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"An Autoethnography of 'Social Justice' in a Primary School"

Notes from a PhD dissertation

A UWS Research Festival Conference Paper (June, 22nd, 2022)

CONFERENCE SOURCE (Dr Andrew Killen)

This dissertation has grown from my recent experiences and frustration with certain aspects of the current system of primary school education that militate against increasing democracy for children. The catalyst for this study was essentially that something 'wasn't right' in primary school education and in order to reflect upon my concerns, this dissertation has emerged as an autoethnographic study in which I draw on journals completed over a two year period.

I start here with a journal extract written at the start of my dissertation journey. I then outline the structure for the dissertation and begin with an explanation for my focus on democracy. I discuss many of its varied dimensions and features and explain my expectations for democracy. I consider aspects of my autoethnography methodology before summarizing the content of the remaining chapters. The extract from the journal here raises issues that frame the study and provides an immediate summary of some of the key themes I shall consider in this dissertation.

> *As I start my journals for my dissertation I consider that I will view many of my experiences with an emphasis on the experiences of children in primary education. I am alarmed that many children appear not to enjoy their time at school. Often I despair at the manner in which they are spoken to and I worry at the ease with which adults can exclude them from discussions. In addition, I think the way children are assimilated into school structures is inappropriate. I have anxieties over the control of children and restrictions on their rights to voice. I worry that in some way this treatment sets a trend which for many of the most vulnerable is replicated throughout their entire life. Experience cautions me against anticipating much support from other adults in school. I wonder how many of my colleagues would share my concerns or have even give it any thought? I suspect and have experienced, for instance, that many in school leadership regard democracy for children with a mixture of apathy and suspicion.*
>
> *The focus for this dissertation is the need to increase democratic opportunities for children. Why do I care about democracy? Most of the*

children in schools such as mine come from single parent families and are often dependent on support from social services because of health and addiction issues. I believe that increasing democracy is one avenue to redress this inequality but many of my colleagues might question my pursuit of increasing democracy. They may ask why bother about democracy for children when time and energy should be devoted to crucial priorities such as the implementation of the new curriculum in Scotland? Teachers are also required to place emphasis on the requirements of children with special educational needs as well as promoting positive behaviour in the inclusion agenda. Increasingly teachers are burdened with the expectation to self evaluate as stipulated by HM Inspectorate of Education. There is also an existing structure of enterprise and citizenship in schools with its expectation of raising awareness and involvement with activities involving people from outside of education. Do we have time to think about increasing democracy when teachers are so occupied with behaviour conflicts, the audit culture and maintaining an appropriate level of continuous professional development? There are these and many other reasons why democracy for children is a peripheral issue in the primary education environment. I believe it should be brought into greater focus.

I acknowledge that at the start of this dissertation, in 2008, there were many themes and issues that I could have hooked onto, one example being the growing sense that teachers spend too much time and energy completing paper work and not enough time directly teaching children. As a newly qualified teacher a number of years ago, I sensed that there must be more satisfactory alternatives to existing practice. As I became more aware of the machinations of schools and the education system, so my frustration grew with the amount of time spent completing forward plans, assessment sheets, attending countless meetings, serving on school working parties and being bombarded with a seemingly endless number of initiatives from policy makers. With hindsight I appreciate that not all of these were fruitless exercises, but I believed, then and now, that there was not enough time for teachers to reflect on their practice and on what education might look like in primary schools. In more recent years, and in a variety of leadership roles, including as principal teacher and acting head teacher in small management teams, I have continued to be increasingly disheartened by many of the complexities and practices of primary education. However, the over-riding drive for undertaking this research was the dissatisfaction I felt over the lack of democratic opportunities for children in primary education.

Although generally I believe that most children are negatively affected as a consequence of undemocratic practices, in particular it is those children in schools where the vast majority of pupils reside in areas where the socio-economic conditions are challenging who may be most disadvantaged. It is not my intention to analyse, in any depth, the effectiveness or otherwise of economic or social policy but to argue that increased involvement of democracy for these, and all, children in primary school will improve their experiences of school and would be beneficial educationally and in a wider sense for their life experiences and expectations outwith school. My dissertation is aiming to highlight, with respect to children, what the recent Carnegie UK Trust (2010) endeavoured more generally to achieve with respect to inequalities in society. A two year study between 2008 and 2010 the Carnegie research had two main issues: aiming to support those in society with least power in actively engaging in decision making processes and shedding new light on concerns over what they referred to as 'democratic deficit' (2010:8). The link with this dissertation is the concern over children's access to democracy not least with respect to the report's claim that democracy and power can be seen '… as a zero-game: you either have it or you don't' (2010:11). Both the Carnegie report and this dissertation take the view that power and democracy are, given the appropriate environment, more fluid than fixed and, consequently, that power shifts and the development of increased democracy are goals towards which we might strive.

When I analyse many of the references to democracy in the chapters of this dissertation, the benefits I highlight are not necessarily or apparently shared by many of my colleagues. I am conscious that often I refer to a teaching profession that is over burdened with other concerns that create barriers, fear or even, occasionally, a general mistrust or misunderstanding of democracy. This frustrates me because democracy in primary schools will not happen by chance: there must be a belief that it is worthwhile. The importance I place on the uncertainty over whether democracy will enjoy a more prominent role in education is emphasised by the comments of Apple when he highlights the role that schools can play both as an arena of reproducing inequalities and '… as an arena for critical understanding and action in changing these inequalities (2008:259).

Despite the uncertainty I signal above, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) are clear of the necessity for schools to provide democratic experiences. With the need to increase democracy in schools for children central to this study, it is necessary to detail my understanding of democracy. What do I envisage as the aspects of democracy that I strive for in my image of a democratic school? What do I expect to change from current practice? In what way might children's experiences be different? In detailing this I am mindful of Hughes who cautioned:

> The impossibility of defining democracy is beside the mark, for though it is indefinable it is understandable, and not only by philosophers but by ordinary people (Hughes, 1951:12).

Rather than attempting a simplistic definition of democracy, I will highlight its many varied dimensions which are vital ingredients if its implementation is to provide the benefits I anticipate. This should inevitably involve what Kiwan refers to as the activity of '… active participation as a democratic activity, with this process empowering people to bring about change' (2007:229). What is necessary, also, is an appreciation of Young's view of democracy as '… both an element and a condition of social justice' (1990:91). On her view, we would regard democracy as a condition of freedom where all persons have '… the right and opportunity to participate in the deliberation and decision-making of the institution to which their actions contribute' (Young, 1990:91). Moreover, democracy requires an attitude typical of that described by Woods who writes of advocates of democracy having feeling and sentiments towards '… the realisation of second order values like hurt and fair treatment and negative feelings towards their opposite' (2005:41). Beane (1990) refers to a democratic way of life while Apple and Beane describe conditions on which democracy depends, including the following.

