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Educational reform:  
An investigation of democracy and the place of the self in Québec education

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May 2005

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy of Education



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## Abstract

The Province of Québec launched a province-wide reform of its schools and adult education centres in 1997 to respond to the exigencies of an increasingly multicultural population, and the requirements of a knowledge-based society. The reform aims to enhance democracy and citizenship. Based on the recent explosion in philosophical literature about varying models of democracy, and the concept of self advanced by each model, it is important to investigate what vision of democracy and concept of self is proposed for Québec through this reform and what institutional measures are being adopted by the educational community to ensure its realization. This paper uses the principles of applied philosophy for an investigation of the reform from three perspectives: a study of theories about democracy, education, and the development of self; a critical text analysis of the reform's formative document; the creation of a study group inside a school board implementing the reform in its schools. The conclusion of the present investigation is that a model of deliberative democracy and dialogical concept of self is not the model of democracy that dominates Québec's current reform project despite evidence that such a model is most likely to ensure that this reform will successfully address the needs of the population.

## Résumé

Afin de répondre aux exigences d'une société de plus en plus multi culturelle axée sur la connaissance, la province de Québec a instauré en 1997, une réforme de tous ses établissements scolaires pour jeunes et adultes. Cette réforme est centrée sur le développement de la démocratie et l'éducation à la citoyenneté. Étant donnés les divers modèles de démocratie et de concept de soi prônés par les nombreuses récentes publications de littérature philosophique, il est important d'analyser la vision de la démocratie et du concept de soi que propose la réforme, ainsi que les mesures institutionnelles que les milieux éducatifs ont adopté pour en assurer la mise en œuvre. Cette analyse s'appuie sur les principes de la philosophie appliquée pour présenter une étude de la réforme scolaire selon trois points de vue, soit: l'étude des théories qui sous-tendent la démocratie, l'éducation et le développement de soi; une analyse de texte critique du document préparatoire à la réforme; la création de groupes d'étude dans une commission scolaire en phase d'implantation de la réforme dans ses écoles. La conclusion de la présente étude est que le modèle de démocratie fondée sur la délibération et l'évolution du concept de soi à travers le dialogue n'est pas le modèle dominant dans le projet de réforme actuel, bien que l'évidence démontre qu'il serait le plus apte à assurer que la réforme réponde avec succès aux besoins de la population.

## Acknowledgements

This investigation into Québec's educational reform spanned a period of several years. The study of the reform from a theoretical perspective followed a relatively traditional process but the theory was subsequently enriched through the creation of a study group within a large urban school board. The study group, comprised of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals, provided me with practical experiences of the reform in a real-life educational setting. I am eternally grateful to the study group's participants for their honest, insightful reflections on the ideas under investigation here. Their perspectives deepened my learning more than they know. I would also like to thank the school board administration for granting me permission to do the research.

Throughout the preparation of this dissertation, I worked full-time in the field of public education in the Province of Québec. The intensity of the writing process required that I take periodic leaves of absence from my regular duties. I am grateful to my bosses for granting me the time to finish my studies and, in doing so, demonstrating their genuine belief in the reform's goal of lifelong learning.

I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor, Boyd White, for his continuous encouragement and profound knowledge of values and how we learn to recognize our own. Kevin McDonough provided me with rich and plentiful sources for the study of democracy, and Lynn Butler-Kisber's methodological suggestions solidified the bridge between the theoretical and practical perspectives of the reform.

Charley Levy's knowledge of Québec's educational reform comes from the most important source of all – real life experiences as an educator. I want to thank him for our numerous conversations and discussions about the reform, and for continually grounding my theoretical readings in reality.

Thank you to my sons, Ira and Evan, who are my favourite teachers and to my stepdaughters, Karyn and Michelle, for their encouragement and interest.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the Province of Québec began the process of constructing and implementing a system-wide reform of its schools and adult education centres. The reform is based on principles articulated in a report called, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997)<sup>1</sup>, and in the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (2002)<sup>2</sup>. The report of the task force is commonly referred to as the *Inchauspé Report* after its chairman, Paul Inchauspé.

In stating its mission for the socialization of students the report says:

In a context that clearly favours a pluralistic approach to ideas and values, it is important that a commitment to a set of common values be founded on common experiences shared by all. One such common experience exists: a commitment to democracy as a goal, in other words, a commitment to a society based on a social contract designed to strike a balance between individual liberty and social organization. Schools, by preparing young people for their role as citizens, have an indispensable

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<sup>1</sup> The report entitled *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* is an English translation of the original document, *Réaffirmer L'école* (1997). This translation has been distributed as the official English language version of the report of the task force.

<sup>2</sup> The policy entitled *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* is an English translation of the original document, *Politique gouvernementale d'éducation des adultes et de formation continue* (2002). This translation has been distributed as the official English language version of the policy.

part to play in the promotion and achievement of social cohesion.  
(Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 33)

The policy on adult education states at the outset:

The concept of basic education includes the dimension of citizenship, which in the spirit of equal opportunity, fosters personal growth, social integration, and participation in the democratic life of a law-based society such as that of Québec. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2002, p. 9)

The report and the policy present visions of formal education as a public process through which students can learn about models of democracy and citizenship that are suitable for the needs of a pluralist society. Québec's province-wide reform is based on the premise that active, participatory, and inclusive forms of learning foster the development of the competencies required for active, participatory, and inclusive citizenship.

The foundational principles for the reform in adult education are the same as for the youth sector. However, due to the complex needs and circumstances of adult learners, the implementation of the reform in adult education entails building partnerships amongst various government departments and between the government and community organizations. The discussions of the reform in this thesis are directed towards formal educational (school) contexts, although the ideas are equally applicable in informal contexts.

An early appreciation for the intentions underlying Québec's project led me to a deep reading of its original document, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997). My curiosity also led me to create a study group within the school board where I worked as a means for learning more about the reform through active participation. Subsequent to these two self-directed experiences of the reform, I was given an opportunity to work full-time for the Ministry of Education constructing the reform at the adult education level. Following extensive exposure to the reform from various perspectives that included a study of its theory and underlying values, an examination of its foundational documents, and participation in the reform's application in an everyday context, I realized that the construction and implementation of Québec's reform is paying scant attention to at least two important issues.

The first issue concerns clarification of the democratic basis of this reform. Different models of democracy are associated with different conceptions of the self and thus any account of democracy's relationship to education must also account for the conception of the self a society is advancing. In the absence of this discussion, an assumption is being made that the authors of the *Inchauspé Report* and the *Politique*, the educational practitioners implementing the reform based on these reports, and the population of Québec in general, all share a common understanding of how democratic education will influence the development of the self. The authors do not make reference to the various models of democracy from which they chose their version, nor do they acknowledge that each adaptation of democracy directs a society towards a particular concept of autonomy



and citizenship. Given the recent explosion in contemporary philosophical literature that proposes adaptations of democracy more suited to increasingly pluralist societies, the assumption that everyone in Québec shares a common vision of democracy and how it should or could function, may lead to a confused realization of this reform project. As Robert Dahl (1998) explains, certain qualities are present in every model of democracy but differences between models are manifested in disparate practices. It is important to learn more about what model of democracy dominates Québec's reform and to analyze whether the conception of autonomy and citizenship associated with this model is coherent with, and capable of underwriting, the needs of the province's population.

A second issue about this reform that deserves closer examination concerns the organizational structure of formal education including the policies and practices of institutions such as school boards, schools, and adult education centres. There is scant mention in the report, the policy, or supporting documentation about what kinds of system-wide changes might be required in order for institutional practices to support a reform based on the development of democracy and citizenship. The *Inchauspé Report* does not address the relationship between a reform of the curriculum and the institutionalization of education. The omission creates an assumption that this relationship is not a central feature of the reform.

There are at least three questions at the heart of these two issues or assumptions: (1i) What models of democracy are currently being discussed and debated in contemporary Western theories, (1ii) and what values and attendant concepts of self are at the heart of

each model? (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec? (3) What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values?

This philosophical thesis attempts to describe and illuminate some of the democratic values underlying Quebec's current educational reform project. It also examines the everyday application of these values in practice. As the reform proceeds through its construction and implementation phases in school boards, schools, and adult education centres across the province, the tension being created between theory and practice is simultaneously intentional and accidental, productive and self-defeating. This thesis is a philosophical investigation into the reform's potential to create a coherent democratic vision for Québec's citizenry. I wanted to learn as much as possible about the reform as it progresses – to probe its assumptions – through three perspectives: the first is a theoretical perspective that looks at contemporary philosophical theories about education and democracy with an emphasis on the conception of self advanced by each theory; the second perspective explores the contextualization of Québec's reform and focuses on a text analysis of its foundational document, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997), in order to discern whether a particular vision of democracy and concept of self is dominant in the report; the third perspective comes from personal, practical experiences of the reform, primarily through the creation and facilitation of a study group in the administration building of a large school board. Each perspective addresses one of the questions stated above.

Throughout the presentation of these three perspectives, the thesis relies on the principles of applied philosophy – philosophy as part of our everyday reality – for its foundation. An associated appellation for applied philosophy is philosophical anthropology or the study of the relationship between conceptions of the self and philosophical concepts. Matthew Festenstein (1997) suggests that the origins of applied philosophy come from the pragmatic theories of philosophers such as Charles S. Peirce and John Dewey who wrote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The bridges they built between philosophy and the social sciences are reconstructed in contemporary philosophy through the writings of social theorists and cultural critics (Festenstein, 1997, p. 2). To adopt applied philosophy as a method for exploring the reform, I rely on the qualitative research principles established by Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000), in particular, to connect theory to practice. His is a method for increasing our interpretive understanding of everyday reality.

When citizens within a democratic society make public choices that influence the overall functioning of a community, these acts of collective decision-making require a foundation for justifying why certain norms or values are granted priority. Every conception of democracy presupposes a concept of self and this concept of self, in large part, forms the basis for these justifications. Formal educational practices play a huge role in the interpretation and development of a particular concept of self. The more we understand about the implications of Québec's reform, the greater will be its potential value for teaching about and for a model of democracy and citizenship that responds to

the exigencies of a pluralist society. Although I do not believe educational reforms ever succeed or fail in any ultimate sense, since the nature of reform is constant change, Québec's reform brings some important ideas to the discussion of contemporary education. Because democracy is continually under construction, Québec's project provides an excellent example of this social phenomenon in action. Every investigation of this reform can be viewed as an act of participatory citizenship.

In the remainder of this introduction, I outline the organizational format the thesis follows. I briefly present each chapter including the questions that guide and contain its scope and development.

## Chapter One

### Applied Philosophy: Interpreting Québec's Educational Reform from Three Perspectives

The thesis begins with the methodology chapter. The same principles of qualitative research flow through every part of the study, with each of its three perspectives designed to illuminate a unique point of view about democracy and Québec's educational reform. On the surface, the three viewpoints presented throughout the investigation are disparate and for this reason it is imperative that the methodological principles tying them together are presented at the outset. In the thesis, each perspective is initially examined as a unique entity for two reasons: first, it was essential that the procedures adopted for each remain consistent and coherent within that portion of the study; second, in order to perform a global analysis at the conclusion of the investigation it was important to first have a clear understanding of what each perspective revealed about the two assumptions

at the centre of the investigation. Once these two conditions had been met, I performed a comprehensive examination where the boundaries between the three perspectives blurred creating a recursive process whereby each perspective informed, and was informed by, the others. This layered analysis of Québec's reform and its two assumptions comprises the conclusion to the thesis.

In the methodology chapter, I explore the history of methodology as a separate concept from either knowledge or understanding (Gadamer, 2000, Popper, 1957). I outline the general principles of qualitative research that bring together philosophy and the domains of social science and human experience – applied philosophy. As Gadamer (2000) points out, the purpose of applying theory to practice is not so that practice can become 'technically correct' but rather so that our understanding of it is enhanced (p. 266). I introduce the three perspectives adopted for this investigation and explain why each is pertinent and uniquely useful for learning something about the reform as it unfolds. I explain how the application of the general principles, articulated by Gadamer and Karl Popper, directed my practices and procedures within each perspective. I also refer to the hazards and limitations of each perspective. I discuss some of the concepts that are central to the process of evaluating qualitative research – trustworthiness and validity, subjectivity and objectivity, particularities and generalities – and examine how the logic of non-positivism addresses these ideas. A reform for and about democracy must remain in constant motion if it also aspires to *be* democratic. Methodologically speaking, to view the reform from three perspectives gives it momentum.

## Chapter Two

### Theoretical Perspective: Contemporary Theories of Democracy

The purpose of the literature review is to assemble some contemporary debates and discussions focusing on education, democracy and the self in order to eventually situate Québec's reform and the *Inchauspé Report* within a broad theoretical context. Traditionally, a review of the literature entails a thorough reading of the texts and a critical analysis of the arguments. It represents a technical-rationalist method for understanding and analyzing a text – technical because the text is an inanimate object accessed through the standardized practice of reading and rational because the text has a single meaning that can be understood, hypothetically, by all readers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). But a technical-rational approach to the literature does not account for the interpretative, contextual qualities of the writer and the reader (Gadamer, 2000). Feminist philosophers and critical social theorists fracture our taken-for-granted assumptions about theoretical analysis and expert discourse. Their voices break apart traditional methods for reading theory and invite us to discover the concealed standpoint, "...the dissolution of objectified discourse" (Smith, 1999, p. 43). This perspective enables the reader to engage with the written material by asking unconventional questions; it invites us to trust our intuitive knowledge and personal experience of the literature (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). My purpose in adopting a critical approach to the literature review in this thesis is twofold. First, I situate each theory in a context that accounts for the voice of the author, what he or she adds to contemporary discourse about education and democracy, and various conceptions of the self that are being advanced. Second, I try to juxtapose the literature in a way that

engages these authors in debate about these issues. I want to extract the true value of the texts by moving aside the cover of expertise. Habermas (1994) interrogates current literature by asking what counts as democratic debate and discussion. What I learn from the literature is directly related to the standpoint I bring to the readings. Seyla Benhabib (1995) summarizes the feminist approach to theory as the struggle against meta-narratives, against foundations and absolute terms. Nancy Fraser (1995) says that every theory is a little piece of cultural discourse. The voices of these feminist social theorists help guide me through a critical reading of historical and contemporary theories of education and democracy.

I want to learn as much as possible about the relationship between education and various models of democracy and the self so that I can later draw on this theory to situate the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* in a context broad enough to account for its relationship to sweeping currents in modern Western thought. The questions that guide my study are philosophical. The literature review is particularly relevant for learning more about one of the questions articulated earlier in this paper: (1i) what models of democracy are currently being discussed and debated in contemporary Western cultures, (1ii) and what values and concept of self are at the heart of each model?

The literature chapter begins with a brief analysis of the changing role of philosophy in the Western world and the perspective of philosophy I adopt for this study. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1947), philosophers known for their interdisciplinary work at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, advance the notion of philosophy as

mutual criticism. Jürgen Habermas (1992), one of Theodor Adorno's students, suggests that the purpose of philosophy is to take ideas out of the abstract domain of exalted reason and situate them in the context of social practices. The feminist project further alters the landscape of philosophy by questioning all meta-narratives. Maxine Greene (1995) says that in education we must *do* philosophy. This analysis serves as justification for choosing a philosophical orientation towards democracy and education.

This is a study about the potential of Québec's educational reform to respond to the exigencies of a complex democratic society. There is a plethora of recent philosophical literature about multiple versions of democracy and the values attached to each account. As well, educational philosophers discuss the central role that formal schooling practices play in the development of the self. I extract three themes about democracy and education from my readings and then structure the literature review within the framework created by the themes. The themes move outward from the particulars of everyday schooling to the generalities of knowledge formation. Charles Taylor's (1989) account of the development of our modern identity provides a schema for understanding our complex and contradictory notions of the self. Taylor's (1989) three sources of the modern self – morality, romanticism or individuality, and rationality – can each be linked to a particular model of democracy and attendant concept of self. Paul Ricoeur draws this connection between Charles Taylor and democracy and comments: "I believe that democracy draws upon this treasure of sources, or resources, and rests upon the capacity of citizens not only to support each other but also to aid each other." (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p.



26). The three themes concerning education, democracy, and the self are described briefly below.

#### Schooling and democracy.

The first group of authors considers the implications of formal schooling for teaching about, and for, particular democratic ideals. I consider the ideas of Israel Scheffler, Maxine Greene, Martha Nussbaum, and Roger Simon. All of these writers emphasize the value of everyday encounters for the education of a moral self. Together, they present a coherent viewpoint about education's potential for building and nurturing inclusive democratic communities as the basis for social solidarity.

#### Democracy and the institutionalization of education.

A second group of theorists adopts a more political perspective about the relationship between education, democracy, and the development of self. They critically examine the organizational structures, practices, and policies of formal education and discuss how these mechanisms serve to organize and categorize future citizens. I discuss the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Henry Giroux, and Theodor Adorno. This group of authors explores the limiting effects that hierarchical social practices reproduce in educational settings – practices that diminish rather than expand the genuine potential and creativity of all individuals, but especially those who live on the margins of a society or community.

Democracy and informal education.

A third group of philosophers puts the discussion of democracy at the centre of their project. Education is understood in its informal role as a permeating social process that weaves through all institutions and public spaces. This group includes Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser. These theorists investigate the development of human potential through collective expressions of accumulated knowledge and the development of rational forms of communication, argument, discussion, and debate.

### Chapter Three

#### Perspective of the Reform in Context: The Principles Underlying Québec's Educational Reform

Sweeping reforms in education, or in any public domain, often follow an orientation set by a study or report undertaken by experts in the field. The construction and implementation of Québec's educational reform proceeds from the principles established in the *Inchauspé Report*. In Chapter Three, I look at the scope and limits of Québec's democratic reform. In this portion of the investigation the following question, articulated earlier, is addressed: (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec?

I try to extract as much as possible from its formative document: the context out of which it was created; the values it advances through the content of the *Inchauspé Report*; and, the provincial implementation plan for actualizing the report's recommendations. I rely

on a type of text analysis to deconstruct the report. Susan Sontag (2000) calls deconstructionism the modern style of interpretation, something that "...digs 'behind' the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one" (p. 6). Although deconstructionism is understood as a deductive process, the text analysis portion of the investigation is not inconsistent with the qualitative research methods of applied philosophy because I come to the analysis so thoroughly familiar with the report before deconstructing it as a text. "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (Gadamer, 2000, p. 269). Although the initial text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* is deductive, I proceed with a critical inductive analysis of my findings drawing from the theory presented in Chapter Two.

Democracy and citizenship are concepts that manifest themselves through the social and political relationships within a society – its practices. An educational reform that aims to teach for and about democracy and citizenship does so by orienting students to act and relate to one another and their environment in particular ways. Buried inside these practices are values, sometimes stated but often implied, that describe a particular model of democracy and citizenship. In order to discern whether one conception of democracy and the self is dominant in the *Inchauspé Report*, I examine the words and phrases that describe what students need to know in order to become democratic citizens. I deconstruct some of these words and phrases in an attempt to find the values and assumptions buried inside of them. Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997) has developed a theory about explicating values and his ideas guide this portion of the study. Curtler (1997)

explains that words, phrases, and actions contain what he calls ‘local properties’; these are empirical qualities we can see and describe. There is usually a very high level of agreement amongst people concerning local properties. But when the words, phrases, or actions are contextualized they are no longer empirical entities; they begin to form relationships and a pattern, in what Curtler (1997) refers to as ‘regional properties’. Although we often discern the same regional properties, due to shared contexts, we may part company on their interpretation depending on the extent to which our values coincide. We interpret regional properties through a valuation process. This is no longer a shared experience. Regional properties elicit feelings and point to our values. I find Curtler’s (1997) framework extremely useful for explaining how values become evident. I introduce Curtler’s (1997) valuation theory here because throughout the thesis I make reference to the concepts of local and regional properties.

I examine the report from the outside in and from the inside out. From the outside in, I seek to uncover which contemporary debates about democracy and education influenced the writing of the *Inchauspé Report*. I also look at the history of education in Québec and the imperatives for change that are addressed through this reform project (Magnuson, 1980). I present the architecture of Québec’s educational reform project and indicate which pieces are relevant to this study. There are multiple layers to the construction and implementation processes presently underway in Québec and I analyze the relationship between the report and these processes. Susan Sontag (2000) says we cannot understand a written document without knowing something about its authors as well as the audience for whom it was written.

From the inside out, I examine the text of the *Inchauspé Report* and try to determine whether there is a model of democracy and attendant values that dominate the report. The primary focus throughout this chapter is the *Inchauspé Report* because it contains the principles on which most subsequent changes to education in Québec – for the foreseeable future – will be based.

## Chapter Four

### A Personal, Practical Perspective of Québec's Educational Reform

There are pitfalls associated with relying on theory and documents as the primary sources of enlightenment about a project. Triangulation in research means exploring data from three perspectives all designed to illuminate the same problem (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). My third perspective of the reform comes from practical first-hand experiences as the facilitator and participant in a research study group. These experiences provide the investigation with an antidote to the restrictions of text through examples of the reform's principles in action. The question that guides this portion of the investigation is the following: (3) What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values?

Democracy is a process; it is non-linear and inexact and, as Seyla Benhabib (1992) suggests, the rules of democracy are always contestable. The creation of a study group in the administration building of a large school board provides a means for reflecting on the reform in action in a particular context. The openness and unconstrained nature of

qualitative research allows values to emerge, often attached to everyday encounters. The study group portion of the thesis rests along the continuum that extends from democratic theory to democratic practices. During its existence, the group provided a reflexive environment where other forms of learning about the reform converged. In Chapter Four, I refer to Curtler's (1997) framework to describe and interpret the actions of the study group by analyzing the regional properties and values that emerge from the local properties of the group and its context. The concepts under investigation in this thesis are huge – questions about democracy, education, and the development of the self. This portion of the investigation is located between two sets of ideals: on one side is the *Inchauspé Report* with its principles of democratic education and citizenship and, on the other side, are the social institutions trying to put these principles into practice. The study group represented an intervention into these practices.

The foundation for qualitative research methods comes from theorists such as Michael Polanyi (1958), who suggests that all knowledge passes through the biography of the learner. For this reason, the third perspective in this investigation re-contextualizes the reform as a form of personal learning. Qualitative research studies look at particular instances of human behaviour. Their contribution to our general knowledge of the social sciences derives from the qualities we share as human beings (Gadamer, 2000).

At the time the study group was convened, the administration of the school board where I worked was in the process of choosing a particular approach to the implementation of this reform – to become a learning organization. Peter Senge (1996) and Michael Fullan

(1993) write extensively about the characteristics that constitute a learning organization and how the presence of certain practices and procedures enlarges an institution's capacity for self-evaluation and change. In this thesis, I draw from the experiences of the study group to examine some of the constraints placed on this reform through institutional structures.

In Chapter Four, I describe the study group and attempt to attach real voices to the educational principles and democratic values espoused in the *Inchauspé Report*. Many of these principles and values also underlie the formation of a learning organization. I was the researcher and a participant during two phases of the study group. I experienced the study group from multiple perspectives. Wherever possible, I signify how the story changes according to the voice I adopt (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). Part of this study is about the porosity of borders, the relationship between official and unofficial knowledge, and between recognized and unrecognized contributions and collaborations.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusions and Contributions of the Investigation

I introduce three different perspectives in this thesis, each one designed to learn more about the relationship between Québec's educational reform, democracy, and the self. The purpose of all three perspectives is to illuminate the two assumptions introduced at the outset of this introduction: that everyone affected by this reform shares the same conception of democracy and its attendant concept of self; and, that existing institutional systems and structures will support the construction and implementation of an

educational reform for and about democracy. The literature review provides the reform's theoretical context; the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* gives the reform its historical and social context; and the study group provides an application for some of the reform's principles in everyday contexts as a means for bringing together, and reflecting on, the first two perspectives.

My intention is to excavate as much as possible from Québec's reform. The implementation of this reform is a province-wide project whose progress may be impeded by the assumptions buried by its momentum. In the conclusion to this thesis I return to the two assumptions and explicate what the three perspectives together uncover about their existence and potential influence.

Education is an essential feature of democracy; democracy depends on education to teach citizens how to critically evaluate the system bequeathed to them (Scheffler, 1966). For this reason, an educational reform for and about democracy must leave room for the evolution of its own process; it must itself be democratic. It is within this framework that this thesis finds its value. Quebec's educational reform will not be the final reform, but it does contain values that are worth paying attention to. This thesis is one means for raising those values to the surface and drawing notice to them.



CHAPTER ONE  
APPLIED PHILOSOPHY:  
INTERPRETING QUÉBEC'S EDUCATIONAL REFORM FROM THREE  
PERSPECTIVES

Organization of the Chapter

My research into Québec's educational reform represents a philosophical investigation of the relationship between democracy, education and the self from three perspectives: the first perspective is based on an examination of contemporary theories of education and democracy; the second perspective comes from a critical analysis of the reform's foundational document in order to explicate its core concepts; and, the third perspective is informed by real-life instances of the reform in action. The overall investigation was multidimensional and comprised of numerous points of entry – real events combined with periods of theoretical study – developed over a period of several years. This thesis represents the written portion of the investigation, and its role is to unite the diverse components and present them as a coherent whole. At the heart of this thesis are concepts that, by definition, do not stand still. Static methodological frameworks contradict the very qualities that define both democracy and education – the concepts being investigated here. For this reason, it became necessary during the course of this inquiry to consciously monitor the changing shape of the methods portion of the study and to relocate myself in a constant effort to respond to the aims of the project (Aspland, 2003). The methodology chapter serves as the organizational guide to the thesis.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, two issues about Québec's project became apparent through both my theoretical and practical experiences of the reform and these are of particular concern here. Integral to these issues – the first pertaining to very real differences between various models of democracy, and the second to the types of institutional support needed to accompany a democratic reform of Québec's schools and adult education centres – are questions that were articulated earlier: (1i) What models of democracy are currently being discussed and debated in contemporary Western cultures, (1ii) and what values and attendant concept of self are at the heart of each model? (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec? (3) What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values? Each of these three questions serves to focus a particular part of the inquiry; the intention of this study is to elicit further discussion about them through the provision of extensive layered description and analysis. Mark Kingwell (2004) commented recently that the goal of contemporary philosophy is not to tell people what to think but rather to guide them in terms of how to think (CBC Radio).

The methodology chapter is presented in two sections. Section One provides a general outline of the features that flow through and give coherence to the entire investigation. It begins with an explication of the principles of applied philosophy and the research methods that bring these principles to bear on the particular concepts under investigation here. Section One also explores the concepts of trustworthiness and validity, subjectivity and objectivity, particularities and generalities in relation to this interpretive study about

education and democracy. There are traditional questions that continue to be asked of all research, including non-traditional, post-positivist studies, and I attempt to address some of these questions. In qualitative research there are two types of questions: those that concern the methods themselves and those that concern content (Taylor, 1985, p. 91). Section One explores the former type of question; Section Two, described below, outlines the procedures for studying the latter type of question.

Section Two of this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the three perspectives I employed in this research study. Contained within the application of each perspective were choices to be made about the relationship between philosophical methods and theory, content, and people (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). As far as possible, I analyze and account for these choices. I explain the intentions behind each perspective and how it contributes to the whole project. I describe particular research procedures associated with each perspective, their advantages and disadvantages.

## Section One

### Principles and questions.

This is a philosophical study and its general design is primarily based on the methodological principles articulated by Karl Popper (1957) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000). Here I present an introduction to the principles of qualitative research – social theorizing – that flow throughout the investigation. Popper and Gadamer write about the ways we come to know and interpret human science and human experience. They explain

why our understanding of the social world does not primarily evolve through studies that apply scientific methods designed to reveal absolute correlations between concepts and experiences. Human experience is unpredictable and so too are the social organizations we create to classify and respond to our needs (Popper, 1957, p. 18). Charles Taylor (1985) suggests that because we accept the ideals of freedom and power as existing outside of us, we are attracted to natural science or absolute theories that fail to account for our personal construction of social reality. Taylor (1985) says we need to weave human agency into the fabric of modern practices; to accomplish this we need interpretive social theories that take into account our meaning-making activities (p. 2). The purpose of the social sciences is to deepen our understanding of the forces that motivate human behaviour – where and how we derive our meaning and sense of purpose (Popper, 1957, p. 21). Gadamer (2000) suggests that our interest in the human sciences originates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the education and cultivation of the self became paramount (p. 9). Both Popper and Gadamer explain that it is through the cultivation of the self – particularities – that humans transcend their individuality and discover universally shared qualities. The search for a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, shared qualities – what Popper (1957) calls the “...doctrine of intuitive understanding” – is the purpose of the human sciences (p. 23). Gadamer (2000) argues that in order to develop and enrich our capacities to understand, we require processes that illuminate the multi-dimensionality of human experience. He calls these processes, methods (Gadamer, 2000, p. 348). But the study of the human sciences or social reality is nothing without conscious subjectivity – without “...receptivity to the ‘otherness’”

(Gadamer, 2000, p. 17). Methods provide a step-by-step procedure for both utilizing and containing subjectivity (Gadamer, 2000, p. 348).

It is never possible, Popper (1957) writes, to entirely know a social event since all experience is part of an infinite progression of human history (p. 77). Gadamer (2000) supports this perspective of qualitative research; unlike empirical experiments, qualitative research has an infinite – and indefinite – quality because the object of its study is always in motion and never clearly in view (p. 216). Even a deep analysis of social reality that adheres faithfully to the principles of qualitative research will produce only “...piecemeal tinkering” (Popper, 1957, p. 67). “Thus the difference between Utopian and piecemeal engineering turns out, in practice, to be a difference not so much in scale and scope as in caution and in preparedness for unavoidable surprises” (Popper, 1957, p. 69).

But piecemeal tinkering does lead to the illumination of small scale events and often enables researchers to address real-life problems precisely because their focus is on particularities (Popper, 1957, p. 91). Qualitative research questions usually evolve intuitively from the lives and interests of researchers; researchers then develop procedures for applying their questions to social practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Through the application of qualitative procedures, errors and/or contradictions in the research questions are revealed (Popper, 1957, p. 98). Gadamer (2000), too, describes the practice of testing our understanding through trial and error. He gives an example of how language is used in research to reveal hidden meanings: “Here as always the metaphorical usage has methodological priority. If a word is applied to a sphere to which it did not

originally belong, the actual ‘original’ meaning emerges quite clearly. Language has performed in advance the abstraction that is, as such, the task of conceptual analysis” (Gadamer, 2000, p. 103).

Qualitative research has, relatively recently, become recognized as an accepted mode of academic research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Popper (1957) speculates that the most fruitful debates concerning research methods are inspired by social problems that are no longer – or never have been – addressed through traditional research methods (p. 57). He suggests that the motivation to accept new research methods derives from changing value systems.

Trustworthiness and validity; subjectivity and objectivity; particularities and generalities.

Our accounts of the world are never without evaluation. Taylor (1985) suggests that theorizing about social issues constitutes a form of practice that should be interrogated.

Social theory is also concerned with finding a more satisfactory fundamental description of what is happening. The basic question of all social theory is in a sense: what is really going on? ...In a sense, we could say that social theory arises when we try to formulate explicitly what we are doing, describe the activity which is central to a practice, and articulate the norms which are essential to it. (Taylor, 1985, p. 92)

Taylor (1985) continues by saying that social theories make social practices explicit while also appraising, challenging, and criticizing them (p. 94). Therefore the worth of a research study increases when the principles of qualitative research and the procedures followed to learn more about the phenomenon under investigation are coherent; in other words, the application of clear, transparent, and consistent methods for questioning social practices increases the usefulness of our interrogations for the purpose of developing social theory. Karl Popper (1957) writes: “We need studies, based on methodological individualism, of the social institutions through which ideas may spread and captivate individuals, of the way in which new traditions may be created, and of the way in which traditions work and break down” (p. 149).

#### Trustworthiness and validity.

There is no single set of procedures that point to the validity of a study. Coulon (1995) challenges the very notions of validity and accountability that originate in the principles of positivism where the social world is knowable, describable, intelligible, reportable, and analyzable (p. 23). But several people have written about the concept of validity from the perspective of non-positivism. Taylor (1985) posits that, “...social theories can be validated, because they can be tested in practice. If theory can transform practice, then it can be tested in the quality of the practice it informs. What makes a theory right is that it brings practice out in the clear; that its adoption makes possible what is in some sense a more effective practice” (p. 104). External validity in qualitative research is conditional on the usefulness of a study’s findings. Internal validity is based on the degree of transparency with which procedures, interpretations, and analyses are applied to a social

setting. Gadamer (2000) adds an additional layer to the debate about trustworthiness and validity when he discusses the presentation of qualitative research findings. He cautions that, because writing is so detached from everyday experience, the trustworthiness of a research report depends on clear, unambiguous language that accounts for – but is not overwhelmed by – the researcher’s voice (Gadamer, 2000, p. 394).

In discussing research into educational practices, Eisenhart and Borko (1993) suggest that a qualitative study embodies internal validity when the following conditions are met: the research question derives from an important educational issue; the question and the methods are skillfully linked; the methods are competently applied; the benefits of the study outweigh the risks; the analysis permits the conclusions to be vigorously assessed; and, all of these components are rooted in a solid, consistent, philosophical foundation. Elliot Eisner (1991) describes three forms of validity that can be found in qualitative studies about educational issues: structural corroboration takes place when several sources of data point to similar conclusions; consensual validation emerges when the participants’ words lead to similar conclusions; and, referential adequacy applies when the presentation of the data reveals what the reader would otherwise have missed (p. 110).

I began this section with a review of the philosophical principles found at the heart of qualitative research methods as articulated by Karl Popper (1957) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000). These same principles also form the foundation for the three perspectives presented in this study, all of which represent interpretive exercises in the



construction of knowledge. The key components that flow through every part of this investigation derive from a solid coherent foundation. In a study where well-established principles remain consistent from the statement of aims, to techniques of data collection, synthesis, and analysis, mistakes are generally minor and tend to be at the level of detail rather than substantive decisions.

### Subjectivity and objectivity.

Michael Polanyi (1958) argues that objectivity in research, as a counter measure to subjectivity, is a false corollary (p. 18). He explains that personal knowing is not purely subjective because societies and communities – including research communities – establish an intellectual commitment to procedural standards and criteria (Polanyi, 1958, p. 65). Objectivity, rigour, and respect for truth are conditions for theorizing (Taylor, 1985, p. 105). Hilary Putnam calls these ‘cognitive values’ and says they constitute our ideal of theoretical intelligence (Festenstein, 1997, p. 169). We create rules of agreement about how to construct knowledge and these rules are what Eisner (1991) refers to as procedural objectivity. But the rules of agreement are always contestable and tentative. The objectivity of a study derives from the degree to which it is coherent with the rules of agreement established by the community to which it seeks to contribute knowledge. The objectivity of a study is not judged according to the rightness of its view or how a theory compares to an independent, separate sphere of objects. It is judged by whether the stories, ideas, and practices of individuals or communities in the study are represented and interpreted truthfully and accurately. D.C. Phillips (1990) suggests qualitative researchers seek objectivity of the critical spirit. The term “...methodological

individualism”, taken from the Popper (1957) quotation above, refers to the researcher’s point of view. Popper (1957) explains that because the researcher’s perspective is only one among a limitless number of possible perspectives – yet every decision in a qualitative investigation is filtered through it – the researcher must explicitly state her philosophy or worldview at the outset of the study (p. 152). There is a difference between describing and interpreting theories and events. Although description of an idea or event (objectivity) and interpretation based on current understanding (subjectivity) are interrelated components, the trustworthiness of a study depends on the researcher’s ability to clearly discern the difference and identify which action is which before fusing them in a “...dialogue between tradition and its interpreter” (Gadamer, 2000, p. 461). Yet from within the paradigm of qualitative research, every element is ultimately subjective because it is framed by social practices, such as shared concepts of human communication that are constantly renegotiated. “What can be submitted to reflection is always limited in comparison to what is determined by previous formative influences” (Gadamer, 2000, p. 571). For Gadamer (2000), subjectivity – prejudice – is not a negative concept. On the contrary; it is when we see our prejudices applied in social contexts that we learn from them (Gadamer, 2000, p. 568).

#### Particularities and generalities.

Ernest Stringer (1996) explains that one of the aims of qualitative research is to transform social settings through small-scale associations of people. Studies of social practices are both particular and general at once. Every social setting is self-organizing and accountable unto itself (Garfinkel, 1967, 33). To present a study as typical of the

population as a whole is unwise because, as Popper (1957) suggests, the human factor is so uncontrollable (p. 158). But human understanding evolves through historically shared contexts and from this perspective our cultural, intellectual, and social traditions provide filters through which new knowledge is generated (Gadamer, 2000, p. 176). Because humans construct meaning from their experiences, this interpretive quality shapes all that is human. This is what Mary Rogers (1983) refers to as the "...unity of multiplicity", or the coherence of the life-world (p. 50). In the current investigation, my aim was to learn as much as possible from the particulars situated in front of me by explicating the tacit background knowledge embedded in the theories, texts, and everyday practices that shape the concepts central to this project. This is the capacity of qualitative research -- to generate moral-practical knowledge that is then fed back into the social setting and contributes to our deeper understanding of it. Gadamer (2000) suggests that qualitative research is rooted in romanticism that acknowledges the contributions of individual people and traditions (p. 273). In romanticism, the particular is granted legitimacy within the domain of human understanding and this creates a dialectic between particular and general forms of knowledge. An investigation into the democratic potential of Québec's educational reform project may contribute to our general knowledge of how democracy is conceived and constructed, while its particular aim is to understand the phenomenon of democratic education in Québec here and now. "(T)he unique significance of the detail can be determined only from the whole" (Gadamer, 2000, p. 200).

## Summary of Section One

In Section One above, I presented the philosophical principles that guided my investigation. I introduced some of the questions that arose out of these principles and that flowed through every portion of the study. Gadamer (2000) writes that in order to fully understand ideas and their implications, we need to create applications for their use in everyday contexts (p. 348). The three perspectives described below in Section Two enabled me to create diverse applications for a single bundle of ideas with the intention of learning as much as possible about them.

## Section Two

Popper (1957) describes three stages that every method must pass through if an investigation is to lead to a deeper understanding of social reality: the researcher must uncover the forces that led to a social event; the researcher must account for the historical and philosophical context of the event; and, the researcher must attempt to discern the meaning of the event including what immediate and far-reaching changes might result from its existence (Popper, 1957, p. 23). The principles that guided this investigation sought to understand and interpret a single phenomenon – Québec's educational reform – by uncovering its social, historical, and philosophical contexts and origins, the aims and purposes of the people who set the event in motion, and the meaning and far reaching implications of the phenomenon.

Although not all qualitative researchers describe themselves as critical social theorists, a strong correlation exists between the principles of qualitative research and the ideas espoused by critical social theorists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, Carr, 1995, Carr & Kemmis, 1986, Eisner, 1991, Festenstein, 1997, Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, McTaggart, 1991, Lather, 1991, Park, 1993, Smith, 1999, Stringer, 1996). Critical social theory is concerned with social change, with challenging systemic practices that reproduce the status quo even in the midst of changing rhetoric. The principles of qualitative research enable researchers to pursue questions that penetrate taken-for-granted assumptions about social events and situations. “Choosing a method for a piece of research is a political choice” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Québec’s educational reform is intended to prepare students for democratic citizenship in a knowledge-based society increasingly comprised of pluralist values and diverse communities. This is an enormous mandate for an educational reform and one filled with idealism and hope. A study of the reform’s potential to create a coherent response to the requirements of Québec’s diverse population necessitates a qualitative approach to the investigation.

#### Applied Philosophy: Interpreting the Reform from Three Perspectives

##### 1. Theoretical perspective.

Karl Popper (1957) suggests that the purpose we assign to theory – explanation, description, prediction, interpretation, testing, analysis, or understanding – depends on

the foundation of our research project (p. 124). Theory shapes our questions and enhances our capacity to notice what we would not otherwise have seen – it is not possible to recognize something for which we have no concept (Vygotsky, 1934). The literature, presented in Chapter Two of this thesis, provides my research with two elements. First, the philosophical literature review demonstrates the quantity and range of historical and contemporary discussion concerning education, models of democracy, and the development of the self. The theory is a means for exploring some of the ideas that may have influenced, even implicitly, Québec's reform. Second, in choosing particular philosophers from a wide range of possible contributors I am able to identify my own style of philosophy and the kinds of arguments and theoretical presentations that deepen my understanding of the concepts of democracy and education. The editing process – choosing to leave certain ideas and people on the shelf – is always somewhat contrived and never completely satisfactory but it is helpful and necessary to the researcher. Choosing the theory provides an entry point into the investigation. Most of the texts selected for this study originate from within a Western post-positivist tradition – both because the roots of my own education are Western, and because Québec's educational reform is written and designed for a contemporary Western context. My attitude towards the literature, however, is to inhabit it critically (Narayan, 1989).

If democracy itself is comprised of processes and practices that enable diverse individuals to contribute their own knowledge, needs, and values as part of its construction, then learning about democracy occurs from within an interactive relationship with the theory. In all relationships that are entered into by choice, people are drawn to individuals and

communities who reflect their values back to them and deepen their understanding of themselves – who reveal their prejudices. As I approached the philosophical literature review and revisited books and authors from my past, I began to eliminate certain writers while protectively guarding others close at hand. Michael Polanyi (1958) writes that our passions draw us towards what we want to learn about and our choice to study the ideas of particular authors is personal, not arbitrary (p. 135). Polanyi (1958) differentiates between intellectual and moral pursuits. He says intellectual knowing separates the knower from the known while moral knowing is the knower (Polanyi, 1958, p. 215). In order to understand an idea or thing we need to live inside it, experience it, and it is through this personal experience that we derive meaning (Polanyi, 1958, p. 196).

