways, to collaborate with support staff and other professionals, to keep very detailed records of progress and to keep in close contact with parents. Many of these changes have been beneficial to the general practice in schools, and have led to excellent changes in whole-school policies.

The implications for training are clear: every teacher needs some training in this area, and every school needs at least one member of staff designated to co-ordinate policies and practice for Special Educational Needs. Senior management staff also need to be aware of issues related to school organisation and resourcing. It is these designated teachers known as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), for whom the Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools courses were originally designed.

C) The One Term In-service Courses for Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools

In 1983, the government announced the first of the direct grants for INSET which included Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools.(SENIOS) Circular 3/83 stated that the courses were to cover the following topics:

- i) identifying and devising strategies to increase access to pupils 'learning.*
- ii) considering implications for the curriculum of the school as a whole, of the presence of children with a range of special educational needs; and*
- iii) implementing form of appropriate organisation for additional and supplementary help which will give such children access to the full range of the curriculum. DES(1983)*

In 1983, when the first of the ear-marked money became available, I was appointed as the tutor in charge of the one-term course based at the Institute of Education, run jointly by a consortium of four colleges and all interested LEAs from the London region. I held this post for four years, until the funding ceased. During this time, 250 teachers from 25 LEAs took up the places on the 12 cohorts of the course. They came from primary, middle and secondary phases of education and held either senior management posts or were responsible for SEN (See App1ii).

The London course had four interwoven modules, all centered around the school-focussed project (see Diagram 1). Module 1 considered issues about identifying children's individual needs and planning suitable modified programmes of work. A task-analysis approach was used, and gradually this led to a child-study as a piece of assessed work for this module. Module 2 considered a curriculum approach to planning, to include children with SEN in mainstream classes. This section of the course developed as national attention on the curriculum grew. Module 3 was experiential in nature, as it was about how to manage change in schools. It was concerned with consultancy skills and management issues. Module 4 looked at the national and local patterns of provision for children with SEN. This module had its own project. Each course member was required to find out about the provision for SEN in the borough or county in which they worked. This included visits to special schools and interviews with relevant professionals for health and social services as well as education.

Apart from Module 3, which concentrated on LEA services and provisions, the other three modules fed into the school-focussed project which was the main product of the course for assessment (see Diagram 1). The purpose of each project was to enhance the school's ability to meet the Special Educational Needs of all its pupils. (App 1iii).

Diagram 1

THE CONTENT OF THE ONE-TERM COURSE

[FOUR MODULES]

Module 1

IDENTIFICATION
& INTERVENTION
Lectures
Workshops

Module 2

CURRICULUM
Lectures
Seminars
Workshops

Course members
knowledge and skills

Individual or group
discussion on projects

CASE STUDIES
Individual child/group studies
Work with teachers or
professional colleagues

SCHOOL
FOCUSED
PROJECT

Working with
communication skills

SUPPORT SERVICES

LEA Project

Outside speakers
Visits to schools
"Networks" talks

PATTERNS OF PROVISION:
Discussion of current issues
Integration to mainstream
Work with parents
Multi-professional liaison

Module 4

CONSULTANCY
Workshops
Readings
Lectures

Module 3

Original course handout

D) School Focussed Project and Tutorial Work

My colleague, Brahm Norwich, had encouraged me to read a range of literature on evaluation of INSET during my first week in the post. I read through work by Eraut (1972, 1977), Henderson (1978, 1979), and Bolam (1982) and, in particular, the prototype report by Ron Davie of a study in Cardiff University, on which the model of the One Term In-service (OTIS) course had been based: Davie (1980). These references will be more fully discussed later, when I analyse in depth the influences on my thinking about the course structure and subsequent work (chapters two & three). What became clear, however, was that the school-focused project was to become a central feature of the OTIS.

The experience of teaching, in particular tutoring, the teachers on the Institute OTIS course, was a very rewarding and enriching one for me. It appeared to be so also for the majority of those who took part. Each course was only 10 or 11 weeks long. However, during that 10 week period the teacher experienced challenge to change, became free to choose other options and saw ways forward that, in time, could be very significant in terms of career, personal development and even in some cases major life changes. An important part of this process came about through conversations with course tutors during project planning sessions.

I was intrigued to find out what had been happening to individuals, but also what happened at their schools. The rationale behind the course had been to effect change in schools through one person attending the course. This was a high expectation of both person and institution. How far could this be expected to have taken place? If it had, how would it be possible to collect evidence of change? How also could evidence of the process be collected?

Part of the project development required a planned visit by the course tutor and the LEA advisor to the school of each course member. This was to meet the Headteacher and other relevant staff, in order to discuss the focus of the project and to ensure management support. These visits were of great importance to the success of many future developments.

During the course a significant time was given to individual tutorials. Most people were given, on average, 30–40 minutes personal time each week, as well as all the group work which gave them frequent opportunities to talk to each other. In late forms of the course delivery (SENIOS outreach) it has been much harder to justify as much time for tutorials and conversations.

The tutorial took the form of a conversation between teachers and tutor about their project. First it was necessary to decide the focus they wished to use, then where

were they going to start collecting evidence of the "rich picture" of the school organisation out of which they could pick a "problem" area? How were they finding out the views of other members of staff in particular those in management positions? What would they do? What actions would take place? How would they evaluate any changes made and give recommendations for the future? Each project, in fact, was a form of action research.

Many teachers found this a difficult way to work. Most, if they had carried out projects before, had a more experimental design idea in their heads. To help people see that they were part of the process all along and that they needed to reflect on aspects of their own work took time. As they talked to me or other tutors they told us of management and organisational problems. It became clear what could not be done, what constraints they worked under. Part of the process was to "enjoy" constraints and use them positively as limitations which could therefore channel choices into the "do-able" parts of the system.

At this point, The favourite reference from the literature was Georgiades and Phillimore "Myth of the Hero Innovator" (1975). This article reveals something about being the change agent in institutions, which never fails to catch the imagination of the reader and with which the teachers on the course nearly always identified themselves. It warns about being the "hero innovator" who gets "eaten for breakfast".

From these discussions it was possible to cut back the over-ambitious aspects of projects to small and "do-able parts". Rubrics for the course projects became "small is beautiful" and "work with the healthy parts of the system". Much of my guidance at this time was intuitive, but some was also based on reading about change mechanisms and processes.

In the early days of project work, in the tutorial role, I was very much in the position of useful friend. Often I was as out of my depth. Together we had to find a possible solution to the problem they had identified. Some of these were achieved through struggle and even tears, some through courage and often through laughter. The culture of the course encouraged slogans, cartoons and diagrams which pictured the stresses under which people worked. At the end of each cohort's course, an oral presentation section meant everyone was asked to give a 15-20 minute talk telling others what they had done. These talks were the highlight of the course for myself and most of the teachers, once the nervousness of presentation had been overcome. Humorous representations abounded and, because of group dynamics, everyone was supported, even if they felt the offering to be inadequate. It was extremely important to give equal value to a project where the constraints had been enormous but the personal journey had been considerable. Even if outward change had not been possible, inner change was often what was reported.

Follow-up evaluations attempted to tease out the strands related to an important question: whose needs are being met by the courses? The fundamental purpose should be the child's needs, but most of the evaluations found this too complex to examine. The teachers' needs were the most frequently examined and through them their effect on their institution, the school. The LEA should be a facilitator, increasing awareness and effectiveness of school policies. This is explored further in the introductory section to chapter 3.

E) Evaluation and Follow-up: Development of Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools in Harrow and Hillingdon (SENIOSH/H)

Meetings with LEA Advisors

As well as oral evaluations of this kind, there were termly meetings of the LEA Advisors for SEN or the LEAs representative link person, if this was delegated to someone other than the SEN Advisor. These LEA tutor meetings gave another opportunity to evaluate the course. These were largely administrative in nature, but there was a good deal of sharing across LEAs about work done in relation to the course and about follow up. The follow-up was much weaker than it should have been due to LEA shortage of time. Nevertheless it became evident that the effects on schools took time, maybe up to two years, but that often after or during this period there was evidence of the influence of the course work on the school. This is illustrated in the contributions to the 1987, Bedford Way Paper, by LEA advisors (see App liv).

Student course- work and early versions of action research

This type of INSET was seen as a freeing up process in comparison with the older academic type of course which was still going on in the Institutes of Higher Education at Diploma level. In the Institute of Education there was little cross-fertilisation between the year long diploma courses and OTIS. The latter had no accreditation at that time; only its course certificate. It was thought that the effect on schools was reward enough. Gradually over years it has been recognised that the teacher who works in this action research paradigm should be rewarded in a similar way to those who learn traditionally by writing essays and doing exams. The present SENIOS courses are now part of the diploma structure, and credit is given to action research as a valid academic report recording personal learning. It is therefore important that course members see the need to reflect on their own learning, as well as on what they did in school. This process has evolved over the 10 years that the courses have been taught, but arose from the original conception of the course work.

Evaluation procedures built into course structure

The course had many ways on which it was evaluated, so there was a good deal of evidence close in time to the delivery of the taught element. For each of the 12

cohorts, I had collected course evaluation questionnaires which were very thorough and well documented and analysed. These were in a written form (see App 1v) Each cohort had a oral evaluation session at which course members could review their experiences both personal and professional. Each course member was also asked to produce written work in the form of action research, including an evaluation section on their personal learning(App 1vi). Most people were accustomed to the academic essay style of report writing where the use of first person was not encouraged. Over the years of teaching the course I have encouraged and given permission to teacher to use a personal approach. For some, writing the word "I" even when talking about what they had achieved personally, was difficult to do.

Later Developments of the One-Term Course: SENIOSH/H

In 1988, when it was known I was to work in Harrow, the SEN advisor for Hillingdon suggested that I run an OTIS equivalent course for the boroughs of Harrow and Hillingdon, for primary special needs coordinators. The Institute of Education (London) agreed to accredit this course as an outreach version of their own course module.

The funding to LEAs from National Priority, Grant-Related In-service training (GRIST) money was available to those boroughs, but would only have paid for one teacher to attend the one-term course in the year. By running the course locally over a year for half a day a week for 30 weeks, the boroughs could train 6-8 SENCOs a year. As only 9 or 10 had attended the one-term course over four years this was clearly a better way to cover the aim of giving training to every school's SENCO. On the one-a-year basis the task was impossible as the boroughs have between 50-70 primary schools (approx). The funding level for the OTIS course had allowed between 4-6 teachers a year, but this also covered all phases.

The course content was to be essentially the same as OTIS. A similar number of hours was available for the taught component over the whole year as in the original 10 week course. The school-focussed project was still the central feature of the course. The difference was that there was no time in school for project development nor study time, and far less time for tutorial backup. Other differences were related to the local and parochial nature of the delivery, as there were only two boroughs taking part, instead of the average of 12-15 LEAs each term on the London course, which had recruited from primary and secondary phases. However local knowledge of the schools, meant it was easier to appreciate the contexts in which the project was to be developed.(See App 1iii c)

This second set of courses, known as Special Educational Needs In Ordinary Schools Harrow/Hillingdon (SENIOSH/H), incorporated much of the OTIS style evaluation procedures, changed and refined where necessary. As the courses were now taught

over the whole year, from the learners' point of view, they were reflecting on a whole year's work, out of which they had to select the most salient features to write up for their project, and to evaluate their personal learning. Diaries became even more important as a tool of reflection.

I realised how important tutorials were, and in the summer months, I was able to timetable whole sessions for this activity. There was, however, a place for knowledge to be given and skills to be acquired. This was shown in the evaluation data. (see App 1vi).

Emerging research questions

It was clear that the tutorial and project aspects of the course were central to the course members' successful learning. To evaluate the processes of learning which took place on the OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses, it would be necessary to understand what was happening in relation to the project process and its subsequent follow-up.

It would also be interesting to see the links between personal learning and the development of the role of SENCO. What contributed to effective practice? What knowledge and skills were related to the ability to perform their job effectively in their own eyes and the eyes of their Headteachers?

It would also be important to understand which elements in the training courses were of long-term importance for the participants. This becomes more urgent as delivery time is cut back even further, and LEAs have fewer people to support training. The IHEs themselves are working to develop new ways of running and accrediting courses for SEN and need to match academic choices with those seen as essential by schools. In future, the training money will be devolved to schools, which will need to plan its use in relation to their development plans. Because of this, it is becoming more difficult to accommodate the individual teacher's needs.

Enabling organisations were an important element in the success of SEN development. People cannot function in a vacuum. They need to work with colleagues, to be given the resources, time in particular, and sufficient empowerment to do their job well. The LEA might have a role to play in helping schools become more effective in this enabling process. What could LEA personnel do to enhance awareness of the need to develop such policies within a school? It became clear that evaluation of the long-term effects of the courses must include institutional features, and could also look at the role of outside facilitators.

E) Questions for Research

(i) How does the individual teacher acquire the knowledge, confidence and competence which enable them to carry out the role within the school organisation that they hold in relation to Special Educational Needs?

(ii) What features of the school's organisation facilitate this development process, or hinder it? How does this relate to the school's development of a whole school policy for Special Educational Needs ?

(iii) What part does in-service training play in this whole process and does the form of in-service affect the long-term outcomes for both teacher and their school?

(iv) What role do the outside agents, the LEA personnel in particular, play in supporting the individual and school to develop effective Special Educational Needs policies and practices?

(v) How could the action research enhance my personal learning and produce outcomes which could feedback into both tutoring and support aspects of my work?

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter explores the significant ideas from theory and practice in education and psychology which influenced my thinking and decisions regarding the research. These come from four sources.

- A) A Personal Journey: My Career in Education and Psychology including periods of formal study and training;
- B) My Early Experiences and Reading related to Personal Construct Psychology;
- C) The Literature on Action Research;
- D) The Literature on In-service and its Evaluation.

A. A Personal Journey: from Teacher Training to Training Teachers

This is a story of a journey which took nearly forty years. It is a personal account of my own transformation and development, an autobiography, out of which the present research has grown. I make no apology for its personal nature, for if there is one thing of which I have become sure as a result of research, reading and reflection, it is the value of personal meaning. Such meaning has been constructed from various encounters with key ideas from theory, meeting significant people, and from experience while working in schools. It arises within the contexts available to me at any one time, and in that sense is a personal history of my learning from the theory and practice of education and psychology.

Initial Training

I started by training for three years at the Froebel Institute, learning how to teach young children in the Froebel tradition, which though extremely practical, was securely founded in Froebel's philosophy of Education (1826). Froebel, born 1782 in Germany, followed in the footsteps of Pestalozzi in focusing attention on the needs of the very young pre-school child. He developed the idea of the kindergarten as the mediator between home and the school. He also opened the first training college for women in central Europe. He went on to develop an education based on his principles; the most important of these was that "learning succeeds best when undertaken by a searching and self active mind" (p16) "That freedom for children to explore, choose and question can result in responsible actions and that all learning has to start from where the learner is: that sound knowledge of children is the prerequisite for successful teaching."¹

¹ Based on ideas expanded in his work "The Education of Man", cited in Liebschner (1992) but without a complete reference.

Encouraging the curiosity of the developing child was a central theme of the training. This was learnt by student teachers through examining, first hand, our own curiosity, creativity and problem solving abilities while handling materials, exploring nature, dance or literature. By looking at these first hand activities we then came to know how to interpret the various areas of the primary curriculum to the developing child. We also were given sizeable doses of educational, psychological and philosophical theory. But what remains with me, is the child centred approach, using careful observation and interpretation of the developing child as a whole person. Teaching was approached through listening, watching and then guiding the young child through their individual processes of development. Children's play was considered to be one of the origins of their learning. However this was to be guided by the teacher and structured by the planned experiences offered in the classroom.

For those of us in training, this had to be tempered by the necessity of making it all work in large primary classes, in the London area in the post-war 50s when resources were scarce.

Early Teaching

My early teaching experiences brought me into contact with those children who found learning difficult for one reason or another. I was to look for explanations which would yield solutions to the problems these children posed to me as their teacher. I worked with psychologists who used a psychodynamic model based on Freudian theory as an explanation for childrens' problems. Faulty parenting and relationships were often seen as causal factors. The solutions offered included opportunities for free expression of these problems through art, drama and play. I worked with those who took on some of the ideas of early information processing theories developing in psychology. For them, the problems were thought to be based in faults in these processes and could be remedied by paper and pencil exercises practising pieces of the learning I was not entirely satisfied by either of these models. The first, because it was difficult to use in a classroom situation, belonging more in the field of therapy; the second, because it lacked wholeness and could easily become trivial.

During these years I also encountered teachers working in the field of Steiner Education. Rudolf Steiner was a philosopher who developed spiritual science and the study of man, which he called anthroposophy. He asserted that anthroposophy must have the task of providing practical solutions to problems in the world. He responded to the concern of groups of industrialists who wished to put right the social, political and economic problems in Germany after World War I. As he was convinced that such catastrophes were due to faulty and neglected education, a practical outcome was to found a new educational movement (Child 1991). The first Waldorf School, opened in 1919 for children of workers at the Waldorf–Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart.

Steiner was also convinced that the problems in education were primarily a problem of the training of teachers. He wished to found a pedagogy based upon the actual nature of the growing child and not on abstract theories. The education should take account of the threefold nature of man and not rely on a purely intellectual approach to man's thinking.

Steiner education may be best known in Britain for its special schools and for the Camphill communities for handicapped adults. There are also a number of independent Steiner schools which offer the mainstream Waldorf curriculum. I became interested in the Steiner Education movement and read books written by teachers from Waldorf schools in England (Harwood 1958). The holistic nature of the school organisation and curriculum, based as it was on anthroposophy, impressed me.

Ideas about education for the young child, in particular, were to influence my own practice and beliefs as a teacher and later Headteacher. I was convinced that education must nurture the whole child and not damage development by over-emphasis on narrow aspects of the curriculum, often presented too early in the child's life.

Open University studies

In the 1970's my studies became more formal, as I took credits in education and psychology in the Open University. The psychology was divided into social and cognitive courses. Within the social aspects we read of the emerging humanistic psychology; within cognitive studies much was included on Artificial Intelligence and models of thinking and learning. The Open University attempted to keep up with current models of psychology and to reflect the changing paradigms. Bruner (1986) reflects that "by the mid 1970s the social sciences had moved away from their traditional positivist stance towards a more interpretative posture, meaning became the central focus" (p 8).

From a sociological perspective came Berger and Luckman's (1966) 'Social Construction of Reality' and Goffman's (1961) work on institutions. Both were to affect my thinking and make me aware of the need to understand different perspectives. Thinking of the school as an institution came as a shock, but a healthy one for me as a Headteacher. What did a school feel like to a new entrant at 5 years old who had to stay all day? Or for that for that matter, what did the institution feel like to her teacher, who had to cope with 40 such children all day? Skinnerian psychology also flourished, perhaps because it easily translated into a craft technology which was prescribed for teachers to use.

Of the cognitive psychologists, whose focus was on the developing child, Piaget had the greatest effect for those teaching young children. (Piaget & Inhelder 1969). While

Piaget's own work was rather difficult for teachers to understand, other writers following his ideas, such as Margaret Donaldson (1978) and Bryant (1982) had influence on those trying to understand children's thinking processes.

My interest was also caught by those who were looking at learning styles and thinking skills. Because, in my practice, I was working with young pupils who had difficulties in learning, it was important to understand such processes, but to remain aware that individuals differ in their ways of learning. If teachers are not aware of individual differences they may exaggerate or even cause learning difficulties. In particular, the work of Bruner et al (1973) on learning styles, was of significance, as was Pask's work (1976) on thinking strategies.

Training as an Educational Psychologist

I went on to study child development and the tools of the Educational Psychologist as used in assessment. However the dynamic part of that year's work, in 1980, was a growing awareness of the effect of the school itself as a force in education. Researchers were now beginning to ask whether some schools were more effective than others. The reason they had not tackled this question before, probably was because up till that time, it was believed that home and social class influence were the predominant factor influencing educational outcomes. To tease out the various influences on educational outcomes from different homes and schools posed a complex research task. In Britain this type of research began in secondary schools, most notably the ILEA Study '15,000 Hours' (Rutter et al 1979). However at this time research in primary schools had hardly begun.

The focus of my attention began to turn to teachers and what they made of the teaching and learning process and how this operated in the classroom. An important encounter for me was with Feuerstein, the Israeli psychologist and educator who developed his own methods while teaching refugees in Israel, who had returned there after the war. Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment programme attempted to bring out the potential of pupils who had largely missed out on education. Key to the process was the adult as mediator in the thinking and learning process (Sharron 1987)

Tutor to the OTIS course

Working in the special needs field just as it blossomed in the early 1980s, I became part of its culture. We tried to move away from a medical model of handicap, towards an interactive one of seeing the child, the teacher and the school as a triangle of forces which might cause a learning disability. I had studied the child factor for many years, so now it was time to look at school features. It was necessary to look within classrooms, at their organisation and at the teaching method. It was also necessary to return to the teacher herself as the mediator of learning.

By the time I had been tutor to the OTIS courses for four years, my experience of teacher's learning and its relationship with school development was extensive. My observations and conversations gave food for thought and raised my curiosity. I began the search for the ways and means to capture the wealth of experiences which took place each term, with each new group of teachers. I needed a methodology which would capture some of these processes of change but which would be useful in itself to any that took part. As action research was the fundamental model of the OTIS projects, it seemed a logical choice of design for an evaluation research. In a later section of this chapter, I return to action research to review some of the literature about this methodology in education.

B. Early Experiences of Personal Construct Psychology

But first I reflect on another influence on my thinking, which came from Humanistic Psychology. This began with brief encounters within Open University courses, written and directed by Richard Stevens (1976). This emerging field was introduced as a development from the psychodynamic psychology of Freud and later Jung. We were briefly introduced to Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology which lay rather outside these models. Initially this felt to me like a technology rather than a theoretical model, albeit a useful one which allowed the person back into the enquiry of "how people tick".

Salmon's (1985) "Living in Time" and later her book "Psychology for Teachers" were to deepen my thinking about teaching and learning processes in school and classrooms. I was particularly affected by the personal nature of the examples given to illustrate development over time in the lives of adults. Also of significance, was her third metaphor for living which describes and values the story as worthy of study.

To create a life story which is credible, which allows development as well as continuity, which tells a tale with telling – this is the task that – as human beings, we must all attempt. p.147 (Salmon (1985))

I met and heard Diamond talk of his work in teacher training in Australia using Personal Construct Psychology to help teachers in initial training reflect on their own learning. While studying I was also running a school for much of the same period. There were opportunities to see how models from psychology could be used in helping to understand the teaching and learning processes. Reflection on practice and reflection on reading became interwoven. At this time I was introduced to more ideas of Personal Construct Psychology through some open lectures held by the Open University Psychological Society. I invited Maureen Pope to work directly with my staff to develop our curriculum for Religious Education. We began by collecting the constructs of my staff about how religious ideas should be taught and led out from this

into a consensus document. This exercise, though not completely successful, helped us integrate ideas over a difficult area of the curriculum.

Pope and Keen (1981) review the impact of psychology in education and note the move away from psychometric approaches in measuring effectiveness. They note the growing emphasis on the person and their individual opinions. Pope and Keen offered Personal Construct Psychology as an alternative view of reality in relation to Education.

Kelly's psychology of personal constructs is an implementation, he said, of a philosophical assumption he called constructive alternativism. He said that meanings are constructed by humans and that each person has to take responsibility for the conclusion drawn from these meanings. He pointed out that constructive alternativism stresses the importance of events and the meanings ascribed to these in the dimension of time. Kelly's own "clutter of events" converged, he said, into his theory of the psychology of personal constructs; the basic postulate of which is:

A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events. (Kelly 1955)

By continually revising his personal constructs through the process of confirming some and disconfirming others, each person's system is built to accommodate change and make sense of the world. Thus Kelly believed that 'man is his own scientist', forming hypotheses from his constructs which are continually modified in the light of experience.

The bi-polar nature of these constructs is a central tenet of Personal Construct Psychology and is the one that helps distinguish a construct from a concept. Kelly said that:

A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs which are reference axes upon which one may project events in order to make sense of what is going on.

Kelly's theory also said that man's construct systems are hierarchical and are formed by subordinate and superordinate relationships. Kelly did not stop at a theory. He also developed the repertory grid technology to interpret the construct system. The repertory grid attempts to represent the personal space of an individual's meaning map of a particular domain of thinking or feeling, at any given time. (Bannister 1970)

Initially the repertory grid was used for work in clinical therapy set-ups. But since then the technology has been harnessed for a very wide variety of uses. While many of these grew out of Personal Construct Psychology, others divorced the grid from its theory and tried to turn it into little more than a psychometric tool.

Later it became clear that it was important to extend the techniques beyond those of the original repertory grid. One step was suggested by Mair (1970). He thought that a model of enquiry was needed that is patterned on the important features of conversations. Both Mair and Bannister (1970) point out that the reflection to ourselves as well as the exchange with others, is part of conversations. (Thomas & Augstein (1985) take this much further by offering a means of Self-Organised Learning through a conversational methodology.

Thomas & Augstein say that;

Our approach is concerned with developing a technology which can represent personal meaning in ways which enable reflection review and effective transformation of the quality of human experience and performance.p (xxvii)1985.

The repertory grid can offer a content free systematic way in which personal meaning can be collected in an unadulterated manner using the learner's own terms and for their own identified purposes.

A conversation can take place within an individual who observes and analyses his or her own learning, but usually people find this difficult to do without some external facilitator or peer group. Both individuals and groups manage their Learning Conversations better when offered a structure in which to work. Such a structure is offered by the conversational tools of Self- Organised Learning, developed at the Centre for Studies in Human Learning (CSHL).

Early introductions to Personal Construct Psychology through conversations or reading, led eventually to the decision to explore Personal Constructs as a methodology for my own research, which led to the decision to enrol at CSHL and thus have the opportunity to further explore conversational paradigm. Using the conversational approach based on repertory grid techniques offered an interactive and structured way to talk to teachers and understand their motivation and meaning. This tool could combine particularly well with the action research methodology chosen for the research. In the next section of this chapter I will review some of the literature describing action research.

C. The Literature on Action Research

During the mid to late 80s there has been a quiet revolution in the methodology of educational research. This has occurred through the development of the action research methodology which has allowed the teacher practitioner to take his or her part in education research. The fact that there has been a growth industry in in-service education during the same period and in particular in modularised courses many of

which require pieces of research, may be one reason for a parallel growth in action research.

Teachers who are training on the job, in their own time, cannot carry out large scale research, so their studies have to be related to their everyday work. They have to see the rationale of this research as being of relevance to their work place and of meaning to themselves, if they are to invest scarce time and effort in its completion. Educators from Higher Education have played an important part in empowering teacher to take the stance of reflective practitioners and thus empower themselves to be agents of change within their schools (Elliot 1991).

But pragmatic reasons alone are not the only justification of this methodology. The emergence of action research arises also from a parallel shift in the paradigms of psychology itself. The action research movement represents only part of this shift towards allowing more of personal meanings to be examined by psychology.

The study of man and his thinking can be carried out as Bruner (1986) puts it, either "top down or bottom up". He is talking about how psychologists study the "theory of stories, of the mind, of readers and writers" (p.10) but the words he uses could also apply to the study of teaching and education.

He says "Armed with an hypothesis, the top down partisan swoops on this text or that searching for what he hopes will be the right explanation ... it is the way of the social scientist, the scientist in general, but it instils habits of work that risk producing results that are insensitive to the contexts in which they were dug up". He goes on to explain that bottom-up partisans adopt a focused approach, looking at particular pieces of work, and read each text for its meaning.

For the teaching profession in the 1990s there is a great need to hold onto the influences which comes from bottom up. As Diamond (1991) puts it,

... the burden of accountability is to be borne at the bottom because the principle of scientific management and technocratic efficiency emphasise hierarchically-structured, top-down, models of accountability ... power resides in the accountants and not the teachers (p7). ... Teacher education involves the continual transformation of perspective. ... [What is needed is a] counter design at a deeper and more significant level of theorizing about the nature of schooling and education (p1)

Elliot writes (1991)

The action research movement in education is indicative of a transformational tendency in the academic culture of professional training facilities within Higher Education institutions as of a

transformation in the professional culture of teachers (p.48).

He is talking about the need to transform the traditional craft culture of teaching by the development of action research which aims to improve practice rather than produce knowledge" But later he expands this idea by explaining how collaborative reflection empowers teachers to change the systems within which they work.

Thus there are three main forces which have and continue to encourage the action research movement in education. (1) The method is possible to use by busy practitioners, (2) it results in small but meaningful changes in practice and policy and if enthuses energises and empowers those who take part and (3) it is a useful way for groups of teachers to work collaboratively.

Cohen and Marion (1980) describe what they think the principle components of action research should be. Action research projects are small scale interventions in the real world, in which everyone in a situation can participate. They describe two stages - diagnostic, when the problems are identified, and therapeutic when solutions are found. They distinguish between action research and applied research. The latter is attempting to establish relationships and test theories. It usually uses large numbers of cases and works in order to generalise its findings. It does not, however, primarily look to solve problems.

The nature of action research is that it is on the spot, carried out step by step but is closely monitored. A variety of methods for data collection are still available within action research which is there to provide a framework for the work. Personal experience in tutoring hundreds of small scale projects used as course work in the OTIS, SENIOS and Open University special needs courses has made me aware of the value of having a method which allows flexible responses from within a steady structure. I use a mnemonic with students to help them remember and understand this structure. I ask them to remember the 4Rs which are rationale, reading, research and reflection.

By rationale, I mean the process by which they identify the starting point and priority area and their logical report of progress from that point. I expect some reading from sources other than their situational one. This is to broaden horizons and help them to see general issues. In the research section I look for evidence of information from the ground to validate the various stages of the project. This may be data to help analyse the problem, evidence from documents, meetings or interviews or observations. If innovation takes place, then the data shows evidence of this action. This often is in the area of curriculum development, so the data may well consist of lesson plans, resources, observations of pupils at work, possibly on tape or video, worksheets, interviews with pupils or other teachers. Exactly what is collected would depend on

the projects focus. An essential part of any action research is the reflection and monitoring of the process which can result in feedback for those concerned or to a wider audience in the school. For this part of the project, personal diaries are often sources which help the teacher reflect on processes over time. The process needs validation by sharing with others which results in another type of data – that of meeting notes, INSET activities and curriculum or policy planning outcomes. Other teachers' views, including Head teachers, may be sought at this juncture.

The criticism that action research lacks rigour and is not therefore "real" research which is generalisable is taken up by Elliot.

At first, working within the action research methodology feels confusing, specially to those trained in experimental methods which appear so much neater and goal orientated. There is no obvious hypothesis to be tested. The methods used have to be innovative and the results are not easy to predict. However action research has its own rigour, its relentless dynamic, and when used well is a powerful tool for change.

Other forms of research are difficult to disseminate and bring back to the people in the context where they took place. Teachers who take part in large surveys or applied projects often feel devalued. They give information but do not receive much feedback especially feedback of use when they have moved on in time. One of the virtues of action research is that it feeds back as it goes and those in it are fully involved and feel ownership of the material being produced.

McNiff (1988) discusses issues to do with the validity of action research in Education. She questions the positivist approach to research which, because results are rigorously analysed by statistics, are seen as objective, thus automatically giving greater claims for correctness. The challenge to action research is that because it is subjective, it is therefore unreliable and can not be tested for generalisability.

She goes on to argue that action research may claim validity based on a) self validation b) peer validation c) learner validation. The strength, she says, of action research is that it helps individual teachers interpret their own practice and make decisions about improving it. "Such judgements may well make significant contributions to the lives of others" (p133). She also suggests teachers need validation groups. This means engaging in dialogue with others. "Dialogue has its meaning in the mutually dependant questions and answers of persons" (p 135).

Winter (1989) addresses the problem of research into human activities, comparing it to the natural scientists. He examines the positivist optimism towards knowledge. The positivist, he says, desires detachment, large amounts of data and looks for general laws. But he adds "positivist social science researchers can only assume that they are

not being misunderstood and manipulated by those whose activities they claim to describe" (p29).

The action researcher is aware of a moving target, of knowledge which changes and interacts rather than accumulates. Winter argues that it is the specialist researcher's knowledge which is dubious. "The most significant knowledge of educational processes cannot be law-like but will always be intimately related to specific contexts". However, Winter continues to state that there are general problems in order to operate the action research model.

The first of these is finding time, when most professional workers are already overworked. The solution, he thinks, lies in formulating a method of data collection which is sufficiently economical to be undertaken alongside a normal professional work load. The second question concerns newness. How can the researcher see any difference between their ordinary work and their research. The data needs to be specific and differentiated without being too minimal or too elaborate.

The third problem relates to research procedures. These should be easily accessible to those who use them and should help build on their competence. To make action research worthwhile it also must be rigorous. For Winter this means not falling into the trap of taking a positivist stance. The questions relate to whether or not the action has resulted in participants going beyond their original assumptions and beliefs. In a word has anything changed?

Both Winter (1989) and Elliot (1989) are aware of the threats to researchers who are insiders in their organisations. Elliot gives useful guidelines to help would be action researchers overcome some of these dilemmas. They are to do with understanding other perspectives, roles and responsibilities, about having intentions and going about the work in a thoughtful way. Many of these tips for would-be teacher researchers have formed part of the course content of the SENIOS courses. These elements were labelled consultancy and were often taught through role play and drama. Experiencing what others might feel like gave insights which led to dealing with problems more carefully in the future.

A Reflection on the Interaction between Theory and Practice in Education and Psychology

Psychological and other theoretical ideas eventually filter into the teaching world through initial or in-service training. When this happens the original theoretical basis is often watered down and leaves a methodology of action behind it. This results in the teacher as a craftsperson who carries out the activity at various levels of skill but who, when challenged for rationale, may be at a loss to justify his or her methods other than from personal conviction that "it works". Elliot (1992) devotes chapter 3 in

his book on action research to the theory – practice problem .

He examines the threat which theory presents to teachers. One of the reasons he thinks, is that theory comes from outsiders who appear or are powerful. Another reason is that;–

the knowledge generated is couched in the form of generalities about teachers practices ... which implies that the experience of teachers operating in particular circumstances is not an adequate basis on which to generate professional knowledge. (p46)

To offset this disabling effect the teacher needs to remain curious and ask questions about the underlying theoretical models being suggested. When these are understood then they can truly underpin her practice. Understanding the theoretical models of the learning processes needs time and motivation. Effective in–service courses need to address these issues by starting with the teacher’s questions and leading out into extensions that are relevant to their situations.

My own research would use conversational tools as a sensitive way to learn how Special Educational Needs co–ordinators became able to carry out their role in their schools. It would also evaluate the effectiveness of one particular piece of INSET aiming to help teachers and schools cope better with SEN. Before beginning I also wished to review the relevant research into in–service evaluation, to find models and ideas to build on.

D. Investigations into the INSET Literature and its Evaluation

Early investigations into the INSET literature were made by the course organisers of OTIS to search for models from the wider INSET field on which to build the structure for the new courses (Cowne & Norwich 1987). Much of this literature refers to the weak impact of INSET delivered by traditional courses on school practice. The James Report (DES 1972) had outlined three levels of teacher training which they advised should be an entitlement for all teachers. These were initial, induction and in–service training. Much of this report was not fully implemented, but there was an attempt to set up induction courses for newly trained teachers and to increase INSET available for practising teachers. The in–service BEd was made available. Teachers increasingly began to see INSET as a way of improving professional competence.

Henderson (1979) explored the virtues of school-based and school-focussed INSET. He thought that the first might favour the needs of the organisation rather than the individual. School-focussed in–service had a potential for allowing for improvements in teaching and learning in the classroom and for helping individual teachers. Training was beginning to be seen as a way of meeting school development needs. As

a first step towards this, schools needed to develop ways of identifying both personal and institutional needs and focussing on priorities that could be met by training opportunities. Identifying needs was a complex task requiring time and, if not efficient, resulted in many ill-matched courses seen as trivial or irrelevant by course attenders. Alexander (1980) proposed a four dimensional framework for provision of professional training based on four critical questions:

- (1) Whose needs were being met FOCUS
- (2) Who would make decisions about form and content CONTROL
- (3) What character would the activity have MODE
- (4) Where would the activity take place LOCATION

Joyce & Showers (1980) devised a model based on four levels of impact and five components of training. These components were:

- i) theory presentation
- ii) skill description
- iii) modelling
- iv) simulated practice
- v) open ended performance feedback and coaching

Of these, the last four are rarely available as training opportunities. In planning the OTIS we would attempt to include all these components.

Eraut (1972) describes four levels of INSET discourse. These are:

- (1) Information Dissemination: awareness applied to questions at a factual level.
- (2) Problem Awareness: definition of curricular and other problems in schools.
- (3) Problem Study: extensive analysis of problems in courses and procedures.
- (4) Problem Solution: seeking to put into operation viable solutions.

Eraut's four levels were to become foundation models for the work of the OTIS and SENIOS courses. The process of the courses was aimed at reaching all levels at one time or another. Central to these processes was the school focussed study which led into problem awareness, analysis and solution.

Evaluation Issues

Evaluation of INSET will clearly need to relate to the purposes for which it was designed. As Eraut (1982) points out, one of the problems that has beset effective INSET evaluation is a mismatch between design purposes and the focus of evaluation judgements. The worst of these matches arises when academic courses are judged by effects in classrooms. Eraut identified three contexts for in-service,

- 1)The academic context
- 2)The school context
- 3)The classroom context.

The academic context expects teachers to come to grips with broad theoretical ideas,

often couched in specialist language. It was usually evaluated through written outcomes, through essays or exams.

The school context, on the other hand is focussed on curriculum or policy development, validated in public by successful changes to practice or policy. Its success often demands consultancy and personal skills. This is evaluated through evidence of change in policy or practice in the participant's school.

The classroom context, least served by INSET, expects changes in classroom teaching methods or management, and successful learning outcomes for pupils. Eraut makes a comparison with actors and musicians learning to master their art form. He, like Joyce and Showers (1980), points out the lack of sustained work on this master craft performer approach. He points out that teachers careers do not advance through mastery of their craft and adds that they are not helped because they do not "watch the game only listen to the commentary". However the question of where the master craft performer enters the scene is not necessarily answered by this model. Teachers rarely watch others teach nor are they given many opportunities to examine the detail needed to improve their classroom performance. There is little or no time for this approach, even at initial teacher training.

The major studies of school effectiveness tried to answer some of the questions about effective teaching. The Bennett Studies of 1976 and 1984 looked closely at the relationship between teacher style and pupil progress. In particular the latter examined the mismatch for the majority of pupils. The Galton and Simon (1980) ORACLE project analyses a detailed variety of interacting styles in an attempt to find what was most effective. Mixed economies fared best, they concluded. Such quantitative research approaches have been important in highlighting the wide variety of classroom practices, but it is doubtful whether such studies change teacher's practice in any way, as the results are difficult to transfer back to the practitioner.

The use of the advisory teacher as a 'master craftsman' in teaching grew up with the Education Support Grant, curriculum appointments (DES 1982). Since the National Curriculum is now largely seen as being in place, this funding is being withdrawn. SENCOs and support staff, when working collaboratively in the classroom, can often assist to feed in new ideas and generally give support to both teacher and school. The OTIS courses set out to develop the role of the SENCO to act at both school and classroom level, to enhance classroom practice. It was also seen as essential that course members should be given theoretical underpinning of knowledge related to their field. This increased their credibility with colleagues, and their own confidence to help others.

The three contexts which Eraut outlined were thus tied together in the OTIS delivery in

order to give increase in competencies, confidence and credibility while also dealing with the four discourse levels mentioned earlier. Therefore to evaluate the OTIS courses it is necessary not only to judge written outcomes, school development and classroom competence but also to evaluate personal factors of growing confidence, self-esteem and increased credibility with colleagues.

Whose needs are being met ?

This question continually arises when working in the special needs field. As Galloway (1989) puts it "The needs of children and teachers are interlinked" "While the rhetoric of Special Educational Needs gives prominence to the needs of the child, this seldom withstands close inspection." Often stating that the child has special needs diverts attention from the teacher's needs, he argues, so children's needs cannot be seen in isolation from those of teachers. But then who will define teacher's needs?

The emphasis on the interactive model of SEN (Wedell 1985) certainly threw this teacher need into high profile. If, as Galloway (1985) proposes, a possible definition of special needs pupils is "those children who cause teachers stress", clearly supporting teachers will in the end help children. The swing away from seeing the need as 'within the child' puts the spotlight on the teacher, the curriculum and the school as potential causes of need. Therefore training should address these issues. If then, the ultimate criterion of the successful training is to investigate whether needs of children are met, part of this investigation must concern teacher needs. To change teachers' strategies and techniques of classroom organisation and management requires their active participation. They need to identify a piece of their own behaviour that they wish to change and have help and support in monitoring this process. Some projects within courses aim to do this and their success can be evaluated by teachers and their own colleagues, if given time, an example of the effective use of action research .

National monitoring of INSET

In the 1980s with huge expansion of INSET the DES itself began to ask questions about monitoring and evaluation (DES 1986). As Bridges (1989) writes, there is a difference between administrative monitoring and professional evaluation. The former usually consists of data collection about planning numbers, budget, and attendance The latter may concern itself with customer satisfaction. It is very unlikely that LEAs or schools will have time for full professional evaluation which would look at long-term outcomes over time. This time delay, typically over one or two years, between input and outcome in itself makes full evaluation of course outcomes very complex. By the time two years has passed the causation for any observable changes are multiple.

The LEA Training Grant Schemes (LEATGS) have been heavily monitored from the

administrative aspect through use of the grants, systems of management and the amount of variety and content of training on offer but, for professional evaluation, teachers' own testimony is needed. The external consultant has a part to play in helping this process. As McBride puts it (1989) "For INSET to be effective as professional development it has to deal in some sense with the concerns and interests of teachers – teachers have to take an active part in their own development." (p188)

Summary of Discussion

I will attempt to summarise the issues raised in the discussion so far. INSET delivery has developed in the last decade from largely academic context, to include school contexts. Attempts to cater for the classroom context have been made, but at a much less intense level. The best of the appraisal schemes could include this context. There has been an increasing awareness of the necessity of involving teachers witness of their own experiences as part of the evaluation process on a professional level. This has resulted in a growth of the use of action research as part of INSET evaluation.

Much data about INSET collected by national and local government is largely of an administrative nature. Other evaluation data is about customer satisfaction at the time of course delivery. While this is useful feedback to course organisers, it does not collect evidence or prove there will be any long-term effects.

The last decade has also seen a growth in school self-evaluation. There would seem to be a link to be made between this and in-service. In large scale school effectiveness research, feedback to practitioners is problematic (Ridell & Brown 1991). LEAs have greatly improved their monitoring and evaluation systems since the 1988 Act, so perhaps such links will begin to be seen in the future (Gray et al 1991).

Quantitative methodology was used by the ILEA Junior School Study (Mortimore et al 1988) to tease out features of home and school influence on pupil progress. This study was able to identify features which made some schools more effective than others. A parallel study in London Infants schools (Tizard et al 1988) used a mixture of observation and survey methods to look at what effects schools had on young children.

All these primary studies find it is the quality of teacher interaction with pupils that makes a significant difference (Gipps 1992). Feedback to schools from such research findings, however significant, is limited. The problem remains of how to help teachers improve their own classroom management and practice by giving them time and opportunities for deeper reflection on their own practices. Findings from large scale research has only a limited use in such discussions.

Even when there is a perceived change in teachers practice or school policy, it is

difficult to tease out the various potential interactive causes of that change. INSET often takes time (one or two years) to take effect, so multiple interactions will have occurred during that time. The only way that it may be possible to find out which was significant would be to ask the teachers themselves.

INSET activities vary in their levels of purpose, content and focus. This should be taken into account in their evaluation. Course organisers need to state clearly intended outcomes at the planning stage, then at least these outcomes can be evaluated. Unintended outcomes may also be observed and noted.

After care and follow up of INSET is very limited, although evidence from personal experience tells me that it is often at this stage, some months from the course delivery that teachers report effects in their teaching and practice. It was for this reason that follow up meetings, a term later, were built into the OTIS course evaluation procedures. Such early evaluation studies and procedures used by the OTIS/SENIOSH/H course tutors are described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Final Reflection

This review of my personal learning through Education and Psychology, combined with recent reading about action research and possible models of evaluation of in-service, has led me to decisions about both the issues to be explored in my research, and the choice of methodology to do this. My own life has taught me how theory and practice interweave, so an action research methodology seemed suitable for an evaluation study, where the research will be able to feedback into practice. The conversational science of Self - Organised Learning then can also become an integral part of such a design because it provides the opportunity to explore personal meaning.

The following issues serve to elaborate and refine the emerging questions listed at the end of chapter one, (p15):

1) The interaction of theory with practice in teacher education :the importance of giving teachers opportunities to reflect on personal learning in order to plan future action;

2) The importance of taking a developmental approach to understanding how teachers cope with changes in practice, resulting from changes in policy. Recognition of time, as an important factor in such developments.

3) The recognition that the development of Special Educational Needs policies, interacts with other in-service, and may be an integrated part of developing whole school effectiveness.

Chapter 3

Design for Evaluation and Action Research

This chapter begins by reviewing earlier evaluation studies of the OTIS courses and evaluation methods built into the course structure. The methodology of these is discussed as a general background leading to decisions about the design methods for the present research, which are then described in the main section of the chapter, organised as follows,

- A) Introduction: Early Evaluation Studies of OTIS
- B) Action Research Design.
- C) The Selection of Teachers and Schools for this Research.
- D) The Learning Conversations, using the Repertory Grid.

A) Introduction: Early Evaluation Studies of OTIS

Masters Students' Reports

The first year of the OTIS work was followed up and reported as part of a Master's course report. (Stubbs, 1984) Another Masters student, Rowberry, (1987) carried out a follow-up study of ten course members from the 5th – 9th cohorts. In both these studies the school-focussed projects were found to be instrumental in the qualitative change in schools.

Those course members' projects, followed by the second Masters student, had as a common theme an interest in children with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Her conclusions were that,

The OTIS course was seen as a successful change agent, to the degree in which it was used by all levels in cooperative effort, the LEA, the school, the providers of the course and the course members.

Rowberry states that she chose to use an illuminative style of evaluation, drawing on a model proposed by Parlett & Hamilton (1972). They say the *evaluator's task is to unravel the complex scene he encounters, isolate its significant features, delineate cycles of cause and effect; and comprehend relationships between organisational pattern and responses of individuals.*

As the primary objective for the OTIS and the later SENIOSH/H courses was innovation, any evaluation study must also ask questions about change. Did change take place in the individual's ways of working or in her organisation; how much of it was intended, and what facilitated or hindered the process?

innovative nature of the course. These projects must be assessed by their own individual aims and objectives and the degree to which these have been met.

What we seek is evidence of change in the desired direction and that the change be sustained and far reaching.

She also asks about the relationship between LEAs and the course provision, and "To what extent do schools, teachers and children benefit from this type of INSET?"

The Cardiff Study

These findings echoed those of the earlier study of a course run by Cardiff University on which the OTIS course had been based (Davie, 1980). This course aimed, not just to enhance the professional development of the participating teachers, but at institutional changes within the schools. Thus participating teachers were seen as change agents. The Cardiff course also had, as its central feature, a school-based project, which focussed on features of school life relevant to learning or behavioural problems. Davie et al (1983), in their evaluation study, proposed a model to explain the change relationships. (See diagram 2).

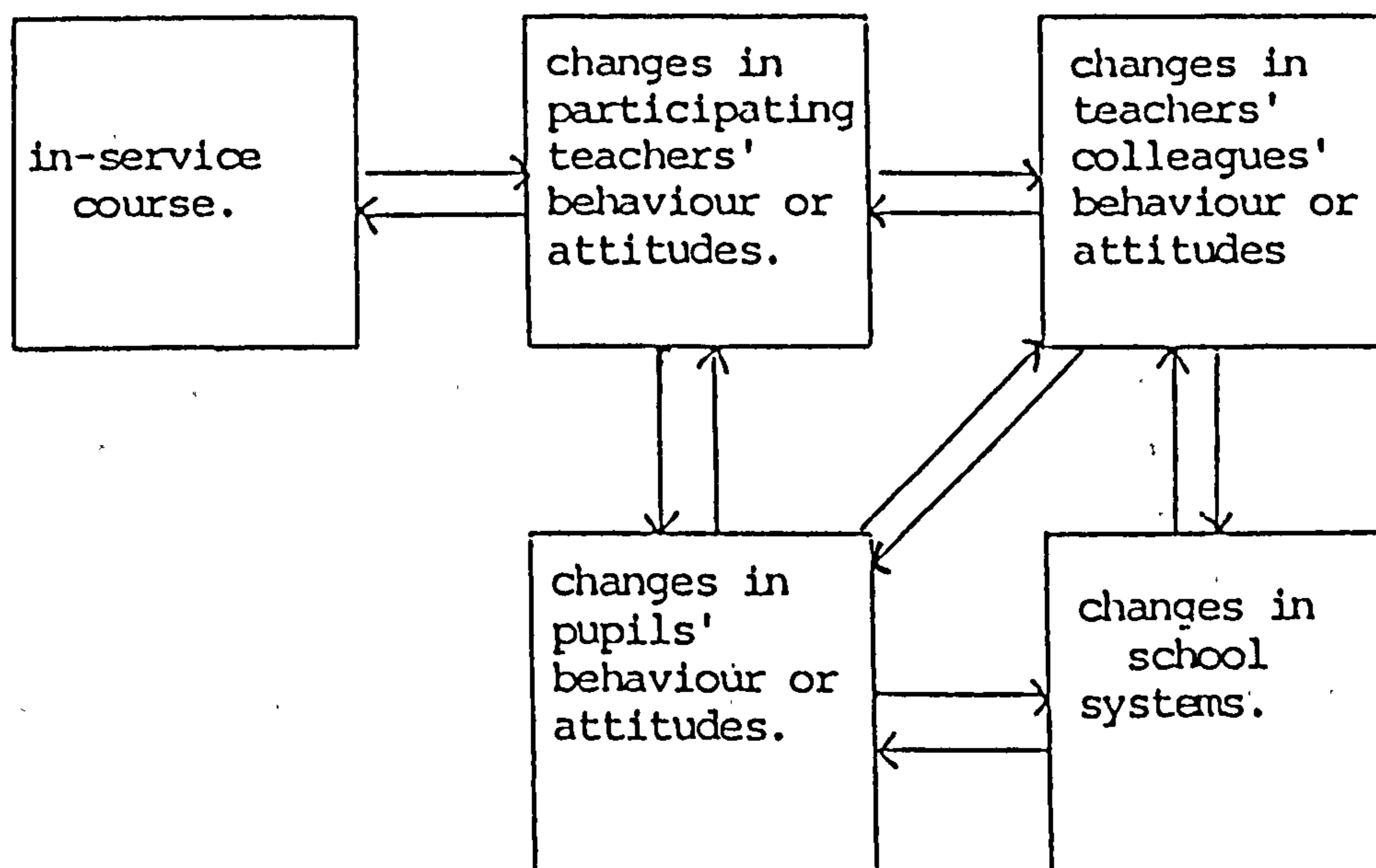


Diagram 2: Change Relationships in the Cardiff course.

Both Davie and Rowberry collected data from course members, their headteachers, and other members of school staff. Davie asked questions about changes in organisation, attitude of pupils and attendance figures. Rowberry sent a questionnaire to her sample schools, on which she based her semi-structured interview.

Lessons in Partnership (Cowne & Norwich, 1987)

In 1985, the course providers of the London course, known as OTIS, had contributed a paper to the national National Council for Special Education (NCSE) conference (Nottingham 1985). As a fuller follow-up of the ideas put forward in that paper, a longer monograph was planned. This set out to follow up the first four cohorts of the OTIS course and to include written contributions from course members, their Headteachers and LEA advisers. The paper was published in 1987 in the Bedford Way series and was entitled "Lessons in Partnership" (Cowne & Norwich, 1987).

One of the concluding paragraphs of Chapter 6 of that study states:-

For many course members the experience of re-evaluating their own educational practice and philosophy has been a memorable and in some cases quite stressful experience. The course gives everyone some time to reflect and review their role in relation to the existing context of their work. Most course members relate how valuable this has been. What seems to be important is that this time is structured and that teachers work within the groups of professional peers from diverse settings.

Cowne & Norwich 1987 p75.

We found that the Headteacher - course member relationship was a critical factor in determining whether changes occurred in schools.

We said "experience of OTIS has confirmed that there can be tensions between the different levels of decision making as it bears on the goals of the school project. These are most likely to affect the outcome of a project when different parties have well-established and divergent conceptions of what is needed" (*ibid*, p.77).

There was an expectation that the one-term courses would prepare teachers to take on the role of special needs co-ordinator or "designated teacher" as envisaged in the ACSET report (1984). This role would include: the identification of pupils with SEN; planning of programmes of intervention; organisation of further help as necessary.

In primary schools this role would be shared between the SENCO and Headteacher or Deputy but it was recognised in the white paper "Better Schools" (DES 1985) that every ordinary school should have such a teacher with responsibility for SEN. How realistic a goal this was in terms of training, is an interesting question, considering the funding allowed at most about six to eight people a year from an LEA. The goal of the SENCO in every school probably has become a reality. Certainly in those boroughs in which I have worked that is now the case and has been for the last 5 or 6 years. How much the one-term courses made this possible is difficult to assess. Certainly the involvement of the LEA advisors in the course should have contributed to their expectation of training someone in every school in the long run.

The Northampton Conference

Another opportunity to evaluate the earlier stages of the one term courses came when the HMI called a conference, in Northampton in March 1985, for college tutors who were running or planning one-term SENIOS courses. 21 HEs were represented. Some of these were thinking of setting up one term courses. Others were running between one to three a year. The London group consortium of the Institute and three other colleges ran three cohorts a year. By 1985 one of the London Consortium of colleges had dropped out and the input from one other was low. Some of the courses, notably Manchester, had the LEA built into course delivery as well as tutoring. Their "after care" was also noticeably better than most. Newcastle had begun to use the one term course as a module for a Diploma.