> The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity… concern over the welfare of others and the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities (Apple and Beane, 1995:6-7).

Suggesting that democracy should offer rights to participate and influence decisions, Woods (2004) suggests it should contribute to open discussions and to aspire to truth. Ultimately, I am aiming for a culture in schools that resonates with all of these ideas and which is similar to the situation described by Dewey when he outlined his

notion of democracy as '… more than a form of government … primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' (1966:87).

Whilst democracy may include much of the above and more, it is not, however, necessarily just about 'shared values' or the 'common good' (Young, 2000). Young articulates a view of 'deliberative democracy' primarily as an alternative against notions of democracy being viewed or used as 'privileged unity' that could silence and exclude diversity. She argues for a minimal notion of the 'common good' and calls for deliberative democracy norms where '… democracy is actually deepened through enabling more inclusivity of plural claims and perspectives and empowering for less privileged participants' (2000:35). The inclusion of deliberative democracy within the mix of dimensions is important because of children who may otherwise be excluded and so too, Young's call to attend to plural claims is relevant to my study.

When anticipating democracy in schools I am aware that Apple and Beane (1995) take great care, and many pages, to discuss a democratic school. My view of a democratic school is that it should facilitate and encourage greater awareness of the needs and rights of children. The notion of democracy, as described earlier, as a process and an attitude, is consistent with Woods' description of the centre of gravity for democracy and his view of democratic practice in schools that is based on '… a sense of common humanity and a fundamental valuing of each person' (2005:42). In that vein, I look forward to democratic schools providing an environment that encourages

> … talking with pupils about things that matter in school and conversations
> that build a habit of easy discussion between teachers and pupils
> (Rudduck, 2006:137).

Suggesting that schooling should be '… dedicated to the cultivation of an informed critical citizenry capable of actively participating and governing a democratic society', Giroux (2010:1). He also highlights features that would be consistent with my expectations. Before democracy is achieved Giroux claims it is necessary for children to be given a voice in schools and that

> … educators need to assert a politics that makes the relationship among
> authority, ethics, and power central to a pedagogy that expands rather

than closes down the possibilities of a radical democratic society (Giroux, 1994:361).

A fundamental component and relevant to Giroux's point on pedagogy in schools is expressed by Hodgkin when claiming democracy as '… not something which is "taught", it is something which is practised' (1998:11). This is further reinforced by Giroux (1999) when he challenges us to address how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experiences of empowerment, for the vast majority of students, becomes the defining feature of schooling.

I expect a great deal from democracy. It is so much more than just involving people in the decision making process, important though that may be. Democracy should be responsible for creating and fostering relationships that then evolve in democratic settings. For this reason, my references to democracy throughout the dissertation often focus on how its eventual effective implementation requires changes in relationships. I will, in the sixth chapter here, 'Summerhill: An Alternative Model?', highlight the view that democracy is not necessarily based on a principle that everyone is equal or that children should have the same rights as adults. Rather it is about redressing what I see as existing imbalances in how we, as adults, treat, value and respect children in primary schools. This anticipation of democracy is summarized more generally with respect to how adults treat children with Young stating that '… to treat people with respect is to be prepared to listen to what they have to say' (1990:58). She also refers to a notion of moral reasoning, which requires '… not detachment from but engagement in and sympathy with the particularities of the social context, and the needs particular people have' (1990:96). The necessity for more equitable and fairer relationships can not be overstated and Young refers too to the powerless, for whom '… power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them' (1990:57). From a rather different angle, Foucault warns that 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (1980:85). There are these and many other difficulties in pursuing aspirations such as more equitable treatment associated with democracy. Trafford argues that it is necessary to define more clearly what is meant by a democratic approach for 'Talk of empowering students and involving them in a democratic process', can risk '… giving rise to fears of a laissez-faire approach' (1997:7). Perhaps it is because of uncertainty over the impact of

democracy that my experience would indicate that the majority of teachers would be uncertain and even fearful of democracy rather than positive towards it. Pursuing increased democracy will challenge the nature and the quality of current relationships in primary schools, exemplified through the manner in which adults communicate with children. I will, in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, Relationships, highlight the influence that teachers exercise over children and the manner in which they control them.

Rudduck and Flutter refer to this control when stating that a fundamental flaw in any process designed to empower children is that '… power issues are embedded in everyday regime of schools and even woven into the very strategies used for consulting pupils' (2004:157). Similarly, Wrigley highlights the very nature of the structures within schools, an issue I will discuss in the third chapter, 'Structure and Control', when teachers become so accustomed to dictates from above that '… the idea of negotiation sounds almost revolutionary' (2003:134). A challenge for democracy that I highlight later in the dissertation, in particular in the fourth chapter, Policy, is that governments have their own view and use of democracy. This manifests through a control and manipulation that steers democracy towards alternative meanings and objectives that are often at odds with my aspirations for democracy as outlined here.

Having briefly sketched some key dimensions of democracy and some of the barriers to its development, I will suggest benefits that could accrue for children on a journey to achieving increased democracy. When I reflect on the 'why' of democracy, the two issues of autonomy and more effective learning and teaching seem to be at the heart of developing democracy and I will provide a brief initial response here to these 'why' questions. Firstly, autonomy is identified by many researchers, according to Anderman and Maehr's (1994) review, as a key factor in pupils' commitment to learning in school. Rudduck and Flutter suggest that the term has many meanings but that students often plea for autonomy, for '… more opportunity to make decisions about what they do in class or learn from each other' (2004:83). Woods claims that schools should encourage the development of children who are '… creative agents… capable of dealing with modernity through self-conscious self-determination' (2005:43). Developing autonomy is according to Rudduck and Flutter

> …the task for schools to help young people exercise power over their own lives both in school and as an investment for the future (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:43).

Woods also suggests we regard '… autonomy of the person as an inherent good, which is connected with the principle of freedom' (2005:43). Such approaches to and attributes of autonomy have clear benefits for children and advocates for increased autonomy may find encouragement from existing policy which lends some support to its development. The Scottish Government encourages teachers to engage in dialogue with children and urge '… a greater emphasis on independent learning to help reinforce learning' (2010a:3). The new curriculum in Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence, hereafter CfE, (Scottish Executive, 2004a) could also be a vehicle for increased autonomy with its emphasis on the four capacities of 'Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors' (Scottish Executive, 2004a:1) acting as a foundation for learning that could facilitate increased autonomy for children.