#### Organizing the theory.

The more deeply I became absorbed in the philosophical literature review, the more I became conscious of the choices I was making. A deep reading of the literature led me to form a cognitive structure as a way to organize some of the theories that addressed the key components in this investigation: how certain models of democracy support a particular conception of the self, and the role education plays in developing the characteristics of this notion of self. These themes are elaborated in more detail in Chapter Two. Here I describe briefly the themes that emerged through my interpretive approach to the literature and how the themes subsequently became an organizational framework for presenting the theory.

I discerned through my reading and notes, over a period of time, that there were at least three distinct positions from which I could view the theory. Although none is in opposition, each viewpoint emphasizes a different role for education in the development of democracy and the self. The juxtaposition between education and democracy shifts with each vantage point. I selected and grouped the authors chosen for this study based on their contributions to one of the three positions. For example, theorists for whom the value of education resides in its ability to develop connected moral selves tend to write about day-to-day schooling practices and the types of interpersonal relationships that can be nurtured within contained communities of learners. I grouped the writings of these authors under the heading, 'schooling and democracy'. I separated a second group of writers because their contributions to a theoretical study of education and democracy draw our attention to institutional structures and how systemic practices are employed to organize formal education within predetermined frameworks. This group of writers is slightly removed from day-to-day schooling but is still concerned with how formal educational practices reproduce the values of a society. They examine, in particular, the effects of instrumental reason when it forms the primary justification for decisions about education. I grouped these writers under the heading, 'democracy and the institutionalization of education'. The third group of authors does not discuss the particulars of everyday schooling practices. They are concerned with informal education as a social phenomenon. Their theories are deeply rooted in the philosophical school of thought referred to as critical social theory and they are interested in how the distribution of all social goods, including education, influences the development of democracy. I grouped these authors under the heading, 'democracy and informal education'. I



organized the literature review along a continuum, where the three themes described here acted as the major headings under which the key components of my investigation – models of democracy, the development of the self, and education – moved back and forth. This constructivist process for presenting the theory enabled me to expose the key elements of the study to a multitude of perspectives – from the particulars of everyday schooling practices to discussions about how social and cultural knowledge evolves. There are several layers of interpretation when presenting a critical review of literature. First, the cognitive structure for organizing the theory, in this case the three themes described above, shapes how the literature is presented. The structure itself forms part of the critical analysis of the literature; it represents an interpretive framework where the contribution of each of the three themes is enhanced by its juxtaposition with the others. Second, the critical analysis I bring to the readings is based on my research questions and interests which themselves emerged out of particular social, cultural, and intellectual traditions. Third, as I mentioned earlier, the selection process itself is a form of judgment and is always somewhat subject to the idiosyncrasies of individual choice.

Once the design and construction of the literature review was organized, I turned my attention to the ideas – the content – of this particular study. I learned that each of the various models of democracy being discussed in contemporary Western debates advances values that represent overlapping and complex concepts of the self. Charles Taylor's (1989) investigation into the sources of our modern identity helped to uncover the origins for the web of contradictory values that comprise our contemporary sense of self. In his book, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Taylor (1989) describes

how these values derive from three historical sources – morality, individuality, and rationality. Although Taylor does not use his discussion to draw parallels between the values carried forward from each of the three sources of the self and the values at the heart of the three dominant models of democracy discussed in contemporary Western contexts, I recognized connections. Essential to both democracy and education are interpersonal relationships. We create processes to facilitate communication, including equal and informed participation in public decision-making, out of our confused and contradictory sense of self. While Taylor (1989) illuminates three sources for our modern concept of self, Habermas describes three models of democracy prevalent in present-day discussions. He labels them: republican, liberal, and deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 1996, p. 6). As stated earlier, each model of democracy advances – and is advanced by – a particular notion of the self. Charles Taylor's (1989) theory about our multifaceted concept of the self illuminates the theoretical literature about democracy, education, and the development of self. For this reason, Taylor's ideas weave through the literature review.

The organizational framework I constructed by cross-referencing theory about education, democracy, and the development of the self was designed to preserve the accessibility of these concepts for real life applications. Dorothy Smith (1999) recommends that a researcher's priority should always be to lived-experience rather than privileged discourse, a principle of applied philosophy. I structured the literature review in a manner that would facilitate its usage throughout my analysis of Québec's educational reform. And, just as the theory informed my analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, the

analysis enriched my understanding of the theory. The study group portion of this investigation became a place for reflecting on this recursive relationship between theory and practice.

#### Presenting the theory.

Critical social theorists and feminist theorists challenge the legitimacy of official knowledge and invite subjectivities into the creation of knowledge (Lather, 1991). Mary Belenky and her associates (1986) were instrumental in signaling the validity of women's ways of learning. They call this 'connected knowing' and suggest that empathy is what enables us to access other people's knowledge (Belenky, 1986, p. 113). This approach is vivid and concrete rather than abstract. I selected authors for this study whose philosophies not only build bridges between theory, method, and practice but who are also comfortable sitting there. Each text referred to in this thesis is the work of a human being who wrote in a particular time, tradition, and place. Each text forms an entity unto itself, but also contains at least some portion of the writer's inner life. This forms an objective/subjective whole that continuously interacts (Gadamer, 2000, p. 291). Patti Lather (1991) says texts must be fractured as a way to limit their authority. Walter Ong (1977) suggests that written words represent closed systems and that "...texts must be recycled back through sound to have meaning" (p. 310). Interestingly, Québec's educational reform adopts a transactional approach to teaching reading. One of the earliest proponents of this approach was Louise Rosenblatt (1938) who wrote that reading should be understood as an organic process where meaning is located neither in the text nor in the reader but in the transactional processes between the two (p. 26). I adopted this

constructivist approach when reading and interpreting the philosophical theories of democracy and education.

#### Summary of theoretical perspective.

Throughout the literature review I attempted to give voice to the authors – in part so that I could hear them speak but also so that they might listen and respond to each other. I selected people I wanted to be in dialogue with so that my capacity to notice was enhanced. This is my interpretation of Max Horkheimer's (1947) comment that philosophy is a form of mutual criticism (p. 174).

The disadvantage of adopting an interpretive approach to the philosophical literature review resides in the limitation of my prior knowledge. Because this research method required me to interact with the theory, the literature filtered through, and was contained by, what I brought to the readings. Michael Polanyi (1958) argues that this has always been the case and that qualitative researchers are only stating the obvious when they include their own shortcomings in their written accounts.

#### 2. Perspective of the reform in context.

The purpose for this portion of the investigation was to learn as much as possible about Québec's educational reform primarily from the perspective of its formative document – *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997), or what is referred to in this thesis as the *Inchauspé Report*. From this

perspective, I addressed the following question: (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec? As stated in the introduction to this thesis, my intention was to study the reform from the outside in and from the inside out.

#### From the outside in.

The reason for studying the *Inchauspé Report* from the outside in was to situate Québec's reform in its broadest possible context and, from that perspective, bring its social construction into focus (Stringer, 1996, p. 41). Because I was interested in learning more about the democratic potential of Québec's reform to meet the needs of a complex, pluralist society, I wanted to understand it in the context of contemporary debate and discussion about education and democracy. I relied on these rich philosophical theories to contextualize the notion of a democratic educational reform and the literature provided me with signposts to guide my foray into the particulars of education. The theories told me what to look for.

There is a proliferation of educational reforms today in the Western world (Levinson, 1997; Mitchell, 2001). In general, reforms are initiated to respond to perceived changes in the needs and values of a given population. Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest one of the goals of qualitative research is to uncover how knowledge is shaped by what it serves. I began this contextual analysis by examining educational reforms currently being implemented in other Canadian provinces as well as a handful of reforms in other

Western countries. I discovered that these reforms are responding to changing needs created, in large part, by increased levels of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in school populations as well as the explosion of information widely available through technological forms of distribution (Mitchell, 2001). This finding confirmed a statement made in the introductory pages of the *Inchauspé Report* where the authors delineate the two most pressing reasons for global preoccupations with curriculum reform: “Knowledge now plays a dominant role in the material and social organization of our society. Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, pp. 13-14). Because the text goes on to say that Québec’s reasons for creating an educational reform are the same as those expressed by other Western countries, these statements provide the overarching goals for the government’s project. Ernest Stringer (1996) says the vision of a group involved in a social event or phenomenon is the most powerful determinant of its impact on the environment. By bringing together contemporary theories of democracy and education with the intentions and goals of current educational reforms, I located what Gadamer (2000) calls the horizon of an idea – the finite determinacy of the thought (p. 302). In the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, I return to the two goals of this reform named above.

To understand more about the historical and philosophical traditions that led to this reform, I examined the history of education in Québec. For several hundred years – until the Quiet Revolution during the 1960’s – Québec’s population remained relatively homogenous. The history of Québec’s education system reflects this long period of demographic stability. Because this is a philosophical investigation and not an empirical

study, I was interested in the broad directions and trends that characterized education during the past three hundred years of Québec's history and not the incremental periodic changes that occurred. The historical analysis of the province's education system pointed to a philosophy of education that benefited certain segments of the population more than others. The endurance of these historical and philosophical traditions over such a long period of time played a significant role in creating the conditions for the establishment of the current reform.

The Quiet Revolution marked a philosophical turning point in the province's history. Rapid and far-reaching changes to the structure and goals of education transformed its role in a society whose face – literally – was quickly altering. Gadamer (2000) argues that research makes history part of the present; history becomes data to be interpreted from our current perspective (p. 200). In reading the history of Québec's education system, one can almost feel the currents suddenly shift in Québec society. Beginning with the creation of the Ministry of Education in the 1960's, the volume of publicly commissioned reports, estates generals, papers, journals, and books about the imperatives for change within the province's education system are almost too numerous to count. Alain Coulon (1995) explains that qualitative research interprets such periods of frenzied writing, reporting, and consulting as "...social structuring activities" (p. 69). People in the province were actively engaged in constructing a new education system – opening what had previously been a closed system. The democratization of education during this flurry of activity was directed towards equal access for everyone (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 2). The launch of Québec's current province-wide educational reform concluded an

extensive period of public consultation and research. The democratization of education shifted with this reform from a quantitative goal of access for everyone, to a qualitative goal of success for everyone.

The current reform, as mentioned above, is a massive province-wide project. It has generated an extensive architectural structure complete with policies, a program of programs, reports, supporting documents, timetables, and guidelines. I read many of these documents in order to grasp the scope of the changes and to learn more about what systemic practices are being instituted to support the implementation of the reform. I discovered there are few recommended systemic changes and every school board in the province is responsible for designing its own implementation strategies and structures. In theory this is a deeply democratic decision and gives school board communities the opportunity and authority to interpret the reform according to the needs and traditions of their student population and, in the case of the youth sector, the parent body. This realization focused my attention on the systemic changes planned and adopted by my own school board community in support of the reform's implementation. The effectiveness of the school board's strategies to create the desired results is examined and evaluated in Chapter Four.

From the inside out.

During this stage of the analysis I focused entirely on the text of the *Inchauspé Report*. First I read the actual document several times to fully grasp its meaning. I was also



interested in experiencing the document apart from its content – its tone, rhythm, and style. People who read the *Inchauspé Report* generally respond to it positively, not necessarily because of its applicability but because of its content and purpose convey a sense of hopefulness. The document embodies what Michael Walzer (1983) refers to as the moral quality of education. This quality is an integral component of the reform. Gadamer (2000) argues that gathering anecdotal evidence and hearsay is not bad research, but rather the result of trusting other people's experiences of a phenomenon (p. 216). Reactions to the report form part of the environment in which it exists. The qualitative characteristics that imbue this report with an aura of hope, together with its content, continue to inform the construction and implementation phases of this reform. A detailed analysis of the document serves to deepen its usefulness for educational policy and decision-making that must be coherent with Québec's democratic principles.

Because this is an investigation into the potential of Québec's reform to respond to the exigencies of a complex modern pluralist society, I wanted to learn more about what the report actually says about democratic education and citizenship. I also wanted to uncover what it does not say – it's "...concealed standpoint" (Smith, 1999). In an article about a qualitative research method called institutional ethnography, the authors discuss Smith's work with texts and documents (DeVault & McCoy, 2000). They explain that Smith takes critical feminist theory and combines it with her reading of institutional texts. In marrying theory with method, she searches for mechanisms of power and control that remain hidden inside official discourse. I wanted to find a procedure that reached inside the *Inchauspé Report* to pull out its vision of democracy and citizenship through the

values it advances for the province of Québec. I struggled to evolve a strategy that I trusted to accomplish this task. Eventually I decided to deconstruct the text by probing for the three keywords that most embodied my project – ‘democracy’, ‘citizenship’, and ‘values’. The selection of these particular words was based on my familiarity with this vocabulary from the literature review. By restricting the document search to these three keywords I risked overlooking other concepts relevant to the study; but because I had read and worked with the report continuously over a period of several years, I knew in advance which ideas I wanted to learn more about. This methodological approach to the text is simultaneously quantitative and qualitative (Ryan & Bernard, 2002, p. 773). As well, I was conscious throughout the search that ideas about democracy, citizenship, and values can be articulated without making reference to the actual keywords themselves; I paid close attention for these instances.

I read and re-read the report searching for every instance where one of the keywords appeared. I assigned each keyword a colour and marked the text for each occurrence. While scouring the pages for the three keywords named above, the qualitative perspective I brought to the search permitted me to notice the overwhelming proliferation of a fourth word, ‘culture’. I added the keyword ‘culture’ to my search. Once the text was read and marked for keywords I transcribed every sentence, paragraph, and section in which one of the words appeared (Appendix A). I purposely took breaks between transcribing each of the keywords because I wanted to sense the textual environment that transformed the keywords into concepts, in part through the background patterns that emerged. In

Chapter Three, the value of this method for extracting particular patterns and relationships between words and phrases is explained.

The next stage in the text analysis was interpretive. I applied the theories of values and valuation, as formulated by Risieri Frondizi (1971) and Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997), to the pages of transcription. Curtler (1997), in particular, describes how values emerge when we pay attention to patterns and combinations – regional properties – amongst local properties. In this case the local properties were the keywords. This is a philosophical investigation and not an empirical study. Therefore although the number of times each keyword appears in the text may hold some significance, my reading of the *Inchauspé Report* was interpretive – focused on meaning and perception – and not technical or quantitative. Gadamer (2000) explains that interpretive research seeks to discover what is common in a variety of modes of understanding – it gets behind the words (p. xxxi).

I retrieved the philosophical theories about democracy and education from the literature review and brought them to bear on a critical analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*. I combined these theories with the pages of transcription in order to enrich my framework for analyzing the text. I was particularly interested in discovering if any single concept of democracy and style of citizenship dominated the report by extracting what vision of the self emerged from words and phrases in the text. I juxtaposed these ideas with the theories of education, democracy, and the development of the self, explored in the literature review. The results of this interpretive process are elaborated in Chapter Three.

As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, democracy is concealed inside the processes and practices that structure our social relationships. The interpretive portion of the text analysis was designed to uncover some of the assumptions and presuppositions that shape these practices. Research based on critical social theory and feminist theory attempts to reveal the "...rhetoric of change" and allows the researcher to evaluate the role power plays in institutional change (Møller, 1993). The *Inchauspé Report* was commissioned by a provincial government and despite its idealistic and hopeful content it cannot escape its political roots. It is a knowledge-generating document whose existence continues to shape the educational landscape of Québec. Dorothy Smith explains that this is how institutional or political documents control public experiences and standardize their felt qualities (DeVault & McCoy, 2000). Coulon (1995) says that too often we approach institutional texts as objective technical documents – documents that have a uniform meaning for every reader. Yet, it is our personal rendering of a text that gives it a dialectical quality (Coulon, 1995, p. 32).

After interpreting the transcriptions of keywords in order to discern their meaning in context and expose both stated and implicit values within the report, the final stage of the text analysis was designed to explore some of the social changes this educational reform is expected to bring about. Popper (1957) describes real social change as unpredictable but says intended social change reveals a great deal about the players. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that intended social change usually embodies the stereotypes, ideologies, and ruling apparatus within a political faction – how people in positions of

authority understand and interpret the needs of their community. Janet Finch (1988) posits that at this point in the critical analysis of a document the researcher should be ready to speculate whether or not the text will lead to substantive change (p. 188). Finch (1988) argues that all documents and policies are value laden but if the values remain implicit, contradictory interpretations of the text can render its contribution negligible. In this last portion of the text analysis from the inside out I compared the values that emerged from the transcriptions of keywords with the values at the heart of each model of democracy presented in the literature review. This back and forth research process, according to DeVault and McCoy (2000), is typical of institutional ethnography where the researcher is in dialogue with the text. Gadamer (2000) refers to this as research of the human sciences, where the research itself is in the relationship between our experience of a social event or phenomenon and our interpretations of it (p. 461). Ultimately, I concluded that there is a strong tendency in the text of the *Inchauspé Report* towards a model of republican democracy and this discovery could have implications for the intended results of this educational reform. In Chapter Three, I discuss in more detail the model that emerged according to my interpretive analysis.

#### Summary of the reform in context.

The purpose for studying the reform in its context, the second perspective in the overall investigation, was to excavate as much as possible from its foundational document, the *Inchauspé Report*. Within this perspective I combined historical, critical, and interpretive analyses of the reform. In the text analysis portion of the study, I combined theory with

my own experiences and interpretation of the *Inchauspé Report* in order to learn more about the democratic potential of Québec's reform to meet the needs of its constituents.

The major disadvantage of the research method I used to analyze the text of the *Inchauspé Report* and its context is, again, the limitations of any one person's interpretive abilities. It is impossible to ever know exactly what the authors of a written document intended by their statements – whether certain words were consciously selected or derived from habit. My personal horizon of experience and traditions frame this research. It is possible that because I did not grow up in the province of Québec, nor did any of my ancestors, I cannot fully empathize with the long historical, cultural, and social traditions that culminated in the current educational reform. Perhaps my interpretation of its formative document neglects values that would be evident to a native Québécois whose ancestors lived this history. On the other hand, one of the stated reasons for the current reform is to orient formal educational practices towards the needs of a rapidly changing Québec society. My cultural, religious, and ethnic background is more representative of this new segment of the population than of the homogenous population of the past. From this perspective, my interpretation of the reform may be useful. I also bring first-hand work experience to the analysis of the report. It is crucial throughout the examination of the reform to remain conscious of the social class and linguistic history I bring to this work compared to the life experiences and linguistic history of the overall audience for this reform. Elliot Eisner (1991) refers to the researcher's quality of intellectual versatility – the ability to see many perspectives at once (p. 49). This second perspective

exposes some of the tacit background of Québec's educational reform and the *Inchauspé Report* (Rogers, 1983).

### 3. A personal, practical perspective of the reform.

Elliot Eisner (1991) explains that where traditional research progresses serially – each step leading to the next – qualitative research employs several parallel processes at once, each procedure highlighting the same components from a different perspective (p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) call this “...interdisciplinary triangulation” (p. xiii). The qualitative approach is constructivist and integrative at once; new knowledge is continuously reintegrated into unanswered questions and old questions are revised based on new experiences. Eisner (1991) suggests this kind of research results in a plurality of truths – an ambiguity that characterizes all qualitative research projects.

The third perspective in this investigation of the reform was the most dynamic. This portion of the study was based on personal, practical experiences with applications of Québec's educational reform. The experiences that contributed to this perspective occurred within a school board administration building where I initiated and facilitated a small study group and a series of information sessions on the reform. From within this third perspective I focused on the following question: (3) what conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values? The two perspectives of the reform described above are ultimately bound – literally and figuratively – by texts. The purpose for including a practical

perspective was to provide a basis for examining the same ideas in real-life settings attached to everyday practices. I wanted to experience the principles articulated in Québec's reform and observe how one group of educators were supporting the reform's application. During the study group portion of this investigation, I was a non-pedagogical employee (non-teaching) within a large school board and I initiated the project from within an employee group not officially implicated in the reform. The periods of personal, practical experiences provided me with secondary data about the reform and gave me a forum for reflecting on my theoretical learning. Through these experiences, I became conscious of how my prior beliefs, shaped by theory, were coming together with real-life practices in actual educational contexts. The experiences provided me with an opportunity for rich reflexive learning.

The face of Québec society is changing. One of the purposes underlying this educational reform is to create learning environments that will nurture the development of citizens capable of handling the multifaceted and layered decisions facing such a diverse populace. Implicit in achieving this goal is the assumption that it is possible to transform formal educational practices, policies, and structures to respond to changing value systems and beliefs. I initially created a study group at the school board as a means for bringing together educators and non-pedagogical employees within an institution that was in the process of implementing Québec's reform. The idea was to test the porosity of the institution's structures to respond to an expanded notion of a community of learners. The principles of qualitative research described at the beginning of this chapter, and that flow through all three perspectives in this investigation of the reform, originate with the



concept that humans learn to construct their world through experience. Gadamer (2000) says human experience relies on confirmation; where none exists, the experience is reconfigured and we seek new confirmation (p. 351). The personal, practical perspective of the reform permitted me to conflate the theoretical ideas about education and democracy, and the critical analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* and attach them to experiences. This is the dialectical process that linked theory to practice.

Below is a description of the strategies and procedures adopted during the study group portion of this inquiry. I explain why I made certain choices, what dilemmas I faced, what bargains I struck, and how I observed, recorded, facilitated, and participated during every stage of the project. As much as possible, every decision I made was directed towards learning more about democratic values in action – what Sharan Merriam (1988) calls “...meaning in context” (p. 3). The formation and facilitation of the study group resulted from a conscious decision to create an experiential learning environment through which to study the reform. I subsequently worked full-time on the construction of the adult education reform and these experiences supplied an unanticipated source of secondary data from which to interpret the reform’s stated principles. However, because the adult education project is still in progress, these work experiences only inadvertently informed the personal, practical perspective in this study. Consequently, below I describe only those procedures I followed in relation to the study group and information sessions.

### Choosing to create a study group.

As I stated earlier, the methods portion of this investigation altered over time as I constantly repositioned myself to enhance the value of the overall study. In the beginning stages of my investigation, I envisioned that the creation of a study group would serve as an on-going action research project within the school board administration building where I worked. But when my full-time employment changed, it took me out of the non-pedagogical employee category and, ultimately, out of the building where the study group was situated. I was neither able to directly participate in the project nor sustain its momentum. Eventually, these self-created experiences were replaced by authentic work-related experiences that took me to the heart of the reform project. As my involvement in the study group diminished, I gained a new perspective on its workings, on my intentions in creating it in the first place, and on its value in the overall investigation.

Action research principles are relational, collaborative, and steeped in democratic values. Because I originally conceived of the study group as an action research project it suited my purposes to design a research project framed by broad questions and only very general objectives so that the process of discovery would be continual (Hubbard & Power, 1993, p. 5). I began with an overarching notion of what I was searching for – democratic values attached to real-life practices – and an idea of where I might find the practices I wanted to examine – in the everyday work lives of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals within the school board where I worked. The literature about qualitative research stresses how crucial the biography of the researcher is to her research (Merriam, 1988, McTaggart, 1991, Rogers, 1993). Merriam (1988) suggests a clear and

coherent worldview helps the researcher invent and discover as she proceeds through instances of ambiguity (p. 39). Gadamer (2000) says there is wholeness in the fact that we study ourselves through qualitative research, "...the homogeneity of subject and object" (p. 222). To learn about democracy requires processes that are themselves socially constructed and recursive.

DeVault and McCoy (2000) describe institutional ethnography as an architectural pathway through the workplace. The administration of my school board, in the early stages of Québec's reform, announced its intention to build a learning organization as its framework for the construction and implementation of this project. By definition, this proposal implicated the entire school board community. Because the concept of community is integral to philosophical theories about democracy, to learning organizations, and to Québec's reform, the study group created an opportunity to do an applied analysis of these ideas within the school board. I used 'purposive sampling' to select the participants for the study group (Merriam, 1988). Support staff and non-pedagogical professionals are the school board's front-line workers and their job is to understand and disseminate the institution's official discourse to the public (DeVault & McCoy, 2000). My question at the outset of the study group project concerned what role support staff and non-pedagogical professionals could play in the construction and implementation of Québec's educational reform in light of the school board's decision to build a learning organization. I wondered how the school board would expand its traditional concept of an educational community to include these hitherto excluded employee groups. Historically, institutions do not attribute agency to support staff. In

Chapter Four I discuss in detail my reasons for choosing this particular group of employees as participants, the number of people who took part in the study, our schedule of meetings, and our actions.

The creation and subsequent actions of the study group took place in the administration building and operated in two phases, the project's emergent design allowing for that possibility. Phase-one of the project began in January 2001 and ended in June 2001. This phase, which I refer to as the 'Research Study Group', followed a discussion group format comprised of meetings held every second week. The active portion of Phase-two began in September 2001 and ended in April 2002. Phase-two of the project consisted of three information sessions comprised of group activities that were open to all support staff and non-pedagogical professionals from the administration building.

At the beginning of Phase-one of the research project, the meetings of the Research Study Group, I believed whatever role we were going to play within the school board's learning community would be enhanced by our knowledge of the reform's content – declarative knowledge. The initial meetings of the Research Study Group represented a passive, static form of learning. We simply absorbed, through reading and discussion, as much as possible about the content of Québec's reform. But genuine learning, in whatever context, generates ideas and certain kinds of ideas spawn actions. The Research Study Group set three actions into motion that ultimately revealed value-laden administrative practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The actions were initially designed to test the limits of our role as a study group within the school board's administration building but

the process of creating the actions, the anticipation of waiting for responses, and the answers we received – or, in some cases, never received – began to alter our focus. I started to notice elements that were, at first glance, peripheral to my inquiry. I realized that as intelligent, capable, functioning adults we were constructing and interpreting knowledge about the reform within our study group, while in our roles as support staff and non-pedagogical professionals we remained marginal to the educational community. Although I began the project with general questions about the study group's role, such as how much knowledge of the reform was necessary to participate as full members of the learning community, the issues that emerged did not concern our knowledge of the reform's content; the group began to exemplify some of the reform's principles. We began to construct our own knowledge and interpretations of the reform's principles. I became interested in how knowledge is generated and applied within communities and whose contributions are deemed legitimate. As democratic citizens within a public institution, every person in the Research Study Group had a right to participate in the interpretation and application of shared knowledge of the reform – procedural knowledge. This is one of the reform's tenets. But the study group was continuously excluded from the official construction of knowledge within its own community. Peter Park (1993) says critical social theory and action research meet on the margins of a community. I began to search for intersections where the values espoused and implied by this reform, based on democratic education and citizenship, converged with our everyday experiences as non-pedagogical employees of the school board. Ernest Stringer (1996) suggests qualitative researchers in the field expect something to change as a result of their research. I became increasingly interested in how members of the Research Study Group

saw themselves; how our concept of self was both influenced by and influenced the role we played in the larger school board community. I dropped my initial discourse about learning the reform's content. By freeing the group from that agenda we had time to share and explore new ways of thinking about education and learning. We became active learners as we generated our own interpretations of education, democracy, and the development of the self. Democracy requires a high level of individual participation and a sense of responsibility towards democratic processes. Learning participatory inclusive citizenship not only takes practice; it requires a learning environment that encourages dialogue and sharing across differences. The later, less structured sessions of the Research Study Group were rich with learning and spawned some wonderful ideas about how to improve school board practices directly affecting our employee groups. We took ownership of our work world through actions that attempted to intervene in the hierarchical power structure of the institution. Our confidence to challenge the status quo was fuelled by the welcoming image the administration created through its talk of becoming a learning organization. We discussed the institution's responsibility to honour its official discourse. Each time our actions went unacknowledged, we debated our next action. I began to realize that the value of the Research Study Group, located in the critical quality of our on-going dialogue, was in the reflexive learning environment we had created around the reform. The creative potential of this emerging phenomenon became my priority as a researcher. We were participating in the construction of knowledge, albeit unacknowledged by the power structure within the school board. We were coalescing as a group of learners and our sessions were rich in content and form. We began to model the very educational principles the reform describes. Through this

process we became acquainted with one another, built a sense of trust and community within the group, and formulated an unofficial educational philosophy.

One of our actions ultimately resulted in opening the Research Study Group to more participants. Phase-two of the project involved over fifty support staff and non-pedagogical professionals as well as a handful of pedagogical consultants and administrators. But despite increased interest in the project within the targeted employee groups, I continued to question if and when our ideas about, and experiences of, the reform would be welcomed into the official discourse of the school board. The final information session with this extended group generated a further action but, again, its effect on management revealed the low priority and marginalization of our needs within the learning community. I discuss the details of this and other actions in Chapter Four.

#### Data collection, synthesis, and analysis.

Because the initial purpose of the study group was to learn more about how a school board might nurture the development of democratic values, every component of the project was guided by a desire to remain open to instances of democratic values in practice. Throughout the data collection, synthesis, and analysis portions of the study group, I relied on the same open-ended, emergent principles of qualitative research that directed this entire investigation into Québec's reform. It takes time for patterns to emerge in a social setting but after almost three years of studying the same site and then comparing my initial interpretations with later reflections on the same ideas, I am now

confident enough to form tentative conclusions from the evidence (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Hubbard & Power, 1993).

#### Data collection.

The data came from multiple sources. I have the action research project proposal submitted to the Research Committee of the school board and the 'teaser' that appeared in the school board's newsletter before the holiday break in December 2000. I also have the 'request for participants' that appeared in the same newsletter in January 2001. I have: field texts of the meetings, some scripted and others tape-recorded; a collection of documents; a wide range of materials such as interviews and a reflective journal; two brief news articles that were published in the school board's newsletter during the project's existence. For the first two months of meetings, I took copious notes at the Research Study Group sessions and then transcribed and distributed a synthesis of the notes before the next session. I struggled with the idea of taping the sessions but worried it would alter my relationship with the participants by making my role as researcher more explicit. Because I was a secretary for many years, I am skilled at taking detailed minutes of meetings. Initially, I was confident that I was accurately documenting the content of every session. However, because I was also reading about the principles of action research throughout this period, I became conscious of the concept of voice – of retaining the ideas expressed in the actual words and inflections of the participants (Hubbard & Power, 1993). In early April I asked if I could tape-record the meetings and everyone agreed with the request. I have recordings of one-on-one interviews conducted with each participant at the end of Phase-one of the Research Study Group in June 2001. I have



various drafts of letters we sent to management as a result of our actions. There are copies of electronic mail to and from participants with reminders of meeting schedules, apologies for absences, and editing suggestions for some of the letters we wrote to the administration. I kept attendance at each meeting for my own records although attendance was, of course, voluntary. I have copies of the content we discussed throughout the sessions. These include: exercises that introduce reform concepts and vocabulary; a leadership style questionnaire; newspaper articles about the reform; newspaper articles about workplace environments that various participants brought and distributed to the group; an employee satisfaction survey that the Director General asked us to complete and critique before it was dispersed throughout the administration building; and, a power-point document the Director General presented to members of the Research Study Group and, later, at the information sessions during Phase-two of the project. Also from Phase-two, I have pages of notes from the planning meetings about the three information sessions and an assortment of potential educational activities that were discussed by the planners. I have the invitation and registration forms that were distributed to support staff and non-pedagogical professionals through department directors. I did not take notes or tape-record those sessions because I was one of the animators. Immediately following each session I summarized its content in as much detail as I could recall. For each of the three information sessions I have: a list of participants by department; copies of their evaluation forms as well as a one-page summary of their comments; the group activities; and, the participants' pictorial representations of their ideas that were created as part of the closing activity for each session. Throughout both phases of the project I kept a journal to record the events

around me. The journal writing gave me a forum for recording informal casual conversations that occurred in my office or in the corridors of the building and that had a peripheral impact on the project. There was a period of several weeks during Phase-one of the project when I became deeply insecure about my role as researcher/facilitator. I wrote about these doubts in the journal. All of the above, together with my recollections and impressions of events and conversations, constitute the data for this action research project. Hubbard and Power (1993) suggest that a researcher should save everything from her research site and utilize as many sources of data collection as possible to maximize the emergent nature of the study (p. 27).

#### Synthesis and analysis.

Because the project remained active for almost two years I collected and recorded copious amounts of data throughout this period without formally analyzing it. Institutional time is slow-moving. Given that the project was part of my full-time work environment, instances of formal discussion and analysis were constrained by space and time. However, casual encounters in the corridors and long periods of reflection formed part of my on-going informal analysis about the research project. J. Nias (1993) writes about the luxury of longitudinal research. She says having a long expanse of time to reflect about the data takes the emphasis off data collection and allows the researcher to concentrate on her interpretations of the data (Nias, 1993, p. 145). The Research Study Group's decision to add Phase-two to the project – the three information sessions that took place over an entire school year – afforded me the opportunity to delay a detailed formal analysis of the data from Phase-one for an additional year. The choice to continue

the project also provided an unanticipated source of new data focussed on the same core concepts. Qualitative research is described as a series of recursive procedures whereby the researcher asks a question, facilitates actions, reflects on the actions, changes the question, facilitates new actions, and reflects on the new actions (McTaggart, 1991). Over a period of almost two years, I made literally hundreds of decisions and choices guided by an uninterrupted cycle of learning, reflection, self-discovery, and application. The researcher is continuously evaluating what is in front of her (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

When I finally decided to bind the investigation with a date, I synthesized the data first before analyzing it. I adopted Hugh Mercer Curtler's (1997) theory of identifying regional properties – what could be called themes – by searching for patterns and relationships between local properties. I read, listened to, and examined the various sources of data that comprised the local properties and looked for emergent patterns. For example, I reviewed the questions administrators had asked and the concerns they had expressed during the initial approval process for the research project. Their questions revealed certain concepts about the ideas under investigation in this study. One committee member asked how I would remain objective if I acted as both researcher and participant in the study group; another committee member asked several questions about how much time support staff participants would be absent from their desks as a result of the study group. Each of these questions represents a particular vision of an educational community – a vision that legitimates certain ideas and values while negating the worth of others. I also extracted themes from the study group discussions. As mentioned above,

I took copious notes during each session of the study group and then transcribed the notes with an analytical perspective. I then distributed the notes at the next study session and participants were invited to change, add to, and comment on the text. This created a form of cataloguing that highlighted ideas and themes repeated and revisited over time. At various junctures during the two phases of the project, we decided it was important to elicit some response about our ideas from the administration. Their responses then informed our discussions which, in turn, deepened our critical analysis of the reform in action. From a researcher's perspective, this recursive process helped me build and track key issues. The themes I identified through this feedback system were then looped through my own understanding as I analysed the data. In Chapter Four, using Curtler's (1997) theory for explicating values from local properties, I discuss and analyze the most salient themes that emerged from this study.

By the time I identified themes from the personal, practical portion of my investigation, I had read numerous historical and contemporary theories of democracy and education and had completed a text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*. And I had added a new layer of practical experience with the reform to my analysis of the data from the study group through my work experience in adult education. Eisner (1991) says qualitative research begins with the researcher's prior knowledge. I was conscious of how other parts of the investigation were shaping and influencing my search for themes in the practical portion of the study. Eisner (1988) explains that language limits knowledge if we bring too few explanatory frameworks to bear on our experiences. The literature review with its complex continuum of theories about democracy and education as well as Charles

Taylor's (1989) formulation about modernity's complex sense of self informed my text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* and then all of these ideas fed my analysis of the personal, practical experiences of the reform in action. Eisner (1991) cautions researchers that evidence is never incontestable and the process of gathering data is never complete. But he also points out that qualitative research based on critical social theory is not about resolving issues or finding answers; its purpose is interpretive – to deepen our understanding of a social event or phenomenon (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990).

Gadamer (2000) suggests experience is a reliable way to learn about reality because of, not in spite of, our prejudices. He explains that even critical reflections are steeped in preconceptions and assumptions that emanate from our traditions; a critical examination of external experiences reveals our prejudices (Gadamer, 2000, p. 69). If we are receptive to learning, every experience teaches about the self and the other. Experience leads from knowledge of the particular to knowledge of the general through "...receptivity to the otherness" (Gadamer, 2000, p. 17). Research is an editing process. As researcher, I am responsible for constructing an analysis that elucidates the questions I am exploring; I choose which examples and themes will best illustrate my own learning (Hubbard & Power, 1993, p. 86). Another researcher analyzing the same data from a different perspective would not make the same presentation.

### Relationship to the theory.

Québec's educational reform has a conceptual component that is difficult to grasp without procedures for understanding how people interpret and give it meaning. This is what the school board where I worked was struggling to do with the creation of a learning organization as a strategy for the construction and implementation of the reform. My decision to mix theories of democracy, the *Inchauspé Report*, and school board support staff and non-pedagogical professionals as a means for learning more about the educational reform was an emergent concept. A reform about and for democracy will only succeed, even minimally, if it is supported by a structure that is participatory, inclusive, constructivist, and interpretive. The system practices I envisage are very different from the traditional hierarchically-based processes that continue to permeate social institutions such as school boards, schools, and adult education centres. Critical social theory is a good fit for the interpretive framework of the personal, practical perspective of the reform because it is concerned with social change that begins with the individual – the idea that change can start with the actions of a single person whose knowledge eventually becomes part of the system's self-learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

The construction and implementation of democratic values takes practice and time. From years of experience as a support staff employee at the school board, I knew at the outset of this project that the institution's structure and ideology serve to marginalize certain individuals and groups because of their title and job status. Through anecdotal evidence from colleagues over a period of years, I also knew that many support staff members

experienced the same feelings of marginalization and lack of agency within the institution as I had. I wanted to learn more about how an educational institution, constructing and implementing a reform about and for democracy, could create the conditions necessary to expand their concept of community – to reach out to people on the margins of the institution. Janet Finch (1988) says the purpose of qualitative research projects within institutions is to contribute to debates that concern policy-making; policies reflect institutional values and point to an organization's priorities. Even minor policies reproduce a viewpoint about the distribution of knowledge and power within an institution. If policy-making influences what goes on in schools and adult education centres, then an institution's concept of community will find its way into every judgment. This personal, practical perspective of the reform created experiences that illuminated important ideas – constructing situations to study what is not in evidence (Møller, 1993, p. 9). Emancipatory research emanates from real people critical of the status quo who are interested in creating an analytical awareness about the power relations in front of them (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). The study group and its actions attempted to discover some of the values behind what Møller (1993) terms the "...rhetoric of school restructuring" (p. 6).

#### Ethics and responsibilities of the researcher.

Gadamer (2000) cautions that the creation of research experiences with and on people is a moral exercise. We invite people to share their personal traditions and horizons of meaning and then we interpret their actions and reactions through our own individual understanding of the world (Gadamer, 2000, p. 469). We are, quite simply, incapable of

knowing what they know. The ethics and responsibilities of the qualitative researcher towards her participants are arguably the most important dimensions of studying practical applications of the reform.

### Ethics.

Sharan Merriam (1988) lists the characteristics that serve a qualitative researcher in the field. The school board's application form for authorization to conduct a research project on site did not ask me to name the character traits that qualified me for such a project. I suspect this is usually the case. Nor does responding to a checklist of personal qualities such as honesty and integrity enhance the actual honesty and integrity of the researcher in the field. Qualitative research is an exercise in the construction of knowledge that draws on the interpretive abilities and prior knowledge of the researcher. This activity is intrinsically ethical. Every qualitative researcher who reads the literature understands this concept intellectually.

But one of the ideas at the heart of this thesis is the difference between espoused and lived values. Because the study group project was located in my place of work with people I interacted with on a regular basis, maintaining collegiality was as important in the long term as the results of the research. I also have a personal commitment to promoting the value of education. I am as idealistic and hopeful about the democratic potential of informal educational practices as the authors of the *Inchauspé Report* are about the democratic potential of formal schooling practices. I believe that people who



participate in the construction of their own knowledge become more aware of its implications and its potential impact on themselves and others. The construction of knowledge opens our learning to a diversity of viewpoints and the concept of community expands as a result. But passionate idealism comes from deep beliefs; my constant feelings of self-doubt and continuous questioning of every choice and decision I made throughout the two forms of practical experience referred to here, are indicators that I was acutely aware of the moral dimension to these experiences.

Two ethical dilemmas in particular concerned me about the study group portion of this investigation. Møller (1993) explains that dilemmas arise when a researcher is confronted with contradictions between her espoused values and what is in front of her (p. 23). I was fully cognizant of the first dilemma going into the project and I shared it openly with the participants. I am married to the person who was, during the duration of the study group, the Director General of the school board where I worked. His was the position of ultimate authority within the institution our study group was investigating and – eventually – criticizing. At the same time, I was a member of the same employee group as the other participants and we shared a history of marginalization within the organization because of our job status. We spoke the same language and empathized with each other's stories. This formed a bond and basis of trust between members of the Research Study Group. I addressed this dilemma initially by disclosing everything at our first meeting. I talked about: my relationship to the Director General; the confidentiality of our sessions; and, my profound commitment to creating an open, honest research environment. But, as Walter Feinberg (2001) states, we do not always know what we do not know and so our

disclosures are never complete (p. 19). In Chapter Four, I elaborate on how this dilemma influenced the direction of the Research Study Group.

The second dilemma was unexpected. Throughout Phase-one, the meetings of the Research Study Group and Phase-two, the three information sessions, I shared the same employee status as the participants. In April 2002, I applied for and received a promotion that removed me from the two employee groups represented by the participants. We were no longer 'we'; I became a pedagogical consultant with access to the official discourse of the school board. I only understood this as a dilemma when I sensed a strained relationship with some of the participants. There is a vulnerability that accompanies even professional relationships after people have shared personal experiences and frustrations. Møller (1993) explains the source of this sensitivity as the deep feelings that are aroused in situations of trust. Once I was no longer an 'in-dweller', the term Maykut and Morehouse (1994) use to refer to researchers who inhabit the same world as their participants, my relationship to the centre of power in the organization changed. For many reasons including my job status, Phase-two of the project lost momentum and participants. I became frustrated by people's lack of motivation because I believed we could make a difference within the school board community. I realized as well that I wanted the project to be a success – I wanted to be able to report that substantive change occurred as a result of the project. But there is an ethical dimension not only to what we do as qualitative researchers but to how we report it. I have an obligation to remain honest and transparent to the project and its participants even when that means reporting lacklustre results.