The Northampton conference was called to share information and views about running such courses. It also informed the two HMI present of their content, processes and progress. These HMI were to influence decisions about the continuation of future funding for these courses. Of the two LEA representatives present, one was the Advisor for SEN for Hillingdon. Ann Hodgson from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) also contributed, explaining her research which was to follow up 3 courses and their impact on schools, (later published by Hegarty and Moses 1988).

This conference raised a number of issues, but one which clearly emerged was the role of the LEA as both partner and customer of the colleges. Just how far should the course be tailored to meet LEA needs? When a single LEA was the customer for a course it was likely that the course priorities would reflect those of the LEA advisor. This was to happen in Kent with the course set up at Canterbury.

The London course worked with up to 25 LEAs over the years, and so had to balance the potential pressures from LEAs with the core principles in the course. By using the school-focussed project as the core feature it was hoped to meet school needs as a priority. However recruitment and selection of course members was largely the LEAs responsibility and, as we were to discover, their policies over this were important in the long term outcomes. One other of the courses chosen for evaluation by the NFER was the Bristol course. This evaluation was later reported in greater detail in part three of the Hegarty and Moses study (1988).

NFER Report

Hegarty & Moses (1988) devoted part two of their review of INSET for Special Educational Needs training, to the one-term 3/83 funded courses. That circular had specified four priority areas of which Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools was one. Courses required at least twenty days attendance and were aimed at "teachers

who have or would be taking up responsibilities for children with Special Educational Needs in primary or secondary schools." They should be designed in close consultation with participating local authorities.

This first circular covered 1983–4 and was repeated for 1985. The LEATGS scheme in 1986 continued to fund similar courses. There were 15 courses eligible in circular 3/83 of which the London based consortium known as "OTIS" was one of the largest. The NFER study was part of the larger DES research project to see what support LEAs needed to implement the 1981 Act.

The reason given for including the one term courses as part of the study were that ; *they were part of a major government initiative to intervene in in-service training and steer it in set directions.They also entailed an unusual degree of co-operation between local authorities and training institutions and in certain respects shifted the balance of power between them for responsibility for training provision (p73)*

The most significant difference was, as mentioned above, that they set out to help change within schools.

The remaining part of section two of the NFER report describes information collected from three (later four) courses which included the OTIS. Information included documentation of the courses, interviews with the course providers and course candidates and local authority co-ordinators. Data was also collected at a number of conferences and meetings concerning the one-term courses.

This NFER research study is largely descriptive of course content and organisation, including recruitment, but it also describes course evaluation briefly. Questionnaires given to course members and feedback from their Headteachers are mentioned as usual methods of evaluation as was an external observation from an HMI or other independent evaluator. The NFER Research study includes a short chapter on the impact on schools. This was based on a follow up study of selected course members including a sample from the OTIS course.

Findings of NFER follow up study

This study found that there was a consensus of opinion that attending the course had increased participants' knowledge and competence regarding pupils with SEN. This led to these teachers "being able to advise colleagues on all matters concerning these pupils" (p92). There was a stated increased awareness of pupils with SEN by colleagues. Colleagues reported that since the teacher attended the course there was a more supportive atmosphere in the school".

Many schools reported changes in policy development in such areas as communication and pupil support. The research also reported factors which were significant in the

success of school changes. These included the role of the course member in relationship to the Head and senior management. The choice of course member and project were also mentioned as significant. The course member had to be receptive to new ideas and the Heads involvement in supporting the on going nature of the work was seen as a significant factor.

In-built Course Evaluation

Questionnaires and oral review sessions held at the end of each term gave an opportunity to explore the course members' thoughts and feelings not only about their learning of the content but also of the processes that had led to the learning. A good deal of this was related to their growing confidence and a feeling of being able to articulate their ideas. Experience on the course, interaction with each others, over topics relating to their role as SENCO was clearly very important, as was shown in the course evaluation data (see App 3 i).

In the last term of the course each teacher gave a 10 minute talk about her project to the group. This also helped their ability to pick out the salient features which had been or were to be further developed in their schoolwork. The internal constraints which occur in managing change and schools were also discussed. On the last day of the course a group conversation was organised to evaluate the learning content and process. (See App 3 iv)

B. Action Research Design

These early experiences of examining the effectiveness of the OTIS courses at all levels of organisation, were to influence decisions about the methodology for this research. Data collected so far, told much about the short-term effects of this type of training experience, but only a little of the processes of change afterwards in schools. Furthermore, it was too simplistic to imagine that the course alone would be the only instrument of change, especially in the fast moving world of education. What would be needed was a way of looking at the whole pattern of interwoven influences on the individual and their institution.

It seemed that the only meaningful and possible way to unravel this would be to allow each person, to select for themselves, those events which they felt had been most influential for them. Then, by holding a conversation which helped them to reflect on their learning, a fuller picture would emerge.

The overall methodology chosen for this study was one of action research. This followed naturally from the methods used in course projects and tutorials. Action research follows the principle that the researcher would be able to reflect on and feedback outcomes to the domain of their own work. I also wished the research itself to act as a further learning experience for all who took part. Using the action research

model meant that after each cycle of activity there would follow a reflection on the findings and outcomes. These would feed forward into the next cycle of the research and into my daily work, where appropriate.

The data collection, for the action research, would use as its main methodology, the Learning Conversational techniques developed by CSHL. In particular the repertory grid, using FOCUS, a grid reflection procedure, would be the basis for guiding the Learning Conversation. This approach allows the researcher to assume a coaching role to help the person to reflect on her own learning processes. Once the conversation has been structured by the grid techniques of elicitation and feedback, it is possible to go beyond the grid to further explore the domain chosen for the conversation.

This method is more helpful to the client than answering a questionnaire or taking part in a structured or semi-structured interview. This is because this tool is content free yet provides structure, for those taking part, to explore the various dimensions of their thinking and feeling at their own pace and under their own control.

The grid offers a

systematic two-level space in which the personal meaning of the client can be collected, unadulterated by any need to simplify or translate it into common standardised language. (Thomas & Augstein, 1985: p.18)

The limitations of adhering too rigidly to a technique are reduced, if the grid is used as a 'starter pack' for further more loosely structured, free flowing conversations which allow further exploration of the chosen topic. This is particularly important when incorporating the research conversations into the practices of everyday conversations, makes Learning Conversational tools particularly appropriate for action research.

When the research began I was working in the London Borough of Harrow, and in close collaboration with the London Borough of Hillingdon, in running the new SENIOSH/H course. It was appropriate and feasible to use samples of schools from the OTIS cohorts and the SENIOSH/H course, from each of these Boroughs.

Because all the previous studies of OTIS and similar courses had shown the significance of Headteacher support, it was decided in each case to include the Headteacher of each school taking part in the research. Where possible another significant member of staff was to be included, usually the Deputy Head. The original design was to include four schools from each borough, two who had sent teachers to the OTIS, and two currently taking part in the present SENIOSH/H initiative. As the first cycle of the research came to an end, I moved to a new post in the London borough of Merton, which gave an opportunity to include four further schools

Table 1
Original Design for Phase one: 1989-91*

Borough 1	Advisor	Borough 2	Advisor
School S	CM OTIS Head Other	School T	CM OTIS Head Other
School U	CM SENIOSH/H Head Other	School V	CM SENIOSH/H Head Other
School W	CM OTIS Head Other	School X	CM OTIS Head Other
School Y	CM SENIOSH/H Head Other	School Z	CM SENIOSH/H Head Other

*A second phase was added, with four further schools, in a third borough, in 1991-2

Individual Learning Conversations

Each course member described the most significant events which they thought had helped them learn to carry out their role as SENCOs. My role would be to manage the reflective process by using the repertory grid and using Self- Organised-Learning procedures developed by the Centre for Studies of Human Learning.

Similar conversations would take place with Heads and others in each school. These would have two purposes: to add to the picture already given by their teacher who had been on the course, and to explore their own philosophy, beliefs and actions in relation to Special Educational Needs. Conversations would be recorded in two ways; through the use of the printouts of the SPACEd FOCUSed grids, or other choices given in the CSHL software, and through tape recordings of the whole conversation. In this way it would be possible to reflect and relive all the research interaction.

Group Learning Conversations

Once the individual conversations were complete, I intended to hold group conversations between the three or, in a few cases, four members of each school who had taken part, given that each agreed. This gave an opportunity to look at consensus or variety of views of the significant policy makers for SEN in each school, and to discuss future action.

Conversations with LEA Staff

To reflect the LEA level and its influence on schools, I also planned to hold conversations with those advisors, who were most involved in the organisation and policy making for SEN and SEN INSET, in the three boroughs in which the research took place.

The awareness raising process which could thus take place for individuals and schools taking part in the research was important. It should not be felt that I was doing something to them which was only of value to myself. There should be a real reward for those taking part in terms of their evaluation of their learning processes and a possibility of using the outcomes of the group meeting for future development of school policy.

Action research aims to help those doing it to change their practice as each cycle and the reflection on key findings deepens understanding. In my various roles of tutor, advisory teacher, policy maker and researcher, I would expand my own learning. To record this process, I planned to hold a series of reflective Learning Conversations with myself. The outcome of these reflections would enable me to choose the future direction of my work. The recording of this process is in itself a form of validation and a sharing with my professional audience. By the second phase of the research I was able to use the action research with the Merton schools.

C) Selection of Teachers and Schools for the Research

The First Phase

The Harrow sample

During the four years of the OTIS course at the London Institute, Harrow sent nine teachers who completed the course. They were all from the primary sector. The majority held the post of SENCO. in their First or First and Middle schools. In deciding which course members to select for the research, two criteria were used. Firstly, the teacher was still to be in post in her original school and secondly the same Head teacher was also to be in post in that school.(see App 3iii a) These criteria were met by School W which also sent a further teacher for training on the SENIOSH/H course in the second cohort. This school was chosen as one of the main case studies to be described in Chapter 5. The two course members, Head (retired) and Deputy (became Head) all took part .

The next OTIS cohort included two Harrow teachers, one of whom was now on long term sick leave and the other was still in post in her original school with the original Head. This second School (Y), is the other complete case study from Harrow. Learning conversations were held with the course members, the Head and Deputy and the other full time special needs teacher. These two schools gave

opportunities to evaluate the long-term effects of the course on the course members and their schools.

The remaining sample came from the later SENIOSH/H cohort and looked at more immediate learning from the course and the processes of applying knowledge and skills in the first year after the course finished.

Harrow's Selection for the OTIS and Borough Support

The SEN Advisor from Harrow chose to use the OTIS course only for the primary sector. She believed that S.E.N.C.Os for High Schools should attend full year courses which at that time were still available. This led to her decision to limit the new SENIOSH/H courses to the primary sector.

The four way tutorial conversations to clarify the OTIS projects, held by LEA tutor and Institute tutor with the Head teacher in the school, were all important. As Institute tutor, I took part in the first two cohorts for Harrow and after that date the work was shared out amongst Institute staff. Choosing the earlier case studies to evaluate, meant I had continuity with these schools and their staff and could use the action research as part of my regular support for these schools.

The Hillingdon Sample

Hillingdon sent 16 teachers to the London OTIS course between 1984–1987. Of these 10 were from primary schools and 6 from secondary schools. By the time this research study had begun it had been decided to sample only primary schools in order to make comparisons with the new SENIOSH /H courses. The criteria for choosing which teachers to interview was the same as Harrow: the teacher should still be in post in the same school and if possible with the same headteacher. (see App 3 iii b)

Of the 1984 group two primary teachers were still in post and one was selected for the research study. Neither of the 1985 group were still in the same school nor were the 1986 group. There was one other possible teacher in the 1987 group. With hindsight these three should all have been selected. At the time of the new course starting it seemed likely that more choice would arise for the new cohorts.

It seemed unlikely that there could be so much movement of staff in the newer sample. In fact this proved wrong, as Hillingdon went through difficult times and lost a very large number of experienced staff to other LEAs. By 1987 it was difficult to find anyone of the many SENCOS trained in the OTIS or equivalent courses still in post in the same borough, let alone in the same school.

This was a great loss to Hillingdon as the LEA advisor/tutor had been one of the best of the 25 LEAs taking part in the OTIS. She had selected carefully for both the Head

teacher support and the course members' enthusiasm. She had supported their projects and helped in the consultancy needs within the schools. She also set up training sessions and precourse follow-up to such courses. During 1986 almost all the boroughs SENCOs had the opportunity to attend a substantial course of SEN or at least had attended a significant amount of in-house training in the borough. The second teacher chosen was from the first SENIOSH/H cohort, matching one from Harrow. The last Hillingdon school chosen for the study was one of the final and third cohorts. Because my work in Hillingdon was limited to tutoring the courses, feedback into my work from the action research was limited to feedback into course delivery and design.

The second phase

The Merton sample

Events led to a change of job for me which gave an opportunity to include a third borough and four more schools. Merton had chosen to use the OTIS course to train their Middle school teachers, and had sent someone from every Middle school. There was a great deal of stability in Merton, so it was possible to select these four from a possible group of six still in post and with the same Headteacher. (see App 3 iii c)

Merton Middle schools, at that time were for pupils aged 9–13 yrs, thus taking in the first two years of the secondary curriculum. They were large schools taking pupils from a wide variety of primary schools across the borough. Course members were usually SENCOs, but in some cases a year head had been chosen as a more suitable candidate. This choice had been made jointly by the Headteacher and the borough tutor, the then Head of Service for the Learning Support team, who had been given this responsibility as there was no Inspector for SEN. A good deal of care was taken in both the choice of teacher, and the follow up work in developing the projects. I had worked closely with Maria, as the LEA's link tutor, so there was continuity between the OTIS course and my action research. This meant I was in a good position to help schools with their current development, as well as evaluating past effects. This is more fully discussed in chapter 6.

D). The Learning Conversations, using the Repertory Grid

I had had few experiences of using the repertory grid, developed originally from George Kelly's work. One of these had been when my colleague, running the OTIS course, had used the tool as an evaluation method in the early OTIS cohorts. This was not initially a happy experience for the course members, because they were given no choice about participating, and the domain of the study was imposed on them. It was necessary therefore to find a way of using the repertory grid which allowed sufficient flexibility and continued to give those participating a maximum degree of autonomy. The repertory grid must not be introduced as an artificial tool. Negotiation is needed

with each participant. Clearly just collecting grids as if they were questionnaires would not do.

The conversational technology accepts people as full participants using their unique position as observers of their own experience. ibid p. xxvii

When I first thought about how to carry out the research project I was working at Kingston Polytechnic. A colleague there doing research into teacher appraisal had changed her direction and supervision and had registered at the CSHL at Brunel University. After an initial conversation with her I was encouraged to visit the CSHL to seek further information about the use of the repertory grid techniques as a tool in my research. From there on, after enrolling at the CSHL, I was able to explore the use of this tool in a flexible way and make it central to the data collection in the subsequent study.

CSHL has developed a conversational methodology which, as it is content free, can be used and adapted for any walk of life or type of organisation. This has led to the creation of a theory of Learning Conversations and a continually expanding range of awareness-raising techniques. These have combined to enable individuals and groups to personally research their skills as learners, so that they may more effectively control the direction and quality and content of their learning. (ibid p.353)

The Grid Learning Conversations

The research conversations began in the Autumn of 1989. Table 2 shows how the grid elicitation and feedback conversations were organised across the following terms. In each case the first conversations took between two to three hours each, sometimes split into two sessions. The feedback and follow up conversations took at least an hour as did group conversations in each school.

It is very difficult to find time, in school life, so the majority of conversations took place outside school hours early in the morning or the evening. Occasionally Heads could organise cover for the teacher during school time. This lack of time for personal conversation and review is a problem for schools, one which will need to be met when the appraisal scheme becomes obligatory in 1992.

Table 2 shows the planned pattern of the meetings. As far as possible I tried to work with only one or two schools over each section of time and to complete the set of conversations within a few months. This became difficult at times for all sorts of reasons but once involved, everyone showed great interest and enthusiasm for the research project and said they found the conversations very useful in evaluating their work and the work of the school. This was an intended outcome as I saw the research as a learning process for the participants and not just of value to myself.

Table 2a: The Timescale for Grid Learning Conversations in Phase I

	SENIOSH/H Follow-up					OTIS & SENIOSH/H Follow-up				
	LEA Staff	School S (Harrow)	School T (Hillingdon)	School U (Harrow)	School UF (Harrow)	School W (Harrow)	School X (Hillingdon)	School Y (Harrow)	School Z (Hillingdon)	
'89 sep	Viv Har 1 Judith HI 1	Leslie HT 1				Cathy HT 1 Stella HTR 1 Jenny cms 1				'89 sep
oct	Judith HI 2	Theresa cms 1 Ann DH 1		Kirsty cms 1 Adrian HT 1		Ronny cmo 1				oct
nov										nov
dec										dec
'90 jan						Cathy HT 2				'90 jan
feb			Dorothy cms 1 Kath HT 1			Ronny cmo 2 Jenny cms 2		Len HT 1		feb
mar	Viv Har 2	Theresa cms 2 Leslie HT 2 Ann DH 2		Kirsty cms 2 Adrian HT 2		GROUP	Christine HT 1	Nye cmo 1		mar
apr	Audry HI 1 Audry HI 2				Pilla cms 1		Lydia cmo 1	Debbie Ticu 1		apr
may		GROUP	Dorothy cms 2 Kath HT 2 GROUP				Lydia cmo 2 Christine HT 2 GROUP	Debbie Ticu 2		may
jun				June DH 1 June DH 2	Pilla cms 2			Nye cmo 2 Len HT 2 Sylvia DH 1 Sylvia DH 2		jun
jul								GROUP		jul

Table 2b: The Timescale for Grid Learning Conversations in Phase I (continued)

	SENIOSH/H Follow-up					OTIS & SENIOSH/H Follow-up				
				School U (Harrow)	School UF (Harrow)	School W (Harrow)			School Z (Hillingdon)	
'90 aug										'90 aug
sep				GROUP						sep
oct										oct
nov				Kirsty cms 3 (CHANGE grid 1)	Pilla cms 3 (CHANGE grid 1)	Jenny cms 3 (CHANGE grid 1)				nov
dec										dec
'91 jan										'91 jan
feb										feb
mar				Kirsty cms 4 (CHANGE grid 2)	Pilla cms 4 (CHANGE grid 2)	Cathy HT u/d Jenny cms 4 (CHANGE grid 2)				mar
apr										apr
may										may
jun									Sharon cms 1 Adrian HT 1	jun
jul									Sharon cms 2 Adrian HT 2	jul

Table 2c: The Timescale for Grid Learning Conversations in Phase II

	OTIS Follow-up						
	SENIOSSH/H	School O (Merton)	School P (Merton)	School Q (Merton)	School R (Merton)	LEA staff	
'91 nov		Barbara cmo 1			Joy cmo 1		'91 nov
dec							dec
'92 jan		Barbara cmo 2		Jill HT 1	Tom HT 1		'92 jan
feb					Joy cmo 1 Tom HT 2		feb
mar	Linda DH 1	Ian HT tape	Dave cmo 1	Chris cmo 1 Jill HT 2			mar
apr			Dave cmo 2	Chris cmo 2 Paul ST 1 Paul ST 2 GROUP			apr
may	Linda DH 2		Brian DH tape		Martin DH 1		may
jun	Sharon cms 3				Martin DH 2		jun
jul	GROUP	Sue DH u/d			GROUP	Maria Mer	jul
aug sep oct nov dec jan feb							aug sep oct nov dec jan feb
mar '93		Barbara cmo u/d	Dave cmo u/d	Chris cmo u/d			mar '93

Abbreviations used in Tables 2a, 2b & 2c

- cmo - Course member, OTIS
- cms - Course member, SENIOSSH/H
- DH - Deputy Head
- Har - LEA staff, Harrow
- HI - LEA staff, Hillingdon
- HT - Head Teacher
- HTR - Head Teacher, retired
- Mer - LEA staff, Merton
- ST - Senior Teacher
- Ticu - Teacher in charge of Unit update
- u/d -
- 1 - First conversation
- 2 - Second conversation
- 3 - Third conversation
- 4 - Fourth conversation

Preparation for Grid Conversations

Each person chosen for the grid conversation was contacted initially to ask if they would take part in the research which was presented as evaluation follow-up to either the original OTIS or to SENIOSH/H. In preparation for the interview they were asked to jot down some notes about events in the last five years or so which they thought represented incidents of their own learning related to their present role in school, in relation to children with Special Educational Needs. It was explained that these events could be interactions with people, children, parents, professionals or more formal learning events including reading. In fact I tried to convey the idea that any event which was felt to trigger a learning experience could be listed. Some people did this very carefully and came to the conversation with a prepared list of about 10–20 items. Others came and apologised and said they had not done the preparation. This did not matter a great deal as they had been focussed as to the type of way we would start. Only one or two were thrown by the fact there were no questions to answer. Most people enjoyed the freedom to choose how they told their own stories.

The Story and Event Elicitation

In fact that is how the conversation began, with each person telling a story of their professional or, occasionally, their personal life in relation to SEN. Some began with their initial teacher training or events in their own families even if these were much further back in time than the five years suggested. These early events may have been significant in positive or negative ways to future work with children. Most people needed little help at this point to talk about significant events. Many events described were about specific named children who had one or another difficulty. Some of the events were to do with how they worked with other colleagues, how they got their jobs or about specific training events including the OTIS or SENIOSH/H courses.

As the story unfolded I jotted notes on cards about each event being described and checked that enough was written to help recall the event again in later conversations. This could be just a name which could conjure up a particular incident or key words which would do so for the person in question. I numbered these E1–E2 etc as the story unfolded.

My role at this time was to help distinguish one event from another and to make sure I caught the essence of it for the person in question. I sometimes wrote the cards so not to interfere too much with the telling of the story and also to insure that there were only a few words on each card. When the story ended I gave the pack of cards to the person, usually 9–16 or so in number but sometimes more, and asked them to check the meaning was clear, remove any they felt were not correct, repeated a similar event or were in retrospect less relevant. Changes were made, if needed, to wording or cards were eliminated in a few cases, especially if there was a number over 20. For some, no changes were made, for others both rewriting and selection were carried

out. When the event or element set was correct for the person in question we either stopped, if time had run out, or continued to elicit the constructs.

During all but the first few conversations, a tape recorder was running throughout the grid conversations. This gave an opportunity to record some of the context, detail and tangential conversations which were not necessarily recorded on the grid or the cards with elements and constructs. A note book was also kept in which it was possible to keep track of the process, especially in the early stages of the research. Tape recordings were particularly useful for certain parts of the conversation process, such as the story at the beginning, which was particularly rich in personal material. In particular, it is possible, by listening to the tape, to analyse my role as facilitator of the conversation. This is discussed in more details in later chapters.

Constructs Elicitation

The constructs were elicited using the triadic method of presentation. First the cards were presented in threes till all had been used. The second and subsequent presentations were presented in random order so that no three cards were presented together more than once. This usually meant using each card three times but occasionally only twice. The cards stopped being presented when the person ran out of new ideas and when constructs were being repeated.

The constructs were elicited by asking which two cards were more alike and which different in each triad. Effort was made to explain that the similarity and difference should be related so as to be on a continuum. Often by the third pass over the elements, constructs were being elicited at a deeper level than on earlier selections.

Each pole of each construct was written on post-its with a tick for the pair and a cross for the singleton. Originally I had used cards of different colours but the post-its worked well. Again as I wrote I checked that there was enough on each card to convey the intended meaning for each side of the pole. This checking meant some revision, if the poles were not related. A different pairing might be then chosen. Once the whole pack of paired constructs labelled C1 Pair- C1, Singleton C2P, C2P etc had been elicited, the next part of the conversation could begin.

The tape recording could also be particularly valuable in recording the laddering and sorting process of matching elements to constructs. However this was sometimes carried out rather silently. This internal conversation could, on occasion be accessed if some prompts were used, to check the inner meaning behind the choices being made.

The Elicitation of the Raw Grid

The post-its were stuck on the table in pairs of ticks and crosses, representing the bi-polar constructs. The person would then be asked to sort the whole pack of element

cards into piles under one or other pole of the construct. If they could not put it in either side they could put it in the middle.

They were encouraged to place the middle group on the side which fitted best. A five point scale could have been used, but was not chosen because I felt any more complications in the technique might interfere with the flow of the conversation. This process of sorting elements against constructs continued till all elements had been sorted against all constructs and the results recorded on a grid sheet. The mid category was given an O if it could not be placed in either pile (see discussion later in this chapter).

This completed the first stage of the grid conversation. As people sorted, they could sometimes see that the labelling of the poles did not fit what they really meant and the words on the construct labels were changed appropriately. As the sorting took place it was clear that they were already forming clusters of elements which fitted a superordinate construct. They were in effect laddering up to a higher organisation of their ideas. This was possible to discuss as a process with some people. It was also possible to see where people had chosen what appeared to be superficial constructs.

Time to reflect is so minimal for those working in schools that this experience was seen as valuable by the majority of people and therefore they would always give the extra time needed to finish their original grid conversation, which typically took over two hours or over two sessions.

The Focussed Grid using Cluster Analysis

The raw grid forms were taken back to the CSHL, along with the element and construct cards. Each grid was focussed by using the FOCUS programme from the suite of computer programmes developed by CSHL. FOCUS also has options for various printouts of the FOCUSed grid. The most useful of these for feedback conversations is the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout which spaces out the elements and constructs in relation to their matched scores. It analyses these relationships using a cluster analysis showing groups of elements and constructs which are construed. Those most closely matched are printed closer together in space – those less closely matched further apart. This visual representation of matching is useful as a feedback and helps the client to see the clusters of elements and constructs present in the FOCUSed grid.

Cluster analysis is particularly useful when combined with the SPACEd FOCUSed printout in showing the client a clear representation of their personal data. This makes the SPACEd FOCUSed grid a good way to feedback to a client and to help them both relive the elicitation conversations and to ladder upwards to their core constructs. The cluster groupings can be often seen by eye, intuitively, by looking at groups of ratings

for one or other pole. Sometimes the ratings are weighted to one or other pole, sometimes there are very obvious clusters but at other times the pattern is less clear. On these occasions other forms of printout can be useful.

The SPACEd TRIGRID option reveals the numerical structures underlying a SPACEd FOCUSED grid as it gives the full matching scores for each element and construct as a percentage. 100% equals a full match and, a lower percentage shows there is little matching present. The SPACEd FOCUSED grid with trees is another way of showing, visibly and with ever greater clarity, the relationships within and between clusters of elements and constructs.

The repertory grid has often been analysed by a principle component analysis. This method is less satisfactory as a conversational device as some of the detail of the data is collapsed and lost in the averaging processes involved. If a multi-dimensional model could be produced, then principle component analysis might be a better representation of personal space, however as only a two dimensional version is available, the effect is to lose some of the personal detail, which can better be shown in a cluster analysis. Principle component analysis has uses, but the cluster analysis is more suitable for use in the conversational work of Self-Organised Learning.

Feedback Conversations using SPACEd FOCUSED Grids

SPACEd FOCUSED grids are still complex to feed back and the clients need the Learning Coach with some experience in reading grids to start them off. Main blocks of clusters may be obvious to see and to discuss. It is the detail of the pattern which takes time and experience to understand. In particular the use of the ratings labelled '2' can be problematical. This rating represent both a mid point and a non-applicable choice. When clients sort element cards against construct poles, to elicit the raw grid, those elements which cannot be easily placed at either end of the construct pole, remain placed in the middle.

In the second phase of the research, when I became more aware of this problem, it was possible, in my role as Learning Coach, to suggest that a choice be made of one pole or the other. The option to leave the element card in the middle remained, usually because it did not belong to the constructs in either of the two piles of cards. These '2' rated element cards, left over when the client had tried to allocate every card to one of the other ratings, usually represented elements that were outside the range of convenience of the domain of this grid conversation. This idea, of a limited range of convenience for personal constructs, is one part of Kelly's theory, described in his original exposition of the theory of personal construct psychology. (Kelly 1955)

In feeding back the SPACEd FOCUSED grids, it is possible to look at clusters of '2' ratings and talk about possible meanings. Sometimes these revealed a deeper layer of

meaning, which would require another Learning Conversation, possibly with a different purpose and domain. The role of the Learning Coach, who guides the conversational process, is important. The client should have control of the content and the choice of purpose for the conversation, although at first the Learning Coach guides the process. This is discussed in more depth in chapter 8 of this research.

Focusing the raw grid

The process of focussing a raw grid can be carried out by hand. The first task is to sort the elements into sets so that those construed most alike are paired and then those next most like put next to them and so on till the whole set of strips of ticks and crosses are re-ordered to form clusters of elements. If a better match can be achieved by reversing the construct pole this is done and labelled RC1 etc. The same process is carried out with the construct pole to group these in nearest and furthest groupings. The result is a focussed grid. This process is carried out faster, and with less effort, using FOCUS, on the CSHL suite of computer programmes.

The Feedback using SPACEd FOCUSed Printouts

Once a printout was produced and another appointment made, the feedback of the SPACEd FOCUSed or SPACEd TRIGRID was arranged. First the grid printout was given to the person to examine. Usually people remarked that it did not make much sense to them. We then looked again at the element and construct cards and related these to the printout. The spacing was pointed out, first those elements which were identical, next those very nearly identical. These groups of nearby elements were then looked at in relation to the constructs that were matched to them. This recalled the matching and clustering and laddering that had occurred in the first conversation.

However, it was now possible to ask what each cluster meant for the person, and a higher-order construct label was often given at this point for the group of ideas. Obvious groupings were looked at first, then less obvious, and singletons which stood far apart from everything else. The same was done for the construct groups.

The clusters of ratings for each pole, shown as ones (ticks) and threes (crosses) and twos (naughts) were then noted (ie a three-point scale). This showed groups of elements matched to groups of constructs often clearly more related to one or other side of the construct poles. Three or four main ideas then began to emerge and show the person's top level or at least higher level constructs about the domain of their conversation. This led on to other conversations recorded largely on tape and not using the grid, other than as a trigger for the discussion. The taped versions of the Learning Conversations, combined with the grid printouts, together give a richness of data which more closely represents the creative quality of many of the Learning Conversations.

time had gone by between elicitation and feedback which meant the feedback was about a 'snap-shot' taken at another time. People commented on their changed views saying, *well, I said that then , but now I would add this, or make a different point in the light of new experiences.* The changes over a couple of months were seldom to do with the higher order constructs, however more often to do with detail.

See diagram 3, taken from 'Self-Organised Learning' p.83 (Thomas & Harri-Augstein 1985)

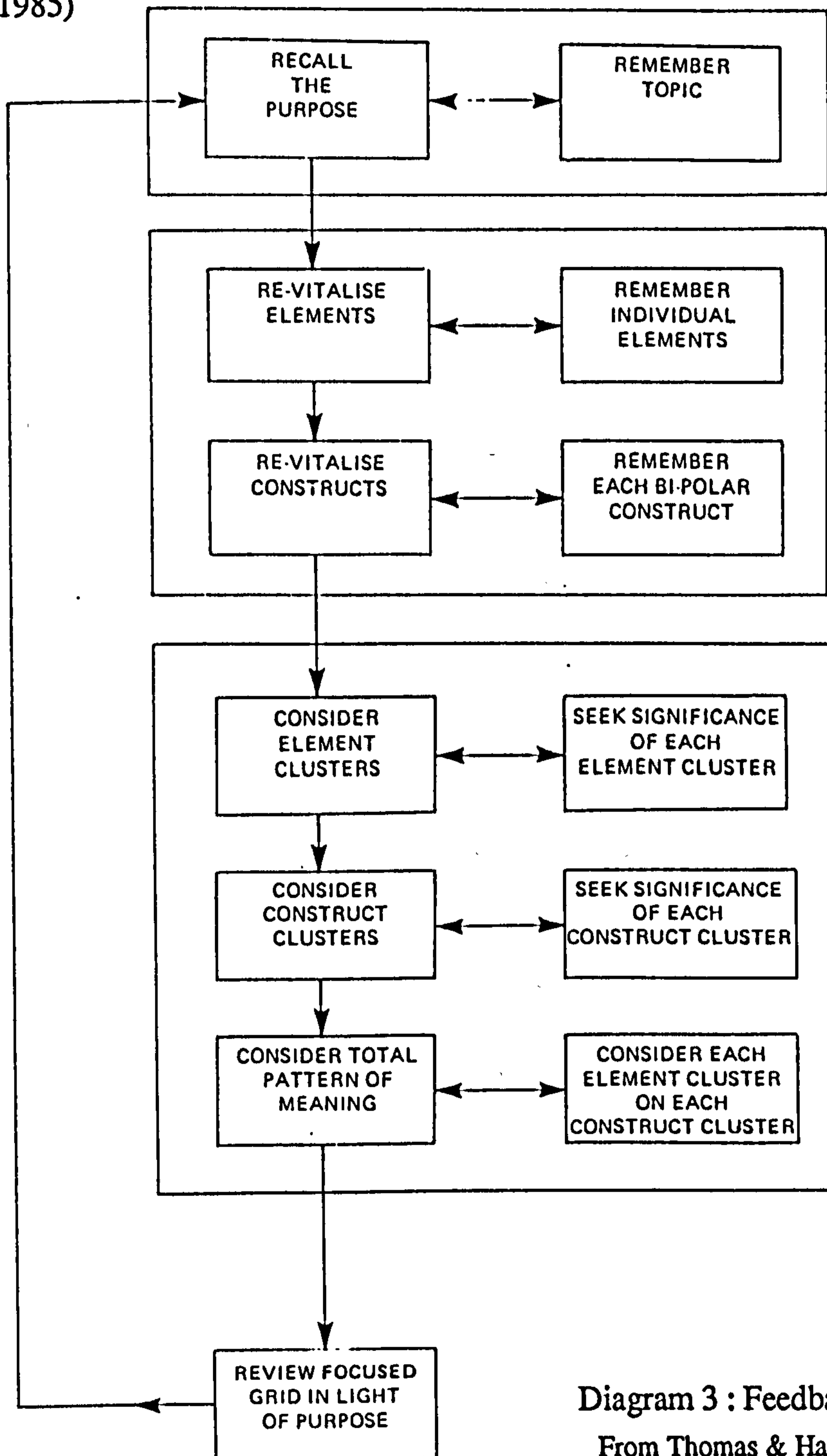


Diagram 3 : Feedback for FOCUSED grid
From Thomas & Harri -Augstein 1985, p 83

Group Learning Conversations and Feedback

Once the individual grid had been fed back and that conversation recorded, group conversations were arranged to share the meanings elicited from the SPACEd FOCUSED grids, between those who had taken part in each school. This was always the Head and course member, and usually also included the Deputy or in two cases another person related to SEN work. The group feedback procedure was the same for each school, once agreement was reached by all concerned. (See instruction sheet Appendix 5)

Copies of all, SPACEd FOCUSED grids with the comments made during feedback written on them, were given in advance to each person in the group. Preparation for this process was suggested, by giving copies of these printouts to everyone the night before. Each person in turn, described each of the other grids. The owners of those grids, then had a chance to correct information wrongly interpreted. I also added information from my knowledge of the original conversation, if appropriate.

Once this process of reading and understanding each grid was complete, the second stage of the Group Learning Conversation could take place. Everyone present was asked to look for similarities and differences between the representation of meanings just discussed. A further discussion of these meanings followed, looking at implications for future development in their school. The reflection on the personal learning which had taken place and the perspectives arising from the different roles held, was also discussed. Where the discussion was between a pair, however, the process was shorter and this procedure was confined to a discussion of the meanings in the grid and the course members' development of their work, related to their course project.

In the second phase of the research, the procedure for the Group Learning Conversation was more tightly managed, both to make more use of the very limited time, and to develop a repeatable conversational tool. This was an evolving process throughout the research. It is described, in its early stages in chapter 4, and more fully in chapter 5. Further discussion is to be found in chapter 6, where the algorithm shown here, is more fully described; see diagram 4.

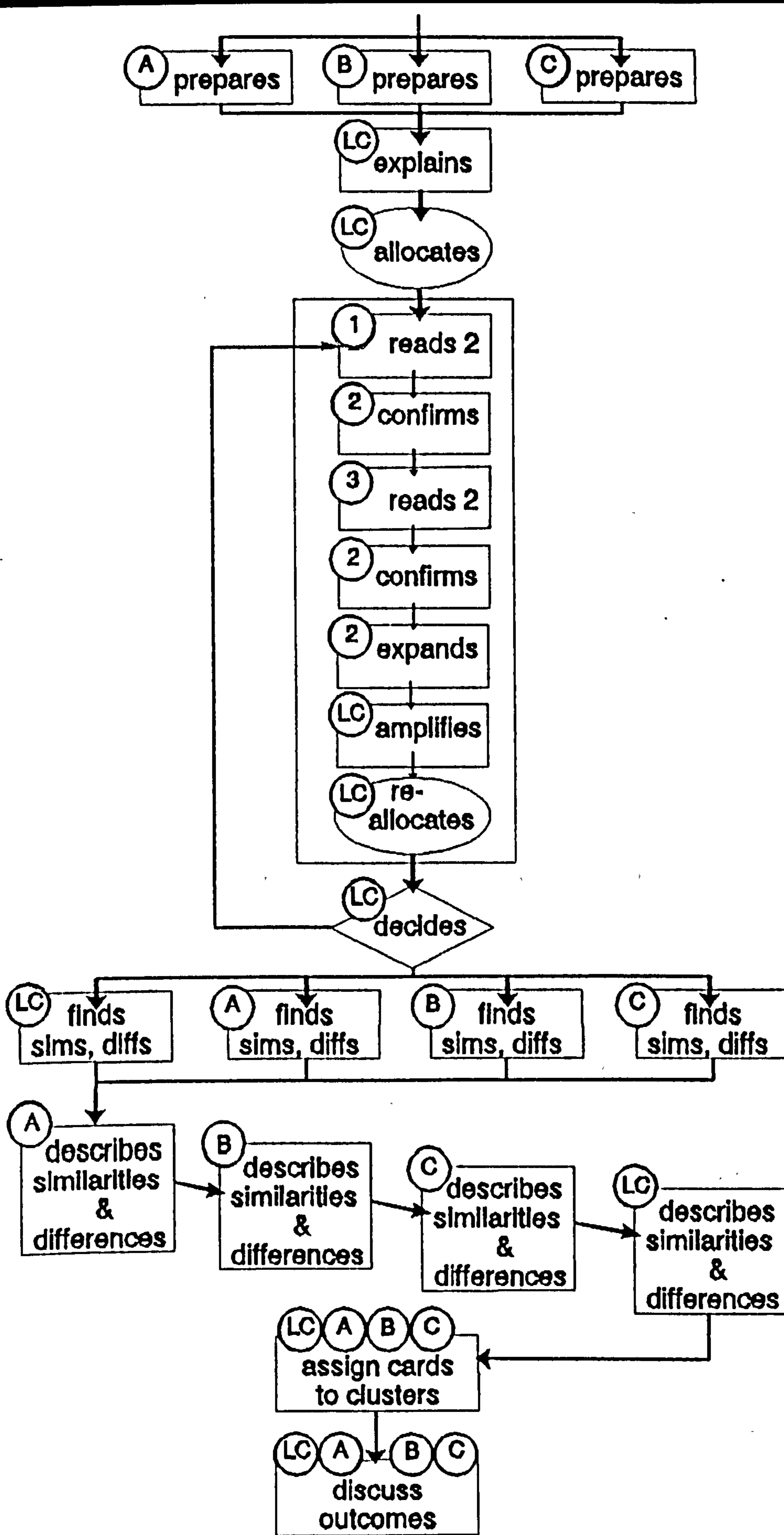


Diagram 4 Group Learning Conversation: an algorithm

Further Learning Conversations based on the CHANGE Grid Procedure

For the group of people who had recently completed cohort 2 of SENIOSH/H, a further Learning Conversation process took place. For this group I was interested in changes over time in their personal learning about SEN, related as well as other learning which took place on the job. For three of these people I was able to carry out a CHANGE grid process, a year after the original grid conversation took place.

For the other three "new" course members change over time was noted in other ways. For two of this group the first grid conversation took place a year after their course had finished and so was in the nature of a change evaluation in itself. For the last course member the original grid conversation took place towards the end of the course but the school group conversation took place a year later. Before that group conversation took place a personal one was possible to update the original grid.

CHANGE Grid Conversational Process

The CHANGE grid process was developed by CSHL, as an extension of the repertory grid. Its purpose is to explore the nature of personal change. CHANGE grids superimpose personal, new meaning, about the same topic, at a different time, onto the original FOCUSed grid.

A CHANGE grid process asks the person to elicit some new elements, which represent new learning in the intervening time since the original grid was elicited and which is related to the domain of that conversation. These are added as new elements. These new elements along with the old elements are represented to elicit new constructs. Then, using both old and new constructs, a new raw grid is elicited. All elements (new and old) are sorted against all constructs. About 6 or 7 new elements are suggested, so as not to make the final grid unmanageable.

The same process of sorting all elements against all constructs is performed in the same way as in the original grid elicitation. The raw grid is similarly focussed, printed and fed back, using the SPACEd FOCUSed option.

The algorithms developed by Thomas & Harri-Augstein (taken from Self Organised Learning, 1985, p 215 & p 217) are included here to show the stages in elicitation, (Fig 1) and feedback (Fig 2). The CHANGE grid process is described, as used with three teachers, in chapter 4 & 5 and discussed again in chapter 8. (See diagrams 5 & 6).

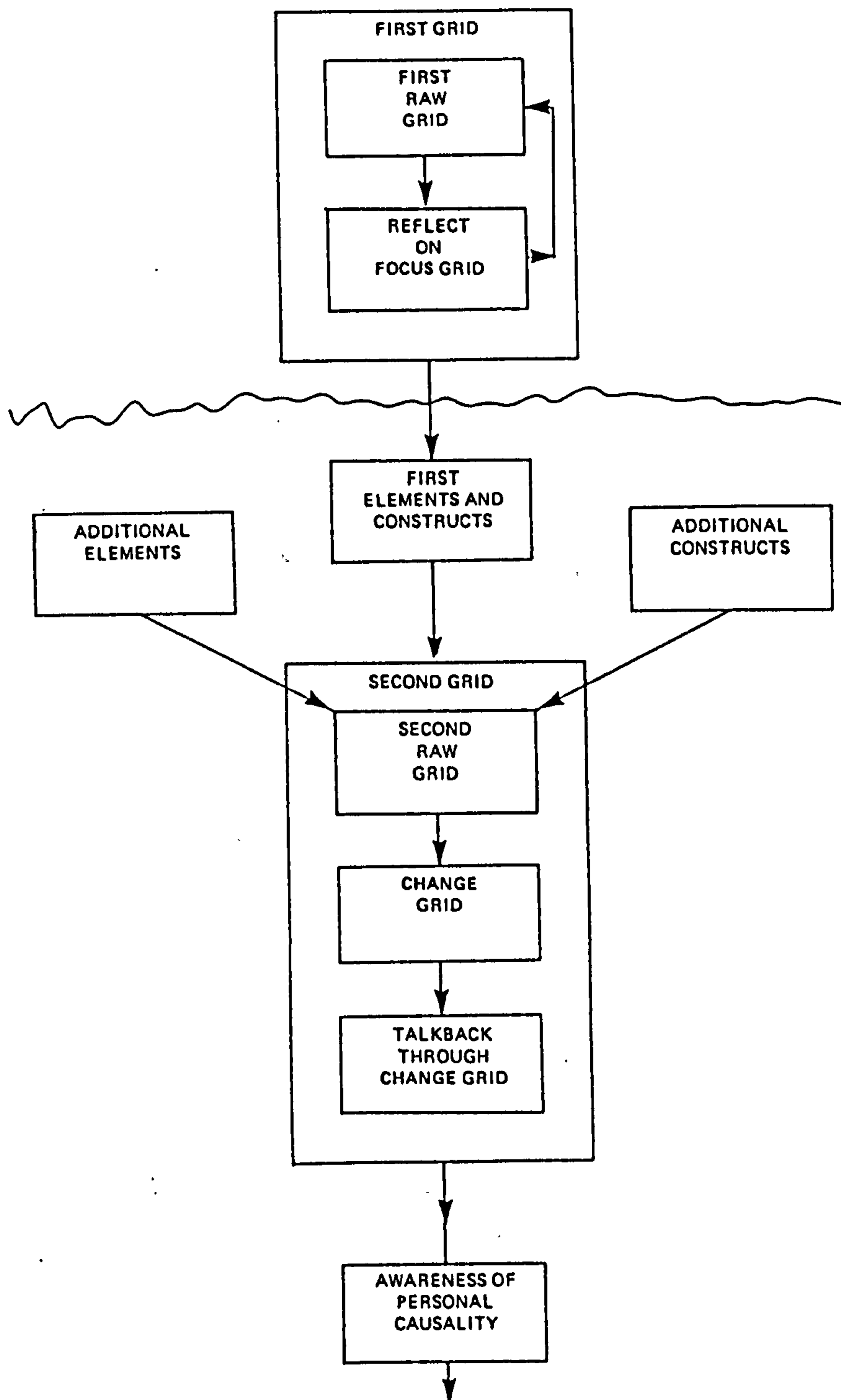


Diagram 5

The CHANGE grid conversation: an algorithm
 from Thomas & Harri-Augstein 1985 p 215

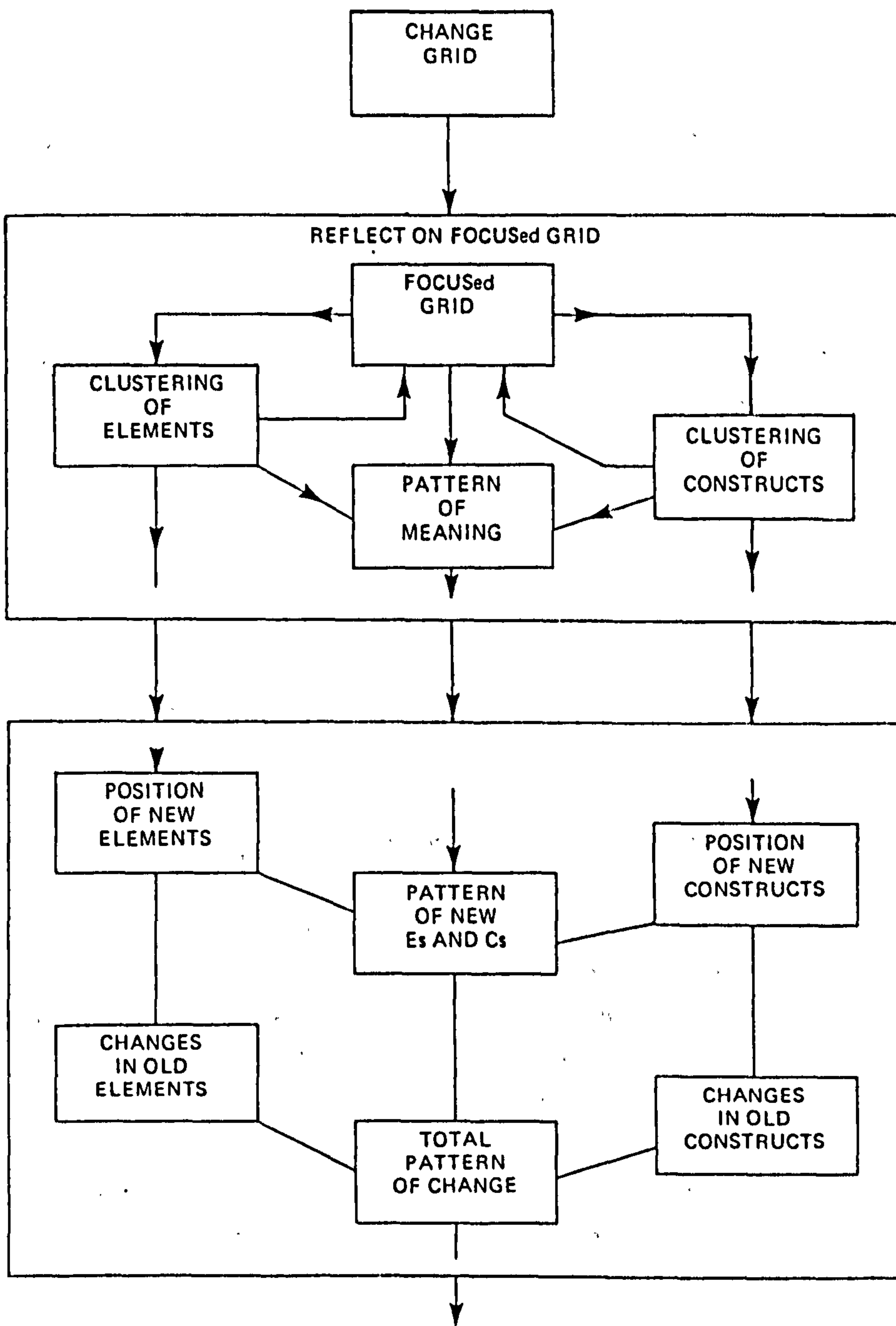


Diagram 6
 Talkback through the CHANGE grid: an algorithm
 From Thomas & Harri-Augstein 1985, p.217

Further processes as Part of Action Research.

For most people, any further conversations took place in the process of on-going work in the school. For the school studies carried out in depth, this becomes part of the action-research aspect of the research. For schools in Hillingdon, there was no follow-up beyond the feedback stage, as I did not work in these schools professionally. For the two boroughs where I was one of the LEA co-ordinators of services, my routine work could bring me into contact with the school, its Head or SENCO. This is discussed later in the section on results, in chapter 7.

Other group Feedback Conversations

As part of the course evaluation for the SENIOSH/H courses cohorts 2 and 3 group conversations about personal learning on the course took place at the end of each course. For the third cohort it was possible to organise this using an adapted process of a grid conversation. Elements extracted from grids of course members were selected and presented on each to the whole group. They then worked in groups, clustering these sets of elements into meaningful patterns and labelled these with descriptions which were meaningful to that group of people. They stuck these to paper and wrote ideas on the paper in relation to the clusters. These were then shared across the whole group. It was interesting to see how much consensus was reached over these clusters but also important to note individual differences which would still be recorded. (See Appendix 3 iv).

Researcher Learning Conversations: using the Repertory Grid for Self-reflection

During the period of the research for 1989 to 1992 I also carried out grid conversations with myself, using the same method as I used with others but not using a tape recorder. This was perhaps a mistake, as I therefore did not record the inner conversations which took place. The series of grids were not treated as CHANGE grids because each time I chose new events to fit the period since the last grid.

They are as a series, however, a reflection of change over time in relation to my jobs and to the research. They reflect personal feeling and thought and are useful because as I know what they mean I can reflect on the levels of meaning and modes of conversations which took place. They reflect real decision making over time as I changed jobs and worked in a different borough. These reflective grids deepened my understanding of the repertory grid, its analysis and relationships to personal learning. The same process of elements arising from events and constructs being elicited in a triadic method was used. On one occasion I used a four point rating to try and work out what happened to those elements less closely related to the poles or outside the range of convenience of the grid. The results were not very conclusive in producing a better picture of meaning, so I reverted to the three point scale again, but tried to record on a raw grid whether the 0 choice was a mid-point or a non-applicable choice.

A conversation with Laurie Thomas at this point led me to some further thought on this aspect of the grid conversations. In the second research phase I tried to pay more attention to non-applicable or mid-point choice in both the original sorting and the feedback. During the second phase of the research, as my experience and confidence grew, the grid conversations were further developed by allowing a more flowing style to emerge from the story elicitation and consequent discussions.

The group sessions were a development which I made, arising from CSHL work but not directly replicating any previous procedures. CSHL has developed SOCIO grids but these use shared elements which were not suitable for my purposes. I needed a way of sharing the individual outcomes of Learning Conversations which had taken place of the previous months. The group method proved very useful in this way, and will be further discussed in later chapters, 5 & 6 in particular.

During the whole period of the research, I was continuing to deliver the SENIOSH/H courses. I also worked in schools in the capacity of Borough Co-Ordinator. In Merton I ran groups for SENCO, in middle schools on a regular basis, and was able to incorporate Learning Conversational approaches to the way these meetings were run. As I was Head of a peripatetic team of teachers who visited all schools weekly, it was possible in one case to incorporate a grid conversation with a team member who was attached to one of the research schools. Therefore in the second phase of the research, more feedback from the action research was possible. This is described in the chapter 6.

Reflection on Method and Design Choices

The Learning Conversational methodology was a very suitable link with action research. Its content-free nature and flexibility made it both a useful and a valid tool to elicit the meaning, for those taking part, of the construct of Special Educational Needs in their school. There was sufficient structure to allow some comparison between people and schools, but sufficient freedom to explore individual meanings and intentions. Each research cycle allowed me to learn to use the techniques more effectively. I return to the research methods, for a further discussion, in chapter 8.

Chapter 4

Descriptions of Learning Conversations **in Phase One**

These next two chapters are devoted to describing the processes and outcomes of the series of Learning Conversations which took place during the first phase of the research from October 1989 – July 1991. As was described in chapter 3, the research took place in two boroughs. The original design embodied a plan to work in four schools in each borough. By the end of this phase it had been possible to work in the four Harrow schools, but only in three of the Hillingdon schools. The fourth Hillingdon school dropped out of the design, as no suitable candidates could be found. The third Hillingdon school bridged both phases of the research. This first chapter begins with a section on my work in the two boroughs and reports of conversations held with three LEA colleagues, who had influence on my work. The second of the two chapters ends with descriptions of grid conversations used to reflect my own learning during this period.

The first of these two chapters is reported as follows:

A. Contextual Background and Grid Learning Conversations with three LEA Colleagues.

B. Grid Learning Conversations with Course members, Heads and others, in four Schools from Harrow and Hillingdon, as Follow-up and Evaluation of SENIOSH/H.

A. Contextual Background and Grid Learning Conversations with three LEA Colleagues

Background to my work with the Harrow schools

During the first period of the research, I was working in Harrow as one of the three Borough Co-ordinators for Special Educational Needs Services. One of my main tasks was to set up the provision for the physically and sensory-impaired pupils. Other teams for learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties were set up and run by Heads of Service who worked to my two fellow co-ordinators. The three co-ordinators were managed by Viv (Inspector for Special Educational Needs), who was also a Senior Inspector, with many other responsibilities. She had been one of the driving forces behind the borough Learning Support Policy, and getting it agreed by the political members. Another of Viv's roles was to manage the in-service budget for SEN. This was a large task, because to implement a policy of change and integration of so many pupils required training at many levels, from Headteachers and governors to every class teacher. She was pleased with the suggestion, made by Judith, (Hillingdon SEN Inspector), to run a local joint training .