There are, however, difficulties with respect to developing children's autonomy. Aronowitz and Giroux highlight a danger of children being programmed '… in certain directions so that they will behave in set ways' (1986:129). Another challenge is that teachers may consider that autonomy is best deferred until children get to college or university. Rudduck and Flutter suggest '… teachers may see their contract with students in terms of ensuring the achievement of good examination passes' (2004:85). Such practice from the profession might well be influenced as a result of the current prescriptive agenda of policy makers referred to earlier. Sergiovanni, however, puts teachers in a pivotal role with respect to developing autonomy.

> But whether they will help students in a particular school or not depends on whether they are invested with enough discretion to act (Sergiovanni, 1996 cited by Mitchell and Sackney, 2000:11).

The significance of the teacher's role and its influence on children is both critical and, at the same time, a difficulty. I will, in the second chapter, 'Apathy or Resistance?', highlight the pressures that face the teaching profession which may impact on the prospects for developing increased democracy in schools.

Prospects for developing autonomy will also be influenced by the vulnerability of some children. Often teachers express concerns over their pupils in descriptions of them as 'poor wee souls'. Many of the children may indeed be 'poor wee souls' and at times, and in various ways, dependent but this should not preclude children from experiencing increased autonomy through democratic opportunities. Young (1990) argues that dependency and the injustice it produces need not be oppressive, turning to feminist moral theory to question '… deeply held assumptions that moral agency and full citizenship require that a person be autonomous and independent' (1990:55). This model of justice accords respect, autonomy and participation in decision making to those who are dependent as well as to those who are independent (Held, 1987). Young is adamant that 'Dependency should not be a reason to be deprived of choice and respect' (1990:55). This view provides encouragement. Even our most vulnerable children in schools have a right to autonomy. Dependency, of course, is not exclusive to children and many adults could reasonably be described as dependent at various times throughout their lives and it should certainly not be an excuse to resist the encouragement of autonomy as a key facet of democracy and justice.

The second response to 'why democracy?' lies in its potential to impact on effective learning and teaching. As with the development of autonomy for children, teachers have a vital role to play in listening to children and developing a stronger collaboration with children and ultimately facilitating changes in the nature of their relationships with them. The development of democracy can lead to a situation in which teachers are the '… professional creators of a new culture of learning' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:147). Bredeson describes such a culture as a basic principle of democracy through the development of a '… critical competence and a capacity to look analytically and constructively at school practices' (1999:22). In 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', Freire (1972) claimed that no curriculum was ever neutral and that in order to empower the learner, teachers are required to adopt themes and issues familiar to their students. One such process that could increase democratic practices and positively affect learning and teaching is the recognition of and valorisation of children's distinctive culture and values:

> Instead of changing children from diverse backgrounds in some way, to suit the school, I prefer to think more about changing the forms of education that undervalue the things that many children bring to school with them (Corson, 1998:68).

This philosophy, as described by Corson, may eventually lead to the increased practice of democracy and to the development of autonomy and learning and teaching, with children developing a range of skills that are social, communicative and participative. Endorsement from global policy is evident according to Osler's claim that such skills are '…running through most of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (1994:146). Autonomy and effective learning and teaching are, then, significant aspirations underlying the development of democracy in schools.

Another 'why' of democracy is its role at the heart of education. I regard a fundamental aim of education to be the development of children's awareness of their right to democracy anticipating that, through time, they will subsequently find a stronger voice throughout their lives. However, decades ago Dent cautioned: 'Before you can have an educated democracy you must offer your democracy an education that is likely to make it one' (1930:14). Similarly and more recently, Apple has posed a fundamental question with respect to the role of education and whether it should be more active in challenging existing inequalities in society, asking 'Can schools actually contribute to a more just society? (2008:252). Additionally, McGettrick asks the direct question '… what is education for?' (2005:33). He continues that time has been unable to answer this complex question and that changing contexts, changing nature of communities, changes in expectations and values do not allow any prospect of certainty or permanence to any response. McGettrick cautions that the curriculum is not the main purpose of education, but a means of achieving the primary purpose, conceding that '… the idea of making the world into a better place is open to many interpretations' (2005:35). There may be encouragement here. The views of the aims for education, expressed by McGettrick, are in part evident in policy in England and Wales, as seen through the objectives set out by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Greany and Jones note that, in 2002, objective one from the DfES was to 'Give children an excellent start in education so that they have a better foundation for future learning' (2005:12). In 2004, these

objectives became more holistic, focussing on child protection and general well-being and Greany and Jones state the main objective was now to 'Safeguard children and young people, improve their life outcomes and general well-being, and break cycles of deprivation' (2005:13). Prior to these objectives, Blunkett (2000), then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, in the Westminster government, stated education '… is the single most important factor in creating and sustaining a socially inclusive society' (cited in, Alexander and Potter, 2005:112). Despite such aspirations of the Westminster government and their indirect influence on Scotland's Holyrood government, the reality for many children in schools is bleak. Often these children appear destined to lives of poor health, limited employment opportunities and inadequate housing with little prospect of experiencing the richness of culture and life outwith their own environment. I categorise those children from challenging socio-economic environments as vulnerable and in doing so I realise that such a classification may be viewed as rather crude and even inaccurate. My justification for referring to such children as vulnerable, and indeed for the occasional use of the term 'able' children, is to emphasise both the unsatisfactory and restrictive nature of the current school environment and also to use the everyday language commonly used by teachers when referring to children in school.

Reference to vulnerable children brings me to the final and perhaps most compelling response to 'why?' for democracy, namely the plight of these vulnerable children and the impact that their environment has on their educational and life prospects. The plight of children living in challenging socio-economic areas has haunted me from my early days in teaching when I became aware of families who are seemingly permanent features of economically deprived areas. Horgan, in a United Kingdom study examining the impact of poverty on young children's experience of school, is clear that poorer children in the study accepted that they were '… not going to get the same quality of schooling, or the same outcomes, as better-off children (Horgan, 2007:1). What for many families can only be described as a cycle of hopelessness, has been a factor in large cities for generations. This hopelessness is captured in a report about Glasgow which states:

> … most of the other problems facing the city (drug/ alcohol addiction,
>   educational failure) can be traced back to the sense of hopelessness

experienced by generations in the same family who have never worked
(The Centre for Social Justice, 2008:).

For many, the traditional escape from such poverty and despair has been through education. Goodman and Gregg caution that children growing up in poorer families emerge from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment and note that '… such 'achievement gaps' are a major contributing factor to patterns of social mobility' (2010:1).