### Responsibilities.

In a qualitative research project where reality is co-created by many participants but a lone researcher retains the public voice that speaks on their behalf, her responsibility to their stories is paramount. Patti Lather (1991) suggests that representing others is a central component of qualitative research. I am profoundly relieved that I tape-recorded – despite my initial reluctance – more than half of the Research Study Group’s sessions. When I listen to the voices of the participants I am carried back to our meeting room with the smells of sandwiches and soup wafting through our lunchtime conversations. It is my responsibility to be faithful to that environment and accurately portray the collegiality amongst participants as we struggled to nudge a deeply entrenched system of institutional practices. I asked the participants to become public learners and I fuelled expectations that we could affect change. I did these things in order to create situations where lived institutional values would emerge. “To take unequal, multiply-sited and conflicted subject positions into account is to foreground the unsaid and the unthought, the partial and open-ended nature of our efforts to create more democratic ways of knowing” (Lather, 1991, p. 99).

Møller (1993) argues there are always trade-offs in qualitative research. One trade-off concerns the power and ownership of a project. I was a participant throughout both phases of the school board project and I cared deeply about its existence. This enabled me to notice things that someone concentrating solely on doing research might not have noticed (Bell & Nutt, 2002). But I was also a researcher. Whether or not the actions taken

by the Research Study Group produced lasting results, the data I collected remains in my possession. It is part of my investigation into the democratic potential of Québec's reform and now constitutes part of the perspective presented here. There is no innocent place to stand in qualitative research. I will happily share the results of my research with interested participants either informally or in written form, but official recognition for the research will be credited to me. This is one of the ironies of conducting qualitative research for traditional purposes. This reality underscores my accountability to the participants – to interpret their viewpoints as accurately as possible and to ceaselessly reinvest my learning in research about the reform.

#### Summary of personal, practical perspective.

One of the reasons the government commissioned the *Inchauspé Report* was to create an educational reform that would address the changing face of Québec society. The creation of a personal, practical perspective of the reform, particularly through the work of the study group, provided a means for examining some of the conditions needed to nurture the development of democratic values within a public institution. I studied the school board's capacity to expand its membership to include the ideas and contributions of hitherto non-members. This was a project aimed at creating lived examples of participatory citizenship and democratic practices within a public space devoted to teaching these same values. "Field studies usually find the causes of educational problems in the basic character of the organizations in which they arise" (Becker, 1990, p. 234).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Organization of the Chapter

The foundational documents for Québec's educational reform, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools* (1997) (referred to here as the *Inchauspé Report*), and the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (2002), name democracy as the reform's philosophical underpinning. In the introduction to this thesis, I said that one of the assumptions in the construction and implementation of this reform is that some agreement already exists about what counts as the best or most desirable form of democracy; this belief system then serves to justify a particular vision of educational reform. In this chapter I examine the reform from a theoretical perspective in order to explicate the first of the three questions named in the introduction to the thesis: (1i) what models of democracy are currently being discussed and debated in contemporary Western cultures (1ii) and what values and attendant concept of self are at the heart of each model? In Chapter Three of the thesis, this theory is applied to a contextual perspective of the reform and, in particular, to a critical analysis of the content of the *Inchauspé Report*. In Chapter Four, the theory explicated in this chapter informs the practical perspective of the reform based on working with, and reflecting on, its principles in everyday contexts.

The current chapter is divided into two sections. Section One lays the groundwork for a later examination of the relationship between democracy, education, and the development of the self by beginning with the concepts illuminated by Charles Taylor (1989) in his

book, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Through Taylor's (1989) analysis, I present the major themes that continue to comprise our complex and often contradictory concept of self today. The three themes explored by Taylor (1989) are morality, individuality, and rationality. Although Taylor (1989) does not explicitly tie these three themes to conceptions of democracy and the self, Paul Ricoeur observes that our present-day conceptions of democracy can be understood in relation to Taylor's thesis about the sources of our modern identity (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 26). Ricoeur's (2000) observation points to an important link between our conception of the self and the three most prevalent models of democracy debated in contemporary philosophical literature – republican, liberal, and deliberative democracy.

In Section Two of this chapter, I leave Taylor behind but borrow his main ideas to shed light on how each conception of democracy advances – and is advanced by – a particular notion of the self. The aim of exploring this theory is to provide my overall investigation of the reform with a conceptual framework for identifying whether a particular model of democracy and concept of self dominates Québec's current educational reform project. The purposes and directives of education, as well as its beneficiaries, alter according to which model of democracy and attendant concept of self is privileged. This reform is a major province-wide initiative whose value and coherence are tied to the fundamental principles it is underwriting. Because this is a socio-constructivist project, our choices for how to proceed should be informed by critical analysis. In Section Two, I choose theories that highlight present-day discussions about democracy, education, and the self. The treatment of these philosophical works is inevitably selective, concentrating on the

features that engage with the questions at issue in this investigation. The theories represent a continuum of ideas from practical forms of everyday schooling to critical social theories that only indirectly address the education of citizens. I group the literature under three headings: 'schooling and democracy', 'democracy and the institutionalization of education', and 'democracy and informal education'. The categories represent a range of educational and democratic discourse from the particular to the general. The first group of philosophers analyzes the role formal schooling plays in creating learning environments where interpersonal relationships are nurtured as a means for constructing common values and knowledge essential to the notion of community. I situate these theories within the category called 'schooling and democracy'. The second group of theorists in this study looks at how the structure, organization, and distribution of knowledge influence individuals' learning potential and development. These writers study how democratic values such as equality, autonomy, and individual rights lose their intensity as they move through system practices and policies. These theories describe how restrictions and inequalities perpetuated through patterns of efficiency and instrumental reason often thwart individual autonomy. I organize this group under the heading 'democracy and the institutionalization of education'. Finally, I explore a group of philosophers for whom lifelong learning permeates every social interaction or practice. Their contributions to contemporary debate about democracy are broad and cut across all public institutions and practices in the Western world. Their preoccupation is with the social evolution of human knowledge within pluralist societies through forms of shared communication. I call this final category 'democracy and informal education'.

## Section One

### Democracy and the Concept of Self

In a collection of essays edited by Seyla Benhabib (1996), Habermas describes three contemporary models of democracy: republican, liberal, and deliberative (p. 6). According to Habermas's descriptions, the task of politics in a republican democracy is to articulate a common good with an emphasis on the solidarity of citizens; politics, in a liberal democracy, provide a means for coordinating divergent interests and preferences by accommodating conflict and self-interests; and, in a deliberative democracy, policy-making occurs in multiple sites based on evolving democratic procedures in an attempt to bridge community needs and individual rights. Although all three models of democracy borrow from, overlap, and intersect one another, each contains distinguishing characteristics. One of the most distinctive features between varying models is their conception of the roles and responsibilities of the individual in relation to others – differing concepts of the self.

Charles Taylor (1989), in his book, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*, explores the origins of our modern identity, or our sources of morality. After a lengthy investigation, Taylor (1989) concludes that three themes are at the heart of our modern concept of self: from religion or metaphysics we seek universalism through morality; from the Enlightenment we learn to value progress through science and rationality; and through the Romantic Movement we become conscious of our uniqueness and individuality. Each theme combines with the next until, according to Taylor (1989), our modern concept of self contains a web of complex and sometimes contradictory



impulses and desires. Taylor's (1989) thesis about the sources of the modern concept of self is important for two reasons: one to do with structure and the other with content. First, Taylor (1989) brilliantly harmonizes ancient and modern philosophy by shouldering his central themes as he moves forward in time; both his journey and final destination help to frame the contemporary philosophical theories in Section Two of this chapter. Second, modern-day notions about the self contain a key to discussions about democracy. At the heart of every form of government is a particular concept of the self and human relationships, whether articulated or assumed. Central to theories of democracy is our vision of the democratic self and what attributes of the self are to be fostered or, in some cases, controlled. Kant attributes human dignity to our autonomous ability to determine our own values (Gutmann, 1992). But autonomy can be interpreted in terms of the individual only or the individual in relation to society. Autonomy is one of the overall goals of Québec's educational reform in the youth sector and the primary goal of the reform in the adult sector. How autonomy is interpreted is key to the reform's evolution and the choices educators make along the way. Based on a model of democracy coherent with the needs of a complex pluralist society such as Québec, it is important to investigate which of Taylor's (1989) sources of the self should be developed through education and whether this vision is consistent with the vision of Québec's current educational reform project.

#### Sources of the self: morality.

Taylor (1989) begins with Plato. Here the notion is introduced of a being whose morality is oriented to the good. Taylor (1989) explains that Plato's conception of the good and

moral order discovered through reason is different from later theories of morality in one crucial sense; human beings, according to Plato, come to understand an existent moral order but are not the creators of that morality. In later theories, represented most notably through the writings of Descartes, the self constructs its own moral order. But, for Plato, to be reasonable means understanding a pre-existing moral order (Taylor, 1989, p. 115). Both Plato and his student, Aristotle, support the idea of democratic rule as the lesser of many evils, including tyranny, anarchy, and monarchy. Plato believes that the state should be governed by virtuous men capable of deriving knowledge of the good through rigorous and disciplined intellectual and moral pursuits. During this historical period, democracy means rule by the people but only those people capable of understanding how to interpret their public responsibility. This includes only free and educated men (Dahl, 1998, p. 13). In Plato's *Republic*, he demonstrates that the needs, security, and happiness of citizens are met through the "polis" or city-state. Both Plato and Aristotle are passionate proponents of the pursuit of knowledge, from forms of practical learning to knowledge about how we think and learn. Aristotelian education focuses on perception and moral reasoning and is crucial for the development of humane citizens who will become democratic leaders.

Knowledge leads men to discover a moral order created by God. This is at the centre of the theme of religion and metaphysics – morality – as Taylor's account moves to the historical period characterized by St. Augustine. During an era spanning almost one thousand years, the Church comes to exert more control over the beliefs and behaviour of citizens than any official form of government. St. Augustine introduces Christianity into

the concept of self. He believes that God resides inside the self and directs it towards the good and moral life. Taylor (1989) explains that Plato and St. Augustine both perceive a natural order made by God and discovered through the self, but where Plato relies on reason and intellect for the discovery of morality, St. Augustine turns to love and devotion. Taylor (1989) says the concept of an inner self, conscious of its outer reflection, originates in the philosophy of St. Augustine. He is the first philosopher to use language that reflects this dichotomy: "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that it was Augustine who introduced the inwardness of radical reflexivity and bequeathed it to the Western tradition of thought." (Taylor, 1989, p.131). Education is dominated by Christian teachings throughout this long historical period. There is little tolerance for knowledge that is neither religious nor practical. Free thinkers and questioners are labeled as heretics and are subject to punishment. The concept of democratic rule governed by secular laws developed by virtuous citizens all but disappears during this epoch, with the exception of small city-states in remote regions of Europe (Dunn, 1992; Dahl, 1998).

#### Sources of the self: rationality.

From St. Augustine and medieval philosophy, Taylor's (1989) account moves to René Descartes whose concept of self remains so durable that its basic tenets continue to permeate philosophical discussions today. For Descartes, the self is not only separate from the external world but disengages from the world it needs to understand. Where Plato's use of reason allows humans to discover the true order of things situated outside them, Descartes' rationality requires humans to construct an order based on the acquisition and not the discovery of truth. Descartes "...brought to completion, or very

nearly to completion, the dualism of mind and matter which began with Plato and was developed, largely for religious reasons, by Christian philosophy” (Russell, 1946, p. 551). Taylor (1989) explains that, with Descartes, reason is no longer understood as a natural attribute of the moral self. Rather it is a particular way of thinking controlled within the self, moral or otherwise. Reason becomes the unifying force for all forms of knowledge during the seventeenth century (Cassirer, 1951). As the authority of the Church diminishes, the qualities of good and evil attributed through Christian concepts in St. Augustine change to conditions of belief and disbelief in the rational self of Descartes. No source higher than reason is held accountable for our determination of good and evil. Taylor (1989) calls Descartes the founder of modern individualism (p. 182). Following from Descartes’ philosophical writings, the separation between moral and scientific knowledge is merged in the dominant spirit of rationality. Descartes’ philosophy is predicated on the notion that learning is a form of doubt and questioning. The idea that skepticism propels the pursuit of knowledge is at the heart of much modern-day science where the emphasis is on argument and proof. The shift from the authority of the Church to the authority of the individual and science opens the door for new forms of democracy (Russell, 1946, p. 479).

#### Sources of the self: individuality.

The third source for the modern concept of self, according to Charles Taylor (1989), comes from the philosophical movement called Romanticism, characterized by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As awareness that the world is external to the self begins to dominate human perceptions, people strive to find expression for individual

differences. Partly in reaction to the long period of control the Church exerts over personal beliefs and partly out of the growing recognition of an autonomous self, the Romantic period marks the beginning of the declaration of individual rights. A quest for self-fulfillment, what Taylor (1989) calls "...the moral consecration of sentiment", adds new layers to the formation of our concept of self (p. 294). In Rousseau, this includes a dramatic alignment with nature. Contact with the natural world reveals people's innermost feelings and sentiments, their natural state. Romanticism gives free reign to expression and significantly changes the Western concept of art, from imitation of reality to the manifestation of hidden thoughts and emotions. Rousseau's belief in democracy comes out of his recognition that, in theory, it is a form of government supportive of individual liberty. In reality, the Romantic Movement revolts against all manner of social bonds, including political ones and "...made social co-operation impossible..." (Russell, 1946, p. 659). In *The Roots of Romanticism*, Isaiah Berlin (1965) writes that the Romantic Movement begins as a liberator and ends by enslaving all of Western thought thereafter (p. 5). Berlin (1965) explains that the movement is largely an attack on the lifelessness of Enlightenment thinking and its search for a "...rational ordering of human experience" (p. 43). If Enlightenment thinking leads to generalities and a dilution of the human spirit as the source for all creative struggles, then Romanticism reignites the drive for a passionate involvement in life.

### Summary of Section One

The history of Western philosophy has bequeathed three central themes that together constitute the sources of our modern identity. Morality comes from metaphysics and

religion, and fills modern discourse with questions about morals, values, and ethics. Rationality comes from the Enlightenment and frames the concepts of reason and cognition that shape our perceptions about the grounds for public policy and decision-making in modern Western institutions. Individuality comes from the Romantic Movement and is central in modern-day discussions about individual rights and freedoms. In the section below, I introduce several theorists whose ideas are grouped according their notions about the relationship between education, democracy, and the development of the self. Taylor's (1989) discussion becomes an analytical tool for shedding light on how conceptions of the self are framed and advanced by various theories of education and models of democracy.

## Section Two

### Theories of Education, Democracy and the Self

Every theory of democracy shares an essential principle of participation (Dahl, 1998). But each model of democracy represents a unique interpretation of this principle derived primarily from a particular vision of the self. On one side of this study is the historical development of our modern sense of self, and on the other side are direct applications of democracy, including education for and about democracy. Between theory and practice lies the terrain where our interpretations of democratic ideals are formulated through policy and decision-making. Theory, interpretation, and practice constitute the interrelated elements in the dynamic and ever-changing process we call democracy.

Below, I present three groups of theorists. The first group examines everyday schooling practices. I rely on their theories to understand more about a connected way of learning and living and I associate their ideas with Taylor's moral sense of self. Based on the three very broad categories of democracy Habermas (1996) explicates, a moral conception of self is advanced through the republican model of democracy. The second group of theorists examines the institutionalization of education as part of a public system of organization. These theories look to individuality as the primary source of self. I associate individuality with a liberal model of democracy. The third group of authors takes a broad view of education as the continuously unfolding development of human knowledge. Their theories explicate Taylor's (1989) theme of rationality and I connect their ideas with a deliberative model of democracy. This framework is meant to be elastic and supple; it is intended to organize rather than contain the theories presented below.

#### Schooling and democracy.

In this section, I introduce the reader to some of the ideas of four educational philosophers. These theorists share a common orientation towards the role education, and more specifically schooling, plays in building and maintaining democratic societies. I identify the values at the core of these philosophies and explain how I think they derive from one of Taylor's sources of the modern self. These philosophers are interested in the particulars of education. Theirs is a deep involvement in the everyday. Their words attract us precisely because of their immediacy and passion. They examine questions about knowledge, how it arises, and the best way to teach it. This group of philosophers does not interrogate the continuing existence of schools as social institutions. Rather, they

endorse schooling as a primary resource for the construction of democratic ideals, both through its social organization and the curriculum itself. Included in this category are: Israel Scheffler, Martha Nussbaum, Maxine Greene, and Roger Simon.

A republican model of democracy depends on the development of a moral sense of self whose roots and purpose lie in the construction and maintenance of common values and a shared social purpose. If one were to choose this model of democracy as the justification for decisions about education, then formal schooling practices would focus on building community and shared values.

Israel Scheffler writes about the branch of philosophy called epistemology or the theory of knowledge. Scheffler (1965) says the purpose of educational philosophy is to examine two related but separate issues – knowledge and education (p.2). Knowledge includes our entire intellectual heritage, which is added to and modified on a continuous basis, while education is comprised of the formal and informal practices adopted and adapted as a means for sharing this knowledge with subsequent generations. The dramatic shift that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century from a behaviourist model of epistemology to a constructivist model altered the relationship between knowledge and education – content and form – so that in a constructivist model the two are interdependent. At an interpersonal level, these interdependent elements of epistemology are translated into the acts of teaching and learning. Scheffler (1965) suggests that learning often occurs haphazardly and accidentally, while teaching is a deliberate act with



intentional goals. For Scheffler (1981), the primary goal of all education should be to teach for and about democracy.

Commitment to the ideal of democracy as an organizing principle of society has radical and far-reaching consequences, not only for basic political and legal institutions, but also for the educational conceptions that guide the development of our children...A society committed to the democratic ideal is one that makes peculiarly difficult and challenging demands of its members; it accordingly also makes stringent demands of those processes through which its members are educated. (Scheffler, 1981, p. 436)

The role of education within a democratic ideal is to help develop particular ways of being in relationship with one another. Scheffler (1981) explains that democratic education must teach students how to enlarge their capacity for informed decision-making. By this, he does not mean teaching students a set of mechanical procedures for knowing how and when to make choices. Rather, he suggests methods for teaching students how to critically evaluate arguments, examine evidence, and use independent judgment for determining whether an idea is coherent or logical within a broad framework of democratic principles. Schooling, according to Scheffler (1981), is a moral project and morality cannot be taught as a subject. Moral education is a pervasive orientation towards schooling that aims to develop an atmosphere of trust and openness amongst students who learn to question existing values and beliefs while also recognizing

their own contribution to values formation. Scheffler (1991) explains that his theory of moral education derives from the Aristotelian philosophy through which moral reasoning requires the establishment of basic forms of conduct, or "...the foundations of character in action" (p. 99).

Commitment to a democratic ideal based on values formation leads to questions about how education can develop a sense of self that is consistent with such a project. Scheffler (1991) suggests the answer can be found in teaching processes such as debate, critical thinking, cooperative learning, acceptance of and respect for diversity, recognition of commonalities, and moral reasoning. One method for developing the capacity for moral reasoning is to educate the emotions (Scheffler, 1991, p. 15). Scheffler (1991) adds that conceiving of curricula as a collection of distinct and separate subject disciplines is a narrow approach to education because intelligent action also requires the development of character and judgment. Scheffler (1991) does not dismiss the teaching of specific subject disciplines, but says teaching should emphasize the patterns of interaction between disciplines, as well as the methodology and values that underwrite each discipline. Scheffler (1991) writes that the organization of knowledge, through educational policies, reflects the true beliefs and values of people holding positions of leadership in a society: "Thus the process of educational planning, through which a society mediates its treatment of children's potentialities, is in its style and scope an index of the society's self-image" (p. 21).

Martha Nussbaum and Maxine Greene are educational philosophers who consistently and convincingly draw on literary sources for the teaching and development of moral issues within education. Nussbaum (1990) employs a distinction, taken from Aristotle's ancient philosophy, to demonstrate how literature can serve as a source for moral education. Aristotle, Nussbaum (1990) explains, differentiates between particular and universal properties in life situations. His theory is that people are only able to make choices based on their perceptions about particular instances but when viewed in a larger context, these particular instances become representative of general situations. It is from this broader perspective that universal values are revealed. The moral authority of the situation is manifested when the qualities at the centre of the particular situation are recognized as generalized values. Individuals learn by making choices in everyday situations; communities and societies learn by recognizing the general patterns of which the particular is one instance. By drawing on Aristotle's distinction between the particular and the general, literature and the arts are rich resources for the development of moral reasoning. Through an engagement with literature or the arts, the imagination carries readers into worlds they will never know in everyday life, and into contact with people who enter their lives as strangers but who become familiar through the revelation of shared values.

And here, we should add, novels once again prove appropriate vehicles for the Aristotelian conception...Thus in their very structure they contain the interplay between the evolving general conception and the rich perception

of the particular; and they teach the reader to navigate resourcefully between those two levels. (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 96)

Martha Nussbaum (1990) argues that the educational leader must combine the qualities of reasonableness, open-mindedness, and generosity of spirit. She refers to Aristotle and his belief that a good public figure must first be a good citizen. Rules and guidelines are often interpreted as a rational framework for human behaviour, but Nussbaum (1990) reinterprets the concept of rationality to include the education of the emotions: “We want leaders whose hearts and imaginations acknowledge the humanity in human beings” (p. 101).

Maxine Greene (1995) advocates exposing students to literature as a powerful method for educating the imagination and teaching about the value of community. She points out that we can only build inclusive democratic communities if we are able to imagine the range of people that will be included. If the powerless, the poor, the illiterate, and the disabled hold no place in our imaginations, Greene (1995) says our communities will fail to create the policies and practices these groups need to thrive and to participate. Greene (1995) adds that ensuring the needs of all members of a community are provided for means more than responding to their physical needs; it also means creating spaces where a diversity of voices can make themselves heard, even very quiet voices. Greene (1988) posits that freedom comes through the kinds of interactions that allow us to reinterpret and redefine our predetermined meanings; in these spaces, choices and perspectives multiply (p. 115). Inclusion of a range of contributions representing a plurality of values will alter existing

communities, school communities among them, where policies and practices are often immersed in values of efficiency and standardization. In an essay entitled, *What Counts as Philosophy of Education?* Greene (1995) writes that the type of cognition referred to as instrumental reason is too limiting for building democratic communities. Its concepts are rigid and their narrow definitions cannot account for ideas such as social justice, citizenship, and human rights (Greene, 1995, p. 9). She invites educators to search for public knowledge systems that will move communities toward democratic ideals based on moral rather than instrumental values. Greene (1995), like Scheffler and Nussbaum, explores the kinds of teaching methods that will engage students in the development of community and foster a sense of responsibility towards others. But, she cautions, teaching students how community values are constructed cannot be interpreted as teaching community values – a practice that represents a form of totalitarianism (Greene, 1995, p. 185). Instead, educators should be responsible for providing students with a variety of situations and activities where they can learn how to recognize, experience, learn from, and accept social obligations and responsibilities. She advocates, in particular, creating conditions that will expose students to multiple perspectives and interpretations about everyday events. Greene (1995) suggests some specific teaching strategies that are effective for educating the imagination and fostering the growth of moral reasoning: exposure to literature, poetry, and the arts; writing assignments where students are required to name and claim their own voices; and, debates concerning issues pertinent to the students' lives. Greene's own philosophical writings are filled with references to literature and poetry. Her texts exemplify her theory that engaging the imagination can create a sense of community. Greene (1995) is resolute in her conviction

that a vision of education for and about democracy must emerge from within the educational community (p.61). Because educational administrators write their beliefs into their policies, they must be awake to their own perceptions and interpretations of the world. The rules and norms that govern educational institutions are constructions and must remain open to reconstruction and reformulation, as should all democratic processes. Greene (1988) defines autonomy in terms of connectedness, a quality she thinks is key to moral development (p. 118).

Roger Simon (1992) concurs with Greene that the usefulness and value of educational policies is directly related to the intentions with which they are formulated (p. 37). Simon (1992) theorizes that one of the roles of critical pedagogy, a process that examines the relationship between schooling and society, is to help formulate a common understanding of the purpose of education and then develop frameworks that will support practices and policies to further this purpose. For Simon (1992) the goal of education is to provide a "...purposeful vision for the ethics of practice, a vision of what is not yet" (p. 14). This notion is rooted in the Aristotelian ideal that striving towards the good forms human character. Simon's (1992) educational philosophy flows back and forth between educational practices and policies: "It is time to return to the core, approaching the problem from inside out, revising our pedagogies and then insisting on the changes needed to expand them, constructing administratively what is demanded educationally" (p. 10). The potential for students to develop an understanding of democratic concepts and grow into participatory citizens is either encouraged or impeded by everyday policies and practices. The direction educational policy-making takes is determined by the degree

to which administrators are self-conscious of the values and assumptions written into their policies.

#### Discussion.

Of the three major themes found at the core of our modern concept of self, carried forward from ancient philosophy to the present-day, the development of a moral self underscores the theories about education presented above. Throughout their writings, these theorists emphasize building community and common values through the education of the emotions, and moral reasoning. They propose that civic competencies are developed when people exchange experiences, engage in discussions with others subscribing to different values, and learn to trust their own voices as well as the judgment of others.

There are present-day debates between proponents of a republican model of democracy (that shares characteristics with communitarianism) and theorists who propose a liberal approach to democracy. Charles Taylor (1989) suggests that our contemporary quest for community is a consequence of and response to the extreme individualism – pure subjectivity – we inherited from Romanticism. Yet a criticism of public education based on the pursuit of commonly constructed values lies in its potential to dilute individuality and autonomy – the subordination of the individual to the collectivity. Communitarians counter that democracy cannot withstand individualism and that liberal democracy, in particular, does not account for the traditions of moral reasoning and argumentation (Festenstein, 1997). The theme of rationality as a source of self, as presented by Taylor

(1989), is also present in some of the ideas outlined above but steeped in the Aristotelian concept that a moral claim to reason relies on perceptions and emotions rather than intellectual detachment. From a purely rational perspective, the construction of shared collective values is a cognitive exercise that depends on organizational and intellectual structures to facilitate rational debate around subjective issues.

Next, under the heading ‘democracy and the institutionalization of education’, I present a second group of philosophers. These theorists take a critical stance towards formal education and are particularly interested in the social, cultural, historical, and political relationships that permeate and control the organizational structures of educational institutions in Western societies. Through their theories, we learn more about the development of individuality – another of Taylor’s sources of the modern self.

#### Democracy and the institutionalization of education.

In the section above, Aristotle’s distinction between the particular and the general is introduced through the theories presented. The theories of the philosophers in this second group move from the particulars of everyday schooling practices to a study of the general structures of education that feed or block values on their way to schools. This section examines how the content and organization of formal education is controlled through its institutionalization. In general, these philosophers claim that regardless of what occurs inside schools, the real role of education in Western societies is determined by what schools are doing besides educating. Kevin Harris (1995) suggests a few questions that serve to focus these ideas: whose values are reflected in the curriculum? Is there real



equality of opportunity in public schooling? Can schools develop individual autonomy in their students? Is there an undemocratic political agenda driving even liberal democratic schools? (p. 221). Max Horkheimer (1947) refers to these as questions about the 'machinery of social power', machinery that is disproportionately larger than either individuals or communities (p.186). As the current study extends outward from the immediacy of school life, this second group of theorists reveals some of the patterns that supersede the details of everyday schooling. Their theories are intended to highlight the characteristics of individuality, a conception of the self at the heart of a liberal model of democracy. Included in this section are: John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Theodor Adorno, and Henry Giroux.

John Dewey is considered to be a pragmatist. Although pragmatism rejects metaphysical claims to truth, it is nevertheless concerned with finding other grounds for moral claims. For Dewey this is through individual autonomy and human agency (Festenstein, 1997). Dewey (1916) writes that democratic communities are intensely involved in the education of citizens because democracies are predicated on the importance of social interaction, and education serves as a powerful means for developing forms of social interdependence: "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87).

Dewey's (1916) primary preoccupation is with the development of the kind of individuality that seeks and responds to social actions and interactions. He articulates a deep concern that, because schools transmit the inequalities they inherit from the larger

society, formal education loses its potential to teach idealized forms of social interaction within school practices. The kind of responsible individuality that Dewey (1916) writes about must be nurtured through appropriate social environments. The development of genuine autonomy requires that agents participate in the construction of these environments, creating a cycle wherein individuals generate the conditions necessary for their own learning and then feed their knowledge back through the social environment. However, a necessary precondition for the functioning and maintenance of socially constructed learning environments is a form of democratic practice that recognizes the worth of a range of individual contributions.

Dewey's (1916) apprehensions about formal education come from his belief that the organization and transmission of knowledge serve as more powerful communicators of values than education's content. He is conscious here of the particular national ends towards which education systems are often directed. Dewey (1916) argues that the true aim of education should be the development of competencies required for lifelong learning and the development of individuals capable of acting intelligently. To aim for any other purpose or end, Dewey (1916) warns, conveys a static view of education and an approach to learning that will not adequately prepare citizens for a lifetime of eventualities. Because constructivism is an implicit characteristic of democracy and citizenship, our understanding of both concepts must be open to reformulation within each successive generation. Thus the aim of education must be broader than any single vision of democracy. According to Dewey, reality tells a different educational story. Dewey (1916) suggests the goals of economic and civic efficiency limit the aims of

education to narrow purposes rather than serving to create opportunities through which students experience shared social situations (p. 218). This misappropriation of the purpose of education is partially accomplished through the organization of disciplinary content. The categories, divisions, and classifications employed as a means for organizing subject matter establish a hierarchy of importance that mirrors differentiations and inequalities present in most Western countries where power is concentrated in certain spheres of activity. Where the aim of education for democracy is for individual students to experience processes for living and learning cooperatively, a curricular valuation of subject disciplines that gives preeminence to the natural sciences over the arts, for example, demonstrates the powerlessness of educational institutions to separate themselves from the political and economic influences through which technical progress is valued. In a democracy, Dewey (1916) writes, those who have the power and authority to organize the curriculum must struggle against this stubborn division of subjects, a division between culture and utility (p. 192). The hierarchy of value attached to particular disciplines reproduces the notion that certain fields of knowledge are more indispensable than others and by consequence less susceptible to criticism. It also ensures that students who excel in the highly valued subject disciplines will garner greater respect and attention from teachers and fellow students within the education system, thereby reproducing social classes within educational institutions themselves. What are emphasized here are institutional arrangements.

Michael Walzer (1983) addresses this dilemma in *Spheres of Justice*. His overall thesis is that society consists of various spheres through which goods are distributed to the general

population, often in unequal proportions. He suggests that certain categories of goods, including education, are qualitatively different in value than other kinds of goods and must, therefore, be equally distributed. Even where the end result will be inequality in the way the educational goods are applied, due to differences in individual ability and personality, education must be distributed equally: "The aim is not to repress differences but rather to postpone them, so that children learn to be citizens first – workers, managers, merchants, and professionals only afterward" (Walzer, 1983, p. 203). The ideal of education is to teach students about the interdependence between various spheres of activity, where each sphere remains true to its own distributive principles (Walzer, 1983, p. 19).

Dewey's (1927) view of education focuses on citizens in relationship with one another learning to harmonize – or at least respect – their diverse interests. He says students whose educational experiences teach them how to live cooperatively within a school environment will have a greater ability to translate these experiences into citizenship roles outside of school. It is through participation that individual potentialities are activated. Horkheimer (1947) describes Dewey as a radical pragmatist whose ideal of education is based on what it can accomplish for everyday living (p. 49). For Dewey, autonomy emanates from participation in collective forms of life; we learn to understand our social world through participating in the resolution of real problems embedded in practical experiences (Festenstein, 1997, p. 24).

In the Introduction to Paulo Freire's (1985) book, *The Politics of Education*, Henry Giroux describes Freire as a person who combines "...the language of critique with the language of possibility" (p. xii). Giroux (1985) writes that Freire values education on two levels: he cherishes an ideal vision of education while at the same time mining education's potential for affecting social change. For Freire (1985), education encompasses more than schooling. It includes all the public and private institutions that teach people to recognize the limits and opportunities attached to their roles, status, and place in society. Schools take their cue from an agenda already established by the state and private institutions, particularly corporate enterprises. Freire's critical pedagogy, whose genesis is in his literacy work with peasants in Brazil where free access to formal educational institutions has long been restricted to certain social classes, is widely read by Western educators. Freire's theories still resonate with relevance today for any society where forms of political and economic inequality are reproduced through educational practices that limit opportunities for certain groups of people while perpetuating the conditions for success for others. The expansive notion of literacy for which Freire is famous, in and out of educational circles, forms the basis for the language arts programs in Québec's educational reform. His ideas are considered vibrant for this Western context. For Freire, the key to a better future lies in people's capacity to participate in informed and responsible decision-making. This is an activity that requires access to participation in public affairs but, more urgently, the possession of literacy skills adequate for playing a participatory role. Literacy skills for the purpose of civic participation must include a level of knowledge that facilitates individual autonomy and the freedom to express oneself (Freire, 1969, p. 29). Increased complexity in civic affairs

requires higher and higher levels and types of literacy. Freire (1969), like Dewey, argues that people can only learn to make significant choices about issues that affect them by experiencing the types of arguments and debates that comprise decision-making processes. People do not develop accountability for their everyday personal choices when broader and more pervasive – and, at times, invasive – decisions are made without their participation. Freire (1969) suggests non-participation creates a dual form of oppression: first, through an absence of voice in matters of public concern; and second, through the internalization of powerlessness.

Democracy is predicated on communication and communication requires participants who possess the social and political knowledge needed for naming and discussing issues of common concern. Education for and about democracy develops in the dynamic between dialogue and responsibility. Freire (1970) writes that one of the roles of education is to foster a desire among citizens to participate in public dialogue as a means for intervening in existing power relations. People learn democracy by taking part in democratic processes (Freire, 1969, p. 36). To be authentic sites of democratic education, schools must build in self-reflective practices through criticism and feedback from constituents. Institutions that claim to be democratic but treat problems superficially are not sites of democracy. In a true democracy, publicly administered institutions, such as schools, can demonstrate a responsibility to citizens by creating procedures that bring their agenda into the public eye through community forums on education, debate, and decision-making.

Henry Giroux (1988) expands on Freire's concepts when he argues that illiteracy is not just the inability to read and write but it is, more importantly, incapacity to know the social, cultural, political, and economic limits and consequences of one's own worldview (p. 151). Freire (1969) suggests that as people's literacy levels rise, so too does their ability to recognize and name experiences of inequality or suffering. The autonomy to realize one's own potential starts with having the knowledge necessary to name that potential as well as the freedom to express it. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) explains that the behaviourist or banking model of education deposits inanimate bits of knowledge into students and establishes a distance between the knower and the known. Although not always intentional, this positivist, objectives-based approach to education masks the potential regenerative quality of learning and cheats students out of participating in the construction of their own knowledge. When a person, or a whole group, is omitted from the construction of their world they are prone to adopt an apathetic acceptance of seemingly benign forms of control. Once the interests of a group have been left out of official knowledge, there is little incentive for them to become engaged in decisions that will have direct consequences on their lives. Freire (1970) calls this a 'limit-situation' (p. 89). A traditional standardized approach to education creates spaces between students and the everyday events around them. The effect can be paralyzing. Conversely, critical pedagogy leads people – and institutions – towards decisional participation or critical action. Freire (1970) compares this constructivist view of education to the static model still pervasive today in many Western educational practices. Freire's concept of education is active and immediate. For him, education is a process for preparing students for their intense and direct involvement in the everyday. The teacher is

not a manager but an educator who must model the values of participatory citizenship while also fostering their development in students. The educator's role is central to critical pedagogy and requires constant self-evaluation and criticism. Freire speculates that the vast majority of teachers possess a worldview that they, consciously or not, inflict on students as a set of truths. Critical educators, on the other hand, name their stance and offer it for criticism from their students and peers.

Theodor Adorno (1963) cautions his readers that the field of philosophy must avoid becoming a specialized discipline because its purpose is to be reflective about experience in general. As a critical social theorist, Adorno makes an invaluable contribution to the study of democracy and education because of his stance on the application of philosophy. He writes that education in modern Western societies exists within a contradiction: on one hand, the aim of education is to open people's minds to new ideas, challenges, and questions; on the other hand, the natural sciences so completely dominate even the human sciences that educational institutions and practices are unable to perform the tasks they set for themselves (Adorno, 1963, p. 40). He joins Dewey in saying that values such as social justice and fairness, although socially effective, are not necessarily socially efficient and are therefore overridden by rigidly rational approaches to human problems. Adorno (1963) is scathing in his indictment of philosophers and other academics who succumb to the organizational values of "...institutions of the culture industry" (p. 56). He says, since ancient Greece, philosophers have blamed citizens for being unable to discern the difference between opinion and reasoned argument when the real culprit is society's system of regulatory procedures: "What is deemed true and what mere opinion



– that is, chance and caprice – is not decided according to the evidence, as the ideology would have it, but rather by societal power, which denounces as mere caprice whatever does not agree with its own caprice” (Adorno, 1963, p. 109). He warns that mechanisms of social control manipulate public opinion for the purposes of limiting and containing the role of the public sphere and its institutions. This is partially accomplished by ignoring peripheral voices and marginalizing discordant ones. Education is an essential means for teaching people the learning processes they need – critical thinking, self-reflection, dialogue – to represent their diverse values, interests, and opinions in public discourse. But the administration and organization of social institutions, including educational institutions, is designed to gloss over economic and social inequalities – deep differences – as natural or unavoidable. To respond to the authentic diversity of needs represented by individuals and groups in a pluralist society would be expensive and inefficient for organizations that function according to system-wide accountability procedures. But Adorno is also hopeful. He explains that one of the paradoxes of society is that injustice creates “...the condition for possible justice” (Adorno, 1963, p. 159). Societies have always existed with imbalances; these imbalances create a dynamic within which we learn about inequality (Adorno, 1963, p. 159).

Schools rarely teach processes such as critical thinking, self-reflection, and dialogue, according to Adorno. Instead they perpetuate a double system of hierarchies. The first is the hierarchy of value attached to particular subject disciplines and, concomitantly, to those students who excel in the dominant fields of study. Feminists argue that this hierarchy becomes even more damaging when we consider that higher value is almost

always accorded to disciplines that find their application in the public – as opposed to the private – sphere (White, 1995, p. 231). The second system of hierarchy perpetuated through educational institutions is less official than the first, less socially acceptable even in theory, and yet resilient; it mirrors society's stereotypes about physical strength, beauty, and intelligence and is associated with gender, class, and cultural differences. Despite a growing movement in Western educational institutions to emphasize the commonalities and shared qualities amongst students and to celebrate visible ethnic and cultural differences, old stereotypes survive just beneath the surface and serve to devalue students at a much more profound level than can be compensated for in school assemblies. That these two forms of hierarchies thrive in school environments is, for Adorno, reason to view education as a cultural site of repression and anxiety. It is a place where conformity is modeled and deep differences discouraged. Adorno (1963) worries that, ultimately, everyone is at risk when people who are manipulated by institutional thinking begin to act out their anxieties in public (p. 299).

For Adorno (1944), full engagement in a lifelong learning process about one's personal, social, and political beliefs represents a search for meaning. The role of education, he continues, is to ensure that students develop capacities for expressing personal ideas and feelings while also learning how to be constructive and respectful in their criticism of others. Through acts of continuous and immediate involvement in everyday life, people build awareness about others around them, and patterns of association are formed. Max Horkheimer (1947), Adorno's closest colleague, writes that while institutional practices often squash the particularity and individuality in people, social progress requires

idiosyncratic and creative thinking: “Critique is essential to all democracy...Critique and the prerequisite of democracy, political maturity, belong together” (p. 281).

John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Theodor Adorno all express deep-felt concerns that the organization of formal educational practices uncritically reproduces the social and economic patterns of inequality present in most Western societies. They argue that institutionalized forms of inequality, fed through school practices, serve as limits for the majority of future citizens while fostering the acceleration of a few. Where Dewey and Freire have a vision of education as purposeful and experiential, Adorno writes about the value of education for enlarging our capacity to think, imagine new ideas, and struggle against intellectual and social conformity.

Henry Giroux (1988) is quick to acknowledge that his writing is rooted in the philosophy of John Dewey and Dewey’s immediate followers who have been called, ‘Social Reconstructionists’. Giroux (1988) explains that the Social Reconstructionists extended and expanded upon Dewey’s position that education is a form of politics through which each successive generation reformulates its own notion of democracy and citizenship. Giroux (1988) says transformative pedagogy combines the reconstruction of knowledge and power with a particular commitment to the lives of individuals suffering under oppressive conditions. He writes that a democratic educational community must forge links with all social movements wherein democracy is debated; if the concept of community is too narrowly defined it cannot argue for democracy (Giroux, 1988, p. 109). By inviting a diversity of opinions and voices into its community, including participation

from previously marginalized and silent groups, education is "...interrogating existing structures of domination" (Giroux, 1988, p. 124) and challenging their insertion into school practices. Giroux (1988), like Adorno, worries that schools define what is standard behaviour and then evaluate and judge students according to one single, static set of norms. This unquestioned and repeated act creates feelings of anxiety for students who do not – or cannot – conform to fit the norm; students learn to repress their authentic voices. Giroux (1988) writes that educators need to adopt what he calls a "...discourse of lived cultures" (p. 142) that will empower teachers and students to publicly acknowledge, recognize, and value the diverse backgrounds, contributions, and traditions represented in the school community.