In my role as co-ordinator of services, I managed a team of teachers who worked with the group of children with statements for physical and sensory impairments, of which the Service for Hearing Impaired was the largest group. My role in Harrow also involved opening new units for the physically handicapped, visually and language-impaired, and working with architects, therapists and borough officers to have buildings adapted and facilities built. It also meant appointing and inducting staff to run these units. I also had the responsibility for maintaining contact with the teachers and parents of all the children with any type of health-related difficulty. This meant working with specialist teachers, psychologists, therapists, Headteachers, doctors, and social services personnel. In most cases, if these pupils were to receive a statement of special needs, I would represent their case at the LEA panel which made the decisions about provision. This generated tension for me because I was, (to use the jargon of 1993), in both the purchaser and provider role for the same case. This meant I knew only too well what was needed for a child through contact with professionals and parents, but, as a member of the policy group, I was caught up in prioritising needs, and was in competition with colleagues for scarce resources.

The physical and sensory group of children often had very severe impairment, and would in other circumstances have gone to special schools. Because Harrow had a strong integration policy, only some children with the most severe difficulties attended special schools in borough or, in very rare cases, out-borough. Setting up integrated units for the physically-handicapped group was expensive, because of the architectural changes to buildings, and the high staff ratio needed to make it possible for the very handicapped child to cope in a mainstream class. Therefore, for the physically handicapped group, it made sense to adapt only one set of schools in the centre of the borough. The secondary school adaptations had been started before I was appointed, but setting up the provision for the Middle and First schools, Schools U and UF, became one of my major tasks. The services and units for vision and language impairment, however, did not exist and had to be set up, which required negotiations with several Headteachers.

Most children with physical and sensory-impairment were catered for by these unit provisions, but there were numerous single cases integrated throughout the borough in any school near where the child lived. This group included those at Schools W and Y and S. Many of these children were integrated independently, with non-teaching assistants paid for as part of their statement provision. These non-teaching assistants were a very valuable resource, and it was decided to set up a minimum-level induction training for each of them, to be offered on a rolling programme.

As well as the work as co-ordinator for the services for children with physical and sensory impairment, I also held major responsibilities for INSET related to Special Educational Needs. Apart from running the SENIOSH/H, I ran many of the other

major courses for SENCOs. Training SENCOs and support staff was a critical part of the training requirement. For this reason the first SENIOSH/H course with Hillingdon was valuable, because the funds went further by training locally, compared with sending one person to an IHE. There was a need to train someone in every school as a SENCO. This presented a challenge for INSET providers with limited resources of expertise and funds. The OTIS course had taken only two or three teachers per borough per year, and although the SENIOSH/H course took up to eight, many schools were left without a training opportunity. Because I ran the SENIOSH/H, I became involved in training and supporting all SENCOs across the borough. Under the same funding, I was also able to run another training opportunity for teachers in High Schools. This was run jointly with the Institute of Education.

The action research planned for phase one could be expected to provide feedback which would be of great use to me in both my roles as trainer and as co-ordinator of services.

Background to my work with the Hillingdon schools.

I had worked closely with Judith, the SEN Inspector for Hillingdon, while tutoring the OTIS at the Institute of Education. Judith had seconded Audrey, a Deputy Head of a special school in Hillingdon, to act as co-tutor to OTIS for two terms. This meant I already had a strong partnership with Audrey when she acted as the link tutor to the new SENIOSH/H course. She would recruit and support the teachers from Hillingdon. This meant she would visit their schools, as well as helping with the school-based project work. My involvement with the schools was only through the course and, for those schools which took part in this research, through the Learning Conversations.

Selection of the course members for OTIS

The role of the SENCO is one which potentially can challenge senior management to re-examine SEN policies. The SENCO cannot carry out the changes without great sensitivity and care. During the ten week OTIS course, many course members met these constraints and challenges. Tutorial time was often spent discussing the “art of the possible” for each course member within the context of their particular school and its power dynamics. The art of doing little but doing it well had to be learnt, in some cases. Patience and understanding of interpersonal relationships were essential skills to develop.

The pre-course selection and interviewing for OTIS had largely been successful in Hillingdon and Harrow. There were however problems for two course members in Harrow whose Heads withdrew support, as the projects began to take shape. Stress was caused to the course members, because they were trying to initiate a change of practice in their schools, which both they and many of their teaching colleagues saw as

a next step, but which the Headteacher resisted or openly sabotaged. In one case this resulted in a breakdown of the individual; in the other, it necessitated a change of school for the course member. This was arranged by Viv. These examples show that the course had quite strong effects on course members and their schools, but these were not necessarily always productive effects when the human dynamic was not fully understood.

If the LEA tutor/advisor was aware of these possible tensions, she could help in several ways. In some circumstances it was unwise to recruit certain teachers from certain schools to a course of such an innovative and challenging nature. When it was felt that the school and the course member would benefit, the next important choice, taken jointly by LEA and Institute tutors and course member, was the topic of the project. This had to be significant enough to warrant the resourcing of the course, but not so major as to be impossible to achieve within the limited time, or within the internal politics of the school. Thus careful selection could result in projects which had a good chance of success in schools, where the Head provided positive support for the SENCOs work. These principles were also used in the selection which Audrey, (co-tutor in Hillingdon) and I made for the SENIOSH/H course members.

Grid Learning Conversations with LEA staff

These conversations started at as the research began, and are included to give further background information to the action research. They were held with (a) Viv, SEN Inspector (Harrow), (b) Judith, SEN Inspector (Hillingdon) and c) Audrey, co-tutor (Hillingdon).

a) Grid Learning Conversation with Harrow's SEN Advisor: Viv

This was the first grid conversation I held, and to some extent was a pilot for me. Although I asked Viv about her personal learning, in fact she chose to tell the story of the development of the Harrow Learning Support Policy and its implementation, drawbacks and successes. There is very little personal material except that, as this policy was developed by Viv, she felt a sense of achievement when she felt it was all going well. Some twenty elements were taken from the story of the policy development, of which twelve were selected. They included:

- setting up LS policy working party*
- getting the climate right at Education Committee*
- setting up the panel for statement decisions*
- achieving permission to vire*
- substantial INSET activities*
- Beginning of support services*

This list is all about services being set up as a result of political will and virement of funds. It includes one element labelled

backlash from special schools

This was the criticising of the Learning Support policy received from the Head of the special school who did not agree with the philosophy of integration.

The constructs are very similar to the elements in many instances but include constructs like

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|------------------------|
| <i>creation</i> | v | <i>destruction</i> |
| <i>development</i> | v | <i>endings</i> |
| <i>climate</i> | v | <i>discrete events</i> |

The topic of the conversation was really Viv's success in setting up the policy and provision. She was not reflecting much about her learning, even though she could have looked at what each success meant to her. It might have been better to hold a different conversation, focussed on her own learning needs, but this was not something she wished to do, nor would it have been easy for her (See App 4 A a & b).

Judith, LEA SEN Advisor for Hillingdon

In 1983 Judith was appointed as Inspector for Special Educational Needs. She had been Advisor for PE and had done a one year Masters course on Special Educational Needs before taking up her new role. In 1984 Judith began to make use of the OTIS course for teachers in Hillingdon, in the end sending 15 over the four years 1984–87. She also used the DES/Regional 3 day course set up at the Institute of Education jointly with LEAs. Both these courses held meetings for advisors and inspectors from participating LEAs. In the case of the DES/Regional, the advisors planned and partly taught the course themselves. It was non award bearing. These meetings proved to be learning experiences for the advisors, who could share good practice and compare roles on their developing policies and provision for SEN. The 1980s were the years of expansion for both in most boroughs.

The changes in INSET funding over these years (described in Chapter D) meant LEAs had more responsibilities and opportunities to use staff development funds imaginatively to train more staff. Judith used the OTIS experience well and so, when she asked to set up the SENIOSH/H, this was a natural progression. She went on to add to this by pre-SENIOS courses in 1989 and residential conferences for all SENCOs as both preparation and follow up to other training. By 1989 almost every school in Hillingdon had a SENCO who had received training – so much so that it was becoming difficult to recruit to SENIOSH/H.

In 1988 Judith, the SEN Advisor, had been able to form a small team of four co-ordinators to help her implement her training and development initiatives. Audrey, who had been seconded from a special school to help me tutor the OTIS for two terms in 1986 and to help Judith in 1989, was now a full time member of this team.

Some extra welfare support for statemented pupils had been possible from 1988 and one of Audrey's roles was to arrange and support this policy. Training for welfare assistants for statemented pupils also began. However, unlike Harrow, very few other staff were appointed. The development of good practice depended on the training initiatives, run by this four person team.

LEA wide, special needs reviews had been carried out by working parties set up in 1989, but due to political and management changes, little was done as a result. There had never been great political interest in SEN. Although through training every school had SENCOs and SEN policies, the level of extra provision for integration was low, compared to that in Harrow.

Grid Learning Conversations with Judith.

On the first occasion, Judith began by telling the story of her own learning about Special Educational Needs in relation to her present role as SEN Inspector of Hillingdon. From this story we wrote down thirty events on cards. On the second occasion (10 October 1989), a selection was made from these elements by looking for repetitive elements and also the focussing on the key learning events. From these, constructs were elicited and laddered to form the raw grid. It was a good deal later that the feedback of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid was possible. This third conversation pulled out the issues Judith saw as significant (see p 66a & App 4Ba).

All these conversations, though structured by the techniques, were easy, frank but very reflective. Judith gave the task her full attention and the result held meaning for her, gave her opportunity to stand back and think. For a very private person, she had great trust in me in the amount of her thinking she revealed. Judith, like Viv, was recording events that happened as part of policies she set up, but she also included external courses and conferences, relationship to national curriculum inspections and borough policy. Judith had little political power to use to set up services and she had many other duties outside her role of SEN Inspector, in relation to her role as a general inspector and her borough wide responsibilities for INSET arrangements.

Talkback of SPACEd FOCUSed grid with Judith (See App 4Bb)

There were three element clusters

Cluster 1

E4, E2, E5, E3, E15.

These elements are all about evaluation or opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of various training initiatives; some related to SEN, such as the OTIS initiative, the Bedford Way Paper and the Nene HMI Conference (See Chapter I) and the DES Regional INSET. Two are about general inspections of Schools, E1 (own Masters course following 1981 Act is only loosely connected to this cluster).

Cluster 2

E9, E7, E10, E11.

This cluster relates to management and policy events or changes at borough level. E9, the first curriculum review and training for Heads and managers. E7, the borough working party on SEN. The other two concerned senior LEA staff which effected Judith's role and ability to perform her role. These elements reflect the facilitating or constraining factors which effect Judith's work on SEN.

Cluster 3

E8, E7, E5, E14.

The pair E6, E12 concern the need to have help in the work and Audrey's appointment – this links to the LEATGS responsibility which necessitated Audrey's secondment. E8, links to borough level cluster as it is outside the SEN field as such.

Judith, LEA Inspector, Hillingdon
SPACED FOCUSED grid

JUDITH

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Activity	C7	C3	C1	C9	C5	C8	RC11	RC6	C4	RC12	C10	Other
EVALUATING SCHOOL PROGRESS	1	1	1	1	1	1						
EFFECTING CHANGE IN CLASRMS	2	1	1	1	1	1						
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT ON JOB	3	1	1	1	1	1						
STARTING POINTS FOR DEVELOPMT	1	1	1	1	1	1						
IDENTIFYING NEEDS IN CLASS	1	1	1	1	1	1						
PERSONAL SPACETO DEVELOPRLE	1	1	1	1	1	1						
EVALUATION OF OTIS COURSE	1	1	1	1	1	1						
MONITORING OWN POSITION	1	1	1	1	1	1						
USE AUDRY AS SUPPORT SPESCL	2	1	1	1	1	1						
HAVING SUPPORT GOING SOMEWH	2	3	3	1	1	1						
SPEAK WTH CNFIDENCE OWN LRN	3	3	3	2	1	2						
HMI CONSISTANCY ABT TRAINING	3	1	3	3	2	2						
EFFECTING GLOBAL CHANGE	2	1	1	1	1	1						
MANAGE RESOURCE TO MKE POL	1	1	1	1	1	1						
PERSON DEVOPMNT IN ISOLATON	1	1	1	1	1	1						
FEEDBACK FOR FUTURE DEVELOP	3	3	3	3	3	3						
WIDEN OWN THINKING ON JOB	2	3	3	3	3	3						
SPECIAL NEEDS WRK EFFECT NC	2	3	3	3	3	3						
TRAINING INTENSIVE NOSRESRC	1	3	3	3	3	3						
INVOLVE SMONE WHO I TRUST	1	3	3	3	3	3						
START SCHOOL BASED TRAINING	3	3	3	3	3	3						
WIDER SUPPORT BEYOND INSET	3	3	3	3	3	3						
EXPAND SUPPOR BOROUGH TEACH	1	1	1	1	1	1						
PERSONAL GROUP SHARE IDEAS	1	2	2	2	2	2						
LEATGS RESPONSIBILITY	*	*	*	*	*	*						
AUDRYS APPOINTMENT	*	*	*	*	*	*						
ASPEN ETC	*	*	*	*	*	*						
SEN TRAINING SUPPORTS NATCH	*	*	*	*	*	*						
CHANGING ASSIANT DIRECTOR	*	*	*	*	*	*						
POSITION STATEMENT	*	*	*	*	*	*						
WORKING PARTY ON 18%	*	*	*	*	*	*						
1ST LEA CURRICULUM REVIEW	*	*	*	*	*	*						
INSPECTIONS CAUSE REFLECTIN	*	*	*	*	*	*						
HMI EXTERNAL EVALUATION	*	*	*	*	*	*						
OTIS INITIATIVE BEDFORD WPR	*	*	*	*	*	*						
NEENE CONFERENCE	*	*	*	*	*	*						
DOES REGIONAL	*	*	*	*	*	*						

Constructs

A large proportion of grid is about the left pole of these constructs. (Appendix 4.Bc)

evaluation of school progress
effecting change in classrooms
personal development in the job
starting points for development
identifying space to develop
evaluation of OTIS course
monitoring my own position
use of Audrey as support for special schools
having support and going somewhere

These constructs are linked most strongly to *cluster 1* of the elements concerned with evaluation of developments. This shows Judith to be a reflective person who values her own learning on the job but recognises the need to monitor, check evaluate in order to move forward. Exceptions for this cluster are C12 – C12 and C4R, expanding support for teachers throughout borough and personal growth, which match pole 3.

The *cluster 2* – her use of the (2) non applicable ratings used. This is because some of these events did not help Judith, either in her policy or learning or were outside her control. She sees them therefore as outside the range of convenience of the constructs she is using in this grid. There would be a further potential for a conversation about the domain to which they belong and new ideas could have been expanded through exploration. This cluster also includes C7, C3 for E11, E10 effecting what change and resources make things possible.

The third group – the pair and two extra elements construe partly to the left pole but also to the right pole for E8, E12, E6,

C9 feedback loops for the developing future
C5 widening my thinking on the job
C8 effecting national curriculum practice
RC11 special needs work effective
C2 training intensive needs help
involving someone I trust
start of school based training
wider support beyond INSET
E14 construes to RC6 and C4 as well for widening opportunities

Additional information from further conversations with Judith

Personal learning, for Judith, is about reflection, monitoring and evaluation in order to move on to the next task. The grid conversations were carried out in 1989 before everything had begun to collapse. A year later the content might have been very different. Indeed, continued conversations with Judith have given me evidence that the borough crises and restructuring was a difficult time for Judith. Now she has weathered this, she is using her considerable abilities to do her new job with great effectiveness.

The amount of local inspection carried out by both the LEA and nationally increased in 1989. Through this it was possible to see evidence on the ground of the SEN training both at classroom level and at the level of school organisation through phases – the work of the SENCO and general awareness of SEN issues. Inspectors not working in the SEN field, also became more aware of the issues related to meeting individual needs.

In 1990 there was a great deal of disillusionment with the senior LEA education management. There was a great exodus of staff from the borough. The Director was asked to leave and a restructuring of LEA management followed. Judith was no longer Advisor for SEN, nor held responsibility for training. She was in charge of the management which was responsible for pupils and parents, which included almost everything except special needs. This now came under the management of the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP).

The training of SENCOs and all other INSET for SEN was also managed by the PEP who had little experience in this field. One of Judith's remaining borough co-ordinators, who had learnt much while in Judith's team, still is attempting to hold something together. In 1991–2 and 2/3 a short version of the SENIOS, was possible but will not be in 1994. From 1991 onwards, LMS and GM status meant the shift of responsibility and power swung away from the LEA to the schools. Hillingdon has one of the highest opt-out rates of LEAs in London, particularly for secondary schools, and is likely to be one of the first boroughs to be taken over by the government's proposed Funding Agency. The LEA is still responsible for the statements and the provision for this group of pupils and may have other duties under the new Education Act due in 1993.

Grid Learning Conversation with Audrey : co-tutor

By 1988 the level of awareness for SEN had risen, most schools accepted pupils with statements and did well with many. The level of INSET being provided for Special Educational Needs was high and Judith badly needed help to run all of this. She was able to second Audrey, a Deputy Head at a local special school to help her. This became essential when Judith took up the full responsibility for the planning of the LEATGS for INSET borough wide.

By 1989 Judith had been able to appoint four Hillingdon Borough Co-ordinators including Audrey to help run the local INSET and support schools with pupils with SEN. Audrey had been seconded earlier in 1986 to support the OTIS work at the Institute so she had experience of the work of tutoring when we set up the joint Harrow/Hillingdon SENIOSH/H. She remained a supportive friend and co-tutor till she retired in the summer of 1990 when the second cohort was finished(See App 4Ca).

Audrey's story links to the Hillingdon history and to Judith's. Her element include;

6 references to events supporting Judith, Borough INSET and Audrey's support role

3 to work with OTIS and myself

1 related to her post in Special Educational Needs

2 reading and course attendance

Cluster 1

E11, E12 are construed identically and are about learning from reading, linked closely to listening to speakers who broaden knowledge

Cluster 2

E5, E1, E3, E13, E2 form a cluster form which are about being given value and opportunities to be a facilitator and help others as support.

Cluster 3

E9, E8, E16, E4, E7 are about being given management responsibility for organisational tasks

Cluster 3 construes to the right pole and was Audrey said about having influence out of schools and learning how to help other schools

Cluster 2 construes on the left pole and is about coping, about herself being supported and influenced and about her own personal learning.

Cluster 1 construes to part of the right pole RC4,C2,C7.

learning by reading

freedom in schools to develop the curriculum

reading about what happens in schools

It concerns her personal learning through reflection, reading and learning from specific people.(See App 4Cb)

Comparison between Harrow and Hillingdon

Both these outer London Boroughs were attempting to meet the demands of managing the changes required as a result of the legislation of the 1981 Act and later the 1988 Education Reform Act. Both Viv and Judith were SEN inspectors, newly appointed as a result of this legislation, who had the brief to set up policy, provision and training to meet the demands of more integration and more ownership of special needs children by mainstream schools.

The major difference between the boroughs was the relationship to the political members. In Harrow, there was political will to make integration a major policy change at council level. Funds were moved from the out-borough placement budget for use in setting up in-borough provision. As well as this extra funds were found to 'prime pump' the system. The Director of Education and Chair of Education both showed commitment to the Harrow Learning Support policy. (This was made evident to me on the day of the Whitmore Saturday conference, which I attended before joining the borough). In Hillingdon, this political will was not evident, so funds were always tight and Judith worked almost entirely through training, until 1989 when she was able to make a few appointments.

Harrow appointed a very large number of support staff, Heads of Service and Co-ordinators. This number became a management problem in itself. The focus was on the statemented child, but it was also important to maintain and develop good practice throughout the whole mainstream education. The borough's three special schools also needed development to make provision for a more disabled population.

My research began as the first cohort of SENIOSH/H was coming to an end. As part of the action research design I wanted to use some of the opportunities it would give to gain more understanding of how teachers and schools coped with change related to special needs in ordinary schools. I also wanted to use the action research to feed into my own practice as a teacher trainer and support provider, as well as using outcomes to improve the delivery of the courses. The first four sets of conversations were intended, as both follow-up and evaluation of the learning that would have taken place for teachers on the first two cohorts of SENIOSH/H.

B. Grid Learning Conversations in Four Schools as Follow-up of SENIOSH/H

1) School S (Harrow)

A1 *Theresa* (SENIOSH/H course member
Cohort 1, Sept 1988/ July 89)

D1 *Ann* (Acting Head)

C1 *Leslie* (Head Teacher)

2) School T (Hillingdon)

A2 *Dorothy* (SENIOSH/H course
Cohort 1, Sept 1988 July 89)

C2 *Kath* (Head Teacher)

3) School U (Harrow)

A3 *Kirsty* (SENIOSH/H course member
Cohort 2 Sept 1989/ July 90)

C3 *Adrian* (Head Teacher)

D2 *June* (Deputy Head)

4) School U F (Harrow)

A4 *Pilla* (SENIOSH/H course member
Cohort 2, Sept 1989/ July 90;
Teacher in charge of first school unit.)

Table 3 Timescale of conversations, 1989 - 1991

Case	Name	First	Feedback	Group	CHANGE	Feedback
A1	Theresa (Harrow)	Oct 89	Mar 90		N/A	
D1	Ann	Oct 89	Mar 90	May 90		
C1	Leslie	Sept 89	Mar 90			
A2	Dorothy (Hill)	Feb 90	May 90	May 90	N/A	
C2	Kath	Feb 90	May 90			
A3	Kirsty(Harrow)	Oct 89	Mar 90		Nov 90	Mar91
C3	Adrian	Oct 89	Mar 90	Sept 90		
D2	June	Jun 90	Jun 90			
A4	Pilla (Harrow)	Apr 90	Jun 90	N/A	Nov 90	Mar 91

Note: The convention followed with respect to the case numbers is as follows: 'A' indicates SENIOSH/H; 'B' indicates OTIS; 'C' indicates Head teachers; 'D' indicates Deputy Heads and others; the number refers to the order in which they are reported in this thesis.

1. Grid Learning Conversations in School S. (Harrow)

Conversations took place with Theresa, (A1) SENIOSH/H course member 1988-89 (Cohort 1) Leslie, C1, Headteacher : Ann, D1 Deputy Head

Background

Theresa was a course member on the first SENIOSH/H course in 1988/89. She had been newly appointed as SENCO in a Harrow First school. She had been teaching for only three years, so was young to advise a whole staff, many of whom were her senior by years. The Head, however saw her potential, and felt that, with suitable support from herself and Ann, her Deputy, Theresa would take her responsibilities seriously and grow into them over time. Attendance on the course was an important part of her induction into this new post.

My role in Harrow, as one of the three borough co-ordinators for Special Educational Needs, meant that I had been an advisor to the school in this capacity. The Special Educational Needs teacher for Early Years also supported this school. At that time, the school had a child with a complex condition which worried the teachers a great deal. Another very disturbed girl had been integrated from a special school, at the suggestion of another of the borough co-ordinators. This meant the school had visits from him as well as myself. During the year Theresa was on the course, the Head had also asked me to lead them in developing a whole school policy for SEN, using school-based INSET time.

The general catchment area of the school was suburban owner-occupied housing which did not produce high numbers of pupils with difficulties. This meant that those few with severe problems were strongly contrasted from the normal population. The staff took their responsibilities for children with SEN well and worked hard to support colleagues who had the problem children in their class.

From the above, it is clear that outside support from the borough to this school was given by a number of people on a fairly regular basis. This meant that for Theresa she had many opportunities to learn from these visits, which included personnel from health and social services, as well as those from education. She was however, also a full time class teacher, so the dual duties were quite heavy. During a large part of the time in question the Head had been away from school ill, so her duties had fallen on the shoulders of the Deputy, who also played an important support role to Theresa in her post as SENCO. Theresa had to learn to support other members of staff and to help them with their problems.

Grid Learning Conversations with Theresa, SENIOSH/H course member

The first took place in October, 1989, the term after the course had been completed. It was very much an extension of tutorial conversations which I had held with Theresa

Theresa: SPACED Focussed Grid
 CM Schools

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS										CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -					
RICH SOURCES OF INFORMATION	RC5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	RC5	MY CONTROL OVER MY LEARNING	
INTERACTIVE LEARNING	C7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	C7	PASSIVE STUDENT	
CHOOSE INF ONE TO ONE	C4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	C4	FORMAL LEARNING SITUATION	
ABLE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	RC10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	RC10	NO POSS OF BUILDING RELASHS	
FORMAL LEARNING PERSONAL	C2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	C2	GAVE ME DEAL INFORMATION	
SPECIFIC IDEAS INFORMAL NAT	RC6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	RC6	ONE TO ONE	
RELATIONSHIPS STAFF PERCEPT	C9	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	C9	ONE OFF SITUATION OTHER SET	
READ WIDER THAN INT PERSINF	RC3	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	RC3	LEARNING COPE WITH STAFFINT	
INCIDENTAL LEARNING	RC8	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	RC8	FORMAL LEARNING	
INFLUENCE EACH OTHER IN SCL	C1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	C1	SPECIAL SCL DIFF STRATEGIES	

		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* DEALING WITH SEN PROFS MESO
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* READING JOURNALS BOOKS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	**SNAP COURSE
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* OUTSIDE PROFESSIONALS TALKS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* INTERVIEWING PROFS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* VISITING SPECIAL SCHOOLS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* THROUGH LIZ COWNE
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* SENIOSH COURSE MEMBERS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* LEESLIE ONE TO ONE TALKS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* THROUGH OTHER COLLEAGUES
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* INTEGRATION CASE SARAH

Theresa, SENIOSH/H course member, School S
 SPACED FOCUSED grid

during the course. The relationship between us was one of friendly trust established over the year. The conversations with Theresa and her Head and Deputy Head were all perceived as follow up to the course and part of the evaluation process. The senior management however, also used the opportunity to reflect on its own learning and its policy making.

Theresa chose events from the last few years as the elements of the conversation. She began her initial teacher training and included other elements related to the SENIOSH/H course. These included reading, visits to special schools, interviews with visiting professionals, as well as talks to other course members and work with me, as tutor. The other group of elements came from school work and included talks with the Head, other colleagues, outside professionals who visited the school and dealing with the child, Sarah whose behaviour was extremely challenging (See p 73a).

The conversation gave Theresa the opportunity to reflect on her learning experiences to date and her work with special needs in particular. She grouped her elements in to clusters which gave her some insight into the various sources for her learning and something of the processes involved. Control over her learning began to emerge as a concept. She uses the description *formal learning* and links this with *passive learning*. The opposite pole to this was interactive which gives a clue to how she contrasts formal with a more dynamic form of learning.

Grouped closely with the concept of formal learning was

no possibility of building relationships

against the opposite pole of

able to build relationships

This whole grid conversation was largely concerned with her own learning at a personal level but there are emerging constructs about working with staff and having a wider perspective.

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSED printout (App 4i A1b) March 1990

The SPACEd FOCUSED printout for Theresa's grid shows a strong clustering of elements E2, E11, E5 and E10 with the construct pole labelled by Theresa as *learning as an individual and me gaining information*. In the feedback Theresa says that this is a crucial part of her learning. She valued the opportunities for what she calls formal learning arising from courses, reading and talks. (See App 4i b)

The other strong cluster relates to the group of elements E7, E1, E3, E4, E6. These include work with the Head, with colleagues in school, particularly in handling Sarah, the child with challenging behaviour. In this group also are two related to the course talks, other course members and myself. These cluster together and relate to the construct pole which Theresa labelled as *incidental learning* and

which she talks about as being related to other people as a source in contrast with her own control over her personal learning which she uses as a label for the contrasting role. As an overview, this grid reflects Theresa's thoughts about her personal learning. She contrasts two types, formal, where she is both passive but in control and informal, which she sees as interactive.

The feedback for this grid came, half a year after its elicitation. By then Theresa had gained in confidence and was beginning to work much more closely with her staff and begin to take a lead. She says her confidence had increased and she was able to make more use of the informal 'knowledge' she had learnt on the courses. This is born out in the conversation with her Head and Deputy.

Grid Learning Conversations with Leslie, the Head Teacher

The first conversation with the Leslie, had covered a wider range of topics but we used the feedback conversation to focus on her view of SEN and the management of the school. The most interesting part to revisit was probably when we summarise her points, after the full analysis. The question asked had been about the Head's own learning about SEN, but constructs formed included a great deal about developing whole school policy and staff development plans. Leslie, like her teachers, stated she learns from the children.

She was pleased about the whole school development. As well as Theresa being on the course, the school reconsidered its special needs policy, had staff INSET on SEN and as part of this were given a lot of help from borough staff, including myself.

The Head had been away for some months on health grounds, so as her first conversation had taken place just as she returned there was a discussion about how well the Deputy and staff had coped. She was pleased because, as she said, Heads now must be able to give responsibility to staff, they cannot do it all themselves. Her conversation was a lot to do with this "feel good" factor that they did cope, did work as a team and take responsibility for their roles particularly well. Theresa had fulfilled her promise which Leslie had recognised in sending her on the SENIOSH/H course and had grown into her role (see Appendix 4i,C1 a &b).

Grid Learning Conversation with Ann, Deputy Head Teacher

Ann had been acting Head for a large part of the previous year when Theresa had been on the SENIOSH/H course. In this role she had given support to Theresa in her job and her school focussed project. Ann had chosen events which occurred during this year as well as others which had influenced her learning about management and SEN. Her elements chosen were:

6 named children (one was her own child)

2 courses (SNAP and Theresa's SENIOSH/H)

I about Borough support
I having welfare support for a child in class
I school policy
I getting to know .

..

This mixture included events which effected the school as well as herself. Head and Deputies, of necessity, are looking at developing their whole system of which Special Educational Needs is only a part. In the feedback meeting, the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout was read to reflect the meaning elicited in the first conversation (See p 75a).

The elements form two loose clusters,

Cluster One E5, E1, E10, E9, E4, E6 which subdivides into two, a) (E9, E4 and E6) and b) (E1, E10, E5).

Cluster Two (E7, E8) – (E2, E3) and (E12) and (E11) again subdividing into subgroups as brackets show

Cluster One a) (E9, E4, E6) concerned Ann's learning about special needs for the school and developing the policy, Theresa's course and getting to know borough services.

b) (E1,E10,E5,) was about strategies, procedures and getting support through use of welfare in class (a kind of result of the identification and paperwork done for statements).

Cluster two was all about specific children with Special Educational Needs and meeting those needs. E11, her own child, is placed near this cluster as this represented another way that Ann understood about children's needs. E7 and E8 are about staff needs as well. The grid is about understanding children's needs and helping staff and the school to meet them. It links individuals to policy making, but starts with the child, goes to supporting staff and then to the policy. Theresa and her course were part of both understanding the support possible for children and the school policy.

Her own summary was during feedback was;-

the constructs on the right pole are largely my view of Special Educational Needs from an organisational point of view – learning how to manage either children or staff in relation to children.

The constructs on the left pole group are ideas to do with people, managing feelings and relations with the child as a whole person with a life out of school providing extra pieces for the jigsaw ... working with outside agencies to fill gaps in understanding ... this arises from the different viewpoints linking together (See App 4i D1b).

She said that she had increased both her management role and her knowledge and skill in providing for individuals with very special needs – sometimes by managing internal resources, sometimes using outside support.

School S: Group Learning Conversation

In May it was possible to meet to share the joint meanings from all three grids. Copies of all three were provided to everyone and we checked we all understood what each individual had meant. By now it was more than 6 months since the initial conversations and two from their feedback conversations, so there was change that arose from this passage of time. Theresa was more secure in her post and able to take more responsibility for special needs, she felt more confident and looked back on the course as a source both of her knowledge and therefore this confidence. Ann was back as Deputy and Leslie had resumed her role as Headteacher but recognised that with the coming of LMS she would have to continue to delegate responsibility to Ann and Theresa for special needs.

They all three thought the school had progressed with its coping capacity and their policy for SEN was firmly in place. They welcomed the opportunity to reflect and review with their own learning and to share their common concerns. Although their perspectives differed from Theresa, a class teacher, to Leslie the Head, they shared a common belief and their need to continue their agreed policies for special needs – to meet the needs of all the pupils including those with very special needs. For these children, the staff had learnt that to work as a team meant individual teachers were supported and therefore able to support their pupils. The group conversation was welcomed as an evaluation of the last years' work, both for Theresa and the whole staff.

2. Grid Learning Conversations in School T.(Hillingdon)

Conversations took place with A2, Dorothy SENIOSH/H Course member 1988-89, cohort 1 .C 2 Kath, Headteacher

Background

Dorothy, as well as being a class teacher at her Hillingdon Junior school, had been appointed as SENCO. She had attended a number of borough INSET activities for SEN, as well as a Open University module, and had knowledge about many aspects of her role before she began the SENIOSH/H course in 1988. Her Head was herself interested in SEN issues and was supportive of Dorothy, wishing her to develop her role and the policy for SEN in the school.

Dorothy's first grid conversation took place in February 1990, six months after Dorothy had completed the course and the school project on policy. She chose as events those which she saw as contributing to her learning in relation to her role and that project. 8/11 of these events related to the various courses, talks and conferences

she had attended including the SENIOSH/H course. (See p 77a)

The other three events were:

talking to my older sister about Special Educational Needs
talking to the school's Educational Psychologist
work with a named colleague.

Dorothy's chosen focus for this first conversation was largely about her personal learning from INSET. The constructs elicited describe the different ways she construed these experiences and values she has placed on them for future use.

On the right pole are constructs which describe her independent learning. She uses these phrases to describe them.

gave knowledge no feedback
theoretical writing
talked to en masse
independent study at home
doing my own bit on my own
knowledge to use later
coming to me to build on knowledge

These constructs arise from certain types of INSET where talks are given and from the Open University distance learning. On the left construct pole are a cluster of descriptions of more personal nature,

personal one to one influence
back up people to boost confidence
involve someone else child
help getting to know staff in school
classroom relevance things to try out
making things happen in school
study, own initiative

The formulation of the policy (SENIOSH/H project) is grouped with these constructs along with talks with significant others, her sister, EP, colleague. Those courses which gave opportunities to talk to numbers of colleagues from other schools are in this cluster of events. The DES regional course is grouped with talking with teachers from many schools on the Bisham conference (a residential course for Hillingdon SENCOS). Of the events from the SENIOSH/H course, one workshop by Anne R is mentioned. This had particular significance as being of immediate use in school.

It would seem that this group of constructs is about the more embedded learning she had absorbed and been able to put into practice. She did however also value the academic knowledge-based learning, of which she had absorbed a great deal. She was gaining in confidence and as a "fully fledged" practitioner and was ready to take off into work in school related to her role and her project. This was not captured fully in

SPACED FOCUSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -										CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -									
					ELEMENTS										ELEMENTS				
STUDY OWN INITIATIVE	RC3	#	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	* RC3	COMING TO ME BUILD ON KNOWLEDGE			
VIEWS ACS LONDON PERSONAL	RC4	#	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	2	2	2	* RC4	LIFE SKILLS TRAINING FORTH				
BACKUP PEOPLE BOOST CONFIDC	CC	#	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	* CC	GAVE KNOWLEDGE NO FEEDBACK				
INVOLVE SOMEONE ELSE CHILD	C1	#	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	* C1	THEORETICAL WRITING FOR PD				
PERSONAL ONE TO ONE INFLUC	CS	#	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	* CS	TALKED TO EN MASSE				
MORE INTERACTION WTHPEOPLE	C7	#	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	* C7	INDEPNDANT STUDY AT HOME				
HELP GET TO KNOW STAFF SOCL	C9	#	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	* C9	DOING MY OWN BIT ON MY OWN				
CLASSROOM RELEVANCE TO TRY	CS	#	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	* CS	KNOWLEDGE TO USE LATER				
MAKING THINGS HAPPEN IN SCL	RC6	#	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	* RC6	OUTSIDE SCHOOL				

		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*ED+1 DU COURSE			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*TALK AINSCOW OR TWEDDLE			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*TALK FROM CHARLES CRIFFS			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*BOROUGH REMEDIAL DIPLOMA			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*SENIOSH ANN RAWLINGS			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*FORMULATE SEN POLICY SENIOS			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*MEETINGS WITH EP REGULAR			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*WORKING WITH REGGY CLOSE SD			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*TALK TO MY OLDER SISTER SEN			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*DES REGIONAL CROSS BOROUGH			
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*TALK OTHER COORDS BISHAMOUT			

Dorothy, SENIOSH/II course member, School T
SPACED FOCUSED grid

the grid representation or the original conversation, but can be seen from the notes taken at the time (See App 4 ii A2b).

Grid Learning Conversation with Kath; Headteacher; School T

Kath was an experienced Head who had been Deputy Head in two other schools. She said she knew the contacts in the borough and knew where to go for help. She had helped develop a borough policy document revision. She believed SEN to be every teacher's responsibility and saw it as an equal opportunities issue. This information arose from her description of the significant events she had chosen to illustrate her own learning about SEN. She also related special needs to medical problems which required help from GPs and therapists. She valued observation as a tool of identification and valued class teachers' knowledge of their children.

In eliciting constructs she used the expression, 'that was a specific incident' more than general occurrences. This was not strictly a construct as such, just a way of describing her events. Children were given as a source for her learning as is her own experiences of the school and borough which she values.

Her overall view of SEN was of individual needs, sometimes medical, sometimes behavioural. She resolved these problems by talking to professionals – EPs or GPs. There was little evidence of staff development, but then as it was her learning that was the focus of the conversation,, this may not have occurred to her. On the feedback meeting the conversation ranged more widely (Appendix 4ii.C2a,b).

She still mentioned what the authority could offer by way of support, such as an extra welfare, but explained her philosophy of special needs as being related to equal opportunities more fully. She used her dad's wish to be normal despite handicaps as an example of this. (This may be one reason for her inclusion of medical views of SEN). She made it clear that her philosophy for the school was one of valuing individuals.

In the feedback conversation she said ;

teamwork is important, Dorothy and I can't do it all, all teacher are teachers of children with Special Educational Needs and we need to give in-service in school to support them. She valued her learning from individual children and professionals she had talked to. She said-The hardest thing was to get people to write nearly helpful records especially for children with very individual needs.

School T sharing grid conversations

After sharing the meaning of their two SPACEd FOCUSED printouts, Dorothy and her Headteacher Kath, held a short conversation reviewing outcomes for themselves and the school.

Kath said;

The course has given you knowledge about management, which you are quickly beginning to use, with your professional knowledge to help you. You are learning to work with people on the job using that knowledge to work practically in school. You learn from other and the children but you have learnt particularly from courses. Its now synthesising and coming together.

Dorothy replied about Kath;

You learn from talking to people including parents and professionals – using articles you've read. Your view is wider than mine – of the whole borough. You see it as your job to help with special children to get back up and get support from the Borough. Because Hillingdon has poor support , it is difficult. Your philosophy is about equal opportunities and rights and self esteem. You've done years and years of work on this with school's borough and policy groups. People matter to you very much. Policy is important to you as it gives individuals a chance.

Kath replied;

I have a nagging fear about the numbers of individual children needing help. Careful records and observations are so important. More time is needed to give support for reading maths, spelling and handwriting. There are no more resources to free people but Special Educational Needs is clearly a cross curricular issue.

The Deputy sees Special Educational Needs as about poor self-image and works to link to the first school. The whole staff have changed views slightly, but are coming to terms with things and looking to Dorothy for support. Staff development is needed, at induction for new teachers on cross-curricular issues but Headteachers also need training in Special Educational Needs especially relating to LMS.

Comment on conversation sharing grid printouts

The grids were a help in getting started. They focussed on the differences between Dorothy and her Head. Due to time constraints, not much more than validation of the two grids could be achieved. It would have taken more time to start to use the content for future planning.

Comparison between Theresa and Dorothy: two course members from SENIOSH/H Cohort 1

Both Theresa and Dorothy were fairly new in post to their role as SENCO and used the course as a stepping stone. Dorothy had taken part in a number of SEN training experiences, so INSET was high on her agenda as a means of learning about SEN. Theresa on the other hand had learnt most from the interaction of her course, her project work and the school based INSET and assisting staff working with her on cases.

Of the two, it is probable Theresa got more active backing from senior management. The Deputy, Ann, gave her practical support with case conferences, parent, and other staff. The Head gave her general policy backup and time to perform her duties. Dorothy's Head's views seemed to be more to do with how to get in outside help than to do with staff development – at least so it would seem from the initial conversation. Dorothy had been given backup to do her school-based project, but her feedback showed a different picture.

A difference for me was that I could not follow up Dorothy's work personally, though reports from Audrey, my fellow tutor, it seemed that she had began to get to grips with the role of supporting staff as she gained experience. There were far less support staff and assisting professionals in Hillingdon than in Harrow.

For both Theresa and Dorothy, knowledge of a theoretical nature was valued as giving them confidence and competence. They also both learnt a lot from talking to other, Theresa, from working with staff and with children with challenging behaviour. In Theresa's case the whole-school policy INSET, with the whole staff, had come at an ideal point in her development. For Dorothy, that was planned for the future, to follow up her project work.

3. Grid Learning Conversations in School U.(Harrow)

Conversations took place with A3 : Kirsty, SENIOSH/H course member 1989-90
Cohort 2, C3: Adrian, Headteacher; D2: June, Deputy Head;

Background

Kirsty was a class teacher in a Harrow Middle school who, though showing interest in special needs, had only recently been asked to take over the role of SENCO. The Deputy Head, who was also very supportive, acted as mentor to Kirsty, as she began to take up her new position. Her Middle school was one of those to be extra-resourced under Harrow's plan to integrate children with physical handicaps. The Head teacher was newly appointed, but while Deputy of another Harrow Middle School, had been a student on an Open University special needs module (E241). His wife had been a course member of the SENIOSH/H the previous year. It was thought he would be sufficiently aware of the issues of special needs to develop his school for the integration project. However one of the other reasons for choosing the school was that, the site was relatively flat – only having two upstairs classrooms, its feeder first school was ideal for the PH Unit and it fed to the High School with the PH Secondary Unit.

The first school, at the time of the course, was being adapted by architects to accommodate up to 8 physically handicapped children. This meant building a therapy room from the old kitchens to be shared eventually by both schools. It also meant minor ramping projects to allow access to the classrooms. Another member of the same SENIOSH/H cohort (Pilla) was appointed as the teacher in charge of this first school unit.

Kirsty was a member of the second cohort of SENIOSH/H and was asked to take part in my research from the beginning of the course, to be followed up one a year later when Kirsty had completed the work.

Grid Learning Conversations with Kirsty SENIOSH/H course member

The first took place in October 1989, a few weeks after Kirsty had started the SENIOSH/H course. As usual the only question asked was "tell me about some of the events which you think have influenced you and your learning about Special Educational Needs." Because Kirsty was at the beginning of her training I expected her to choose any classroom events which she had experienced in relation to Special Educational Needs, as well as more formal training, and emphasised that the choice of events was hers.

Nearly all the significant events chosen to be listed by Kirsty were in fact from her classroom teaching. Six were centred round individual children who had caused her some concern, two were particular experiences of collaborative work with other

teachers and two came from personal experiences from short courses run at the teachers' centre.

There were ten events, selected from her story by Kirsty, were written on the element cards. When these were presented in triads, ten bipolar constructs were elicited.

When sorting all the element cards against each of these construct pairs in turn, a pattern began to emerge as to how Kirsty perceived her own learning about Special Educational Needs. She grouped those cards with children's names and specific classroom incidents together with two personal experiences which happened to her on courses. These were about gaining insight into children's problems, seeing failure emerging, becoming aware of individual needs.

Another group of elements were sorted against the construct poles related to classroom management, co-operative learning, her ability to organise as a classteacher. This pattern was becoming clear as Kirsty sorted the cards and talked about her choices which were recorded on the raw grid.

The SPACEd FOCUSed printout of Kirsty's grid revealed similar information to the original sorting, but with more detail. The child named elements or incidents were construed against the right construct pole (See App 4iii A3a),

My experience gave me insight into a child's experience

Learning from first hand experience with a child

Learn about literacy difficulties from individuals

Children gave me insight

Child told me something about his differences

Understand children's difficulties

The element cards of two of named children were construed against construct pole 3.

success for children working on their own

success for children and myself

remember that this was good and it worked

Zabelle, a child for whom an intervention by Kirsty relating to her maths, had been successful is construed against three "success" constructs. Darren is also grouped with these success items but also with all the others at this pole. Kirsty construes Carl, Paul and Lee identically because she herself learnt from teaching them in the same way, not because their problems were necessarily the same.

The elements clustering towards the opposite pole are related to Kirsty's learning about her own class organisation and management. These she gives as:

*value co-operative group learning
planned programs were successful
learning from own experience
my organisation matters
my organisation effects behaviour*

The experience which gave rise to this construct pole most clearly was;
*reading article the Primary Project provided
collaborative learning with support teachers
behaviour observation skills learnt by tasks set by support
teachers*

The element *Zabelle* was construed partially on this pole on
*learning from experience
planned programme successful
my organisation matters
my organisation effects behaviour*

This was because the experience Kirsty had chosen to retell about this child, represented one of her own successes. She sees this success as being related to her better organisation. The two elements are;

*copying arabic
listening through hearing aids*

These were personal experiences Kirsty had on two courses. They had given her ideas of how it felt for the types of problems children have when they cannot fully comprehend language in the classroom.

She construes these two almost identically (C7). These elements are construed as relating to the right construct pole for,

*my experience gives insight about child differences
firsthand experience
learn about literacy for individuals
understand children's difficulties*

and the construct to the left pole,

*seeing failure emerging
must be able to bear this in mind for these children
learn from own experience*

The C7 is about physical impairment affecting behaviour for the right pole and organisation affecting behaviour on the left pole. The two personal experiences from INSET are construed differently on this construct, hearing being related to the physical impaired, learning arabic to the organisation aspects.

The style of the conversation was quick and reflective on Kirsty's part. My role was an extension of the tutorial one. Tutorial sessions were in many ways very similar to Learning Conversations of the type used on the research. The tutorial used the reflective tools of action research.

Feedback conversation using the SPACEd-FOCUSed printout

The second conversation took place in March, about half way through the course. This feedback took the form of a further reflective Learning Conversation. The paper record of the first conversation gave a picture of Kirsty's views at the time but this was extended by her interpretation of this record six months later. The notes scribbled by myself on the original grid printout reveal something of how this conversation went. (See App 4iii A3b)

The clusters of numbers were ringed to highlight where they occurred. Kirsty's comments about them were written on the paper printout. Some of this confirms the description of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid section above. Kirsty's own groupings are added. She groups her right pole constructs together as,

how children function

what they do

ones you stumble on accidentally

and RC6 and C10

satisfaction

as opposed to the opposite left poles in the same construct as

anguish in a classroom situation

as opposed to a small group or individual one -to-one sessions

All the right hand pole constructs are labelled as *first hand experience in class* predominantly as opposed to *my organisation and how I function..*

Her comments about clusters of elements were

children teach you about individuals

practical experiences puts you in the shoes of a child

About E8 she says *we took her back to the basics, it needs courage*, and the links to E3, E10 which are about *being brave*.

Her overall comments on the feedback, related to how she thought she had changed since it was elicited in October were;-

(1) In learning a lot about the children

(2) In beginning to get to grips with organisation, over which other people are helping. my experiences have been a specific effort. I haven't always been able to 'do' collaborative learning.

(3) Noticing special needs can be cause of anguish and distress but it can be rewarding. (Splash of guilt – very difficult to help others especially older colleagues).

Group Conversation at School U

By June, Adrian the Head, and June the Deputy Head, had held conversations with me about their perceptions of special needs. This had also taken the form of a repertory grid elicitation and feedback. In June's case the time was snatched from her other duties and we were interrupted several times. These conversations gave insight into the priorities of the Head and those of his Deputy. Once this had taken place, the group session was fixed. Everyone had copies of their own and the others grids. The session was not very satisfactory for a number of reasons. Adrian was in a hurry to finish and go to his next task. It was the end of a school afternoon and June wanted to be available to parents and children and Kirsty had decided she did not like teaching and was looking for alternative careers. She became a bit upset during the session and it was brought to a close quickly but carefully. Only a little new information about the theme and the school came to light. June had been helping Kirsty to decide on her future career. The record of grid conversation threw up painful issues for Kirsty who was finding class control very stressful. June had been helping support her and was very positive. Adrian's grid had looked very much at his career and its progress rather than much about SEN. It was not reflecting much about the school, more about himself. June, on the other hand was very much focussed on school needs. She saw SEN in social emotional terms, as a pastoral issue (See App 4iii C3 & D2, for grids and notes for Adrian).

Grid Learning Conversations with Kirsty using CHANGE grids

In November 1990 Kirsty came to hold a third (personal) Learning Conversation with me and we used the CHANGE grid procedure. She had decided to stay in teaching but to work part-time, for a while and with smaller group teaching, in a support role.

The CHANGE grid procedure began by eliciting new elements (in Kirsty's case new events which she considered important since the last grid conversation 13 months before) and then from both new and old elements, new constructs,

New elements listed were:

Arron

experience working as support

SENIOSH/H project – INSET day

talking to others – SENIOSH/H

morning spent with Pilla

working with June , every child

SPACED FOCUSSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS														CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -		
		E	E	EE	EE	E	E	E	E	E	E	EE	EE	E	E			
		1	1	11	11	0	1	0	0	1	0	00	00	0	1			
		7	3	4	2	1	3	0	9	8	5	1	65	27	4	6		
LEARN ABOUT LITERACY INDIVS	C4	2	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	11	11	1	1	C4	VALUE COOPERATIVE GRP LRNG
LEARNING FRM OWN EXPERIENCE	C2	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	11	11	1	1	C2	CHILD TOLD SMETHG ABT DIFF
INSIGHT INTO HOW CHILD FEEL	C12	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	11	1	1	C12	HOW STAFF FEEL
LOGICALSTEPS TO HELP NEEDS	C14	3	1	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	11	11	1	3	C14	YOU TAKE THINGS AS IT COME
BEING ONE STEP AHEAD METNED	C13	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	11	1	3	C13	WATCH A NEED EMERGING
SUCCESS FR CHILDREN AD SELF	C6	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	22	11	3	3	C6	SEEING FAILURE EMERGING
SUCCESS CHILDREN ON OWN	RC8	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	22	11	2	3	RC8	SUCCESS THRU WORKG TOGETHE
SECOND HAND LEARNING	RC1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	33	11	1	1	RC1	FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE
WORK IN CLASS TECHNIQUES OW	C11	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	22	22	1	1	C11	WAYS OF WORKING WTH OTHERS
STRATEGIES FROM CHILDREN	RC15	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	22	21	1	1	RC15	STRATEGIES FROM COLLEGUES
MUST BARE THIS IN MIND FCHO	C10	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	11	11	1	1	C10	REMEMBER GOOD THIS WORKED
UNDERSTAND CHILDRENS DIFFCL	RC5	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	11	11	1	1	RC5	MY ORGANISATION MATTERS
CHILDREN GAVE ME INSIGHT	RC3	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	1	22	11	1	3	RC3	PLANNED PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL
PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTEFF BEHV	RC7	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	12	22	3	3	RC7	ORGANISATION EFFECTS BEIFJU
MY EXPERIENCE OV INS CHD DF	C9	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	11	33	1	3	C9	EXPERIENCE OUT DOESNT HELP

# DARRON																		
# LEE WRITING COULDN'T LISTEN																		
# CARL REVSL PAUL RD INSIGHT																		
# COPYING LET BY LET OBSERVTN																		
# COPYING ARABIC																		
# LISTENING THRU HEARING AID																		
# DARRON MNEIOMIC FEL SUCCESS																		
# NEGOTIATING TASK FOR CH STY																		
# ZABELLE MATHS PROG WORKED																		
# BEHAVIOUR OBSERV SKILL LRNT																		
# COLLABORATIVE LRN TYPE TEAC																		
# PRIMARY PROJECT ARTICLE HLP																		
# EXPERIENCE WORKING SUPPORT																		
# SENIOSH PROJECT INSET DAY																		
# TALKING TO OTHERS SENIOSH																		
# SPEND AM WITH PILLA																		
# WORKING WITH JUNE EVERY CHS																		

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Kirsty, SENIOSH/H course member, School U
 SPACED FOCUSSED CHANGE grid

86a

The New Constructs were
on the left pole

on the right pole

insight into how child feels

how staff feel

logical steps to help needs

take things as it comes

being one step ahead to meet needs

watch needs emerging

work in class techniques

ways of working with others

strategies from the children

strategies with colleagues

The new and old elements were then construed and produced some new constructs. The whole set of elements were then sorted against the whole set of constructs forming a new raw grid for the CHANGE grid.

The process by now was illuminative to Kirsty who was beginning to understand the relationship between the elements, and constructs, so the laddering sorting was almost as revealing as the feedback with the SPACEd FOCUSed grid (See p 86a). Those elements related to learning from the children or having insight into individual difficulties are largely construed still as learning from experience about how the child feels.

The opposite pole to some of these constructs now included

How staff feel

Ways of working with others

Strategies for colleagues

The other new constructs added to those already present on the right construct pole.

They were about

You take things as it comes

Watch a need emerging

Their left poles opposites were

Logical steps to help needs

Being one step ahead to meet needs

The right pole cluster which was most obvious was all about collaborative working, organisation, strategies from others. The most obvious left pole cluster was about learning from the individual children. It embedded some of the new ideas as how to be effective.

This grid represented a picture of Kirsty's view of her learning on job through work with children and now, in the CHANGE grid, with other staff.

The two elements about her own learning from the earlier courses,

Copying arabic

Listening through learning aids

are outside the range of convenience of some of these newer constructs and organisation of ideas related to classrooms and collaboration, they are still in the range of convenience from the group of construct on individual needs.