Certainly there has been some recognition of such struggles for some time. The architect of the 'Third Way' philosophy, Giddens, argued that exclusion at the bottom in society tends to be self-producing and any strategies which break poverty cycles should be pursued for '…a well-educated population is desirable in society to reduce inequality and allow for the redistribution of possibilities' (1998:109). Whilst Goulden suggests that '… poverty is dynamic' (2010:3) he also admits that about a fifth of poverty is '…recurrent where people only escape temporarily' (2010:1). Further studies from Tomlinson and Walker would substantiate that view: '… measures of income poverty, financial strain and material deprivation are either chronic or recurrent for a quarter of the population' (2010:4). For many children their families seem to have been incapable of altering their destiny; one can almost plot their lives for them, even as early as the first year of primary school. Research in Scotland by McQuaid et al. exploring the difficulty faced by parents attempting to escape from recurrent poverty, uncovered key barriers to that escape.

> Cost of public and private transport; rent levels; health issue; low qualifications; and lack of confidence or self-esteem. Issues such as domestic violence, traumatic experiences and drug addiction (McQuaid et al. 2010:3-4).

Undoubtedly some children do escape from deprivation. However, for a significant percentage this is not a realistic expectation. Increased democracy is one possibility of a route out from poverty but I now highlight what I regard as a failure of education to develop democracy effectively and the subsequent detrimental effect this has on our most vulnerable children. Firstly, there is an impact on children, mentioned earlier, from their challenging environments. Fullan states that Berliner's analysis of the impact of poverty in the United States creates '… a compelling case for why we must put school reform in societal context' (2006:12). Closer to home, Powers

(1997) refers to the housing estates on the periphery as areas of social and economic desolation and the Scottish Government recently stated that issues of inequality continue: 'Children from poorer communities and low socio-economic status homes are more likely than others to underachieve' (Scottish Government, 2008:9). However, despite what would appear to be recognition of inequalities, there is also, at times, a reluctance to acknowledge the material and class division of society. Scotland is often still depicted as a singular, homogenous nation, described by Law and Mooney as '… the distended nation, the 'One Scotland'… imagined as a horizontal, multicultural (though rarely vertical, multi-class) community of interests' (2006:528). The reality, however, according to Paterson et al. (2004:151), is a seriously divided and stratified society where '… the nature and experience of the resulting exclusion may, if anything, have worsened'. Fullan, summarizing Berliner's findings, suggests that the link between academic achievement and poverty is multifold and pernicious.

> Poverty, and all that it entails, has direct health and indirect physiological and psychological consequences that inhibit the capacity to learn (Fullan, 2006:13).

Secondly, having recognised the impact on children of challenging environments, it is important to consider what action can be taken. Apple and Beane maintain that we need to be more proactive and extend beyond just improving the school climate. Democratic educators seek not simply to lessen the harshness of social inequalities in school '… but to change the conditions that create them' (Apple and Beane, 1995:11). Nussbaum, too, suggests that schools are key institutions of the public good and '… crucial to both the health of democracy and to the creation of a decent world culture' (2009:6).

Thirdly, it is necessary to recognise the challenging goals outlined by Apple and Beane and Nussbaum. Giroux warns of a move by policy makers and politicians that is designed to question the quality of teaching when the worth of teachers is solely determined by student test scores on standardised tests. 'Professional experience and quality credentials are now more irrelevant next to the hard reality of empiricism' (Giroux, 2010a). While recognising that the implementation of CfE may create an environment at odds with that described by Giroux, I can imagine, only too easily, the

deafening silence that might follow a suggestion at a staff meeting to tackle social inequalities. Most teaching staff have clear lines of demarcation and they would consider fighting against social inequalities falling outside their remit. What is required is a radical re-think of what is expected of educators in areas such as my school with challenging socio-economic conditions. Apple highlights the plight of an inner-city school.

> The curriculum and those who planned it lived in an unreal world, a world fundamentally disconnected from my life with those children in that inner-city classroom (Apple, 2008:242).

Reflection on Apple's concern brings into focus a failing of schooling, namely a belief that those children most disadvantaged in our schools and communities are the very children who appear to benefit least from our present schooling structure. Giddens (1997) would look to empower the most vulnerable children in society from past restrictive practices that resulted in both social and educational exclusion but Ginsburg cautions that 'Schools for poor children are not functioning properly, and poor children often fail at school' (1972:1).

What could be regarded as a failure of government forces closer examination of the aspirations that government have for these children from 'poorer communities'. Is the expectation and reality that only those with the necessary 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977) are to be successful in the new Scottish 'One Nation'? Is citizenship and enterprise education the pinnacle of expectation for our most vulnerable children? Is this to be the extent of their democratic experience in primary school? Law and Mooney caution that, at times, the working class are viewed as a hindrance to the Scottish national interest and that the most precarious and vulnerable groups are 'Increasingly seen as being out of step with what policy elites consider as normal or mainstream' (2006:528). The journal extract below would support the claims of Law and Mooney and also points to the need for a more democratic and equitable approach in education for our most vulnerable children.

When I reflect on concerns I have about the lack of democratic practice in primary schools, one of the major issues for me is the failure of the current education system to deal effectively with the significant needs of our most vulnerable children. I

believe that policy has simply failed those children who are most vulnerable and that policy makers are often out of touch with those communities such as the one that serves my school. On a daily basis I see reminders of the inequalities that blight the lives of children in my school. Often I will sit in my office on days like today and despair at the poverty, poor appearance, inadequate diet and domestic turmoil and instability that seem to be constant features of significant numbers of my pupils' troubled lives. When you experience these difficulties on a regular basis one really appreciates some sense of the magnitude of the struggle faced by these children. I realise that school is often a place that provides shelter, heat, school dinners, some structure and respite from the disarray and helplessness of typical home life. Is this enough? Do we not as educators have a responsibility to at least highlight these dreadful inequalities in society? Days like today leave me feeling utterly despairing and depressed. I think about individual children in my school and predict their life prospects. Each time I do this I imagine a lifetime of struggle through ill-health, unemployment, affected by crime and a general lifetime of dependency. Surely these children deserve better?

The journal extract above invites debate with regard to the purpose of education as highlighted by people such as Neill (1917). There are significant tensions in this debate and, even as a passionate advocate for democracy; I am challenged by the wider question of the main purposes of education. The severity of the situation described in the extract above is a cause of great frustration for me, especially when I consider what appears to be a lack of any noticeable reduction in the struggles that face some of my pupils and their families and communities. Shelter's report on bad housing and homelessness for children states that

Two thirds of social housing which children live in has failed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)… children and young people in Scotland continue to live in run-down, overcrowded, damp housing or are stuck in temporary housing affecting all aspects of their current and future lives (Shelter, 2009: 2).