Educational institutions in Western societies have the power and authority to either liberate students or silence them. The curriculum represents an interpretation of a society's collective knowledge, including its vision of the distribution of power, its values, and its forms of assessment. Giroux (1988) explains that the curriculum is a form of narrative – the officially sanctioned story of a community. The role of educators is to critically evaluate the story, name its biases and omissions, and engage students in a dialogue that interrogates and completes the narrative of their community. Giroux (1988) says of the curriculum: "...knowledge does more than distort; it also produces particular forms of life" (p. 190). Giroux (1988) suggests that citizenship education should fulfill two interrelated purposes in a democracy: the first aim of citizenship education is to help students develop the necessary competencies for fully participating in social, economic, and political structures constitutive of the public sphere and reproduced in the

administrative structures of most educational institutions; the second aim of citizenship education in a democracy is to create an atmosphere inside schools where students learn to imagine a better society that includes their voices in its constitution (p. 201). “Central to Giroux’s view is the inevitability and educative potential of struggle and conflict, an active reconstruction in which public spheres are created and democracy and political community are reinvented” (Giarelli, 1995, p. 209).

#### Discussion.

While the theme of morality as a source for the development of the self is central to the writings of the first selection of philosophers, the second group is more concerned with the growth of individual autonomy and self-identity in the face of overwhelming mechanisms of power and control. Dewey, Freire, Adorno, and Giroux come from different backgrounds and their writing spans most of the previous century, but their contributions remain timely and pertinent. They share one conviction: individuals who are free and autonomous to participate in the construction of their own knowledge are more likely to understand democracy in terms of the responsibility of civic participation. When students are taught methods for critically evaluating the taken-for-granted rules and procedures that structure their lives, their participation in public discussions will enrich their lives while potentially altering existing mechanisms of social organization. From the perspective of individual autonomy, democratic education must teach people how to identify, appreciate, and respect their personal rights and preferences so that they, in turn, can learn to appreciate the rights and preferences of others. People who fail to see themselves reflected in the official knowledge dispensed by public institutions –

students whose personal knowledge is consistently absent or belittled in school discourse – remain detached from everyday events around them. They learn silence rather than participation and they internalize, even if they do not accept, the various value hierarchies that surround them. Freire and Adorno both warn that apathy and conformity are dangerous partners and work against the democratic potential of a society. When people become too disassociated from engaging in the creative resolution of problems, the atmosphere of totality that characterizes sweeping religious or political movements, including war, appears attractive to them because they never found, or were prevented from finding, their own sense of meaning (Berlin, 1996, p. 69). Too many people are marginalized through institutionalized practices based on efficiency and instrumental reason. As a consequence, there is scant reason to expect the kind of critically-minded community involvement required from all citizens for the healthy maintenance of a democratic public sphere. Proponents of a republican model of democracy based on the pursuit of common values and ethical consensus argue that liberal democracy can only function with overburdened levels of bureaucracy because no alternative basis for moral commitments exists (Festenstein, 1997, p. 118). Charles Taylor (1991) says the price of instrumental reason as the overarching principle for liberal democracy is too high.

#### Democracy and informal education.

In a pluralist society where scant recourse to a comprehensive shared morality exists and variations in ethical behaviour are determined by the extent of value pluralism – even taking into account that most groups endorse some basic common values – democracy requires more than moral education and individual autonomy to thrive. The final section

of this chapter about contemporary theories of democracy, education, and the development of the self combines the themes explicated by the two groups of philosophers above and introduces a debate about "...whether ethics can be reconceived as an objective science of morality..." (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 13). In Charles Taylor's (1989) exploration into the sources of our modern identity, the third source, sandwiched between morality and individuality, is rationality. The work of Jürgen Habermas is extremely influential in current discourse about combining the foundations of public policy and decision-making with procedures for deliberating between private interests. Much of Habermas's philosophical writing focuses on the theme of rationality. Feminist critical theorists have expanded on Habermas's views to ensure that the affective domain is included in issues of rational decision-making. What marks these discussions as modern is the association of rationality with communicative procedures that open the concept of rationality to contemporary themes such as diversity, pluralism, feminism, and inter-subjectivity. Where the first group of philosophers presented in this chapter writes about the direct link between democracy and schooling and the second group writes about the institutionalization of education within a network of institutions designed to regulate and control public behaviour, the concept of education found in this third group of theorists encompasses, and then extends, these ideas. Theirs are trans-global philosophies that examine how societies, and indeed the human species, learn. Margaret Somerville (2000), speaking from the perspective of the ethics of science, explains that two worldviews continue to dominate theories about the evolution of thought today and both are closed systems: one set of theories is rooted in a metaphysical or moral worldview and these tend to be anti-modernist and often fundamentalist; the

second set of theories comes out of an uncritical acceptance of a scientific worldview that dominates our perspective of progress and individual accomplishment, leaving aside humanity altogether. Somerville (2000) suggests we are now in search of a new worldview, where science will join the human spirit in openness to all forms of knowing (p. 17).

Below I discuss the works of four philosophers, in particular their views about the development of modern thought. Sometimes explicit, but often implied in their writings, is the relationship between democracy, education, and the self. Their theories are intended to highlight the characteristics of rationality and a model of deliberative democracy wherein autonomy is redefined as a characteristic of decentralized spheres of communication where procedures and interests of specific groups of people interact. Included in this section are the ideas of: Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser.

Hannah Arendt (1958) divides the development of the modern self in half by stating that, before Descartes, all thought and action was unquestioningly rooted in "...the wonder at everything that is as it is" (p. 274). With Descartes's words began a philosophy of doubt that still serves as the model for our thinking today – a doubt that fuels our quest for scientific knowledge as the primary source of truth. She laments that the language and thought patterns used in scientific research have so permeated the modern consciousness that we try to understand morality from within the scientific model. She, like Charles Taylor (1989), suggests that we have come to view life only as a practical arena where



everyday needs are met. We yield to public institutions that function according to statistics of uniform behaviour and predictable outcomes, and we approach the distribution of goods with a competitive spirit, as though even moral goods are limited. This pattern of public behaviour contains our vision within a single perspective while, ironically, we fight for individual rights and freedoms – the right to be unique. Taylor (1989) warns that self-centeredness is an insidious state, not easy to recognize and difficult to move away from; it hampers our ability to see clearly anything that is not “...clouded by our own reactions” (p. 429). Since the Romantic Movement, the primacy of individuality has become so dominant that it blurs the boundaries between private and public realms. The functions of private and public institutions are merged in the needs of the social being (Arendt, 1958, p. 38). Yet, despite public proclamations about individual autonomy and freedom, we accept the pervasive use of statistics and predictability as an inevitable consequence of having our needs met in the public sphere. What we fail to acknowledge is that this dependence on utility, as Dewey (1916) calls it, or instrumental reason, as Taylor (1991) calls it, creates an environment where the rights of anyone who differs from accepted social norms are at risk. Even more dangerous is that deviant and marginalized groups are perceived as useless from within this paradigm and, potentially, not entitled to rights at all (Arendt, 1951). There is a direct connection, Arendt (1958) argues, between the loss of human rights and the dominance of the economy in the public sphere. Business, she says, is more portable than the politics of a nation-state and transcends the limits of even democratic borders. Modes of thinking based on utility and efficiency are transported across institutional and national boundaries. Mark Kingwell (2003) supports Arendt’s claim. He suggests that commodities embody a culture of

usefulness that is dispersed as a transnational value. The banality and sameness of material products gives people the illusion of shared values while distracting them from the more profound points of intersection between peoples and nations. Kingwell (2003) is hopeful, however, that market mechanisms created for the transnational distribution and consumption of mass culture might someday serve a more constructive purpose should societies choose to employ this organizational apparatus for transporting ideas about democracy and social justice (CBC). In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt (1958) presents an interesting demarcation between labour, work, and action that serves as her framework for understanding human society. Her explanation of action is particularly relevant to this section. Action, according to Arendt (1958), is the human capacity to initiate new courses of activity: “The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle” (p. 178). By inserting the social individual into the public sphere, the human potential for action now combines the rationality of laws and probability with the subjectivity and creativity inspired by human needs. These ingredients form the substance for current debates about objective morality, or “...an authentic science of morals” (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 178).

Hannah Arendt (1958) says that sameness amongst all human beings begins with the act of birth, while difference begins with the act of speech (p. 178). The theories of Jürgen Habermas represent an attempt to mobilize these two interrelated aspects of all human beings – sameness and difference – into a coherent moral project. The project is based on

a new conception of human evolution that combines cognitivism with cultural and social norms of behaviour (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 178). Habermas's theories explore new possibilities for understanding and participating in the social organization of pluralist societies, without resorting to either the pure liberalism of individual rights or the potential totality of moral commitments. Habermas (1994) conjoins the two concepts in inter-subjectivity or the "...public practice of shared reciprocal perspective taking" (p. 154). Several feminist philosophers have expressed concerns about the concept of inter-subjectivity and have voiced their criticisms in debates about language appropriation and usage (Benhabib, 1996; Coole, 1997; White, 1995; Young, 1996). These concerns are further addressed below when I present the ideas of Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser. But Habermas (1988) counters feminists by saying that language is a "...factually shared form of life" (p. 136) and does not need to be understood at an interpretive level of meaning. In order to reach an evolutionary stage in human development where people are prepared to discuss the formation of norms for social justice – despite the limits and restrictions of language – there first needs to be a collective decision to accept responsibility for constructing moral-practical knowledge (Habermas, 1989, p. 15). In Western capitalist societies where the system quickly intervenes to suppress visible manifestations of discomfort or resistance, this is a difficult step to achieve. The result is that social needs are barely registered in the public sphere (Habermas, 1970, p. 102). Material comfort and individual rights – rights as possessions – present themselves as uncontested values in Western democracies. Even potential and/or limited access to both has, to date, successfully prevented a radical questioning of how these goods are distributed or of the costs involved in keeping them at the top of the social agenda.

Habermas (1979) questions what will ensue when happiness requires something beyond the material comfort of the individual (p. 199). The second step involved in social evolution, following the acknowledgment of a personal and collective responsibility to become involved, is the development of methods and procedures for participation. Habermas (1994) discusses discourse ethics and discourses of application as communicative processes that constitute "...procedural morality" (p. 27). Discourse ethics sets up rules for argumentation that enable people to debate moral issues rationally; participants work towards an agreement on processes for justifying norms but not an agreement on the norms themselves. In secular, democratic, pluralist societies some form of justification is required to guide ethical debate and decision-making. In discourse ethics the justification comes from inter-subjectivity – the perspectives of speaker and listener are interchangeable. This position creates a moral core around which communication occurs (Habermas, 1994, p. 131). Discourse ethics represents a method for creating a range of valid norms that exist apart from a specific context. When institutions or individuals, entrusted to serve the public's interests, prove to be unreliable or deceitful, this violation of public faith leads people to seek effective responses – a further stage in the process of constructing discourse ethics and discourses of application (Habermas, 1994, p. 40). It is at this point that norms are applied in particular situations where moral actions are required and "...a coherent normative order is formed" (Habermas, 1994, p.38). Discourse ethics provides a forum through which individuals or groups can posit an array of alternatives for a particular social situation where the original terms of agreement have broken down; justifying one course of action over another is a form of discourse application. Habermas (1979) suggests that human beings are no

longer evolving physically but socially. Because information in modern technologically advanced Western societies accumulates at a faster rate than it can be applied, we store vast amounts of knowledge both literally and figuratively. Discourse ethics requires that these storehouses of knowledge be applied to pressing social issues. Our existing public institutions and administrative structures will either shift to accommodate this new moral-practical knowledge, or atrophy. This is, in brief, the definition of social evolution. Peace, Habermas (1988) writes, is not only the absence of war but is a process that addresses the "...preconditions for coexistence" (p. 185). Habermas's theories of discourse ethics and discourses of application – communicative action – provide the framework for an ethical method of communication that combines technological/scientific knowledge with moral progress as they develop interdependently.

Seyla Benhabib is interested in enlarging the capacity of Habermas's theories of discourse ethics and communicative action to ensure the inclusion of a plurality of voices within the processes he presents. Benhabib (1992) accomplishes this by revealing the implicit assumptions in Habermas's theories and by proposing procedures for increasing their usefulness. Benhabib's (1992) contention is that the assumptions of modernity have been written into the theory of discourse ethics. She suggests that these assumptions originate in Enlightenment thinking that excludes women, non-whites, and non-Christians (Benhabib, 1992, p. 2). In order to redress these omissions, Benhabib (1992) asks three questions of procedures designed for the purpose of reaching public agreement: Is there a single understanding about what constitutes moral reasoning? Is every attempt to reach a universalistic position oriented to the male perspective? Is there

any tenable universalistic position on moral issues in pluralist societies? (p. 3). She responds to these questions with the following three assertions: moral beings are always embodied and contextualized, not disembodied and decontextualized; reason is not a static concept but develops through processes of 'interactive rationality'; and, the justification of truth as a universalistic claim should be reformulated as a search for truth based on a "...discourse theory of justification" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 6). Benhabib's (1992) project is to uncover the assumptions of modernity wherever they occur, in processes of debate and in social practices, in order to sensitize discourse ethics to diverse forms of communication. The theory of discourse ethics as articulated by Habermas further assumes the existence of public spaces and institutions where genuine, open, and peaceful discussions about ethical and moral issues can occur. Benhabib (1992) says this cluster of assumptions reveals a set of values at the core of discourse ethics that may not be shared by everyone in Western democracies. In *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, Benhabib (1996) argues that the challenge to all three models of democracy, introduced earlier, is to formulate a broad enough range of interpretations of the common good to account for value pluralism (p. 73). As well, the processes, practices, and procedures adopted for public dialogue and decision-making must be fluid enough to accommodate a diversity of styles of communication and the continuous addition of new voices to the conversation. Contemporary philosophers are struggling with various conceptions of language and language usage in the complex world of pluralism. It is an issue at the core of much of Benhabib's work. Here I turn briefly to feminist positions that reinforce Benhabib on the issue of language.

Iris Marion Young (1996) suggests that forms of discourse ethics and communicative action are more likely to develop within a model of deliberative democracy than within either liberal or republican models of democracy. But even within a deliberative model, the terms of participation must challenge the assumption that people require a common language and vocabulary in order to communicate; we need to embrace a variety of interactive styles for sharing meaning including verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (Young, 1996, p. 120). She also points out that the acceptance of public debate as a valuable process is, itself, a culturally specific stance (Young, 1996, p. 122). Diana Coole (1997) suggests that language is only one means for realizing a relationship of inter-subjectivity. Coole (1997) writes that intentionality and perception can be communicated without recourse to language (p. 232). Additionally, Coole (1997) says, we need forms of communication that allow for the inevitable – and desirable – ambiguities of inter-subjective communication. Melissa Williams (2000) places the issue of character front and centre: “The challenge of pluralism to political legitimacy lies at the heart of the project of deliberative democracy” (p. 125). She cautions that impartiality of procedures requires more than shared commitments and conversations. Impartiality emanates from that part of a person’s character that renders them receptive to a plurality of social perspectives including perspectives that challenge their own practices (Williams, 2000, p. 131).

Benhabib (1992) writes about the implications of discourse ethics for public institutions (p. 47). One of the purposes for public institutions in a democratic society is to provide

spaces where citizens come together to learn about and participate in processes of communication such as dialogue, sharing, debate, and mutual criticism. Ideally, public institutions create spaces where the competencies required for active participatory citizenship are nurtured and developed through shared experiences. But public institutions in democratic societies need to do more than provide spaces wherein discursive forms of communication can develop; they have a responsibility to model deliberative procedures internally. Benhabib (1992) suggests that institutions can accomplish this through the types of procedures they create and employ for distributing their services, and in how they ascribe access to information and power (p. 47). Benhabib (1992) redefines the notion of a public sphere to include any space, no matter how small, where people debate issues of shared concern. Although discourse ethics is not a theory of institutions, Benhabib (1992) says public institutions play a pivotal role in creating the conditions for the process to evolve (p.104).

Nancy Fraser (1995) describes theories as 'bits of cultural discourse' and says that even critical social theories are culturally and historically embedded in time and place (p. 69). It is useful for contemporary philosophers to adopt approaches to theory that are supple and sensitive to both particularities and generalities if they are to manoeuvre through the web of complex ideas that is philosophy. Fraser (1995) cautions philosophers that the two biggest hurdles to surmount in contemporary philosophical discourse are metaphysical entanglements and dichotomous thinking (p. 166). She attempts, in her writing, to address some of the dichotomous thinking bequeathed to modernity by René Descartes. She challenges many of the dualities that flow through Western philosophy,



such as knowledge and power, public and private, system and life-world, and points to the dangers of their continued, unexamined existence inside public forms of organization. Fraser (1989) states that part of her project is to render the domain of education political by revealing how even routine practices are appropriated for the purpose of controlling social behaviour. In *Unruly Practices*, Fraser (1989) discusses Michel Foucault's analysis of power and how it is manifested in contemporary Western democracies. Foucault's contention, according to Fraser (1989), is that modern forms of power are local and are often invisible because they restrain and constrain – rather than explicitly control – social practices (p. 25). These restraints are supported through the values that dominate social science practices, values that implicitly establish social and behavioural norms. In public institutions such as schools, for example, the hierarchy of values is so powerful it undermines any expression of genuine need. When well-intentioned policies that are created to redress the unequal distribution of services within an institution are subsequently administered within a framework of procedures organized around values of economy and efficiency, the policies are rendered ineffective. System and life-world values are conflated when institutions that serve a social function, such as education, are controlled by the principles of instrumental reason. Fraser (1989) suggests that even after the services of public institutions are reformed internally, the institutions continue to serve the same overarching purpose in the organizational scheme of a society or community (p. 145). Fraser (1989) argues that real social change requires the excavation of existing mechanisms of social power through which passive citizenship is perpetuated, rather than the simple reformation of services within public institutions. Fraser (1989) supports Hannah Arendt's contention that the public sphere is so overrun with politics

and economy there are no longer public spaces where authentic deliberation between citizens occurs (p. 76). Fraser (1989) suggests that we interrogate the political and economic dominance of the public sphere through strategies that will account for its true social purpose. Fraser (1989) argues that public/private delineations in our collective spaces are no longer relevant or helpful because system and life-world needs are almost all addressed publicly (p. 80). Fraser (1995) praises postmodernism and feminism as intellectual movements that have helped liberate people from external labels and opened creative possibilities for describing ourselves and the world (p. 71). These movements have also contributed to the removal of false assumptions embedded in dichotomous thinking and helped prepare the public sphere for a diversity of forms of participation. Fraser (2000) aims for what she calls a 'parity of participation' (p. 104). The goal, she says, is "...to *deinstitutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it*" (Fraser, 2000, p. 102, italics in original). Fraser (2000) combines the politics of recognition with the politics of redistribution and arrives at an expanded paradigm of justice.

#### Discussion.

The philosophers in the section above are interested only indirectly in formal education. They are concerned with how human beings can learn to live together in pluralist societies. Institutions and their practices, including formal education, need to evolve to meet these needs and this will happen as the people inside them develop and apply new forms of moral-practical knowledge. This occurs when rationality and subjectivity find a common base in the formation of principles and procedures for collective decision-

making. Individuals and groups learn from each other's positions – through receptivity – and feed this new knowledge into system practices that support changing values and new forms of social organization (Habermas, 1989, p. 95).

Hannah Arendt (1958) posits that the purpose of every public space is to provide a safe place for citizens to come together as strangers and learn to negotiate shared meaning on issues of common concern. It is no longer tenable in pluralist societies to allow the public sphere and its institutions to be organized around a single set of principles and dominated by values that represent only a fraction of the population (Habermas, 1989, p. 14). The existence of value pluralism guarantees that no single set of values will meet the needs of all citizens. The philosophers introduced in the section above share this set of preconditions and explore ways in which democracy can be reconfigured – reconstructed – as a set of processes that bring inter-subjective communication into spheres of wider deliberation for the purposes of debate and decision-making. Decisions are justified through the participatory construction of moral-practical knowledge. Deliberative democracy, Stephen Macedo (1999) writes, is not primarily about seeking end results, such as agreement. Its aim is to support the development of procedures that can be applied in public debates on issues of particular concern (p. 103). Disagreement is a constant feature of a true democratic community (Macedo, 1999, p. 18). The philosophers in this section contribute to what Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur (2000) refer to as the 'third discourse' – a multidisciplinary approach to morality and ethics that simultaneously accounts for individual and cultural differences and the commonalities that bind humanity together.

In a deliberative model of democracy, whose value as a context of collective decision-making supersedes prior conceptions, autonomy depends on dialogical relations between co-citizens rather than upon individual contemplation of an external reality (republican) or internal rationality (liberal). The dialogical self is both a pre-condition for deliberative democracy and a crucial element for its reproduction.

### Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter points to the length and breadth of philosophical theories about democracy and education. At the heart of these theories are particular concepts of the self and their relation to the development of various conceptions of democracy. I began the chapter by describing the three sources of the self as explicated by Charles Taylor (1989) – morality, individuality, and rationality – that have carried forward from ancient philosophy to the present day. His account provided a framework for understanding the complex and contradictory concepts that weave through contemporary Western philosophical theories about democracy, education, and the development of the self. At the same time, one can discern at least three models of democracy that co-exist, intersect, and overlap on today's world stage. I theorized in this chapter that each model of democracy implicitly draws from the values inherent in one of the sources of our modern concept of self. For example, republican democracy derives its core values from morality; liberal democracy takes its direction from individuality; and the values at the heart of deliberative democracy come from rationality. The interconnections between the three major themes that weave through the development of our concept of self in the Western world, together

with the three models of democracy currently being debated in contemporary discourse, provided a framework for understanding how the core values in our modern concept of self combine and splinter as we try to construct social and political procedures for healthy forms of human interaction. I introduced a range of philosophical theories intended to highlight some of the interconnections between democracy, education, and the development of self.

My aim throughout this chapter was to present a variety of perspectives without straying too far from the concept of philosophy that is proposed by critical social theorists – philosophy as a public endeavour designed to deepen our understanding of common concerns and social reality. Because this thesis focuses on the relationship between education and democracy, I was particularly interested in examining how these theories address the concept of education. I constructed a framework for accomplishing this examination by dividing the contemporary discussions of democracy into three sections. The philosophers in the first section, ‘schooling and democracy’, examined educational practices – everyday schooling – from the point of view of morality and, in particular, the development of moral reasoning as a procedure for developing community, common values, and ethical consensus. The philosophers in the second section, ‘democracy and the institutionalization of education’, looked at how the structures and frameworks used to organize public institutions are reproduced through educational practices. The result is that institutions limit the development, creativity, freedom, and autonomy of individuals and groups perceived to exist on its margins. The philosophers in the third section, ‘democracy and informal educational practices’, viewed education in its broadest sense,

as a form of rational critique that permeates every human interaction with the potential for contributing to social evolution. Taken together, the three sections provided a broad examination of the relationships between education, democracy, and the development of self.

Philosophical discussions about democracy and education represent a complex web of ideas. These concepts are not only vast but exist in a space of constant reformulation. This chapter is intended as representative of salient contributions to modern philosophical discourse about democracy and education. There are numerous contributors to these discussions who are not included here. Nevertheless, the chapter serves an important purpose for my overall investigation into the potential of Québec's educational reform to respond to the exigencies of a pluralist society. By introducing some of the major concepts at the heart of contemporary philosophical theories concerning democracy and education, I can now draw from these ideas in the following chapter to contextualize Québec's educational reform project. It is a project that names as its primary goals the development of democracy and citizenship, and the development of autonomy as the necessary precondition for their achievement. In Chapter Three, I introduce the report entitled, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997). This report forms the template for this extensive province-wide reform. My investigation of the report is framed by the theory presented in this chapter. I examine how the three major themes of morality, individuality, and rationality described above reveal themselves in the report. If, as the literature suggests, certain values and concepts of self are dominant in particular models of democracy, then it is

important for citizens in the province of Québec to know more about what is implied by the model of democracy and attendant values that emerge through this province-wide initiative. As stated earlier, any account of democracy's relationship to education must also take account of the conception of self that underwrites the democratic polis.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### PERSPECTIVE OF THE REFORM IN CONTEXT

##### Organization of the Chapter

Amy Gutmann (1987) writes, “Education must be guided by the *principles*, not the practices, of a regime” (p. 19). This chapter examines Québec’s educational reform in context in order to learn more about its missions and goals for the province. This is accomplished by marrying the philosophical underpinnings of education, as outlined in the previous chapter, to the actual creation and articulation of educational principles for a reform for and about democracy. At the heart of this chapter is the question expressed earlier: (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec?

The reform is a massive project that will eventually affect all elementary and secondary schools as well as adult education centres in the province. Educational practices are shaped by policy-making and it is inevitable that policy makers will recognize some ideas as more pertinent than others in the construction of this reform. For this reason, it is important that policy makers at least consider the broadest possible range of ideas about democracy, education, and conceptions of the self in their decision-making. Because educational policies will influence how the reform is translated at the school level, problems could arise from practices that nurture a concept of self that is inconsistent with the underlying values of a modern, multicultural society. It is essential to learn as much as possible about the reform’s missions and goals and to evaluate if the emergent concept



of self is the most appropriate one. The principles for the reform are established in the 1997 report, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Inchauspé Report)*. The reform's implementation is guided by an action plan articulated in *Québec Schools on Course: Educational Policy Statement* as well as the programs of study, numerous supporting documents, policies, reports, diagrams, and on-going research publications. In this chapter, I concentrate on examining the text of the *Inchauspé Report* – from the outside in and the inside out – because this document represents the foundation on which all other components of the reform are being constructed. At the heart of the *Inchauspé Report* are values, some articulated and others implied, that reflect a point of view about the relationship between education, democracy, and the self.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section One locates Québec's educational reform project in a temporal and spatial context – it looks at the reform from the outside in. The section includes a brief survey of educational trends in a few Western countries throughout the world today, and takes a glance at the preoccupations of other Canadian provinces concerning the field of education. I then summarize the history of education in Québec to highlight some of the events that precipitated the current reform project. Educational institutions in Québec are presently administered by a central authority called the Ministry of Education (M.E.Q.). I touch on the influence exerted by political forces in the reform process. This includes a cursory look into the various roles assigned to school boards at the level of implementation and professional development.

Section Two constitutes the major portion of this chapter. It includes an introduction to, and analysis of, the *Inchauspé Report* – from the inside out. I refer to axiological theories developed by Risieri Frondizi (1971) and Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997) to identify and articulate what values, both stated and implicit, form the basis of Québec's current educational reform. I am particularly interested in examining how the report advances the relationship between education and democracy. In Chapter Two, I linked the three major sources of the modern concept of self articulated by Charles Taylor (1989) – themes that have carried forward from ancient philosophy to the present day – to three models of democracy that exist in our contemporary Western world. Although all three sources are combined in our modern self, I posited that each model of democracy supports and is nurtured by a concept of self that satisfies its core values. The processes through which education builds autonomy and citizenship alter according to the model of democracy being advanced. For example, republican democracy tends to nurture autonomy through the construction of community and views education as a shared social process through which moral reasoning can be developed for the purpose of consensus formation; liberal democracy tends to value rights and freedoms of the individual, supported by an educational approach that develops autonomy of a separate self that protects itself while respecting differences in others; deliberative democracy values inter-subjectivity where education consists of dialogical teaching processes designed to enlarge a person's moral-practical knowledge and competencies through discussion, debate, and dialogue. By combining the theoretical perspectives of democracy and education outlined in the previous chapter with axiological theories for the explication of values, in this chapter I

try to identify which concept of self and model of democracy are dominant in the *Inchauspé Report*.

The Province of Québec is constructing and implementing an educational reform that is both theoretical, based on the principles of democratic education, and practical, based on the development of competencies. My study proceeds from the assumption that any reform claiming to respond to the needs of a modern multicultural democratic society must itself be open to the type of scrutiny and questioning that mark a democratic encounter. Québec's educational reform has created an opening for citizens to examine the values of Québec society. This means every investigation of the reform is a process for learning about democracy.

## Section One

### From the outside in

In the spring 2001 issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, Nancy Fraser writes, "The profound tension between an economically based global agenda and a socially based national narrative also helps to explain the intensity of the fight over the philosophy and practice of education at this current historical moment" (p. 71). Her words serve to underscore the quantity of activity and concentration of attention focused on the field of education throughout the Western world today. Michael Polanyi (1958) explains that, periodically, societies collectively deliberate about one domain in order to resolve a dilemma that is provoking passionate reactions (p. 171). Education, at present, is such a domain. People are turning to education as a means for responding to the needs and

demands of complex social situations that are changing how we think about ourselves and our world. Even with a less than exemplary record, there is still a strong tradition of belief in formal education as a means to an end. In the present context, it is viewed as a means for teaching future citizens how to address complex social, political, economic, and cultural issues. Polanyi (1958) says this focus on a particular domain is often accompanied by tangible forms of support such as additional personnel and financial resources directed towards the domain. All of this presupposes more research into the domain's potentialities. In its opening pages, the *Inchauspé Report* notes that the purpose behind educational reforms throughout the Western world has shifted dramatically over a relatively short time period: forty years ago the goal of educational reforms was to create equal access for everyone; twenty years ago the goal was to improve educational performance; today, the goal of educational reforms is to prepare students for a knowledge-based society through schools that serve as 'agents of social cohesion' (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, pp. 13-14). There is a level of complexity at the heart of this modern-day goal that Fraser (2001) captures in her choice of the word 'tension' located in the quotation above. As Charles Taylor (1991) points out, modernity has created a tendency towards instrumental goals that does not always serve the authenticity of the self (p. 5).

#### Educational trends in other western countries.

In an article by Meira Levinson (1997), she examines how current educational trends in Great Britain, France and the United States are addressing the tensions between strong liberal values within pluralist democratic societies. She looks at how liberalism's

emphasis on individual and group rights interfaces with the general characteristics of democratic education where a range of rights – from individual to collective – must be accommodated.

In Great Britain, the existence of a national curriculum plays a unifying role in a strongly liberal school system where public funds are allocated for the creation of schools that serve specific religious and ethnic groups. The emphasis in Great Britain's education system is on meeting the needs of particular groups, which means that, "...at least in theory, no single school need encapsulate the entire 'body public'" (Levinson, 1997, p. 338). This has resulted in a system where cultural and ethnic communities have the right to open schools that respond specifically to their needs; parents within these communities can, and do, control student enrolment by establishing what criteria define group membership and access to community schools. The national curriculum is organized according to traditional subject disciplines and includes only elective courses on citizenship education. Levinson (1997) says the extreme liberalism at the heart of this system has resulted in the re-emergence of forms of separation and segregation. She wonders how students in this pseudo-private school system can learn to be tolerant, respectful, community-minded citizens if they are never exposed to difference and are instead educated in the value of their separateness. Although official documentation from the British government supports pluralism and multiculturalism in its schools, everyday practices appear to reflect a strong predisposition towards the values of liberal democracy. Amy Gutmann (1987) believes that learning the processes necessary for collective deliberation across differences is such an essential feature for constructing

democracy that schools and school systems that do not teach these processes are actually repressive sites of education (p. 106).

France shares with Great Britain the idea of a national curriculum. However the country differs sharply in its response to individual and group rights. The public school system in France is secular, unified, and national. The private beliefs, customs, and traditions of particular religious and ethnic groups are excluded from public spaces throughout France, including schools. References to contributions made to specific fields of research from a multicultural perspective have been expunged from the curriculum. Schools pay no heed to cultural or religious differences but instead focus on commonalities, on building a secular notion of civic character and democratic citizenship. In this way, Levinson (1997) says, the separation between public and private spheres is preserved but the price is an education system that is anti-liberal in its homogenization of the population (p.353). The French education system appears to reflect the values of republican democracy where commonalities are emphasized in the service of building secular public spaces where, in this instance, a strong concept of French society is promoted.

Education in the United States is officially decentralized, although the country has a national department of education that exerts more or less influence on state education systems depending on the political agenda of the presidency. No common curriculum exists across the country. It is precisely this decentralized character of the American education system that, in theory, enables public schools to embrace a plurality of values (Levinson, 1997, p. 345). Levinson (1997) suggests teaching values of accommodation

and tolerance is absolutely essential in a school system that welcomes private beliefs into public spaces. In theory, students are excused in this system from lessons that contradict or offend their belief systems – should they wish to be – while curricular materials and lesson plans, wherever possible, include multiple perspectives of single events. Levinson (1997) posits that American schools are attempting to be all things to all people (p. 346). In a series of articles in *The New York Times*, James Traub (2002) suggests the current Bush Administration introduced a means for homogenizing public schooling without seeming to dictate a common curriculum or set of values across states. President Bush offered large financial incentives to states and districts that agreed to use government-approved teaching and testing methods and materials. The largest program of this kind, ‘No Child Left Behind’, claims to be based on current scientific research about developing math and literacy skills. Traub (2002) argues, however, that this program views education “...more like medicine than morality.” Traub (2002) objects to the program’s emphasis on accountability, standards, and a singular notion of success. He comments, “...the obsession enshrined in the ‘No Child Left Behind Act’ may have obscured the more fundamental question of what it is that children learn to do with those skills” (Traub, 2002, November 10). Despite the administrative autonomy conferred on state and district school systems throughout the United States, Bush’s program advances values that are more republican than liberal in their overall intent to achieve a homogenous system of accountability in the guise of individual success. Taken as a whole, the education system in the United States is comprised of a complex and contradictory mix of values. As Benjamin Barber (1984) posits, “The United States

would seem to live to some degree in the worst of both worlds. It is torn apart by cleavages of every kind and can hardly offer a meaning for the word *public*...” (p. 243).

It is worth mentioning that none of the educational reforms in the three Western countries named above are particularly revolutionary. In each instance, education continues to be organized around disciplinary content taught in age-specific classrooms and controlled by the exigencies of institutionalized social structures. Gutmann (1987) suggests – as does Traub above – that we need to pay more attention to the development of democratic virtues than to the achievement of particular skills and abilities (p. 91). Gutmann (1987) argues that democratic virtues are in large part developed through participatory learning – through the learning processes themselves. As Freire clearly states, a minimum level of literacy is essential for the practice of democracy, but minimum literacy skills alone do not guarantee any knowledge of, or interest in, participatory citizenship.

#### Education in Canada.

Canada, like the United States, has decentralized education systems designed and implemented by the provinces. Unlike the American model, Canada has no federal department of education. When compared with the other Western countries mentioned above, Canadian provinces enjoy relatively autonomous education systems. This has advantages and disadvantages. Because the role of the federal government is largely financial, education systems across Canada tend to reflect the political, economic, religious, and other demographic characteristics of their province or region. For



example, although the British North American Act of 1867 grants the right to denominational (Catholic or Protestant) schools for all Canadians, the western regions of Canada have had predominantly secular school systems for decades, while many eastern provinces have always maintained publicly funded denominational schools (Magnuson, 1969). This difference in attitude reflects the heterogeneity of provincial populations in western Canada compared to, until very recently, the more homogeneous populations of Québec and the Maritime Provinces. Because education is a provincial responsibility, the vision of public education and its goals cannot be separated from provincial politics. Lewington and Orpwood (1993) suggest that provincial politics keep educational issues swirling in constant motion "...marked by turmoil and confusion" (p. 15). The province of Ontario provides a good example of this phenomenon. The provincial government has changed four times during the past decade and after each election, the newly formulated department of education re-engineers the school system to mirror its values. During its last mandate, the defeated Conservative government in Ontario made dramatic changes to education that focussed on standardized testing and fiscal responsibility – an accountability model of schooling that has also been replicated, at various junctures, in Alberta and Nova Scotia (Lewington & Orpwood, 1993, p. 20). The liberal party's subsequent victory in Ontario's provincial election led to a pendulum shift in the educational agenda towards more socially driven goals. One consequence of the instability of provincial education systems is that people within the education system cling to issues that endure across party politics. This is one reason for the strength and durability of teacher unions; they provide a sense of security in an ever-changing landscape. Parents, too, seek stability as an outcome of this insecure educational

environment at the provincial level. Student enrolment patterns in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario are shifting towards private schooling where parents are able to find comfort in the rigorous teaching standards and traditional curricular materials of religion-based schools (Lewington & Orpwood, 1993, p. 7). In reaction to the growth in private school enrolment, many large urban multicultural centres now offer highly specialized programs within public high schools. These specialized programs are designed to meet the needs and interests of individual learners by offering limited places to qualified students who wish to concentrate on languages, athletics, the arts, or intensive academic programs. Although eligibility criteria for these programs are never based on family income or economic status, the reality is that these programs cater to middle and upper class students whose parents are able and willing to transport them outside their neighbourhood. Even in publicly funded schools, special programs often demand considerable time and financial contributions from the family. Among the Maritime Provinces, both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick are in the process of eliminating school boards altogether in an effort to streamline the administration of their education systems. Lewington and Orpwood (1993) interviewed teachers from both provinces who complained there is no longer a central authority who can administer to their needs (p. 9). In *Understanding Canadian Schools*, Jon Young and Benjamin Levin (1998) summarize the dilemmas that characterize Canadian schools: centralization versus decentralization; professional authority versus lay (parental) authority; and, uniformity versus diversity – language and religion being the most prominent aspects of diversity (p. 63). Although all of these issues are common across the country, it is difficult – without a centralized educational body – to monitor whether a single problem currently preoccupies

the Canadian educational landscape. It is equally difficult to ascertain whether one model of democracy and attendant values are being advanced through Canadian education. For this reason, the case of Québec is best understood from within its own provincial context.

#### History of education in Québec.

Two principal themes have dominated the history of education in the province of Québec for several hundred years; they are religion and language. It is important to give a brief summary of the province's educational history because its effects are still present in Québec's current educational reform project. The review below represents Québec's educational history taken from the perspective of English-speaking authors. It is important to note that the history of Québec education may be differently portrayed by French-speaking historians.

During the mid-1800's, the British government commissioned Lord Durham to visit its North American colonies and evaluate the political and educational circumstances in Upper and Lower Canada (Magnuson, 1980). Lord Durham's report stated that the French-speaking population of Lower Canada (Québec) was almost universally illiterate, a comment that launched a passionate quest for more education on the part of Québec's population (Magnuson, 1980, p. 25). Shortly thereafter, a system of public schools divided along religious lines was created. In the sparsely populated country-side common schools were opened for children of all religious denominations but Catholic and Protestant children had the right to dissentient schools based on their religious

affiliations. A dual system of schools, French-Catholic and English-Protestant, developed in Québec and this division remained relatively unchanged for over one hundred years. The French-Catholic schools were organized and administered by the Church clergy while the English-Protestant schools began to develop a more secular approach to education and, by the early twentieth century, were receptive to the exigencies of industrialization. By the middle of the twentieth century, according to Magnuson's (1980) *A Brief History of Quebec Education*, it was evident to French Québécois that the economy and culture of the province were controlled by English-speaking Canadians. Magnuson (1980) suggests there are numerous historical interpretations as to why and how the situation evolved in this direction, but there is some agreement that the largely agrarian French-Catholic population spent the first half of the twentieth century resisting the secular, industrial, and urban values of modernization (p. 72). Magnuson (1980) writes that even when some members of the Catholic clergy expressed a willingness to modernize the education system during this period, they were ostracized by their peers (p. 75). The consequences of this dual education system became public in 1958 when the federal government conducted a national survey of provincial literacy rates. Published statistics revealed the French-Catholic population of Québec had the lowest literacy rate in the country while their English-Protestant counterparts scored considerably higher nationally (p. 76). The low rates of literacy among the French-Catholic population were due only in part to restrictions placed on education by the Church. School taxes were collected from property owners but Catholic clergy were not allowed to own property. Their Protestant neighbours, on the other hand, were landowners and commercial tradesmen. As a result, taxes collected for Protestant schools were higher than for

Catholic schools. Because families in the English-speaking population of Québec had fewer children than in the French-speaking population and they had more tax dollars to spend on schools, Anglophones in the province benefited from better schools for fewer children. Interestingly, the high enrolment figures and success rates for English-Catholic schools during the first half of the twentieth century parallel those of the English-Protestant school system rather than the French-Catholic schools within the same system (Gagnon, 1996). This is because the relatively small English-speaking Catholic population was left alone to govern its own schools; they chose to adapt their practices to reflect modernization, even if they did not explicitly teach secular values. At the post-secondary level, the French system of education continued to impede rather than encourage students. Students were required to attend a classical college for three to four years between secondary school and university, while their English-speaking counterparts entered university directly from secondary school. This additional period of study meant that, by circumstance, almost all students able to attend classical colleges were wealthy and male. This constituted the group of Francophones who continued into university. The additional period of study in classical colleges also delayed entry into public professions – a lag that perpetuated the dominance of English-speaking Québecers in the domains of politics, business, and culture for several generations. Magnuson (1980) suggests the French system of classical colleges served to create urban-oriented male elite who held viewpoints dramatically different from the majority of the province's French-speaking rural, Catholic population. The characteristics of Québec society, as described briefly here, were further entrenched during the long and arduous political tenure of Maurice Duplessis. The 'Duplessis Era' ended in 1960 with the election of Jean Lesage as the

Liberal party premier of the province. If the history of Québec education for over one hundred years can be summarized in one page, the remainder of this chapter will reflect the rapid acceleration of change since 1960.