Only two new elements related to the SENIOSH/H course directly. These are

SENIOSH/H project talking to others on SENIOSH/H

Spending the day with Pilla

which was an indirect outcome of the course, as they were both in the same cohort and now on the same site, as Pilla had taken up her new post and the first school as Teacher in charge of the physical handicapped unit. The element of *experience with learning support* arises from her new part time post, as does *working with June, every child*. The two elements related to the course are construed in a nearly identical way, largely against the right pole against the constructs of *working with others and working in classrooms*. These three new elements were outside the range of convenience for three constructs relating to learning from the individual child's failure or success

Feedback conversation using CHANGE grid

The fourth conversation with Kirsty took place March 1991, a year since the first feedback and about four months since the CHANGE grid was elicited. She reflected on how she had changed and felt (See App 4iii A3d).

She records her emerging interest in the school as a whole, getting ideas about organisation, planning working with colleagues. She was happier in her new role as support teacher because she had removed herself from the frustration of her perceived lack of achievement in the classroom context, in meeting individual's needs. She says

I like working with people I know – supportive framework

I've got a bit of status

I like doing things thoroughly

The running commentary on the CHANGE grid feedback added further insight into the meaning of the printout and enriched the record of the conversation, showing how it went beyond the grid conversation.

There was evidence of new ideas being pulled out for discussion to do with Kirsty's views of Special Educational Needs. In her original grid she had used children's failure to complete tasks as evidence of how she became aware of individual needs. By the CHANGE grid conversation she was distinguishing between children coping – not coping, as one construct, and succeeding - not succeeding, as another. The discussion elaborated these ideas showing that Kirsty felt 'anguish', 'dash of guilt'

about children's failure but could see that coping was a type of success. Some aspects of learning for a child need "failure" to make progress developmentally. I used as an example to discuss this with her, a child tumbling over as he learns to walk. This is not perceived as failure, however in a classroom these 'learning steps' can be perceived negatively by teacher.

She uses

planned programmes v *let it develop*

as a construct. She was using classroom organisation in her original grid as one pole of her ideas of how she coped. A new 'space' is emerging, which allows her to stand back sometimes, and realise the child may be coping and she can afford to wait.

At one point she didn't understand how she had construed her own two poles of a construct. We looked back at how it was elicited – she readjusted the meaning ;
Yes I see – that's me learning from children – the other is learning from other people's opinions on the INSET day.

In her first grid she learnt from support staff working collaboratively with her. In this CHANGE grid she is learning to work with her own staff as a SEN support teacher. She had said in the first feedback conversation

It was not until I took on the job of Special Needs Co-ordinator that I realised what a monumental task it was.

The final feedback conversation took place some six months after the end of the course. Kirsty had a new role – one of a support teacher, rather than SENCO. Kirsty had found classroom teaching too stressful, just because she could see the failure in individual children and felt unable to deal with it herself She thought that making these career decisions was helped by the reflective nature of the Learning Conversations.

Her Deputy, June, says Kirsty is a good class teacher and thinks highly of her, so this feeling is Kirsty's own perception of herself, not as she seen by others. Kirsty wanted to get to grips with the individual child's problem in smaller groups.

4. Grid Learning Conversations with Pilla: SENIOSH/H course member, cohort 2, 1989-90, in charge of First School Unit on the same site as School U

Background

Pilla was not part of any school group, in the research. She was appointed to run the new unit for physically impaired children in February, 1990, This unit was on the same site as School U. She attended the second cohort of SENIOSH/H, as did Kirsty, with whom she could work with in a liason role. Pilla was a mature teacher in mid career who had many years experience in different settings. Before bringing up her own family Pilla had run a nurture group for disturbed children in central London. When she came on the SENIOSH/H course in 1989 she was SENCO and Language Co-ordinator at another Harrow First school. This school had an attached unit for hearing impaired children. In her capacity as teacher for reading, Pilla had taught those children, as well as being responsible for the mainstream pupils.

Half way through the course Pilla left this school and took up her new post as teacher in charge of the physically handicapped unit at the First school of School U. This change arose partly as a result of her coming on the SENIOSH/H course at a time when she was looking for a new opportunity. She also had been distressed by the way her First school Head had announced to the staff that she never had been the Language Co-ordinator, after she had held the post for two years. Relationships were not very easy with that Head, which may have contributed to Pilla's feeling for a need of change. It certainly related to her need for support and to re-affirm her own philosophies and beliefs.

Her new post took her into realms of the unknown, dealing with the degree of handicap she had not met before. Her fundamental beliefs about children being 'whole people' not handicapped people was important as was her experience with parents when running the nurture groups. My role with Pilla also changed from tutor on the course to her mentor and support in setting up the unit and facilitating all the architectural, medical, social and educational personnel who would be part of the venture.

Grid Learning Conversations with Pilla,

The first took place on April 6 1990, two thirds through the course. It started with a long story, told over a hour, of her history in teaching. It was very much a personal story, showing her development in thinking, in confidence and the value she gave to children and their parents. It also told of some of the difficult times she had experienced. This story was about Pilla's philosophy, building up over her years of teaching and bringing up a family. It relates also strongly to her views about special needs.

This story is best represented by a mixture of listening to the taped account and looking at the elements chosen in the end as the most significant events. These events related to Pilla's whole development as a teacher and include her understanding of the whole child and the life outside school. It is very little to do with the detail of special needs work, but very much to do with Pilla's growth of confidence and competence which she builds up over the various encounters of ten years of teaching. Her relationships with me was as friend and supporter, so she had few inhibitions in saying what she is thinking. The conversation was very centred on her development of her confidence (See p 90a).

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed printout and TRIGRID

There is not much spacing in the grid and the correlations between elements is not very high. TRIGRID shows % of 80–85–87 between a number of elements but these overlap across each other and do not show highly construed ideas which are separate. This may be because of the over use of (2) as a ranking and a non-applicable choice (see App 4iv A4b).

Most of the value of the first two conversations was in the process and the taped record shows this best. The sorting of elements against constructs was however not recorded on the tape.

For this grid a different printout TRIGRID shows the relationship better (See App A4 c,d). The cluster E1, E7, E20 and E12, E2 seem all to be about Pilla's ideas of the child as a whole, the child with parents as well as in school which she relates to her own son and learning through his experiences. E9, E15, E14, E6 are all about people and experiences which have supported Pilla and helped her confidence. E5, E8 and E12 are about developing school and staff policy. E9, E3, E16 are more negative experiences when things became difficult. E18 and E17 are about change in and to some extent is E19 and E10. The OU E241 course is seen as outside the range of convenience of this discussion 8 times, another 4times it construes on the right pole, 2 times on the left. These constructs were to do with widening concepts about SEN and learning about policy, reading with a meaning and purpose.

E15, SENIOSH/H, was also outside range 4 times, 6 to right pole, 4 to left. It had some constructs and in common with the other course, but was perceived more in terms of the talking to others, including myself as tutor as a support and change agent. This comes from the taped conversation.

Learning Conversation around the CHANGE grid (See App 4iv A4 c,d)

The third conversation with Pilla's used the CHANGE grid elicitation procedure. It took place in November 1990, seven months after the original grid conversation. We began by revising the meanings on the cards and printouts so Pilla could remember

SPACED FOCUSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS																		CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -			
		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E			
		1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1		
		8	7	7	4	2	2	1	7	0	1	0	5	4	6	9	3	6	5	8	3		
LEARNING FROM THINGS THAT WROTE	RC13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	RC13	REASONS TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS	
LOTS TO LEARN IN NEW JOB	C10	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	C10	I HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE	
CHILD WAS LIFE OUT OF SCHOOL	C4	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	C4	WIDER CONCEPTS OF SEN	
INFLUENCING OTHERS THROUGH TALK	C3	1	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	C3	BOROUGH WHIP IT OUT CHANGE	
OWN PERSONAL STRUCTURE & EFFECT	RC11	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	RC11	STRUCTURE BEING TAKEN AWAY	
WHOLE CHILD THEY ARE PEOPLE	C2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	1	C2	I WAS LACKING CONFIDENCE	
READING FOR A REASON MEANING	C14	3	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	C14	FELT I WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS	
PUSHING MYSELF INTO THINGS	RC12	3	3	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	RC12	GROWTH POINTS ACCIDENTAL	
HOW PEOPLE TREAT WIDER LEARNING	C5	3	3	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	C5	ABOUT HOW I FEEL BEGINNINGS	
PEOPLE GIVING ME SUPPORT	C1	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	C1	POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT WITH CHILDREN	
INFLUENCING OTHERS ADVERSELY	RC8	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	RC8	NOT ONLY A HANDICAP CHILD	
VALUE OF LEAD COORDINATOR	RC9	1	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	RC9	IT DOESN'T MATTER AS LONG AS LEARNING	
LOSS VALUE TAKEN AWAY FROM ME	RC6	1	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	RC6	ENTHUSIASM OVER NEW THINGS	
BOROUGH DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT	C7	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	C7	CONFIRMS WHAT I THINK MATTERS	
																						*BEING LANGUAGE COORDINATOR SEN	
																						*TALK STRANDS SCHOOL POLICY	
																						*MORE; I STOP MORE I THINK	
																						*TOLD NOT LANGUAGE COORDINATOR	
																						*MOVING TO HARROW ISOLATION	
																						*STAFF RELUCTANT IN CLASSROOM	
																						*CONVERSATIONS WITH PAUL	
																						*IN MEETING LIZ	
																						*COMING ON SENIOSH	
																						*E241 CRS TOO BROAD AT TIME	
																						*SHOWING BOOK FEEDBACK FROM	
																						*VALUE CHILDREN WHAT I DO	
																						*MR BOXALL BUILD UP NURTURE	
																						*SEEING CHILD AS WHOLE	
																						*OWN SON REFLECTING CHILDREN	
																						*TEACH HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN	
																						*BYRS READ AT CEDARS RELATIVE	
																						*ESCAPE OLD REMEDIAL READING	
																						*NEW JOB AT ELM GROVE	
																						*GLYNIS DEVALUED EVERYTHING	

Pilla, SENIOSH/H course member, School UF
 SPACED FOCUSED grid

90a

what she meant by the words. When this was done she discussed important events during the last few months and most of these were selected for the new element cards. This grid became difficult to handle and needed some elements dropped for the computer programme to work. One each of those elements construed most alike were dropped, but as in the original grid, similarity between elements had been low, this became rather arbitrary.

Its probable that the most of the new material in this CHANGE grid relates to Pilla's growth into her new role in the unit, rather than the SENIOSH/H course. This was already mentioned in the original grid. Some of the same constructs are elicited about

whole child

being valued

confidence – what to do

children help me to see something new

The tape of the elicitation is better evidence of these new experiences and what they meant, than the grid printout which, because of its size and complexity, lacks clarity. This grid was not fed back, but further supportive conversations took place.

Pilla did not take part in a group conversation, as no-one in either of her schools had taken part in the research.. She keeps some professional contact with Kirsty and Adrian in the Middle school, but is quite separate from them in the First school. After leaving Harrow I have kept in contact with Pilla. She has remained as teacher in charge of the unit and is still coping with the extremely complex job of organising support for the group of 10 children with severe needs who are integrated in that school. She has become an accepted member of the staff and is highly thought of by the Head, who delegates nearly all responsibility for the unit to Pilla.

Comparison between the two SENIOSH/H cohort 2 course members

Both Kirsty and Pilla attended the second of the two courses for a year. Both took on new roles within their schools, Pilla at a different school, half way through the course just as the first research conversations also started. They were, however at very different places in their careers. Pilla was a mature teacher, with a great deal of knowledge of special needs. Kirsty was new to special needs, the course being an introduction for her to the issues. They both made good use of the CHANGE grid experience to evaluate learning and to plan for their futures.

Reflection on Early Stage of Research

These four follow-up studies showed much about how the learning that took place on the course was used by different individuals and their schools. It showed how it takes time for the process to effect change, first for the individual and then later for the organisation. It would seem, particularly from the CHANGE grid conversations, that it is over a year before much evidence can be seen. Although not easy to see from the conversations with Heads or Deputies, support for the course member is important. The learning outcomes are fully discussed in chapter 7 of this report.

The second set of four conversations, reported in the next chapter, began as follow-up and evaluation, mainly of the OTIS courses, although one school had a course member from both OTIS and SENIOSH/H (School W). The difference between the two sets lies in the time between the first changes brought about through a course member, or another source for change. In the first set, described in this chapter, work had only recently begun. The first changes to be seen were to the course member themselves. This was reflected in much of the conversation reported in this chapter. In the next set, special needs work had been going on for some years, due to initiatives of Heads, OTIS course members or others. This is reported in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Descriptions of Learning Conversations held in Four Further Schools in Phase One

The second set of four conversations began as follow-up and evaluation, mainly of the OTIS courses, but one school had a course member from both OTIS and SENIOSH/H (School W). No suitable candidates were found for the second Hillingdon OTIS follow-up, but it was eventually possible to work with a further Hillingdon school, (School Z), following a course member from the third SENIOSH/H cohort. This work was begun during the first phase of the research, but the conversations with the Deputy Head and the Group Learning Conversation took place towards the end of phase two, when I had extended the techniques of the Learning Conversations. The whole of this case study is, however, reported in this chapter.

This chapter is organised as follows-

A) Sets of Grid Learning Conversations held in Four Schools, in Harrow and Hillingdon, (As follow-up of OTIS & SENIOSH/H course members and action research where possible.)

The four schools in this section were all ones where work had already begun on developing Special Educational Needs. It was, therefore, possible to use the opportunities given through the research to both help evaluate this work and discuss future action.

B) Series of Personal Reflective Grid Conversations

This chapter ends with the descriptions of a series of reflective grid conversations conducted to monitor my own learning, as part of the action research methodology.

Table 4 Showing Grid Learning Conversations in Four Schools

5) School W (Harrow)

B1 *Ronny* (OTIS Course Member 1985)
 C4 *Cathy* (Head Teacher;)
 A5 *Jenny* (SENIOSH/H course member
 Cohort 2, 1989/90)
 C5 *Stella* (Head Teacher; now retired)

6) School X (Hillingdon)

B2 *Lydia* (OTIS Course Member
 1984)
 C6 *Christine* (Head Teacher)

7) School Y (Harrow)

B3 *Nye* (OTIS Course Member 1984)
 C7 *Len* (Head Teacher)
 D3 *Sylvia* (Deputy Head
 D4 *Debbie* (Teacher in charge of unit)

8) School Z (Hillingdon)

Continued into Phase 2.
 A6 *Sharon* (SENIOSH/H course
 Cohort 3, 1990 -91)
 C8 *Adrian* (Headteacher)
 D5 *Linda* (Deputy Head)

Timescale of Conversations, 1989-1992

Case Name	First	Feedback	Group	CHANGE	Feedback
B1 Ronny (Harrow)	Oct 89	Feb 90	Mar 90		
C4 Cathy	Sept 89	Jan 90	" "		
A5 Jenny	Sept 89	Feb 90	" "	Nov 90	Mar 91
C5 Stella	Sept 89	N/A	N/A		
B2 Lydia (Hillingdon)	Apr 90	May 90	May 90	N/A	
C6 Christine	Mar 90	May 90	" "		
B3 Nye (Harrow)	Mar 90	Jun 90	Jul 90	N/A	
C7 Len	Feb 90	Jun 90	" "		
D3 Sylvia	Jun 90	Jun 90	" "		
D4 Debbie	Apr 90	May 90	" "		
A6 Sharon (Hillingdon)	Jun 91	Jul 91	Jul 92	N/A	
C8 Adrian	Jun 91	Jul 91	" "		
D5 Linda	Mar 92	Jun 92	" "		

5. Grid Learning Conversations in School W (Harrow)

Conversations took place with B2, Ronny, OTIS Course Member 1984: A5 Jenny, SENIOSH/H Course Member 1989/90 : C4, Cathy, Headteacher, C5, Stella, (Retired Head).

Background

School W was opened in the mid-seventies as an open-plan combined First and Middle school, serving a Catholic parish in north-west London. The first Head Stella, believed very strongly that the school should be open to every child, including those with disabilities. Over the years a number of children with special needs had been accepted by the governing body, who also backed Stella's philosophy. The school set an example, which later was to be followed by other schools in the borough.

The LEA eventually agreed to some extra resourcing of School W. This took the form of non-teaching assistants for pupils who were physically handicapped or those with severe learning difficulties. There were no adaptations to buildings until much later, when, in 1991, a therapy and adapted bathroom facilities were added.

The ethos of School W was one of a caring community which valued everyone equally. All children were considered to be special and to have individual needs. There was no special-needs policy because the whole-school policy covered special needs in the way the school was conducted, from management to details of the classroom. This is often said by teachers or Heads who do not wish to think too hard about special-needs issues, but in this case there was evidence of the philosophy permeating all the activities of the school.

Ronny, the SENCO for School W, attended the OTIS course in 1984. Her project was related to extending the curriculum planning for special needs to those children who did not have severe difficulties; the group often referred to, in Warnock terms, as the 18% of children with Special Educational Needs.

At that time Stella had integrated a few pupils whose difficulties would have usually placed them in a special school. This action of the governors and school, in integrating these children who might have been "labelled" mentally handicapped by many schools, had upset the Head of the school for severe learning difficulties, who felt the decision to be wrong. All this had occurred before the borough had adopted their policies for integration. In 1985 the LEA had appointed an Advisor for SEN, Viv, who with the Director of Education and a forward-looking Chair of education, began to plan for new SEN policies. Stella, along with a secondary Head, were to be on the working party developing these policies.

Personal Involvement with School W

My first visit to School W was during Ronny's OTIS course when, as part of the tutoring, I visited, with Viv, to agree the details of Ronny's school project with Stella. In 1985 Stella was asked to contribute to the Bedford Way Papers evaluation of OTIS as one of the Headteachers' contribution. (Appendix 1 iv)

Ronny continued her studies of Special Educational Needs by taking an Open University Advanced Diploma. I was a her tutor for the last module of this, E806, which required three small action–research projects as course work. In 1988, when I was appointed to Harrow, to work as Co–ordinator for Services for Children with Physical and Sensory impairment, I worked closely with Ronny to help her with facilities and equipment for her children.

In deciding to include Ronny, and later Jenny, in my research it was possible to include School W as a case study. My own history of interaction with the school meant that I knew Stella and Cathy, her Deputy, soon to become Head, when Stella retired. I did not know the other staff or Jenny before she attended the SENIOSH/H. My way of working with Ronny and Cathy and with School W took the form of acting as a friend who could assist them in joint problem solving. I had some knowledge to add, but I also learnt from their considerable experience.

There was, therefore, very little change from the support role to the role of action researcher; both included the task of reviewing and reflecting and discussing ideas. (Appendix 5 v)

Conversational Styles

At first it appeared that the techniques of the grid elicitation might interfere with our normal conversational style. Indeed, I think that Ronny was not sure she was not just playing my game at first however willingly. However, as our grid elicitation progressed and particularly by the time the feedback took place, she began to use the tool to reflect at a deeper level than she might otherwise have done. Cathy took the technique in her stride and did not let it interfere at all with her thinking, reviewing, talking through her events, constructs and later with feedback on the whole grid. My conversations with Cathy were frequent, so in one sense the grid conversations were only rather special versions of the set. However, because of this Cathy had trust in me and we were able to work hard at the grid conversations and discuss the meaning of her constructs at quite a deep and personal level.

A year later, after the school study was completed, I was able to return to the school for another hour's conversation, which I will discuss in detail later. This time I did not use a grid as a technique because it was no longer necessary.

With Stella I was only able to hold one grid conversation without feedback as she had

already retired to live out of London. Again this conversation was really one of a series and so was only made different by the use of the grid as a tool. In Stella's case the conversation took the form of a counselling session with myself. Stella had left her school with some deep feelings of anger about the LEA and how policy had worked against her philosophy for her school. The personal nature of this session meant that the full report is not appropriate in the research. Her grid, however shows some of the content. (Appendix 5 v C5)

Grid Learning Conversations with Cathy, Headteacher

The first grid conversation took place in the evening of 26 September 1989. Cathy told her story of her growing knowledge and capacity to manage special needs in School W, following in the footsteps of Stella, who had just retired. Cathy had been Stella's Deputy since 1985. She had gone to the school knowing there would be opportunities to learn about children with a variety of special needs. She learnt from conversations with Stella, and later with Ronny, who had been at the school before Cathy came.

As a spin- off from the OTIS course, School W was used as a school for visits by all the next cohorts of OTIS. Cathy remembered showing these visitors round. She said that through their comments and amazement at the success of the school, in teaching the needs of all their children, Cathy also stood back, reflected, and was amazed herself. Her chosen events included experiences in management, both at class and school level and courses, conferences and visits she had made. She mentioned four children who remind her of specific incidents, including two related to her own son who, though not at this school, also has special needs. She also gave conversations with Stella as an on- going learning event.

The constructs were elicited and the laddering and sorting completed. The tone and quality of this first conversation was as of two friends talking about professional and life issues. The two interwove due to Cathy's mention of her own son and the history of her four years at School W. The structure then became more formal in order to complete the raw grid elicitation.

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed Grid

A term later it was possible to find time to feedback and talk through the SPACEd FOCUSed version of the raw grid. This printout shows two clusters of elements. E5, E6, E2, E7, E8, as one cluster and E3, E11, E10, E9, E1, E4 as the other, leaving E12 as a singleton loosely connected to both clusters. First I asked if the elements were still as significant or whether she would change any now. Cathy said the two about her son were linked to events particularly important at that time, but due to personal history, some of these had changed, so she was not so worried. The second Simon mentioned, was a child she read about in a book.

The constructs form two clusters, (C7, C 6, RC3) being about Cathy's management role, working with and through others from her personal and emotional viewpoint and (C4, RC2, C8, C1, C9) (the last two an identically construed pair), is about -
benefit from others experience *v private experience*
perspectives from outside *v realistic expectations of the school*

The clustering of the constructs and their poles is better represented by the SPACEd TRIGRID layout of the focussed grid (see p 98a).

This left C5 as an isolate, only very loosely connected to the two clusters.

The taped recording of the feedback conversation gives fuller meaning to the ideas behind these clusters.

At the end of the conversation, I tried to summarise all the points Cathy had discussed in relation to the grid and its extended meaning. This pulls out the overarching constructs she sees related to her grouping of ideas, in the clusters, and the meaning of the singletons. One of the reasons for this overview was to help the group feedback and sharing of grids planned for Cathy, Ronny and Jenny, described later in the chapter. To help this group feedback and sharing, I wrote a few notes on the SPACEd FOCUSed print-out. (Appendix 5v, C4b,c)

We then reviewed and reflected on the picture the grid had given. It gave a personal picture of Cathy and how she manages the whole 'show'.

The taped record gives some of these .which included ideas,

1)About management and whole school policies,

2)About realistic expectations of a school in relation to Special Educational Needs

Both of these are about realistic expectations of school. The ability of schools to cope with every problem. I found it difficult to learn but ... there is a point when you can not cope and resourcing is a recognition of that. I learnt also to be realistic about the education system through my own experiences with my son.

3)About the place of theoretical knowledge

Theory is what I've read in books, heard from others; knowledge that has no direct bearing on what I'm doing in my own role or my personal experience ... It is important or just different from this (the opposite pole). Its' not important till I need it and then its no longer theoretical – its' important that I know about it and when I use it, it becomes part of the rest. For example ... and she quoted something she had learnt on her management course then used in her daily routine.

SPACED CONSTRUCT TRIPRINT

RCS	MANAGEMENT ROLE IN SCHOOL V THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE INCRS	RCS	16
C7	MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES V DESPAIR	C7	0
C6	LEARNING THROUGH OTHERS V EMOTIONAL REACTION	C6	50
RC3	WIDER VIEW V PERSONALREACTION	RC3	50
C4	COMPARISONS OTHER SCHOOLS V REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS	C4	41
RC2	SEEN THROUGH OTHERS EYES V INVOLVMENT IN ACTION	RC2	66
C8	PEOPLE AS ROLE MODELS V PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	C8	75
C1	BENIFIT OTHERS EXPERIENCE V PRIVATE EXPERIENCE	C1	83
C9	PERSPECTIVES FROM OUTSIDE V REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS SCL	C9	100

Cathy, Headteacher, School W
 SPACED CONSTRUCT TRIGRID

Grid Learning Conversation with Jenny : SENIOSH/H Course Member Cohort 2, 1989-90

Background

Jenny was a teacher of some years experience, who had returned to teaching after a gap when she was bringing up her own children. She had worked in a number of schools but had been at School W for a few years. Although not the SENCO, she had expressed an interest in finding out more about SEN.

Jenny's first grid conversation took place on 21 September 1989, just as she started the SENIOSH/H. It was quite lightweight in content as she was at this time tentatively exploring her interest in the domain. The conversation shows one of her frustrations about not knowing, and curiosity and desire to know more. It is built round 9 elements:

3 mentioning children (one her own child)

2 teaching observations

3 practical experiences in her own teaching and

1 outside school experience

The constructs elicited in the comparison of these 9 elements are about her own feelings about teaching, success, failure and the wish to know more. She mentions Stella's influence, as a label for one pole of a construct.

She had one boy, James, in her class who was integrated and who caused her concern. He had learning difficulties of a fairly severe nature and was given a statement of special needs, which gave extra help to meet his needs.

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed grid(See App 5v.A5b)

After explaining the paper printout and showing the relationships of elements to construct poles, we talked about the meanings presented by this "snapshot" from September.

Jenny said; Its interesting to see how I was in September – I don't disagree with it though.

We discussed how her experiences with children taught her; in two cases made her realise she was not in control and had more to learn, in the case of her own daughter she was however more able to help.

Coming to School W gave me a whole new view of special education and what it could be like. I wanted to know more – It was a whole new ball game – it changed my philosophy and made me think about areas I hadn't previously considered. When I came her I found specials were treated as normal and all children were seen to be special.

This shows from Stella's influence which permeated throughout the whole school and staff. *I wanted to know more – out of frustration as well as success – children push you into learning – it isn't until they are there that you actually realise you've got to handle it.*

Conversation with Jenny using the CHANGE Grid procedure (see chapter 3)

The third conversation took place in November 1990, more than a year later, when Jenny had successfully completed the course. Her confidence had increased, so much so that she applied for a special-needs support post in her present school. Unfortunately she had not been successful and as this happened shortly before this third conversation, which became an opportunity for her to readjust and come to terms with the rejection, but keep herself self-esteem as a teacher. (See p100a & App 5v,A5c,d)

The process of the CHANGE grid was the same as used with Kirsty – up to six new elements were added to the original set for grid one. These elements were chosen as significant events which had contributed to her learning during the last year.

Her new elements were

- current reading of SENIOSH/H course material*
- Ronny's influence in helping in my class*
- James's progress – questions about integration*
- learning how to modify the curriculum*
- going for the Special Educational Needs job*
- visits to special schools*

These elements and the original nine were all used to elicit new constructs which were-

<i>widening knowledge of mainstream</i>	v	<i>extension of special needs strategies</i>
<i>knowledge without watering down</i>	v	<i>made me think deeper</i>
<i>very positive forward looking approaches</i>	v	<i>negative feeling about persuasion</i>
<i>not coping, feel inadequate</i>	v	<i>learn techniques about learning difficulties</i>
<i>learning through the unsuccessful experiences</i>	v	<i>learning through reading and talking to others</i>

Of these new ideas, Ronny's influence, reading on the SENIOSH/H course are construed identically with the original elements, Stella's influence and the Kingston friends group.

These four are construed strongly with ideas from the right hand pole such as:

- Stella's philosophy and influence*
- integrating James*
- teaching in Asian school (she meant she could do better than the model of teaching she had observed)*
- firing enthusiasm*
- learning new techniques*

Jenny CM School W
CHANGE GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -

ELEMENTS

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	N	CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -
IDENTIFYING KNOWLEDGE MAINSTRM RC14M	3	1111	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	*ARC14 EXTENSION OF SPECIAL NT WATERED DOWN
MADE ME THINK DEEPER C7	3	1111	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	* C7 BAD MODEL OF TEACHING
EXPERIENCE MADE ME LEARN C4	3	1111	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	* C4 BAD TEACHING STRATEGIES
VERY POSITIVE FORWARD APPRC RC11M	1	1111	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	*ARC11 NEGATIVE FEEL ABT PERSUSIO
GOOD EXPERIENCES WANT TO LN C6	1	1111	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	* C6 THOUGHT I HAD IT CRACKD BUT-
GET HELP FOR IDENTIFIED PRL C10M	1	1111	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	*C10 NOT KNOWING HOW TO GET HELP
ED AREAS NO PREVIOUS EXPERNC RC9	2	2222	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	* RC9 INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE JULY PRM
INSTANCES INFLUENCING ME C5	1	3333	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	* C5 STELLAS PHILOSOPHY INFLUENCE
OLN EXERS DEALING SEN INADQ C2	3	3333	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	* C2 OVERALL INFLUENCE OF STELLA
INCREASED DESIRE TOLEARNSEN C3	3	3333	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	* C3 INTERGRATING JAMES
ANDREWS BEHAVIORAL INDIVIDL RC1	3	3333	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	* RC1 TEACHING IN ASIAN SCHOOL
FEELINGS OF FRUSTATION C8	3	3333	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	* C8 FIRING ENTHUSIASM
NOT COPING FEEL INADEQUATE RC12M	3	3333	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	*RC12 LEARNHOW TECHNIQUES LEARDIF
LEARNING THRU UNSUCCESSFUL RC13M	3	3333	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	*ARC13 LEARNING THRU READING TALK

																				*60ING FOR SEN JOB
																				*ESL GUJERATI TEACHER
																				*OLN DAUGHTER PROBLEM MATHS
																				*ANDREA DISRUPTIVEYR2 YR30IF
																				*JAMES SMALL PROGRESS QUERIS
																				*JAMES FIND DIFFICULT HANDLE
																				*CULTURE SHOCK PREVIOUS EXPER
																				*COVERING FR RONNY FLT INADQ
																				*FIRST EXPERIENCE SEVERER LD
																				*VISITS TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS
																				*RONNY'S INFLUENCE WITH OJCLS
																				*KINGSTON FRIENDS GROUP IMPT
																				*STELLAS INFLUENCE ON THOUGHT
																				*CURRENT READING SENIOSH MAT

Jenny, SENIOSH/H course member, School W
SPACED FOCUSSED CHANGE grid

learning through reading, talks and other strategies

on the left pole with ideas like

widening strategies useful to mainstream

made me think deeper and made me learn

positive forward thinking attitudes

good experiences – wanted to learn

could get help for identified problem

The only construct for which these elements were outside the range of convenience was

*intimate knowledge of problem
(own child)*

*v areas of no previous
experience*

Apart from these four elements, there are a few other strong patterns emerging from the elements, which are largely construed against the right hand pole showing her increasing desire to learn but frustration about unsuccessful experiences or her deepening thinking and positive experiences. It is as if the course had expanded her knowledge, but had the effect of making her more aware of what she still had to learn.

Less elements are linked to poles relating to influences with good or bad models, more to her own control of her learning, even though she still has frustrations and feelings of inadequacy. The three constructs which are most alike are

feeling of frustration

firing enthusiasm

not coping, feeling inadequate

learning techniques

*learning through unsuccessful
experiences*

*learning through reading
and talking to others*

The left hand pole is much more frequently chosen in her sorting of elements than the right which is chosen for the block of four identical elements and the element learning how to modify the curriculum. Elements which were course activities are E10, E15, (these partly construe to the right pole) – good influences and to the left pole, *made me think deeper or widening knowledge*. The visits to special schools are construed against bad models of teaching and bad teaching strategies and negative feelings about persuasion (about integration).

Jenny had some doubts about the integration policy of the school and these are expressed in the conversation. These stem from her experiences with James in her class and her feelings of rejection in not getting her SEN job. She accommodates to this by stating that she is probably better as a mainstream teacher.

Grid Learning Conversations with Ronny ; OTIS Course member 1984

(See p 101a)The first grid conversations with Ronny took place on October 3 1989. This was four years after she had started the OTIS course. Ronny was a teacher of

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -

RONNY SPACED FOCUSSED
CM School W

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -

ELEMENTS

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -	CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -
FINDING I CAN HELP OTHERS	FINDING BOROUGHS POLICY
MYSELF FINDING OUT FOR ME	MYSELF BEING TAUGHT
USING LEARNING TO LEARN MRE	LEARNING THRU DISCUSSOIN
WORKING WITH OTHERS	ONE TO ONE DEVMNT
ONGOING RC10	ONE OFFS
ACTION RESEARCH ACTIVITY	TRANSFER OF INFORMATION
POSITIVE ASPECTS OF OUTSIDE	NEGATIVE ASPECTS OUTSIDE
OPEN MINDED IMAGINATIVE	NARROW PERSPECTIVE.
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	HELPING OTHERS DEVOPMEN H
WORKING IN EDUCATION	WORKING OUT EDUCATION
STRUCTURED LEARNING PROCESS	INFORMAL LEARNING PROCESS
OTHER BOROUGHS PERSPECTIVE	LEARNING AT BOROUGHS LEVEL
	* VISIT TO WHITTLESEA (Special school)
	* LINC CONFERENCE
	* WELFARE TRAINING
	* VISIT FROM KLAUS
	* VISIT JOHN CHILTON
	* OU E241 MATHS
	* OTIS TOTAL
	* OU E306 COURSE
	* CURRICULUM PLANNING GROUP
	* DR WILSONS CLINIC
	* CHILDREN IN SCHOOL JENNY
	* STELLA INTERVIEWS PERSONAL

Ronny, OTIS course member, School W
SPACED FOCUSSED grid

many years experience who had taught at School W for some years. She was also a parent and although her children no longer attended School W was a member of the local community.

The events Ronny chose as of significance were:

4 courses and conferences ,including Open University and OTIS and visits to special schools

2 activities she was engaged in at Borough level

Talks/interviews with Stella

Dr Wilson's clinic

A visit to School W by Klaus Wedell

One other event in school

The constructs that were elicited from these are better understood from the discussion about them, which is recorded in tape from the feedback conversation. At the end of this conversations I attempted to look for the overarching meaning in her grid and the taped representation. This was discussed and recorded with notes on the SPACEd FOCUSed printout. Again, the meaning that Ronny herself could elicit and discuss is recorded most meaningfully on the tape. This taped record shows Ronny's understanding of her self and her learning processes, both of how she learns on the job and from the course work and reading.(See Appendix (5v,B1b,c,& notes)

Group Learning Conversation at School W: Cathy, Ronny, Jenny.(See App 5v notes)

The three participants in the grid conversations met with me to share our perspectives about special needs at School W. I used one of my own grids about my learning of SEN issues from the research. This was not, as it turned out, very appropriate as it did not relate to School W. Although my grid played a very small part in the conversation, it could be more use if it had been construed around the domain of my support role to the school.

Each of the three feedback versions of the grid with notes, were photocopied and given to each person the day before, with a request that they should have a look at their own and others before our meeting. When we met, each person was asked to "read" the grids of the others and the owner then checked that correct meanings had been 'read'. When this was done for each one, the owner then added any extra points and a general discussion took place. This structure proved rather loose and was tightened in subsequent group sessions, as described in chapter 6.

From the taped record of the Group Learning Conversation

Ronny about Cathy

Ronny could see the strong polarity of Cathy's grid showing the personal and emotional experiences on the one side and the management on the opposite side.

Learning from courses comes together to make Cathy what she is.

Ronny about Jenny

Because this grid was done before Jenny began any training, it reflects her own professional life and the good and bad that have influenced her lack of confidence and need to know what to do are obvious – it look like I felt five years ago.

Jenny about Cathy

Jenny saw this as both professional and personal learning to develop role of Head using experiences of family and individuals to contribute.

Jenny about Ronny

Courses and professional development are strong influences as well as visits made, more than individual children.

Cathy about Jenny

This reflects personal feelings and increasing knowledge – not being able to cope and others not coping – confidence, expertise increasing. Examples of good practice and whole school policy and Stella's influence but goes beyond this. Interesting as a starter snap shot – hope its not all still true now.

Cathy on Ronny

What struck me about Ronny's grid was she had gone out from herself and the school to new experiences which reinforced her beliefs by study, courses and individual people. She is influenced by others who reinforce what is there.

Cathy on Liz

This was complex showed personal and emotional and professional content. Liz learns from other sand through her training and INSET a two way effect, people are all important.

We then talked about the various issues related to the school's development.

Cathy

The school policy has the support of the church and the governors

Jenny

Here is a feeling of community in school. Parents are always accepted and its accessible for parents – not true of all church schools, sadly.

About the LEA – Cathy and Ronny

The Borough is now more obvious as an influence, gives more support, more resources. They have their own learning support policy. Funding and support and advice and help are important ,but other decisions will effect us too. We also have looked outside our four walls and involved ourselves in the borough in professional development.

What happens in School W was in spite of LEA but how strongly supported by LEA. In the past we were told what we were doing was wrong, now expectations of us are high and can be stressful for a variety of reasons. there are no quiet places with this 100% expectation.

About the Role of Training

Experience and training together gives you confidence to admit you don't know but then you learn where to go for help. Special needs are also adult needs ,but it helps to have outside help resources and reinforcement of beliefs. Health, social services – courses attended strategies to use.

About Stella's Philosophy

Her own conviction– you couldn't help but be influenced and then actually seeing it and doing it and seeing other people doing it – not theoretical but about people and down to earth you'd seen it in books – she showed it through action.

Its about being able to relate to other people and see all people involved the child – teacher – as whole persons – whole community

The outcome of this hour was a request from Cathy to use our joint constructs on cards to be a focus for a work shop for the whole staff, and ancillaries, governors and selected parents. As it turned out, this worked quite well for the teachers, but, as there was no representation from our grids of non-teacher view points, it was much less satisfactory for ancillaries and other 'laymen'. This technique could be developed however, for such activity in the future.

Free style Learning Conversation with Cathy a year later

Before this conversation took place, I had elicited my own set of elements and constructs about my history of interaction with School W. These ideas were introduced into the conversation, along with those Cathy wished to introduce. None of this was written, except my list which I used as an aide memoir. I had internalised the methods of Learning Conversations and did not need to use grid techniques. We talked about Stella's influence over everyone; Stella as a support. We talked about the wider community of the church and parish and how Stella's philosophy of every child having a right in that community was central to the school. This led to a discussion about the widening responsibility of governors for schools under LMS and the outside influences from DES and LEA.

Was Stella's influence waning after 2–3 years? Cathy saw it more that other influences joined Stella's.. We also discussed Jenny's professional development and her future role which she has decided would not be directly with SEN, even though Ronny had now left. The post was now filled by someone the borough appointed.

6) Grid Learning Conversations with School X(Hillingdon)

Conversations took place with B2: Lydia: OTIS course member 1984 C6: Christine Headteacher.

Background

Lydia was a teacher in mid-career, with experience in both special schools and mainstream Infant schools. She had children of her own, a husband also in education who was also interested in special needs and had attended a full year diploma course at the Institute of Education . Prior to coming on the OTIS in 1984, Lydia had taught in a special school for moderate learning difficulties. She had recently transferred to an infant school in Hillingdon before beginning the OTIS. After that course she had continued attending borough INSET provided for SEN. She was now Deputy head with responsibility for SEN in a different Infant school. This school had sent Charlotte, their SEN on the same OTIS course. Charlotte had left as had the original headteacher. There was some continuity of relationship with the OTIS course albeit rather a fragmented one.

Grid Learning Conversation with Lydia. OTIS course member 1984. now Deputy Head (See App 5vi,B2a)

April 1990

When arranging the time with Lydia, I had asked her to prepare by thinking of significant events which had contributed to her learning about SEN. We used these as the basis of the conversation.

They were

4 mentions of children (including her own child)

4 experiences from courses including OTIS

teaching books from her husband's course list

work in a subnormal hospital

the home reading scheme for parents

present parents who she had previously taught at her special school

On the taped recording these events are discussed and their meaning explained. The children she talked about were used as examples of how she saw borough level management or mismanagement of resources for SEN.

Her own child was also cited as an example of the system wanting the child to fit in, rather than recognising the child's needs. The example she quotes concerns his interest in his grandfather's stories of the second world war; finding a milk bottle in the old air-raid shelter which he took to school. Instead of picking up on this interest, his teacher had used this to 'prove' he had aggressive tendencies. Her son had lacked stimulus at school and had been seen as a nuisance in class.

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -
 LYDIA FEEDBACK of
 SPACED FOCUSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -

ELEMENTS

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -	CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -	ELEMENTS	CS	CC	C2	C9	RC1	RC7	C4	RC5	C6
MANAGEMENT SEN BOROUGH LEVEL	3 5	3 3 1 2	3 1 1 1	3 1 1 1	2 2 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
ALL CHILDREN HAVE POTENTIAL	3 3	3 3 3	3 2 1 1	3 2 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
POSITIVE VIEW ENVIRONMENT	3 3	3 3 3	2 2 2 2	2 2 2 2	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
BOTH SUPPORT HOW I WAS FEEL	3 3	3 3 2 2	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFIRM	3 2	3 2 3	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
CHECK MY VIEWPOINT ON RIGHT	2 2	2 2 3 3	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
MOVE AWAY FM LABELING	1 1	1 1 3 3	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
OVERVIEW OF SEN PHILOSOPHY	1 1	1 1 2 2	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1
PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES	1 2	1 2 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1

SPECIFIC CURRICULUM AREA
 MUST BE CHILD'S FAVOURITE FINOT
 NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT CLE BOIF
 DEAL WTH CHILD DAILY NO SPT
 REAL PEOPLE INDIVIDUAL NEED
 WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL PERSON
 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AST BEH
 SPECIFIC BTS OF CURRICULUM
 PRACTICAL CHANGE INTO PRACT

Use the literature there
 Changing the pace Balance of the Curriculum. Perseverence of NC.
 Personal Knowledge
 Deserve to find out more
 I know from the special school
 Expectations again - Parents believe much better experts
 Individual children - Real situation
 "bored" Labelling | peoples expectations of "7c"
 Danger of
 PEOPLE WHOSE PARENTS ITGT
 CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS ITGT
 CHILDREN MARK JASON DAVID
 ANOTHER DAVID HE DIDNT FIT
 YRS AGO WRKED SUBNORMAL HOS
 CAN CHILD AT SCHOOL

Lydia, OTIS course member, School X
 Feedback of SPACED FOCUSED grid
 106a

Much of what Lydia said about individual children is about not labelling them negatively, recognising their individuality, recognising that the environment could cause needs and that they are not all 'within' the child and not making them conform to a system which does not meet their needs. This labelling theme is brought up again by other events.;

subnormal hospital

present parents who she had taught in special schools in the past

This bit of the conversation was about peoples expectations of these groups of so-called mentally handicapped people. How they were seen as failing and unsuccessful needing to be shut from society's view, but how these expectations were wrong in the case of her present parents (ex MLD pupils). These people have jobs and families and are just as successful as others.

Her own learning experiences are taken from specific named speakers who as she says confirmed her views and made her feel she was in the right lines. The examples she uses were speakers who delivered part of the Hillingdon course for SENCOs, Tony Dessent's book 'Making Ordinary Schools Special' and Frank Smith's book on 'real' book approach to reading. The OTIS course is mentioned as giving a whole overview of SEN in ordinary schools. It came at a transitional point in her career when she first moved into mainstream. The other reading and talks came later.

At this distance from the course specific items are less likely to be remembered. These eleven elements were then used to elicit her constructs and then laddered against these to produce the raw grid. As this process progressed so did the conversation, which also digressed at times onto other related topics. This was recorded on tape which gives a great deal more information about Lydia's philosophy of SEN and how she uses this in her work.

Some of this can also be seen recorded on the SPACEd FOCUSed printout used for the feedback conversation later in the term (See p106a)

Grid Learning Conversation with Christine: Headteacher :

Christine had been Head of this Infant school for four years, and was previously Head of another. Lydia had joined her two and half years ago as SENCO and then also Deputy head. This school serves a large council estate and a mixture of owner occupied property. Christine's elements were-

2 mentions of working with particular parents

2 of welfare support and its value

4 about Lydia's role and changes from Charlotte's role

4 about support from outside agents

2 about staff's ways of working with SEN

Disturbing children were high in her concern, both for their sakes, but also for the

staff. She certainly thought SEN was the responsibility of all her teachers and that Lydia's role, with her backing, should be to support these teachers by help in class but if necessary seek help from outside agencies. She cited social services –the EP, GP and the RNIB for a visually impaired child. The borough had recently appointed special-needs welfare assistants which she felt was particularly valuable. More adults in classrooms and people who can identify with the child's background because they are themselves local and have known the families well.

Feedback conversation with Christine using SPACEd FOCUSed and FOCUSed grid with trees. May 24 , 1990

Both printouts of Christine's grids were used .They were helpful in quickly identifying pairs and cluster of elements and arriving at an overview. These groupings of elements were then given labels by cluster.

about welfare support E2, E5

about outside agencies support E11, E3, E12, E13

about Lydia and her role in school E6, E8, E10, E14

and slightly less tightly construed *E6 and E7*

Of her constructs closely clustered were

C, C9, C5 were seen as about support

RC4, C3, RC6 as about SENCSs role and school policy in outside agencies

(See App 5 vi C6a,b,c).

The conversations in School X were limited to evaluation of the long-term effects of learning begun on OTIS by Lydia. It was not possible to return to the school to follow-up issues raised by these conversations.

7) Grid Learning Conversations in School Y :Harrow

Conversations took place with B3, Nye: OTIS Course member, 1985

C7, Len: Headteacher, D3, Sylvia: Deputy Head: D4, Debbie: Teacher in charge of special unit.

General Background

School Y opened in 1974 as two separate schools, First with a Nursery and Middle. They share a single open plan building and serve a densely populated area of Harrow with a large Asian community. In 1977 a unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties was moved into the school when another provision, used by the borough, had closed down. It had its own teacher in charge and a welfare assistant, but was not under the management of the Head nor integrated into the mainstream of the school. Its door remained shut for its first year or so. Later, the wall was removed and the unit was brought under the Head's management and attempts were made to integrate the pupils with others in the school. The population of the unit changed also and was mainly for pupils with learning difficulties or health problems. These changes were not under the control of the school, as the LEA decided

which children to place in the unit, whose staff it appointed.

Background to the teachers

Nye came on the OTIS course, when she was the SENCO for the Middle school. At that time, the First school was separate with its own head. Nye worked in the Middle school, where there was an attempt to encourage integration of the pupils from the unit into the mainstream school. The school also had a large moving population of children from nearby bed and breakfast accommodation. These pupils were difficult to teach, as they often stayed for short periods. Nye's OTIS project was to develop a pack of materials to help teachers settle these children quickly into their classes, and find out what they could do. My first introduction to School Y was as the course tutor, visiting to set up this project with Len, and the LEA advisor Viv. At that visit, I also met Debbie, who was responsible for Special Educational Needs in the First school, later to take charge of the unit.

Debbie had some twelve children, with a range of learning difficulties and health problems in the unit, which she and her welfare assistant ran. Nye was responsible for the rest of the school and the Special Educational Needs of the many children coming through. Debbie had completed a full years diploma course in SEN, which gave her a specialist qualification. In 1988, pupils were placed at School Y with emotional and behavioural problems. This had stretched the resources of the unit to its limits and beyond, but no extra resource had been provided to meet their needs.

Len had been Head since the school opened, and was near retirement. He had a quiet, caring manner and was concerned for the welfare of all his children and staff in his school. The difficulties of running this school were considerable, especially with the changing policies of the LEA regarding the unit's population and support.

Sylvia was once on the First school staff and was now Len's deputy. She was not involved directly with special needs policy, but was very concerned about the total well-being of the school.

Grid Learning Conversations with Nye: OTIS Course Member 1985

The first grid conversation in March 1990 lasted several hours as Nye told her story, chose and talked about the events which would become the elements, and elicited the constructs. The conversation gave opportunities to review her history in School Y, those who supported her from within the school and visiting professionals. Len's support as Head became clear, as did her own loyalty to the school. Her close partnership with Debbie was made explicit. The conversation also revealed her inner resolve, idealism and personal development.

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81 53 59 46 56 56 59 34 37 56 46

81 81 59 46 53 62 59 78 28 46 56 40

75 87 81 46 53 59 65 78 78 37 46 43 65

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93 87 81 93 93 59 81 93 90 93 81 43 90 71 78

E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	6	5	9	6	3	4	5	8	2	3	1	2	7	4	
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*HOTEL CHILRN MEET URGENT Nye, OTIS course member, School Y
 *SANDRA MADE FRIENDS READING SPACED ELEMENT TRIPRINT

The second conversation was to feedback the meaning of the printouts of the FOCUSed grids. I used SPACEd FOCUSed & SPACEd TRIGRID (See App 5vii B3a,b). Nye explained what these meant to her, and we looked at how they were construed. Nye chose other new labels for the clusters, which I jotted down on the printout.

From these discussions of the printouts and the taped version of the conversation, it is possible to get a picture of how Nye saw herself at that time, and how she had learnt her job.

C15 my idealism v hard in practice

is not clustered with the other groups. This significant construct is used for a number of elements largely on the left pole – *my idealism* . Only three are construed against the *hard in practice* pole and those include the names of others who supported her.

The picture which this gave me was of an idealist who had great loyalty to the school, its children and staff. Nye gathered strength from people she met and learnt from, but her greatest strength was an inner one, coming from her own beliefs and resolve to support the child.

Grid Learning Conversation with Debbie; Teacher in charge of unit

April 1990

Debbie's elements included

5 individual children

2 courses including the diploma

2 jobs held in School Y

5 adults who she worked with

3 of the children elements are construed identically, and the 'child elements' form one cluster.

Her two closest colleagues, Nye and her welfare assistant, Linda are construed identically and they and the other school staff and events form the other cluster.

This leaves her diploma course in a nearly isolated element. She did not value it much, and only uses it because of the people she met on it and its effect in helping her decide not to teach in a special school. She felt Nye's OTIS experience had been much more relevant than her course. The other course mentioned was a locally run course on computer-assisted learning technique. This is loosely construed, nearest to her 'children' group, because it helped her with the pupils' learning.

Feedback conversation with Debbie using SPACEd FOCUSed Grid print-out.

June 14 1990. The element pairs and clusters were discussed and given group labels (See p109a). Debbie was about to leave School Y for a year's travel. She had resigned and was unlikely to return. The 'child' cluster she splits into two; she labels

SPACED FOCUSSED GRID
CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -

ELEMENTS

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -

DEBBIE GRID

Two School Y

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EE

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EE

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1

1

SWIMMING AGAINST TIDE WOTEK RC12

WITHDRAWAL SITUATION RC9

TEACH THE CHILD RC11

DEEP NEED OF CHILD RC5

ADAPT TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS C4

STIMULATING WORK ONE CHILD RC7

I CAN DO IT HAVE STRATEGIES RC3

LOOK FOR METHODS LEARN FROM C3

THERAPISTS PART OF TEAMS KIL C2

LEARNING ABOUT SEN MAINSETG C1

TEACH INDIVIDUAL WITH SEN C10

PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR EACH OR C6

LEARN WORK WHOLE SCHOOL PAN

LEARNSEN IN MAINSTREAM SETEMUG

ADULT SUPPORTEVERYONE AVAIL

CANT WORK IN ISOLATION

YOUR JOB HAS TO BE VALUED

WORK AS A TEAM PERSONNELSPT

WORK AS TEAM GET SUPPORT

TECHNOLOGY OTHR METHODS USE

DIFFERENT KIND LEARNINGTEKS

THEORETICAL LEARNING NT PRC

NOT WANTING ECL WORK

RESPECT ANOTHER METHODOLOGY

ALL CHILDREN HELP ME TO LEAR

RICCI AND SIMON BEHAVIORPRO

DANNY TOOLITTLE TOO LATE

NICOLE

CHRISTOPHER GUINEA PIG EVNT

CONCEPT KEYBOARD COURSE

DIPLOMA COURSE PEOPLE METSP

ELEMENT 4

RUN A MINI UNIT FIRST SCHOOL

SUPPORT THEN JOB AS UNIT TR

BRIAN(TEACHER)

NYE AND I WORK TOGETHER

LINDA WELFARE WORK AS TEAM

Debbie, Teacher in charge of unit, School Y

SPACED FOCUSSED grid

the two parts individual children *who were hard work*, and the other pair *those who she learnt most from as they integrated*.

The staff and school clusters are labelled as *working with others – not in isolation – integration requires support of teachers working as a team*. She construes this cluster largely against the right construct clusters for RC12, RC9, RC11, RC5, C4, RC7, RC3, which she also labels *work as a whole-school team* (commenting *I didn't want to work in a special school*). She also construes this cluster against the bottom half of the left-hand pole of clusters which she labels *'I know how to' strategies* (see App 5 vii, D5b).

The 'child cluster' is largely construed against the left pole, which is about deep needs of children and her ways of meeting them through her strategies. Two of the child elements are construed against firstly, *learn to work with the whole school and parents*; secondly, *learn SEN in mainstream*; and thirdly *learn about adult support available*.

These two children were her two successes in integration. She says she learnt about integration for herself from them.

The element *Len's attitudes support pupils and teachers* is loosely construed with the other two elements about people in her team, which are: *Nye and I work together*, and *Linda (welfare) and I work as a team*.

Her comments about the grid were:

I'm very happy with the 'snapshot' of myself ... doing the grid was very helpful ... it focussed me. Whether it's because I'm leaving ... but it helps me to feel positive about what I've done, I feel extremely positive.

I've had three very difficult children ... but I did see them as a learning experience ... they were important. I have felt a sense of isolation when people don't back me up. When I worked in the First school I had no base or resources. When I started in the unit with the welfare it was completely different. Then I also had Nye's support. It's taken a long time for the whole staff to take responsibility as well. It would be sad if the whole thing folded now.

In July, Nye and Debbie exchanged grids and 'read' them to each other. This was because it was possible that Debbie might leave before the Group Learning Conversation was held.