The journal extract above also alludes to the despair faced by many in such communities through the cycle of hopelessness that is so often prevalent for those living in such areas. The reality is that for many children at my school this

depressing lifestyle often stretches back generations. The depth of gloom that seems to engulf such areas forces me to question why, to date, government appear to have been unsuccessful in putting into place effective measures to assist in alleviating this situation. Goulden notes, however, that in recent years there have been some signs that '… policy in the UK is starting to recognise and respond to problems caused by cycles of poverty' (2010: 4). Even allowing for Goulden's observation, the failure to date to develop and adopt policies that might impact more positively on vulnerable children especially is summed up by Apple: 'If we cannot get angry at what this society is doing to its children, what can we get angry about?' (2000: vii). Reynolds and Trehan argue that '… to pretend social inequalities are not present, inevitably serves the interest of the dominant group' (2003:166). It would seem wrong to assume that, as a starting point, everyone has equal access to the debate on inequality. In a wider context, and of equal concern, is Apple's claim that there '… has been an altering of the very meaning of what it means to have a social goal of equality' (2000:30). He claims that definitions of freedom and equality are no longer democratic, rather they are commercial, and he goes on to blame this on the 'Right in both the US and UK … who have began to reconstruct the social order' (Apple, 2000:30). There is also an emphasis on consensus, described by Reynolds and Trehan as '… a subtle manifestation of consensus masquerading as common interest' (2003:74). It should be recognized that there is little evidence of schools creating a culture for equality.

Having reflected on and introduced the main themes for the dissertation, the what and why of democracy and factors such as relationships, the role of teachers and the home environment, it is to my research methodology that I now turn. I felt it necessary to write this dissertation in a form that could narrate the last two years and highlight the experiences, fears, doubts, emotional pain and immense frustration of attempting to understand myself and the actions of those around me more fully. Berger describes this sort of study as 'narrative autoethnography' (2001:509) although I will, throughout the dissertation, use terms such as 'narrative enquiry' and 'narrative autoethnography' interchangeably to describe my methodology. Ellis and Bochner suggest that '…autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world' (2000:761). They also claim that

autoethnography '… demands self-questioning in deeper ways and leads to a better understanding of others' (2000:738).

I reflect now, at the end of the study, that autoethnography was not only an appropriate methodology but perhaps the only way of reporting my experiences and introspections. I had only become aware of the methodology through dialogue around the planning of my thesis when autoethnography was suggested as a suitable methodology for my study. I did not, at that time, have any knowledge of the methodology. I was initially rather sceptical over how I could complete a thesis through merely compiling and reflecting on journals. How could this be academic? An ignorance of the methodology forced me to become, firstly, immersed, and, very shortly thereafter, fascinated by autoethnography's weaving of personal narrative and theory. There was, however, still uncertainty. Embarking on a thesis is fraught with doubts as to the most appropriate path to take. I had to be sure that autoethnography suited me. Added to my anxiety was the awareness that the methodology was potentially rather risky and I will deal shortly with some of the many criticisms it attracts. However, I was determined to persevere. Over an extended period I read seemingly endless autoethnographic journals and marvelled at the detail of the narrative associated with the methodology, becoming excited about the impact that the use of emotion had on my understanding and connection with the various issues highlighted in the articles I was reading. Only then did I begin to think that autoethnography might, after all, be an ideal fit for my research.

First and foremost I state that I am telling my story. I am not declaring a scientific truth but rather providing, as described by Dyson, '… my creative construction of a reality, which I have lived through' (2007:39). As I do so, I am aware of Richardson's view that writing '… is not simply a true representation of an objective reality: instead, language creates a particular view of reality' (1995:198-221). This dissertation is about my professional life and my view of the unsatisfactory experiences of, in particular, our most vulnerable children. I want others to imagine what I have experienced. Autoethnography appears exciting because its many features include a reliance on an explorative, uncertain and fluid process rather than one that purports to discover something. Ellis and Bochner (2000) refer to the need for social science

texts to construct a different relationship between researcher and subjects and between authors and readers from that so prevalent in much academic research. One of the ways that autoethnography facilitates this is through narrative inquiry, described by Ellis and Bochner as stories that create the effect of reality '… showing characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments' (2000: 744). While being mindful of the many paths I might have followed I was attracted to the 'advocate research model' (1984:20) description of ethnography used by Burgess for that it would be not enough just to describe or to make sense. Rather, the point, argues Brewer is to '… intervene and improve the position of the people studied' (2000:147). I want criticism and debate and I want this dissertation to bring my area of concern, that schools should be more democratic for children, to the fore. I am interested in who agrees or disagrees with me. I would like there to be some impact as a consequence of my dissertation. My hope is that those involved in educating children will react to my dissertation and that teachers and those in positions of leadership, whether novices or vastly experienced, will engage at a professional level with the issues that arise here. Ultimately my aim is to effect change in primary school environments in order to provide a more satisfactory experience for children.

The dissertation, then, reflects my experience and thoughts, influenced by examples of writing from those such as Tedlock (1991, 2000) Richardson (1992, 1997, 2000) and Ellis and Bochner (1996, 2000). In this dissertation, it is my intention to use the advice of Coles: 'Take your readers in hand, take them where you've been, tell them what you've seen' (1997:97). The use of narrative inquiry (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) sits comfortably with the emphasis placed on reflexivity and described by Brewer (2000) as a critical reflection on social processes and data. Ellis and Bochner talk of '… an understanding of the self acting in the social world' (2000:153) and this goes some way to dealing with what Denzin and Lincoln refer to as the issue of 'double crisis' (1998:21-22). Brewer described this crisis as 'A disillusionment surrounding the ethnographers' claim to provide a privileged and special access to reality' (2000:39). Further potential crises, or criticisms at least, such as representation and legitimation (Holt, 2003), emotional or intellectual impact (Richardson 2000) and validity (Ellis, 1993) also deserve consideration.

One of the attractions of autoethnography is its evocative narrative and the opportunity to write from an ethic of care and concern (Richardson, 1997) in direct contrast with the authoritative voice commonly associated with *good* research (Lather, 2001). I am moved by the prospect of shedding light on my experiences of primary education. I hopefully have, as suggested by Jago, peeled back 'multiple layers of consciousness' and will display my concerns, fears, limitations as well as my hopes (2006:405). I am attracted to and guided by Nussbaum's suggestion that one might have '… openness to being moved by the plight of others' and '…the willingness to be touched by another's life' (1990:162). For Richardson (1997), this manifests as 'emotional work' to express feelings and to be intimate with potential readers. This emphasis on the emotional is something I will return to in the final chapter but suffice to say, this willingness to be moved by my own and others' experiences is an ultimate aspiration, even with the knowledge of the claims of Ellis and Flaherty (1992) that it requires giving up power and privilege, a particular skill they claim for women rather than men.