#### The Ministry of Education.

Robert Gagnon (1996) writes that the election of Jean Lesage and the change to a Liberal government rocked the education system in Québec: “The roles of church, state, school board and citizen were redefined” (p. 84). Thus began a period often referred to as the ‘Quiet Revolution’. All of the values and traditions that had defined Québec society for centuries were challenged. It was a revolution of ideas, including a revised role for the state in matters of public concern such as education. Within the first year of his mandate, Lesage commissioned an investigation into the state of education in the province. It was called *The Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education* and became known as the *Parent Commission* after its chairman, Alphonse-Marie Parent (Magnuson, 1980, p. 106). This commission initiated a tradition of public consultation into education that is still healthy and active in Québec today. The *Parent Commission* condemned the condition of education in Québec. Its authors made sweeping recommendations to change virtually every aspect of a system that was ill-equipped to prepare Québec’s citizens for modern society. Magnuson (1980) writes, “Inspired by the principle of democratic education, which it defined as the right of all citizens to an education consistent with their interests and needs, the commission proposed comprehensive reforms touching on the character, organization and administration of education” (p. 107). Based on the recommendations of the commission, the Ministry of Education (M.E.Q.) was created in 1964. The creation

of the ministry shifted the responsibility for education from the Church and its clergy to the State and its politicians. The transfer of power created tensions that still exist today surrounding the kind of values a secular, modern, state-administered education system is capable of promoting. This became a central question in 1998 when the structural component of Québec's educational reform project dissolved Catholic and Protestant school boards and created a new school system organized along linguistic lines. In 1999, with the publication of the report, *Religion in Secular Schools: A New Perspective for Québec* (referred to as the *Proulx Report*), these tensions came to a climax. The Catholic clergy employed various forms of public communication – newspaper stories, television and radio interviews, and community meetings – in order to condemn the loss of public morality. The personal character of Jean-Pierre Proulx, himself a publicly avowed devout Catholic, was maligned in the name of religion. That the report has been tabled indefinitely points to the continued potency of these old tensions.

The primary preoccupation of the first wave of educational reforms during the nineteen-sixties was to extend access to free education to everyone in the province. The Ministry of Education encouraged participation in the development of a province-wide system by creating layers and layers of advisory groups that included parents, teachers, businesses, and community groups. This drive for public involvement in decisions concerning education has been a constant feature of Québec's public education system since the *Parent Commission* and still continues today. It is one of the distinguishing characteristics of education in Québec because, although a system of public consultation can be burdensomely slow, it nevertheless guarantees a democratic forum for

participatory citizenship about educational issues. This valuing of the concept of inclusion may derive from centuries of being spoken for by others, or perhaps it reflects the perception that collective decision-making leads to solidarity. Regardless of the reasons, the M.E.Q. and the citizens of Québec have enjoyed a lengthy dynamic relationship based on public consultation and constant exchange about education that extends across party politics.

#### Reports and Estates General leading to reform in Québec.

In the years since its inception, the M.E.Q. has led the province through several waves of educational reform. The *Inchauspé Report* notes that reforms in the nineteen-sixties based on access to education changed to reforms in the nineteen-seventies based on enhanced student performance with an emphasis on the creation of objective-based, teacher-centered programs of study (p. 17). In 1994, the *Corbo Task Force* was created to re-examine the overwhelmingly objectivist approach to education that had evolved in the province. Their report, *Preparing Our Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, led to the creation of the *Commission for the Estates General on Education* in 1995, and eventually to the writing of the *Inchauspé Report*. During the years since 1964, the M.E.Q. has commissioned innumerable reports and position papers. These reports are rarely tabled before the government consults with the broader educational community and citizen groups. A brief survey of the bibliography in the *Inchauspé Report* reveals title after title of reports commissioned by and for the M.E.Q. There are several reports, for example, from advisory boards on English and French language instruction, art education, the teaching of science and mathematics, and reports that examine subject disciplines by



grade level. There are studies on the status of education at the pre-school, elementary, secondary, adult, college, vocational and university levels. There are reports from the Catholic Committee, the Protestant Committee, the Conseil des relations interculturelles, a report on education for pluralist societies, a study about the development of ethical competencies, a report on the integration of new immigrants into Québec schools, and several reports on a wide range of educational issues written by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation – an advisory board to the M.E.Q.. There are also studies commissioned by the M.E.Q. about teaching methods, about the quality of the curriculum, about the role and responsibility of the teacher in modernity. But in addition to all the above-mentioned documents written by professionals from within the field of education, of significance for a study about education and democracy are the 11 reports compiled by the *Commission for the Estates General on Education* based on consultation with the public. This commission was convened in 1995 to carry out a process of public consultation across the province. Its mandate, quoted in the *Inchauspé Report*, was expansive: "...to define objectives for the school in its broadest sense, both now and in the future" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 19). The titles of the 11 reports compiled by the Estates General and listed in the bibliography of the *Inchauspé Report* reveal a comprehensive investigation into contemporary educational issues and practices. At the conclusion of the *Estates General*, the then Minister of Education, Pauline Marois, commissioned a task force to write a report that would become the foundation for an educational reform for the Province of Québec, taking into account all antecedent documents. The resulting report, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Inchauspé Report)* was tabled in 1997. Although there have been four Ministers

of Education since 1997 – François Legault, Sylvain Simard, Pierre Reid, and Jean-Marc Fournier – it is Pauline Marois who is considered the principal architect of the current educational reform project. It is not insignificant, however, that the political party that instigated this reform – the Parti Québécois – is not, at present, responsible for its continued construction and implementation.

#### The implementation process and the role of school boards.

The construction and implementation phases of Québec's reform are as layered with consultative bodies as the process was leading to the writing of the *Inchauspé Report*. At the M.E.Q. level there are: theory teams; program writing teams for each subject and each cycle level; teams responsible for writing cross-curricular competencies; a provincial body that monitors and coordinates all of the program writing teams; groups to study time allocations; groups to study evaluation and certification procedures; consultative bodies to study teacher education programs; and committees responsible for deciding what forms of professional development will facilitate the implementation of this reform. But despite all of these centrally-organized consultative bodies, and although programs of study, subject-time allocations, evaluation procedures, and the overall implementation timeline are determined at the ministry level, it is the responsibility of school boards to implement the reform in their schools and adult education centres.

The 1997-1998 annual report of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation called, *Educating for Citizenship*, states that while it is important for school boards and schools to teach

citizenship through classroom practices, they must also model the roles and responsibilities of citizenship through institutional and organizational actions (Chapter 3).

Every school board is autonomous to develop the policies and practices – and create the environment – that will facilitate the implementation of the reform in its schools. Because school boards are responsible for developing their own implementation strategies and plan of action – a decision made partly in deference to regional differences in student clientele and partly in response to public demands for school board and school autonomy – it is unlikely there are uniform organizational changes being made across Québec’s school boards. Because the reform is being implemented by and within pre-existing school board communities with pre-established value systems and traditions of practice, it is possible that a school board could accommodate the reform administratively and still resist making deep changes in its overall learning environment or philosophy of education. It is also possible that historical and cultural differences between regional populations within the province are influencing how school boards interpret and respond to the values advanced through the *Inchauspé Report*. As will become evident in Section Two of this chapter where I examine the text of the *Inchauspé Report*, there are complexities and contradictions at the heart of this reform. The construction and implementation processes developed by school boards provide them with an opportunity to enrich the reform through creatively interpreting these tensions. In Chapter Four, I examine one large school board and its attempt to create an organizational structure and learning environment supportive of some of the values in this educational reform. Here I turn to an interpretive analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*.

## Section Two

### From the inside out

C.S. Pierce (1893), one of the earliest proponents of applied philosophy, suggests that when we doubt our own ideas, we are compelled to create situations through which to debate them: “There must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle” (p. 11). The educational reform project currently underway in the province of Québec represents an opening into the global debate about which values should be nurtured and taught if democracy and citizenship are to evolve to meet the needs of pluralist societies. A quick glance at a daily newspaper or television news broadcast reveals how frequently the words democracy, citizenship, and values are used in our public conversations. The constant repetition of these words is indicative of our struggle to meaningfully organize everyday experiences. Although the literature review in the previous chapter revealed that there is no single definition for either democracy or citizenship, there is something reassuring – and necessary – about keeping these ideas at the forefront of public discourse. The variations between the three models of democracy described in the previous chapter and the concept of self that supports and is nurtured by each model, are significant enough to justify conducting an interpretive analysis of an educational reform for and about democracy to determine whether a particular model of democracy and associated values is dominant in the *Inchauspé Report*. In Section Two of this chapter, I explore methods for discerning values and patterns of valuation by describing the writings of Risieri Frondizi (1963, 1971), Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997), and Jean-Pierre Changeux (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000). Their theories provide a

framework for locating where values occur in the *Inchauspé Report* and for identifying what those values are. I then conduct an interpretive analysis of the text of the *Inchauspé Report* in order to extract the values and patterns of valuation present in the report. The values contained in the *Inchauspé Report* form the basis for educational policy-making about this reform, and are thus absorbed into school practices. The purpose of this part of the thesis is to deepen our understanding of the report's potential to respond to the democratic needs of a complex modern society. T.M. Scanlon (1998) in his book entitled, *What We Owe to Each Other*, formulates a beautiful nuance that guides my critical analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*. He says, "...understanding the value of something often involves not merely knowing that it is valuable or how valuable it is, but also how it is to be valued" (Scanlon, 1998, p. 100).

#### Theories about values and valuation.

Risieri Frondizi (1963, 1971) explains that the history of axiology, or the study of values, is a relatively new branch of philosophical enquiry. It was born out of the confluence of the death of metaphysics and the centrality of rationality and individualism. During the middle of the nineteenth century a confidence developed in our human ability to discern significance without recourse to pre-established value systems based on either religious doctrine or scientific investigation. Frondizi (1963) credits Frederick Nietzsche with being the first Western philosopher, during the second half of the nineteenth century, to formulate philosophical theories around the construction of values (p. 33). But values with no religious or scientific justification risk meaninglessness. The history of axiology during the past one hundred and fifty years has been an attempt to address questions

about the relativity of values. Frondizi (1971) says it is too soon to pass judgment or draw conclusions from the study of values; no single theory yet exists to clearly explain what constitutes value and valuation. He says, "Progress in philosophy is very different from that of the sciences; it does not, obviously, progress in the sense of linear ascendancy" (Frondizi, 1963, p. 48). The central arguments in the theory of axiology, to date, are divided roughly into two camps. On one side are subjectivists who argue that values do not exist apart from the process of valuation; a subjectivist says something has value because a person or group values it. On the other side are objectivists who argue that we value something because it has value; the objectivist says our valuation process is guided by the idea or object that has value. Frondizi (1971) suggests this may turn out to be a false dichotomy. In time, and with more study, philosophers may discover that certain ideas or objects do have intrinsic permanent value; on the other hand, it may be established that historical periods develop their own hierarchy of values lacking permanence outside the particular epoch. Changeux, a neuroscientist, explains that recent advances in brain research indicate human traditions leave permanent traces on the brain (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 136). If this discovery becomes established fact, perhaps philosophers and scientists will collaborate in the field of axiology to study whether human evolution provides a predisposition towards particular values. Frondizi (1971) combines the subjective and objective positions in search of a more comprehensive understanding of values. Values, he says, occur in the relationship between an idea or object and the person or group doing the valuing. Values do not exist apart from the idea or object they are attached to. In this respect values are like parasites; they require a carrier. Frondizi (1971) describes a broad set of conditions that surround values and

valuation: the historical period; cultural context; social customs and personalities; and, legal and religious habits of being. All values, whether extrinsic – the valuation of ideas or objects for what they produce – or intrinsic, require a process that assigns value. Frondizi (1963) explains that the more complex the idea or object being evaluated – issues with ethical and moral significance – the more dependent the valuation process is on external factors that influence what is being valued (p. 140).

Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997) says postmodernism has confounded the study of values; we have arrived at total subjectivism where something is valuable because it is valued. He disagrees that value is mere perception. He has developed a theory about how values present themselves and I draw on his theory to assist with my interpretive analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*. Curtler (1997) explains that an idea or object is comprised of local and regional properties. A book or text, for example the *Inchauspé Report*, is comprised of local properties that can be seen or pointed to; they have a physical existence independent of human perception – they are empirical in nature (Curtler, 1997, p. 107). The local properties in a text include: letters; words; phrases; sentences; paragraphs; ordering of the chapters; typeface; spacing; cover design; paper quality; etc. Regional properties occur in the relationships between local properties. In the case of a text, regional properties might become evident to the reader as a result of: reading context and purpose; shared cultural meanings with the author(s); juxtaposition of topics; frequency and repetition of particular words; etc. Regional properties emerge – and are felt – as the reader interprets the relationships between local properties; the felt quality derives from the valuation process. Changeux (2000) proposes a third model for evaluating our experiences of the

world. What he terms ‘first-order representations’ compare to Curtler’s (1997) notion of local properties and involve empirically-based knowledge about ideas or objects; ‘second-order representations’ compare to Curtler’s (1997) notion of regional properties and are discerned in the complex relationships between first-order representations (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 153). According to Changeux, discernment of second-order representations requires the use of reason: first in order to conceptualize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the relations between first-order representations; and, second, to make choices about which second-order representations are significant (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 249).

My interpretation and critical analysis of the text of the *Inchauspé Report* borrows from all of these theories of values and valuation as a framework for extracting and interpreting the values implicit in this reform. I explored the text to find the local properties pertinent to my study – the actual words and phrases – and then determined, through rationalization, conceptualization, and selection, which regional properties or second-order representations (values) were significant for the interpretive portion of this investigation.

*Critical analysis of Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Inchauspé Report).*

Regional properties or second-order representations are terms that refer to relational experiences – to felt qualities that result from the valuation process. For this reason, a study of the *Inchauspé Report* based on explicating values from the text must begin with



a general evaluation of Québec's overall project. Frondizi (1971) explains that the context and value system of the person or groups doing the valuing form part of the evaluation process; the context and intentionality of the idea being evaluated deepens the complexity of the dynamic process of valuation. I begin my analysis by situating Québec's educational reform in both a particular and a general context. I evaluate Québec's reform project first, in time and place and, second as symbolic of something larger than a provincial educational reform – a quest for learning how to live together well. I then present my study of the text of the *Inchauspé Report* by examining: which values are named explicitly; which values are advanced but not named in the report; and, how the text formulates the concepts of democracy and the self.

#### The particular context.

The local context for the writing of the *Inchauspé Report* is described in a letter addressed to the then Minister of Education, Pauline Marois on behalf of the task force: Paul Inchauspé writes that he is fulfilling Marois's request to submit "... recommendations concerning the changes to be made to the elementary and secondary school curricula in order to satisfy the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century..." (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 3). The educational reform in Québec is framed by a particular time and place – the years preceding a new century at a juncture when the face of Québec society is, quite literally, changing. Jane Jacobs (2000) describes how institutional systems mimic nature when they are no longer able to cope with unanticipated features in their environment (p. 63). Rather than remain exposed and vulnerable, the system diversifies its practices to encompass the changes. One of the impetuses behind Québec's

reform was the need to create an educational environment that could embrace a growing immigrant population, represented by diverse values and customs, while still retaining the deeply cherished characteristics of French-Canadian society. The reform is the culmination of years of public consultation about curricular issues ending with hearings held by the *Commission for the Estates General on Education* during 1995-1996. These hearings yielded two major findings: that the quality of basic education in Québec needs to be improved; and, that the cultural content of the curriculum must be increased. These findings were translated into goals that parallel those of educational reforms throughout the Western world: to prepare students for knowledge-based societies; and, to develop schools as agents of social cohesion. This, in brief, is the complicated and complex particular context of Québec's educational reform and the writing of the *Inchauspé Report*.

An evaluation of the *Inchauspé Report* in its particular context.

After several thorough readings, the *Inchauspé Report* still emits a hopefulness and sincerity about the relationship between education and democracy that is valuable. It takes a strong idealistic position vis-à-vis the character of education. Because I believe that formal educational practices in Western societies play a powerful role in the formation of selves, I value an educational reform that publicly acknowledges this as a responsibility and submits itself to questions about its own intentions. The writing style and organization of most government reports create a rhythm of sameness that quickly drives the reader in search of only pertinent information. From my first reading of the *Inchauspé Report*, I responded to this text as one educator in conversation with another.

My purpose for teasing out the values in this reform is to enrich and enliven the debate about Québec's project, precisely because I respect its intentions. Isaiah Berlin (1996) says the greatest feature of reforms is their consummate belief that a better way of life exists. He says it is often the intention and not the reform that is worth valuing. The greatest strength of this reform is also its greatest weakness – the enormity of its vision. It attempts to create a value-based education system through which students will learn how to become active participatory democratic citizens in a pluralist society where diverse values are respected while the particular values and customs of French-Canadian culture are protected and nurtured. Policies, practices, and personnel in school boards, schools, and adult education centres will model and teach these concepts while also qualifying students, through adherence to a rigorous curriculum, to enter a global-market economy where jobs and university places are limited to only the best and the brightest students. This is a complex and ambitious mandate. I do not think Québec's educational reform will succeed in any absolute sense but I do agree with Jane Jacobs (2000) that tinkering goes a long way towards saving the environment (p. 130). A text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* as a particular reform in this time and place may provide one means for people in Québec to reflect on the values of democracy and citizenship advanced in this educational reform and to determine whether their own needs and values are reflected in the concepts as they are presented.

#### The general context.

There is a palpable tension throughout the Western world today between the values at the core of liberal democracy based on the protection of individual rights, and the values that

underlie republican democracy based on social consensus, cohesion, solidarity, and community. These tensions are now beginning to vibrate through less developed parts of the world. In order to sort through and make sense of this complicated interplay of values, societies need to construct social situations that will foster the development of compassion and inhibit violence. The creation of norms of behaviour becomes the “...raw material for a universal and fundamental normativity of human morals” (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 232). Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) suggest that the evolution of norms is beginning where physical evolution ended. There are movements – tentative and provisional – to organize everyday human experiences towards harmony. Jürgen Habermas is one of the contemporary philosophers who conceptualize normative progression through theories of discourse ethics and communicative action. These theories acknowledge the dissonance between competing sets of values but strive to utilize the energy released through their tension as a means for contributing to our overall understanding of human differences. Without recourse to an ethics of discourse, competing value systems are reduced to irreconcilable contradictions, cancelling – or obliterating – the benefits of each. Discourse ethics as articulated by Habermas and enlarged through the writings of Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser, presents a theory for establishing procedural rules capable of accommodating diverse articulations of values and valuation patterns. Québec’s educational reform project is an attempt to join this global enquiry into how humans can learn to peacefully coexist in pluralist societies. Québec’s educational reform for and about democracy creates a means for citizens to enter this conversation. In this way, the reform is extended into a general context.

An evaluation of the *Inchauspé Report* and its general context.

Reforms, in general, are testing grounds for new values. Québec's reform demonstrates how debates about democratic values and citizenship enter into public discourse. Because it is a province-wide reform, the entire population of Québec can – potentially – participate in this debate. According to Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) cultural evolution occurs when social groups begin to rationalize, conceptualize, and select specific systems of values in an attempt to live harmoniously. This reform is Québec's ambitious attempt to articulate a system of education that will foster the development of ethical norms for a rapidly changing social context. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are a handful of words that proliferate present-day public discourse – democracy, citizenship, values. We have immersed our public consciousness in words that describe forms of human interaction. There is an imperfect but discernable readiness to begin to structure social institutions according to interpersonal rather than instrumental goals. This desire is partially addressed through the intentions of this educational reform. James Bohman (2000) suggests that proponents of deliberative democracy must take these ideas out of their theoretical domain and find ways to demonstrate what deliberative democracy looks like in action. The general value of Québec's educational reform rests in its potential for engaging the public in on-going democratic debate.

Values named in the *Inchauspé Report*: keywords.

Because the words 'democracy', 'citizenship', and 'values' refer to the concepts at the heart of my investigation, I examined how these words are presented in the text of the *Inchauspé Report*. Through the course of my investigation, I added the word 'culture' to

the three words named above because of how frequently it appears in the text of the report. The word 'culture' is used more often than any of the other three words and this makes it significant as both a local and regional property in my analysis.

In Appendix A, the reader will find excerpts taken directly from the *Inchauspé Report* for each instance where one of the four key words appears in the text.

Keyword: 'democracy'.

There is no a priori discussion in the recommendations of the *Estates General* or in the text of the *Inchauspé Report* concerning the assumption that an education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be constructed around the principles of democracy and democratic citizenship. There is also no discussion about whether a particular model of democracy is to be advanced for the province. Nevertheless, the report states unequivocally that schools should promote democratic ideals (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 24). Given that Québec functions with a democratically elected legislature within a federal democracy, and given that philosophical debate about differing models of democracy is a relatively recent phenomenon (Cunningham, 2002), it is understandable, although worth mentioning, that the task force accepted its mandate as intrinsically valuable without questioning that the principles of democracy would form its foundation. Of particular import for this thesis is how democracy is described in a sub-section of the report called, "Common Values Based on Common Goals", part of a larger section, "Expectations Relating to the Mission of Socialization" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 33). The sub-section, part of which is quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, states that a pluralist

approach to ideas and values must be based on a commitment to common values and common experiences such as a commitment to democracy as a common goal. The text continues by listing values on which democracy depends: recognition of others; individual liberties; responsibility; the promotion of social justice; respect for the law; and, participation in democratic processes. The text sets up an interesting juxtaposition between issues that touch on diversity and the notion of commonalities. For example, the phrases ‘common values’, ‘social cohesion’, and ‘solidarity’ appear in each paragraph of this section and the text states explicitly that the survival of democracy depends on the promotion of common values. “Individual liberties, although their priority is recognized, cannot be exercised to the detriment of social cohesion” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, p. 34). Although the report does not define the concept of social cohesion it is granted priority over the exercise of individual liberties in the phrase quoted above. Democracy is not a stable concept. “Plural public reason promotes common deliberation about conflicts, not about the collective goals of particular cultures” (Bohman, 2000, p. 95). This section of the text concludes by saying that schools are well-placed to implement democratic ideals as the basis for an education in values. However, this goal is complicated – and compromised – when the text puts forth its conditions for an education for and about democracy by stating that if the role of education is to “...provide a foundation for a shared vision of democratic society, a new vision of democracy, then in our view the foundation should include a memory of past events...we believe that the idea of a national community is one of the cornerstones of identity” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, p. 34). The construction of a new vision of democracy requires porous boundaries, contested values, constant argumentation, and the reformulation of past

conceptions. Stephen Macedo (1999) says institutions can have a utilitarian purpose or a moral purpose but cannot authentically accomplish both (p. 110). This distinction may explain confusion at the heart of Québec's educational reform. Is the report advocating that one role of education in Québec is to help new citizens assimilate into an existing culture by adopting – and adapting to – the memories and traditions of a pre-existent national community? This would represent a utilitarian purpose. Or is the role of education in Québec to provide all citizens with the knowledge and skills to participate equally in the formation of values and evolving forms of social organization that will reflect the newly burgeoning pluralist population? This would represent a moral purpose. Although in reality both purposes rely on educational practices as the means to an end, in the former instance education serves the politically-driven agenda of the state while in the latter instance education is, in theory, more inclusive of the entire population including those individuals and groups for whom the memory of a Québec national community holds little significance. The mention of a national community underlying the development of democratic ideals parallels a debate taking place within contemporary democratic theory. This debate centres on the question of whether democracy can survive without national borders, borders that have hitherto lent structure and definition to the notion of 'common culture'. Do democratic values need this form of protection against the encroachment of economic globalization? (Cunningham, 2002, p. 201). Throughout the passages where the word democracy occurs, there is a recurring theme best summarized in the following sentence: "Successful democratization of the education system does not involve merely ensuring equality of access; it must also ensure the transmission of a common culture to all students" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 37).



Based on Québec's recent history and the fact that the *Inchauspé Report* was written during the tenure of a Parti Québécois government, it is impossible not to ask if the report's insistence on transmitting a common culture is based on democratic or other values. Benjamin Barber (1984) suggests that social cohesion is not in and of itself a negative concept and need not be created through persuasion or manipulation. He cautions that the danger inherent in a political system designed to foster social cohesion is the risk of creating a "...disposition toward political unanimity, and inspirational persuasion..." (Barber, 1984, p. 241).

I stated earlier in this chapter that I would examine both local and regional properties through the interpretive analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*. The words and phrases discussed above represent local properties. It is also important to note the regional properties that emerge through the report's presentation of democracy and democratic education. This reform has three overall missions or goals: the mission of instruction; the mission of socialization; the mission of providing qualifications (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 21). Within this organizational format, discussion about the promotion of democratic ideals is found almost exclusively within the mission of socialization. This framework suggests implicitly that democratic values are integral to our interpersonal relationships but are less crucial when it comes to cognitive development (the mission of instruction) or preparation for higher education or the work place (the mission of providing qualifications). In the mission of instruction, there is a great deal of emphasis placed on respect for individual differences in learning styles, cognitive abilities, and personality traits. One of the refrains of this reform is '...success

for everyone keeping in mind that success is not defined in the same way for all students'. However, in the mission of socialization, we see a shift away from individual differences and towards sameness with the phrases 'common values', 'social cohesion' and 'solidarity' being repeated constantly throughout this section. In the passage quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, there are six instances of these phrases in a single paragraph defining the mission of socialization (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 33). Although no doubt unintentional, the report seems to suggest that while learning about content is an individual, cognitive act, learning about citizenship is social and affective.

Keyword: 'citizenship'.

Because we cannot teach democracy directly, democracy being an active process comprised of numerous practices and relationships in constant motion, citizenship education consists of teaching information about and providing examples of how people participate in democratic processes and practices. We select to teach particular processes and not others based on our conception of democracy and its values. Citizenship is represented multi-dimensionally in this reform: it is a cross-curricular competency; it is a broad area of learning; and it is a program of study. In theory, this structure guarantees that citizenship education will remain a constant component throughout a student's schooling.

In the first instance where the *Inchauspé Report* refers to citizenship education as a program of study, the text states, "In keeping with the role of schools as agents of social cohesion, we propose that citizenship education be provided as part of a formal course"

(Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 58). The most extensive description of citizenship education is found in the section called, "Citizenship Education" where the text explains that schools have a social and political commitment to prepare "...young people to play their role as free and responsible citizens..." (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 119). The text further states that the goal of citizenship education is to: make students aware of their rights and responsibilities towards others and towards society in general; prepare students to be active citizens by helping them develop critical minds and respect for others; help students master the skills needed to promote and defend democratic values and human rights; and, demonstrate social solidarity and an understanding of other countries and other cultures (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, pp. 119-120). The report then briefly returns to the notion of citizenship education as a process for developing social cohesion. It states that citizenship education is "...based on knowledge of past and present society, and on a certain view of the society of the future. It also covers the rules of life in society..." (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 120). The final comment in this section then flips back to a pluralist approach when it says citizenship education "... is part of a dynamic of social inclusion, and its content and activities are a source of dialogue and sharing for all, without exception" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 120). As with the word 'democracy' examined above, passages in the text containing the word 'citizenship' appear to move back and forth between the promotion of common values and social cohesion, and the importance of respecting a pluralism of values. The text appears to endorse a genuine acceptance and appreciation for the fact that Québec schools are filled with children born outside the province and, in many instances, outside Canada. There are numerous references to the importance of respecting diversity and

learning about the histories and cultures of other countries. At the same time, the refrain of social cohesion is constant and, after considerable repetition, it is almost impossible not to interpret this regional property as meaning that agreement, stability, and commonalities are values to be promoted through this reform. The outline of this vision is filled in with passages about: the preservation of shared knowledge of past and present events; learning the rules of society; and sharing a common vision of a future society. It is important that citizenship education courses reflect a clear vision of the democratic values they are teaching. As I mentioned earlier in reference to Stephen Macedo's (1999) writings on deliberative democracy, it is not possible to simultaneously prepare students for integration into a pre-existing society and teach them how to deliberate and debate about the formulation of new values and creative visions. If this confusion of values in the *Inchauspé Report* becomes part of citizenship education courses, it may limit the democratic potential of this reform. If students are taught to develop critical capacities for questioning and are encouraged to participate in processes of dialogue and discussion only to later discover that their explorations are confined within pre-existing frameworks, there is a potential for disillusionment. Theodor Adorno (1963) writes about the susceptibility of youth when their ideas are moulded to fit institutional expectations. Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) suggest that the cultural conventions of communities serve to limit the interests of individuals especially when new members of a community do not share the same source of legitimacy or cultural conventions (p. 267). A requirement of participatory democratic citizenship is the creation of authentic public spaces where every citizen not only has the right to express an opinion but also has the right to believe there is a genuine opening for its possibilities.

Keyword: 'values'.

Early in the text of the *Inchauspé Report* in a section called "Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion", the relationship between education and values is explained: "...schools must help students find their place in society by transmitting a common cultural tradition (including knowledge, cultural references, and value systems), by sharing common values based on common needs, and by providing for real equality of opportunity" (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 14). In a pattern similar to that found above in the analysis of the keywords 'democracy' and 'citizenship', the text of the report goes on to describe a pluralist approach to values and value formation. The authors of the report suggest that values are formulated and absorbed through experiences where their presence can be felt, an idea that is consistent with the philosophical theories of education presented in Chapter Two. The report specifically refers to art and literature as providing indispensable means for exposing students to a diversity of values (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, p. 52). But this pluralist approach exists side by side with the notion of a single set of values.

The values of community life are promoted and often exemplified in Québec's schools...Common values are taught in all school subjects. However, the curriculum does include a time and place specifically designed to encourage reflection on values: religious and moral education, or moral education for those who prefer the secular option. The values discussed and promoted in these courses are essentially the same. The only

difference lies in the explanation given for the basis of the values: religious on the one hand, natural or rational on the other. (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997, pp. 32-33)

Most contemporary axiological theories differentiate between values and value formation suggesting that the types of processes employed for learning about values influence one's discovery and understanding of values. The *Inchauspé Report* makes an enormous assumption in stating that the values under study are the same whether the foundation for the investigative process is religious or secular. Returning to Charles Taylor's (1989) thesis about sources of the self – morality, individuality, and rationality – a person's relationship to values is inordinately influenced by the source of the value's legitimacy. T.M. Scanlon (1998) suggests the primary difference between value systems based on religious doctrine and secular value systems is that traditional religious values contain comprehensive plans. Scanlon (1998) says we cannot truly understand 'the other' until we put aside our comprehensive plans (p. 171). Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) suggest it is possible, if one digs deep enough, to discover a place beyond language, religion, and customs where secular and religious values meet (p. 270). But, they add, formal religion continues to resist a meeting with secular values because, there, it loses its authority. Jürgen Habermas (1994) suggests that multicultural societies where pluralism is the norm require a high level of abstraction about value formation to accommodate multiple perspectives (p. 90). He states that teaching common values is not the same thing as teaching processes for "...common will formation" (Habermas, 1994, p. 16). The keyword 'values' is often accompanied in the text of the *Inchauspé Report* by verbs such

as ‘promotion of values’ and ‘transmission of values’. Values themselves are often described with adjectives: ‘shared values’, ‘common values’, and, ‘community values’. Again, the text appears to contain contradictory impulses. In certain instances it embraces diversity and promotes the concept of multiple perspectives; then the repetition of words and phrases such as ‘social cohesion’, ‘conformity’, and ‘a pre-determined notion of community’ confuses this perspective. Frondizi (1963) explains that the hierarchical ordering of values is changeable within a society if people first recognize and then examine the criteria for their valuation process (p. 10).

A sentence found in a section called, “Intercultural education”, expresses a viewpoint about globalization in general: “Cultural diversity is one of the characteristic features of contemporary society. It will probably be accentuated in the future, as travel becomes easier and more frequent. One of its consequences is the continual transformation of the social fabric in host societies” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, p.122). In the use of the phrase ‘host societies’, there is an implication that others are visitors. Who decides whether and when someone is a host or a visitor in a society, and what criteria are used to establish one’s position?

Keyword: ‘culture’.

Throughout the *Inchauspé Report* there is no precise definition or description for what the word ‘culture’ refers to. Despite its frequent usage, the word remains elusive. To begin, I will list the phrases that contain the word culture because, as I mentioned earlier, the length of the list itself represents a significant regional property: cultural heritage;

cultural contexts; cultural traditions; cultural memory; cultural project; cultural competence; cultural component of the curriculum; cultural content; cultural aspect; cultural goals; cultural perspective; human culture; cultural system; assimilation of culture; cultural achievements; cultured teachers; cultural elements; cultural subjects; intercultural understanding; culture of origin; Québec culture; language of cultural attachment; common culture; cultural characteristics; cultural dimension; cultural education; cultural environment; cultural production; artistic culture; technological culture; arts education culture; marking culture; general culture; professional development culture; cultural diversity; intercultural exchange; cultural pluralism; cultural relations; cultural richness; cultural expressions; cultural identity; and, cultural activity.

Based on Curtler's (1997) theory, the sheer proliferation of the word culture throughout the *Inchauspé Report* reveals a certain value attached to this concept. Virtually every aspect of the reform is discussed in relation to some notion of culture. At the same time, the proliferation of the word culture dilutes its significance for the reader. After several thorough readings of the report, two distinct notions about culture emerge: culture as constitutive of shared meanings, traditions, history, language and customs; and, culture as the expression of creativity through literature, art, music, and drama. Where the report talks about schools preserving cultural heritage and the curriculum as a cultural project and an expression of cultural memory, the first meaning is invoked. This sense is summarized in a section called, "The History of Québec": "... no student can successfully integrate into society unless he or she has been helped, in school, to



assimilate the cultural traditions of the society concerned” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, p. 35). The second meaning of the word culture is conveyed in the section called, “Improving Cultural Content”: “The intellectual curiosity of students can only be fostered through an understanding that the evolution of the human mind has been based on the development of representations of the world we live in and the construction of a store of knowledge...This is another reason why the cultural aspect must receive more emphasis in the curriculum” (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, p. 28). It is interesting to note, again relying on Curtler’s (1997) theory about discerning values through regional properties, that the first use of the actual phrase ‘cultural diversity’ does not appear until page 122 of the report while the first reference to ‘common cultural traditions’ occurs on page 14. Earlier in this chapter I summarized the history of education in Québec and suggested that the centrality of religion and language are still evident themes in Québec’s current educational reform project. The fact that both concepts are subsumed under the single word culture in the report partially explains why almost every page of the *Inchauspé Report* is punctuated by references to culture; the themes of religion and language are still very present in the history being created through this reform.

### Conclusion to the Chapter

In Section One of this chapter, I described how other Western democratic countries and some Canadian provinces are reforming their education systems in response to the complex demands of increasingly pluralist populations. I then briefly reviewed the history of education in Québec in order to highlight the developments that led to the emergence of two themes that continue to dominate the field of education today: religion

and language. I summarized the role played by the Ministry of Education in previous reforms and tried to demonstrate the genuine value the M.E.Q. places on public involvement in decisions about education. This on-going practice provides an enduring example of participatory democracy in action within the province and is a fact not incidental to the continued construction and implementation of this reform project. The writing of the document, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Inchauspé Report)* represented a culmination of several years of public consultation about education and contains a response to the needs expressed within the educational community and by the public. At the end of Section One, I indicated that the construction and implementation of this reform is, in part, the responsibility of local school boards, schools, and adult education centres.

The purpose of Section Two of this chapter was to provide an interpretive critical analysis of some of the key concepts contained in the *Inchauspé Report*. I began by situating the report in the particular context of Québec society where a complex combination of values has created a potentially unworkable mandate for this educational reform: to teach the values of participatory democracy and citizenship to a student population represented by a pluralism of values within a culture that, because of its precarious position within North America, wishes to protect a set of pre-established values. I then situated the report in a general context where Québec's reform project joins an important global debate about educating for democracy and citizenship in pluralist societies. The value of this reform is contained in its very existence; it points to a

willingness on the part of the government to engage citizens in a public conversation about what it means to learn and live together well.

#### Models of democracy for the Province of Québec.

I concluded Section Two of this chapter with an interpretive analysis of the text of the *Inchauspé Report* by examining the usage of four keywords. The purpose of the analysis was to identify, if possible, what model or models of democracy are being advanced for the province of Québec through its educational reform. I chose keywords that exemplified the ideas at the heart of this investigation: ‘democracy’, ‘citizenship’, ‘values’, and ‘culture’. I tried to locate every instance where one of the keywords appears in the report. Then, using the process of valuation described by Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997), I attempted to discern the value or values attributed to each of these concepts. In some cases values are explicitly stated, and in other cases they are implied. In still others, values are buried inside assumptions. I discovered through the analysis that the report contains a durable two-sided thread that is woven into its fabric and produces a back and forth pattern between the valuation of diversity and its resulting process of social evolution in a pluralist society, and the protection of traditional customs and values representative of the French-speaking population. Although there is nothing inherently problematic in a democracy that balances changing social norms against the protection of individual rights – in fact this is the overall goal of deliberative democracy – it becomes a dilemma when the evolution of social norms is curtailed by a predetermined course of action. Through the critical analysis of the text, it became evident that genuine expressions of good will and openness to diversity are constantly balanced by the

protection of the majority population. However, in its broader North American context, French-Canadian society constitutes a minority that requires protection (Taylor, 1992, Kymlicka, 1998). Taylor (1992) acknowledges the contradiction inherent in the idea of a liberal society organized around a substantive commitment but he argues that the case of Québec calls for special consideration. Taylor (1992) concludes, however, by asking if a society's claim for special rights based on cultural survival is a valid position for all future generations (p. 41). According to the ideas expressed by the educational philosophers introduced in the previous chapter, the intentionality that sets a policy in motion is a critical determinant of the policy's value. The authors of this report are clearly cognizant of the need to create democratic spaces where all citizens can participate equally. Habermas (1994) includes a wonderful quotation in his book about discourse ethics, taken from the wall of William James Hall at Harvard University. The quotation speaks to the values at the heart of this reform: "The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual; the impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community" (Habermas, 1994, p. 113).

The dilemma that emerges from an analysis of Québec's educational reform is neither intentional nor malevolent. On the contrary, it arises as a consequence of an ambitious project that strives to answer the needs of a diverse population with a complicated history and a vulnerable present. However, philosophical theories about values and valuation together with contemporary debates about democracy and democratic education for pluralist societies all emphasize the importance of teaching the kinds of procedures that develop participatory citizenship. When values are transmitted or promoted without being

accompanied by processes of critical reflection, citizens are unlikely to appropriate them. The result is an assimilative model of citizenship where minority groups integrate into the dominant culture to the extent necessary for their survival while perceiving themselves as marginal to the construction of evolving values. If a class system determined by membership in the dominant community recreates itself inside schools, these schools will be unable to function as sites of true democracy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). Curtler (1997) says if one set of values controls the valuation process, no authentic evaluation is occurring; values are received as doctrine. The result is passive rather than active citizenship. Frondizi (1963) explains that almost all societies develop a hierarchy of values representative of their historical development and social relationships (p. 102). But when this hierarchy becomes embedded in political institutions, it is easy to overlook its socio-constructivist origins. The resulting perception is that the hierarchy of values is justified based on an agreed upon standard. In reality the grounds for justification may no longer exist. Frondizi (1963) cautions that substantive justification is needed for values that are granted top position on the hierarchy (p. 131).

Based on an examination of the particular and general contexts for Québec's educational reform together with a text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, there are two models of democracy advanced within this educational reform: the first is found in the overall educational project itself; the second is located in the content of the *Inchauspé Report*.

The true value of this reform is in its very existence. Deliberative democracy takes a tremendously long time to develop. There needs to be a readiness of the society as a

whole. It begins with small groups of people working within public institutions who are willing to re-envision social norms as a means for extending the limits of traditional democratic practices. In Québec's case, the vision appears in the guise of an educational reform designed to encourage public deliberation about democracy, citizenship, and the values we choose to advance through our educational institutions. The intentions driving this reform are rooted in the values of deliberative democracy. They originate with a perception of educational institutions as public spaces poised in an attitude of '...turned towardness...' to borrow a phrase from Martin Buber. It will take a long time – at least one generation – to evaluate whether or not this reform can genuinely establish and sustain deeper, more inclusive democratic processes. But it represents a valuable tool towards that end. This educational reform has begun a process of public deliberation that could be, potentially, more powerful and enduring than the content of the *Inchauspé Report* itself.

The text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* demonstrated an inclination towards the promotion of a republican model of democracy based on social cohesion, group solidarity, and common values. Habermas (1972) explains that traditional institutions implicitly foster uniformity by meeting the needs of the majority while ignoring dissenting voices (p. 276). The *Inchauspé Report* clearly states that the development of the individual must not proceed in a manner that undermines the common needs and common values of the community. What complicates the context for this reform and lends an element of urgency to its message is the precariousness of Québec's French-speaking community within a North American context. Over a lengthy period of time

this fragility has been translated into a particular vision of community – a vision that so completely permeates the aspirations of the state, it may have been inadvertently written into the reform (Taylor, 1985).

Although the *Inchauspé Report* is a full, rich document and too complex to be reduced to a single notion of democracy, we nevertheless need to sharpen our view of which model of democracy is dominant. Based on the theory explicated in Chapter Two and that informs the critical analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, the dominance of a republican model of democracy underwrites a form of autonomy developed through moral reasoning for the purpose of social solidarity. Keeping in mind the three sources of our modern concept of self, is this the source of the self that should be developed through an educational reform that was created to respond to the exigencies of a modern multicultural society?

## CHAPTER FOUR

## A PERSONAL, PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE REFORM

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.*

*Margaret Mead*<sup>3</sup>

### Organization of the Chapter

The purpose for adopting a practical perspective of Québec's educational reform was to learn more about one of the project's assumptions – that the systems and structures currently in place can support the implementation of an educational reform for and about democracy – and the question this assumption raises: (3) What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values? The chapter relates the story of a Research Study Group convened within a large school board's administration building as a means for learning more about, testing, and reflecting on the principles of the reform and how they are, or can be, nurtured within an institutional structure. Between the principles of democracy on one side and democratic living and learning on the other side, are the policies, processes, and procedures that promote – or limit – the development of democratic values. The purpose of this chapter, based on the principles of applied philosophy, is to explore what occurs in this space located between theory and practice.

