CHAPTER 6

CRUCIAL DESCRIPTION OF A SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL APPROACH:

PART 2 – Sumaiya and the Arranged Situation

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data from the arranged situation, as it was pedagogically organized for research, is represented. It begins with “Day 3”, the lesson in which the project work ideas were presented to the class by Sumaiya following her preparatory work done earlier, described in the last chapter. The projects of individual groups of pupils as they unfolded in the classroom then follow and are discussed separately, together with initial reflections that arise from each of the five group projects. To construct the description, data from each lesson was “chunked” and re-clustered but maintained in a continuous sequential thread so that the workings and dynamics in each of the groups can be followed. The classroom video/audio data of the lessons are “smoothed” to facilitate reading but preserve the sequence of events in their entirety through the “Days”. The data chunks are introduced with comments, which offer an orientation to the particular reading I am making of events. The data selection is made to preserve as far as possible the natural environment of the classroom and what happened in the groups, and also to highlight aspects that developed in the reflections that followed in the attempt to constitute a crucial description. Implicit in any description, is an interpretation and analysis. The reflections continue an initial grassroots analysis, providing a means to organise additional data gathered from the teachers and pupils; and hence offer multiple perspectives and interpretations on the happenings in the classroom. In this respect they contribute to a democratic participatory validity. Any attempt to understand what happens in classrooms always produces only a slice of that reality. Many different readings can be made. It is a partial view because of where the researcher’s lens focuses and it is also partial in that it is coloured by the lens of the theoretical landscape through which the data are being interpreted. The perspective I bring to the data, the language of description, is that of a social, cultural, political approach to the school curriculum which integrates a critical perspective.
Day 3: “D-day” for introducing project work to pupils

61. When I arrived in class at 8h00 on Monday morning the pupils were already seated in five groups. Both Sumaiya and the class teacher were present. This was the first time I am meeting the class.

Mrs. Chetty: Now listen did you hear mam (Sumaiya) giving instructions. You need your thinking books and the diaries that mam’s given you. Leave both on your side and take your pencils out. (Approximately 10 minutes elapse with several interruptions from the intercom, pupils are reprimanded to be seated or to be quiet. The class register is taken. Sumaiya confers with me and then writes the project titles on the board while the pupils work on their budgets from the pilot project.)

Sumaiya: OK everybody, can I have your attention please? I have five projects on the board and today we are going to choose one project. You going to work in groups, groups of six. Ok, is that alright?

62. Project 1- Inspired by pre-project concerns of diversity and inequality in pupils’ lives (#23):

Sumaiya: The first project that I thought of was “time spent after school”. You, the pupil will have to draw up a list of what you do after school. You will have to draw a graph. Ok, Devan why don’t you tell us what you do after school?

Devan: Mam I go home.

Sumaiya: Do you play, do you do any chores at home, do you clean up the house, watch TV? This is a graph, actually its called a bar graph. What do you do?

Devan: Mam I watch TV.

Sumaiya: You watch TV. Can you remember how long? One hour here… Anything else that you do? Eat?

Devan: Ya.

Sumaiya: For how long?

Devan: Mam, an hour. (Laughter)

Sumaiya: Anything else? How long does it take you to do your homework? (_) It takes you another hour. That one activity, “time spent after school”, you could do by drawing a graph. Then, I would like you to compare your findings with that of a friend - Devan will take his graph and compare that to Loresha. You could also interview your friend to see how much of time you may be wasting, or to show how some of the pupils have