SPACED FOCUSSED GRID

CONSTRUCT FOLE RATED - 1 -	CONSTRUCT FOLE RATED - 3 -	ELEMENTS				
E	E	E	E	E	E	
0	0	0	0	0	0	
1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	
4	4	4	4	4	4	
5	5	5	5	5	5	
6	6	6	6	6	6	
7	7	7	7	7	7	
8	8	8	8	8	8	
9	9	9	9	9	9	
10	10	10	10	10	10	
11	11	11	11	11	11	
12	12	12	12	12	12	
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67	67	67	67	67	67	
68	68	68	68	68	68	
69	69	69	69	69	69	
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72	72	72	72	72	72	
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74	74	74	74	74	74	
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94	94	94	94	94	94	
95	95	95	95	95	95	
96	96	96	96	96	96	
97	97	97	97	97	97	
98	98	98	98	98	98	
99	99	99	99	99	99	
100	100	100	100	100	100	

Len, Headteacher, School Y
SPACED FOCUSSED grid

Grid Learning Conversations with Len: Headteacher, School Y

February - March 1990

School time was impossible for Len, who gave up two evenings to work with me. The first time he told a long story of the history of the school, out of which we picked key events for the element cards; we used these to elicit the constructs. There wasn't time to do more, so he returned next time to 'play cards'. He says he came back out of curiosity about the technique, which initially he saw as a game. As he sorted all the element cards very carefully against the constructs, he began to see what he was really doing. He worked in almost complete silence and very meticulously. He said he found the experience most helpful. His elements originally included 18, which were reduced to 12:

3 children by name

4 staff by name

4 events in the history

1 three-day course on SEN

The four elements removed were events in the history of School Y, but not closely related to his own learning (see p. 110a).

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed printout and FOCUSed grid with trees

June 1990

There are two clusters of elements, which can be seen on the two printouts, but on the FOCUSed Grid with trees the connections between the elements were clearer.

E4, E1, E11, E2 and E9 form one cluster –of which E11, E12 are identically construed. E4 stands rather outside this cluster on its own. The other cluster is less tightly connected, comprising E3, E10, E6, E7 and E5 with the pair E2, E8 as nearby ideas.

The 'child' group, which includes the unit children, is construed largely against construct pole 3, which Len labelled as about individual needs, child's needs and development, but also against ideas like

the ebb and flow of children

effects of particular children

something over which I was given no control

influence of the LEA

training given to me by the children

He expresses the thought that he learnt from the children, but was concerned about the resources for them.

The other cluster he breaks into parts E10, E6, E7, E5 is about
*staff and people who influence me ,who have the right knowledge/philosophy
commitment and empathy for children with SEN*

Most of this sub-cluster construes most closely to the left pole constructs, which he labels as *policy and theory about children*, apart from C11, C15, C2 and RC2, which are about influences on himself or advice he has had.

E8 he identified as personal learning which he brings back to staff. This was his one direct piece of INSET related to special needs: a three-day course at the Institute of Education on the 1981 Act.

E2, E8 he sees as *related to Borough policy and facilitating it.. E4, began to integrate children easier*, he says really is an idea and so did not link well to his other elements.

The pair of elements E2, E8 which he labelled *related to Borough policy and facilitating it..*, is construed in a different way to the other clusters. On 4 of the constructs he feels these elements are outside the range of convenience of these constructs. They were not about the pair of constructs seen as identical.

While carrying out the task, the tape commentary shows how Len feels about the LEA's influence in relation to the unit. It was an add-on to his school over which he had no control – then he was asked to integrate it and also to appoint a SENCO for the school. He feels he has no control over these aspects of policy. This was important at the time of these conversations because there was a possibility of closing the unit; again, this was a decision about which Len had been given little direct consultation.

His meaning of C5 left pole is *iraining and influence from outside training institutions not the LEA.*

His overall comment about his constructs was;
policy justifies acting in a certain way. You do it in a way and then you justify from policy – policy grows from experience.

He is talking about his school but with references to the LEA too. He says about integration:

class teachers were less important early on but as more children became integrated class teachers became more important ... it wasn't my mission to deal with all of this I just responded to events (See App 5 vii,C7b,c,d)

Grid Learning Conversations with Sylvia: Deputy Head, School Y

We had two conversations on two days before school in June 1990. On the first, Sylvia told her story of the school's history rather than her own learning, although she showed this incidentally. Her view was very much one of management, and seeing

the problems the pupils with special needs brought to the school as related to staffing and resource issues. She also included bilingual pupils as needing extra resources and so also as having special needs.

The elements chosen from the story include

2 children for which integration was a success

3 children for whom inadequate resources were given

4 about changes and support and staff needed to integrate the unit

2 about staff 1st day cover issues and LMS

4 about bilingual issues including a seminar on E2L

1 about reporting to the governors

1 about the Borough Learning Support Policy and the changes it made for School Y

These elements were used to elicit constructs and to sort for a raw grid on June 5. The SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout was used for feedback. This conversation was recorded on tape (Appendix 5vii, D3 b& notes).

The element pairs and clusters were looked at first. The E8, E9 pair was about *support from the right people* and linked to *the way we joined the unit into our other special needs, and the benefits and bonuses this had for some children.*

E7, E1 were about staff cover and LMS – she said *when you have problems with staffing, how can you manage SEN as well?* This related to E7, E11: *two children for whom inadequate provision had been given.* One was a physically handicapped child who needed welfare support, the other a child reintegrated for the local EBD school with no extra resources. This linked her into the Borough Learning Support Policy, which, she said, had required schools to make policy changes.

Both the bilingual and SEN group of children are seen by Sylvia as similar problems to be solved. They raise equal opportunities questions. This can be done with good support from the right people. As meeting the bilingual childrens' needs was her way into special needs, she makes some parallels between the groups in terms of integration into classrooms and the child's sense of worth. On the left pole constructs, Sylvia shows her concern about borough and school policy in relation to resources, lack of the right people and strategies, crisis and how to avoid it, and other resource issues. E5, E7, E11, E15, E16: these constructs are chosen from the cluster elements about SEN of children, and borough policy and staffing.

Group Learning Conversation at School Y: Nye, Len, Debbie, Sylvia.

Selected comments about the Learning Conversation process.

Nye commenting on a reading of her grid

I'm happy with the reading, it's my inner belief – my crusade about it all – inner convictions about the protestant work ethic – serve other – it's a mission .

Sylvia

But there is many a class teacher who is crying inside – "where is my support and guidance? I need to discuss things – am I on the right tracks?" – occasionally, very occasionally, the child and teacher need a break and the child may be taken out for their own sake and the sake of others.

Len: about the whole process

It is a positive statement. It could have been negative. There could have been things seen as negative because resources are short, but we really are doing a great job.

Debbie: also about the conversation

It was important for me in my role. Now I know that I have to say to class teachers, can only do my job because you're doing a great job. I make a point of giving this praise since I did my grid.

Nye: about the experience of the Learning Conversation

I couldn't believe it – I was amazed when I did it (the grid). It's like someone telling you you're doing a good job. You need support from outside. We need some appraisal exercise like this for the school. I've never sat down before to discuss things. I've never been able to talk this through with anyone before.

Len: about the integration

We responded to the challenge once we had the staff who wanted integration. The thing became alive and really centred on the school. We held case conferences which were positive – we felt we had done so much – so many have benefitted and been accepted by the other members of staff. You don't have to be special to have commitment and respond to the challenge of the children.

There's nothing special about helping children's needs; it's only what we should be doing if we're a professional group – support one another, give recognition for worth.

Len: about the Learning Conversation

I was fearful of it at first. I thought the process might show that there weren't any strong underlying principles that guided our work in the school because of the way it had grown up.

And yet, looking at these, there are very strong professional and philosophical strands brought together and made into one. It is very heartening because of the degree of unanimity between the four of us even though they were done independently. It's tremendously reassuring.

Debbie

No-one pulled in a different way. I was impressed – not with the whole staff but with the strong philosophy – idealism is good. We practice our skills – we have known how children come into everybody's grid. They are always there as one way of learning. Management and resources to keep the show on the way – but these are an undertone not the top layer – that's children and staff and teamwork – I'm impressed.

My Research at School Y

Before beginning my research I had visited School Y infrequently. I saw Nye at borough meetings for SENCOs. At the time the research began Debbie and Nye both welcomed the opportunity to talk about their work as they felt isolated and lacking in LEA support. Len joined initially to support my research and Nye, but became fascinated with grid technique which he called 'cunning'. Later his Deputy Sylvia agreed to be 'interviewed' making a group of four for the final group conversation.

Both Nye and Len gave a great deal of careful thought to the elicitation of constructs and their sorting for the raw grid. This was done in their personal time well outside school hours. They told their personal memories of the school's history and their learning about special needs. Len had started with no special interest in SEN but had learnt on the job by dealing with the various populations he had thrust upon him in his school. The 'ebb and flow' of hotel pupils as he described them and 'becoming the manager for the unit'. He gained a little knowledge of the 1981 Act from a LEA course and much from Nye's course and work. He delegated much of the responsibility for the SEN in his school to Nye and Debbie, but gave them his full support. The children newly integrated from special schools for EBD had stretched the coping capacity of the unit to its limits and Len supported requests, that were as yet unsuccessful, to the LEA for more help, as did the school's EP.

Debbie much enjoyed the grid conversation which had to be fitted into the last hour of a Friday afternoon when she was due to travel. She completed the sorting for the raw grid at home; having understood the principle.

In Sylvia's case, our conversation took place in school time fitting in early in the morning on two occasions. Sylvia like Len had no special knowledge of SEN being more concerned with management issues. She saw children with a second language as having some special needs, though this group is not officially recognised as

belonging to the SEN category.

Comparison between School Y and W – Review Two Years Later

Both these schools were opened at a similar time in the mid 70's and both have been extra resourced for SEN. The great difference between them is that in School W's case Stella's philosophy was the driving force and clearly permeated the whole community of the school.

In School Y's case Len, though a very caring man, had no really strong idea about SEN. The introduction of children with a range of problems came from outside influences, the LEA and the hotel children. He just tried to cope with it all. In School Y it was Nye who had the strong belief and the philosophy which kept her going. In her quiet way she insisted on the rights of the child and the staff looking after them.. When she was joined by Debbie, they became a strong partnership. Sylvia, the Deputy, did not understand special needs, seeing management and resourcing issues as uppermost importance. Still, this has its place in such a school.

Our conversation took place at a critical decision point in the school's history. Debbie had decided to take a year off and travel round the world. She was doubting her abilities to return to teaching until she reflected through the grid conversation which as she put it herself *made me go on a high , as I realised all I had done*. Nye had tried to apply for another job and was unsuccessful but her very strong loyalty to School Y meant she really did not want to move schools. Len chose to retire, but Nye stayed in to stand up for SEN with the new Head, which proved very necessary. Two years on Debbie, who returned from her world trip is now in a similar job in another Harrow Middle school, though at present is on maternity leave.

School W also has lost Ronny, Jenny decided to stay but not as a specialist in SEN . Two years on Cathy has been seconded by the LEA to draft statements for the borough. This means the Deputy is acting head and Jenny is Acting Deputy.

Schools depend on individuals with a strong sense of purpose and idealism to help them manage change and to take on more. Working effectively with SEN expands capability and if done well for some individuals, permeates the work for all pupils. This was clear in both these schools, but in different ways. School W was the stronger, because it had two Heads in succession, and a SENCO who were able to lead. But leadership from below worked too, in the case of Nye, who though very quiet, consistently stood up for her beliefs in the rights of the individual child.

8) Grid Learning Conversations with School Z (Hillingdon)

Conversations took place with Sharon, A6 SENIOSH/H course member 1990-91: C7
Adrian: Headteacher: D5, Linda: Deputy Head.

Background

Sharon was a course member from the third cohort of the SENIOSH/H. She came from School Z, a Junior school in Hillingdon. She was not the SENCO, as this role was taken by the Deputy Head, Linda, but the intension was that she might take up the role in the future. Sharon had not been teaching for many years but was showing every sign of being able to take a post of responsibility. She had also attended one of Hillingdon's pre-SENIOS courses and one on differentiation of the curriculum. Linda, the Deputy Head, had begun SENIOSH/H the previous year, but due to staffing problems had not been able to continue. She had done other SEN training in the past.

School Z was a large school serving a mainly industrial area of the borough. By the time the research was completed the Infant and Junior Schools had combined under Adrian, the previous Junior Headteacher. The individual Learning Conversations are described first, then follows a report of the Group Learning Conversation.

Grid Learning Conversation with Sharon

The first of these took place towards the end of the course in June 1991. Time constraints were such that we met on a Saturday and Sharon had in preparation written out her 'incidents which opened my eyes and furthered my understanding of special needs' (Appendix 5viii). From her story she elicited 13 elements covering:

2 encounters with severe handicap

3 specific children

3 working with Stephen and Linda (learning on the job)

3 course related events

2 parts of her work in school

Discussing the elements and then using these to elicit constructs gave a very clear picture of Sharon's own development. It showed someone interested in meeting individual child needs, learning how to do this herself and then quite quickly learning how to help other members of staff with their difficulties. (see p 117a)

Her development and progress had been helped by working with Linda in school and by coming on the pre SENIOS and SENIOSH/H courses. These experiences had given her knowledge, competence and confidence.

She had learnt about teaching children with behavioural and learning difficulties from practice in the classroom and also from learning strategies on the courses which she could try out while supported by the course. The child-study, when she taught one

child by a small-step approach, was a significant learning experience, as was her project for SENIOSH/H in differentiating the curriculum. She had thought about the integration and segregation issues through contact with special schools and her work with a deaf/blind group she had worked with during a holiday. She saw her relationship to Linda as an apprenticeship, particularly in learning the role of SENCO and learning how to lead and help others. Some of the detail from the tape is of interest to see how she views in-service as part of her learning.

Well actually, we've asked Hillingdon to offer us more knowledge based courses. We're sick to death of getting into groups and learning how to do something. But now we've got the National Curriculum with History and Geography to cope with, and with pulleys and levers in science, we need more facts – we want to know – the more effective way would be to produce some sort of booklet or other and let us read it or just to tell us in a talk instead.

Feedback conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed Grid and FOCUSed Grid with trees

Sharon's focussed grid falls into two fairly distinct clusters. (see App 5 viii C6,b,c).

Cluster One

Around E9 and E12 is E11 – E5 E9 E12 E10 – and less closely E8.

Cluster Two

Around E3 E2 E1 E7 E6 – E2 E3 E1 – E4

Cluster One

This cluster construes largely to the right pole on constructs RC9, C5RC2, C7, C10, C11

These are about

her having apprenticeship into the management role and appropriate ways of helping others.

On the left pole these elements construe mainly to concepts about

knowledge gives confidence

growth and effecting change

guidance, knowledge helps

practical and theoretical help

C12 both poles are used by parts of the cluster. This construct was

Left Pole *learning to be a SENCO*

Right Pole *teaching in class*

Both these were important to Sharon.

Cluster Two

This construed to the right pole on

helped me to learn the job

change in one person

personal satisfaction in relation to Special Educational Needs

helped with my class

teaching in class

Some of this cluster construed to the left pole

learning at chalk face
inappropriate review remedies
single isolated expert approach
changeable, related in content.

There was further detail, but these covered the main themes of the feedback and discussion with Sharon. This I was able to do just before the course ended and before the full course evaluation. Sharon said that eliciting the grid and checking the feedback with me, helped her to think about and review her own learning on the course. It also helped her to write her own last chapter of her project, which required a reflective review of personal learning. At this point I was aware I had inadvertently given her an advantage in comparison with other course members. Ideally every one of them should have had this Learning Conversation experience. In view of that I used a very modified form of a Learning Conversation as an evaluation technique for the whole group. This was described in Chapter 3 (p 38).

A year later to up-date my knowledge, just before I met the School Z group, it was possible to have a short conversation with Sharon about her work. By this time the two schools had joined and Sharon had moved to the Infant section. She held a post of responsibility and was part of the Senior Management Team. The way SEN had been met and organised in the Infant School was very different from the Junior section. There was much more work to do in helping staff take on the responsibility themselves. She had some quite tough management tasks to cope with, trying to help colleagues. As she was quite a lot younger than many of them she had to use a great deal of diplomacy and skill to handle these situations.

She was also teaching a younger age group herself, which was another learning situation. Her post required her to be responsible for helping six classes and class teachers with SEN. There was very little help from outside the school other than occasional visits from the Educational Psychologist.

Her first task was to set up a system of identification of children with needs and get staff used to talking about them with her but not expecting her to take children out. This couldn't be done as Sharon had her own class to teach. There was some part-time help which could be used for support. About this role of supporting others, Sharon said:

Everything I learnt has now settled into place. I feel confident – I didn't realise what I knew. I can think of strategies – the SNAP programme – small steps approach helped. The way people think, causes problems; I need to get a bigger picture – find where they are and give feedback and praise.

She had learnt management skills,

I wanted to see people doing what I'd suggested but I learnt to go slowly, to concede sometimes – to compromise and build on good points and not only see bad points.

Some people in the team tried only to see the bad. Sharon said she had some difficult meetings where she'd been calm on the outside but rage and fury underneath. Linda had helped her and given her helpful feedback.

It was very clear from this short conversation how much Sharon had grown in her ability to manage others, help them with children with special needs and use knowledge and skills gained from in-service as part of her daily work in school.

Grid Learning Conversation with Adrian, Headteacher.

My first conversation with Adrian took place in June 1991 just as Sharon was finishing the course. I had not met him before this occasion although I had some idea of his commitment to special need's issues from Sharon. This conversation was different in kind from those in the other boroughs where, I would have had more contact during my work.

I began with a free style conversation about general educational issues and Adrian's viewpoints in his relationship with the LEA. Adrian said that in this last year it had been difficult to retain or recruit teachers in Hillingdon. There are very few inspectors left, none for English or Special Educational Needs and the attached General Inspector has very little time. The Educational Psychology Service is very small also, so there are very few people left to support schools. It was therefore, difficult to get a child seen.

The LEA is taking pride in reducing its central support services and is aiming at 95% delegation of funds to schools (87% at present). At large number of secondary schools are going Grant Maintained and they take a proportion of funds with them and time leaving less for the rest of the schools. A year ago there was a hung council, no decisions were made and there was great dissatisfaction with the senior officers of the LEA. All these changes had effected in-service education. He was worried more for new heads than for himself. He said when he started up as Head, a few years back, he had found the advisors very helpful. They acted as levers to get things done. This is not longer available. The Advisor for SEN, Judith, saw special needs as part of every aspect of the curriculum. Adrian had used every course available to send staff to extend their knowledge. Now the shift was away from outside courses and away from teacher development to school development.

Adrian told his story of how he arrived at School Z and started to make the changes he wanted. The key points of this story became the elements of the raw grid. These were largely about staff development in general and how he moved the school to take

on his general philosophy of education. The domain of the conversation was a review of his management role. Special needs was not a discrete area for action, being only part of his general philosophy of serving the whole neighbourhood and meeting all needs. His role was one of leadership and enabling others through training and experiences to take other roles within the school. He had the concept of the critical mass needed for change to take place. For him this meant appointing key people as curriculum co-ordinators. Originally his core group had been himself and two others, Linda and a Maths co-ordinator.

Our second conversation took place a few weeks later in July, when we used Adrian's elements to elicit constructs and to sort these to form the raw grid. This conversation showed even more clearly how Adrian worked. He had a strong sense of his own beliefs in Education and wished to change the school to fit his ideas. He needed to change the ethos to one where each teacher took the responsibility for children's needs. He had learnt most through his staff, through negative and positive experiences. The conversation said a lot about how people were treated. He saw certain staff as destructive to children and therefore to his ideal school. He used the word catalyst to describe staff who achieved ways which helped others develop. He talks about building on staff strengths and talents and his recognition that he needed to praise staff and give positive feedback. He also recognises he has to give people time and space for development. He looks for significant staff members who can help him lead the staff. There were some staff who represented unacceptable approaches to education for Adrian.

The conversation was about whole-school needs and how he had striven to achieve his goals. This is represented on the SPACEd FOCUSed grid which accompanied the conversations. (See App 5viii, C8a,b, & analysis notes).

By the time I could feed this back, Adrian was preparing to apply for the Headship of the newly formed joint Infant and Junior School, his own job with the additional responsibility of the Infant section. Linda was applying for the Deputy Headship. Adrian's grid was a reflection on his development and management of School Z. It was about having enough key individuals to carry through his philosophy. It was also partly about his own learning on the job and partly about what he sees as creative and destructive forces of education.

Additional topics which arose in this feedback conversation.

About Becoming an Extra-Resourced School

We could become a resource for the borough. We've been asked to take various types of problems and we don't shy away from our own needs. We are identifying children who we might not have done if we hadn't had someone as good as Linda.

About forming a cluster with other Heads

I've been toying with the idea if the LEA shrinks, with a number of local Heads. We could share to employ an Educational Psychologist so we would get more of her time so she could do some preventative work as well as statutory work. We happen to have an outstanding Educational Psychologist at present. In this school I've no qualms about what happens because we've got the experience with commitment. I am very concerned about newly appointed heads who are not so well versed. I could be disastrous. My colleagues in the cluster need a lot of support without the LEA to help this could be very difficult.

The notes accompanying the feedback shows Adrian sees the left pole as being about outstanding individuals, adults who are confident in their won approach. *This is one way change is achieved. You need a cluster of like -minded people who can be catalysts for the others.*

He also said,

There needed to be a structure, a hierarchy where responsibility is devolved, a good manager has a strong part of new. You don't get out of responsibility but you build a collective philosophy and significant influence while not being dogmatic.

About the budget:

It is liberating to run the budget. I've grown in enthusiasm. I've an assistant who is expert. The budget took my time but now I can turn to other issues.

About SEN:

We need to start earlier to identify needs. There has to be a mechanism in Year 1 or before we have been handicapped by a desire to wait and see. Most expertise is now in place to support all pupils. We need an audit of ideas.

About the curriculum:

Now I can return to this. I'm surrounded by people who can take their leadership role and co-ordinate each area; give each group half days to identify teaching contribution and planning the whole curriculum.

Grid Learning Conversation with Linda, Deputy Head

Linda was clearly a significant person to Sharon and to the Head, Adrian. She also held the management responsibility for SEN in School Z. It was therefore important to hold some conversations with her. This proved very difficult to arrange, partly because of the geography as I now worked in Merton, partly because she had very high demands on her time. Our first conversation took place in December 1991, at the end of the term after Sharon completed the course (see App 5 viii D6a,b).

Linda's story also reflected part of the history of School Z from 1984 – 1992. Most of her events were changes in her roles with the school, from class teacher to Deputy Head, and descriptions of management duties. Some were centred round children or

particular staff members who illustrated particular points.

Linda endorsed the picture of School Z given by Adrian, of a self sufficient school. Hillingdon has very little to offer now as almost all its support services were reduced. Linda was enjoying the challenge and potential for building up SEN practice and making School Z a centre of excellence in this area. She saw Adrian as a Head with vision and clearly enjoyed working with him. She also thinks very highly of Sharon for whom she has been a mentor in developing her role in relation to SEN .

Linda's constructs were very much about the changed perceptions of how best to cope with SEN in School Z. She did not support certain methods which belonged to the old ways she had inherited on arrival to the school. She uses phrases like those below to describe these poles of her constructs.

*things from the past where I came from and learnt from
this does not fit our philosophy
uncomfortable for the ways the school was developing
what I want to leave behind
this is a negative view of EBD*

The opposite left pole constructs were

*exciting future developments
common management objectives for the future
School Z philosophy of meeting child needs
personal views consolidated
positive views with EBD/LD children*

The SPACEd FOCUSed grid shows most of her elements construed to the left pole, where she sees positive future ways of working that fit her philosophy. Her early history in the school and particularly her work with two particular teachers construe to her old world negative right pole.

The left pole she labels as

*About my role as Deputy with philosophy and management style of the school I like,
School Z is an exciting place to work.*

E8, E11 are

*senior management and C posts
EBD future network for early identification*

She labels these as future structures. These and,

*Adrian as responsible Head
work with teaching assistants*

are also construed to her left pole which she sees as the future and positive directions for the school.

She uses a two rating quite frequently. This is because she has used similar constructs about positive and negative developments a number of times. This means some of her

elements will not construe to these poles, thus falling outside her range of convenience. when asked what these were about, they represented another idea, that of outside agencies and the support they could bring to her or the school. These agencies came from Health and Social Services rather than Education and it was that she hoped they would come rather than they did at present. This was her ideal model and how she saw the school developing.

The second part of the conversation with Linda took place in February 1992. By this time the two schools had been amalgamated. Adrian was appointed Head for the joint school, and Linda, Deputy. Linda's office was in the Infant Department and she and Sharon were attempting to bring the Infant Department in line with the Junior, in the ways of which she approved. This meant getting away from the remedial model of SEN and helping all class teachers take responsibility for the children with any special needs. To assist in this process Sharon was to support with ideas, strategies and positive encouragement.

The third part of my conversation with Linda when I fed back the SPACEd FOCUSed grid was on the phone. I'd sent her the printout in advance with some ideas as how to read it and then I talked her through it for about half an hour. Not perhaps ideal, but an expedient way of coping with our time management problem. In fact she probably was able to get quite a lot of understanding this way and it was necessary to do this before we met for the three way joint meeting with Adrian and Sharon.

Linda's philosophy becomes much clearer from the detail of the taped conversation. She explains about learning, counselling skills and using these in school.

I'm not a professional counsellor but it's opened up the whole horizon, the child, the family. The wholeness of special needs, not just the academic, but what they're bring in with them – alerted all my senses to everything that surrounds children and other learning and their life and the influences in it and the ways in which to cope with these.

LC

You're obviously taking a viewpoint of special needs which is holistic.

Linda

Yes, I prefer to see the whole child within the context of everything that influencing them. Maybe its the nature of Special Educational Needs. In special needs in this school I think children within this school have problems relating to emotional and social difficulties and we definitely want to cope with them from within the school.

For the future:

Something else for the future I'd like to develop would be a network of multi-disciplinary approach bringing in education & social workers. Social workers – we've got a new EWO and I'm also pleased with how we're working with her.

EWO working in school – value and learn from her:

I've learnt to use her as a support and link to parent. I value her input. Also the Educational Psychologist – we've got a wonderful one at the moment. I'd love to see more of her in school but her time is taken up with multi-professional assessments and statements. I'd love to see her working in a more therapy based way in school. I'd like to set up a nurture group – would be very exciting. This is the future – I'd love to see, we could have links to health and social worker working as a team.

LC

How to handle that sort of child is a challenge to you.

Linda

Its important to know when to say I'm sorry this school can no longer help we've got to say no for the sake of other children.

Bringing together what we're doing. I'm proud of what we're doing in the Junior School and what we've established here. We've got a very positive approach, everyone's working together – teacher, assistants – we're nearly there. Teachers working in a very practical way. Now we're putting it together with another school which is working in a different way and the person co-ordinating there sees children with bits of problems and she'll sort them out: Its going to be a management challenge for me.

The school could be extra resourced for special needs. We've got all these people who have a good insight into special needs, they are prepared to take on the responsibility for it within that structure – I see myself managing that, we've got people, place to support these needs – that the resources are there, that the curriculum differentiation is there, the planning, the record keeping is there – that's going in anyway. I feel I've had to adapt my role – I love working with children – I love it but I'm having to accept I've got to remove myself a bit. I've got to provide the support, the training for the teachers and manage resources.

LC *Its the view of the self-organised school of the 90's; you're taking that on – aren't you?*

Linda

Yes, I want to bring Sharon in too, I'd love to develop Sharon with this team as significant influence in this, particularly in key stage one where we are going to have a lot to do. Adrian and I are both very committed to special needs – we've been agreeing Sharon could perhaps take on the SENCO role now as I've got enough to do as Deputy Head.

Group Learning Conversation with School Z

The first part of the procedure was to share the meaning of the individual printouts of the SPACEd FOCUSed grids. This was so everyone understood each others meanings and how they had presented their learning. This did not go very well because they needed so much help in the interpretation. Time had passed since Sharon's first and second conversations. I had carried on an update conversation on the phone the day before, but not really about the printout, more about what had happened since. I'd fed back to Linda only on the phone and Adrian's feedback was some six months before. Once this process was completed I asked each of them to list similarities and differences between their goals on two different coloured cards. We then discussed these: (see App 5 viii)

Sharon

Linda and Adrian share whole school approach and prescribe to fostering it.

We have all learnt from working with children.

Linda and Adrian recognise value tapping resources from outside agencies – I do too but not on the printout.

Adrian went for staff development issues

Adrian

Things becoming easier

Working with colleagues

Special needs features in all grids

School management

Management of staff

Linda

Involving them in responsibility

Recognition of the needs of staff

Sharing responsibility

important in management issues

There were fewer differences. These identified were:

Sharon *Showed classroom teacher's viewpoints*

Adrian

Sharon mentions individual children

School management verses classroom

SEN is part of management philosophy and leadership with staff

Linda

counselling individuals and outside agencies ideas also.

I then checked they were happy with the picture presented so far. As we had presented no surprises, we went on to discuss the future. First we reviewed what it was like a year on. Sharon had told me on the phone of her consolidation of her learning, how she had moved forward and had difficult management things to do.

Adrian:

That description could apply to all of us although for Sharon its newer. Its interesting to look at the last three months and review the amount of changes the whole staff have experienced. Some feel it is them that have changed most but we all have deep seated feelings about how change has effected us – we may present an outward face but very very major things have happened.

LC *Was the change coming from the outside influences?*

Adrian

There were significant changes in the school due to the amalgamation

LC

Special Educational Needs are an integral part of the school – part of making it a good school.

Adrian *I hope so.*

Comment on Group Learning Conversation.

This version of the group conversation, only worked for limited purposes. It took place early in the morning before school. The reading of the grids was difficult and needed rather a lot of help from me as Learning Coach. This part of the process took up a large proportion of the time and Adrian, in particular, was not fully engaged in the activity. It showed me that both time to prepare and time for the process are necessary, to be able to use the conversational process for development. What was achieved was a validation of the views of the participants. At this point Adrian had to leave. The conversation continued with Sharon and Linda, who discussed the tensions in her dual role of SENCO and Deputy Head. She expressed some worries about not being able to work with the individual child now She was not very happy about the help they receive. Sharon talked about developing each curricula area and building special needs issues into each document. We discussed whether there needs to be a whole school policy for SEN which is written down. They felt they were working this in practice and when they could write it as it is part of everything else. The possibility of being an extra-resourced school for the area was mentioned again.

Relection from the perspective of the end of phase two of the research

By the time the School Z Group Learning Conversation was held, I had developed the technique in the Merton schools. The difference with School Z was that I had neither the time for the process itself, nor the possibilty of acting on the outcomes. This was because I was no longer running the courses for Hillingdon, nor were Audry or Judith in post to act on my findings. I have only the opinion of Sharon and Linda, that they found the process useful to review their work . Despite these reservations the research in School Z was more effective than had been possible in the other Hillingdon Schools, T and X. Schools Z, W, and Y from this second set, all had well developed special -needs practices and policies, but perceived these in very different ways. These school differences are discussed further in chapter 7 of this report..

B. Reflective Grid Learning Conversations

The first repertory grid conversation I did was with Sheila, my tutor at CSHL. The purpose was twofold; to give me first hand experience of the technique as a participant, to understand the inner processes of thinking and feeling that happened during the conversation; and to understand the mechanics of elicitation. It also gave me experience of focussing a raw grid by hand.

Analysis of Own Grids – Grid One

Purpose – to understand grid techniques
– to explore inner thoughts and feelings using the grid as a conversational tool.

Domain – my learning on the job in the last six months.

The elements chosen were key events relating to individual cases or specific duties or events. From this I elicited 12 constructs which were to do with my personal feelings about the job.

I hand focussed these elements and constructs with paper, pen and scissors to re group to form pairs and clusters. Later the same raw grid was fed into the FOCUS programme at CSHL and SPACEd FOCUSED and SPACEd trigrid printouts were used for analysis and feedback to myself.

The elements grouped into three sets of three and three elements which clustered less tightly with the others.

E1, E8, E10 with E4 formed cluster 1

E12, E5, E11, cluster 2 with a quite closely placed group

E9, E7, E6 forming cluster 3.

The elements E3, E2 lay between cluster 1 and cluster 2 being construed somewhat like each.

What was the meaning of these three clusters to me at the time? This is shown by how I construe the groups against the constructs. This is best seen in the SPACEd FOCUSED printout: (see p 128a)

SPACEd FOCUSED printout analysis

Cluster 1 is construed mainly against Pole 1 of the constructs

These elements were all individual child cases. The terms I use express how I had to make decisions about them, resolve conflicts, take care of their needs (sometime medical ones) but on the whole I had been able to resolve the problems, work with colleagues successfully. The exceptions to this were the few choices on the right pole stating I felt angry, possibly about perspectives of colleagues in relation to these cases.

E3, the panel relates very much to these cases where the discussions were made about statement provision.

C.S.H.L. GRID ---- L12

SPACED TRIGRID LAYOUT OF FOCUSSED GRID

62
70 41
62 50 50
62 58 58 58
54 66 66 66 50
45 75 58 75 41 62
33 66 66 50 50 54 41
54 45 58 58 58 62 50 41
70 75 54 50 66 54 58 50 50
70 83 83 62 58 62 83 58 58 66
79 91 91 75 70 70 91 91 66 91 75

	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	
	4	1	8	0	3	2	2	5	1	9	7	6	
C7	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	1	1	C7
C3	2	3	3	1	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	1	C3
RC2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	RC2
C9	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	C9
RC1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	RC1
C5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	C5
C6	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	C6
RC4	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	RC4
RC8	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	RC8

- *AFFILIATING HS TEACHERS
- *TEACHING COURSES
- *PHON INTERVIEWS
- *MEETINGS VIV
- *JOB APPLICATIONS
- *DEIRORE
- *ELIGROJE GOVERNERS
- *PAJEL
- *PHYSIO ELIGROJE
- *CB CASE
- *LIBBY O CASE
- *ALI Z CASE

First Reflective grid, Liz, LEA Co-ordinator & tutor
SPACED TRIGRID LAYOUT OF FOCUSSED grid

Cluster 2 and 3

These are about ongoing events, meetings and appointments of staff as well as running courses. In these clusters I use constructs for the left pole and right pole groups.

E12, E5, E11, are construed mainly against constructs expressing ideas about understanding roles, finding some things easy but also finding some situations stressful, making me angry, having conflicts to resolve and understanding constructs. I learn interview techniques also.

E2 fits with this cluster to some extent but concerns individual cases.

The content of the constructs represent the emotional reactions to aspects of the job as well as showing where things are difficult or stressful and where they are easier. I was getting very little support at the time in making some important decisions about both children and schools. I was working very much on my own, with little team support or support from my line manager. This reflected in the picture of my grid conversation.

Grid Two: October 1989

The second conversation took place about six months later. For this one I worked with a friend and fellow CSHL student who was using the conversational technique in her research into teacher appraisal. She was my Learning Coach and we used the tool of grid elicitation to hold a conversation appraising my own learning about SEN. The domain and purpose was similar to those used in my research with the teacher.

Purpose – to further understand and function and power of the repertory grid a tool
– to explore my own learning
– to talk about special needs – the equivalent methods I would ask my
- clients' as researcher

Domain – my formal and informal training in the field of SEN.

As I was working with a colleague she was able to ask questions to clarify my meaning about both elements and constructs and discuss the elicitation and laddering processes of the grid conversation. For this grid I used events over my professional history as elements representing my own learning. The style of the conversation was one of appraisal interview.

The thirteen elements represented different courses taking significant people with whom I had worked and types of job I had held. The SPACEd FOCUSed printout and TRIGRID printout showed two clusters of elements with tightly construed elements and more loosely construed and a separate pair in the group.

- Cluster 1** – E11, E10, E4, E8, and E1,
Cluster 2 – E12, E13, E2, E7, E9, E5,
Pair – E6, E3

Using the SPACEd FOCUSed printout it was possible to see that *Cluster 1* construe mainly to the right pole of C11, C8, C3, C7, and RC4 and the left C11, C,1 RC2, C12, C6, C9, C5.

The notes made on the feedback grid show that these are seen as about learning practical solutions, working with teachers in classrooms and significant others who influenced and taught me – construed as different kinds of support to me as I work and affective long-term dynamic processes of change learning to think on a wider perspective about complex issues (see App 5 D2).

Cluster 2, though not entirely discrete, construes most strongly against left construct pole for C6, C12, RC2, C1, C10, C11, C8, C3 – most of C9.

These teaching experiences which taught me and gave me a wider intellectual perspective of issues overtime. Taught me skills, of working with others and learning from others. These elements most were largely about teaching the OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses but included being a Head teacher myself for 10 years and teaching in the Open University. These were largely perceived as positive opportunities for growth and learning. The exceptions to this cluster were E6, E3 which I felt as somewhat negative and are construed on construct pole 3 on C6, C12, RC2 .

E1, was a very recent event which showed me the power of the community feeling and relationships in relation to the philosophy behind School W. This event was included because of its nearness in time. It continues again but is outside the range of convenience of some of the other constraints.

This grid pictures my view of myself in relation to my learning about special needs. I clearly learn from others and from teaching experiences. My formal training event as an Educational Psychologist , E5 is linked to the Institute experiences, not surprisingly as it took place in the same department.

From the construct map, it is clear that working with others is significant, that widening horizons and long term goals were valued and that those experiences seen as negative could though part of my learning, have to do with events I saw as destructive or frustrating to my wider purposes.

Third Grid reflective conversation June 1990,

My third grid conversation was carried out 9 months after the previous one. This came at the end of a period of enormous change in Harrow and in my work. I had been under a great deal of stress and was coping with a very heavy workload and a difficult situation in terms of relationships. The grid conversation with myself was a useful reflective tool to help access my strengths and weaknesses, but also to analyse in which contexts I was able to contribute to the full and those in which I was frustrated and undervalued. This helped me feel confident about my job and look for positive places I could work in the future.

Purpose To reflect on aspects of my work which were successful or problematic.

Domain Events chose from my work in Harrow.

My talkback about this grid was done impressionistically by looking for clusters of elements and constructs without reading the labels, then using a coloured pen for the two construct pole ratings. Again I looked at the pattern. As is often the case, one pole was used more frequently than another – in this case the left pole. The first thing that stands out is that there are two very clearly defined clusters of elements, very little related to each other. These clusters are E1, E13, E12, E14, E3, E2 which were all difficult events, where I was standing up for my staff or pupil's needs or where I felt very isolated (see App 5 D3).

The other cluster was of events that went well, from which I felt I was learning and working effectively. These events covered work done in other boroughs which were favourably received. The three events concerning research interviews had been equally dynamic and fulfilling. The other two events were about colleagues who I had worked with successfully.

This cluster construes almost entirely to the left pole which is about success in work situations, learning on the job, and using my own knowledge to help others in different partnerships. The part of this cluster which construes to the right pole was about successful out-borough work in progress or leading to development. The grid can be seen as four clusters of ideas; three are about a variety of ways I had been working successfully both in and out of the borough. Only one cluster concerns the stressful area of work where I felt I was working alone and was anxious about the policies and decisions being made for the borough.

The technique of the grid has limitations. It is two-dimensional and perhaps should be multi-dimensional. The two poles are not always chosen as true opposites of particular constructs. The use of 2 as a rating can show another dimension emerging. However the grid exercises and the reflection together helped me to think about this period and the changes to come. Shortly after this I was accepted for the new post in Merton and decided to leave Harrow by the end of the year.

Link between Phase 1-2

At the time that phase one was coming to an end I had decided to apply for jobs outside the borough. My last grid analysis best reflects my thinking about this. I had accepted the post of Head of Learning Support in Merton and was due to start there in January 1991. I had also decided to use Merton schools for phase two of the research, instead of continuing to collect samples in Harrow or Hillingdon. While some of the reason for this was geographical, the main reason was that I could work interactively on the action research model in a borough in which I had easy access to the schools. Merton had sent someone from most of its Middle schools on the OTIS courses between 1984-87 and I had worked closely with the then Head of Service who acted as in-borough tutor for the course. These teachers would all have left the course between 4 and 6 years previously, so direct learning from the course would have faded and assessing on-the-job learning would be the purpose of the questions asked.

Before entering the new phase a lot of negotiation was necessary at borough and school level which meant there was quite a delay in starting any school-based conversations for phase 2. The intervening six months gave an opportunity for reflection on my learning so far and possible next steps.

By December 1990 I had completed most work in Harrow, needing only to carry on with the CHANGE grids. I had not been successful in completing a fourth Hillingdon school. I planned to finish the work following-up one Hillingdon course member from Cohort 3 in School Z, in the summer of 1991. As I was going to continue working with School Z, from a distance, I could plan this as part of the second phase. I had learnt a great deal about holding in depth conversations using the grid technique to start me off, but often going beyond the grid.

I had started working productively with school groups. As the first phase ended, and I left Harrow, I was able to feel confident that I could continue the work in Merton, and had benefited from the learning which I had in my conversations in Harrow and Hillingdon. I had been able to use the knowledge gained to feedback into the running of the SENIOSH/H course, and was learning a great deal about the dynamics of change in schools, and how I could, as an outsider support this process.

Chapter 6

Descriptions of Learning Conversations and Action Research Outcomes: Phase two

Overview of Phase Two

This chapter covers the second phase of the action research, which began in the Autumn of 1991 and was completed in the summer of 1992, with updating in the spring of 1993. It began after I had moved both job and home to Merton. As there had been considerable involvement in the original OTIS course by teachers from Merton middle schools, it was appropriate to follow up a sample of these as a second part of the research. It was also necessary to try to complete the follow-up work for the third SENIOSH/H cohort in School Z, reported in chapter 5.

This phase represents new developments in my use of the conversational paradigm. The repertory grid techniques, combined with tape recordings, together give a full record of the innovations in the conversations, which, when reconstructed for analysis, yield other insights in both personal learning and school development. The recording of the elements formed a summary of the main events selected from the telling of each person's story, often also a history of their school. My new role in this was to engage in more elaborated conversation, when a point arose which needed further clarification. Another role was to ask short probing questions to encourage a full coverage of the domain. The richness of data is portrayed in the tape recordings. The completed grid, however, gave structure to the analysis and further opportunities for exploration of the personal meanings of those taking part.

Another technique which was more fully developed in the second phase was that of the group Learning Conversations. This involved sharing printouts, to elicit common constructs. These then formed the content for a conversation about how the participants saw their school's development to date. This technique began with school W and X in phase one, and was further refined through the work in School Z. It became most successful in the two last case studies, Schools Q and R. Here the Group Learning Conversation proved not only to be a way of checking meanings for those taking part, but also a useful tool for action planning. This evolving technique led to the development of an algorithm which represented the process (See chapter 8).

To put the Merton work in perspective in relation to in-service activities which took place between 1982–1990, I end with a record of a conversation held with Maria, my predecessor as Head of Learning Support Service, and tutor/advisor to the OTIS. This also gives some of the background to Merton's use of in-service to develop SEN policies and practice in schools. The conversation with Neil, a course member of the most recent version of SENIOS, rounds off this phase.

Table 5: Showing Design of Phase Two Grid Conversations

Borough Three Merton

- 9) School O
 B4 *Barbara* (OTIS course member 1984)
 C9 *Ian* (Headteacher *[Tape only]*)
 D7 *Sue* (Deputy Head) *[Tape only]*
- 10) School P
 B5 *Dave* (OTIS course member 1986)
 Head Teacher absent through illness)
 D7 *Brian* (Deputy Head) *[Tape only]*
- 11) School Q
 B6 *Chris* (OTIS course member 1987;
 also Deputy Head)
 C10 *Jill* (*Headteacher*)
 D8 *Paul* (Senior teacher)
- 12) School R
 B7 *Joy* (OTIS course member 1986)
 C11 *Tom* (Head Teacher)
 D9 *Martin* (Deputy Head)

LEA staff
Maria (Tutor/advisor to OTIS)

In addition
 A7 *Neil* (SENIOS course member 1991-92)

Timescale for conversations. November 1991 - May 1993

Case	Name	First	Feedback	Group	Update
B4	Barbara	Nov 91	Jan 92	N/A	Mar 93
C9	Ian	Mar 92 Tape	N/A	" "	
D6	Sue	Jul 92 Tape	N/A	" "	
B5	Dave	Mar 92	Apr 92	N/A	Mar 93
D7	Brian	May 92 Tape	N/A	N/A	
B6	Chris	Mar 92	Apr 92	May 92	Mar 93
C10	Jill	Jan 92	Mar 92	May 92	
D8	Paul	Apr 92	Apr 92	May 92	
B7	Joy	Nov 91	Feb 92	Jul 92	May 93
C11	Tom	Jan 92	Feb 92	Jul 92	
D9	Martin	May 92	Jun 92	Jul 92	
A7	Neil SENIOS 1991-2	Mar 93 Tape	N/A	N/A	
	Maria (Tutor Link)	Mar 92 Tape	N/A	N/A	

For the purposes of discussion and analysis the description of this phase is organised as follows:–

A) Two OTIS Course Members, Merton Schools (O & P)

B) Two Merton Schools, Q & R, as case studies,

C) Conversation with LEA tutor/advisor. Reflection on action research in phase two.

A. Two OTIS Course Members, C4 & C5: Two Merton schools, O & P

School O:

Conversations took place with Barbara (OTIS course member 1984), using the repertory grid and short taped interviews were held with Ian, Headteacher, and Sue Deputy Head.

Background

Barbara is the SENCO at School O, a large Middle School in Merton for pupils aged 8 – 12 years. At the time she came on the OTIS in 1984, she had recently joined School O as a remedial teacher who taught lower ability groups. The school catered for pupils aged 9 – 13 at that time, before the primary and middle schools were reorganised. This meant two years of secondary curriculum had to be covered.

Grid Learning Conversation with Barbara: OTIS course member 1984

5 November 1991.

By the time this took place, I had learnt to use the grid technique as only one aspect in the whole conversation. A tape recorder ran throughout. The story-telling part of the technique was valuable, so this took as long as Barbara needed. As she talked about each event we recorded something on cards to act as a trigger to memory, but the natural flow was also important. The taped transcript is able to show some of the richness of detail, not possible on the record of the grid conversation. The structure of the first part of the conversation comes from the elicitation of the meaning from the events of her story.

The first two were about children, one in a book called Dibs, the other a child who was sent to special school almost over one week, mainly because he couldn't read. Barbara says about Dibs,

The book taught me that you don't write anyone off. It exposed all sorts of hidden things, it gave me such encouragement. There's always something there – you've just got to find it or someone has.

About the special school child,

In those days if staff found a child who couldn't learn to read they said this child isn't for us. He must go to special school.. So he did, almost overnight. It was our decision, the parent agreed – but we had the power. It hangs on my conscience to this day. Now I would do everything in my power to stop children going to special school.

Another topic was Barbara's learning from formal courses. The OTIS was the first, then the Open University module and later, after another borough course, an MA. in SEN at a local college, which she had just completed. These all gave her confidence in different ways.

About the OTIS, she says,

Coming on the OTIS was an amazing learning experience; just finding the building made me realise what a special needs child must feel ... The experience turned my whole world upside down – meeting all the people from the other schools and sharing ideas.

I thought everyone would know so much more than me. But they talk and you talk and it's not a case of who knows most, it's what you as a person contribute. It helped my confidence amazingly, because people in school ask you things and you tell them and they come back to find you next day for more.

About the Open University Course,

I went with three other people from school who I recognised were at the same place I'd been when I went on OTIS. It wasn't the same kind of experience though – one dropped out – they wouldn't have done on the OTIS because you got so much support – one did it but she liked writing essays and getting A's. The OTIS course had made me stand up and learn to walk. The Open University course plugged some gaps in my knowledge, but I couldn't have done it first.

About the MA,

Parts were good but I'd heard a lot of it before. There were two management modules. These were important, as special needs people have to have management skills now. My project was about how class teachers provide for the needs of children in their classrooms. These were new learning experiences.

Barbara had only just completed this course and was waiting for the results.

About her role in school,

As a result of the OTIS she was made SENCO for her school. This meant staff looked to her for help, it also meant running case conferences, seeing parents and dealing with all the various professionals who were involved with the children.

As a result of the MA course, she also had been given a C grade post which made her part of the management team in the school. About this she said,

It changed my status with the staff, it's probably more significant to them than me. I also took on a pastoral role – looking after family problems. The role is very different now – I do not teach individual children much.

She then gives examples of how this works for two types of teachers.

One, a Maths teacher, wanted help but did not want to have the child or the

responsibility taken away. This applied to another colleague too. The third however said, you've forgotten I've got this child, what are you going to do about it?

This led to her talking about the present situation and what needs doing. We need to get the support systems right so we can use it better – the support coming from outside and that from inside. We don't have a support policy that works reliably.

The constructs that were elicited from these elements are best seen through the analysis of the SPACEd FOCUSed printout of the grid, which was also used to feedback and check the meaning with Barbara. The elements fall into two large clusters, a pair and a loosely connected trio (See p 136a).

The pair E8, E10, are to do with her status in the job given by the Head – she called it empowerment.

The trio E2, E3, E14, were some negative learning experiences which she used to illustrate what she had needed to move away from.

Cluster 1

E3, E7, E4, E6, E1, are about her personal learning through reading and courses, learning through and gaining knowledge.

Cluster 2

E9, E13, E15, E11, E12, are all examples of her work in school where things she has learnt are applied with other activities of staff or, in one case, a family.

These elements construe into four main blocks:

Block One

On the right pole (upper half) are RC2, C12, C5, RC11, C10. These are to do with positive learning experiences related to theory and practice. They relate to RC9, loosely matched to decisions regarding SEN.

Block Two

On the left pole (upper half) of the same constructs are negative examples, difficulties overcome and her own lack of knowledge. This pole is very little used, as it represents things she has left behind.

Block Three

On the right pole (lower half) C8, C3, C6, C1, C4, are constructs to do with personal growth and relationships in school. These are very strongly related to theory and knowledge which help her to do her job.

Block Four

On the left pole (lower half), these are to do with school needs and how they are moving forward – her responsibilities for staff and managing support systems.

The main points to come out of the raw grid elicitation were:

It's about empowerment and status to do the job of SENCO

Being pushed into something and then given confidence -Through knowledge

About my self education – the courses and events which have changed me.

We then started to talk about things that had hindered the progress she had wished to make and she said,

There's a lot of icing at this school – the layers look pretty, the building is impressive – so we are over -subscribed. However it's difficult to get beyond that.

Feedback Conversation with Barbara using SPACEd FOCUSed grid

January 1992 (See App 6ix B4b).

Cluster One

In talking back the meaning of the SPACEd FOCUSed printout, we spent time talking about how theory and knowledge empowered Barbara, gave her status and led to the Head giving her a post of responsibility. She said that the staff think differently about her since she received her MA and she feels this helps deny the attitude that special needs teachers have few brains.

We discussed the meaning of these groups of ideas for Barbara and the school. E7, E4, E6, were the three courses, identically construed, despite the marked differences when discussing them. These are not construed identically just because they were courses, it was because they empowered Barbara in two ways. Firstly, the knowledge and confidence empowered her directly, but secondly, the fact that she had attended was, in her view, one of the reasons she was given posts of responsibility which again empowered her. E3, reading the journal of NARE, was alike in some ways to the courses, as was reading *Dibs*. These were to do with personal learning, as was, to some extent, the child, Sundhen, a Downes–Syndrome child of a family friend. These early experiences changed Barbara's attitudes and sent her on a search for information.

This type of learning gave knowledge of theory behind practice and helped Barbara to tackle practical tasks. The course taught her to work with the positive people first. She sees these kinds of knowledge as part of her personal empowerment.

E9, E13, E15, and to some extent E11 and E12 are all seen as examples of good team work where things went better. They also were,

Areas we need to change in all years and all curriculum groups. These are bits that we tried and worked, but they were isolated experiences and didn't last.

E5, E14 are negative examples where people try to get rid of the responsibility for SEN.

That teacher and that child are about the same idea – being threatened by a child with learning difficulties – needing to get rid of the child – I was like that years ago

The pair. E8, E10, are about getting the responsibility posts, but on five of these constructs they are given a 2 as being either non–applicable or half way. Barbara says:*they are half way because they are a bridge between poles.*

About the large group construed to the right pole, she said that these were things she had read or tried- sources for ideas -they helped her to do the job and were personal events which changed attitudes in herself. About E12, the family, she added:
I used all my knowledge and skill to solve their problems – they needed a multi-agency approach, it was very time consuming.

The overall meaning shown by the grid was summarised by Barbara as being about,
Teacher expectations – these need to be high
Empowerment to do my new jobs
Successful things achieved in school with positive people

Barbara was concerned about many of the children still not reading; about the match being poor between their needs and what they are given. She has some people who work well with her, but she is still too isolated.

Interview with Ian, Headteacher: School O

(Interviewed with tape only.)

It had been difficult to get an appointment to meet in Spring 1992. There was some reluctance on the Head's part to take part in the research. However, he did not express this directly. We met by appointment and after a half-hour delay, began to discuss his views about special needs in his school. He had been at the school seventeen years, fourteen as Head. What he told me was the key points in the history of the school's development in relation to special needs. He did not wish to take part on a personal level, a point which became clear when our interview time was interrupted after thirty minutes by a phone call from his secretary. I was told later by Barbara, that this was planned to prevent him carrying on longer. His reason, given at the time, was that he had another urgent engagement.

This reluctance was predicted by Barbara, who had said that now special needs was delegated to her, Ian did not wish to engage to any extent in the issues surrounding it. As this was the only time in the whole research anyone was so reluctant, it is probably significant in relation to the overall development of policy in School O.

A good deal of the conversation was about the school's development; its intake over the years changing to take on more children with special needs. He was keen that all childrens' needs should be identified and then resourced. He said:

One of the biggest catalysts for us was Barbara going on that course – that really woke us up. It was a couple of years after that, that I gave her a responsibility allowance in recognition of her worth. It's difficult to get someone with 100% commitment like Barbara's.

He said that the school had special needs on the school development plan two years before. *Special Educational Needs now has a higher profile. The year co-ordinators ,*

meet Barbara regularly. She has her finger on the pulse. Special needs goes throughout the school, which is large, with 19 classes and 28 staff plus part-timers.