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3 Note. From *Democratic Schools* (p. 77), by Michael W. Apple and James A. Beane (Eds.), 1995, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



I tell the story of the study group from three viewpoints, each one drawing from one of the sources of our modern identity as articulated by Charles Taylor (1989). Part One, a description of the actual events and characters in the study group, comes from a moral sense of self where everyday practices are infused with purpose. Part Two, in which I synthesize and analyze the events of the study group, draws on the relationship between democratic values and the institutionalization of education where individuality and particularity become subsumed in what Max Horkheimer (1947) calls, 'the machinery of social power' (p. 186). Part Three, where I interpret the study group as an attempt at deliberative democracy, derives from a rational concept of self that embraces new forms of knowledge based on value pluralism and expanded notions of community. I recount each part of the story through a different voice. Part One represents the immediacy of the everyday where my voice is deeply present in all of its numerous roles: as a non-pedagogical employee of the school board; a participant in the study group; the group facilitator; and, a researcher. In Part One I am aware of a complex array of events and conversations because of the layered context through which I experienced the study group (Bell & Nutt, 2002). In Parts Two and Three, my voice is less immediate, my reactions less personal; I become a researcher. By the end of Part Three, the reader will hear the voice of a citizen engaged in creating processes for nurturing democratic values. In all research projects, but particularly in a qualitative research project where the researcher also participates, he or she plays many different roles. It is sometimes disconcerting to switch from one role to another and it is inevitable that the roles will blend or intersect. But concepts, terminology, and perspectives are specific to the

functions of each role. It is the responsibility of the researcher to respect the implications of each change (Jonnaert, 2004).

#### The case of a large school board.

As I noted in Chapter Three, the report, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997), articulates the principles on which Québec's educational reform is being constructed and it is the role of school boards, schools, and adult education centres to interpret and apply these principles in everyday contexts. This process is on-going and occurs in overlapping layers. In brief, it includes the following elements: the Ministry of Education (M.E.Q.) borrows teachers and educational consultants from school boards, schools, and adult education centres to work on the design and writing phases; each school board creates a framework for receiving the reform that includes on-going professional development for all personnel involved in its implementation as well as a plan for evaluating programs of study and related materials as they are written; schools and adult education centres test the programs of study and related materials in classroom contexts; finally, the M.E.Q. produces the revised programs of study and related materials for province-wide distribution and implementation.

This chapter tells the story of a research study group that was created as a means for learning about and becoming involved in one school board's implementation plan for the reform. Although my original conception of the study group was to create an action

research project based on teaching reform concepts to support staff and non-pedagogical employees, the study group became a place where I could reflect, along with my colleagues, on our understanding of the reform in a real-life context. By making available a reflexive environment through which a new and necessary dimension was added to my overall analysis, the study group provided my investigation with a very different kind of experience of the reform than originally conceived.

### Part One: A Moral Story

Nelson Goodman (1985) says all stories are fragments taken from the whole, with artificial beginnings and endings. Our stories, he says, originate in worlds already known and we remake them through storytelling (Goodman, 1985, p. 6). The existence of the study group within a large school board is a tiny slice of an on-going process; deciding to relate these experiences as a story provides a creative means for ordering and clarifying the surface interactions (Grbich, 2004). Where theories are meant to be cogent and ordered – and a good theory accounts for multifaceted possibilities and eventualities – a story makes no such claim to lucidity. In stories, people and their ideas are dropped into muddy waters. With a tremendous effort of goodwill and cooperation the characters surface from the murky pool with something valuable in hand. Part One is divided into four scenes; these divisions underscore the timeline and the actions of the project. For example, the first scene is introductory; it sets the stage and provides some of the background knowledge necessary for the reader to understand the workplace atmosphere and context for the story. The action of the story actually begins in the second scene where the lead characters are introduced, the story becomes intense and messy, and the

plotline is confused. By the third scene, multiple characters are added but the story becomes somewhat clearer through the passage of time. The fourth and final scene is brief and not overly optimistic. I divided the story of the study group into scenes that serve to clearly demarcate the phases of the project. Simply stated, because Part One is recounted as a story the scenes unfold sequentially and represent an introduction followed by a beginning, middle, and end.

#### Scene one.

During the 1996-1997 school year, the then Director of Instructional Services of the school board where I worked was invited to join the *Task Force on Curriculum Reform* chaired by Paul Inchauspé. He became one of the authors of *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* and was profoundly committed to its content. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 this same administrator became the Director General of the school board. He was the newly appointed Director General of a recently formed school board (in 1998, linguistic school boards replaced denominational boards in the province of Québec) that was just beginning to construct and implement Québec's educational reform. To many employees this juncture created an opening for new possibilities. In September 2000, in the cafeteria of the school board's administration building, the Director General addressed the building's approximately 300 employees and announced his intention for the school board to become a learning organization. He explained that this was a cooperative project and he was inviting everyone at the school board to join in. He said the process of creating a learning organization was consistent with the values underlying Québec's reform: constructivist learning; inclusive

communities; recognition of and respect for individual differences; and, teamwork. For many of the employees present on that September morning this brief invitation was our sole introduction to the concept of building a learning organization.

Scene two.

I wanted very much to join in the process of building a learning organization at the school board. At that time I had been an employee at the school board for thirteen years but, despite my education and teaching certificate, was not directly involved in educational issues. I assumed that the non-pedagogical status of my job would not exclude me from being part of the process of building a learning organization since both the *Inchauspé Report* and literature about learning organizations promote the value of diverse community participation. However, the learning opportunities I witnessed in the administration building were addressed only to pedagogical employees directly involved in the implementation of the reform at the school level. Professional development workshops designed to introduce the major concepts of the reform were on-going but support staff and non-pedagogical professionals were not invited; small discussion groups or triads, created to provide a forum for dialogue about the reform, were open only to members of pedagogical departments; a graduate course on developing educational leadership for the implementation of the reform was offered in the administration building but only for school administrators and pedagogical employees. Although I possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the reform and its values, based on constant reading, university courses, and on-going discussions with other educators, nothing in my daily work-life was involving me in the reform's construction or implementation. I had

assumed the learning organization concept would find me but when it did not, I decided to make an opening for myself. I designed a project to take place in the administration building as part of my doctoral research on the reform. My publicly stated and genuinely sincere reason for creating the project was to establish a role for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals in the creation of a learning organization. I wanted to accomplish this by demonstrating that the implementation of an educational reform for and about democracy could only occur within an inclusive learning community that valued diversity among its members. A second unarticulated purpose for the project was to find my own voice within the educational community. I applied for and received permission from both the university and school board research committees to convene a research study group comprised of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals from within the administration building. Despite some initial difficulties attracting a sufficient number of participants to the study, due to my assumptions about how information in the building was disseminated, the first official meeting of the Research Study Group was held on February 19, 2001 with eleven people in attendance. Eventually, fourteen employees signed written agreements to participate in the study group – eleven women and three men. Of the fourteen participants, six were support staff, seven were non-pedagogical professionals, and one was a member of management who signed the contract but never participated. At our first session we agreed to meet every second week during lunch breaks until the end of June 2001. I introduced the first session by stating that my purpose for the study group was to learn more about our roles – as support staff and non-pedagogical professionals – in the construction and implementation of Québec's educational reform and to try to develop connections between the reform's principles and

the values of a learning organization. I explained that the study group represented an emergent form of research with no preconceived plan of action. I assumed we all shared at least a basic knowledge of the reform's concepts and would begin from there. I also assumed that people had some general idea of what building a learning organization entailed.

It was evident after one meeting that many of the support staff and non-pedagogical professionals in the study group had minimal knowledge of the ideas at the heart of the reform despite, in some instances, their regular contact with schools. I suggested that the Director General be invited to visit the study group and give an introductory presentation on the principles of the reform. This idea met with the participants' approval. Two weeks later, during his presentation to the study group, the Director General drew a distinction between jobs and roles within the school board; he said our role was to be part of the learning organization even if our job was not intimately involved or publicly acknowledged in the construction of this educational framework.

At the meeting following his introductory presentation I perceived an increased level of understanding and enthusiasm about the reform. Many participants spoke eloquently about the reform's principles and their emphasis on reflexive practices. Buoyed by the group's discussion, one participant suggested we test the actual values in our respective departments by requesting permission to meet as a study group during regular working hours. "We are a learning group in a learning organization and we should have time to do this without giving up lunch hours" (2001-03-13).

Between that meeting and the next, I wrote a memo based on the above-mentioned proposal and distributed it to all participants. The group agreed that we would only meet during regular working hours if each participant obtained a signed copy of the memo from his or her respective boss. Everyone did obtain written permission to meet during regular working hours but, for a variety of reasons, we never exercised that right. One member who did not want to lose her lunch hour cautioned the others: "Use it or lose it" (2001-03-27). But many of the participants expressed concern about being absent from their desks because they were too busy. Although I believed their stated reasons, I also think there were unspoken motives for not meeting during regular working hours.

At the end of March the direction of the Research Study Group began to change. The fusion of school boards three years earlier – from denominational to linguistic – had created a duplication of services within some employment levels. This came to a head during the spring of 2001 when a record number of positions for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals were abolished. Because the school board was a relatively new entity with little shared history, people began to blame their new colleagues for a bad situation, particularly since some previous school boards had brought a deficit budget into the fusion of school boards while others had arrived with a surplus. Circumstances were greatly exacerbated by the impersonal manner in which the Human Resources Department carried out its mandate to cut positions.



The Research Study Group participants brought their unhappiness – and uneasiness – to our meetings. It became impossible to talk about the value of building an inclusive community in an environment filled with anxiety and anger. I made a decision to devote some sessions to talking about what was in front of us although, at the time, I thought we were veering off topic. One person said: “We spend more time here (at work) than anywhere else – we should be happy.” Another person expressed the belief that no one listened to support staff. They said they did not believe change was possible in such a large organization. One person asked: “Do we do more because we feel good about our jobs and the organization or do we pick up the phone and call the union when we do more?” Someone answered: “Why do more? With cut-backs, when staffs are small, others are asked to do more; the ones who are willing keep getting asked and they get abused.” A third person added: “People aren’t participating beyond their jobs; maybe they don’t feel a part of belonging or value their job or aren’t challenged enough. Maybe it’s the people who don’t have enough to do who always complain” (2001-03-27).

Out of the malaise came a story from one of the participant’s about her experiences at another school board. She explained that the support staff and non-pedagogical professionals in her department had held monthly meetings with rotating facilitators and note-takers. The staff generated an on-going list of unresolved issues during the month and distributed the list at the beginning of each meeting. Since the issues concerned only support staff and non-pedagogical professionals, it was their responsibility to reach some level of agreement concerning the resolution of each issue. She said the director of her department only joined the support staff at the end of each meeting and, unless one of

their decisions had far-reaching economic or political implications, he merely noted their resolutions. The participant who described the process said: "It really improved office relations because support staff was resolving their own problems" (2001-03-27).

Other participants immediately responded to her experience. One person described the situation in her current department: "The problems just fester and get worse and worse. In my department they voice concerns but not in public. They are afraid." "Afraid of what?" someone asked. She answered, "It's a delicate issue. Maybe only support staff could meet and vent and then managers could come in to listen." Another participant said at her previous school board she was encouraged to try new ideas as well as continue her studies. She said the support and encouragement she received had changed her motivation towards her daily work. She said, "That was an example of something that would happen in a learning organization" (2001-03-27).

There was such genuine, widespread enthusiasm about the story of support staff meetings that I suggested the Research Study Group act on this idea. I proposed that we write a letter to management describing how support staff meetings could function and asking if this idea could be implemented throughout the administration building. The suggestion would cost the school board nothing and would benefit support staff in a multitude of different ways. It was agreed that I would draft a letter but we would forward it to management only if every participant in the Research Study Group signed the letter. I drafted the letter, sent it to participants for editing and approval, and brought it to our first meeting in April for signatures. On April 9, 2001 we sent the signed letter to the Director

General asking him to take our proposal to other managers. I assumed that the study group would receive some acknowledgement of our proposal whether or not it was approved, and I conveyed this assumption to the participants. The first question at the next meeting and at every subsequent meeting between April and June was the same: “Was there any response from the Director General or the management group concerning our suggestion for the implementation of support staff meetings?” (2001-04-23). The answer was and still is, no. We never received a response to our letter. During that period, I sent two letters of reminder on behalf of the group. As the Research Study Group developed a life of its own and participants grew more committed to taking actions that might challenge status quo practices of the power structure, I began to view management through different eyes. As I mentioned in Chapter One, my relationship to the then Director General created an ethical dilemma that affected the direction of the Research Study Group. He had voiced early support for the project and paid a visit to deliver a presentation and answer questions on the reform to the Research Study Group. But, in retrospect, both actions may have been the gestures of a supportive partner rather than an administrator. When our letter and reminders remained unacknowledged over a period of months, I did not know what to do. Had the Director General been a stranger, I might have reacted strongly – perhaps even angrily – to what was widely perceived by the participants as an affront to support staff. But I did not react. I was as frustrated and immobilized as the participants. I tied myself in emotional knots and blamed myself for not anticipating this dilemma. Eventually, the Research Study Group went in a new direction where our subsequent action led to phase-two of the project. But I still believe in the value of our suggestion and am profoundly sorry it never received approval.

During April, May, and June of 2001, jobs were abolished. We received no response from management about our proposal. One of the participants stopped coming to the meetings and told me he did not like the reform, its values, or our study sessions, which he felt were too uncritical of the overall project. One of the participants was harassed by her boss when our lunch-hour meetings spilled over even briefly into regular working hours. That same administrator complained to my boss that the study group received special privileges because of my relationship to the Director General. During a visit to my office, another participant confessed she was finding the whole process overwhelming. She described how she had felt subsequent to our last meeting. "I was overcome with feelings of worthlessness and futility and felt like the task at hand was too enormous to tackle" (2001-04-24).

I started to lose confidence in the whole purpose of our sessions which had originally been to study the values at the heart of the reform and a learning organization, and to make connections between those values and the role of support staff. At one meeting someone voiced what I was thinking. "What's going on at the board is almost the opposite of what we're working towards" (2001-06-11).

We resorted to busy work for a few sessions. I asked various pedagogical consultants for exercises they used at workshops to introduce reform concepts. We did the exercises at the next study session and the activity generated an informative but not very lively

discussion about some of the terminology and vocabulary used in the reform documents, and the clarification of some reform concepts. At the following session, I distributed an exercise that enabled people to identify their leadership styles. This led to a discussion about competencies and whether our job descriptions could be rewritten based on competencies rather than tasks. Someone said: "If we talked in terms of competencies, then if we were bumped from our job we would still take our competencies with us" (2001-05-22).

Attendance at the study sessions during the late spring was lower than it had been at the beginning of the project. The average attendance at each session was down to seven people. I assumed this was my fault because the sessions were uninteresting or irrelevant. I became deeply insecure as the group leader. But when the chairman of the school board's Social Committee asked to speak to the study group, his visit indirectly prompted another action. He explained that although the mission of the Social Committee was vague, its general purpose was to boost morale by creating opportunities for people in the administration building to socialize. He asked members of the Research Study Group to collaborate with the Social Committee on the preparation of a social event about the reform. When one of the participants made a face, I asked her to explain her reaction. She said: "It makes our roles frivolous again and we're asking to be taken seriously" (2001-06-11). Participants thought the idea would dilute the purpose of the Research Study Group.

Following this visit, one of the participants suggested that if we wanted to expand the study group concept we could organize a workshop for other support staff and non-pedagogical professionals to introduce more people to the reform. The suggestion was well received and it was agreed that I would ask the Director General for approval to hold the workshop, and contact some pedagogical consultants for assistance in designing the content of the session. We received approval to do both. The original Research Study Group was dissolving at the end of June but we decided that members who were interested in organizing the workshop would reconvene in August 2001. The final meeting of the Research Study Group was an animated, free-flowing conversation about the school board, the union, the reform, learning organizations, management, budgets, and what role the study group might play in the future. Comments about the whole process varied widely. One participant said: "It's been stimulating and I enjoyed it." Another said: "It's been a way of getting to know all of us. Our group's styles were very mixed so we made a great team." A third participant was less certain about the overall goals of the study group: "Trying to connect the reform to a learning organization is a real stretch. After all, it's a curriculum reform; it's not a societal revolution" (2001-06-11). During the last two weeks of June I conducted one-on-one interviews with most of the participants of the Research Study Group. Two people did not return my telephone calls and a third participant was crying at her desk when I arrived for the interview and said her boss had just reprimanded her. She did not want to be interviewed.

### Scene three.

In late August 2001, phase-two of the project began. Five participants from the original Research Study Group returned to help organize a half-day information session on the reform for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals from within the building. In a memo granting permission for three pedagogical consultants to assist with the content and animation of the session, their department chairman wrote that although he was happy to offer the services of his staff, he did not understand what connection I was trying to construct between support staff and non-pedagogical professionals, on one hand, and the reform's principles on the other.

After two organizing meetings, the first information session took place on October 19, 2001. Thirty support staff and non-pedagogical professionals attended the half-day session which was called, "Educational Reform and It's Partners: Building a Learning Organization". The Director General began the session by giving his introductory presentation on the reform. After answering questions from the group he left and we spent the remainder of the morning doing group activities. The activities were designed to demonstrate the links between some of the key concepts in the reform – lifelong learning, the development of competencies, cooperative learning, teamwork – and a learning organization. Participants were asked to consider the following questions during the exercises: What could I change about my job? What do I like? How does my department work as a team? How does my department not work as a team? Do I know the mission of this school board? Do I practice it? As a closing activity, coloured markers and bristol board paper were distributed and each table was asked to pictorially represent the goals of

their departments. One group drew a picture of a boat in which everyone was rowing together. Another group drew a picture of children playing outdoors while department members joined hands to form a protective circle around them.

Within days, people were asking when the next information session would be held. Someone stopped one of the consultants in the corridor to thank her for such a wonderful morning. We began to organize a second information session with the same title, content, and format as the first. During one of these meetings, a pedagogical consultant mentioned that her colleagues were curious about our project and wanted to attend the second session. I assumed this was a positive development. I wrote and distributed a memo inviting consultants to come. Four consultants registered immediately. When I mentioned this new idea to the Director General, he asked me to un-invite the pedagogical consultants. He said the purpose of the information sessions was to offer support staff and non-pedagogical professionals an opportunity to be at the centre of a project and not on its margins. He was concerned if we invited people already knowledgeable in the reform's concepts to an introductory session, the support staff might feel silenced. I withdrew my invitation. Given the response to the first information session, we were surprised that registrations for the second session were slow to come in; the organizing committee decided to cancel the session rather than have too few participants. Once again the Director General intervened and told us to hold the session regardless of how many people registered. He said not to discourage support staff who were interested enough to register for a session on the reform. He suggested we plan a more advanced third session to combine people from the first two introductory groups. His idea was to create a core of



people who, if interested, could continue the work of combining the reform and the development of a learning organization in the administration building. The second information session was held on December 14, 2001 with twelve participants. The morning was quite lively for such a small group and again the evaluations were extremely positive.

In early February 2002, one year after the first meeting of the Research Study Group, I sat down with two pedagogical consultants and two participants from the original Research Study Group to organize the third and final information session for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. The title of the third session was, "Educational Reform and Its Partners: Looking at Practices". Registration forms were distributed through department directors, as was the procedure for the fall sessions, to all members of the two targeted employee groups even if they had not attended one of the introductory sessions. The purpose of the third session was to focus on the concepts introduced during the fall sessions and examine how they might look attached to everyday practices. We organized activities that would encourage participants to reflect on practices within their own departments. The workshop was held on April 5, 2002 and seventeen people attended. The participants worked in groups but the goal was for everyone to reach a consensus, by the end of the morning, on one practice that could be improved together. The participants chose the following practice: "To develop ways to ensure that our ideas are heard." During the closing exercise, employee after employee stood up and expressed the hope that our words would be taken seriously by management. The comment from one participant summarizes these sentiments: "I would sincerely hope that

management takes seriously into consideration the concerns of all of us who are in our own small way trying to contribute and that they learn from this” (2002-04-05). People suggested that a forum be created in the administration building where management and support staff could discuss issues of common concern and asked that I convey their sentiments to the Director General and keep everyone informed about our next move.

On April 11, 2002 I wrote a letter to the Director General asking if the support staff and non-pedagogical professionals who had attended the three information sessions on the reform could meet with management and present their ideas and concerns. Between April and October, I wrote four letters on the same topic. Each time, I sent copies of the letters to members of the Research Study Group and everyone who had participated in one of the three information sessions. By early October 2002, when it was evident the letters would not produce results, I sent a final group e-mail saying I would be in the cafeteria at noon on October 17, 2002 to meet with anyone still interested in pursuing this project. The e-mail went to fifty people. One person came to meet me in the cafeteria. She suggested we ask members of the Social Committee how to re-interest the support staff in this project.

#### Scene four.

The irony of going to the Social Committee was that one and one-half years earlier, their chairman had asked members of the Research Study Group to collaborate on a project for support staff about the reform and we had refused. Now two lonely stragglers were

asking the Social Committee for assistance. One of the people at the meeting had been to the information sessions and said she became too discouraged to continue: "It's difficult to keep caring when there's no response after all those letters. My department was told to hold support staff meetings and we're still not doing it." Another member of the committee commented: "It takes a long time and a lot of educating to get management to the point where they understand that this process isn't meant to threaten them or take away their time. It's meant to enhance the board" (2002-10-25).

The suggestion of the Social Committee was to offer a "Lunch and Learn" session open to everyone in the administration building. The chairman of the committee, who generously agreed to join our group of two, said a lunch session would be: "...quick, easy, and interesting." If people enjoyed it, a second event could be planned. He also suggested we send our proposal directly to the Deputy Director General since previous communications to the Director General had not yielded a response. I had always assumed I should go through the Director General for approval but the chairman of the Social Committee was at ease in trying a new line of authority. On November 11, 2002 three of us pitched our idea to hold a "Lunch and Learn" session for everyone in the administration building. The Deputy Director General requested a written proposal before making a decision. I prepared a brief written proposal in January 2003 and on March 3, 2003 we received permission to schedule the first "Lunch and Learn" session.

When the three of us met to organize the lunch session, one of my colleagues said she had heard people in the cafeteria complaining that I gave up on the support staff and

simply complied with whatever the Director General said. After two years of working tirelessly on a project that exhibited little remaining energy, that piece of gossip was difficult to hear.

The first “Lunch and Learn” session was held on March 25, 2003. Thirty-three employees attended, including eight people from management. Only one person from the original Research Study Group and three people from the information sessions were in attendance. I had assumed the lunch session was an extension of the original project based on forming links between the reform’s concepts and a learning organization but my colleagues preferred to choose what they perceived to be a more neutral topic for the first “Lunch and Learn” session – welcoming a new member of the management team and providing him with a forum for answering questions about his department.

A second “Lunch and Learn” was scheduled, cancelled, rescheduled, and cancelled. I was promoted from the position I held when this project began and now work at the heart of Québec’s educational reform. On July 1, 2003, a new person was appointed to the position of Director General of the school board. To my knowledge, there are currently no projects for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals in the administration building concerning Québec’s educational reform.

## Summary of Part One

The story recounted above can be read as a moral tale. I was the author and a participant in the story and the decisions and actions that constitute its plot are recounted here from my perspective. Like the central characters in most tales about change and moral purpose, I thought my intentions were relatively pure and transparent while I was living the story. My primary goal was to empower a marginalized group of workers – my own employee group – to take their place as equal members within the school board's learning community as it built a structure for constructing and implementing Québec's educational reform. My intention was to demystify the reform and demonstrate how its basic concepts apply to everyday practices. In hindsight, my motivation was muddled by my roles as both practitioner and researcher and by my relationship to the then Director General. I also miscalculated the powerful influence systemic practices have on the actions of people inside and outside the sphere of institutional power.

For over two years, I was both intellectually and emotionally involved in monitoring how the everyday practices of the administration building affected the workings of the study group. My level of participation was deep and immediate and my attitude propelled other participants of the Research Study Group to take risks. Our collective enthusiasm briefly raised our visibility in the building and, for one institutional moment, the presence of support staff was felt. However, I think my passion ultimately set us up for disappointment and disillusionment. Carol Grbich (2004) writes that seeing oneself interlinked with others who are undergoing the same processes requires a strong focus on self-disclosure (p. 60). In hindsight, I recognize that a level of naïve idealism drove me

throughout the project, partially rooted in my personal quest for recognition within the educational community.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I introduced four philosophers under the sub-heading of ‘democracy and schooling’ whose ideas shed light on how this story can be understood as an exemplification of the reform’s principles in action. Israel Scheffler (1991) says moral education is an orientation towards learning rather than a specific set of practices or outcomes. The story of the Research Study Group represents an attempt to orient one group of employees towards self-recognition and autonomy within an institution where they are marginalized by system practices, even when they are included in system rhetoric. Martha Nussbaum (1990) suggests that we learn about the general by focusing on the particular. The actions and outcomes of the Research Study Group within the administration building were examples of the particular – of local properties (Curtler, 1997). The interactions between the study group and school board administrators also represented examples of the particular – in this case, the hierarchical relationships that exist within social institutions. In Part Two, I analyze how these particular practices provide windows onto general institutionalized practices or regional properties.

Maxine Greene (1995) writes that we need to search for forms of public knowledge that interrupt the instrumental approach to education and engage people in the process of building community. The Research Study Group took several actions that tested institutional boundaries within the administration building. Even though none of these actions succeeded in creating lasting results, setting them in motion was a participatory

process. The actions of the participants created a mechanism for testing the school board's notion of a learning community.

Roger Simon (1992) points out that the value of practices is partially determined through their intentionality. As far as possible, I tried to ensure that the study sessions and actions taken by the Research Study Group were rooted in the values espoused through Québec's educational reform and the characteristics of a learning organization – values such as the inclusion of diverse voices in the construction of communities. The project, for however brief a period, offered a group of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals an opportunity to try to make a difference – to participate in the central corridors of the school board instead of resting on its periphery.

## Part Two: Individuality

In Part Two, I distance myself from the story of the Research Study Group and examine the events as a research project located within a complex social institution. I synthesize and then analyze the data from the research project in order to identify where and how it was affected by the institutionalization of education. The values and intentions of individuals and ideas become overpowered by the unquestioned hierarchical practices of public and political forms of accountability. First, I synthesize the events of the two-year period by extracting the major themes that emerge out of the copious notes, tapes, and interviews collected during the project. I then analyze how these themes interface with

institutional belief systems that serve as powerful controls – controls that remain invisible until we feel their tentacles wrapped around our everyday actions.

Synthesis – in the participants' own words.

Eight months after the school board publicly announced its intention to build a learning organization, the following conversation about job reductions took place during one of the sessions of the Research Study Group. All of these quotations come from a meeting that took place on May 7, 2001.

Why can't they explain the process to us? Why can't they include us? At least maybe then I'd feel part of it. A lot of people don't know why their jobs are being abolished. We're not pawns here – we're part of it. There are people who have been here 30 years and they don't know why their jobs are being abolished.

I heard a story today about someone who heard about losing her job while she was on the bus. Some people were talking and sure enough she found out right there.

Yeah – that's how it happens. They don't have it in them to take people aside and just tell them. Not that it would make it easier but...



Two months later, during one-on-one interviews, a few of the participants took time to reflect on the relationship between the Research Study Group and management. As is evident from the excerpts below, the participants articulated a strong connection between the Research Study Group and practices adopted by the school board.

Very often support staff and professionals are very much on the front lines and I think the way we communicate with our clientele reflects our value systems, who we are, and the type of organization we represent. But staff think they're powerless and so they allow themselves to be treated like they're powerless and they're very powerful. Because of bumping, there's a culture of competition between support staff and because the bumping goes on every year, the culture persists. Even though I know that's not why management does it, it sort of creates a divide-and-conquer mentality.  
(2001-06-20)

I was surprised that the atmosphere around this building is not as good as I thought it was. Maybe I live in my own glass bubble. We have a lot of work to do and we shouldn't be hearing those comments and we need it aired out and we need to know what's bothering them. There shouldn't be people who are being mistreated by their superiors. That shouldn't be allowed... If the actions of the study group are taken seriously by management they will make a difference. There should be more study

groups on different issues. There's tremendous apathy out there and people don't want to do things and they should. There are probably many other subjects that should be dealt with. (2001-06-21)

If you look at it as a structural concept, if you don't have anything holding up the structure it's going to collapse so obviously we are involved. And if we're too far removed from the educational side we don't know what our purpose is. We should have kids coming into this board on a regular basis because it would remind people why we're here... If we can motivate the staff, then the school board benefits and if the school board benefits, society benefits. Everyone benefits when you've got happy people doing a good job. It all works together. (2001-06-22)

It's about time we're heard. We're never included. We never even hear things until the end...The support staff are never appreciated. They don't get the support they deserve. This is a family. We are here 7 or 8 hours a day. If our bosses don't know what's going on, well, I'm sorry. They say there isn't time for support staff meetings but if we don't meet, people will just take that time later to sit down and gossip and complain. (2001-06-22)

People need to feel that they can make a difference somehow in their little lives. You can sensitize one group like support staff, but how do you

sensitize management? I heard some feedback – some superiors were not totally pleased, made some kind of negative comments. Well, accountability has to come from all over and not just support people. There are people out there with opinions that I want to hear. Everyone comes with some experience, knowledge, which can be tapped into at other levels besides the social level. (2001-06-26)

If you were to put a line of dominoes on the table and you tried to make changes on the table and everything isn't lined up together, you'd see the gaps. Everything has to work together...There are psychological reasons why people don't change – if they're too insecure and they don't feel part of things...You can have all the information in the world but if you don't act on it its not worth very much. (2001-06-26)

Synthesis – major themes that emerge from the data.

Assumptions, expectations, intentions, change, empowerment, community, marginalization, control/power, learning, and democratic values – these are some of the themes that emerged from the data collected throughout the period of the research project. As I described in Chapter One, I took copious notes during the sessions of the Research Study Group and kept an on-going journal where I regularly recorded events that were peripheral but significant to the project. When it was time to synthesize and analyze the data, I read and re-read every source searching for the ideas that resurfaced in

more than one guise. As Grbich (2004) suggests, themes emerge as we pull at the threads of our experiences in order to discover which ones separate into major issues (p. 114). There were three criteria for selecting and naming the themes listed above: the theme constituted an explicit topic of discussion during the Research Study Group meetings or information sessions; the theme constituted an idea that wove itself implicitly through the project; the theme connected subjects from the theoretical literature with the project. Based on this selection process, I slowly honed the data, and chose themes that illuminated the concepts at the heart of this investigation.

#### Theme: assumptions.

Everyone involved in this project made assumptions. As the person who designed the project and acted as group leader throughout the process, I made assumptions about a multitude of factors: that I could monitor and contain my various roles; that knowledge and education confer power; that everyone was as interested in the process of change as I was; that I understood my relationship to the centre of power; that everyone would eventually recognize links between democratic values and the inclusion of support staff within the school board's learning community; and, that I shared the same needs and desires as other participants in the study group. These assumptions, among others, played an enormous role in determining the direction the project took. Although the Director General's two decisions about the information sessions – not to include pedagogical consultants in our information sessions and not to cancel the session that had a small enrolment – were meant to encourage the continued involvement of support staff, they were rooted in the assumption that the support staff's insecurity around professionals

might prevent their full participation. The participants of the Research Study Group made an assumption about how people perceive different forms of public communication; when they decided not to organize an event with the Social Committee it was because they assumed a social activity would diminish our purpose in the eyes of others. The people gossiping in the cafeteria assumed I had the power to affect change and when nothing in the administration building visibly altered they assumed I had stopped trying or caring.

Theme: expectations.

There were high expectations within the administration building when the then Director General announced his intention to build a learning organization. Because I believed in the transformative power of education, I expected the Research Study Group to serve as a vehicle for change within the building. Whether or not members of the study group had specific expectations when they first agreed to participate, the public actions taken by the group created expectations. It became evident that the Director General expected to have ultimate control of the project once the information sessions were opened to employees beyond the original Research Study Group.

Theme: intentions.

My professional intention in creating this project was to expand the school board's concept of a learning organization by creating a place for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals within its community. My personal intention was to find a role

for myself in the educational community and to use this forum for furthering my knowledge of the reform. The intention of the people who approved my proposal to form a study group was to encourage opportunities through which everyone in the building could – potentially – learn about the values of the reform and a learning organization. The study group was intended as a bridge between the democratic values espoused in the *Inchauspé Report* and the everyday work lives of the group's participants; it was intended as an example of applied philosophy.

Theme: change.

I wanted to create a learning space for support staff within the school board's administration building by changing pre-existing assumptions about membership in the learning community. The participants in the Research Study Group wanted to change the treatment of support staff during the job elimination process. They also wanted to alter the organization and scheduling of department meetings so that a forum could be created for support staff to conduct their own affairs. Everyone in the Research Study Group wanted to change stereotypes about support staff.

Theme: empowerment and autonomy.

After the participants in the Research Study Group agreed to take their first action – requesting permission to be recognized as a legitimate study group who could meet during regular working hours – there was a palpable change in the atmosphere at meetings. When a problem was discussed, people immediately talked about how to

resolve it. With empowerment came the freedom to act autonomously. The decision to expand the study group into phase-two, the information sessions, originated from this sense of empowerment. A common refrain throughout the one-on-one interviews quoted briefly above, was the participants' belief that they had had an opportunity to act out of a sense of purpose. Sadly, the treatment of support staff during the period of job eliminations profoundly demonstrated our lack of autonomy and empowerment within the system where we worked.

#### Theme: community.

The creation of the study group was an attempt to expand the school board's notion of a learning community. Each time an action was proposed by members of the Research Study Group, it was agreed that the group would proceed only if a consensus was reached within the group. That sense of solidarity strengthened the group and decisions were increasingly based on a shared vision of the changing role of support staff within the school board. When the Social Committee wanted to join with members of the study group to organize an event, there was agreement amongst the participants about what kind of community we represented. Part of the impetus for wanting to broaden the study group concept came from a desire to connect with other members of the support staff community. As is evident in the quotations above taken from the one-on-one interviews, participants spoke passionately – and sometimes angrily – about what they wanted from their institution: to be included; to be part of the process; to have a voice; to be listened to; to be acknowledged as part of the support structure of the board; and, to be respected. These are all qualities associated with belonging to a community.

Theme: marginalization.

After years of being invisible and marginalized as support staff and non-pedagogical professionals, it took courage for members of the Research Study Group to take public actions that challenged people at the centre of power. After the first action was successful and the group was granted permission to study during regular working hours, people were hesitant to exercise that right. When the letter asking that departments consider holding regular support staff meetings was never acknowledged, disillusionment was quickly followed by a sense of resignation. And after the final information session ended with participants pleading for management to take the concerns of support staff seriously, and again no answer to our multiple requests was forthcoming, people retreated to their original positions on the margins of the institution. By the time I asked for volunteer participants two years after the original study group had convened, apathy answered the call.

Theme: control and power.

The actions of the school board administrator who complained when her secretary was away from her desk as a result of the study group and who questioned my integrity as group leader, demonstrated her desire to control the actions of support staff. The fact that we were obliged to channel all registration forms for the information sessions during phase-two of the project through department directors, rather than directly to potential participants, was a means for management to control and monitor the process. That



support staff had to ask permission to study during regular working hours when other employee groups within the building were free – and encouraged – to meet at their own convenience, indicated the lack of power and control support staff had over their work environment. It also pointed to which employee groups were officially sanctioned to act autonomously. The most intimate example of power and control, or the lack of it, was the image of a study group participant crying at her desk after being admonished by her boss.

Theme: learning.

Three different kinds of learning emerged through the Research Study Group: learning about the reform and its content; participants' self-learning; and, learning about the school board as an institution. During the final one-on-one interviews, I asked participants three questions about these categories of learning: "Has your knowledge of the curriculum reform increased as a result of the Research Study Group?"; "Did you learn anything about yourself personally through your participation in the Research Study Group?"; and, "Do you think the school board benefits by approving the creation of study groups such as this one?" Although all of the participants said they learned something about the reform, their most animated responses were to the question about self-learning. Some participants said they had not studied, even informally, since leaving high school and they found themselves energized by the sessions. A few people even commented that the study sessions were too brief. When asked whether the school board learns through projects such as this one, the responses were consistent – management will learn only when it begins to listen.

Theme: democratic values.

The purpose for creating the Research Study Group was to build links between the values espoused in Québec's educational reform, the values that characterize a learning organization, and the everyday lives of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals in the administration building of one school board. The very existence of a study group for support staff, combined with the public actions taken by the group, created numerous opportunities for values to emerge. I tried to organize and facilitate the study sessions according to the principles we were studying. The project was premised on the notion that content and form must be coherent and interrelated – that certain structures nurture the development of democratic values while others inhibit them. I worked hard at remaining conscious of this idea throughout the process. As group facilitator, I tried to ensure that participants felt comfortable and secure about contributing their ideas without fear of judgment or censorship. On more than one occasion, I offered the role of facilitator to anyone interested in chairing a session. Each decision to take a public action was debated and voted on before proceeding. All participants of the original study group were invited to organize the information sessions that constituted the second phase of the research project. The participation of study group members in this extended project was voluntary and when the original participants disappeared one by one, I did not pressure them to rejoin the project.

Analysis – institutionalized practices and the reform.

James Bohman (2000) says institutional complexity is one of the modern world's most durable obstacles to deliberative democracy (p. 72). Institutions do not transform because

people adopt a new discourse or because the content of what they deliver is altered. Institutional change almost always originates with modifications to individual or group values, and values can only be modified if something causes them to become visible. As a result, institutional change is slow, incremental, and messy. Most contemporary institutions, even those with a moral purpose such as education, function according to what John Dewey (1916) calls 'a culture of utility'. Practices often work in opposition to the institution's stated social purpose because they are grounded in long held traditional beliefs that have survived relatively intact since the Enlightenment – beliefs about institutional progress, efficiency and accountability in which "...the process is always decided from the start" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944, p. 24).

When the administration of my school board announced its intention to build a learning organization as part of the implementation of Québec's educational reform, the idea represented an attempt to construct a coherent institutional support system whose practices would uphold its purpose. George Roth (1996) says there is scant empirically-based research about learning organizations and no consistent definition of organizational learning exists. However, the literature does point to certain features as being essential to a learning organization. Laurie Field (1997) says employee empowerment and learning are two of the most recognizable traits of a learning organization. Peter Senge (1996) suggests that learning organizations tend to acknowledge multiple sources and types of authority and leadership while attempting to limit hierarchical decision-making. Michael Fullan (1993) lists collaborative cultures, shared vision-building, and self-reflective practices as requirements for a learning organization. The literature uses words such as

collaboration, team-work, cooperation, learning, inclusion, and empowerment – words that imply a learning organization is a type of community. Fullan (1993) says we need educational institutions to become learning organizations for the change process to be built into their structure (p. 4). A learning organization, ideally, is comprised of administrative procedures that force values out in the open. Values embedded in daily practices are revealed through altered forms of organization; as a result, contradictions between the espoused values and the lived values of an institution emerge. Practices can then be re-evaluated and realigned to match espoused values. This process creates a feedback mechanism within the system.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the discussion groups, formal courses, and other learning activities that already existed in the administration building when the concept of a learning organization was introduced, continued to function after its inception but without the inclusion of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. No public forums that included support staff existed. The research project was my attempt to respond to what I perceived as an omission. Through the project, I tried to build links between the values of a learning organization, the values espoused in the *Inchauspé Report*, and the values attached to everyday practices within the administration building. Ideally, these three sites of values should form a coherent and integrated whole: the school board provides the supporting structure for the construction and implementation of Québec's educational reform in its schools and adult education centres within the framework of a learning organization. But the observations and experiences I documented during a two-year period point to contradictions between these three sites of

values. In an objective study, specific indicators measure if – and how much – change occurs as a result of a research project. However, in this research project indicators of change were not decided in advance and are difficult to identify even in hindsight. Roth (1996) says measuring institutional learning is almost impossible because there are rarely specific objectives. Instead, he suggests, it is more productive to describe what happens as institutions try to learn.

#### Analysis – practices and the values they exposed.

The school board's decision to build a learning organization and its acceptance of my research project were decisions indicative of the administration's attempt to develop a coherent self-reflexive institution. That both projects became part of the public discourse of the organization, however briefly, demonstrated that value was being attached to institutional learning. But some of the everyday practices that occurred during the course of this research project revealed values that contradict the concept of a learning organization and the values espoused in the *Inchauspé Report*.

My proposal to create the research project was submitted to five committees within the school board over a period of three months. The first question I was asked during this approval process concerned my intention to use the building's monthly newsletter as a means for soliciting participation from support staff and non-pedagogical professionals for the study. An administrator pointed out that the newsletter was a public document whose purpose was the dissemination of information about education. She said that my

request might set a precedent for the misuse of this document. In a learning organization, public communication and the sharing of ideas is paramount to building community. My project was both public and educational, and was reaching out to a group of employees traditionally ignored in the newsletter's content. Paulo Freire (1969, 1970) explains that access to information and sites of decision-making contribute to a person's ability to express an opinion.

The second question asked during the approval process concerned how much time the participants would be absent from their work as a result of the project. The final reflections from Research Study Group participants indicate that they learned a great deal about the reform and about themselves as a result of these sessions. Learning – through a variety of settings and activities – is a key feature of a learning organization; lifelong learning is one of the values espoused in the reform. The study sessions constituted a lived example of lifelong learning in the workplace. The question asked by the administrator revealed at least two values: this person did not think learning about the school board's purpose constituted part of the work of support staff; and, within the school board some employees had autonomy over their work schedules but support staff did not.

A third question asked during this process concerned how I was going to ensure objectivity when I was so closely connected with the project. This question originates from a traditional, objectivist viewpoint of how knowledge is constructed. The question came from a school administrator who is implementing a reform based on the socio-

constructivist model of learning in her school. My study was built around these same principles, through which knowledge is always situated and connected. In this paradigm of constructivist learning, objectivity of the person is not a value.