I opted to use autoethnography to raise awareness of the issues that have emerged in recent years in primary education and to highlight the nature of the existing school environment which I believe is both unacceptable and unsustainable. My goal, therefore, is to capture segments of my experiences and to describe these for myself and others and to open them up to analysis and debate. I note that Reed-Danahay suggests that:

> One of the main characteristics of an autoethnographic perspective is that autoethnographer is a boundary-crosser and the role can be characerised as that of a dual identity (Reed-Danahay, 1997:3).

I believe that my intimate, active involvement of school life as a school leader combined with my more reflective academic role places me in a good position to cross the boundaries of these two very different practices.

Having highlighted some of the positives of the methodology it is important to outline some of the substantial intricacies that require a degree of untangling before autoethnography can be effective. Woods cautioned that schools should not be opened up to ethnographers, claiming '… them to be arrogant outsiders' (1986:150).

This is autoethnography and I am not an outsider. There are, however, ethical issues to consider not least around my role and position in the school and consequently how others react to me and, also, whether I have recorded others' experiences accurately. I will deal in more detail with these issues in the final chapter but the use of journal entries are snapshots of my reality and recordings of my every day experiences. I do not claim that they reflect the reality of anyone else and neither do I claim them as 'the truth'. However, there is a challenge highlighted by Richardson: 'Does the text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience?' (2000:15).   Eisner (1991) stresses the need to avoid the criticism of being self-serving and Richardson is also critical of writing that is '… narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed' (1997:87), suggesting it is dangerous when research makes a difference only to the individuals conducting it. I therefore require to be guarded against assuming that others will necessarily be engrossed or even interested by what I experience and write. Richardson argues that the difficultly for ethnographers is that stark self-revelation is done poorly if it is a decorative flourish that is not essential to any argument and is merely '… exposure for its own sake' (Richardson, 1996:13). Going further, Behar cites relativist arguments '… that auto-anything is a combination of, nonevaluative, anything goes self-therapizing logic' (1997:13) whilst Coffey suggests that those who preach autoethnography are '… in danger of gross self-indulgence' (1999:132). Perhaps then, in this case, it is useful to acknowledge Schwalbe's view: 'Every insight was both a doorway and a mirror…a way to see into their experience and a way to look back at mine' (1996:58). I was often guided by this notion.

The challenges of any methodology are significant and within autoethnography there is the requirement of an awareness of which hooks, which issues, to develop and how deeply to analyse these. I will cite one example of this intricacy, namely the issue of trust, referred to often throughout the dissertation and in particular in the chapters on Relationships and 'Towards a Conclusion'. What is reasonable analysis of this issue? How much can one achieve in an essentially broad dissertation and what must one omit? For example, I could refer to the literature and the use of emotional writing in autoethnography as the catalyst for further deliberation of issues such as trust. Similarly, reflection of the complexities of relationships could have led my study to Nussbaum and her work on the differences between compassion and

empathy and the construction of a 'double life' (2001:335). Frustratingly, I was
unable to develop my study in these directions because of restrictions over the
ordering of issues, what to include and exclude and limitations of time and space.
The reflexive nature of autoethnography invites such inquiry and consideration of
how far and how deeply one should develop any issue. Recently there has also
been some discussion with respect to how analytical researchers should be. Ellis
and Bochner were critical of realist ethnography and analytic autoethnography
claiming ethnography '… for us is a journey; they think of it as a destination. They
(ethnographers) want to master, explain, grasp it but caring and empathizing is for
us' (2006:432).   Caring was for me, too, but not necessarily at the expense of
explanation and analysis. Anderson had been critical of the 'Evocative and mode of
storytelling' nature of autoethnography (2006:377) and, with others including
Atkinson, Coffey and Delmont (2003) would subscribe to analytic autoethnography
and its 'Analytic reflexivity, dialogue with informants and commitment to theoretical
analysis' (2006:378). Despite my unwavering support for the style of Ellis and
Bochner, the debate of these issues reinforces for me the many pathways available
through autoethnography and is also a reminder of the tensions over issues such as
appropriate depth of analysis of specific issues. Ultimately, perhaps, there are no
'right' answers but I have tried, here, to focus on both a caring, empathetic approach
and analytic reflexivity.

Contemplation of the issues here both allows and forces me to reflect specifically on
the difficulties of writing autoethnography. I immediately appreciated that the process
would be much more complex than merely observing people's actions, recording my
experiences and being reflexive, and making links to relevant theory. There are
anxieties over misrepresenting people or of not being reflexive enough. What should
be included in a study? What should be left out? What information should I use?
Have I analysed the information fairly and accurately? Macbeth (2001:49) refers to
the constitutive reflexivities of everyday life as one of the many complex discourses
of qualitative research whilst Garfinkel (1967) asks how we make sense and
meaning, how we give order and fact to everyday life whilst Bernstein (1971) was
critical of what he described as an elite collection code where the interpretation of
knowledge was for the chosen few. It is necessary to realise that autoethnography
creates what Beatson refers to as uncertainty; it is not a scientific method with a

hypothesis or '…a set of questions to be answered' (1972:vii). Instead it is, on Woods' (1986) view, more like a detective hunt in which one looks for clues, seeking to discover and analyse. It is this uncertainty and necessity for further enquiry which applies equally to autoethnography and which I view as a challenge but also a fundamental strength of the methodology.

For instance, I would subscribe to the view of philosophical hermeneutics, namely that there is never a finally correct interpretation. Maddison would argue that ultimately my aim as a researcher is philosophical, it is to '… understand what is involved in the process of understanding itself' (1991:121). Similarly, Schwandt states that understanding '… lies at the heart of qualitative inquiry' (1999:451) and Gadamer argues that one should not attempt to develop a procedure of understanding but '…clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place' (1989:263). There does appear to be, in qualitative research, an unsettling aspect of analysis of interpretive practice due to the seemingly constant shift of the analytic pendulum (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). There are many views on how best to understand human action. Richardson stresses that an individual's understanding is dependent on whatever discourses are available. Furthermore, contradictory interpretations are governed by social interest rather than objective truth. She deduces that subjectivity '… is shifting and contradicting; it is not stable or fixed' (1997:89). I do subscribe to the view that a qualitative inquiry such as this autoethnography is trying to construct the meaning of something, however, temporary and subjective that is.   Gadamer (1989) reinforces claims that subjectivity is a distorting mirror shaped by history, not just through self-examination, and Richardson notes that 'Self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life' (1997:276-277). In this regard Ellis and Bochner (2000) claim that interpretive practice engages in the "hows" and "what" of social reality with echoes of this social construction seen in Karl Marx's adage that '…people construct their own world, but that they do so entirely on their own terms' (1956:488). Ultimately I am persuaded by Bernstein's view that we can make '… comparative judgements and seek to support them with argument and appeal to good reason' (1975:338).