For Ian, special needs was both a pastoral and curriculum issue. A responsibility for the class teacher, year leader, and curriculum co-ordinator, who all work closely with Barbara. It was clear from this conversation that Ian relied heavily on Barbara to take the bulk of responsibility for special needs in his school.

Conversation with Sue, Deputy Head: School O

(using tape and element cards only)

The discussion about Sue's views of SEN in School O covered areas related to her role as Deputy Head, responsible for the pastoral aspects of the school and timetabling and organisation.

It was this later area on which she dwelt in the first half of the conversation. She was a French teacher and as such the issue of setting was uppermost in her mind. In the past the school had set the pupils for Maths, English and French in the last two years from aged 10, (when the school covered two years of secondary curriculum). The Borough reorganised Middle Schools with only one year, Year 7, in the secondary age band. They changed to mixed ability teaching in all subjects, except maths, which was banded.

Due to a recent review of staff opinion and because of papers published as a government report, (Alexander et al 1992), the mixed ability policy was due to be changed, possibly reverting to setting. Sue and I discussed the pros and cons of mixed-ability groupings. She felt that the lower groups did worse on the whole in this arrangement, as they often became dispirited with the lack of success for them in the work. It was very difficult for teachers to teach right across the ability range in subjects like Maths or French and meet the needs of all groups. More targeted approaches could be achieved, she felt, by setting.

Another major topic of our conversation was Barbara's role in the school: how it had grown and developed and what part she played now. Sue felt one of Barbara's successes had been to help all staff take on the responsibility for SEN and not see it as someone else's problem.

One of the big improvements in special needs in the last five years has been that staff do take this on themselves and no longer expect Barbara to do it all. Due to Barbara's good work we all know that it's up to all of us to be involved and prepared to differentiate and devise special programmes of work for children with special needs – that is much more widespread now.

Barbara had been to the governor's meetings and they had been very impressed with her report and asked for more information in the future. The Special Educational Needs Policy was being reviewed as part of the school development plan and we discussed ways this could be reviewed and rewritten.

Support issues, stated teachers, parents and specific problems such as dyslexic children were mentioned. We ended talking about the pastoral role that Barbara and Sue share, related for example, regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer. Sue felt Barbara to be much more confident now in her role as SENCO and also a valuable member of the senior management team of the school.

Reflection and update of action research

It was clear from all three conversations that Barbara herself had grown in expertise and confidence and held a key role in the school's development of special need's work. Ian had certainly empowered Barbara and relied heavily on her to lead this area of staff development. Sue also saw Barbara as a valuable colleague and team member with whom she worked closely on pastoral and curricular issues.

Barbara is however not satisfied that everything has been achieved. She feels there is much to be done about the curriculum, about support being efficiently used and about future developments of policy. In reviewing and reliving the conversations for the write-up of the research, I was also able to use this revision to prepare for a further conversation held with Barbara in March 1993. Our focus was the future action for School O in relation to special needs and how my team member could best help. Through the review of last year's conversations, I could focus quickly on the next steps with Barbara and identify action plans for both of us.

School P

Conversations were held with Dave, B 5 (OTIS course member 1986) and Brian, Acting Head (Short taped interview)

Background

School P is a large Middle school with over 450 pupils, serving a suburban population. When Dave attended OTIS in 1986 it was for 9-13 year-olds, as were all Merton Schools before reorganisation. The Headteacher, Margaret, was very supportive towards special needs and choose Dave, who had curriculum responsibilities, to come on the course. He was interested in looking at how staff could change their teaching of humanities subjects, to include children with a range of interests and abilities. One of the Deputies, Ursula, held the responsibility for organisation of SEN. She largely perceived as these literacy difficulties, needing extra support.

I had hoped to talk at some length with Margaret as part of the research. I had held a

series of conversations with her; once when Dave was on the course, and other times since I came to work in the borough. Unfortunately, Margaret was very ill for almost the whole of the year and was never able to meet me.

I held two grid conversations with Dave and a short conversation with Brian, the Acting Head, recorded on tape. For Dave, the conversation served a useful purpose as he was to take up responsibility for SEN in the Autumn, after Ursula retired. At the time of the interview, Dave was Head of Year and still responsible for Humanities, which had recently been the subject evaluated by the Borough Inspectors.

Grid Learning Conversation with Dave

The conversation started with a review of key events. These included three related to the OTIS course, which had influenced his practices in school, both in the classroom and in helping other staff in his capacity as Humanities teacher and Head of Year.

He also gave examples of incidents with children which illustrate his own learning about how to meet their needs in consultation with parents and teachers. The school had recently had a specialist inspection in Humanities, which was uppermost on Dave's mind. This had been an unhappy learning situation as the organisation of the Inspection had been unfortunate in some ways, and he felt staff needs were not met.

Dave had learnt much from his conversations with Margaret which he mentions specifically as an ongoing series of events. He also talked about staff development events and his work to help other teachers develop their teaching strategies to allow more group work and contact with the children.

He was concerned about the effect of LMS and the loss of staff next year. In eliciting constructs, a great deal of the conversation was about both his personal learning and his learning to help members of staff to teach effectively within his subject responsibility for Humanities. He had used the strategies he learnt on OTIS, to advantage, on both counts.

When the school had changed from catering for 9–13s to 8–12s, Dave had seen one of his roles to help change philosophy and practice to a more primary-based approach. To this had been added the National Curriculum History and Geography which brought other changes. The school has a number of integrated statemented pupils with part-time teachers attached. This also has meant helping staff change to incorporate these children in their class management and planning for differentiation.

The conversation also covered Dave's liaison role with first schools, the children and parents. This meant he visited the feeder primary schools (later renamed First

SPACED FOCUSSED GRID DAVE

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS		CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -	
CONSTRUCT	POLE	RATED	1	2	3
WHOLE SCHOOL PROBLEMTACHSN	C3	* 2	1	1	1
MY COURSE FEEDBACK SUPERPOS	RC10	* 3	3	1	2
THINGS MISSED IN CHILDS NED	RC9	* 3	3	1	2
MY OWN CLASSROOM STRATEGIES	RCS	* 3	3	3	1
CHILDRENS LOOKED AT AS INOS	C4	* 3	3	3	1
WORKING WITH CHILD & PARENT	C7	* 3	3	3	1
PERSONAL TEACHING&CLASS MAN	C1	* 3	3	2	1
CONFIDENCE BUILD FR STAFF	C2	* 1	1	3	1
BUILDING PICTURES OF INDIVLS	C6	* 1	1	1	3
ME HELPING OTHER PEOPLE	C8	* 1	1	2	3
MY JOB EFFECT SCHOOL POLICY	C3	* 1	1	1	3
STAFF IDENTIFIED OWN NEEDS	RC10	* 1	1	1	2
EVALUATING THINGS MISSED	RC9	* 1	1	1	2
CLASSROOM WORK SUPPORTING	RCS	* 1	1	1	3
RESOURCES OF TIME NEEDWHSTF	C4	* 1	1	1	1
ME IN DEPT ROLE	C7	* 1	1	1	1
WHOLE SCHOOL STAFF DEVELOPNT	C1	* 1	1	1	1
RELATED TO HUMANITIES	C2	* 1	1	1	1
STAFF NEEDSNOT PERCEIVED	C6	* 1	1	1	1
ME BEING HELPED	C8	* 1	2	3	1
*STUDENT ON T P NEED PRAISE		* 1	1	1	1
*TEACH YR 4 WHO WERE WEAK		* 1	1	1	1
*LEARN STRATEGIES TASK ANAL		* 1	1	1	1
*FREDERICK WRK WTH PARENTS		* 1	1	1	1
*CHANGE ROLE FRM 9-13 TO8-12		* 1	1	1	1
*CONVERSATIONS WITH MARGARET		* 1	1	1	1
*SCHOOL RECORDS FR SPECIALNO		* 1	1	1	1
*OTIS STUDY & REPORT BACK		* 1	1	1	1
*WE THOUGHT GET HELP PLAN		* 1	1	1	1
*EVALUATION OF HUMANITIES		* 1	1	1	1
*IMPLIMENTATION OF NAT CURR		* 1	1	1	1
*TEACHING STATEMENTED CHILD		* 1	1	1	1
*CLASS GROUPING INSET COOPWK		* 1	1	1	1

Dave, OTIS course member, School P
 SPACED FOCUSSED grid

schools), to pick up all the information about individual needs. This linked also to School P's well developed record-keeping systems to cover individual needs.

Dave had incorporated a small-step task analysis approach to solving some pupils' learning difficulties. He had learnt this on OTIS and then taught it to others in the school. He relates this to other strategies including the importance of giving positive feedback and praise to staff as well as pupils. He had this sort of support himself from Margaret, the Head.

As Dave had several roles in the school, the conversation covered his learning for all of these, probably with greatest emphasis on his role of leader of others in relation to Humanities and as a year tutor.

Feedback Conversation using SPACEd FOCUSed grid

In reading back the meaning of the grid we rehearsed and covered some of the same ground as the original conversation. The grid showed the pattern of Dave's learning quite clearly (See p. 142a).

E13, E9, E10, E6, E8 construe on the right pole for RC10, RC9, RC5, C4, C7, C1. These elements are construed in relation to working with staff, supporting staff and whole school development. They also relate to his role as leader in Humanities. Most of the right half pole is about staff needs and whole-school policy. The exception being C8, his own talks with the Head being seen as support for himself.

The majority of the rest of the elements construe to the left pole, which he sees as his personal learning either from the course or from solving problems with individuals in school. Dave seems to have integrated this personal learning well into the various roles he holds in school. (Appendix 6x, B5b)

We then went on to talk about his future role of SENCO, taking over from Ursula when she retires. I would act as possible support for him in this role. The school would also be under new leadership, as Margaret had to retire due to her long-term illness. Change was on the way.

Conversation with Brian, Deputy Head: School P

(recorded on tap)

Elements were elicited to shape the story; however a second opportunity to elicit constructs and the raw grid never occurred, due to the pressure on him to hold the school together, during Margaret's long illness.

By this time, I realised the story elicitation might need some prompts to focus on and to ensure coverage of the domain chosen for the conversation. Other than these

prompts or requests for clarification of a point, I listened and wrote.”

Brian started by saying he saw E2L children as having special needs, as they cannot access the curriculum, but he also was coming to realise that taking them out may not be the best way to teach them.

His next group of events centred round his pastoral duties, dealing with discipline problems or parents in dispute over their child and how they'd been handled in school. In both these types of events Brian adopts the role of listener, mediator and counsellor, trying to give both child and parent space and time to put their viewpoints. He explained the school's viewpoint to try to show that the school also has problems and children cannot behave entirely without awareness of others. He ended by talking about the need for careful collection of evidence to show a child had needs to ensure extra resources, using the Borough's MEND¹ system effectively.

He ended by saying the school needed to develop a support policy and training for every teacher to be a teacher of Special Educational Needs. He sees the role of SENCO as essentially one of advisor, trainer and consultant to help other staff.

Reflection and update

School P now has a new Head and Deputy, and Dave is the new SENCO. He had learnt a lot to take him into this post from previous experiences, including the OTIS course and his curriculum and year leader responsibilities.

The changes in management style, coupled with the pressures of LMS have meant SEN has a lower profile and lower resourcing than in the past. Due to this it has been more difficult to follow up this case.

¹MEND – Merton Educational Needs Documentation. A system using a five-stage procedure to identify levels of Special Educational Needs.

B. Two Merton Schools, O & R, as Case Studies

School Q

Conversations were held with B6. Chris (OTIS course member 1987.)

C10 Jill, Headteacher, D8 Paul, Senior teacher.

Introduction

School Q was chosen as one of the schools in the Merton sample because Chris had been on the original Institute one term SEN course and Jill, the Head, had also been the Head at the time. This meant it was possible to look at the effect of in-service after five years and see how it had interacted with all the other significant events that also had taken place during those years.

School Q, a Middle School, is situated in an industrial area and serves a large council estate. It used to be designated as the only social priority school in Merton, when that category was used. When Chris came on the OTIS course in 1987, he was Deputy Head, as he was at the time of the research. In 1986 the school was threatened with closure and the community and parents and staff were fighting to keep it open. It had recently been opened as an amalgamated school with the staff from both the previous schools. Closure had not been planned then and the staff felt particularly angry about the added stress this caused on top of the amalgamation. The battle to keep the school open was won and from then the Head had been working hard to build up a coherent school policy which would increase the school numbers and reputation. It has become much more successful and is well respected for its caring attitude to both children and parents.

I was asked to hold a day's INSET for the whole staff, using the borough's guidelines to help them to develop their whole school policy for SEN. Targets were set by the whole staff as a result of the work on this day. The SENCO, Leslie, was asked to write up the policy after consultation with the staff. This has now been done.

The fact that Leslie did not have significant training for her job, but has been in the post for eight years, is an important feature of SEN development in School Q. When I came to the borough and first visited School Q with Christine, my team member, she expressed a sense of frustration about her own work. I wished to get some measure of what was happening here. I met Leslie, the SENCO. I also met Chris, who was to some extent showing frustration about the way the SENCO was working and yet he wished to keep a positive relationship with her and not undermine her confidence.

My original observations were that the school was a caring place which valued childrens' individual contributions and believed in building their self-esteem.

However important the overall ethos of the school was to the Head and Deputy Head, it was clear that there was some frustration on the staff's side about curriculum development, differentiation and, in particular, specific teaching strategies related to SEN. (See App.6x)

Grid Learning Conversation with Chris: OTIS course member & Deputy Head

I had held several conversations with Chris since I arrived in Merton. The grid elicitation was therefore a special, more structured one in the series and took place in January 1992.

Chris told a story of how he developed his philosophy of special needs. He used examples of children and staff as incidents to illustrate issues. Other influences from reading and from the OTIS course experiences were included. Staff INSET events, and managing the SENCO and another member of staff where there was conflict, were also given as examples of learning on the job, and of how to manage SEN in the school. Parents' interviews were included as an element in his learning.

Chris had a lot to say about building a positive self-image for all children. A number of his examples illustrate this construct. He admires adults who empower children, who develop an atmosphere of consideration, who treat children as individuals. He clearly sees his own development in terms of encouraging staff to adopt these attitudes wholeheartedly (See p. 146a).

E1, E3, E6, E2 and to some extent E7, E11 are all about examples, both positive and negative, of Chris learning how to achieve the goals of giving these individuals consideration which build self-esteem for the child.

The rest of the ideas are in pairs which are less loosely matched one to the other.

E , E5 are examples of Chris learning from the OTIS course.

E10, E12 are examples of managing people as aspects of his job when there is conflict

E10 is about managing the SENCO , with whom he has a number of difficulties.

E8, E9 are about helping staff

E8, an example with a probationer

E9, other INSET events

The left construct pole is largely about staff development and management in relation to this theme. The right pole is about Chris's own learning by one means or another. He uses a two rating quite frequently. In the feedback of the SPACEd FOCUSed Grid, I explored these ratings with him. Some were about events he chose not to mention before, and are about some of his more negative learning experiences. Managing the SENCO role is one of these. He uses the 2 rating five times on this

SPACED FOCUSSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS										CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -					
		E	EE	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E					
SELF IMAGE CONFIDENCETRNSFR	C1	* 3	3	11	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	* C1	NEGATIVE FEELINGS DIDNTCARE	
WAYS ADULTS EMPOWER CHILDORN	C6	* 1	1	11	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	* C6	RELATIONSHIP WTH COLLEGUES	
ATMOSPHERE OF CONSIDERATION	C2	* 1	1	11	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	1	* C2	GENERAL ACADEMIC LEARNING	
INDIVIDUAL DISAFFECTEDNEEDS	C5	* 1	1	11	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	* C5	LEARNING ABT TEACH ENVIRMET	
INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT	C8	* 1	3	33	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	* C8	EXPERIENCE FOR ME EXTREMES	
MANAGING STAFFING CONFLICTS	C4	* 1	3	33	3	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	* C4	CULTIVATE ACCEPTBLE ENVIRMT	
RAISING STAFF AWARENESS	RC3	* 3	3	33	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	* RC3	SETTING APPROPRIATE TASKS	
HELP PEOPLE CONSIDER NEWWAY	C7	* 3	3	33	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	* C7	OWN VALUE OF PUPILS ROLE	

		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*VISITS TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*OTIS MEETING ADULTS REFLECT
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*PARENTS VIEWS BEING DISCUSD
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*MANAGING SENCO ROLE
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*STAFF INSET VARIOS
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*PROBATIONER REPLACEMENT
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*HENRY H CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*LEE & BASKETBALL
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	**ARTICLE TES FIRST DAY COMP
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*READING *TO SERVE THEM ALLD
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*ROBERT LUDLOW
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*YR6 BILLY CURRICULUM MATCH

Chris, OTIS course member & Deputy School Q
 SPACED FOCUSSED grid

element. We discussed this further. He is not finding it easy to motivate the person who holds this post to carry out her duties. The situation has been going on for many years, but the Jill had not tackled it. Some of the other uses of 2 were rather more arbitrary and might have been pushed towards one of the poles.

E12, *parents' views being discussed*, also is construed with 2, five times. This is because the poles are about staff or personal development and Chris sees this as a different domain and so this is outside his range of convenience for this grid.

In listening to the tape of this first conversation, it is possible to record much more richness of detail than on the notes and the element cards. Chris started with incidents about children, to illustrate his attitudes to individuals whose needs must be understood and something positive recognised, in order to enhance the child's self-esteem.

He then went on to describe his experience of the OTIS course in January 1987. He said;

It's not really necessarily the content of things said, although a lot of that was stuff I hadn't considered before, but it's mixing with people from such varied backgrounds. The chance to think about things rather than just see them. The visits were very useful, We were like the fly on the wall. One of these was a special school or unit in a mainstream. It was the way in which children were treated with consideration that struck me as important.

He then told a story about an incident of particular teacher who taught in such a way that children failed. On the card we wrote *Billy, curriculum match*, to remind Chris what he meant. His comments were:

She would send people to me if they couldn't cope with this type of environment. Billy showed me what he'd been asked to do and I couldn't understand it. It was about six levels more difficult than it should have been for ten year olds. He was in trouble, although it wasn't his fault.

His next story was about a part-time teacher who replaced a probationer for half a day a week, while she went on her training. On this morning the attendance of the day dropped and when he investigated this, Chris found that the supply called the children "thick". Chris went on to talk about management issues. He felt that there are about 60% or more of the staff now who are really planning their work well.

The percentage figure rise is due to the number of people who are now properly trained for middle school age. The problem has been secondary-trained teachers needing to learn. Since the INSET you started with Christine in the summer, there was a marked change of attitudes for some individuals and, again, last Monday we had a fascinating hour and half when I asked, how do children learn.? The different

things that came forward were incredible. I was able to play devil's advocate and brought out the argument. This will feed into our curriculum document. The management problems included the SENCO herself and how we persuade, empower her to do the role and if you don't think it satisfactory, how do you get someone else to take it over without causing upset.

We then checked the cards for coverage of the domain. I prompted a further story about how Chris handles behavioural incidents, which I knew were important to him. He told a story about a conflict management incident he had diffused between a member of staff and a child. This illustrated a fundamental belief for Chris, that you make sure the child knows it's the behaviour you won't accept, not the child himself. He said;

Its important to also sort such tension rather than let it bounce off again.

We labelled this event *Henry*, the name of the child.

I now find that members of staff now do allow the child space to calm down before they escalate the thing.

I continue to prompt for coverage – what about parents? I ask.

One fascinating thing I did was to ask a group of parents to come in and tell me what was important in school. Previously I had done a similar thing with children who had identified Maths, English and Science. They had seen education as a list of subject.

But the parents, were far more concerned about children being able to mix well, be able to be polite and deal with adults, qualities that would help them get and keep jobs. They don't query what we teach, but they are quick to do so if you slight their child. We do try to involve parents more to sort these things out.

In going over these events again to elicit the constructs, some further ideas emerged, but more frequently this further conversation acted to confirm the core constructs which were present in the story. One of the core constructs was the importance he attached to valuing individuals rather than conformity. This theme went through most of his choices. He said;

I feel very strongly about self -worth and building a kind, considerate atmosphere in school.

In choosing similarities and differences I reminded him that there needs to be a continuity between the two ends of the poles. I also reminded him about the domain of the conversation, which was about his own learning. These prompts helped Chris to tease out the construct, but it was richer in quality than we could write down on the card.

To me the value of the OTIS was the informal atmosphere, what goes on at coffee etc. This was like a back -cloth upon which a decent play could be staged. The other was about children's learning.

The next one, Chris says, *This about the way adults can disempower children and damage confidence and demotivate.*

This conversation showed how Chris was planning to deal with the present SENCO and her role, in ways that were parallel to his belief about children. We agreed on the construct as about, not demotivating adults or children.

At this point he mentioned being seconded for six months, as Deputy to help run a local EBD Special school which was failing badly. He had left this out of his story of events till this point. He said he had left it out because he had hated every minute of it. He then told me about this and why it had been such a bad and damaging experience. He admitted it had taught him through negatives, about himself and how to handle other teachers and manage situations. The only thing he did feel good about was that he stuck it out every day, even though he felt so ill. Telling me this was quite difficult for Chris, who doesn't like to talk about his failures – it shows a measure of his trust in me as a counsellor and friend.

Chris had tightened up on many aspects of the school's life. School Q makes its anti-bullying policy one of its selling points and this, over the years, has led to an increased first choice for this Middle School from the surrounding primaries. Chris was pleased with the upward trend in recruitment. He makes sure he visits every class, every day. In this way he has a feel for what really is happening in the school and meets his children regularly (See App 6xi B6b).

Chris feels that he is getting the staff to take responsibility for their own special needs children. My team member, Christine, is acting far more in an advisory capacity, helping with INSET and ideas and resources.

Grid Learning Conversation with Jill: Headteacher, School Q.

January 1992.

The conversation took place about six months before Jill retired as Headteacher. Her story covers some of the school's history, particularly the threat of closure following the amalgamation. This incident has left its scar on Jill and those staff who were there at the time. Parental support and support for parents have become an integral part of Jill's philosophy in running her school. Some of the other elements in her story are about her positive use of funds, coming through the LME Scheme, from which her school is greatly advantaged in terms of the formula. She has used this to appoint non-teaching assistants for all the year four classes. She got the idea from the statemented support assistants and when she saw the quality of the personnel, extended the idea beyond statemented children. She also was able to fund other projects from their extended funding and, for the first time, was able to plan ahead.

Seven further elements centre round various aspects of staff development. The last two elements return to the theme of parents and add those of governors who also support the school (see p149a).

JILL

Jill, Headteacher, School Q
 SPACED FOCUSED grid

SPACED FOCUSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 - CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 3 -

ELEMENTS

	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		
C10 INVOLVE OUTSIDE GRPS IN POL	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	C10 INVOLVE OUTSIDE AGENT TRAINING	
C12 LINKS TO COMMUNITY	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	C12 INDIVIDUAL LEADING BY EXAMPL	
C9 SUPPORT FRM OUTSIDE SCHOOL	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	C9 SUPPORT FRM INSIDE SCHOOL	
C8 ONGOING INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	C8 NEGATIVE LINKSPAST CONTROL	
RC7 MONEY GIVES OPPORTUNITIES	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	RC7 STAFF TAKE INITIATIVES	
C6 WHOLE SCHOOL DEV THRU FINCE	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	C6 CELEBRATION OF SUCCESS	
RC1 FINANCIAL INFLUENCE OF FLS	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	RC1 WHOLE SCHOOL DEV CHOOSE LIB	
RC11 INDIVIDUAL COMING ON SLOWLY	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	RC11 STAFF DEV IN GENERAL	
RC3 MY OWN PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	RC3 EFFECT ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT	
RC4 SEN POLICY DEV TIME ROPENOW	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	RC4 CHRIS DEV & EFFECT ON STAFF	
C5 OUTSIDE COMMUNITY INFLUENCE	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	C5 WITHIN SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
C2 INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS REACTIO	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	C2 LOOKING AT STAFF AS A WHOLE	

	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNERS
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* OPEN DOOR POLICY FOR PARENT
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* THREAT OF CLOSURE PARENT CHO
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* USE NT STAFF IN YR4
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* LMS INFLUENCE READ RM STAFF
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* BEST FUNDS SCHOOL DEV PLAN
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* APPRAISAL SCHEME FOR HEADS
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* SEN WH SCHOOL POLICY FOLLOWUP
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* LIBERTY AS SOCIAL PRIORITY
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* AUDIT FOR STAFF CURR DEVOPM
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* LYR 6 YRS YR7 YR4 OSMOSIS
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* CHRIS LEADING BY EXAMPLE
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* CAROL YR6
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* IAN J NOT TAKING OWNERSHIP

* IAN J NOT TAKING OWNERSHIP

She construed these elements into two clusters which are fairly matched.

Cluster One

This centres round E12, E10, which are key events about staff development. One was a single day's event, the other a continuous process: what she called *osmosis of ideas from one year group to another*. She was keen to measure how far primary school ethos had developed since the school intake changed from 9–12 to 8–12 year olds. Some of the secondary methods and subject-based thinking was, she felt inappropriate.

In particular she wanted to encourage the concept of every teacher being responsible for all the child's needs in their class. She is aware that they do not always know how to meet these needs. It is important to share the expertise that is already there in the staff.

Matched closely to these elements were E7, E1.

E7 is about Chris leading by example.

E1 is School Q's social priority status.

For Jill, Chris's philosophy about children with social and emotional needs, is central to how she also perceives special needs. This links to her ideal of the school meeting the needs of the community. Chris had developed policies and practices to stop bullying and try to enhance each child's self-esteem. Matched closely to these elements are,

E11, Special needs policy

E5, two examples from individual staff

E6, one positive and one negative which illustrate her points about taking responsibility for all pupils in the class

E12, is a link between the school's development, Chris attending the OTIS course and my support for their INSET on SEN policy.

Jill thought that it was because of the trust staff have in Chris that my input into the school's development about special needs policy was accepted so well. She wondered what would have happened if I hadn't been appointed to the borough and that link between the OTIS hadn't been reviewed. I had carried out two in-service sessions with the school and had been well received on both occasions. This was, I thought, because I knew where the school was at, through previous knowledge when Chris had been on OTIS and updating through my own LSS team members (See App. 6xi).

The other cluster shows two sets of three elements each.

E14, E15 identically matched to each other and less tightly construed with E

E3, E4 and E9 are all about having money from LME and GEST funding.

Lying between these two cluster groups are E8 : the Head's Appraisal Scheme, from

which Jill says she had learnt to structure her planning better and co-ordinate this with her other work. Thus E8 is shown as a co-ordinating element between the two clusters. Jill elaborated this theme and this is shown best on the taped recording.

My appraisal taught me to structure my work and link to the school development plan. The school development plan highlights particular areas and the consequences of that is that these things are linked. In the curriculum development plan you automatically get your staff development plan coming from that.

Because we started our first staff development plan with an audit bottom-up, that identified areas for the senior team and the INSET Co-ordinator to say this is where we see our in-service training going. Two thrusts are coming out of the documentation we were required to do but equally we have allowed individual requests not to go by the board.

Jill had to admit that LME and other government initiatives about development plans have been advantageous to the school. She felt this had begun to effect classroom practice. She was particularly pleased by the calibre of probationer teachers she had been able to recruit. They had brought new ideas into the school which she hoped would filter through by her osmosis methods. To return to special needs, she felt anything that helped the school benefits this group and vice versa. She felt she had sufficient expertise and commitment in the school, but was still concerned to get over the idea that the staff were here for the children and to meet all of their needs (See App. 6xi C10b).

Grid Learning Conversations with Paul: Senior teacher. (See App 6xi, D8 a,b)

Paul was a senior teacher at School Q who had recently been appointed as the second Deputy head. His interest was in the curriculum and did not see himself as being particularly knowledgeable about SEN, although he thought he was learning from experiences on the job. I did not know Paul, so our grid conversation in March 1992, was the first we had held. He told his story of the school's development and his own learning about SEN, through handling various situations in school, particularly those concerning Statemented pupils, which he included four times. Paul's elements included two about the previous history of the school, including the threat of closure. He talked about staff development initiatives that he had organised for himself and others, two of which were using computer technology. He also mentioned the need to consider brighter children as an aspect of individual needs: he felt his was neglected. He was concerned about curriculum access for the range of pupils with individual needs. He had responsibility for Year 7 (and used to have Year 8 before reorganisation) and was a secondary-trained teacher.

He learnt a lot about differentiation of the curriculum from integrating the statemented pupils. First, he had learnt to identify individual needs using the MEND procedures thoroughly to record concerns of the teacher:

MEND gave a structure to work to and recorded a lot of things – but MEND made you do it. Hope the process will have started in Year Four and will be easier. Identifying children carefully and getting a needs analysis going. I sorted out how I taught them and interacted with them – they were all different and they all had different problems emotionally – learning and social problems.

Then when he became a support teacher for Year 7 his role changed within the year: Thought I'd go into all the classes and help with less able or brighter children. In the first place this is how it went but I ended up teaching the Social Studies theme. I've become the expert almost, to lead the topics and so the support and lead role has changed – I've seen it as in-service for my colleagues.

I'm trying to differentiate the lessons so all children have access to the lesson. In topic work the lovely thing that happens once work is set is we can both together individually see to the children's needs – both of us are working on the same wave length.

But in English and Maths it's a bit different. In Maths:, we have set for this subject because of preparation for High School, and because we have neglected our brighter pupils it's been my job to push the brighter children – they are loving it. Year 6 and Year 5 will do this for Maths – We've support teachers in every year group. There is support across the school in different ways. In Year 7: in the first half hour we take out 4–5 from each class on English based subjects. Also for brighter children and discuss their difficulties. On Friday, when I support English, my job is to help individual class teachers pick up less able children.

Paul was concerned about outside opinions of the school, about them not being able to cope with more able children. He was often frustrated by things that were initiated and not carried through, like Chris's project on Records of Achievement. He was concerned to use INSET funds to help staff develop more expertise.

We are all trying to get to learn how to teach all our children, we need experts on the staff to feedback to us when they go on courses. I am trying to get staff who have been on a course to disseminate the main ideas – there is a folder in the staffroom to fill in. But when I ask them to do it, inevitably it doesn't happen, and also some are actually unwilling to share what they have learnt.

Group Learning Conversation with School Q: Chris, Jill, Paul.

By the time this was held Chris had been appointed Head to take over from Jill, when she retired. Paul was to be one Deputy and the other was to be appointed. The group conversation served a useful purpose in reviewing where the three had come from and to share their ideas to make some plans for the future.

Procedure

Each was given a copy of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout with notes of the other two plus their own printout. They were also given a sheet of written instructions for the procedure (See Appendix 6 xi).

The first steps of this procedure are to ensure understanding of the printouts and therefore the meaning of these for the three concerned. As they knew each other well, it is unlikely the printouts would give many surprises, but they were a quick way of summarising the way each person saw their learning in relation to special needs.

The next steps, 5 and onwards, were to put together main points in common from the grids and to pick out obvious differences. From then, the discussion opened up to discuss these points and to plan for the future. Such three way discussions rarely can take more than a hour, due to crowded timetables in schools.

My preparation for this conversation

Apart from the clerical tasks involved in giving everyone their printouts and instructions, I felt it important to focus my own mind on what I know about the school and what I could bring in from other sources. One of these was my own interactions with the school. There were also two obvious people to talk to for this, one was Leslie the SENCO, the other, Christine, my team member from the Learning Support Service. I also did my own grid about School Q.

Leslie, the SENCO, had not been included in the original sample of people with whom I had Learning Conversations. This is because she was not perceived as being very effective by Chris and Jill. However, I felt it was important to find out her viewpoint on special needs, not least because she has given the task of writing up the draft version of the school policy for SEN, following up the in-service I had led.

The other person was my team member, Christine, who visited the school weekly, worked closely with Leslie and many class teachers. She could act as an extra perspective to check out points of view, other than those from senior management.

I held a Learning Conversation with Christine about her work at School Q. This grid was not focussed or fed back, but seemed a useful tool to help both Christine and me share her knowledge of the school, and for me to feed into this information into the

whole picture. The outcome was to help Christine realise why she had found some of her work in School Q unsatisfactory and what she could do about changing it. (See App. 6xi).

She could see that she was an accepted member of the team of teachers in the school and had a lot to offer in the way of direct or indirect in-service. Some of her problems related to the way Leslie worked and how Leslie prioritised work for Christine to take on. Christine chose the left pole to ladder most of her elements against. This was about:

Working with teachers

Sharing information with staff

Working with teacher and sharing information

Specific children – what can be done in class

About being needed by teachers

Useful ways of using support

The other, where the right pole was used frequently, were:

sharing resources for Special Educational Need children back in class.

positive aspects of sharing

From this, it was quite clear that Christine saw a positive way forward in working more closely to support teachers, as a way to support children, rather than pick out individual children in isolation. As a result of this, she arranged a meeting with Chris in the Autumn term, to set this in position for the future.

I elicited my own constructs from events to do with my work at School Q since I had met Chris on the OTIS. I put both events and constructs on cards as usual, but did not go any further in finishing a raw grid or focussing it. This was partly a time management issue, but also because I realised I needed to simplify techniques for use in everyday life. Both the listing of events and eliciting constructs served to structure what I knew about the school and the key people, Jill and Chris, and to less extent Paul and Leslie. It also would show what I didn't know, and help me to make decisions about which parts of all this I could use to help the school in future. For lists and details see App 6 xi.

Summary of this activity as a preparation for the Group Learning Conversation

I decided I knew a lot about Chris and something about Jill's philosophy, the key events in the school's history and the effect this still had on decisions made in the school. I needed to know more about what it felt like in classrooms; this possibly could be found out through my team member. I had not talked to a parent or governor but was unlikely to be able to do so. In relation to the SEN policy, what criteria could I use to evaluate successful implementation in the follow-up visit a year later?

Relection on the Group Learning Conversation

This worked well. The 3 people knew each other well, so they could "read" more into the grids than was present, from other knowledge of the people. However, the check procedure for allowing the owner of the grid to correct meaning was essential, as was my contribution, taken from the tone of the original grid elicitation and my own information.

The next step, which was innovative on my part, and though not completely thought out in full worked well. It meant people had to look at all three grids again, but this time for similarities and differences which were both to be of value. This drew out essential material to work on and showed very clearly the team work possible with these three (See App. 6xi).

The discussion of these similarities and differences included my own contributions, which came from the grid readings and my discussions with Christine (LSS) and Leslie. This step was, I think, an important one and could be a new development of method for a shorter form of this type of conversation. The action plan following may not have been quite as effective. Reasons were time – we'd been working intensively for one and half hours, a staff meeting was due, and Jill's retirement meant she was reluctant to expose her thoughts too much. The future planning element was more rushed than it should have been. It was a bit superficial in its feel; maybe at this point it didn't have much validity for the people concerned. This was only in comparison to the complete commitment of the individual participants. Targets were set – but not written. It may be that if I had written a summary report with these targets included, it might have been worthwhile to have given them a copy.

The hard working, but trusting partnership was evident and useful at such a transition point in the school's history. Chris and Paul are both committed professionals, frustrated by what they saw as less commitment in other staff. Jill, who has had to lead through difficult times, was more tolerant and kept things going because of this. The future is a challenge for Chris, but Paul will make a good complimentary partner. Their second Deputy will be an important appointment.

Follow-up Conversation with Chris, March 1993

It was over a year since I had worked with School Q on their whole-school policy for SEN, and some eight months since the end of the research interviews. I wished, therefore, to follow up on both of these and plan further work at the school.

Chris had now been Headteacher since September. He felt pleased with what he had achieved. His new appointment of a Deputy, Jan, had been particularly successful, as had some other staff changes. He had restructured the staffing which would allow a different person to take over the SEN next September.

Because the methods used in this research, which take account of my own personal contributions to the schools' development, it was possible to add input from my involvement since taking up the post of Head of Learning Support Service. This includes the contribution of my team member, Christine, who added to my knowledge of the school from a different perspective. Christine works with the SENCO, Leslie, to develop a partnership.

Chris had talked about Paul and his role and particularly the clues I had picked up from the research tapes about his feelings about Paul. From my conversation with Paul, I knew he cared very much for the individual child, but I had sensed his frustration with some staff. Paul now has a more administrative role, and is no longer in charge of INSET or staff development. He is still concerned that the school is seen to be catering for the full range of pupils.

Reflection on Action Research at School Q

My own involvement with the school has two phases. The first was during and immediately after the OTIS course in 1987, when Chris attended, and I visited the school to set up the project. The second was last year when, as a direct result of knowing Chris, I had early conversations with him on being appointed in the borough. These and my follow-up of Christine's work, led to being asked to contribute more INSET for the staff and staff meetings after school. The school decided to write a SEN Policy and was the first to use the Borough's guidelines, under my direction on an INSET day. I had been on the working party which developed these guidelines in the previous summer, and had made a significant contribution to the Process section, which aimed to help schools audit their present position in relation to their existing policy and practice.

Chris had found the research Learning Conversations very useful. They had come at just the right time and helped him focus on things that needed doing. For him it had been really useful, particularly in relation to Paul. Chris felt special-needs work was so much an integral part of making his school an all-round "good school" that, although he puts resources into this aspect, he also sees good staff development in all aspects of school life as part of the same thrust. He said he would value my team member and myself as continued support for this.

In School Q, I felt I had been able to make very good use of the action research and the Learning Conversations, for both school and individual development.

Grid Learning Conversations with School R.

Conversations took place with B7 Joy, (OTIS course member, 1986); C11 Tom: Headteacher; D9, Martin: Deputy Head.

Background

School R is a Catholic Middle School with a population of nearly 600, 9–13 year olds. The Catholics did not change from this age arrangement when Merton changed in 1990. It serves the Mitcham side of the Borough. My interaction with the school began in 1987 when Joy, the SENCO, came on OTIS. At that time I met the Head, Tom. When I came to Merton, I met Joy and Tom again in my role as Head of Learning Support. I have a team member working in the school for a day a week and I have been to School R to monitor his work. Joy attends the termly meetings for the Middle School SENCOs. All of this meant that the research conversation with Joy, was a special one in a series within our professional work together.

Grid Learning Conversation with Joy

25 November 1991

This took place after school, so we had time to cover Joy's story of her learning and elicit a raw grid. Joy's elements covered people who had helped her as well as children from whose difficulties she had learnt to problem solve. It also covered training events both courses and INSET in school. Her role, being given a C post of responsibility and her relationship with Tom, the Head, were also given as examples as were events involving parents and other members of staff. Her constructs showed how she viewed herself in relation to her role as SENCO in the school. She is a good administrator and Tom delegates most of the special needs work to her. She organises support for statemented and non-statemented pupils and is proud of her managerial abilities.

She is very aware she has learnt from the children but is also willing to learn from outside influences. Some of her constructs reflected which parts of her job were easy for her to do and which were harder. She enjoys administrative tasks, such as timetabling and the responsibility the Head gives her. She also likes solving problems and helping people. Her Christian belief also became clear from the way she construed events. All of this can be seen in the printout of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid and in the taped commentary to the conversations.

Analysis of SPACEd FOCUSed Printout (See p. 157a)

The elements groups as follows:

Trio E6, E3, E4 – children

Cluster E5, E8, E9, E7, and E1 – more children and related incidents

Pair 1, E11, E12 – information and timetabling

Pair 2, E13, E10 – small steps with staff

Isolate, E2 – child abuse training

The trio of elements was about children who had helped Joy understand special needs in a variety of ways, but largely about how to help integrate these pupils successfully, by using a small-step approach and through good human relationships with the adults in the system.

The cluster of five elements is similar, in that she says these were also examples where she had learnt a lot of this on the OTIS, but wasn't always aware of that, because it was now so embedded into practice. Chris S's (the EP) support, when she returned from the OTIS, was important in this process.

The two pairs are about two other separate ideas – E11, E12: getting things organised efficiently, something Joy sees as very important.

E13, E1 are about the need for using small steps with teachers too, in helping them learn about SEN. What is significant about the completed grid, is how much of it construes to the right pole. This is about good management of staff, about caring for people, value systems and what Joy can do for others. She said that this all relates to her Christian faith. It was she said about being competent to do these things. She uses the left pole only for certain constructs. C8 and RC7 is used on the right, E6, E3, E4, these are about new learning and establishing trust with adults.

RC3, C5 (left pole) on E13, E10 where she learnt from mistakes and was learning constantly. C4, C6 are used for E11, E12 – *things I find easy and routine things without emotional content*. These constructs describe her thoughts about the administrative aspects of her job.

RC2, C1 left are used for E1, E5 because they came from outside influences which helped her learn more.

She uses two ratings quite frequently on RC2, C4 and also on RC7, C5. These are about her ways of learning and how she feels about her job. High/low emotional impact is one dimension which sometimes fits but not always. Finding things difficult to do and learning how to do them is also part of this set of ideas which do not always match with some of her events. On the whole, Joy prefers to put on a very positive front and not to expose any of her less secure situations. This trio represents something of that hidden side of her. She feels very strongly about children's rights, about the value of mainstreaming and about helping people.

She may find it difficult to recognise some of the more difficult areas that still need development in relation to the school and other members of staff. (See App. 6xii B7b)

Grid Learning Conversations with Tom, Head Teacher.

I held two lengthy conversations with Tom. The first in March 1992 was an exploration of ideas about Tom's views of teaching the full range of pupils in a school. He began teaching in a secondary modern school, where he became aware that there were lower expectations of pupils because they had not been selected for grammar school. Although he had never had specific responsibility for special needs he was very aware of underachievement. He did not think remedial classes to be a good way of meeting needs.

He described his own and the school's development in relation to special need's issues and policies. These events cover support from the school psychologist, CS, who was outstanding and his awareness that something needed to be done to implement ideas from the 1981 Act. He sent Joy to OTIS and on her return gave her the post of SENCO and time to carry this out by not being classed based. He thought identification systems to be important. As he said, *we were supposed to have 20% children with special needs , but didn't know who they were.* For this reason Joy's OTIS project had been to set up an internal record system for special needs. This was later superseded by the borough's own system known as MEND.

The next significant changes related to the growth of the support system, initially in relation to statemented pupils, but then extended from the schools own resources to others. He was also concerned to meet the needs of the more able pupils, which he did not feel the school was yet addressing.

At this point he started to talk about LME formula, the school's image in the community and whether he could or should extend his special needs provision. He was wondering if being good with special needs would in the end become a poor marketing feature for the school. Would he get the wrong reputation?

He then discussed the possibility of introducing setting into years 7 and 8 to cover the increasing demands of the curriculum. He felt this might be a better way of organising teaching especially for Maths and English. This reflected the recent government discussion about primary school specialism, but was even more necessary when covering two years of Key Stage 3, as School R does. He then went on to discuss assessment, and the potential negative feedback to the late achiever of National curriculum tests which he saw as normative.

He would prefer a criterion referenced approach where it was progress towards objectives that was measured. He was interested in the notion of value-added, an idea he'd just been exposed to at a NFER conference. He was concerned that the pupil could feel good about their achievements. He thought parents would need education about these issues too. Education was not, he thought, just about exam

results. Some of what he needed to do was what he called damage limitation particularly in relation to the special needs pupils. How was he going to continue to make them feel they were enjoying learning? Again he returns to setting as a possible solution for some subjects.

This second conversation covered the same ground, but in eliciting the bipolar constructs, it was necessary for Tom to think more deeply what these events meant for him in relation to managing the school. He saw a lot of them as staff development and a number as administrative. Keeping good records is clearly part of special needs work. How the school is viewed by the community is another issue and as is the resources issue. He is concerned with meeting the needs of all his children.

All of this is expanded in the analysis of the SPACEd FOCUSed and TRIPRINT versions of his grid and the taped recording of the conversations. (See p.159a & App. 6xii, C11b, c,)

The printouts show two main clusters:

Cluster One

The SPACEd FOCUSed grid shows a large cluster of E7, E13, E12, E10, E9, E2, E3 and less lightly matched E5 which are all ideas about looking wider than special needs, using more specialist approaches, identifying a range of pupil needs and support systems to meet them.

Cluster Two

A second cluster, E14, E4, E15, E1 and E11 are largely about resource issues related to SEN, and other minority groups like E2L. E8 and E6 are more isolated ideas. E8 is about statemented pupils having more severe needs and E6 is about identifying Joy for the SENCO job and giving her time to do it.

Cluster One construes to the left pole on:

C9 External Agencies influence

C5 About children's learning

C4 Development of ideas for SEN

C2 Heightened awareness of SEN

C6 Proactive identification of SEN

C1 Development of staff positive

and E5, E7, E3 also match the left pole on

C8 Record keeping

RC10 Administration system to identify needs

the right pole matches on

RC7 About Statemented children needs

and E1, E9 about other group needs.

Construct 3 is used half and half across the whole range of elements. The left pole is

about *positively supporting the child* and the right pole about *administrative side of the system*. . This balance represents how Tom sees his role in relation to SEN , it's about having a system of identification and records that monitors the needs of the child.

Construct 9 also is an isolated one; he mainly uses the left pole on all elements, *external agencies influence* and only once the right pole *need for resources*, but for 5 elements he used a 2 rating construct.

The whole grid is very balanced between his main ideas which he summarised as on the left pole, being about:

Development of policies in a changing school and subset of special needs at both ends of spectrum about mixed ability teaching groups or setting
on the right pole about:

administrative constraints and resource implications.

Grid Learning Conversation with Martin, one of the Deputy Heads

May 20 1992

Martin was chosen to represent the non-specialist viewpoint for the staff. He had been in the school for many years and Deputy Head since 1976 and so had been part of the same history as the other two, but in a more passive role in relation to special needs, which was not his responsibility. He could describe these developments from an observer or recipient point of view.

I had not met Martin on his own before, only as part of an in-service group. He explained how he had been made aware of special needs having a wider spectrum than he had thought earlier. By this he meant that the term included children's emotional and social background, which might effect behaviour and learning in school.

The story of his awareness increasing followed and covered events that happened in School R, which he saw as being part of special needs. These were the increase in use of support teachers and the system of working with these teachers and identification and record systems including MEND.

He also mentions the work done by the Learning Support Service, organised by Joy. He felt special needs had achieved a higher profile in the last 2-3 years because of these management issues, including the relation to LME and the increase in INSET on this topic.

These had helped him gain a new perspective of his role as a teacher, he had become more sensitive to the need to differentiate in his classroom teaching; he illustrated this

from his subject of technology which he recognised as being more demanding in paperwork now with the National Curriculum.

This had also effected his leadership of a year group and the need to encourage differentiation. In the subsequent construct elicitation these ideas and events were discussed further in relation to their effect on his own learning.

This second conversation helped Martin to reflect on his own learning in relation to the events he had chosen to describe. He describes his own heightened awareness of special needs as an issue he needs to address in his teaching and in his work with parents. He had learnt from working with Joy and from INSET held in school. He sees both internal and external support systems as important ways of increasing staff awareness and helping building a team approach. All of this impinges on his management role and particularly on what he called staff – school interface. Learning about special needs had effected how he worked both with children and colleagues. He thought they were getting better at planning for differentiation of the curriculum.

The pattern became clearer in the analysis of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout and taped recording of the feedback conversation held in the next month. This is best represented in the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout, used later in the feedback conversation a few week later (See App. 6xii D9 a&b).

E 7, E10, a pair, and also E4, E2, E5, form one cluster, which construe mainly to the right pole. These are all events which raised awareness for special needs in the school and also for Martin, who in this sense was a representative of those not specially involved in SEN issues, like Joy. They match ideas from constructs like:

C2 internal monitoring to identify

C4 source for differentiation

C3 source for staff – SEN INSET

C5 detail of management for SEN

C7 how others deal with needs.

RC1 support programme available and

C2 left pole, people outside school help.

The pair about INSET construed to the left pole on

RC1 my own awareness raised

and the whole cluster construes to the left pole on

C8 identifying pupils needs

and the two on

C9 improve provisions and awareness

C6 set up provisions and action

A second trio E1, E8 ,E9 is mainly about Martin's own development and construes to

the left pole about which he says:

these are to do with myself and the impact of INSET about ongoing discussions influencing change and developing practice in the classroom.

E6 and E5 are rather isolated ideas. E6 *LSS support and Joy's referrals* is matched to left pole:

RC1 my own awareness raised

C8 identifying pupils needs

C6 set up provision action

C4 people outside school help

and right pole:

C9 facilitation for support and INSET

C7 how other deal with needs.

E3 was largely outside the range of this conversation, as it was concerned with LME and the staffing this allowed. Martin's comments, recorded on the tape, about the picture presented by the printout, confirmed that it was about both his own raised awareness and that of the staffs', particularly about becoming more aware of identifying special needs and about the need to differentiate the curriculum.

The use of trio rating on E1, E8, E9 he explains as part of earlier stages of development. His final comments were:

I'm aware that the Special Educational Needs programme has been developing and give all credit to Joy for all the work she's done and I can see the benefit to all the individual children and what they got out of it. I feel personally I have fed off it a little but in that I'm part of the school awareness being raised. I've adapted my own teaching techniques to cope with the wider range of activity and so that as far as my own integration with Special Educational Needs goes.

Group Learning Conversation with School R

The group method developed over the last few schools was used again with School R after each person had their feedback meeting with me individually.

The sharing of ideas went well through the printout analysis. We then progressed to finding similarities and differences and putting these on cards. The only new development with School R was to stick these cards, on a large A2 sheet, as a cluster map of the joint ideas, making a group product from the conversation (See App 6 xii). This makes one form of record of the outcome of the conversation, the tape recording is another.

At first they all found difficulty in understanding the meaning in the printouts and needed help. Martin helps explain his own:

What I'm saying around that left pole is about myself and my memory of the impact that in-service training had on me, in terms of special needs. I've seen improved

provision – I've seen action. I'm aware of people outside the school and its all impinged on the way I teach and deal with Special Educational Needs. The other pole is more to do with history, finance and administration – things I have less control over.

Joy read Tom's grid

This bit is very much about a whole school view rather than a personal view, we are looking at how Special Educational Needs fits into a whole school system. On the other side this is about Education as a whole approach, it seems to be his historical, political and economic perspectives – so these are the problems impinging on the way Special Educational Needs are effectively developed in the school.

At this point I checked Tom was happy with this broad sweep over his constructs. He asked for further clarification from Joy who continued:

It was more as you the manager had to overcome these problems – its about matching some of your ideas to these. I'm impressed how tidy Tom's grid is compared to mine which is all over the place.

Tom was now happy with this interpretation. I added that we all must remember these were only single conversations and we were also only looking for the main ideas and may be leaving out the details.

Martin read Joy's grid:

There are a number of distinct blocks –its sophisticated analysis rather than a broad general analysis. Its about people learning on the job and there's a value element here about philosophy which comes out.

Martin was making good sense of Joy's grid and she agreed with his reading. I added extra meaning from my knowledge of the conversation. Overall Martin said,

This is about philosophy, well though out in practice on the job.

I learnt an enormous amount from those two first statemented children, and you facilitated by the way you gave me the scope and the information. I am fully informed so I can help these children. There is a good information flow all around the school.

Once this part of the group work was over we used the two colour cards to pick out similarities and differences and to discuss these. We ended by looking at the whole picture that this had produced of the three participants and also discussed what was not represented. Tom pointed out that there was no mention of equal opportunities – perhaps rather the opposite.

They also said there was no obvious mention of the fact it was a Catholic School, Joy mentions of her faith and philosophy. Perhaps this was taken for granted though possibly it shouldn't be. They discussed whether the effects of legislation were usable – they were. Joy and Tom felt implicitly. I added a thought I'd had from an outside source, one other feeder primaries, about continuity issues with primary schools. Joy

felt continuity to the High School was thought very acceptable.

We ended with the possibility to talk further about future developments, about my service from the LSS to the school and the subject of differentiation. Tom felt this was a *massive con* – it just wasn't possible to do this in every situation and it irritated him to think it could be done. Tom summed up the whole SEN activity by saying: *Joy did it – Tom gave the OK and Martin made sure it worked administratively.* I added *you've made a great success of it.* .

Reflection on action research in School R

The Group Learning Conversation worked well because we had both time to read the grids and time to explore ideas that arose from the sharing experience. I was able to use some of the outcomes to help Joy plan the better use of their LSS support team member in the following term.

C. Conversation with Maria, LEA Tutor/Advisor to OTIS: Reflection on Action Research in Phase two

Maria was Head of the Learning Support Service in Merton from 1982 till 1990 when I took over. Her role also covered responsibility for Special Needs INSET for Merton, particularly in the earlier part of that time when there was no inspector for SEN in the borough. In that capacity she had been the LEA tutor for the OTIS during the period of 1984–1987 and we had worked together on that course. She had also contributed to the Bedford Way Paper. We had learnt much from our collaboration over the years. I decided not to use the formal grid techniques but to structure the interview in a similar way by asking for key events as a focus. My question was, *can you tell me about those parts of your job in Merton which related to Special Educational Needs INSET.?*

Maria began by reminding me that she came to Merton after 2 years at Bulmersh, where she had designed and delivered in-service courses for SEN. This meant she could use this experience in planning to in-service teachers in Merton in response to the newly implemented 1981 Act.

We discussed a number of in-service initiatives which she had led over the next eight years. The first of these were the DES/ATO Regional courses run through the Institute of Education INSET office in collaboration with local Authority Advisors for SEN. These were jointly planned with 3 x 3 days at the Institute during the year and interwoven, locally delivered twilight sessions.

Within the DES Regional course there was scope for local developments. Maria decided to run her local input by delivering a short course on behaviour management

requiring a "hands on" case study of a child. She was fairly rigorous about her course members carrying out this practical work and writing it up. This was not the case in other boroughs necessarily. Her rationale for this was that:

They were talked at in the main part of the course and although I've nothing against this, people do need information, they are unlikely to experiment on their own with new practical ideas. By asking them to do it as part of the course, they are given support while they are doing it.

The next initiative was begun jointly by Maria and the Primary Inspector. Coventry LEA had started a rather distinctive cascade training scheme for all its primary schools this was known as SNAP (Special Needs Action Programme). The plan was to involve all primary schools, by first discussing the plan with the Headteacher and then reinviting one teacher onto a six week, half-day course teaching them a small step task analysis approach to help children with learning difficulties. The underlying model for this approach was strictly behaviourist, requiring an objectives based analysis and a tightly controlled and monitored programme. The teacher, having used this approach herself with one child, was to teach everyone in her school to do the technique as well. This required Headteacher support and time to be allowed.