When members of a community speak from a position of commonalities, it is usually because they possess a comprehensive knowledge of their own needs. When participants in the Research Study Group proposed that school board departments implement support staff meetings, they were speaking from a position of expertise. Field (1997) suggests that power in a learning organization should be distributed according to various criteria – hierarchy, expertise, history (p. 150). The fact that our request was ignored despite persistent and frequent reminders to management underlining the importance of these meetings for support staff – particularly during the difficult period of job eliminations – exposed at least two values. The first was that meeting the needs and ensuring the well-being of support staff were not priorities. Our letters, quite simply, did not represent an urgent request. But Theodor Adorno (1963) writes about the dangers attached to marginalizing people over extended periods of time. He says when apathy develops in an institution it not only hurts individuals but eats away at the institution's ability to fulfill its purpose. The second value exposed was similar to one mentioned earlier – that certain employee groups within the school board were free to organize their own meetings while other employees required consent to meet as a group. Both the *Inchauspé Report* and literature about learning organizations discuss the value of inclusive communities where contributions from a diversity of voices are welcomed. Freire (1970) argues that when an

institution takes away a group's right to public dialogue, the members of that group are robbed of their voices. Both the institution and the individuals lose.

The school board approved the research project for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. The existence of the study sessions was public knowledge. Three actions were created that catapulted the group's ideas into the corridors and meeting rooms of the building. Yet no one outside the participants, to this day, has ever asked me questions about what we learned or what the process contributed to the school board's self-learning. Henry Giroux (1988) writes that when institutions judge what is important based on a narrowly defined set of criteria, everything on the margins is omitted. He cautions educators to interrogate practices and taken-for-granted assumptions so that a space can be created for the quiet voices. I can only assume that this project was not deemed important to most school board administrators because the learning and empowerment experienced by a small group of support staff carries with it little visible power or authority.

### Summary of Part Two

The purpose of Part Two above was to examine the data collected from a myriad of sources during the two-year period of this research project. I began with a synthesis of the data using the discussions and conversations of the participants themselves. I presented one exchange that was characteristic of many of our sessions as well as reflections articulated by Research Study Group participants during one-on-one interviews at the end



of phase-one of the project. I then described the major themes – or regional properties – that emerged when I reviewed the data in the context of the other two perspectives in this investigation. Regional properties become evident, according to Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997) when we study patterns or relationships between local properties. The data provided rich descriptions of local properties, particularly the taped-recordings of the Research Study Group's sessions during which the participants shared stories and proposed actions.

I then turned to an analysis of the data. I examined the actual events that transpired during the two phases of the research project in order to determine where contradictions emerged between espoused and practiced values. The school board lies midway between the principles of the *Inchauspé Report* and their construction and implementation in real-life contexts. Underlying both Québec's educational reform and learning organizations is a strong sense of democratic principles. But how are democratic values going to be nurtured within school boards, schools, and adult education centres? When new ideas are introduced that imply change and there is a willingness to see these transformations come about, there must also be a readiness to create the conditions under which they can succeed. Bringing about the conditions for success means creating new processes that will force people to acknowledge the contradictions between espoused and practiced values and either eliminate or account for them. Without these processes, the only modification to institutional practices is its discourse.

Despite constant references to lifelong learning as one of the underlying values of the reform and learning organizations, the school board practices experienced by members of the study group pointed to a concept of education based on a traditional model. The creation of the Research Study Group and the subsequent information sessions for support staff and non-pedagogical professionals were attempts to broaden that notion of education. Paulo Freire spent his life developing teaching strategies to empower marginalized workers. Although the working conditions of support staff within the administration building hardly compare to the lives of illiterate peasants in agrarian societies, the helplessness, anger, and resentment articulated by members of the Research Study Group are sentiments expressed by many marginalized groups. It is an irony of the modern world that social institutions created to respond to particular societal needs – such as educating its citizenry – are organized according to a technical-rational blueprint for efficiency and accountability. Individual needs are obliterated by the very patterns designed to care for them (Taylor, 1991).

### Part Three: Rationality

I stated at the outset that the purpose of this chapter was to address the following question: What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values? In the first two parts above, I tried to make connections between Québec's educational reform and the reorganization of the school board as a learning organization based on the values of democracy and citizenship. Constructing an education for and about democracy

constitutes the school board's purpose. In the present section I frame this idea within procedures for building deliberative democracy.

Bohman (2000) suggests one of the criticisms leveled at contemporary democratic theory is that concepts remain idealized in literature that rarely refers to democratic practices in action. In addition to this theoretical obscurantism, the very real existence of value pluralism sometimes leads to complex, confused, and damaging public actions taken in the name of democracy (Bohman, 2000, p. 3). But Bohman (2000) argues against becoming skeptical about democracy by examining the possibilities for a deliberative model. Although there are various approaches to deliberative democracy, Bohman (2000) is interested in a dialogical approach because it specifically accounts for the inclusion of everyone based on "...continued cooperation" (p. 34). This is what Nancy Fraser (1989) refers to as a hybrid approach – a marriage between theoretical democratic debates and actual political practices (p. 2). Two of the strategies through which deliberative democracy opens itself to inclusive practices, according to Bohman (2000) and Fraser (1989), are by: recognizing a multiplicity of public spaces for debate; and, acknowledging differentiated forms of public communication as equally valid. Fraser (1989) says this expands the number of possible arenas through which people can seek to change their lives (p. 26). Fraser (1989) argues against the system/lifeworld dichotomy articulated in the theories of Jürgen Habermas (p. 122). She says there are multiple spheres in contemporary society and all of them are infused with forms of social and economic inequality, including inequalities based on race, gender, and social status. Every public space is consecrated to meeting the needs of what Hannah Arendt (1958)

calls the social being (p. 38). One way to understand more about the pervasiveness of inequalities in modern Western societies is for deliberative democracy to construct processes of enquiry that expose both the structural and ideological values underlying social institutions (Fraser, 1989, p. 146). Fraser (1989) says such processes bring into evidence such issues as: who has autonomy and rights and who is seen to be dependent; who is participating in and designing public discourse and who is merely its recipient. Bohman (2000) adds that one of modern democracy's dilemmas is its dependence on complex social institutions that are "...inevitably selective in various ways..." (p. 82). He suggests there is a simple empirical indicator for testing whether an institution is supportive of democratic values: do all groups within the institution have the power and capacity to initiate public deliberation about their own needs and concerns? (Bohman, 2000). Without this, democratic practices remain asymmetrical and membership in the institutional community is selective.

The research project described in this chapter was an attempt to apply philosophical concepts in a real-life context. Perhaps one of the reasons no one outside the participants was interested in the outcome of the project was that people never understood why or how Québec's educational reform was connected to the everyday lives of school board support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. If the reform is interpreted only as a set of curricular changes taking place in classroom contexts, then school board administrators are legitimate in thinking that support staff and non-pedagogical professionals have no role to play. (The only exception to this statement, articulated in a quotation by one of the participants above, is that the support staff occupies a front-line

position and is the public's first contact with the school board.) I also think there were members of the Research Study Group who did not understand the links I was making between the *Inchauspé Report*, the support staff, and a learning organization. The bridge I was – and am – trying to build between these three sites of values is not constructed from traditional tools or concepts about education or institutions. I think most school board administrators and the participants in this project continue to conceive of the reform in technical rationalist terms – as an entity that exists in the empirical world to be implemented by educators. My reading of the reform is active, participatory, and constructivist. To me, the reform does not exist without every citizen's energetic involvement in infusing it with life.

Certain kinds of values can exist in isolated settings. For example, I can value a deeply cherished friendship without wanting to experience that same level of intimacy with every person I meet. But other kinds of values are only valuable because they are distributed equally – inherent in their value is a shared quality (Taylor, 1985). Democratic values are of this category. An educational reform designed to teach democratic values and participatory citizenship belongs to everyone who lives within its sphere of influence. Because democracy is comprised of self-reflective participatory practices and because this reform claims to teach about and for democracy, the reform itself must remain open to investigation. Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur (2000) suggest that societies learn about formal social practices by examining everyday experiences because they represent an exchange of intentions and meanings (p. 67). This is the Aristotelian model of beginning with the particular and working towards the

general in order to discern universal characteristics. The study group project existed untidily in the middle of a much larger context, poking tentatively at the institutional boundaries that marginalized its members. In an attempt to breathe life into the espoused values of democracy and citizenship, the project adopted a dialogical framework meant to raise issues to the level of public awareness. Bohman (2000) suggests that however small the process, the effects of public deliberation spill over into the wider community (p. 95). Seyla Benhabib (1992) writes that interactive rationality is the result of learning together through discursive practices rather than learning through disembodied knowledge – knowledge that has “epistemological deficits” (p. 14). Benhabib (1992) argues that the inclusion of traditionally silent voices in public deliberation not only modifies the content and outcome of public discourse but transforms the rules themselves. Deliberative democracy is based on values of coexistence and cooperation. The perpetual exclusion of certain groups from public deliberation within a social institution, even limited deliberation about the group’s own concerns, is an indicator that democratic values are not being practiced. Such institutions are unlikely to foster mutual cooperation and coexistence – two of the stated purposes for this educational reform.

### Summary of Part Three

“A model always remains partial, but it points the way to progress in knowledge” (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 74). In Part Three, I attempted to remove myself as much as possible from the research project at the school board and to understand it as a partial model of deliberative democracy. As long as modern, increasingly pluralist, Western societies continue to be dependent on complex social institutions to meet the

needs of their citizenry, then mechanisms need to be created that will align the espoused and practiced values of an institution. In the case of a school board trying to implement an educational reform based on democratic values, all the members of that school board's community need to learn what inclusive forms of democratic dialogue look like in practice. If school board personnel understand democracy as a static concept that exists only in the political realm – as opposed to an organic, evolving concept – they will be unable to support the implementation of a reform based on democratic values. Seyla Benhabib (1996) says deliberative democracy ought to be noisy and non-linear. Norms and rules of procedure must be revised and reformulated on a continuous basis to account for differentiated forms of communication within its ever-changing membership. Bohman (2000) suggests that understanding and interpreting differentiated forms of communication often requires procedural compromises (p. 97). When the participants of the Research Study Group first began to focus on the inhumane process school board officials were employing to eliminate jobs, I thought we had veered off topic. When I listened only to the words of the participants, I failed to recognize that some of the themes implicit in our discussions exemplified democratic theory: marginalization and inclusion, power and control, autonomy, and, building community through public participation. The participants not only spoke often and passionately about experiencing acts of social inequality, their ultimate sense of resignation when faced with yet another instance of non-recognition personified the long term effects of exclusion. The study group discussions and subsequent information sessions were an attempt to create, however briefly, lived examples of differentiated forms of communication and a deliberative democratic context.

Democracy, particularly the model of deliberative democracy based on a dialogical concept of the self, defies easy description and neat organizational categories. Because most social institutions in contemporary Western societies continue to function according to a technical rational approach to efficiency and accountability – an approach that dilutes difference – they are losing their ability to respond to real social needs. Institutional self-learning is possible but only if multiple sites and varied processes for learning are implemented. A small study group comprised of marginalized employees was one place to start this process.

### Conclusion to the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to examine one research project from three viewpoints in order to learn more about the following question: What conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values? Each viewpoint from which I examined the research project was shaped by one of Charles Taylor's (1989) sources of the modern concept of self, presented in Chapter Two. This organizational framework facilitated a theoretical analysis of the study group and tied together the major concepts under investigation in this overall inquiry. In Part One, I recounted the story of the Research Study Group as a tale of morality in which I was deeply and passionately involved. In Part Two, I stepped away from the study group and tried to synthesize and analyze the data I collected during a two-year period. First I identified and discussed major themes, or regional properties, that emerged from the data and presented reflections about the project in the participants'



own words. Then I analyzed some everyday practices within the school board to discern what values were revealed through these practices. Part Three presented an explication of the research project as a small example of deliberative democracy.

In Part One I introduced the research project as a moral tale because it was born out of my own predisposition to believe in the power of education to affect social change. Despite my initial plan to facilitate learning sessions about Québec's educational reform, the Research Study Group evolved from a passive concept into an active body, following a change in the atmosphere of the administration building that deeply affected members of the study group. We began our project shortly after the board announced its intention to build a learning organization – a period during which it was easy to imagine that constructing a bridge between the values espoused by the reform and those of a learning organization would open a space for the participation of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. The reform and learning organizations are both concepts based on values such as: building inclusive communities; recognizing diversity; differentiated forms of communication; equal and active participation; lifelong learning; and, the development of autonomy within an environment of cooperation. These ideas taken together constitute the ingredients for a model of deliberative democracy and this was the initial context for the study group. But when the atmosphere in the building deteriorated as a result of the administration's decision to abolish an unprecedented number of jobs at our employee level, the role of the study sessions changed. We shifted our focus from passively learning about idealized forms of social practice to deliberating about the very real practices we were living. The values espoused by the school board in

the context of implementing Québec's educational reform were not evident in our day-to-day experiences within the administration building. As a result of several animated sessions, the group took three separate actions. Two of the actions – requesting permission to study during regular working hours instead of during lunch-hour, and asking if we could offer introductory sessions on the reform to other members of our two employee groups – met with success. It is significant that we never received a response to the third action taken by the Research Study Group because it was perceived by participants to be the most vital of our three actions. The third request made was our proposal to implement regularly scheduled meetings, organized and administered by support staff within every department. Had the request been approved, it might have generated far-reaching consequences by potentially raising the status, visibility, and collective possibilities of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals. But the proposal to give these employee groups a forum for deliberating about their own concerns never even received an acknowledgement. I suspect this disregard for our needs – regardless of its cause – was the primary reason the project fizzled to a trickle of activity by the end.

In Part Two, I juxtaposed the voices of individual people with the system practices that silenced them. I examined the enormous quantity of data collected from multiple sources during the two-year period of the research project. First, using three criteria outlined above, I synthesized the data into themes – regional properties – that emerged from the everyday encounters and conversations that were recorded in various forms. I included some of the actual words of the participants because their words so eloquently describe

the feelings associated with being invisible within a community. Their reflections serve as powerful testimony to the riches being squandered by an educational institution that persists in excluding support staff from its learning community. I examined which values surfaced when the actions of the study group propelled us into the public spaces of the school board. I compared these values attached to real practices to those espoused in Québec's educational reform and literature about learning organizations; I identified some of the contradictions that emerged.

In Part Three, I looked at some of the characteristics of deliberative democracy and illustrated how the research project at the school board exemplified a process that could lead to institutional self-learning through the adoption of inter-subjective approaches to rational practices. In Chapter Three, I stated that the Québec government initiated this educational reform partly in response to the changing composition of its communities. The reform talks about building inclusive participatory communities and the school board adopted the reform's rhetoric as a framework for its implementation process. But existing communities do not necessarily possess feedback mechanisms that enable them to enlarge their concept of membership. It requires more than the articulation of democratic values and openness towards values pluralism for a social institution, such as a school board, to develop spaces for diversity and differentiated forms of communication. The school board's mission to build a learning organization was a theoretical idea based on the desire to create a coherent value system between the institution and its purpose. But building inclusive communities is a messy slow process that generates anxiety and uncertainty for people inside and outside the circle of power. People who have lived or

worked on the margins of a community for protracted periods of time learn to silence themselves. And yet the capacity to participate develops through public deliberation. Bohman (2000) refers to this as 'political inequality'; it creates a cycle of non-participation in public spaces (p. 124). The research project comprised of support staff and non-pedagogical professionals – two employee groups who live on the margins of the school board's learning community – represented a relatively non-threatening way for the school board community to expand its membership. That this did not occur pointed to some of the areas where everyday practices contradicted the values at the heart of the school board's purposes. Habermas (1979) posits that when enough people inside a social institution, such as a school board, realize the institution no longer fulfills its function, new forms of societal learning are released; institutional frameworks are reformulated to use this knowledge productively (p. 147).

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

## Organization of the Chapter

In *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer (2000) explains that interpretation and understanding are contained in the questions we ask – the horizon of our questions determines the scope and complexity of our interpretations (p. 370). Gadamer (2000) conceives of understanding, interpretation, and application as a single unified process (p. 306). The meaning of an idea and knowing how to apply it are one and the same. These are the principles that guided this applied philosophical study designed to learn more about the potential of Québec's educational reform to respond to the exigencies of a modern multicultural society. The knowledge a community chooses to pursue shapes the community (Polanyi, 1958, p. 203).

Québec's reform brings important ideas to the field of formal education and I continue to be impressed by its far-reaching and noble ambitions. It is a reform that calls for deep changes to the way we think about education and its relationship to our everyday lives. It is a reform for and about democracy and espouses the value of participatory citizenship for building diverse communities where pluralist perspectives will enhance their development. But real change does not occur simply because it is mandated in a government document. Transforming the way we conceive of and practice education is a slow messy incremental process. My investigation of Québec's educational reform spanned a period of several years and encompassed learning from both my student and

work lives, combining theory and practice. The enquiry was constructed on the premise that there are at least two significant assumptions embedded in this reform project that are not being publicly discussed or explored to a sufficient extent. After articulating the two assumptions I wanted to excavate, I created three questions to facilitate the study. I employed the qualitative research principles of applied philosophy to examine the reform from three different but interrelated perspectives; each of the perspectives focussed on one of these questions. The purpose of this conclusion is to: reiterate and explicate the two assumptions and the questions that guided my study; describe what the three perspectives in this investigation uncovered about the meaning of these assumptions; and, discuss why attempting to make the two assumptions part of our public debate about this reform is necessary if substantive change is to occur in Québec's education system as a result of its implementation. It is my contention that both assumptions contain concepts about democracy, education, and the development of the self that need to be made explicit before we decide that they represent the most effective, most workable, and most morally adequate basis for democratic education.

#### Two Assumptions and Three Related Questions.

After reading the foundational document for Québec's education reform, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform* (1997) and studying its concepts, I concluded that it displays little perceptible awareness of two issues that are vital to the reform's construction and implementation. Because, from the outset, I have embraced the idea of creating an educational reform for and about

democracy, I decided to learn as much as possible about these two issues as a means for contributing to public debate about education.

The first assumption about Québec's educational reform.

The first assumption buried inside Québec's educational reform project is that we all agree on what it means to talk about an educational reform for and about democracy. I can find no evidence of written discussion or public debate that addresses this assumption. Because we live in a democratic country, it is justified to assume that everyone affected by this reform shares a commitment to some form of democratic polis. But democracy is neither fixed nor finite. It is an evolving concept comprised of processes and on-going negotiations amongst people and between people and their environments. At best, it is naïve to assume we share a common conception of how democratic processes should be constructed within educational institutions and to what ends they should be applied. Even without recourse to philosophical theory about democracy, a cursory read through today's international newspapers provides ample evidence of the multiple and widely divergent definitions and applications of democracy around the world. It is essential that we at least understand more about the various models of democracy that exist, whether Québec's reform is advancing a particular model for the population of the province, and, if so, whether it is the most appropriate or desirable model.

I stated in the Introduction to the thesis that the exploration of two questions, in particular, were created to illuminate this first assumption: (1i) What models of

democracy are currently being discussed and debated in contemporary Western cultures and, (1ii) what values and attendant concepts of self are at the heart of each model? (2) Is there a particular model of democracy and associated values being advanced in the *Inchauspé Report* for the province of Québec?

The second assumption about Québec's educational reform.

The second assumption concerning this reform project is that it is possible to implement substantive changes to Québec's schooling practices – changes to the curriculum, teaching methods, evaluation procedures, and overall philosophy of education – without also rebuilding the entire infrastructure that supports schools and adult education centres in their implementation of these changes. I created one question to focus this part of the investigation: (3) what conditions must be present in order for a social institution, such as a school board, to nurture the development of democratic values?

Support for the construction of democratic practices that embrace value pluralism and diversity will come in various guises from original conceptions of teaching and learning methods to new strategies for evaluating non-linear learning. The reform proposes a competency-based approach to education where recursive processes guide the student and teacher through continuous spirals of theory-practice-theory (Kolb, 1984). This experiential approach to education requires a learning environment that nurtures trial and error procedures. While it is possible for individual teachers to create an atmosphere conducive to change inside the closed walls of their classrooms, extensive transformation occurs when people can safely test their competencies in a multitude of contexts. Not just



individual classrooms but whole school boards, schools, and adult education centres will need to reflect the values espoused through this reform if substantive change is to occur.

### Three perspectives to investigate the assumptions.

I adopted three different but interconnected perspectives to learn more about the two assumptions articulated above. Although the three perspectives taken together shed light on the entire project, each one illuminates different aspects of the assumptions: the philosophical review of the literature contextualized the reform in relation to current theories of democracy, education, and the development of the self; the text analysis of the reform's foundational document, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Inchauspé Report)*, provided me with a descriptive vision of what models of democracy are advanced for the province of Québec; and, the personal practical experiences of the reform in action informed and enlivened all of these ideas by providing a learning environment where I could bring together and reflect on the ideas from the first two perspectives. By utilizing three perspectives within the methodological framework of applied philosophy, I was able to construct an investigation that adopted some of the reform's own tenets: constructivist learning; recursive processes; combining theory and practice to develop competencies; and, the use of multiple and diverse resources to learn about a single phenomenon.

### Theoretical perspective of the reform.

Contemporary philosophical literature abounds with theories about democracy and each account for a complex set of factors. There are so many different labels for various forms

of democracy that I searched for a way of clustering the concepts. Since each model advances values that point to the development of a particular concept of autonomy and the self, and because the development of autonomy is one of the overall stated goals for Québec's educational reform, I found it useful to organize the theoretical literature in relation to the three sources for the development of the modern concept of self – morality, individuality, and rationality – described by Charles Taylor (1989) in his book, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*. Although the complexity of democratic theories defies easy categorization and models of democracy overlap, intersect, and subdivide, I emphasized the distinctions between the three models of democracy that dominate contemporary theoretical discussions – republican, liberal, and deliberative – for the purposes of this thesis. The values and concept of self advanced by each model roughly correspond to one of Taylor's (1989) sources of the modern self. By constructing my review of the literature around this framework, I was able to learn more about how each model of democracy conceives of the individual self and the self in community as well as what role education plays in each vision of autonomy. This construction permitted me to explore the interplay between theories about formal and informal educational practices, as well as theories about the development of democracy and citizenship. As I observed commonalities between the ideas expressed by individual writers, I grouped them for the purposes of this study. All categories and constructs about democratic models conceal their shared qualities and the constant cross-fertilization that occurs between concepts. Still, one of the roles of philosophy is to attribute meaning and intentionality to our systems; the organizational structure I created allowed general attitudes and tendencies to emerge (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000).

Broadly speaking, the values at the core of republican democracy advance a concept of self that originates from Taylor's (1989) source of metaphysics or morality. A republican model of democracy is understood as a form of moral practice and education provides a means through which people learn how to lead deliberate and informed lives. Republican democracy is democracy with a social purpose. The role of education is to teach moral reasoning as a learning process that will contribute to the development of a society's democratic project. This model of democracy is rooted in the notion that continuous and open public debate will lead to consensus-building and collective decision-making. I read the works of many writers but presented the ideas of Maxine Greene, Martha Nussbaum, Israel Scheffler, and Roger Simon because each explores the relationship between formal schooling practices based on a moral approach to society, and the development of a connected sense of self. The concept of democracy and the self explored here is constructed around the idea that the spirit of a community develops through what Martha Nussbaum (1997) calls 'cultivating humanity' – teaching people to focus on the human qualities we share as citizens of the world.

Liberal democracy advances a concept of self that is rooted in romanticism or individuality. Because most theorists agree that liberal democracy functions in the dynamic between institutions and the people who are subject to their authority, I chose theorists who would illuminate the relationship between this model of democracy and the institutionalization of educational practices (Cunningham, 2002, p. 43). I examined the writings of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Theodor Adorno, and Henry Giroux. One of

liberal democracy's core values is individual autonomy and the role of education in this model is to empower the individual through recognition of his or her religious, ethnic, linguistic, or other personal affiliations. In a liberal democracy, communities evolve as a result of the personal growth, autonomy, and voluntary contributions of individuals who comprise them. Unlike a republican model of democracy where the self is sometimes subsumed in the pursuit of socially determined goals, liberal democratic theory posits that respect for difference flows from strong, secure individuals whose rights are protected through formal institutions. The authors I grouped together under this heading articulate how the institutionalization of education, and other social structures we create to protect individual rights, often reproduce and reinforce society's inequalities. They suggest the purpose of formal education should be, only in part, to teach people respect for individual differences; it should also provide a secure environment where students learn to identify and critique social injustices perpetrated against individuals who do not conform to the majority culture.

Deliberative democracy is probably the most recent addition to contemporary discussions about theories of democracy, and its concept of self has its origins in rationality (Bohman, 2000). I studied the writings of Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser to learn more about this model of democracy and the role informal education plays in the development of a dialogical self. These writers approach democracy as a social construction continually changing and reformulating its own processes, including educational processes. Education occurs wherever people choose to learn about each other and negotiate the rules of shared spaces. Deliberative democracy

unites many of the concepts in the two models of democracy described above by introducing the notion of inter-subjectivity – the idea that we become conscious of being individuals only through associative living (Habermas, 1992). Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur (2000) suggest that we need to develop organizational “...models that are simple, partial, fragmentary...” (p. 19). Deliberative democracy is an example of such a model. The concept of self advanced by this model is one that is both connected and autonomous at once – a self that has the capacity for both synthesis and analysis (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 82). But this shift from either/or thinking to thinking in parallel processes takes considerable learning and practice. It requires the development of a self that we understand in theory but find scant evidence for in practice. Williams (2000) attributes this paucity to modern culture’s general lack of receptivity towards alternate understandings – something that requires new and profound forms of listening (p. 133).

#### Perspective of the reform in context.

By beginning my investigation with a philosophical review of the literature about contemporary theories of democracy and education, I arrived at the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* with a framework for identifying some of the concepts of self and models of democracy that might emerge from a critical analysis of the text. Although each school board in the province is responsible for developing its own implementation procedures within a formal structure and time schedule mandated by the M.E.Q., the *Inchauspé Report* is the foundational document for Québec’s comprehensive education project and contains the reform’s overall principles and philosophy. I read and re-read the

report in order to learn about it from the outside in and from the inside out. From the outside in, I attempted to discern what influences led to the creation of Québec's educational reform and which philosophical currents of thought influenced its overall vision about the role of education in society. From the inside out, I concentrated on how the text formulates and presents information about the concepts at the heart of this investigation. I did this by excavating and analyzing the report's use of four keywords: 'democracy', 'citizenship', 'values', and 'culture'. I relied on the work of Hugh Mercer Curtler (1997) as a method for explicating the unarticulated values advanced through the text.

Although the report does not explicitly name a particular model of democracy for the province of Québec, through the use of Curtler's (1997) method for extracting values it became evident that one model of democracy is more dominant than the others. The text analysis of the report revealed consistent references to concepts such as: common culture; common experiences; shared values; social cohesion; and, host society. These phrases, or local properties, form regional properties that point to values supportive of a republican model of democracy where schooling is viewed as a moral practice with a societal purpose. The implications of this finding are discussed below.

#### Summary of the first assumption.

My investigation of the first assumption required that I learn more about what is meant by an educational reform for and about democracy. I formulated two questions that highlighted the issues at the heart of the first assumption. From a theoretical perspective,

I examined what models of democracy are currently being discussed in contemporary philosophical discussions. This provided me with a framework for a contextual perspective where a text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* took me to the heart of Québec's reform and the values it advances for the province's population. There, I found some evidence to suggest that the model of republican democracy tends to be favoured in this report.

As stated earlier, this model of democracy in its ideal form is rooted in a moral vision of society where the peaceful functioning of a public sphere is the dominant guiding principle. Individual differences are respected to the extent that they do not disrupt or destroy the development of safe and harmonious communities – stability and the public good are paramount. The danger of large-scale republican democracy as a political system is that, traditionally, almost all elected officials come from the dominant or majority culture of a society (Cunningham, 2002, p. 70). It is crucial to this analysis to remind the reader that the *Inchauspé Report* was conceived of, commissioned by, and approved by representatives of the Parti Québécois, the political party in power at the time of its writing. Frank Cunningham (2002) suggests that within republican and liberal models of democracy, pluralism is addressed through existing institutional practices – practices that were created by the majority culture (p. 86). Cunningham (2002) cites Robert Dahl's analysis of republican democracy in which Dahl explains that genuine pluralism is only possible when everyone has political equality including authentic representation in official circles of power (p. 88). As I stated in Chapter Three, during the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, the political party that commissioned and

approved this report was elected with a mandate to strengthen and solidify French Canadian values, culture, and language. Although the government invited cultural, ethnic, and linguistic communities to participate in public policy debates during their mandate, a sub-text of the party's political agenda has always been the assimilation of minority cultures and languages into the majority culture within the province. Despite a few recent exceptions, statistics published after almost every election and by-election in the province reveal that few members of cultural, linguistic, or religious minorities vote for representatives of the Parti Québécois. A lack of true representation of minority cultures is one of the weaknesses of republican democracy. Iris Marion Young (2002) refers to this as a dilemma of special group representation and says it occurs when a democratically elected government does not represent everyone's interests equally. A liberal government is currently in power in the province and is responsible for the continued construction and implementation of this reform. However, if no public debate occurs to excavate the ideas buried in the *Inchauspé Report* it is possible they will be applied in educational settings regardless of who is at the helm. The case of Québec is complicated by the minority status of French Canada within the North American context. French Canada is attempting to balance these dual roles while it watches the demographics of the province's population become more and more heterogeneous. There is always a danger within a republican model of democracy to marginalize groups whose public differences pose a threat to the interests of the dominant culture and for this reason I find it significant that there is a tendency towards this model of democracy in the text of the *Inchauspé Report*.



Frank Cunningham (2002) writes that even learned political theorists stumble when asked to describe precisely what democratic theory entails (p. 2). The complexity inherent in democratic theory is intensifying as our traditional concepts of democracy broaden to include everything from the large-scale governance of nation-states to the functioning of small community-based groups. It is no longer tenable in a world of pluralist values and competing social needs to conceive of democracy as a universal coherent system. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1947) suggest that the idea of a categorical system of organization contradicts the very definition of democracy as a participatory and changeable course of action (p. 169). They say that, conceived of in this way, democracy becomes an excuse for marginalizing everyone who does not fit into one of its categories. Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) propose that a pre-determined set of common values serves to contain group interests rather than allowing values to evolve (p. 267). Society needs both consensus and conflict (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 276). If true and open deliberation means that no single philosophy or particular model of democracy can ever be adopted for long, then the only true definition of democracy is continual redefinition.

In theory, because Québec's reform adopts a socio-constructivist approach to education it will support a vision of democracy comprised of deliberative procedures under constant negotiation. But in practice, the application of the *Inchauspé Report* unaccompanied by deep discussions about its implications could produce a less evolutionary, and therefore less responsive, model of democracy for Québec.

### Personal, practical perspective of the reform.

One of the aims of critical pedagogy and critical social theory is to uncover practices that persistently limit social evolution by remaining hidden inside taken-for-granted institutional policies and procedures. Thomas Popkewitz (2000) argues that the implicit authority embedded in institutional structures serves to normalize and direct certain kinds of behaviour (p. ix). He explains that educational systems create mechanisms to control the circulation of particular ideas while thwarting the advancement of others. Popkewitz (2000) suggests that inclusion means providing everyone in the educational community with equal access to social practices, power arrangements, and sites of information (p. 15). This requires new institutional behaviours and differentiated modes of distributing education (Whitty, Gewirtz, & Edwards, 2000, p. 115). Paulo Freire (1969, 1970) criticizes contemporary educational reforms that espouse decentralization and community involvement but continue to be controlled by a central governing authority. This is the case in Québec. Although school boards are responsible for creating their own implementation plan, the Ministry of Education retains final approval on all substantive issues, from establishing the reform's goals to distributing its implementation timeline. This reliance on hierarchical practices controlled by a central authority contradicts the reform's principles of differentiated participation and inclusion. Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) suggest that most western institutions have inherited the Enlightenment's concept of organization in which, "...the schema of an activity was more important than its content" (p. 88).

I learned through the writings of the third group of authors presented in the literature review that it is possible, in theory, to transform systemic practices in order to support the espoused values of an institution. Their theories suggest that participation in community and group activities through which the rules of agreement for procedural decision-making are publicly negotiated, is a legitimate and dynamic form of citizenship. Authority becomes decentralized and diminished as a result of the divergent interests of the participants. A precondition for the development of this form of participatory democracy is the creation of spaces designed for the purpose of public debate. I mentioned in Chapter Three, during the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report*, that each school board in the province has the autonomy to develop its own strategies for the implementation of this reform. I suggested that, in theory, this was a democratic decision. Each school board represents a particular community that will benefit from the freedom to meet the needs of its students and parents. In reality, however, the autonomy of school boards is constrained by Ministry of Education directives. Through the text analysis of the *Inchauspé Report* I realized that these two sets of practices within the reform's implementation process – autonomy and conformity – reflect the chaotic and contradictory nature of democracy in action. The reform espouses ideas that are steeped in post-positivist concepts – competency-based education, values-based education, inclusion, differentiation, and socio-constructivism – that develop through messy, non-linear, and overlapping spirals of learning. Yet the system that is supporting these processes is organized as a binary structure where content and form remain separate.

I do not think it is possible to understand democracy by relying only on the intellect. More than anything else, democracy is about human relationships including our relationship with the environment. Studying the reform from a practical perspective provided me with an opportunity to examine what the reform's espoused values look like in real-life contexts.

The practical experiences of the reform that came out of a research project I designed and facilitated at the school board were originally conceived of as part of an on-going action research project. But through a series of circumstances the project became contained within a more limited framework and ultimately emerged as a two-phased study group that provided me with a learning environment where I could attribute three-dimensionality to the reform. It remains a valuable source of learning about the second assumption named above. The school board became an ideal environment for testing, and reflecting on, the convergence of democratic values and system practices particularly after the administration announced plans to build a learning organization that would include all employees from the administration building.

Jane Jacobs (2000) argues that because single source systems are more vulnerable than diverse source systems, systems are strengthened when participation comes from a variety of places (p. 63). She suggests that a healthy system knows how and when to generate its own self-correcting conditions called 'positive-feedback loops' (Jacobs, 2000, p. 93). The school board was attempting to create a self-correcting system by introducing the concept of a learning organization. However, the experiences of the

Research Study Group revealed the tenacity of systemic practices that become self-perpetuating at the cost of more reflective practices.

Initially, school board administrators thought the study group represented an interesting interpretation of some of the reform's principles concerning the development of diverse, inclusive communities. But bureaucratic behaviour is habitual and time-consuming. It detracts from the kinds of practices that are required for participatory democracy to take root. The development of a learning organization calls for a slowed-down style of management where people traditionally on the margins can be invited to participate. It necessitates the awareness and creation of non-linear, inclusive processes. A learning organization requires the development of collective competencies. During the two-year duration of the project, school board administrators did not have the time – or perceived that they lacked the time – to nurture these conditions. But the same administrators who had no time to meet with members of the Research Study Group, despite an initial announcement that support staff was part of the development of a learning organization, were responsible for creating policies to support and nurture the reform. Administrators might argue that support staff and non-pedagogical professionals play no direct role in the implementation of the reform and their inclusion in the developmental process is not, therefore, a priority. But the reform was created, in part, to respond to the growing diversity within Québec's classrooms. One of the goals of every institution responsible for its implementation should be the creation of mechanisms that invite and acknowledge contributions from people traditionally excluded from the centre of activity.

The personal, practical perspective of the reform revealed the dichotomy, present in even well meaning environments, between espoused and lived values. The research project demonstrated the complexity of nurturing democratic practices compared to the simplicity of following pre-established rules of behaviour. Despite a genuine appreciation for the tenets of this reform and a profound desire to meet the needs of Québec's students, system priorities based on values of instrumental reason permeate our educational structures.

#### Summary of the second assumption.

The second assumption I wanted to learn more about was the relationship between Québec's educational reform and the organizational systems and structures that support its development and implementation. Although from time to time there is public mention of decentralizing education, in reality the current reform project is governed centrally by the Ministry of Education. When I studied Québec's current educational reform project from this perspective, it became increasingly evident that a critical examination of the reform's support structures is paramount. How can an education system that does not critically evaluate the effects of its own organizational structure hope to promote democracy and citizenship? Without this analysis the reform will simply be, at best, an intellectual exercise costly both in time and effort; at worst, it will fuel public disillusionment about our education system. In either case, everyone will lose something valuable by not giving this reform a chance to bring some important ideas to the field of education.

Through the literature review in Chapter Two, I discovered an abundance of critical social theory suggesting that the inevitable consequence of unexamined bureaucracies is the dilution of community values and the flattening out of individual aspirations. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) are scathing in their critique of regulatory systems that confer the desire for sameness on human conduct: “And so that same icy and perverted love which in the world of things takes the place of straightforward love, is directed against men – who are misused as things” (p. 113). They argue that the devotion of modern-day capitalist societies to universal systems of organization is simply a secular version of the metaphysical truths people have been seeking for thousands of years. Henry Giroux (1988) and other critical pedagogues suggest the design and application of social services, including schooling practices, are intended as levelling instruments that aid in the dissemination of mass culture. In fact, traditional liberal-democratic theory says schools are considered democratic simply when everyone has equal access to education. The goal of Québec’s educational reform is to shift the democratization of education from access for everyone, to success for everyone (Ministère de l’Éducation, 2001, p. 2). This is a qualitative change that will require the transformation of the whole system if it is to succeed.

The research project at the school board afforded me an opportunity to study the institutionalization of education firsthand – how the school board’s documents, policies, and practices interfaced with their espoused values. Québec’s reform advocates a competency-based approach to teaching and learning. Educators in Québec and in many Western countries are adopting this approach because it emphasizes the construction and

application of knowledge in real-life contexts (Jonnaert, 2002). The world is full of unapplied knowledge as a consequence of an Enlightenment vision of education where theory and practice, content and form, remain separate; the values espoused in Québec's current reform are an attempt to bridge this dichotomous thinking and turn learning into an applied, life-long, transformative process. While the competency-based approach to education is sometimes criticized as overly pragmatic, the whole purpose of socio-constructivist learning is that it fosters change.

It is precisely because this reform espouses the value of applied learning through its reliance on the competency-based approach, that its failure to evaluate its own systems and structures is so apparent. Jürgen Habermas suggests that when critical social theory integrates the study of method in its analysis of social institutions and their purpose, it allows for the possibility of structural changes to occur (Seidman, 1989, p. 11). Habermas argues that changes to organizational systems take place when norms and rules are transformed – what he calls shifts in moral-practical knowledge (Seidman, 1989, p. 15). Social progress is a result of life-world values and system practices coalescing to support one another.

### Contributing to the Discussion

In Chapter One, I delineated the principles of qualitative research that flow through every part of my investigation. In accordance with this guiding set of principles, Janet Finch (1988) explains that judging the contribution of a qualitative research project rests in whether or not it fuels or enriches debate about a social issue. This final chapter ties



together the pieces of the investigation and presents the reader with enough evidence to warrant a closer examination of our public conversation about Québec's education reform. In the tradition of non-positivism, research is a shared experience. It belongs to the public sphere from which it originated and should be debated and scrutinized for what it has to contribute there. Just as there is no single question that guides a qualitative research project – because new questions emerge and old ones are reformulated – there is no single empirical answer that proves the study's contribution. When enough people begin to doubt the truths that are embraced within their community, a possibility opens for new knowledge, new perspectives. New perspectives lead to different priorities (Narayan, 1989). Gadamer (2000) suggests this is when we notice what hitherto seemed strange and transform it into new knowledge (p. 252). When this occurs, Gadamer (2000) explains, the human sciences are seeking to understand a new significance from within their own traditions (p. 282).

#### Limits and criticisms of this investigation.

##### Limits.

The concepts at the heart of this investigation are huge and complex. Both democracy and Québec's educational reform are value-laden ideas that defy easy definitions or concrete descriptions. This investigation provided me with arguable evidence that there are assumptions hidden in Québec's project that are poised to render it ineffective in meeting its stated goals.

This new century of post post-modernism finds the world in need of what Margaret Somerville (2000) calls a 'science-spirit' worldview (p. 17). Changeux and Ricoeur (2000) ask: "Is it possible to construct a secular ethics that goes beyond cultural differences and is democratically accepted?" (p. 264). This is a complicated question that can only be addressed through the application of multidisciplinary methods for pursuing knowledge. We need to appropriate all the theories, tools, and instruments at our disposal – including new ways of working and learning together – in our search for altered forms of moral-practical knowledge. Even the principles of qualitative research when applied within a traditional academic framework deprive a research project of its full potential.

The present investigation was primarily performed as a solitary pursuit, which is the expectation in most traditional university research programs. Yet individualism in research contradicts the humanist project of constructing shared values and community ethics. True and open deliberation is denied by our custom of copyrighting knowledge as though single philosophies or particular models can and do stand alone (Changeux & Ricoeur, 2000, p. 301). This research project was limited by the boundaries of my own knowledge and imagination but also by the very same institutional frameworks that are the subject of this thesis.

#### Criticisms.

Change is slow and the effects of this reform will not be known until at least one generation of students has been educated, through its philosophy, to apply their learning

in real-life contexts. Mine has been a critical analysis of Québec's reform with a particular focus on some of the pieces that are missing from public debate. But this is a young project by any measurement. The slow plodding progression of governments can also be interpreted as a form of checks and balances that prevent erroneous or confused concepts from ever reaching the stage of public experience. I said earlier that it takes time and practice to learn how to participate in public discussions. A reform based on socio-constructivism must allow the public to take the time it requires to become aware of and comfortable with the participatory role people are expected to play. We need the liberty to notice unexpected openings for learning. It is possible that a critical analysis of the reform at this juncture is overly hasty.

There is another dimension to Québec's reform project that I have not explored in detail but that has been implicit in much of my analysis; it adds an additional layer to the process. The Ministry of Education is an enormous organization comprised of thousands of individuals who work in numerous departments. This entire machinery is reading the *Inchauspé Report* and converting its concepts into applied practices. Was everyone given adequate time to appropriate not only the report's words but its overall vision and goals? Has the evolutionary nature of building a democratic reform been accounted for as people transform its values into policies? With each layer of translation the essential qualities of the report are altered. The extent to which the Ministry of Education has prepared itself to function as a learning organization will affect its appropriation of the reform and the decisions it makes concerning the reform's application by the constituents under its

jurisdiction. My investigation included only a brief glimpse into what occurs at this level of interpretation.