It is also important to acknowledge that some are hostile, doubtful and sceptical of autoethnography. Delamont views it as '… lazy – literally lazy and also intellectually lazy… almost impossible to write and publish ethically' (2007:2). Atkinson argues:

> Research is supposed to be analytic not merely experiential. Autoethnography is all experience, and is noticeably lacking in *analytic* outcome (Atkinson, 2006:400-404).

Shooter (1987) claims autoethnography fictionalizes life and that distortions result in a story about the past and not the past itself whilst Atkinson, again, deems it unworthy of social science because it 'Creates a romantic construction of the self and becomes a storyteller rather than a story analyst' (1997:327). Brewer (2000) cites Dickson's description of the style as being 'Anecdotal, hearsay with a tendency of accentuating the unusual at the expense of the mundane' (1996:16). Woods (1986) refers to theoretical limitations of ethnography, but, such criticisms refer equally to autoethnography, citing Sjoberg and Nett (1968) 'A researcher must often be able to remove himself intellectually and emotionally from the immediate social situation' (1968:148). Woods cautions that the difficulty for ethnography is that 'Immersion and retraction do not go well together' (1986:148). My own experience would, however, indicate that the emotions involved in writing a journal entry do not preclude reflection of specific incidents at a later time although I would not wish to suggest I could or even should have tried to remove myself from those reflections. However, challenges remain. Hall argues that 'Culture hides much more than it reveals and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants' (1959:30). Karra and Philips (2007) also note that 'Several researchers have doubted the use of the self as a primary data source' (Denzin and Linclon, 1998:156). Further challenges of the methodology come from Denzin (1990) who cautions that 'To go native results in a loss of authority' (Karra and Philips, 2007:548) and from Sparkes who suggests that use of the self as a primary source leads to 'Over emphasis and romanticisation and is difficult to evaluate' (2000:21-41). While acknowledging these criticisms, I do not believe or claim that the status of my authority was a significant factor in my research or that I have found it difficult to evaluate. I have attempted not to romanticise what was my natural working environment and my reactions to it.

I should acknowledge that perhaps some of the criticisms levelled against autoethnography arise in part because narrative inquiry is against the current trend in educational research which has come to rely on evidence based policy, with an emphasis on scientific rationality (Sanderson, 2003) as the gold standard (Eraut, 2003). Hodkinson (2004) argues that there is an attempt to put in place a new orthodoxy for educational research and Avis suggests the following.

> This orthodoxy determines what counts as 'good' educational research…the current importance attached by the state to evidence-informed practice and systematic review (Avis, 2006:108).

Often such research is marked by what Avis refers to as 'Technicisation and instrumentalism…partly to meet the rigorous standards of what is to count as educational research' (2006:109). Such scientific research has a certainty which perhaps counters any perceived obfuscations of academics and Schwandt claims that empiricist theory is determined to 'Trump our lived experience' and to provide the last word in a quest of getting to the bottom of things and put on a sound objective footing (1999:453). Similarly, Latour argues that 'Science produces objectivity by escaping as much as possible from shackles of ideology, passions and emotion' (1998:208-209). There is also a view that evidence-based research and subsequent systematic reviews leads to the dissemination of good practice with Hammersley warning that systematic review assumes the superiority of the positivist model of research.

> This is a result of the methodological criteria used to evaluate studies which place experiments, randomised controlled trials and statistical analyses at the top of the credibility hierarchy (Hammersley, 2001:544-545).

Considering recent criticisms of autoethnography and because of the trend towards more positive research models it is important to question issues such as the quality, validity and reliability of my research and resulting dissertation. Before attempting to answer such questions it is, however, useful to consider the terminology associated with particular types of research. Joppe defines reliability and validity as follows:

> Reliability, the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population…Validity, determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research result are (Joppe, 2000:1).

However, Watling (1998) has suggested that reliability and validity '… are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology' (cited in Winter, 2000:7) although, Patton (2002) takes the view that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be troubled about when judging the quality of a study. A useful compromise is offered in Richardson's proposal that validity should not be seen as a rigid two-dimensional object but a multi-dimensional crystal providing us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic in which '… paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know' (1997:92). I would reiterate that I am not attempting to discover truth as if it exists *per se* or if it is available if we only look hard enough and so concepts such as reliability and validity, borrowed from positivist research, are less appropriate than others such as crystallization. I subscribe to the view of Golafshani who suggests that '…these terms defined in quantitative terms may not apply to the qualitative research paradigm' (2003:600). Perhaps inevitably, there is confusion. Stenbacka states that if '… a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good' (2001:552).   When I judge the quality of my dissertation it is not through criteria such as reliability and validity. I am substituting these measures of 'goodness' for concepts such as trustworthiness (Mishler, 2000). Trustworthiness has been, according to Rolfe, divided into:

> … *credibility,* which corresponds roughly with the positivist concept of internal validity; *dependability,* which relates more to reliability; *transferability,* which is a form of external validity; and *confirmability,* which is largely an issue of presentation (Rolfe, 2006:305).

Trustworthiness, following Johnson is '… defensible' (1997:282) and will help to establish confidence in my findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In addition, I would argue that my focus is '… for precision (Winter, 2000) credibility, and transferability (Hoepfl, 1997) and trustworthiness' (Golafshani, 2003:600). I would describe my research not as testing, predication and evaluating of findings in a quantitative sense but as Hoepfl (1997) describes it '… illumination, understanding and extrapolation to similar situations' Golafshani (2003:600).   I also acknowledge the criteria that Richardson uses when reviewing personal narrative and so constantly have asked myself:

Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action? Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? (Richardson, 2000:15-16).

Even using these questions, Lincoln and Guba want us to ask 'How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?' (1985:290). Whilst Eisner's (1991) view is that a good qualitative study can help us '… understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing' (Golafshani, 2003:601). Sandelowski (1986) refers to the notion of the researcher leaving a decision trail and this, for Rolfe, shifts the emphasis for judgement over issues such as quality '… from the producer to the consumer of the research. A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so' (2006:305). My own view is that as a researcher it is fundamental that I judge the quality of my research using a combination of the criteria highlighted above. I also relate to Arendt's conception of storytelling as an activity which 'Reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it' (1973:107). When I consider the trustworthiness of my dissertation I am clear that I do not claim to capture the past accurately, as if I were holding a mirror to it. The dissertation is my own reflection from journal entries and experiences. What is of importance are the consequences my story produces as I and others can ask, '… what kind of person does it shape me into and what new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:746). All stories, in some form, reinvent, omit, revise, and rearrange events for various reasons. Furthermore, I would argue that academics, by their nature, training and motivation, will differ in opinion. I subscribe to the view of Tompkins who is critical of '… the trashing of emotion a ceaselessly waged war against feeling, woman, and writing that is personal' (1989:138). I neither hide nor try to reduce writing that is emotional. Autoethnography for me is in some way a liberating process that facilitates reflection on life through personal narrative.