Maria was requested to start a similar programme for Merton, but as there was less money, her version was run after school hours. The Headteachers were involved though, just to agree to the cascade policy for their schools, then to give time to it. This programme was successful in that every primary school (aged 3-9 in Merton) and most Middle schools took part. Unfortunately after a year teacher strikes intervened and made any INSET delivery very difficult. The cascade approach was also difficult to maintain.

While the SNAP course was focussed almost entirely on teaching strategies, the last module was about developing a whole school approach to special needs. This was probably the first course to focus on such practical tasks. The running of this for 2-3 years, in Merton, meant that by the time Maria was to select for the OTIS course most Primary and Middle schools had taken part in the SNAP courses.

There was little follow up to SNAP, but as the LSS found out, teachers who had been quite successful on the course quickly forgot to use the approach when unsupported. They needed to be reminded and encouraged to use this tool for assessment and planning for individual needs. There possibly was a clash in philosophies for a primary teacher who had been trained to teach using a more developmental approach. The structures of the behavioural programme seemed alien to some, so they needed further reinforcement to use this, especially when they reached a difficulty with a child, that they couldn't solve. It required them to observe very closely exactly where the child was and to match the teaching very precisely to

that point. Of course precision is difficult to do with many children and so should only be used where necessary.

In 1984 Maria began to recruit for the OTIS course. It was decided to use this for Middle Schools because they needed a broader and more curriculum and policy approach to managing SEN. If possible, two teachers from Merton would come together for mutual support and feedback. In the end almost every Middle School had taken part, along with one from a High school.

The person chosen was not always the SENCO. Maria decided to recruit year teachers or curriculum teachers. The choice of CM and of school focussed project choice was carried out very thoroughly by Maria in consultation with the Heads. Pre-course, mid-course and follow-up meetings were held by Maria for those sent on the OTIS. Maria, possibly had more time, within her role than an inspector would have for this level of support. A few other boroughs gave something like this level, but Merton was unusual in the degree of care taken either in planned selection or in liaison with schools.

Teacher's industrial action made the OTIS work difficult too. Only teaching of pupils took place and other activities were not taken on. Despite being seconded for the team the course member was to work on their project for two days in their school each week. They became vulnerable to being used as support teachers to cover for other colleagues instead.

When LEATGS funding for these courses was reduced Merton did not send teachers to the Institute and instead used the West London Institute and Kingston Polytechnic Courses instead. West London Institute of Higher Education initially had been one of the four members in the consortium running OTIS. They felt they could run a course on similar lines by themselves.

My partnership with Maria.

I had left the Institute to take up the post of Senior Lecturer for the PGCE and INSET at Kingston Polytechnic. It had been possible to adapt the OTIS course as a module for the in-service diploma run by the Education Dept. Maria sent two people to that course as well as the WLIHE one. I only ran one cohort before leaving for Harrow. This diploma module, continues to be delivered in a modified form at Kingston.

Merton looked else where for a course which would cover similar ground. Maria decided to set up her own and have it accredited by Roehampton Institute. This course was known as the Certificate of Professional Practice. It was open to everyone interested and ran for a twilight session a week over a year. It had an academic element acquiring a written project at the end. This was not a school

focussed project as such, although Maria encouraged course members to choose a area of relevance to their school. There was little partnership with the schools as to content and feedback. The focus had returned to the individual.

A few other people also took an Open University module in SEN. When I came to Merton I ran the second half of the last of these Courses of Professional Practice courses set up by Maria. I did not find it a very satisfactory way of teaching, as it had little feedback to schools and felt very much a academic exercise.

As a result I decided to follow the SENIOSH/H model and adapt it again for Merton, Kingston and Sutton to be delivered in twilight sessions over two terms. What had once been a 10 week course, with full supporting cover, now had to be delivered in teachers' own time and with far less teaching hours. My experience of running OTIS, SENIOSH/H as well as the one year in Kingston, meant I was practised in changing the course, while still keeping it's key components.

Our conversation from here took the place of the construing and laddering and focussing grid conversation. We compared the types of learning required by the various courses, the relationships to the role of the SENCO and the differences in that role depending on management decisions in the school. I asked what similarities and differences there were between the various courses.

About theory and practice, Maria said:

Translating theory and knowledge into practice doesn't come very easily to some teachers. Equally taking back practice to illustrate theory, $A > B$, $B > A$. They need guidelines as to how to do this. Its about knowing how to problem solve, whether about children's learning or problem behaviour.

The cascade model is asking some – for one reason the teacher may not have mastered the new techniques before they are expected to teach them to their colleagues. This was the weakness of the SNAP course. The OTIS was not so specific but then it was a more diffused type of project.

Types of learning experiences for teachers on courses:

In the end what I think it comes down to is this. As long as teachers don't actually do psychological damage to the children , its OK They should make children feel good about themselves, so they do not feel unwanted or failures. If you get this right you can go forward.

About the SENCO role:

I don't think this is a single role – it depends so much on what level of power they have. Very few have power – it depends on their head. The SENCO meetings help to support them, I don't think the you can talk about SENCO management as if it was

the same for everyone , each school is different.

LC replied

But sharing practice and ideas does support. At least now there is a SENCO in nearly every school , even though sometimes this is only one of their roles. Our next aim is to get a written policy for each school with criteria for annual evaluation. We had a good turn out to our Heads and SENCOs for twilight INSET on this last Summer. It will become important to review and audit this especially as in relation to their use of funds from the LME formula for Special Educational Needs.

Neil, SENIOS course member, 1991-2, Merton

To round off this chapter and the action research, I carried out one last conversation. This was between myself and a course member of my last years version of SENIOS, run for Merton, Kingston and Sutton form primary schools. Neil, from School N is the SENCO of a large primary school for children aged 3–8. His project was to develop a policy for managing behavioural incidents in the playground and classroom. The interview took place on 25 March, 1993, about 8 months after the SENIOS finished.

This conversation ranged from his experiences and events prior to coming on the SENIOS, which were fairly few in terms of special needs . We then looked at events on the course itself, which he had found particularly useful. These included the visits to special schools, where he made comparisons, one with another and with his own first school, which catered for many children with special needs. Interviews with professionals had been an eye opener, to see their point of view and understand their workloads. He had valued the input from the Portage worker and the parent, which gave him some insight into pre-school activities for special needs. All in all, he had valued the breadth and coverage of the course.

We turned to his project, which was on behaviour in the playground and solutions the staff found to deal with this through organisation of space. The joint problem solving approach, working in collaboration with the whole staff, was a valuable learning experience He does not see himself as an expert, in the role of co-ordinator, but he does like to spend time in all classes once a week, gaining an overview of where staff or children are experiencing difficulties. He does like to feel he can point people in the right direction to find solutions. He thinks he learnt much last year, about such strategies. Neil hopes to continue his studies to achieve a professional diploma, because he valued his experiences on last years course. He has clearly learnt a great deal and can apply it. This was confirmed later by the Headteacher

Reflection on Action research, Phase Two

This phase completed the collection of conversations as designed. Because I worked in Merton, with the people I had used for case studies, conversations, as such, did not stop. In this part of the normal work cycle. To chose any point as an end point is arbitrary and artificial. However, in order to reflect on work carried out overtly as research, May 1993 is chosen as the end of the action research described here. It is clear that in the Merton schools, the learning that took place during the OTIS course has become embedded in school policy and practice. Each OTIS course member can attribute the course as a trigger for their learning about SEN and how to manage the role of SENCO in their middle school. Of the fourteen Merton Middle schools, eight had staff who had attended the OTIS, though three have since resigned or retired. Four more had staff who attended similar courses at Kingston, at the Institute or in one case, the new SENIOS, which I ran.

There is always the need to keep opportunities available for those appointed who are new to the role and have little previous training. Where no training or previous experience has been undertaken, the SENCOs in a large school can be very confused or very ineffective. There is unlikely to come a point when everyone is trained from every school. By developing the use of the Learning Conversation, it may be possible to encourage groups of SENCOs to work together on a regular basis, to share good practice, This already is happening twice a term for SENCOs from some of the Merton Middle schools.

Chapter 7

Evaluation and Action Research Outcomes

Introduction

The previous three chapters covered both phases of the research, and included detailed descriptions of Learning Conversations using the repertory grid. This chapter first draws together the learning outcomes from these conversations, and discusses the evaluation data related to the follow-up of the courses. Then the action research outcomes are discussed, in relation to both individuals and their schools. The chapter is presented as follows-

- A) Comparison and Discussion of Individual Learning Outcomes,
- B) Action Research Outcomes for Individuals and Schools.

The intention behind the action research was to follow up two sets of teachers, who had attended the two courses of one term or one term equivalent, that I had tutored between 1983 and 1991.

The first set of teachers had completed their course recently; the second set between 5 -7 years previously. A comparison between these sets shows how learning developed over time, and interacted with learning on the job. Such long-term evaluation of significant in-service initiatives, such as the OTIS, are rare, as was shown in chapters two and three.

Headteachers and Deputy Heads were included, originally to give contextual information concerning the course member's learning. However, it quickly became apparent that each person in these groups welcomed the opportunity to stand back and reflect on their own personal learning. For Headteachers in particular, the events discussed often were part of the history of their school. As they told this history, the conversational technique of the repertory grid proved a powerful means for them to reflect on their philosophy of education, as seen through consideration of the Special Educational Needs perspective. This was carried further in the Group Learning Conversations which took place in most schools. To give the contextual background from the three boroughs and to look at LEA influences, the conversations with advisors and LEA tutors was included along with information from my own reflection as course tutor, researcher and provider of LEA services.

This will lead to chapter 8, where I will discuss the developments in the methodology of the use of grid Learning Conversations and reflect on my own personal learning during the research .

Comparison and Discussion of Individual Learning Outcomes

The sets of teachers and LEA staff who took part are as follows:

1. SENIOSH/H Course Members: where the conversations took place during the course or within the year after completion.(Cases A1-7)¹
2. OTIS Course Members: where the conversation took place between five to eight years after completion of the course.(Cases B1-7)
3. Headteachers of both groups of course members.(Cases C1-11)
4. Deputy Heads and others in the schools of course members (Cases D1-9)
5. LEA staff in the three boroughs.(Cases E1-4)

To summarise the outcomes of these conversations I will first consider each set and compare the learning outcomes, one with another. In eliciting similarities and differences between teachers I will use each person's labels chosen to describe clusters of elements and constructs during their final feedback conversations, checked by the taped commentary analysis of each one.

This technique is similar to the one used in the group Learning Conversations at the end of each school case study. The difference is that I will be carrying out this comparison alone, using the research data to check for validity, rather than asking each person to check my interpretation. As each individual feedback conversation and each group conversation had, as one of its purposes, the checking of correct representations, the research data has the necessary validity for such further analysis.

1. Outcomes from Learning Conversations with SENIOSH/H Course Members

Reports of six grid Learning Conversations, following up all three cohorts of the SENIOSH/H courses, are reported in the first research phase, although one was completed during the second. A seventh, short taped conversation, was added recently, for comparison, and as a follow-up of my most recent version of the SENIOS which ended in 1992, thus updating the action research aspect of the study.

These seven teachers vary in many respects; in their length of teaching experience, previous special needs training, the type of school they come from as well as personal

1. All feedback grids with notes and group conversation notes used for the analysis can be found in appendices four and five and six.

features such as confidence in themselves as teachers. Differences between each teacher are to be expected in the way they develop their learning about Special Educational Needs and their roles within their schools. (see App 3 ii)

They also came from different schools, where the Head's and Deputies' individual philosophies and commitment to special needs varied in focus, depth and understanding. The relationship between this and the course members' ability to develop themselves and their role is another area for further analysis.

The common feature they shared was that they had all attended similar courses on special needs, run by myself as tutor. They also held in common their participation in this research. The sets of conversations, which I held with them as tutor on the course, continued into the Learning Conversations and in many cases other conversations held with those I worked with in my role of LEA service provider. However the grid Learning Conversations were a special opportunity to reflect on personal learning in order to focus on future decisions.

Similarities and differences between learning outcomes

These are reported from the six SENIOSH/H course members and additional Merton SENIOS course member. These comparisons are taken from the last Learning Conversation held with each course member some eight to eleven months after the course was completed. In the cases of Kirsty, Jenny and Pilla, this was the feedback from the CHANGE grid conversation .

All stated in their own way how they had gained confidence in the last months since completing the course. This came from having a secure knowledge of their field, knowing how to do things, knowing strategies which worked in their classrooms and which they could share with others. In Sharon's and Kirsty's cases they mentioned status with other staff. Knowing where to find out, if they did not know, was also important for Theresa and Pilla. This was mentioned as important, as they both use the multi-professional network to organise case conferences and get support for individual children. Four mentioned specific strategies for classroom organisation or planning programmes for individuals. All had learnt from the children themselves, which they had used as elements in their first grid conversations, to illustrate aspects of their own learning. Some of these experiences were about learning from their own mistakes. For Pilla, an important construct was seeing the child as a whole person, not as a handicapped person. This central idea effected much of how Pilla viewed other aspects of her own work.

For Kirsty, who had many negative experiences in managing individuals within the classroom, her learning was about how to deal with failure, her own or the child's. A lot of her learning was about coming to terms with how children cope with their own

learning difficulties, and how she coped herself, and now was helping others in her role of support teacher.

Four stated they had gained in confidence so they could support other staff. Theresa and Sharon are particularly obvious examples of this rise in confidence, as they were both young members of staff supporting older teachers. Sharon talked about this as her apprenticeship in managing change, working in close liaison with Linda, the Deputy Head. Dorothy stated she was beginning to use her knowledge gained through in-service to help others.

Support to course members

All mention support they had themselves through interacting with others, both on the course and in school. Jenny mentions conversations with Stella, (retired head), as being most important, as well as receiving support in class, from Ronny. Both Kirsty and Sharon chose support from their Deputy heads as their significant source of help. Sharon saw herself in the apprentice role to Linda. Dorothy gained most from what she calls interactions on the job. She also saw in-service, of some types, where interaction took place, as sources of support. Her grid conversation was unusual in being almost entirely about the different in-service courses she had attended. She valued those where there was feedback and links to school practice, things that were relevant to staff, such as SENIOSH/H.

Pilla had most support from outside school, either from health personnel or from myself as co-ordinator of services. Pilla had negative experiences of lack of support from her former Head, who had not shown that Pilla was valued. This had badly damaged Pilla's confidence in herself as a teacher. This had been offset by positive experiences on the course and in her new job. Neil mentions Christine, a member of the Learning Support Service, as a source of support.

Projects

Kirsty used the school-focussed SENIOSH/H project as a new element in her CHANGE grid. (In particular the INSET she gave the staff at the end of the course on the effectiveness of support.) Pilla's project was on effective use of non-teaching staff and she made good use of this both in her work and in helping deliver borough In-service to non-teaching assistants for statemented children. Theresa, had developed whole-school policy of special needs as her project, which coincided well with the school's development plan and the in-service I gave the whole staff. Dorothy's project, also on whole school policy had not yet developed, due to lack of staff development time. Sharon used her project, on differentiation of the curriculum, as one of her sources for strategies for planning with staff. Jenny made no mention of her project as a source of her learning. It had been to successfully develop concept-

keyboard programmes for computer-assisted learning. Neil, the Merton SENIOS teacher saw his project as a problem-solving approach which was used to develop policies for handling difficulties in behaviour in the school playground, but could be used again on another topic. Like Sharon he was generalising from the problem-solving approach for future staff development.

Four mentioned visits to special schools and talks from other professional groups such as therapists, as important events. For Pilla and Jenny, the comparison with special schools or units, confirmed what they were doing themselves. This was important for Jenny, who was having difficulties with parts of the integration policy at School W.

Dorothy, Theresa, Jenny, Sharon and Neil all talk about the importance of knowledge and information, breadth and depth, as being important to their learning. Theresa construed different types of learning; the formal/passive type over which she has control, and is private, and the incidental/informal/on the job type, over which she has less control. She valued both as sources for development. Jenny thought having knowledge, which was not "watered down", and which broadened her horizons, giving her ideas of positive dynamic ways forward, were important. She used the phrase, "fires me with enthusiasm" to describe these experiences, which include her conversations with Stella, the retired head. Sharon stated that knowledge gave her confidence. She wanted in-service to address the need to add information for teachers, not merely rehearse what they already knew. The table below shows the relationship between the time since the course and the series of Learning Conversations.

Table 6

Time Chart Showing Learning Conversations with Course Members in Both Phases

Course member	Dates for this member's course	Date of first conversation	Feedback on SPACTd FOCUSed	Group sharing	Change grid	Change grid feedback
B1 Theresa	Sep 88-Jul 89	4 Oct 89	23 Mar 90	4 May 90		
B2 Dorothy	Sep 88-Jul 89	18 Feb 90	15 May 90	15 May 90		
B3 Kirsty	Sep 89-Jul 90	Oct 89	21 Mar 90	Sept 90	20 Nv 90	1 Mar 91
B4 Jenny	Sep 89-Jul 90	21 Sept 89	6 Mar 90	20 Mar 90	22 Nv 90	19 Feb 91
B5 Pilla	Sep 89-Jul 90	6 Apr 90	12 Jun 90	n.a.	19 Nv 90	Mar 91
B6 Sharon	Sep 90-Jul 91	22 Jun 91	10 Jul 91	16 Jun 92		
C1 Lydia	Summer 84	13 Apr 90	24 May 90	24 May 90		
C2 Ronny	Autumn 84	3 Oct 89	13 Feb 90	20 Mar 90		
C3 Nye	Autumn 85	2 Mar 90	14 Jun 90	13 Jul 90		
C4 Barbara	Autumn 84	5 Nov 91	27 Jan 92	n.a.		
C5 Dave	Autumn 86	13 Mar 92	6 Apr 92	n.a.		
C6 Chris	Spring 87	Jan 92	Mar 92	27 Apr 92		
C7 Joy	Autumn 86	25 Nov 91	Feb 92	24 Jun 92		

2. Comparison of Outcomes from Learning Conversations with OTIS Course Members

The seven grid Learning Conversations are reported in full in chapters four , five and six and copies of all SPACEd FOCUSed grids are in the appendices for these chapters. Here I attempt to summarise the outcomes of these seven sets of Learning Conversations to find similarities and differences between each, and to discuss these in relation to the research questions listed at the end of chapters one and two.

Roles and Responsibilities: Relationship to the OTIS Course

Six of the seven course members came from Middle schools in Merton or First and Middle schools in Harrow; only Lydia represents the infant sector and Hillingdon. All but Lydia were in the same school when the Learning Conversations took place as the one they came from to OTIS. The stability of staff in Harrow and Merton compared with Hillingdon has already been discussed in Chapter 3.

However, there have been changes in roles held within the schools. Lydia and Ronny are now Deputy Heads of different schools, Chris is Head of the same school. Joy, Barbara and Dave have increased responsibility. Nye has additional responsibility for the First School as well as the Middle School. Informal follow-up of many other OTIS course members shows that, for many, the course led to promotion, most often to the post of Deputy Head. This may be a logical outcome, as the post of SENCO requires consultancy and management skills with the whole staff and a significant part of the OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses was spent on enhancing these skills.

Of the seven, three went on to accredited further courses either in the Open University or at local Institutes of Higher Education. All but Chris attended courses and meetings run by their LEAs for SENCOs. In School Q the SENCO attended these meetings. Chris did not discuss his training for management, so I have no knowledge of this. Lydia, Barbara, Chris, specifically referred to books which have influenced their thinking more specifically their attitudes to children with SEN.

Barbara specifically connected promotion with achieving academic success in her field through her personal study. She continued courses after OTIS and went on to get an MA in Education. Ronny also pursued her studies and achieved an Advanced Diploma in Specific Needs in the OU. Ronny did not relate this to status, as she had this already in her position in the school before she started the OTIS. The academic work gave her confidence in helping others. Joy also continued her studies. Lydia took no further formal qualification, but continued attending Hillingdon's courses for SENCOs.

Chris and Dave and Nye took no further courses of an academic nature. Nye and Dave went to meetings for SENCOs and in Dave's case curriculum meetings related to

Humanities. There is no evidence of Chris taking further courses.

OTIS as a significant learning event

Despite the fact that they completed the OTIS course between five and seven years before these conversations took place, the OTIS course was chosen as one of their significant events by all of them. This could have been a feature of my being both tutor to OTIS and the researcher, but the reasons given showed specific and genuine feelings for its inclusion, for what the course had done for them. This was different for each individual. For Barbara, it was an emancipation; it gave her confidence in herself and eventually status on the staff as a result of being designated as the school's SENCO, a result directly connected to her attendance on OTIS. For Dave, the course had armed him with useful classroom strategies which worked both for himself and others. In his role of Humanities co-ordinator, effective strategies for differentiation were important.

For most, the detail of the course was lost to memory, although Joy gave specific examples of how strategies learnt on the course had been used in her classroom practice. These strategies came from the child study and work on intervention based on task-analysis a small-step planning for individual children.

Both Chris and Barbara gave as examples of positive aspects of the OTIS the opportunities to talk, both formally and informally, with other course members from different schools and LEAs. This reflects the evaluation data from OTIS and SENIOSH/H described in chapters 1 and 3.

All talk about learning from the children. Most referred to visits to special schools Barbara, Lydia, Chris, Ronny, use this reference to discuss their attitude to the labelling of pupils in a derogatory way, about positive expectations of pupils and building up the pupils' self-esteem. For Nye and Joy, this is part of their overall philosophy – Joy said they are all God's children; Nye, because of her strong socialist background, saw schooling as being about equal opportunities. Dave sees this as being part of the entitlement of the pupils to the whole curriculum.

Integration of Pupils with SEN into Ordinary Schools: Attitudes and Beliefs

For Lydia, Barbara, Chris, Nye and Joy one of the outcomes from OTIS was to confirm them in pursuing integration policies for pupils with special needs.

Lydia made comparisons between attitudes towards pupils from special schools and those from mainstream schools. She has children in her school now, whose parents went to the special school at which she used to teach. For Lydia, integration was about having expectations of pupils, but also about having the resources to meet their needs. Lydia spoke a lot about both expectations and careful identification of need.

This theme is also to be found in Barbara's conversations. She made comparisons about how placements in special schools used to be made, on very little evidence and with little parental involvement. For Barbara, commitment to integration of pupils with SEN came over very clearly in her discussion of two of the children from the past, one of whom was a friend of her own children.

This theme was expanded in a different way by Chris, whose whole Learning Conversation was about the importance of empowering the child to give of its highest potential. For Chris giving and maintaining high self esteem to the child was a core construct. This is also exhibited in the philosophy of School Q which has clear policies about how children should treat each other and how staff treat children. For Chris, special schools had a particular meaning, as he was seconded as a Deputy to a local one to help out for a few months. It was not a happy experience and one he preferred not to mention in the original Learning Conversation. He, like Ronny, Lydia and Barbara would prefer to see pupils placed in mainstream schools.

But Chris was impressed, during his visits to special schools and classes, while on OTIS, with the considerate way adults spoke to and valued the children. Ronny mentioned visits to special schools as learning events, but really to confirm that her school was on the right lines, in integrating pupils with both physical and mental impairment.

Joy also, is committed to integration, given resources. Her view came over in her analysis of the various children she mentioned in her grid conversations, as examples of how she learnt to make integration work in practice. Joy's School R, also has a high number of pupils with statements and it is Joy's task to organise the support systems, and deploy part-time teachers added to the school's staffing to meet these pupil's needs. Her own strong Christian views are part of her belief in integration. For Nye, integration was connected to her socialist principles. Personal beliefs came to light in many Learning Conversations. In Nye's case these were what she called "doing my own thing". Her commitment and loyalty to School Y also came through in her conversations. In this she was backed up by Len, the Head, who delegated the day to day running and support for SEN pupils to Nye.

Dave did not discuss integration much, although the pupils with statements challenged the practices of his colleagues and led them into thinking about differentiation in the curriculum area of Dave's responsibility, namely social studies, history and geography in the National Curriculum. So for Dave, the issue is entitlement and access to the curriculum. He gave examples of teachers he had supported, to help them change classroom practices. These may initially have been for pupils with statements, but often this benefitted many others as well. Chris also sees meeting SEN as being about a correctly matched curriculum.

Organising and giving support to other members of staff is a key role for SENCOs. All mentioned staff development and supporting or changing practices or attitudes of others, as part of their own learning. In many cases it is the member of staff whose attitudes are entrenched, or whose practices are ineffective, with whom the SENCO or Deputy Head is trying to work – sometimes unsuccessfully. Dave, Chris, Joy, Barbara, in particular, gave such examples as elements of their grid conversations. Dave linked this to the change in organisation in Merton for the Middle schools from 9–13 to 8–12, resulting in a need for more primary school methods. School R, in the Catholic sector did not change with the rest, so for Joy this was not applicable. This reorganisation is a theme that returned in conversations with the Merton Heads and Deputies. Chris, as Deputy as well as giving support to staff, described examples of specific management decisions, which needed to be made, related to SEN.

Support for themselves from their Headteachers was a common theme. Ronny, Nye, Dave and Joy gave conversations with their Headteacher as elements in their grid conversations. For Ronny and Dave, their Headteachers gave them inspiration as well as encouragement through a series of conversations. For Nye, it was the knowledge that Len would enable her to carry out what she believed in, that mattered. For Joy it was good management of communication to and from the Headteacher, in special needs issues that was important. Chris was in fact very strongly supported by Jill, but at the time of his Learning Conversation, Jill was retiring and it was just before the interviews were held for the headship. Chris used the Learning Conversations to review his philosophy and to establish his independent style of leadership.

Barbara and her Head have a working relationship. The Head has delegated responsibility for all special needs issues to a "C" post of responsibility. This view was substantiated in the conversations with the Deputy, Sue. For Barbara this empowerment is important because it is the way she sees herself as having enough status on the staff of about thirty teachers, to influence their practice in relation to special needs. She does not receive active support from the head, but she is given a free hand to make decisions in relation to support work, statement paperwork and all the multi-professional casework related to children with fairly complex needs.

For Barbara support has come from her various training experiences which she sees as empowering, because she connects having knowledge to having status. In her discussion of the three major courses she attended or took, the OTIS, the OU course and the MA, she differentiated between these. The OTIS gave her an enormous boost of confidence and sent her to look for more knowledge in the OU course which was much more theoretical. She valued the MA for its module on management, an important aspect of the SENCO role. However, when she construed these three courses, she did so identically, because they all resulted in her having additional status and therefore empowerment in her role.

Barbara also gave, as elements in her grid, two members of the Learning Support team who have helped her in school, to make changes in classroom management and ways her colleagues perceive children with special needs. She has tried to convince all staff that these children are their responsibility and that she will willingly help with, but not remove the child.

Ronny also continued her studies, completing the Advanced Diploma in SEN in the OU. She did not equate knowledge with power; rather with gaining confidence to carry out her role of supporting others in school and helping integrate children with a range of very complex needs.(See App 5v)

But for both Ronny and Barbara, the last six or seven years has deepened their confidence and competence to carry out their role. Ronny, in comparing herself to Jenny, the recently trained SENIOSH/H course member, said that she felt like Jenny five years ago and could identify with Jenny's sense of frustration in not knowing enough to be able to handle certain children. Joy also saw continued in-service as helping her with specific problem solution. These included, the child with difficulties in mathematics, her need to counsel and support parents and the requirement to produce a whole school policy for SEN.

Chris, Joy, Barbara, Dave, Ronny have all organised or given in-service related to SEN, to their staff. Ronny also took part in borough-wide planning and delivery of INSET, specifically writing of a course for the training of non-teaching assistants who work with SEN children.

Reflection on Learning Outcomes in Relation to Evaluation Issues Raised in Chapter 2, Section D

In designing the original courses, consideration was given to the models given by Eraut (1972), in particular, and other writers on in-service such as Joyce and Showers, 1980 (see Chapter 2D). The objectives of circular 3/83 were also central to our planning (Chapter 1C). Evaluation of outcomes therefore, needs to refer to these objectives and models.

Eraut,(*ibid*) proposed four levels of delivery, the first of which was information dissemination. Wedell (*personal communication* 1987) emphasised that teachers need to have an understanding of the theoretical underpinning the models give. It is not enough to give information about aspects of teaching or special needs work, it is also important to help teachers understand these models. The school-focussed project using an action research model, and the individual child study requiring a task-analysis approach, both worked on the same problem-solving model, designed to deepen teachers' understanding.

In both the large-scale school project and the small-scale micro teaching project, the first step was to identify a base line and prioritise what action or intervention was to be planned. Then came the planning stage, followed by a step-by-step action or piece of teaching. Lastly there followed an evaluation of action in order to plan future cycles. This problem-solving model became fundamental to the work carried out by teachers on both OTIS and SENIOSH/H.

In their discussion of how they learnt, only Ronny specifically discussed the action research model. She learnt most about this on the Open University courses, taken after OTIS. The interaction between the E806 courses and the later SENIOSH/H course became possible because I taught both and could carry the action research OU model back and link it to the SENIOSH/H work. This also reflected the growing respectability of the action research methodology in academic circles and the accreditation of the SENIOSH/H course.

Three quarters of the course members from both SENIOSH/H and OTIS referred to the importance of acquiring knowledge as part of their development. Some distinguished their sources and gave reading, specific talks or courses as examples. Most made a connection between growth in knowledge and growth in confidence. This applied to the SENIOSH/H course members, Theresa, Dorothy, Jenny and Sharon, and is described by Barbara, Ronny, Joy and Dave from the OTIS group.

A level of delivery, identified by Joyce and Showers, is the skill-based component. In the OTIS course model (see Diagram 1 p 9), this relates to the way the two first 3/83 circular objectives were met; Module 1, identification and intervention, covered the first 3/83 objective and Module 2, the second. Both of these aimed at changing classroom practice as well as school planning. To begin with the OTIS course covered areas of curriculum analysis and planning, untouched by most teachers at that time, but by 1990, towards the end of the SENIOSH/H period, the National Curriculum overtook much of the curriculum planning aspect. This meant basic planning of the curriculum was in place, so more work was done in helping give access to this for pupils with learning difficulties.

Curriculum Differentiation had become a key feature of SEN in-service by 1992. For Sharon and Neil, this was part of their repertoire of strategies. In 1986–87, the later cohorts of OTIS had also begun to do this. This was reflected in the shift towards curriculum-based projects which occurred as schools developed identification and recording policies (See Appendix 1ii). Dave, and to some extent Chris, reflect this in their Learning Conversations.

The other component levels described by Joyce & Showers were covered by Module 3 of OTIS, the consultancy Module, where role play simulated practice and feedback through project discussion took place. This ties in also with the problem-study and situation levels of Eraut's other model (1982) of working at school-context levels to affect the management of change.

The reported increase in confidence of almost all the course members may relate to this, but they made no explicit mention of these aspects of the course. Certainly there was evidence in most Learning Conversations, of an increasing responsibility for helping others, but they attributed this largely to experience on the job.

The third objective of the 3/83 circular about organisation for additional and supplementary help, was partly addressed by the courses and partly by some projects. This was the least represented area in the Learning Conversations. Barbara and Joy and Dave talked about their own role in giving support ; or in Joy, Barbara's and Ronny's case managing others to give support. This has been learnt on the job, through experience and is not related to outcomes of the course. Arguably, apart from Barbara, who attended a management module of her MA course, no other course member had received training or help with this important and growing aspect of their role.

Sources of support for course members

From all Learning Conversations it is clear that a great deal of the learning came from experience on the job. They learnt from working with children, other teachers and in some cases other professionals, such as health workers. They valued support for themselves from their Heads and Deputies in particular. Certain Heads were named as sources of inspiration, as were certain Deputies. In other cases course members were enabled by management structures. Teachers who had the most difficulty with management were Kirsty and Pilla, who, though supported by others, were not much helped by Heads. Lydia and Chris mentioned no support for themselves but do not mention negative features either. For quite a few in-service was seen as a source of support – Dorothy, Ronny, Lydia, Barbara quoted in-service. Dave gave Advisory teachers and Barbara, Learning Support personnel, as sources for their support. In the follow-up conversations, a year after the research was completed, Chris, Barbara of the OTIS and Kirsty and Jenny of SENIOSH/H, valued the Learning Conversation itself as an additional support in their jobs.

The best evidence of change has come at the classroom level for every course member. At the school level there is evidence of organisational change and that philosophical beliefs were reinforced, and that they were able to enhance the principles of equal value and entitlement being given to all children. There is evidence from course members, such as Pilla, Lydia, Jenny, Barbara, Joy and Chris that this valuing of the

whole person is a central construct for those teachers. Their choice of people who are seen as supportive enhances this aspect of their learning. Strong beliefs, such as these, gave these teachers a sense of purpose in helping the others in working for change. This is reflected also in the conversation of Heads and Deputies. This was more visible in the OTIS course members and the older SENIOSH/H teachers, Pilla and Jenny, so may well be a feature of maturity.

3. Comparison of Outcomes from the Learning Conversations with Headteachers

Eleven grid Learning Conversations were held with the Heads, in the two phases of the research, between October 1989 and July 1992. During this period government policy changes could account for some of the differences between content chosen by Heads to discuss, in relation to their own and the school's development of policies for SEN. Local Management of Schools, in particular, is a topic of discussion in the later but not the earlier conversations, when the scheme had not yet been implemented. The National Curriculum is mentioned only once, by Adrian (Harrow), as a possible threat to development of SEN policy. Other policy issues mentioned are the GEST (INSET funding), by Jill who also mentioned the Heads' appraisal scheme as an element in her grid. Adrian (Hill.) discussed the LEA's changes in policy and provision in his conversation.

In most cases I had met these Heads at least once before, in relation to the course work of their teacher. In the cases of the three Hillingdon Heads however this was not the case, so the grid Learning Conversations and sharing of these were the only occasions I met them. In the two boroughs where I worked as a co-ordinator of support, I was often able also to follow up the initial research conversations.

Apart from their link through the course, these Heads had no common experiences. They came from three LEAs and had been in post varying numbers of years. Some like Jill and Len were near retirement or in Stella's case had just retired. Others were new in post, like Adrian (Harrow) and Cathy (Harrow), although Cathy had been Deputy in the same school. The Merton Heads came from a secondary training and background, the Harrow and Hillingdon Heads from a primary one.

It is therefore not surprising that similarities of content are harder to find than among the course member groups. There is a wealth of detail of an individual nature in the content of these eleven conversations with Heads. All but one used the opportunity to review their own learning and school development to date, and took between 3-4 hours over the task. The exception was Ian, who would only give a half hour to the topic and did not take part in a grid Learning Conversation.

Table 7: Showing Heads and Schools and LEAs

<u>Harrow</u>	<u>Hillingdon</u>	<u>Merton</u>
C1. <u>Leslie</u> (School S) First	C6. <u>Kath</u> (School T) Junior	C9. <u>Ian</u> (School O) Middle
C2. <u>Adrian</u> (School U) Middle		
C3. <u>Cathy</u> (School W) C4. <u>Stella</u> " First & Middle	C7. <u>Christine</u> (School Y) Infant	C 10. <u>Jill</u> (School Q) Middle
C 5. <u>Len</u> (School Y) First & Middle	C8. <u>Adrian</u> (School Z) Junior & Infant	C11. <u>Tom</u> (School R) Middle

Special Needs Issues: Support to the School: Relationship to LEA: LMS Issues.

For most Heads, special needs is about seeking support or seeking resources from outside the school. For everyone except Adrian (Harrow) this relationship between inner and outer resources was discussed. Adrian's conversation was about how he had become a Head and met challenges. It was not about special needs nor his present school.

For many, the issue was who to ask for help or where to go for help. Leslie, Kath (Hill.), Christine, Tom and Adrian (Hill.) in particular, talk about the people who support them or help their staff cope with pupils with SEN. The Educational Psychologist was given as an example by Leslie, Kath and Adrian (Hill), Christine and Tom. Medical personnel were mentioned by Kath, Cathy, Stella; Social Services by Christine, who also gave services for the Hearing Impaired and the RNIB as examples of sources of help.

Jill, Tom and Adrian (Hill.) and Len discussed changes in LEA policy which have affected their organisation; Len because he felt decisions were made by the LEA outside his full control, discussed how the unit in his school was firstly set up and then changed twice in character by LEA decisions. Jill and Tom and Adrian (Hill.) mentioned LMS influences, Jill and Adrian (Hill.) because it had freed them to make their own choices and develop their policies. Jill gave several examples where having extra money under the LME formula has given more resources to use for SEN. Tom was more cautious as he saw the market forces argument being a threat to special

needs. Will parents want a school that is seen to be good at special needs? What should he do about the special needs of other groups, such as the gifted? Ian also mentioned this group as one whose needs should be considered. Tom also was concerned about showing a value added factor. Will he be able to show good results for all his pupils? Would he be able to do this better by some measure of setting? Tom, in particular, was looking towards the potential threats for SEN in new government legislation.

Adrian (Hill.) also was very aware of new threats because as Hillingdon shuts down its Education Dept. there will be almost no services available from the LEA. His response was to plan to group, in a cluster with other local Primary schools, to buy in their own joint services from any source, Education or Social Service or Health.

Some of these special needs issues relate to meeting the needs of pupils with statements who need extra teachers or adults and for whom the school needs advice. Identifying pupils needs accurately and completing the record-keeping procedures which can lead to a statement being provided, is an important part of the special needs policy for the school for Tom and to some extent Ian and Adrian (Hill.).

Jill, on the other hand, is more concerned to resource all classes with extra help to prevent special needs developing. Due to generous funding she has been able to appoint non-teaching assistants to help each Yr. 4 teacher this year.

All these Heads were committed to integration of pupils with SEN as long as they had the resources of staff and advice to accompany them. Len gave examples when this was not the case in earlier days of his school.

Stella was very angry still with the LEA for not listening to her staff and her own advice as to how to meet the need of a child who has to leave school for the secondary sector. Stella felt very disappointed in her LEA and what she perceived as their lack of support for her decisions. Stella held passionate belief in the right of the parent to have a say in their child's future placement.

Cathy, also recognised having realistic expectation of what any school can cope with was part of this discriminating process. Parents were a theme for some of the Heads. Stella and Cathy in School W, Christine and Kath (Hill.) Adrian (Hill.) Jill) saw part of their role as meeting parents and discussing children's needs, so the correct support can be provided. For Christine and Len in a different way, SEN was very much an equal opportunities issue – the right of the child to be as normal as possible in their peer group.

The organisation of staffing and internal support was discussed by some of the Heads,

but often as part of their SENCO's role. Cathy and Leslie see organisation and planning management skills as part of her learning to handle SEN.

The role of their SENCO is discussed by Leslie, Stella, Ian, Tom and their Deputy Heads (the OTIS course member in each case) by Christine and Jill. The courses they took are valued as part of this development, as is other in-service carried out in school, often organised by the SENCO. Staff development in relation to SEN is closely linked to developing good practice in effective classroom management and good curriculum match. This area of these conversations was on a much broader basis than just special needs work.

Often special needs was used as a lever for better development all round. A well managed classroom and a differentiated curriculum are ideals and were mentioned by Adrian (Hill.) and Jill in particular. For Jill, the issue related very much to developing good primary practice in a school which had used secondary school teaching methods prior to reorganisation. For Adrian (Hill.), who had tried to turn round a very old-fashioned school, staff development meant having sufficient new blood to change practices. Adrian valued what he called his critical mass of three or four new appointments, whom he then sent on courses. He gives as positive examples of staff support the Subject Advisors who visited him and gave his teachers opportunities to go on substantial in-service courses. He is concerned now for newly appointed Heads, who will not get such support in future from the LEA, as these advisory posts have gone.

Jill gives examples of staff development which she thought important for SEN needs work. This took place in school – in one case she makes a continuity link between Chris attending the OTIS, trust in Chris, and therefore in myself to carry out whole-school INSET. In School Q it had been possible to work closely with the staff to develop SEN policies. For this school the present action research is embedded in this development. This was also the case to some extent in School S, (Leslie and Theresa), and School W (Cathy, Ronny and Jenny). In both these schools in-service or continued support had been possible and the action research again became part of this pattern of support.

For these three schools the Group Learning Conversation played a part in this continuum. It may also have been of use to Schools Y, Z & R. but was less clearly part of on-going work.

4. Outcomes of Learning Conversations with Deputies & Senior Teachers

Not all Deputy heads were available for grid Learning Conversations; in two schools only short versions of the conversation were possible, recorded only by tape recorder and not by use of the grid. Deputies were included for two reasons, the first was that some acted as the mentor and internal support to the course member; the second was that Deputies often represented the rest of the staff. What they had been exposed to in the way of in-service or special needs development was often the result of their SENCO's activity. They acted as a bench-mark for the general experiences of the rest of the staff, in the way policies, procedures or strategies had changed as a result of the course member's work, whether related to the course or not. Deputies and others that took part in the action research were as follows:-

Table 8

Showing Deputy Heads and their Roles in Relation to the Course Member

<u>Deputy Head</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Borough</u>	<u>Course Member</u>	<u>Role</u>
D1. Ann	School S	Harrow	Theresa	Mentor
D2. June	School U	Harrow	Kirsty	Mentor
D3. Sylvia	School Y	Harrow	Nye	Management
D4. Linda	School Z	Hillingdon	Sharon	Mentor
D5 .Debbie	School Y	Harrow	Nye	In charge of Unit
D6. Sue	School O	Merton	Barbara	Curriculum & Timetable
D7. Brian	School P	Merton	Dave	Pastoral & Management
D8. Paul	School Q	Merton	Chris	Senior Teacher
D9. Martin	School R	Merton	Joy	Pastoral & Management

The amount of teaching experience varied, as had been the case with the Heads. Those in the mentor role had more knowledge of special needs work gained, through their pastoral role and through experience on the job, rather than from any substantial in-service training. Debbie, as Head of the special unit, had taken a full year's Diploma course in special needs some years previously.

The way these Deputies saw special needs emerges in their Learning Conversations. In most cases the viewpoint is uni-dimensional in nature, and depends on their responsibilities in the school. For example, June, Brian, Linda, Ann and Martin all held responsibility for the pastoral role. This was interpreted in a variety of ways and was very similar to their views of special needs.

For some, who shared management and financial duties with the Head, the advent of the LMS scheme featured in the later conversations (Martin, Brian and Paul.) For those whose roles lay in curriculum and organisation, like Sue, the conversation was largely about setting and support and access to the curriculum. For Martin, Brian, Sue and Linda their work was often with parents so they discuss the special needs of parents, particularly those with children who are distressed or who exhibit challenging behaviour. Linda does a lot of counselling and is aware of her own need for support from other professionals like EWOs and social workers.

The way these Deputies had learnt about SEN did not vary much. Most had learnt on the job by managing pupils and staff in relation to individual needs. All described individual cases as examples of how they learnt, sometimes from supporting the child in class, more often through dealing with an incident or the parent. Ann and Linda had attended LEA short courses and June had attended course on maths teaching which she used as an illustration of matching the work to the child.

There were a few who did not have a very clear understanding of what special needs meant for their school, or for whom it was seen as the sole responsibility of the SENCO. Sylvia thought of children with English as a second language as those with a special need and compared them to the children in the special unit. For Sylvia the issues being discussed were about resources, LMS, timetabling and the success (or lack of success) in integrating individual pupils into the school. Sylvia saw Nye and Debbie as working very successfully as a team.

Sue discussed setting in subjects like French and Maths as a way to meet curriculum needs. She worked with Barbara on some pastoral issues, such as child abuse, and so had an awareness of the emotional needs of some children. Brian saw his role as de-escalating angry parents or pupils who had lost control. He supported staff by acting as the 'de-fuser' of these stressful situations.

Paul was equally concerned with the individual needs of the able and gifted and was concerned the school could be seen to do as well for these pupils, as those with learning difficulties. Paul also saw special needs as a staff development issue. He had himself learnt most by supporting children in Humanities and helping staff to differentiate the curriculum for pupils with statements. Martin, also had learnt about differentiation from school based INSET organised by Joy. He said he had become more aware of both identifying the individual pupil and then planning more appropriately in the subjects he taught. He attributed this heightened awareness to Joy's work with the staff.

All except Sue and Brian took part in the Group Learning Conversation and had their part to play in reviewing policy to date and deciding on future development needs. In the groups for Schools Y, Q, R. & Z, in particular, the Deputies had a significant part to play. Ann, from School S, took part in an early sharing conversation, which was also successful within the more limited objectives of follow up to the course member. The conversation with June had been interrupted a good many times and the group conversation did not work well (see Chapter 4).

Teachers in charge of units

Debbie's role was different from the Deputies'. She was much more of a specialist and worked in close co-operation in the team of Nye and a non-teaching assistant, to support the twelve children with statements, many who had complex needs. A short comparison follows between Debbie, Nye and Pilla, who held a similar roles.

Debbie had attended a year's secondment to a Diploma course. In her Learning Conversation she showed she did not value this much as a source of learning, saying that the knowledge was too theoretical and irrelevant for class and school needs. Debbie found the grid Learning Conversation very useful in her personal development, coming as it did just as she was leaving School Y for a year's world tour. She had felt sad about leaving but also was not sure what she had achieved in the job. She said the grid Learning Conversation, part of which she completed alone at home, had helped her review her work and had shown her what she had achieved for the children.

It became very clear from the Learning Conversations with both Nye and Debbie that they were both very much in need of support for themselves, in their task looking after so many and varied needs. They had no visitors from the LEA to give advice and support, other than the Educational Psychologist who did visit, but who was too busy to talk much to them. This, in a borough with a very large support staff, was surprising and worrying. In fact my whole research with School Y was distressing as I discovered much that I was unable to feedback to the borough, because of confidentiality issues.

Nye and Debbie supported each other and had a good consensus over their own grids, which they had shared as a pair before the whole school group which is reported in full Chapter 5.

Pilla did not take part in any sharing of grids due to being the sole representative from her school. Pilla had only the SENIOSH/H course to train her to carry out the tasks of supporting the complex needs of severely physically handicapped children. She had to learn most of this on the job, from the therapists and from talking to the children's parents. What Pilla had gained most from SENIOSH/H was a restoration of her confidence in herself and a feeling of worth to others. This was just the element missing for Debbie and her course, which she had disliked. For Debbie, Nye's experience on OTIS, was seen as much more useful. Nye herself, though a very quiet person, had inner strength which she showed in her conversations. For Nye the OTIS had confirmed her beliefs and given her idea of strategies rather than much formal knowledge.

The Learning Conversations with these three, all touched on life issues as well as professional ones. They all stated that it had helped them to reflect, make decisions for the future and had added to their inner confidence in themselves. A timely, useful outcome!

5. The LEA Context and Conversations with LEA Staff.

The period of 1983–1990 was one of great change and expansion in special needs development for LEAs. This was most obvious in Harrow, where a large amount of resources were made available and Viv, as advisor, had the power to create new posts and services. The climate, for this to be possible, arose from the leadership of people like Stella, from School W, and Christine, the Head of one of the secondary schools, now Director of Education. Viv used INSET as a means of development also, but not to the same degree as Judith in Hillingdon. This was partly because INSET was the only means available for Judith. Merton also, largely through Maria's management, used INSET as a means to bring change to school policy and practice.

The Headteachers in Harrow and Hillingdon talk about the support they receive or do not receive from the LEA. In School W, there was also talk in the Group Learning Conversation, about the expectation from the borough that their school should provide support for a range of pupils with complex needs. This reflects the lead this school had been taking for some time. In Hillingdon, Adrian, head of School Z, talked at some length about the diminishing role the LEA would be able to play in future, and his fears for schools at an earlier stage of development than his own.

From the conversations reported in chapters 4 and 6, with Judith and Maria, it is

possible to trace some of the background to the OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses from the perspectives of the two LEA link people. They could both attribute some development of borough policies to these INSET activities. They both also collected evidence from classroom observation of changes in practice, which they thought were initiated as a result of this special needs INSET. In Maria's case these observations came through her work with the Learning Support Service; in Judith's case it came from inspection of the National Curriculum.

Maria also spoke about occasions where, she felt that teachers had needed more time and support to fully understand new innovations, and as a result had not been able to sustain the changes needed. Viv made little attempt to collect first hand evidence of her policies on the ground, being more interested in relationships which would give her power for her next development.

Through my own work, in Harrow and Merton and through this action research, I have been able to see clearly, the effects of the three LEAs on policy and practice, in at least some schools. It has been possible to use the outcomes of this research most in Merton, where I could incorporate knowledge of schools into support work, and policy making, and knowledge of learning processes, into in-service. I discuss this more fully in the next section of this chapter.

B) Action Research Outcomes for Individuals and their Schools

In comparing action research for schools, it is necessary to consider two factors. The first of these was my role within the LEAs. In Harrow and Merton, it was possible to carry out the Learning Conversations as a special kind of interaction with schools which I visited as part of my job. In Hillingdon, my role was limited to that of tutor to the courses and the evaluation and follow-up of those courses. Any outcomes other than evaluation data was therefore limited. This evaluation data proved to be useful feedback for the running of future courses.

The second factor affecting action research outcomes was the management style of the Headteachers. Their philosophy of education and its relationship to the policies for Special Educational Needs made differences in how developments took place. Much of this has already been discussed in the above section on Headteachers. The interaction between my role and the Head's management style probably had the greatest effect on action research outcomes. When the research was seen as part of the schools' development plan, or as a natural component of my support role, then the effect of the series of Learning Conversations lead to positive outcomes.

However, even when I could not do very much with the management, it was usually possible to support the individual. By so doing, it was possible that in the long term, there would be effects through that individual. There was only evidence for this when I could return for further conversations after a year had passed. The evidence I did have from such individuals would suggest that the Learning Conversations helped decision making and planning. This was discussed in the section on course members above. When individuals were thus strengthened in their personal resolve and in gaining confidence, they became more effective in their schools. Further research would be needed to analyse this in detail. The three teachers who used the CHANGE grid procedure all report that they found the procedure useful in making decisions about their future careers.

In Merton, where it was possible to follow up the research, there is more evidence to suggest that there was some effect on school development. Barbara, in School O, reports that the Learning Conversation was useful in her long term planning. Her Head delegates responsibility for SEN to Barbara. He is not willing to become involved himself nor involve others from senior management. Barbara therefore holds a key position in developing policy for SEN. Dave, from School P, again felt the Learning Conversation to be useful in his new role as SENCO. However again senior management delegate the SEN to him and there is limited partnership across the school.

In contrast, School Q, where the previous course member is now Head, I was able to continue the support begun through the research, by helping the school develop its policies. This is being extended to my involvement with a newly appointed Deputy head.

In School R, I am at present working with Joy, who is attending a new course aimed at helping develop whole school policy for SEN. The series of Learning Conversations are giving insight into some of the issues which then can be built upon or developed.

This was also possible in Harrow, in School S, where the research became part of the INSET programme for year. The Head had a very clear idea what was needed for her school. Although the Learning Conversations began as evaluative, they also gave opportunity for personal reflection to the Head and Deputy. In contrast, it was difficult in School U to do more than support individuals. This was due to the Head's lack of active interest for special needs. His Deputy, while showing interest, was too short of time to make full use of the opportunity that the research offered.

In School W, because of my support role, as well as my link through the two courses, it was possible to use a series of Learning Conversations in a more dynamic way.

In School Y, I became a real source of support for those who took part in the Learning Conversations. This happened at a critical point in the school's history. Unfortunately, because of a clash between the two roles of researcher and LEA employee, I was unable to use the findings from by data from School Y in a useful way. The day after the Group Learning Conversations took place, important decisions were being made regarding the management of School Y. These decisions were being made by a senior LEA officer who had not made any recent fact finding visits to the school and therefore based his decisions on little knowledge. The Group Learning Conversation had elicited evidence which appeared to be the exact opposite of his conclusions. But I felt I could not break confidentiality promised to the participants and argue against his conclusions. The opinion of the participants of the School Y, was that they needed someone from the LEA to listen to them and understand their perspectives.

My ability to use the action research outcomes to feed back to my work as a LEA coordinator in Harrow was shortened by a change of post. In Merton, I was able both to deepen my understanding of the processes involved in the Learning Conversation and to make more use of this in my work supporting schools. The need to develop reflective practitioners became a central purpose for much of my INSET delivery. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

The overview of outcomes just described, set by set, gives some idea of the personal learning revealed in the grid Learning Conversations, some of which can be attributed to the courses, at least as a starting point for future growth. A great deal more comes from the learning on the job, described by the various participants. One way to judge what effect the Learning Conversations themselves had on those taking part is to look again at the data collected around the Group Learning Conversations, held in some form with nearly every school participant. This gives some evidence as to the feelings of the participants about the process itself.

Overview of Action Research Outcomes

If, as Elliott (1991) states, "action research can be beneficial as a study in a social structure with a view to improving the quality of action within it", what actions have been improved or changed by my research? What has occurred during the sets of Learning Conversations held between course members, Heads and Deputy head teachers and others? Validation of this type of research comes through practice. In order to find out what effect the research itself had, as opposed to the earlier study of the courses, further research would be necessary to further changes in practice. It is therefore necessary to establish where, within a conceptualisation of an action research model, I began and ended this study.