#### Questions for further research.

There is an organic core in both democracy and Québec's educational reform for and about democracy. Both are concepts comprised of processes that evolve and mutate in continuous cycles of activity. But their value to society is proportional to their healthy maintenance and the quality of the ideas that nourish and keep them alive. One of the instruments used to feed these processes is research.

There are endless questions that can be asked of this reform in order to enhance its democratic potential. From a multidisciplinary perspective, some of the following questions could contribute to debate about the reform and help flesh out the assumptions I raised in this thesis. Some may already be the subject of research projects.

From the perspective of educational psychology, it will be important to observe whether students who failed within a traditional model of schooling enjoy a more successful learning experience as a result of the reform's philosophy. Because self-esteem is a major determinant in the level of a person's participation in issues of public concern, more productive educational experiences might translate into a more active citizenry.

From the perspective of social anthropology, it will be helpful to study the needs of some of the people for whom this reform was written – children of new immigrants who enter

— Québec's public schools speaking neither French nor English. If our hierarchical system of education were a ladder, the Minister of Education would be securely seated on the top rung while these children would be precariously balanced on the bottom one. Yet they have more to teach us about pluralism and inclusion than all our philosophy books combined. They are our key informants. What do they need in order to grow into healthy participatory citizens?

From a feminist perspective, we will need to learn more about the effects of male dominated school board administrations and female dominated classrooms. Who holds the power and who implements the decisions? How does this dynamic influence an educational reform whose mission is success for all? It would be interesting to study whether or not the aspirations of female students are affected by this contradiction between espoused and lived values that forms the backdrop of their everyday school experiences. And, there are two other gender-related concerns that are widely discussed in education today. Although statistics show some improvement in this area, there is still a tendency for adolescent girls to lose interest in science and math during secondary school while the overall dropout rate for boys rises during this same period. Will this educational reform based on the creation of diversified forms of instruction and the recognition of multiple learning styles respond to the gendered needs of our adolescent children?

From a political science perspective, it will be important to study how the changing face of Québec society is interfacing with this reform. As Taylor (1992) and Kymlicka (1998)

explain, Québec is a society with a precious and precarious heritage that is at risk within a North American context. But as one province within a country known for welcoming immigrants, Québec has not escaped pluralism. It is a reality that creates a growing dilemma particularly for politicians of a certain age who have spent their lives fighting for the protection of the French Canadian language and culture. The reform provides one example of the government's well-meaning but conflicted attempts to welcome immigrants to Québec.

From the point of view of the sociology of education, we will need to take a closer look at system structures and how they inhibit or allow the flow of certain kinds of information. As our vision of democracy alters, new models will be needed so that the organization of social practices can provide for the complex needs of a diverse population within an efficient, accountable system without reducing every need to its minimum level of sameness.

I have speculated above about some of the questions that could be asked in order to contribute to our understanding of Québec's educational reform and to the development of an evolving form of democracy. These topics are merely a representative sample among thousands of research questions that might be asked. More important than my list of sample questions is the fact that they indicate the imperative for additional research, more study, and rigorous public debate about this reform. The extent to which assumptions remain invisible is the extent to which they are taken for granted.

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## Appendix A

All page numbers in this appendix refer to excerpts from:

Ministère de l'Éducation. (1997). *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: Report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

‘Democracy’.

From “Curriculum Reform in Western Countries”: “*Thirty to forty years ago, these countries were concerned about increasing school attendance (democratization)*” (p. 13).

From “Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion”: “*Democracy must also be exercised outside the institutions created to ensure its maintenance, by citizens who are aware of the collective stakes and who wish to play an active role in democratic life.*” (p. 14).

From “Expectations to be met through the Curriculum Reform”: “*A public confrontation of opinions and a democratic debate were clearly needed before a consensus could emerge.*” (p. 21).

From “The belief that schools should not go beyond the limits of what society in general considers worthwhile”: “*...if society seems indifferent to democratic ideals, they must be promoted in schools.*” (p. 24).

From “Common Values Based on Common Goals”: “*In a context that clearly favours a pluralistic approach to ideas and values, it is important that a commitment to a set of common values be founded on common experiences shared by all. One such common experience exists: a commitment to democracy as a goal, in other words, a commitment to a society based on a social contract designed to strike a balance between individual*

liberty and social organization...The values on which the ideal of democracy is based include recognition of others as separate from oneself and worthy of respect. In the words of Charles Taylor, democracy is 'the politics of recognition'. One of these values is solidarity: despite our differences, we are alike, we are equal before the law, we are mutually dependent. Responsibility is another such value: the operation of a democratic society requires people committed to its ongoing construction, rational agents who are able to participate in important political decisions. Democratic society is fragile. It cannot ensure social cohesion using totalitarian methods. Individual liberties, although their priority is recognized, cannot be exercised to the detriment of social cohesion. The survival of democratic society thus requires the promotion of certain values. These include social justice since injustice and the processes of exclusion and marginalization undermine social cohesion, and the rule of law since respect for others..., equality, and responsibility are, in a democratic society, expressed in terms of the law. The emergence of law in society parallels the emergence of democracy. Lastly, these values include participation in democracy: since democratic society is not homogeneous, given that divergent interests, opinions and convictions exist, its survival is based on negotiation, the exclusion of violence as a means of resolving conflict, and the availability of information to ensure that enlightened decisions are made. This summary of the democratic ideal as the basis for education in values demonstrates that schools are the ideal place for its implementation....if education is to provide a foundation for a shared vision of democratic society, a new vision of democracy, then in our view the foundation should include a memory of past events." (p. 34).

From "Social Exclusion and Segregation in Schools": *"Successful democratization of the education system does not involve merely ensuring equality of access; it must also ensure the transmission of a common culture to all students."* (p. 37).

From "Science": *"The ethical problems raised by current scientific and technical developments make the acquisition of scientific knowledge even more important. Issues such as genetic manipulation, new reproductive technologies and environmental protection must be settled democratically, and thus debated and voted on."* (p. 48).

From "Life in Society": *"The evolution of society (from traditional to industrial, from rural to urban, from totalitarian to democratic, from national to global, from autarkic to exchange-based) has resulted in increasingly complex forms of social organization based on increasingly complex functions."* (p. 49).

From "Impact on Schools": *"Each school must be a small-scale democratic society. In school, the rights and freedoms of each individual must take into account others' rights and freedoms: individual differences must be respected and common rules established. Such a school promotes solidarity and rejects intolerance, violence, arbitrary decisions, intimidation and authoritarianism. In order to promote students' intellectual development, this small-scale society must be civilized. In other words, it must guarantee respect and safety for all its members."* (p. 109)

From "Citizenship Education": *"In a pluralist society such as ours, the search for and promotion of shared values is part and parcel of the process of constructing and developing a democratic space in which the population as a whole is entitled to live."* (p. 119).

From “Intercultural Education”: *“Consequently, new approaches tailored to the situation are needed to ensure that schools become a focal point in the process of learning to live together with proper regard for the values of a democratic society.”* (p. 122).

‘Citizenship’.

From “Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion”: *“Schools must address the question of how to prepare students to exercise citizenship. As new democracies gain a foothold around the world, their fragility is only too evident.”* (p. 14).

From “Adapting the Curriculum to Social Changes”: *“Social diversity. Schools must address the questions of intercultural understanding, religious pluralism, and citizenship education.”* (p. 31).

From “Expectations Relating to the Mission of Socialization”: *“...The challenges facing schools in coming years will include defining common values based on common goals, namely, preparing students to exercise their citizenship, integrating students into a common culture based on both past and future experience, and maintaining equality of opportunity.”* (p.32).

From “Common Values Based on Common Goals”: *“...Schools, by preparing young people for their role as citizens, have an indispensable part to play in the promotion and achievement of social cohesion. For this to be achieved, however, citizenship education cannot be reduced to a type of civic education based on an explanation of the role and operation of selected institutions. Although this is necessary, it must be extended to include the demonstration and promotion of essential values of a democratic society, as set out below.”* (p. 33).

From “The History of Québec”: *“Throughout the world, the nation is still the framework within which citizens exercise their collective liberties as they strive to influence their destiny.”* (p. 34).

From “The History of Québec”: *“...We cannot expect schools to ensure that history classes include references to the cultural traditions of all new citizens, but schools must nevertheless encourage them to retain an interest in their origins. The integration process can only be successful if these students are aware of their origins and differences.”* (p. 35).

From “Major Areas of Learning, Essential Learning and Elementary or Primary Knowledge”: *“Basic skills ...are often defined as the ability to read, write, speak and do arithmetic, elementary knowledge with respect to shapes, forms, and graphics, an understanding of space and time, knowledge and application of the rules of personal hygiene, and knowledge and application of the rules and values governing life in society and good citizenship.”* (p. 45).

From “Life in Society”: *“Help students understand the development of society and its institutions, with a particular focus on political institutions (citizenship education).”* (p. 50).

From “Life in Society”: *“At the secondary level, we recommend that history be taught each year, and that citizenship education be incorporated into the history courses.”* (p. 57).

From “Citizenship Education”: *“In keeping with the role of schools as agents of social cohesion, we propose that citizenship education be provided as part of a formal course. Since it focuses on the study of institutions and the way they function, on human rights,*

*on social relations, on intercultural and international understanding, citizenship education should, for the most part, be integrated into the teaching of history. We recommend that citizenship education be provided across the curriculum starting in Grade 1, then more formally as part of the history, geography and citizenship education program...” (p. 58).*

From “Incorporating cross-curricular learning into the curriculum”: *“Some learning – mainly that linked to socialization – is tied to specific subjects. For example, the knowledge needed to develop a positive attitude towards environmental protection and sustainable development is part of the content taught in science, geography and citizenship education.” (p. 60).*

From “Citizenship Education”: *“It is from this standpoint that the task of preparing young people to play their role as free and responsible citizens can be regarded as a social and political commitment to be made by our institutions, and especially by our schools. Citizenship education can be viewed as one of the fundamental elements in the overall mission of a democratic school. Its goal is to make individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities towards others and towards society in general. Schools, in their role as educators of independent citizens, should also prepare their students to be active members of society, by helping them develop critical minds and respect for others. Citizenship education is designed to enable students to master the skills they need to defend and promote democratic values and human rights, both at school and in society, and to demonstrate social solidarity and an understanding of other countries and other cultures. It is based on knowledge of past and present society, and on a certain view of the society of the future. It also covers the rules of life in society, the relationships*

*between human individuals and between humanity and the environment, and the influence of the media on the process of constructing representations of life in society. It touches upon the history of ideas and relationships between states, peoples and nations. It is part of a dynamic of social inclusion, and its content and activities are a source of dialogue and sharing for all, without exception.” (p. 119-120).*

### ‘Values’.

From “Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion”: *“Schools must develop and promote the values and attitudes of the various communities represented in the country. Schools must react to social breakdown, the signs of which are family collapse, the widening gap between rich and poor as a result of growing poverty, the values crisis, the disappearance of traditional community ties, and violence. In reaction, schools must help students find their place in society by transmitting a common cultural tradition (including knowledge, cultural references, and value systems), by sharing common values based on common needs, and by providing for real equality of opportunity.” (p. 14)*

From “The reforms are often a response to the concerns of the State, which are expressed in three main forms”: *“The definition of the skills and abilities to be developed and the common values to be promoted. For example, former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett asked that schools develop the following qualities in their students: strength of character, individuality, independence, reflection, loyalty, kindness, diligence, honesty, equity, self-discipline, respect for the law, and an ability to act in keeping with accepted and tried notions of good and evil instead of their own personal preferences.” (p. 15).*



From "Focusing on the Mission of Instruction": *"Over the past 20 years, schools in Quebec have been marked by ultimate objectives such as those proposed in The Schools of Quebec, which focused on personal growth, the instilling of values, and individual independence....The Schools of Quebec, by focusing the work of schools essentially on values and individual development, was sometimes used as an excuse for neglecting tasks relating to intellectual development and for not taking the means to achieve the standards set."* (p. 22).

From "Ensuring that Generic Skills are Mastered": *"Schools seem disoriented, and even sometimes overwhelmed, by the complex social changes they have to face, whether in connection with ethnic diversity, changes in value systems, the transformation of the family or community roles, the place of our society in larger systems, etc. Lastly, schools are slow to state their own values and promote them effectively."* (p. 32).

From "Expectations Relating to the Mission of Socialization": *"The values of community life are promoted and often exemplified in Québec's schools, and students are prepared for the exercise of various social roles (producers, consumers, parents, etc.)."* (p. 32).

From "Common Values Based on Common Goals": *"Common values are taught in all school subjects. However, the curriculum does include a time and a place specially designed to encourage reflection on values: religious and moral education, or moral education for those who prefer the secular option. The values discussed and promoted in these courses are essentially the same. The only difference lies in the explanation given for the basis of the values: religious on the one hand, natural or rational on the other. Since common values are currently taught, the established solution could be retained for*

— students who do not opt for the religious education course, but in our view, it does not adequately deal with the realities of our pluralistic society.” (p. 33).

From “Personal Development”: *“Personal development also requires that students be introduced to human values, which cannot be done in a haphazard way. Students must adopt human values freely, which excludes teaching them using an authoritarian approach. Values are acquired through experience rather than through learning. This does not mean that they should not be promoted explicitly, but teaching them will be ineffective if they are not also inherent in the community life of the school. It is not enough to simply state human values. In pluralistic societies, conflicting value systems exist side by side and ethical concerns are overshadowed. Students must be prepared to deal with this situation by developing their moral judgment, in other words, their ability to act individually and collectively on the basis of human values. The question of human values is addressed directly in certain subjects (moral education, religious and moral education, personal and social education, etc.) but should not be confined to these subjects. Value-related issues occur in literature, science, technology and social studies. The goal of personal development, based on an awareness of human values, does not necessarily need to be assigned a specific place in the curriculum. Some of its aspects can be taught across the curriculum or through extracurricular activities. However, in light of the mandate we received, we believe that the specific contribution of moral and religious education and moral education courses should be maintained.”* (p. 52).

From “Essential Learning Across the Curriculum”: *“...The final report of the Estates General on education also retained generic skills as one of the major learning areas, but added attitudes and values to the list of intellectual skills.”* (p. 52).

From “Proposed Changes”: *“Whereas it is necessary to eliminate overlap and redundancy, whereas courses are not always the most appropriate way of promoting learning, whereas new content must be introduced and whereas the family is the institution best qualified to teach certain values and knowledge, we recommend that certain subjects currently taught at the secondary level as compulsory courses no longer be considered independent disciplines...”* (p. 53).

From “We recommend that cross-curricular learning be introduced into the curriculum”: *“Social skills. Schools must promote social cohesion. They must also allow all young people to find their place and play an active role in their communities. In addition to the knowledge dispensed in specific subject areas, certain types of knowledge must be promoted through all school activities. Certain attitudes and behaviours are tied to values and must be experienced rather than taught. Consequently, students must be given opportunities to learn these values through experience.”* (p. 60).

From “Incorporating cross-curricular learning into the curriculum”: *“We therefore propose that these skills be set out in a booklet called the “program of programs” which would be different for the elementary and secondary levels. This booklet would be intended for all teachers, as well as other school professionals who have an educational responsibility towards young people, and would clearly set out the values to be promoted in Québec schools.”* (p. 60).

From “Subject-Time Allocation”: *“Elementary school. ...At the elementary level, besides acquiring essential basic knowledge, students must formally start learning the work methods that will be indispensable at higher levels of study, and familiarize themselves*

*with the various aspects of their culture, the main characteristics of their society and the values that must be promoted within it.” (p. 61).*

From “Changes in the Nature and Form of the Measurement Instruments Used”: *“...In other words, we should be measuring what we value, rather than valuing what we measure.” (p. 88).*

From “Updating the Ministerial Policy on Evaluation”: *“Evaluation as a field is by no means neutral. It involves different perceptions of education and sets of very different values. Depending on the approaches used, emphasis may be given to exclusion or inclusion, success or failure, participation or selection. It is a relative newcomer in the history of education, and its many different theories and methods favour the proliferation of different schools and different trends that are not always conducive to equity and equality of opportunity.” (p. 99).*

From “Impact on Professional Development”: *“...The Commission suggests that every school body should: value professional development by peers and the use of practical expertise...” (p. 107).*

From “Content Outline for the ‘Program of Programs’”: *“Values in Schools: What values? How should they be taught? How should they be put into practice?” (p. 115).*

From “Health Education”: *“In our post-industrial societies, the organization of work, our lifestyles and our values have a direct impact on our health.” (p. 118).*

From “Media Education”: *“Everyone agrees that the media contribute significantly to the development of children’s personalities and values. They have become reference points outside the family and the school. They are attractive and use images, sounds and words well suited to a young audience, creating a form of parallel culture. However, it is a*

*culture that develops and infiltrates without the educational supervision that would give the young recipients sufficient time and space to think about the values being conveyed. Schools, in their desire to create an educational environment in which they can train free, critical and responsible citizens, cannot ignore the influence of the media on children and adolescents who will be members of tomorrow's democracy."* (p. 121).

From "Intercultural Education": *"Cultural diversity is one of the characteristic features of contemporary society. It will probably be accentuated in the future, as travel becomes easier and more frequent. One of its consequences is the continual transformation of the social fabric in host societies. While it forms a dynamic that provides mutual enrichment, it also means that the population as a whole must find ways of adapting, with proper regard for shared values and the specific features of the various cultural communities."* (p. 122).

From "New Information and Communications Technologies": *"NICT have infiltrated our lives extensively, forcing us to adopt a clear-minded attitude to their possibilities and to the mentalities and values that they may influence and even change. We must understand and learn their language and tools, because they evoke representations that have an impact on how we think and communicate with others."* (p. 125).

#### **'Culture'.**

From "Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion": *"Schools must address the global challenges presented by current social changes: increased migration, pluralism, sustainable development, the preservation of cultural heritage, the expansion*

*of the media, environmental concerns, the imbalance between rich and poor countries, and so on.” (p. 14).*

From “The reforms take into account the cultural context of the country concerned”: *“Although mathematics and science tend to follow international standards, the relative importance placed on the arts, health education, moral education and languages, and the approach taken in the social studies, are deeply rooted in cultural traditions. Some elements of the curriculum can be used to reinforce cultural tradition, but some are deliberately included to transform tradition. The curriculum is an expression not only of cultural memory, but also of a cultural project.” (p. 16).*

From “The Opinions of the Commission for the Estates General on Education”: *“...that absolute priority should be given to improving the language skills and general cultural competence of Québec youth...” (p. 19).*

From “Raising Standards”: *“The raising of standards was a constantly recurring demand at the Estates General on Education. It covered a range of concerns, including: ...the need to increase the cultural component of the curriculum...” (p. 23).*

From “Improving Cultural Content”: *“...The first report released by the Estates General on Education, The State of Education in Québec, expanded on this point, and identified cultural content as one of the major deficiencies that needed to be corrected. For many people, however, correction would involve merely increasing the time devoted to literature, the arts, and history. This, in our view, is not sufficient. The curriculum as a whole must be adjusted to ensure that the cultural aspect is more firmly embedded in it.” (p. 24).*

From “Improving Cultural Content”: “...Thus, the cultural goal needs to be reinforced in our curriculum, which until recently has focused mainly on the utilitarian and cognitive goals...The increased importance attributed to the notion of basic education throughout the Québec school system in the wake of the Nadeau Report (1976) does not need stressing here, nor does the current interest in cognitive psychology. The cultural aspect, however, has received very little attention. Despite a passing mention in parts of the Parent Report, it has practically dropped from view, and to bring it to prominence now is an uphill struggle. If the cultural aspect is to take its rightful place in the curriculum, three types of action must be taken.

The cultural perspective governing the selection of subjects for inclusion in the curriculum must be made more explicit: “The learning schools must impart to students is not generated spontaneously, but is rather a product of the work done by previous generations in the various fields of human culture: art, literature, science, technology and lifestyles. Students are introduced to culture at school in order to allow them to better adapt to, and join, a cultural system built up over the centuries – the complex world in which they will have to live. Another goal is the assimilation of culture, allowing students to construct their intellectual and personal identity and in turn innovate and, in some cases, create. (Preparing Our Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)...

The content of certain courses must be rebalanced to allow a more thorough understanding of cultural achievements: Many deficiencies must be corrected...At all levels of the school system, the science program does not place enough emphasis on technology, the history program does not place enough emphasis on the cultural

*achievements of the eras studied, and the French as the language of instruction program does not place enough emphasis on literature.*

*The cultural aspect must be present in every subject taught: Simply stating that the cultural aspect must be present in all subjects, or relying on the initiatives taken by a minority of cultured teachers, is not sufficient. The curriculum must explicitly identify the elements of culture to be taught to every student, at every level. All the current programs must be revised to integrate cultural elements, since even apparently cultural subjects can be taught without any kind of focus on the cultural aspect...*” (pp. 25-26).

From “Special attention must be paid to developing students’ interest in culture”: *“A taste for and interest in knowledge is developed when student come directly into contact with other active minds...These other active minds can be those of fellow students or the teacher, but they can also, and indeed should, be the active minds that have preceded us, the active minds that have left us their heritage of cultural achievements. The intellectual curiosity of students can only be fostered through an understanding that the evolution of the human mind has been based on the development of representations of the world we live in and the construction of a store of knowledge...This is another reason why the cultural aspect must receive more emphasis in the curriculum.”* (p. 28).

From “Adapting the Curriculum to Social Changes”: *“Social diversity. Schools must address the questions of intercultural understanding, religious pluralism, and citizenship education...Environmental concerns. Schools already focus on the relationship between humans and the environment. Current environmental concerns, however, are broader and are interwoven with social, economic and political concerns. Social expectations will require schools to provide keys to understanding the interdependence between the human*



race and the physical, chemical, biological, economic, social and cultural elements of the environment.” (p. 31).

From “The History of Québec”: “...We believe it is time to move beyond such difficulties, and to give history a more prominent place in the curriculum. Why? Because no student can successfully integrate into society unless he or she has been helped, in school, to assimilate the cultural traditions of the society concerned. From this point of view, the situation of children born in Québec is exactly the same as that of newly arrived immigrants. We are all born into a world that already exists, and our integration into that world depends on our being able to assimilate the cultural traditions of the society into which we are born. The difference between immigrants and people born in Québec is that the former still have a foot in their culture of origin. Their search for a new identity does not mean that they retain no memories or that all differences are abolished...Because it is impossible to understand other cultures without understanding one’s own culture, just as it is impossible to properly understand one’s own culture without making an effort to understand other cultures. The world has long been a global village, and not to know one’s own history is to condemn oneself to ignorance of that of others. The reasons given for increasing the emphasis on the teaching of history also determine how it should be taught. It should be taught in an open, wide-ranging manner. It must be grounded in a knowledge of Québec culture and history, but must open up to other histories and other cultures, to the contributions made by other cultures, and to different interpretations of culture and history...” (pp. 35-36).

From “The Question of Language”: “...The mother tongue, or the language of cultural attachment, is not merely a communication tool. It is also a heritage that reveals our

*inner being, since our ideas, feelings, and dreams are revealed in language...French schools must emphasize the study of French, since French is the cornerstone of Québec's identity and its survival in North America depends on its strength in Québec. In addition, French schools must attempt to ensure that the children of immigrants, who may study in French initially under compulsion, adopt French as their language of cultural attachment."* (p. 36).

From "The first language (or the language of instruction)": *"To ensure that students receive a common culture, they should be brought into contact, at the appropriate time during their schooling, with a selection of literary works from the body of standard works..."* (p. 46).

From "The second language and third languages": *"The cultural aspect of language learning is also important. Studying a language brings students into contact with the cultural heritage of the language and of its sphere of influence, as well as the cultural characteristics of daily life in the countries and areas in which it is spoken."* (p. 47).

From "Science": *"Scientific activity and its products are among the most significant manifestations of human culture."* (p. 48).

From "Mathematics": *"...The cultural dimension of mathematics, too, must be studied, as should certain high points of the intellectual adventure that constitutes the development of mathematics."* (p. 49).

From "Life in Society": *"To be effective, teaching in social studies must: ...Help students understand the social aspirations of the human race. Human beings create civilizations and are moulded by the civilizations they create. Arts, cultures, religions, lifestyles and occupations, national identities and institutions are all manifestations of life in*

society...This knowledge must be conveyed in social studies classes, especially history classes, but literature, the arts, science, technology and foreign languages all contain a cultural aspect which must be emphasized in the classes concerned. Students must know the main chronological events of world and national history and the main spatial reference points thoroughly and therefore by heart. This is a form of elementary knowledge as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. To ensure that culture is being assimilated in a structured and coherent manner, students must be examined periodically on the above knowledge and must be required to apply it correctly in all subjects taught at school." (p. 50).

From "The Arts": "Teaching in the arts has a specific role to play in the development of each student's sensibility and intelligence, and in his or her cultural and social education. Through contact with the world of artistic creation and wide range of different works of art, students become more open-minded. Through knowledge of common references, they improve their social ties...teaching in the arts must: ...Bring students into contact with works of art created in their own artistic and cultural environment. Students must be encouraged to visit the centres of cultural production and to meet artists...This approach to arts education, based on the relationship between artistic creation and the appreciation of works of art from the past or the present, also develops the cultural aspect. The works or productions used in class to place those of students in context must be significant, in other words, they must be works whose artistic worth is recognized and that bear witness to the transformation of society and of our conception of the world. The number of works presented is not important. Rather, they must

represent a range of eras, trends, and artists, since students must understand that artistic culture is founded on pluralism and diversity.” (p. 51).

From “Technology, science and mathematics”: *“Technology. Developing an awareness of the world of technology and technological culture through the study of technical objects or processes must start in elementary school...”* (p. 56).

From “The arts”: *“At the elementary level, with the aim of more clearly identifying the learning that should be emphasized and of more effectively developing a true arts education culture in our society, we propose that compulsory courses focus primarily on music and the visual arts, as in most countries.”* (p. 58).

From “The official program in different subjects”: *“The program should be designed with the cultural aspect in mind.”* (p. 77).

From “The Place of Evaluation in the Education System”: *“The place of evaluation in the education system differs from country to country, for cultural, political and pedagogical reasons.”* (p. 85).

From “Proposed Corrective Action in the Field of Evaluation”: *“If we are to redefine the role of schools to focus on the basics, instil greater rigour, improve cultural content and take action to ensure that they become the centre of intellectual, methodological and social skill development process, we must correct certain practices, and give a new direction to the process of evaluation.”* (p. 87).

From “The Report Card”: *“The Task Force, while attempting to encourage a certain standardization, make report cards easier to understand for parents, and promote a certain ‘marking culture’ – the emergence of a minimum implicit social consensus on the*

— *meaning of marks – is nevertheless aware that, in some communities, the status quo should be maintained...*” (p. 90).

From “Impact on Initial Teacher Training”: *“We believe the general economy of the reform we are proposing and a number of the recommendations we are formulating support the principles which are the very foundation of the revision of teacher training programs (integration of programs, importance of general culture, mastery of the language of instruction, etc.).”* (p. 105).

From “Impact on Professional Development”: *“Beyond the teacher training and professional development needs created by our proposed changes to the curriculum, the huge challenge facing elementary and secondary schools will be that of developing a professional development culture. Such a culture is wanting at the present moment...”* (p. 107).

From “Intercultural Education”: *“Schools are one of the most important elements in the process of welcoming and assimilating cultural diversity, and provide a laboratory for intercultural exchange and communication. Schools bring together identities that are otherwise scattered anonymously through society. The cultural pluralism that has become such a feature of modern schools will undoubtedly increase in the future...”* (p. 122).

From “International Understanding”: *“The main goals of education in international understanding are to make individuals aware that they belong to a group known as humanity, and to create accepted interdependencies between individuals, peoples and nations. It is part of a dynamic generated by the globalization of social, political, economic and cultural relations, and aims to illustrate the issues and analyze their*

*effects. Consequently, it can make a significant contribution to the emergence of a global awareness and can play a role in the international community's efforts to build peace.*" (p. 123).

From "New Information and Communications Technologies": *"The technological culture now seems to be a fact of life, and schools must play an active role in disseminating it as part of their overall mission of training free, responsible and competent individuals."* (p. 125).

From "The Programs of Study: Proposed Changes to Improve Cultural Content and Correct Deficiencies": *"...This appendix briefly describes the perspectives to be taken into account in revising certain programs of study in light of the advocated improvement of cultural content and the deficiencies noted...The most recent revision of the secondary school program is explicitly aimed at introducing students to the cultural richness of the literary heritage of Québec and the rest of the French-speaking world. For this reason, a larger place is given to literary works...Compared with the previous situation, there is now an emphasis on the cultural perspective...The study of the cultural expressions of the language of instruction should not be limited to our own geographical area: the culture to which we belong is much vaster than that..."* (p. 128).

From "History": *"Interpretations of Québec history may vary, depending on the students' perspective and their own cultural identity...The second is a concern not just with exceptional or powerful men and women but also with the major cultural, political, and economic ideologies or trends."* (pp. 130-131).

From "The Arts": *"Art is usually considered a cultural activity because what artists produce is a manifestation of humankind's creative activity. Current art programs are*

*mainly intended to give students a chance to experience this creative activity themselves. If we intend to incorporate a stronger cultural perspective into the teaching of the arts, however, this practical emphasis is not sufficient. The programs must include more art history and give the students some familiarity with major works of art of the past and present.” (p. 131).*

From “Life in Society”: “...*New environmental and intercultural education components must also be included, along with concepts related to international understanding.*” (p. 135).

From “Personal Development: Moral Education”: “...*The program must be reorganized to include concepts of intercultural education as well as content related to health education, sex education, consumer education and life in society from the current Personal and Social Education program.*” (p. 136).

## Statement of Ethics of Proposed Research

### **1. Informed Consent of Subjects:**

A copy of the consent form is attached. A "teaser", announcing my intention to do research, was included in the December newsletter distributed to central office personnel at the School Board. The "teaser" indicated that the Letter of Consent would appear in January's newsletter (distributed February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001).

### **2. Subject Recruitment:**

2.1 In the sense that everyone works in the same building, the subjects are "captive". However, there are no constraints placed on employees beyond those of regular work responsibilities.

2.2 I am not in a supervisory position nor do I have access to private or confidential information about employees that could place undue pressure on individuals to participate in the research project. It must be emphasized that all employees are part of the transformative process at the school board. This study is simply an attempt to enhance that experience through conscious and reflexive participation.

2.3 The only inducement I can provide is a fuller richer experience of the change process and a chance for people to examine their own capacities for learning.

2.4 I have included a proviso in the consent letter explaining that participants can join or withdraw from the research project at any time during the 2000-2001 school year.

All interviews and/or questionnaires will be conducted on a voluntary basis.

Because my project does not depend on a particular number of participants, there will be no added pressure to recruit subjects.

### **3. Subject Risk and Well-being:**

The only risk I can foresee is the unsettling realization that we all possess preconceived notions and limitations.

### **4. Deception of Subjects:**

None.

### **5. Privacy of Subjects:**

I do not require information about the participants' private lives. I do, however, hope that individuals will begin to discuss such things as their approach to change, experiences of change, learning styles, etc. That some participants may choose not to examine these issues is a normal condition of the institutional change process.



CONTRIBUTING TO CIVIL SOCIETY: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM REFORM AT  
THE \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL BOARD

Central Office Personnel:

As you will recall, our school year opened with an address by the Director General during which he emphasized the role employees of the Administration Building play in supporting and servicing the needs of schools and centres at the \_\_\_\_\_ School Board. Two of the "Action Principles" discussed at that meeting underline the role of central office personnel:

*We believe the Board's first responsibility is to support its schools and centres in their efforts to educate students within a caring, safe, and inclusive learning environment.*

*In meeting our responsibilities, everything we do must be of high quality, timely, and rooted in a commitment to mutual and effective support.*

This year marks the beginning of the implementation of Quebec's curriculum reform based on the report, "Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools". As a learning organization whose mission is to provide competent, accountable management founded on knowledge, values and ethics, the implementation process requires the support of all employees. It is expected that every one of us will try, to the best of our ability, to act in accordance with the values at the foundation of the curriculum reform.

By involving all central office personnel in its transformative process, the \_\_\_\_\_ has embarked on a collective process of change. Individuals may interpret their own degree of involvement and responsibility differently, but collectively we are attempting to evolve into an authentic learning organization. During the 2000-2001 school year, I am proposing to conduct research within the Administration Building of the school board in order to examine the following questions: Is it possible for an institution to redefine itself from within? Can the attempt to transform systemic values be tracked and documented as it progresses?

I would like to invite interested central office personnel to join this research project. I hope that through voluntary participation in periodic interviews, discussion groups, questionnaires, and informal conversations about the transformation of values, the curriculum reform, and our individual and collective capacities for change, an employee's experience of and contribution to the change process may be enhanced. Because the research project will continue throughout the year, participants are welcome to join now or at a later date, or to withdraw from the project at any time. None of the opinions expressed or information gathered through this project would in any way adversely affect participants' employment at the \_\_\_\_\_. I hope to use the results of my research to answer or at least partially answer the questions posed above. This project has received approval from the Research Committee of the \_\_\_\_\_ School Board and the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education at McGill University.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my proposal and I look forward to meeting with some of you in the near future.

Lori Rabinovitch

Interested employees are asked to sign the bottom portion of this page and return it to L. Rabinovitch, Rm 246 by February 16, 2001.

**INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT:**

I agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Lori Rabinovitch at the \_\_\_\_\_ School Board. I understand that full confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed in all published work arising out of this research project. Participation in this project will not adversely interfere with my work schedule, and I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time. I agree that some of our discussions may be recorded and that I will be informed in advance if this is to occur.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES ON MEETING NO. 2, 2001-02-28, ROOM 114, 12 NOON**  
**CURRICULUM REFORM**

Below are notes on the curriculum reform presentation given by \_\_\_\_\_ to the Research Study Group. I have organized my notes according to the key concepts and ideas pertinent to us, as a group of support staff and professionals. At our next meeting feel free to add to, delete, or change the ideas I have highlighted here.

***“What is it I can do to make the curriculum reform work? How do we take a good idea and make it into a good reality?”***

The reform is important for society as a whole and not just for the education sector.

The more people understand and participate in these ideas, the more chance the reform has of succeeding.

Change takes place when people decide to change but not when change is directed from above.

To change we must take responsibility for our actions. This requires shared purpose, commitment, and participation.

Boundaries are disappearing.

No one is an expert in all things. We are all experts in some things.

Everyone is involved in education because everyone is a learner.

Assigned roles are disappearing.

Learning goes beyond school and beyond age categories.

A mistake is a learning experience. We need to be able to make mistakes without being judged.

Every organization should be a learning organization.

Opportunities must be made available for people to develop and display their competencies in their place of work.

Competency means being able to take knowledge"s" and use it at the right place, at the right time, in an appropriate and useful manner.

Responsibility for developing and displaying competencies goes in both directions.

Conditions have to be in place in order for people to give the best of themselves.

The best ideas are lost if conditions are not put into place to support them.

The most important condition for the success of this reform will be a change in people's attitudes and values.

The role of the school board's organizational structure is to support schools, school administrators and students in their change process.

The role of the school board's support staff and professionals is to actively participate in the creation and maintenance of a learning organization. Our contribution is key to the successful implementation of the reform.

To instruct means we are here to serve the students; to qualify means we make informed choices in our place or work; to socialize means we contribute to the development of a sense of community within and outside of the school board and act as responsible citizens in a responsible society.

***“The reform is beautiful but fragile. Everyone is implicated in its implementation.”***

**SOME QUESTIONS WE MIGHT ADDRESS IN FUTURE DISCUSSIONS:**

- \* • If we gain power, does someone else lose power? Or is this a misconception or a fear?
- \* • How do we build a network of change agents?
  - Is our work value-based? How can we begin to see it that way?
  - Is our work competency-based?
  - As a study group, what role should we take in helping to build a learning organization?
  - As individuals, what role should we take in helping to build a learning organization?
- \* • Do we practice self-assessment/reflection in our work?
  - How can we address the problem of “vertical disconnection”? How do we build learning teams across departments and across levels of authority?
  - What is the essence of this curriculum reform?
- \* • The reform will force us to struggle with new ideas; will there be a place in the school board for our new knowledge, commitment, and enthusiasm?
- \* • Are there sufficient opportunities for us to learn in the workplace?
  - Do we want to invite our bosses to join us in discussion at some point?
  - ?
  - ?
  - ?

**NOTES ON MEETING NO. 3, 2001-03-13, "THE STAGE", 12 NOON**  
**RESEARCH GROUP**

Below are a few notes on the discussion that took place at the most recent meeting of our research group. Rather than write exactly what was said, I have tried to summarize the major points of the conversation. Mine represents only one interpretation of the discussion so please dot down your own comments and we can build on these ideas at our next meeting.

The comments expressed about presentation on the curriculum reform were very positive. Everyone agreed it had been inspiring and motivating, and we appreciated that the presentation was adapted to reflect the role of this group. The ideas/ideals in this reform are very deep and layered and as said, fragile. Making a commitment to act as active participants in the implementation process requires us - individually and collectively - to take responsibility for learning about and practicing the values of the reform. These are the kinds of ideas that inspire people to push their own limits, to ask questions like, "Is this as far as I can go? Is my professional life in harmony with my personal life? Am I leading the kind of life I believe in?"

After some reflection, I think one of the main points of our discussion centered around the question: Can we change the attitudes and values of others by modeling the values of the reform in our own behaviour and language? Or is there an additional stage in the process of transforming the school board into a learning organization that requires a more direct approach, i.e. creating focussed teaching/learning situations?

Some of the participants related experiences from their personal and professional lives where modeling values such as kindness, generosity, and friendship resulted in reciprocal displays of compassion and warmth from the other person. Once we fully understand the foundational values of the reform the next stage of learning is one of self-assessment and reflection. This is the process through which we build authenticity into our personal and professional lives. Authenticity results from our ability to recognize disparities between our espoused values and our lived values and to address these contradictions. As our own behaviour changes the environment around us, including people in it, will be affected. But does every change in behaviour imply a change in values? Does all change automatically mean that fundamental value systems and attitudes have been examined?

Many people emphasized throughout the discussion that change is slow and incremental. It takes years and years to transform an institution into a learning organization, and it can only happen one step at a time. People change when they are ready and not because they are handed a directive, or confronted, or challenged.

We also discussed whether we understand our roles in the implementation process of the reform from a personal perspective only - through reflection and self-assessment and continual learning - or as part of a community of learners.

We mentioned that the ideas in this reform can and will change existing structures and we wondered if people in management positions fully understand the depth of these changes. Do they consider themselves learners?

We then identified five questions that, for the moment, interest us more than some of the others. All of the questions are interrelated and overlap.

**“The reform will force us to struggle with new ideas; will there be a place in the school board for our new knowledge, commitment, and enthusiasm?”**

We are interested in exploring whether or not our enthusiasm to participate more fully in the transformation of the school board into a learning organization will be welcomed or discouraged by management.

**“Are there sufficient opportunities for us to learn in the workplace?”**

This question is really part of the first question, i.e. are we responsible for creating our own learning opportunities in the workplace? If we do create learning opportunities, will we be encouraged to explore them? Or should we identify our needs and then, within reason, expect that opportunities to meet these needs will be created for us? Should departments be working as teams in order to ensure that learning opportunities open continually and at all levels of employment?

**“Do we practice self-assessment/reflection in our work?”**

It is through reflection and self-assessment about our own learning that we formulate questions and develop ideas regarding our role in the implementation process of the reform. Reflection is what propels us to search for the learning opportunities that best suit our needs. Through reflection, we come to recognize our own conditions for learning, for turning new theoretical knowledge into practice.

**“If we gain power, does someone else lose power? Or is this a misconception or a fear?”**

This question is situated somewhere between reflecting on what kinds of learning we require, and believing that these learning situations will evolve in our work environment. This question addresses the issue of power, lines of authority, and the taken-for-granted roles that define the organizational structure of the school board. When assumptions about roles remain unexamined, they have the potential to inhibit the evolution of a person or organization. Supporting a learning organization in practice as well as in theory will require changes in our assumptions about authority.

**“How do we build a network of change agents?”**

This question relates to the earlier discussion about whether we see ourselves as advocates of change or whether we understand our role as one of modeling the changes, or both. If we decide we are advocates of change (change agents) what kinds of activities would facilitate this process?

As part of this last question, we decided to take a collective action and request permission for our research group meetings to take place during working hours. If management has made a commitment to build a learning organization and if every employee is implicated in the process of transformation, then our study sessions are an integral part of that process. This action legitimizes our group, allows us to test the ‘theory vs. practice’ question, and represents an opportunity for the research group to put its knowledge of the reform into action. You will find a draft memo attached. If you wish to make changes, let me know at 7545, or drop off your revisions in Room 246.

As always, thank you.

**SERVICE DE L'ÉDUCATION AUX ADULTES ET DE LA FORMATION**  
**PROFESSIONNELLE**  
**ADULT EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL SERVICES**

**DATE:**     **March 15, 2001**

**RE:**           **Schedule for Sessions of Research Study Group**

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**I am writing this memo on behalf of the research study group that has been formed as a result of our interest in learning more about, and participating in, the curriculum reform.**

**As part of a learning organization and in the context of the implementation of the curriculum reform, our research study group is requesting permission to hold its meetings during regular working hours and for these study sessions to be considered a legitimate part of our working day.**

**Our group meets as a community of learners for approximately one hour every second week to study, discuss, and reflect on the theory and values at the foundation of the curriculum reform. To date, we have met during our lunch hours. The next meeting is scheduled for the lunch hour of March 27 and we would appreciate your response by that date.**

**This memo is being distributed by each member of the research study group to the person she or he reports to in the school board structure.**

**Thank you.**

**Lori Rabinovitch**  
**Adult Education and Vocational Services Department**