A fundamental tool for this narrative is the completion of, reflection on and inclusion here of journal entries. To this end, throughout the final two year period of my dissertation, the journals I wrote were therapeutic, cathartic and a powerful heuristic tool, allowing me to reflect, think and re-write my personal narrative. The journal

extracts that appear here were not modified in any way to make them academic although they were occasionally altered if their grammar or meaning was unclear. Janesick (1999) takes an interesting view of the connoisseurship of diary writing, claiming it can increase our understanding of our own thinking. Journalling provides clear feedback from ourselves (Progroff, 1992). However, it is also important to recognise that all diaries are selective and Hammersley warns that the use of diaries is like a voyage of discovery in which '… much of the time is spent at sea' (1984:61). Ellis and Bochner highlight another potential difficulty; journal writing could be difficult to carry off if the writer isn't introspective enough or is too introspective. Some, for example, '… aren't observant enough of the world around them' (2000:738). Ellis and Bochner, describing such writing, suggests it can display '… layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the culture' (2000:739). They claim that the distinctions between the cultural and the personal become blurred as the author changes focus and moves back and forth between looking outward and looking inward. My process, in this respect, involved writing these journals each evening. Very occasionally I would write them at my desk in school or a few days after an event. The journal was the most important tool for recording and reflecting on my experiences. From these initial recordings I would contemplate what issues and themes would frame both my dissertation and my actions in school. There were difficulties. For instance, on one occasion I had completed five pages of my journal and had recorded events only up to early morning. This presented challenges with respect to the time it took to complete my journals and uncertainty over the appropriate length for each entry. In addition, on reflection of my early journals I realised that I was being too introspective with incidents that related to me personally rather than issues that might have a broader importance. I was forced to reflect who I was writing for and why. I worried that I was too insular but at the same time was mindful of Janesick's (2000) line that such practice allows '… for stepping into ones' inner mind and reaching further into interpretations of behaviours and beliefs and words we write' (cited in Ellis and Bochner, 2000:745). These examples highlight not only the complexity of writing within the methodology but the challenges and benefits of reflection with the importance of recording copious notes and the necessity of experiencing the evolving nature of the methodology. What I would describe as the fluid characteristics of the methodology can be viewed as both a positive and negative

feature. Despite the time consuming nature and even the inefficiency of the recording of events, the completion of the journal afforded an opportunity for reflection on which hooks, which issues, were best suited to provide links with literature for further analysis. In the 'Towards a Conclusion' chapter I will reflect further on some of the limitations of writing in an autoethnographic style that became apparent, for instance, when set within academic parameters. It is worth noting here, however, that the EdD dissertation, though significant, was only one element, one driver, for my journaling as I came to rely on my journal writing and reflection to support my everyday practices and actions in schools.

Having outlined my methodology and briefly introduced concepts of democracy, the final section of this chapter outlines the content of each of the remaining chapters. There were many influences from reading literature, especially with respect to democracy, but in particular I draw upon the following as most significant in their impact on my understanding of crucial issues: Michael Apple, Paulo Freire, Iris Marion Young, Michael Foucault, Henry Giroux and Antonio Gramsci and, with respect to my methodology, Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner and Laurel Richardson who all, in different ways, capture the beauty and strength of autoethnographic writing. I refer also to the influence of Jean Rudduck and Julia Flutter and their work on student voice and school improvement. The dissertation chapters focus largely on specific themes and issues relating to an anxiety over the prospects for increasing democracy and their content and themes overlap. Hence making decisions on how to structure this dissertation were challenging. The Apathy-Resistance chapter deals in some detail with what I refer to as a general apathy or resistance amongst the profession with respect to engaging with democracy. There is a combination of factors for this perceived apathy or resistance including, for instance, the crowded curriculum, audit culture and behaviour issues, and I will discuss these in some depth. The 'Structure and Control' chapter deals with the actual structures of schools and how they are used, knowingly or otherwise, to control children. I make a distinction here between structures that are formal and informal and describe spaces in schools that are tightly controlled by adults contrasting these with 'forgotten spaces' in which children are relatively free and more autonomous. In the 'Policy chapter', I consider additional factors that have a significant bearing on democracy because of their influence on the practices of the

profession. Paramount here is the nature and the direction of policy and its effect on the profession. In the Relationship chapter I consider relationships between teachers and pupils. This is a theme I return to frequently throughout the dissertation and it is necessary to emphasise that I regard the nature of the relationships in primary education to be at the root of many of the difficulties currently faced. Effective relationships are fundamental before advances towards increased democracy can be achieved.

I develop my argument further in the next two chapters, 'Summerhill: An Alternative Model?' and 'Behaviour', by taking into account additional key issues that might influence prospects for increasing democracy. For instance, I highlight the example of alternative practices through education in progressive schools such as Summerhill as a direct contrast to the environment that often prevails in the schools I have experienced and I also consider the influence of the current citizenship agenda. In addition, I reflect on the effects that the influences of socio-economic conditions have on children's education discussing, for example, the level and manner in which behaviour can impact on schools and be influenced by the home environment.

The six chapters, combined, provide a sketch of my direct experience of teaching in a primary school in the two years from 2008 to 2010 when I started to 'write-up' this dissertation. The cumulative effect of these chapters reinforces my early prognosis that 'something wasn't right in education' whilst providing the opportunity to analyse why this might be so with particular respect to democracy, or lack of it, in schools. My focus on children does not stop me from being empathetic towards teachers as I think about my colleagues in an environment which often drains them mentally and physically, where there is little trust or respect or time to reflect on one's practice. What hope is there for change to more positive, equitable and democratic relationships? It is to address such questions that I contemplate the need for some alternative practice in the 'Towards a Conclusion' chapter which summarises some of the issues raised previously and allows me to reflect on my choice of democracy as a main theme in this study. With respect to alternative measures, I question how the new curriculum in Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004a) might influence and help to effect changes towards increased democracy. I

question, also, historical barriers to change and the need to adopt more distributive and democratic models of leadership before briefly considering prospects for a more radical approach to education, such as Freire's critical pedagogy (1970). In the final section of the 'Towards a Conclusion' chapter, I discuss how this dissertation has impacted on my practice and consider the influence, limitations and advantages of my methodology on this dissertation, future studies and my own practice.