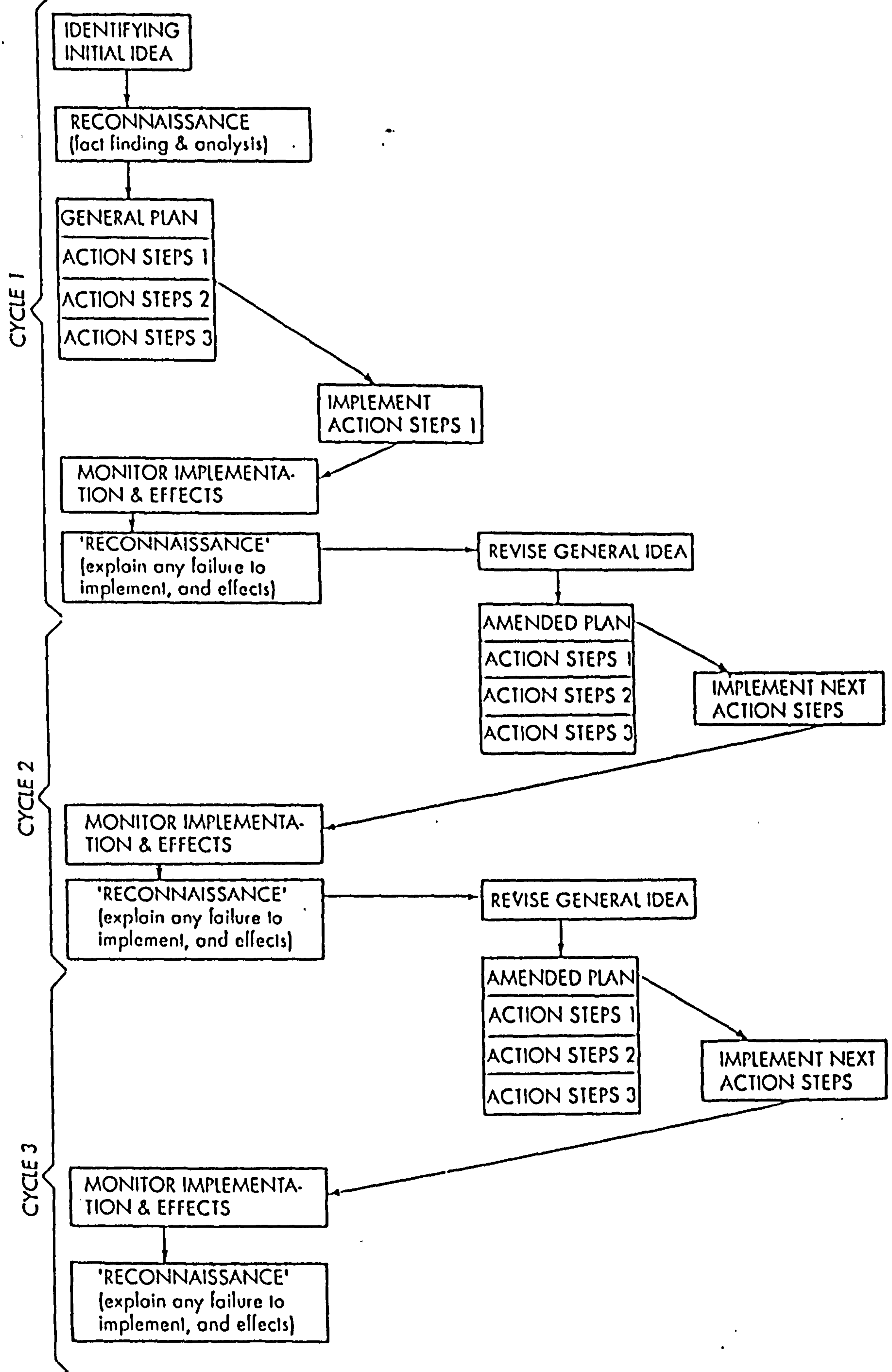


Diagram 7 Action Research Model

Adapted by Elliott 1991 from Lewin

Using Elliott's adaptation of Lewin's model of Action Research, (see Diagram above from p71 Elliott 1991), I see the beginning of this research as being in 1987 when I completed the last OTIS course cohort at the Institute of Education. (See Time Line below & App 7). My initial research idea had been to investigate what was happening, both within the course in tutorials, and in the project work, and see how it would affect practice in the future. The next two years included experiences for myself in two other jobs and gave time for reconnaissance of the idea and potential methodology. By the time I enrolled with CSHL in 1989, I had the general idea of what I wanted to investigate; the action plan for phase one then followed. This action is described in Chapter 4 and 5 in some detail, ending with a further reflection period when I reviewed purposes and methods, my own learning, and possible feedback into both course teaching and planning and other aspects of my work, now in another Borough. This led to the action plan for the shorter phase two, with some further case studies and a deepening of the conversational methodology. Thus the research looks both backwards over the courses and their effects and forward into my own work and that of the participants in the Learning Conversations.

Action Research Timeline

Date	Employment	Courses run:		Research:	
		SENIOS	OU	Phases	Own grids
May 87	Lecturer, Kingston Poly	OTIS cohort12			
Jul 87		↓			
Sept 87		Poly Cert.			
Jan 88	↓		E806		
Apr 88	Coordinator, services, Harrow	↓			
Jul 88		plan SENIOSH/H			
Sept 88		SENIOSH/H 1	↓		
Jan 89		Access for all	E806	enrol at Brunel	
Apr 89					1
Jul 89		↓ ↓			
Sept 89	(Viv resigns)	SENIOSH/H 2	↓	start phase 1	2
Jan 90		Access for all	E806		
Apr 90					
Jul 90		↓ ↓			3
Sept 90	↓	SENIOSH/H 3	↓	↓	
Jan 91	Head of LSS, Merton		E806	reflection &	
Apr 91				completion	
Jul 91		↓			4
Sept 91		SENIOS MKS	↓	start phase 2	5
Jan 92					
Apr 92					
Jul 92		↓		↓	6
Sept 92		SENIOS Sec.		reflection	
Jan 93		↓	E806	write-up	
Apr 93	↓		↓	↓	

Chapter 8

Conversational Uses of the Repertory Grid **within Action Research**

This chapter explores and discusses the development of the Learning Conversational methodology within the action research design, first with individuals and then with groups. It also examines the role of the researcher as Learning Coach for these conversations. The chapter is organised as follows:-

- A) Discussion of Developments in Individual Learning Conversations,
- B) Discussions of Developments in the Group Learning Conversations,
- C) Reflection on the Role of the Learning Coach, and My Personal Learning from the Research.

In the first section I discuss the development of the Learning Conversation starting with the repertory grid, but extending beyond the grid technique in many instances. The evidence for this comes mainly from the taped record of the conversations. The detailed descriptions of the conversations are to be found in chapters 4, 5 and 6. In the earlier stages of the research, described in chapter 4, the repertory grid procedures dominated the conversational style. By the second part of stage one, reported in chapter 5, the conversations, as recorded on the tapes, show that, on occasion, the procedures allow additional types of conversations to be included within the overall framework. This was further extended in the second phase of the research, as described in chapter 6. As the conversational styles were extended, so were the roles I played as Learning Coach or manager of the conversations.

A) Discussions of Developments in the Individual Learning Conversations

From the start of the research, I didn't want the repertory grid techniques to interfere significantly in the conversational style. I also needed to both record and take part in the conversation. At the beginning, I took notes while the participant talked. This proved too difficult, so I began to use a tape recorder, and to keep brief notes as well.

The story and event elicitation

The telling of their story presented no one with any difficulty, and with a tape recording, I could concentrate on my interaction with the participant. After talking through an event, we would agree on some words to put on the event card. This was only to trigger memory for the person concerned, however the cryptic nature of these

notes was to cause problems in future sessions where the original meaning had come out of context. In all feedback sessions an important role for the Learning Coach is to help revisit the original context and meaning. Stories were often long and covering a number of potential domains. It soon became clear that another role for the Learning Coach was to help in the selection of events to use in the final grid. It became clear that if this was not done, as was the case with Pilla, the final grid was both too large and too undifferentiated. When choosing which pole an event belonged to, too many ended in the middle, because too much was being attempted in the one grid. For the repertory grid to be useful, there needs to be discussion as to its purpose and its topic.

One of the aspects of constructs described by Kelly's original theory of Personal Construct Psychology, is the focus of convenience. This comprises those things which would be most usefully described by the user, usually within a restricted context. If the range of a conversation is too widely spread, it is possible that there will be a mixture of contexts, or domains, thus causing ambiguity for the user.

The story was a rich source of data, and the taped record could reflect some of this and add contextual detail to the grid, which gave a different form of record of the Learning Conversation. The decision as to when to intervene in the selection of events differed between individuals. For some people it was important to be allowed to tell the whole story first and then select afterwards. For others, particularly when time was very short, selection was needed from the beginning. This meant discussing purposes and domains in advance. However, most people thought they were just helping with the evaluation research, and it was not until they had taken part that they saw that they had been able to use the opportunity for useful reflection and evaluation for themselves. This meant that the purpose changed subtly as the conversation progressed, so in many cases, it was necessary to negotiate personal choices as we went along. Although it was the elements (events) that were being selected, some of the personal constructs began to emerge while these events were discussed.

As my skill in managing the repertory grid procedures and conversations developed, I felt more at ease. This resulted in letting clients tell their stories in their own way, recorded on tape, but gently interacting with them to select or highlight events as it felt right. I usually entered the conversation to clarify meaning or encourage the expansion of a point, in order to understand its meaning for that person. Sometimes I would have shared the event, and needed to make sure I had understood the meaning and significance for them. The role of the Learning Coach is explored in more detail in Section C of this chapter.

Eliciting constructs and the raw grid

When it came to keeping the conversation as natural as possible, the story and events elicitation posed fewer difficulties than did the construct and raw grid elicitation. This

was because presenting event cards in triads, making comparisons, and sorting into piles, all had a number of sequential procedures which are necessary to arrive at the raw grid. The taped record of these stages was of less use, as it often recorded only procedure, and not anything of the person's thoughts as they made their choices. At later stages in the research I encouraged more dialogue at these points. I also felt it possible to intervene on occasions. For example, there was often difficulty in articulating the reasons why two elements were more alike than the other one. To get over the idea of a continuum, with two poles, the pair on the one pole, the singleton on the other, was difficult. People often choose simple opposites and, particularly when meeting their element for the second or third time, needed to think more deeply as to how it was different or the same as another element. With some probing, they often stated that they could now see a different layer of meaning in their choice. This led to a free ranging discussion of an issue which had proved significant. The final choice was sometimes a surprise to the participant in some cases. This began to emerge in the taped recording of these later conversations as described in chapter 6. The final sorting for the raw grid began to show some of the clustering of elements that would become clearer when the grid had been FOCUSed. There was some opportunities to discuss this while proceeding, but usually due to time restraints, not much was possible.

Feedback of the SPACEd FOCUSed grid

This second Learning Conversation gave many opportunities to go beyond the grid techniques. However the grid printout offered an excellent structure on which to proceed. As I became better at interpreting the FOCUSed grids, I could guide participants through the meaning of the grid. At first, I looked only for the larger clusters of elements and constructs. Later, I was able to pay more attention to details, such as smaller groupings, the use of the mid-point, and other individual features. The role of the Learning Coach is essential until the person has become familiar with the grid techniques. No one in my sample had sufficient practice in this to become independent.

At first it was possible to trivialise the feedback of the grid and loose meaning. With experience, the feedback session became an opportunity to explore personal meanings, taken from the grid initially, but then to discuss future implications for their work or, in some cases, their life. Because often quite a lot of time had gone by between the original conversation and the feedback, changes had occurred and some events were no longer seen as very significant. They still had developmental importance though, to most people, and this was a topic to explore in further conversation. Taped recordings of these extra conversations show how they went beyond the grid. The repertory grid was responsible for the structure which guided the conversations, and in many cases revealed to the individual, aspects of their work that they were not fully aware of before we began.

B) Discussion of Developments in Group Learning Conversations

Purposes: Initially, these were set up as a way of checking and validating the outcomes of individual conversations, from the perspectives of significant others. The individual could validate their own learning in individual feedback conversations. In the group situation, others could state both, how they saw a particular issue and how they viewed their colleagues actions as a result of their learning.

As these group conversations took place and the action research progressed, it became clear that they were actually serving other purposes apart from those concerned with the research. In the role of Learning Coach to all conversations, the group sharing gave another opportunity for me to correct the validity of the picture of the school, I had collected through the series of conversations. These were limited in time and purpose and might well have been at best incomplete and at worst atypical or misrepresentation of what individuals really felt.

What also emerged was the potential of the exchange process in clarifying an agreed meaning, a consensus of opinion about special needs policies and practices in the individual school. In most schools this was assumed implicitly to be agreed, but opportunities to examine the individual perceptions of reality rarely occurred.

By setting up an opportunity through the research for such a structured, focussed discussion, there was a real opportunity, to both review the past, and plan for the future. The technique for managing these conversations evolved over the various attempts. Each had value in their own right, but the last two occasions in Schools Q & R, gave opportunities to test a model and to define the process more clearly.

The Algorithm, first discussed in chapter 3, shows the outcome of these trials and is an attempt to model the process of the Group Learning Conversation. However, it must be emphasised that each time the conversation was managed, as well as issuing a procedural guide, given in advance to participants, I also tried to ensure that the process was not adhered to in such a way to become sterile or ritualistic in format. At all times regard for individual variation was given as well as being sensitive to emotional content or distress arising at any point.

Managing such conversations, I found, required a good deal of preparation. It was important that I had gathered together my own constructs about the school and was clear both what I thought I knew and of what I had no knowledge at all. I took part in the conversation as both a Learning Coach to guide procedure and an active contributor of content when appropriate. In School Z, in Hillingdon, where my knowledge was very limited, it was only possible to act as a Learning Coach for the process, adding content at the end when the full group had broken up (See Chapter 5).

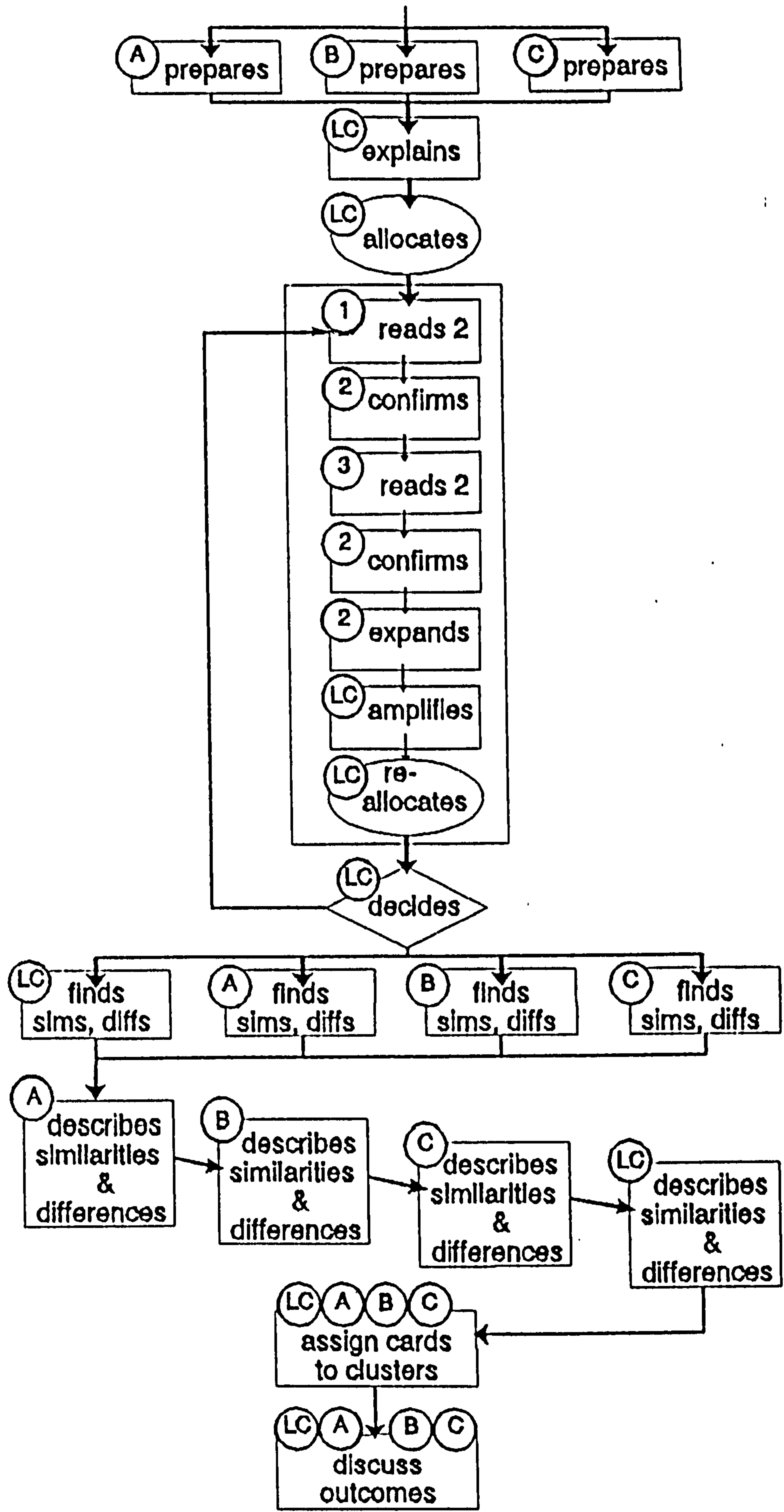


Diagram 8

Algorithm showing procedure for Group Learning Conversations

Notes on the *diagram 8*
Group Learning Conversation: an algorithm

The various boxes indicate stages in the conversation process. Rectangular boxes indicate stages in which information is produced or shared. Oval and diamond-shaped boxes indicate stages in roles are allocated or (in the latter case) a decision is made as to whether to move on to the next phase. The arrows indicate the sequence of events.

A symbol in a small circle attached to a box indicates the person who is the principal participant in that stage: the person who is formulating ideas about a grid, providing a verbal account of these ideas, etc. The participants are LC (the learning coach), and the following list: person A, person B, and person C. Each of the persons on the list has produced a SPACEd FOCUSed grid. In all the stages where someone is speaking, they will speak to the group as a whole (all four participants).

In the stage labelled "prepares", the person indicated in the circle examines all three of the grids, in the light of LC's written instructions, and endeavours to decide the meaning of each. Each grid is a SPACEd FOCUSed grid printout, with notes from the feedback conversation written on it. This stage takes place the day before the subsequent stages, and is intended to provide practice in interpreting these grids.

In the stage labelled "explains", LC explains the forthcoming procedure to A, B, & C. In the stage labelled "allocates", LC designates person A as reader 1, person B as reader 2, and person C as reader 3.

In the stage labelled "reads 2", the reader indicated in the circle examines the grid produced by reader 2, and delivers a verbal account of it.

In the stage labelled "confirms", reader 2 either confirms or amends the previous reader's account of what the grid means.

In the stage labelled "expands", reader 2 adds any points which have been missed in the verbal accounts of readers 1 & 3.

In the stage labelled "amplifies", LC verbally adds any relevant points, external to the grid under discussion.

In the stage labelled "re-allocates", LC rotates the designations, so that readers 1, 2 and 3 each become the next person on the list (or the first, if they were the last).

The stage labelled "decision" represents the decision to move on to the next phase in the conversation process, when each of the persons A, B, and C has played the roles of readers 1, 2 and 3

In the stage labelled "finds sims, diffs", the person indicated in the circle examines all three of the grids, identifies similarities and differences between them, in the light of what has been said in the previous stages, and writes each of the similarities on a card of one colour, and each differences on a card of a contrasting colour.

In the stage labelled "describes similarities and differences", the person indicated in the circle delivers a verbal account of the similarities and differences they have detected in the three grids.

In the stage labelled "assign cards to clusters", the whole group co-operates to produce a meaning map, in which the cards generated in the stages "finds sims, diffs" are pasted onto a large sheet. The clusters in which the various cards are placed are the product of what has been said in the "describes similarities and differences" stages. In the stage labelled "discuss outcomes", the whole group discusses future actions relating to the individuals and to the school, in the light of what has emerged from the earlier stages.

In School W, I attempted bringing in my own grid which was unrelated to that school. This did not work, as the participants could not extract the meaning, and even if they had, it would not have been of much use to them as the domain was different. This shows that, for this type of exchange to be useful, there has to be some overlap of domain, content and purpose.

The Group Learning Conversation procedure has some similarities to EXCHANGE grid, as described in Thomas & Harri-Augstein (1985) S.O.L. (p 246). However, I was not asking participants to rank or choose construct poles for the other participants' elements, as is the case in EXCHANGE grids. Rather, I was asking them to 'read' the main points for the labels given by each person to their clusters of elements or constructs. In this sense the 'reading' could only be as good as the notes on the SPACEd FOCUSed grid printouts. Some understanding could also be added by looking at the labelling given to the clusters of constructs, on each pole, to which elements were construed.

Element and construct labels too could produce problems, as the verbal labels had originally been chosen only as memory triggers, to remind the owner of the grid of the part of a story they had used to illustrate a learning event. In writing both element and construct labels for the limited field of the computer program, there was a need to collapse data. This also made these labels cryptic, or at times without meaning to an outsider to the conversation.

Some of this was offset by the opportunity for the owner of the grid to correct meanings, but time did not allow too much detail to be given here. The potential for misunderstanding of the verbal labels of the constructs was even more likely, as these were often expressing complex ideas which were not best expressed by just a few words.

This did not matter greatly when working with an individual who could relive their original conversation or, if a problem did arise, could check their original meaning by referring back to the raw grid or to the cards where elements constructs had been written. As Learning Coach to the individual conversations I also could use my own memory backed by notes and taped recordings.

This meant that the contributions of the Learning Coach to the Group Learning Conversations was even more important. I could bring in my contextual knowledge of the original conversation to qualify what might otherwise have been a misrepresentation of meaning.

Beyond the Grids

In both individual and Group Learning Conversations, grids were used as a way of structuring the process of the conversation. This structured process was not very negotiable, although it was varied in a few details, to suit individual needs. The content of the conversation was largely open-ended and exploratory even though the original domain had been decided by myself; namely the learning of their role in relation to Special Educational Needs.

Within this domain, individuals chose a wide variety of approaches and perspectives and that choice was theirs. Once the topic had been started, sub-topics arose around individual events (elements) or constructs. Initially, sometimes elements and constructs became rather interchangeable.

In the Group Learning Conversation finding similarities and differences between the main ideas of the grids seemed fairly easy for these participants to do. This may be because they used both the grids print-outs and their own background knowledge of their colleagues.

In Schools Q and R, there was time to transfer the similarities and differences onto a large sheet, this gave a further opportunity to establish a shared meaning. In this case what was not shown on the total picture, was as important to the ensuing discussion, as what was present. It showed perhaps, that the three present, did not represent the whole school or staff very well and the task should perhaps, in truth, be carried out in some way, with whole staff, to establish an institutional level meaning map. Such an activity could be evolved for use on staff development days. Then it would be less likely to focus on the individual as much as I had been able to do.

I now ask whether this process was any better than a more free ranging type of conversation could have been in producing a group consensus? Given that I had in most cases only one hour, some structure seemed important. The conversation had some purpose, namely that of sharing meanings and therefore a potential for opening up an area for discussion. Without the detailed preparation of the grid conversations, I doubt whether the group conversation could have as economically and with such validity or in such depth, reached the shared meaning levels achieved.

C. Reflection on the Role of the Learning Coach and My Personal Learning from the Research

This research has been a reflection of the personal qualities and development of the participants in relation to roles and responsibilities for Special Educational Needs. This was described in detail in Chapters 4 , 5 and 6 and comparisons between groups were examined in chapter 7. Validity of the contributions was checked in each case with the individual and in most cases in the school groups. The research has been as creative an illustration of the learning of those who took part, as was possible. The evidence from the grid Learning Conversations, both recorded on paper and on tape, show some of the dynamic of these exchanges. Even so, some of that richness of these conversations are lost in the recording. In most conversations there was an element of surprise, of recognition, of a self revelation and an awareness that the process of the conversation was not merely investigative, but was in itself, a means by which the persons involved could make more sense of their world. This might in some cases lead to having a clearer idea of their purposes and directions for the future.

The conversations reflected the growth of confidence and competence of those who had taken part in the SENIOSH/H or OTIS courses. It also reflected their teamwork in schools. Although the research was not directly about school effectiveness, it was clear that having a group of people who had agreed meanings and purpose would affect how their school developed. This was inevitably an incomplete picture as all staff were not involved, classrooms were not visited and parents not consulted.

The use of the repertory grid has been a central feature of my research. During the cycles of conversations, I learnt to use the grid with more precision and sensitivity. I also learnt when to go beyond the grid and let the conversation take off. The grid conversation provided the structure and led the process, but I did not want its use to be restrictive or mechanical .

Its virtues were, that it gave form to both the central conversation and the feedback analysis. In this sense it was an efficient use of the person's time and it helped keep to original purposes. It also helped the person to reflect at the level of meaning of their choice . Sometimes this was about life issues, sometimes professional ones. The grid allowed for both detail and overview. It was important to allow the people involved, freedom within the chosen domain, to explore this in their own way. From the researcher's viewpoint this had both expected and unexpected outcomes.

The conversational method takes time, both for the clients and the researcher. The use of the computer programme at CSHL meant some delays occurred between first and feedback conversations, due my time constraints for processing of the data to obtain SPACEd FOCUSed printouts. Although these printouts were valuable in the feedback

conversation, there may need to be a more accessible way of handling conversational data for educational uses.

In the first phase of the research, I may have been too directive in the role of Learning Coach. Managing conversations takes time to learn, requires flexibility and sensitivity. I became very interested in the roles and tasks of the Learning Coach and those of the teacher as learner, during the conversation. An attempt to map the various roles played is given in Diagram 9.

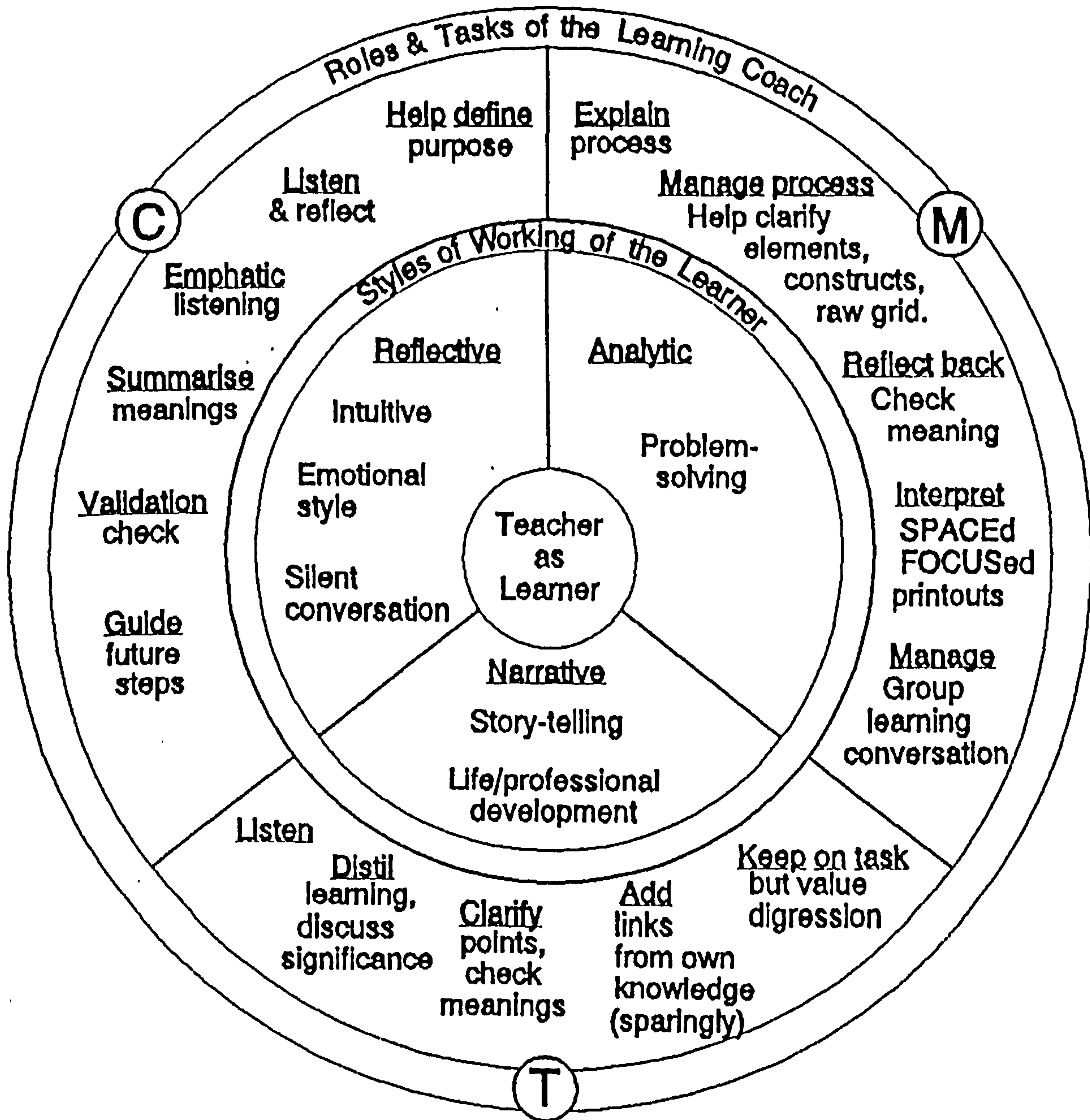


Diagram 9

The roles of the Learning Coach in managing a Learning Conversation

My learning was about managing the various roles shown in the outer ring, while the learner moved through the sections represented in the inner ring. This movement could be in any direction and could go from any section represented to another.

It seemed that most Learning Conversations had three attributes: a) the narrative, b) the analysis, c) the reflection. Participants began with the narrative, telling their story. They could be analytic and reflective about aspects of the story as it was unfolded, but were not necessarily. The elicitation of elements, constructs and then the grid interpretation of the SPACEd FOCUSed printouts required a more analytic and problem solving approach. The role of the Learning Coach here is to guide the process itself and reflect back meaning for the learner to verify in all stages.

Throughout the conversation the Learning Coach listens and reflects back to further define and check that meanings are clear. The Coach also helps the learner to summarise and articulate their overview and future purposes from the conversation. The Learning Coach moves between the roles of a) manager b) tutor and c) counsellor, as both the process and the clients needs dictate.

All of this required learning on my behalf. As I progressed through successive conversations, I learnt to do tasks better, to recognise when to listen, when to prompt and when to engage in creative conversation which was symmetrical in both purpose and content or when only to manage the process. I realised in retrospect that some of these conversations became creative encounters similar to those described in Self Organised Learning (Thomas & Harri-Augstein 1985) (Chap 10).

I used the reflective Learning Conversation at intervals to help understand both feelings and thoughts about aspects of my professional life. Because I had changed job, the first two of the second set of reflective conversations are like the last two in the first set, described at the end of Chapter 5. They were a reflection on events in the previous six to twelve months and helped me to evaluate on my present position and to see ways forward. (These reflective conversations are reported in full in Appendix 8).

By the sixth reflective conversation, the domain and purpose was more closely related to reviewing the action research and thus had a different purpose to the others, recording my personal learning from the research and helping focus on the future. I have found the reflective grid technique an excellent tool for a conversation with myself. The FOCUS programme offered ways of reflecting my own experiences, and although I would have had some value from a pencil and paper exercise on its own, the various printouts are a very useful way to analyse both detail and overview. I learnt to read all grids better by reading my own, I could now interpret the shapes of the clusters without knowing the content. This was illustrated recently when I interpreted a fellow CSHL student's CHANGE grid and could feed back something of

because of the cluster formations. Of course this needed to be checked by the owner of the grid for accuracy, but in fact I possibly had more insight in what I saw there than he did, because I had so much practice in grid reading.

I learnt that the positioning of the clusters was significant in relation to each other and the poles. I also learnt that detailed checking of the variants in some lines of the grid may be important. Sometimes a grid printout was not correct, possibly for technical reasons or human error in transferring data. It was therefore important to check this data against other information, such as the raw grid form, notes during elicitation and the client's taped commentary. The feedback conversation is thus important both to check validity of the meaning, and to take the client further in exploring their personal learning .

Being clear about the original domain and purpose of the conversation is also important if the process is to be focussed enough to be useful. This is something I learnt from doing my own grids, because they are a series over time, but are not CHANGE grids which use the same elements and constructs.

As well as the set of six personal reflective grid conversations, I kept a diary in which I noted, from time to time, interaction between the action research, the Learning Conversations and my own work, both as tutor to the courses and provider of support services in two of the boroughs. Tutorials, seminars and workshops at CSHL played a large part in my own learning, offering different perspectives. My own learning about the use of the repertory grid came from practice of guiding Learning Conversations. The conversation at CSHL, made me aware of my 'growing competence and confidence in the role of Learning Coach. Workshops on Systems 7 (Harri-Augstein & Thomas 1991) introduced me to the term and made me think about the management role I had held in the conversational process. I did not incorporate System 7 into my research, as it was introduced to me too late to do so. However in working in groups of other researchers it was possible to conceptualise other ways of managing conversations, particularly with groups.

I came to appreciate the link between the research Learning Conversations and the tutorials on the original OTIS courses. In the one, there was a structure for the process arising from the repertory grid and its variations, in the other, the structure came from the problem solving approach to the project development. Those helping tutor, Audrey (see Chapter 4) and another colleague, Sabina, confirm that this tutorial process was central to those courses. Our purpose in the tutorial had been to guide course members through their school-focussed projects, to help them analyse their own learning and to support their future initiatives. Sabina, in particular, recently reminded me of how, through these small group tutorials, we had supported course members to become more confident. There is a strong link between such tutorial support and the role of

the Learning Coach. This is why T (Tutor) is used to label one part of the Circle Diagram 9, representing the role of the Learning Coach. In the story elicitation, the link with the tutorial role was strongest. The Grid Learning Conversations had to follow a certain analytic process dictated from the grid procedural rules. In this part of the conversation the Learning Coach changes to managing the procedures and helping the course member in reflecting on and investigative analysing of their ideas.

In the original tutorials any structure that was present came from the the action research model underlying the school projects. A starting point for these, was the conceptualisation of a "rich picture" of the school as a system. Once this was done the part of that system to be studied or changed was examined in more detail and the course members own role considered. The tutorials had as their purpose consideration of this action research. However, much personal material also emerged and the tutors often found ourselves playing the counsellor role as well. In the Learning Conversations, the role of emphatic listener is similar to this aspect of the original tutorial.

It was the dynamic of the tutorial that led me to the wanting to understand more about this learning, interactional process. I consider that the research experience has fulfilled this purpose and has given me some additional skills which I can use with groups of teachers in the future.

The teachers who took part in this research learnt to carry out their roles through a mixture of learning from significant conversations, both on and off courses, reflection on experience, and from more formal learning experiences which gave information. Confidence and competence both increased through this interaction between acquiring knowledge and skills, and having opportunities to reflect and plan. In-service courses which gave sufficient time for this to happen, such as the OTIS and SENIOSH/H, would seem to have an important part to play in both personal and school development.

Conversations with Heads, senior teachers, or LEA support staff appeared to have been a mechanism for enhancing this developmental process. My evaluation research would seem to have offered an alternative, powerful addition for at least some of those who took part.

Chapter 9

Implications for the Future

The Management of Change in Relation to Special Educational Needs

The aim of this final chapter is to discuss implications of the findings of the research for future action. It has been possible to see some of the developmental processes that take place in the successful implementation of change. These processes take time, as shown by the differences between the short-term and long-term follow-up studies. Any significant change takes several years to fully integrate into a school's practices. A first step is to help a few teachers gain knowledge and skills related to the domain of the innovation. This critical number, possibly about three, can then pilot the new ideas and encourage others but they must have the confidence and competence to execute changes in practice.

This small group needs information and skill, then, as they begin to create innovations, there is a need to evaluate each step. This innovation and evaluation cycle becomes part of normal practice. It is in fact action research. If one or more of the teachers have experienced an action research model, as part of in-service training, this helps to maintain the momentum within their school. This could be seen in some of the studies in this research. The interaction between theory and practice deepens the teachers' understanding and helps them to lead others. In this research the domain of change was Special Educational Needs, which had a wide scope, and could interact with many parts of school development.

The Learning Conversation, using the repertory grid, provided a structure which supported this reflective process, and could help in the development of effective practitioners. Enhancing the effectiveness of the critical group of three, through the Group Learning Conversation, could become another way of strengthening a school's ability to manage change. This is becoming increasingly necessary as the pace of change quickens, as a result of government legislation. If changes are to have lasting and useful effects, they must become embedded in the practices of schools. The changes related to Special Educational Needs, following the legislation of the 1981 Act, took many years to implement. Since the late 1980s, major innovation has been required on the part of teachers every year, if not ever month, of which Special Educational Needs is just a part.

This final chapter re-examines those issues which have emerged from the research and which appear to have significant implications for the future. One central theme, from both the OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses and their evaluation, is the effective management of change, at both a personal and institutional level. I will argue that the effective development of Special Educational Needs policies and practice is an integral part of the development of an effective school.

Teacher Development: School Effectiveness

Writers, such as Whitaker (1993) and Fullen (1992), on school effectiveness, all agree that teachers' own development is the key to successful school development. Fullen (ibid) goes further, and argues that:

successful school improvement depends on an understanding of the problem of change at the level of practice and the development of corresponding strategies for bringing about beneficial reforms (p. 27).

Changes in school management, more attention to accountability of school and pupil progress, and more structure and planning in the curriculum, have all been changes which schools have had to come to terms with as well as those initiated by the 1981 Act.

To understand this process, teachers need to be actively involved, and to determine the meaning of any changes for themselves; to experience both pressure and support during the process of change; to recognise that change is about behaviour and belief and that, for change to be effective, there has to be a sense of ownership for the individual and the organisation. Huberman (1992), in the introduction to Fullan's book, points out some of the paradoxes about change. One of these is that rapid small changes may be superficial and may be followed by rapid decline. Change is tricky, because it involves teachers' professional lives and upsets their stable arrangements – styles of leadership will be important, to maintain a creative dynamic system which keeps its capacity for change but is also supportive to individuals.

The changes that OTIS and SENIOSH/H courses aimed to make, concerned the provision of a better-matched curriculum for a wider range of pupils, and better classroom management, planning and support. On the organisational side, improvements in record systems, planning of support, and communication with parents and governors, are all mentioned, as are resourcing issues. A great deal was said about personal beliefs and philosophies and positive attitudes towards individual children. Most of this could be said to be good practice, and not solely concerned with special educational needs. In making changes for a few, many would benefit. The aim was to increase the effectiveness of schooling for the whole range of pupils. This was confirmed repeatedly in the short-term evaluation of such courses (see Chapter 3).

What also became clear was that the processes course members experienced were part of good practice for teacher development. Such processes helped teachers to learn, to become reflective practitioners, and to increase their competence and confidence (Chapter 7). The original OTIS courses set out, quite consciously, to change attitudes towards organisational and classroom practices, in the schools of the course members. The intention was to bring about changes in the individual, through the course

activities, in such a way that they could in turn influence change in schools. If course members had management support, this might be a possible aim; without such support it was difficult, stressful or even potentially damaging to the course member's confidence and feelings of professional effectiveness. For this reason the individual aims, as set up through the school focused project, had to be tuned and retuned to the possible, for each individual course member. Innovation, for some, was confined to their own classrooms, and this was seen as important in its own right.

These changes occurred over time, and had to work alongside others brought in by the 1988 Act, which included the National Curriculum and the Local Management of Schools. The structure given by the National Curriculum was generally welcomed in the later years of the OTIS and all of the SENIOSH/H courses.

For many projects, differentiation was chosen as the focus for innovation. There was a general recognition that planning programmes for individual children would not be sufficient; it would also be important to change learning environments – to reduce alienating experiences for pupils, and concentrate on the way pupils learned, not only on the content. Changes in preset patterns also gave schools the opportunities to plan school and staff development in an integrated manner. Special needs development became an integral part of this overall pattern of in-service.

The Grid Learning Conversations with Headteachers, and Group Learning Conversations, in this research reflect some of this system development, and, although leadership styles varied, the research schools had in common a willingness to discuss and reflect on changes over time.

Schools have been given opportunities for self-development through recent legislation. They have scope for choosing how they present education to their community of parents. Local Management of Schools schemes have generally been welcomed, as they give freedom to school governors and Heads to develop in ways they think appropriate. Constraining their choices are the National Curriculum assessment, the law's requirements of the new OFSTED inspection schedules, and possible overall reduction of resources available to the governing bodies.

There is a hidden paradigm shift between the 1981 and 1988 Acts. The 1981 Act could be seen to be a further implementation of the comprehensive principle, offering entitlement in mainstream local schooling to all. The 1988 Act appears to reaffirm this entitlement, but the ever-tightening central control of the curriculum assessment, combined with opting-out and school specialisation, are beginning to bring that concept into doubt.

Teacher-based classroom assessment was recommended in the original Task Group on Assessment and Testing Report (TGAT) (DES 1988), as was cross-curricular work. Recent changes have all reduced the flexibility of teachers in both delivering and assessing the curriculum. Pupils become aware of failing to reach an age-normed standard, as progress is increasingly being measured by normative rather than individual criteria methods. This specifically threatens special needs work, as praising pupils' best efforts is increasingly becoming of lower priority than achieving good test results.

The Construct of Special Educational Needs

The usefulness of the term Special Educational Needs is now being questioned. Mittler, in a talk to NASEN¹ (1992), discusses the value of this term in the current climate. My research raises the question of whether there is a meaningful difference between policies and practices for Special Educational Needs and those of general good practice.

Mary Warnock (Chairperson of the 1978 Warnock Committee), writing in the Observer (Oct 18th 1992), said:—

There is an urgent need to look afresh at the education of people with special needs.

She explains that in coining the phrase in 1978 the aim of the Committee of Enquiry had been to reflect the continuum of difficulties children might have, and therefore encourage a continuum of provision:

We thought most special needs children would be in ordinary schools because that's where the majority were already.

Re-examining this situation ten years later, she feels that this approach has been disastrous. Instead of the situation where only those pupils with most severe needs requiring a statement to ensure resourcing, there is now a clamour for more and more statements, from both parents and schools, as a means of acquiring extra resources. There is, she thinks, a need for a radical rethinking into the way needs are assessed and met in order to meet the full range of children's needs.

Special Needs as a Resource Issue

It would appear that there is indeed a need to re-evaluate the distinctions between levels of needs, and to make clear what level of resourcing must be provided so as to be as fair to as many children as possible.

As mainstream schools increasingly control devolved funding for special needs, this is an urgent requirement, if an equitable systems is to develop. Such a system will need to be capable of being monitored, to ensure funds are used appropriately.

¹ National Association for Special Educational Needs

If special needs is about discontinuity of need, it follows that it is about unequal funding for some pupils. Just which those pupils are, and how decisions are made to identify, resource and review these needs, is a complex issue. One view is that all schools should be sufficiently well resourced to meet the special educational needs of all pupils. But this is both financially unrealistic and difficult to monitor. To give an individual child expensive resources of staffing and equipment requires some direction from law; this is just what a statement is meant to do. But how many children should need statements? This depends on points of view, parents, teachers, and administrators differ.

Money is being devolved to schools for SEN under LMS Schemes. As the Audit Commission Report of 1992 pointed out, this is most frequently done on the basis of the proxy measure of eligibility for free school meals. There are attempts throughout the country to improve identification of real needs, through various schemes of bids for funds, based on audits of need.

In Nottingham, under direction of Dessant (the writer of "Making the Ordinary School Special" (1987)), the Children First scheme (described in Potts & Swann 1992) attempts to devolve more money to schools under a bidding system, rather than spending it on statements for individuals. Kent has evolved an audit system whereby every school has to identify the various levels of intervention for each level of need (Moore, 1990 and 1993).

Training Needs for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

School governors have been responsible for Special Educational Needs since the 1981 Act, and now are likely to be asked to be more accountable for funds allocated for that purpose. Awareness has been raised all round, since the 1981 Act for all teachers, parents and those in government. It is likely that the new legislation will require all schools to have a whole-school policy for SEN, and to review this policy annually. An important part of this policy will be to define the roles and responsibilities of senior management and the SENCO. Schools will be required to have systems to identify pupils with SEN and define their needs. They will also be required to review these regularly.

The other clear responsibility for senior management and the SENCO will be the efficient management of extra support for these pupils, either through curricular differentiation or through the organisation of extra adults in the classroom. All this is likely to enhance the role of the SENCO, as they will need to be able to advise senior management and governors. Training needs remain, therefore, as great as ever for these SENCOs, who may well also be asked to lead staff development sessions in their schools on the new requirements.

Ten years ago this SEN co-ordinator role did not exist. It was brought about largely through the SENIOS training initiatives, which made LEAs aware that they should encourage all schools to have a SENCO, and a whole school policy for SEN. (Cowne, 1990).

Courses like OTIS and SENIOSH/H are still needed, but as funds are reduced and supply cover cannot be afforded, courses become shorter and must be in teachers' own time. Courses run at LEA professional development centres are at risk, as the funds to be used are devolved to schools and the advisory staff contracts terminated. There are very few people with sufficient training, skill or knowledge left to deliver such local courses. Teachers will turn to the Institutes of Higher Education if they are prepared to fund themselves, and work in their own time, but the majority of training needs are difficult to meet in such a way.

Special Educational Needs is still on the GEST lists for grants for 1993-4. But funds have to cover all specialist training for the rarer handicaps, as well as all SENCOs' needs in the mainstream. Even the most imaginative use of funds makes this difficult to organise. When OTIS began, it was 100% funded for a term's secondment plus fees, and there were full-time specialist diplomas and Master's degrees available as well. The very real cuts in INSET funding to special needs has serious implications for future specialists, and future support for SENCOs. The findings and methodology of this research would seem to have something to offer with respect to these training and support needs in the future.

Integration or Segregation

One of the clauses in the 1981 Act talks about efficient use of resources. There comes a point when the individual resourcing of pupils in mainstream schools is not practical; for example, adapting all buildings for wheelchair access, or having therapists who are in short supply visit numerous sites.

For this type of reason, formation of pockets of extra provision on selected sites can be seen to be a better use of resources. Extra-resourced schools was a concept Harrow used. Schools U, W and Y were examples of these (Chapter 4 & 5). It follows that such concentration of needs also requires increased staff expertise. This is most often organised for groups of pupils with difficulties of a physical and sensory nature. For pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, or have emotional needs, the picture is different. Few schools want concentrations of such pupils, whom they view as disruptive. Some schools make it a policy to try to keep all such pupils, and attempt to cope with the stress this places on other pupils and staff. There is, however, a worrying trend towards more pupils being excluded from schools, sometimes not being offered alternative placement. Most of these pupils do not have a statement to protect their interests, and even some who do are still excluded. This trend may be

related to the need to publish exam results, and to market schools to parents. Schools may not wish to be connected, in parents' minds, with special needs, particularly those with emotional or behavioural problems.

The 1981 Act has not resulted in much overall reduction in special school places, especially for those in the broad categories of learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The large group of disaffected pupils however were rarely catered for through use of the statement. Some went to off-site units, sometimes labelled "sin bins" by the local press, some were given home tuition for limited periods of the week. The government is becoming aware of the increase in this group and is considering fining schools who exclude pupils. But as Sutton writes, in the TES (Jan 1992), schools usually only exclude as a last resort after enormous efforts have been made to sort out a solution. Permanent exclusion is rare, temporary exclusion much more common. Parental choice also has a part to play, and second or third chances are often arranged. However, in the end the LEA has to have some resources at its disposal to meet the needs of those pupils who, through disaffection or for other reasons, cannot be contained in schools. The devolution of all funds to schools is making this increasingly difficult to provide. Some LEAs still run effective services and off-site provision, but this is usually stretched to its limits.

Changing Role of the LEA & Government Legislation

The LEA has had a major influence on the implementation of change, in relation to both Special Educational Needs and teacher and school development. From conversations with the LEA Advisors, and from my own experience, it is possible to initiate innovations first by awareness-raising and then by policy changes in schools. In Harrow, the growth of the support teams was a major route to innovation. In Hillingdon, in-service alone was used as a change mechanism. In Merton, in-service led the way, but was backed up by the work of the Learning Support Services.

In this work, these boroughs acted in partnership with Institutes of Higher Education, in particular the London Institute, but also Roehampton and West London. This partnership was strongest during the OTIS courses (as reported in Lessons in Partnership, Cowne and Norwich (1987)). It has continued in the form of support for outreach work, a role which is likely to increase in future as LEA's support teachers' and advisory teachers' posts reduce.

New government initiatives, begun in 1988 and further to be enforced by the 1993 Act, aim to reduce the powers of LEAs, indeed possibly to remove them entirely as a tier of government related to education (as is already to be seen in Hillingdon). There is a massive shift to centralised power through the new Education Act, published first in the form of a White Paper "Choice and Diversity" (1992). The Government's

declared policy is that, as soon as a majority of schools opt out of LEA control and become grant-maintained, the LEAs duties will largely be replaced by those of a funding agency. But, either way, the role of LEA or funding agency will be that of purchaser of services, not provider. Some inspector teams have already been disbanded, and this is likely to continue. Many Advisory teachers' contracts have been terminated. All learning support teams are under threat of reduction or disbanding at worst, and devolution of their funding to schools (who may choose to buy their services back) at best.

Within the last few years, in-service funding has almost all been devolved to schools, but under strict government control as to its use. The main purpose of in-service funding are: curriculum development and assessment; and developing LMS management. Small amounts of money are specified for Information Technology. However, the SENIOS money is still granted to LEAs, who can set up some courses of a limited nature.

LEAs are still regarded as needed for the planning, monitoring and administration of Special Educational Needs. This is largely seen as related to the statement procedure, and not the provision for the larger group of needs in ordinary schools. The schools themselves are to be entirely responsible for this group of pupils. Some think schools should be required to publish their achievements in relation to special needs pupils (Spastics Society 1992). Parents certainly need advocacy to ensure their children have their needs met, but an increase in the statutory appeal process through tribunals and courts should not be the way to do this. LEAs have, in the past, spent much time and effort in trying to meet parents' requests and children's needs, in as fair and equitable a way as possible. Funding Agencies, with no local knowledge, would be unable to carry out such a role and will not be a cost effective way of managing the strategic planning for all children with Special Educational Needs.

Some parts of the SEN policy is likely to be one of the few areas of responsibility left with the local authorities, even if the grant maintained schools dominate the system. Opting out rates are much slower than expected, and most LEAs are still holding on to some of their strategic planning and developing roles so far. Merton is introducing three interwoven schemes in relation to special needs provision, built on models taken from Nottingham and Kent and its own previous policies.

Brighouse, writing in the TES 19th Jan 1993, still sees a role for the LEA. Schools on the whole want to be part of their LEA, which they see as offering support, guidance and services. The economy of scale in sharing services is particularly obvious to primary schools. LEAs have played an important role in offering support and challenge to schools, in their management of all the changes resulting from government legislation.

The LEA has usually been the sole provider of these support and advisory services. If they no longer exist, who will replace these services? The idea that bands of independent advisors will spring up. Then the LEA might have a role as a broker for agencies, whether voluntarily or statutory, says Brighouse. He warns that the present education legislation is "yet another step on a downward path that is not just bad for education but threatens democracy".

From all of the above, it is clear that not only is change here to stay, but that some of this change may not be seen, by many in education, to be in the right direction. There is an attempt by government to reverse much of the previous years progress since the 1944 Act. These issues do not favour individuals, especially children with different needs. The present teacher dispute over testing has at its centre an acute awareness by teachers of the potentially damaging effects of tests, particularly those for English designed for the 14 year olds. They are narrow in concept and are the antithesis of good teaching which has encouraged individual creative responses to literature. At best they are trivial, at worst they could undo years of careful nurturing of a large proportion of the secondary school population. The advice of those in the National Curriculum Council and the original TGAT group, lead by Prof. P. Black, are being rejected in favour of alternatives proposed by the Centre for Policy Studies. Headteachers at their 1992 conference passed a motion stating that the government's tests were far too simplistic to yield useful information about pupils progress". (Simon and Chitty, 1993).

The HMI, which the government have largely disbanded as too much a part of the educational establishment, have been replaced by the new privatised independent inspectors. These teams, which may include lay people with no experience of education, will inspect all schools every four years. They will be responsible for quality control of all LEA maintained or grant maintained schools. The team members have a week's training in the OFSTED inspection methods. This training discourages a personal friendly approach. Meanings that the establishment and its teachers may have or of what they do are not of major concern. Criteria that can be observed behaviourally or counted predominant. Failing schools will be given to teams of volunteers to restore to health! If they do not comply they will be required to opt out of LEA control where there will be even less accountability to their community.

This scenario would seem to be the opposite of what is needed to help schools develop. My research has shown how much careful work and time is needed to develop effective practice, well grounded in the teachers' beliefs and purposes concerning education. Who will help schools in the future? It is difficult to see how the same person can be committed to the alternative philosophies required to carry out both these roles of inspector and supporter. The outsider role of the critical friend, that the some LEA officers play at the moment, may not be much in evidence in the future.

It is my opinion, as a result of this research, that primary schools, at least, welcome and need outside influences and support, including those on offer from LEA staff.

Teachers of Future Generations

At the same time as these threats appear on the horizon, there continues to be an increase in in-service directed at empowering teachers to become reflective practitioners; to carry out active research projects; to become in effect self-organised learners. They are the key to the future, and will need as much support as possible to hold on to values and beliefs in education, at a time when these are very much threatened by the present centralised government control. Brighthouse (writing in *The Observer*, 14 March 1993) calls teachers "nurturers of the next generation". He observes that:

In the developed world, when teaching has become a more complex and demanding task, our collective respect for teachers has evaporated . . . Teachers have a futures market all of their own. It is dealing in what might be. The future of society demands that we cherish and salute them.

How best can such nurturing be done? This research, I believe, gives a possible direction. Teachers have to be helped as Whitaker (1993) suggests, to both know and become. They need knowledge, information and skills, but they also need to acquire confidence, inner strength, and personal commitment. They need support in such development, both from each other, and from outsiders, who bring new ideas. In particular teachers need support to manage change within their classrooms and schools, and with challenging pupils. The Self-Organised Learning that has been described in this research could offer structure to future teacher groups who may find themselves working without the support of in-service providers.

If we take a step back, for a moment from the present scene, we might see that we will have to go through a dark age in order to come to a new enlightenment. How many years this will last, cannot be known at present but, if we believe in change being continuous, then the wheel should turn again and other new ideas emerge. But for those children in our schools at present that might be no comfort. They only have one chance to gain a full education, one that will enhance their self-esteem and give them confidence to tackle the world. We damage our future by damaging theirs. We must, therefore, nurture their teachers.

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