SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN THE CHILEAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

Chilean education is still in the process of overcoming a dark period of dictatorship where the school was governed by repressive, controlling and antidemocratic regulations. In 2009 a new general law for Chilean education was enacted that included several values suggesting a more active participation for all the members of the school community. Additionally the law states that schools must provide inclusive environments based on tolerance, mutual respect and awareness of current cultural diversity. The inclusions of these values are aimed to democratize education of Chilean schools. The purpose of this study is to inquire, from the experience and perspectives of the school community in two Chilean schools, the current state of democracy within these educational institutions according the theory of democratic education proposed by John Dewey among other authors. The research has a qualitative nature and uses school ethnography as the main method for investigation. The process of data collection included the use of fieldnotes, interviews and participant observation in the context of schooling. In both schools, the study evidenced the efforts that some students and teachers make in order to create meaningful interrelations were individuals can active participate, having a significant communication based on mutual understandings and respect and being part of the process of decision-making. Nevertheless major transgressions to democracy in education were observed from school authorities and part of the teacher staff. These transgressions influence the social life of the school community and represent forms of unnecessary formalism, conservatism and militarization of the character. The study concludes that the members of the school community perceive democracy in several different ways; most of these perceptions reflected contextualized exertions of power, control, repression and fear over different school situations which are not consistent with the nature of what a democratic education constitute.

Keywords: School ethnography, democratic education, active participation, Chilean education

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Chapter I

Introduction

During the 50' until late of the 80' education had a significant growth in several countries of Latin America. This growth emerged as a reflection of successful, liberal and democratic educational strategies aimed to pursue social integration and to encourage participatory citizenship education. Accordingly, States were open to discuss the progressiveness on Freire's discourse and to support his well-received ideas against the oppressive and authoritarian forces exerted over pedagogies and an increasing world-wide capitalism. Latina American societies introduced the debate which claimed social and cultural empowerment, welfare and flourishing arguing high responsibility from the State. Thus several social groups and organizations, whose incentive was social change, emerged in order to support democracy through an active participation of citizens and the inclusion of different values such as solidarity and social inclusion; altogether with a rising of quality in public education and a considerable reduction of the percentages on illiteracy among people. The ideologies of Neoliberalism interceded with the promising pragmatism of left governments and education, as consequence, was one of the institutions that resulted more influenced. The appearance of neoliberal policies increased inequalities and produced a breakdown of the educational structure in many countries of South and North America together with social instability, political disruption and coups that endangered democracy. These policies aimed reduction of the State inversion, responsibility and structure, in favor of privatization and commercialization of education by using the argument that the State had failed granting quality, equality and stability in schools (Puiggrós, 1996).

The emergence of the coup d'état in Chile in 1973 drove by the General Augusto Pinochet led into disastrous consequences for democracy and affected every single social sphere in the country, among them education. The implementation of neoliberal ideologies, authoritarian nationalism and marked-oriented policies influenced every social aspect in the country and introduced totalitarian and radical changes to education. The Military Government dismantled the Chilean education structure, imposed repression, power and control over schools and transformed education into a consumer good (Moreno & Gamboa, 2014). Furthermore, in

1990, the Organic Law of Education -LOCE in Spanish- was enacted and regulated every sector in education. This law was seen as the legacy of the Military Government, since it repressed their freedom of expression and did not recognized the rights of participation, decision and collaboration of students, teachers and parents, cultivated fear, obedience and discipline (Muñoz, 2011). In 2006 and 2011, in front of the few possibilities for students to release from the situation, a new generation of youth born in democracy and characterized by being *students without fear* transformed themselves into several student organizations and social groups which emerged and protested against the law LOCE across the country. These students' manifestations were fundamental to settle the debate which proposed an ending to an education for-profit, the transgression of democracy in schools and other demands in relation to the end of the neoliberal nature of education (Cummings, 2015).

Due to the constant pressures from different social movements and the extensive criticism toward the remaining relevancy of the LOCE and its antidemocratic policies in education, the General Law of Education - LGE n Spanish- was enacted in 2009. This law regulates the whole educational sector in Chile, the general and cross-curricular objectives and the base curricular design. It proposes significant changes that might serve as a basis for a more active participation for the whole educational community, promoting a civic formation and structural and conceptual changes in the curriculum, the normative and the administration of schools. The new law states the importance of tolerance, respect and communication between the members of the school community (Mineduc, 2009). The law was constructed under the faith for regaining democracy in education by establishing democratic concepts. Nevertheless after eight years of implementation of regulations and normative proposed by the LGE, there is an scarcity of educational experiences depriving participation in decision-making, a lack of integration for all and problems in the establishment of social bonds within schools. (Flores & Garcia, 2014) These proposals and the rhetoric in educational policies are understood as aiming to the inclusion, implementation and encouragement of a more democratic path for education. Therefore, facing the actual changes in curriculum design, the democratization of schools together with the massive students protest waves in Chile in 2006 and 2011, the promulgation and current implementation of the LGE, and several efforts of different governments after the return of democracy to bind together participation, collaboration and democracy in education it is necessary and relevant to understand, from the pragmatic and functional perspective of schools, how a democratic education is voiced, perceived and

manifested within the Chilean educational system and how it influences the different process within schools.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate, using an educational ethnographic approach seen from a qualitative perspective, how a "recently introduced" democratic education proposed by the General Law of Education (LGE) is expressed, perceived and experienced by students, parents, teachers and school authority in two school of the city Villa in Chile. The study will employ an ethnographic methodology to investigate the social life of the participants and to look into their daily interactions and perceptions. Research data was collected through an ethnographic methodology in a naturalistic setting; where interviews, field notes, participant observations and conversations played an important role. The research has as a theoretical framework, previous studies made on democratic education where the names of John Dewey, Jürgen Habermas and Richard Rorty are essential and served as a basis for understanding the concept of democratic education and use it as an insightful background in the field.

Research questions

1) How does democracy manifest within education in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B?
2) How do the different actors (students, teachers, parents and school authorities of SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B) experience democracy in education?
3) What are the students' perceptions and opinions on participation, collaboration, and communication in both schools?

Research limitations

Since the school year in Chile begins in March, the process of data collection in this research study began once teachers started planning their lessons and assisting to both schools at the middle of February 2018. Because of this, time limitation was one of the most restricting and demanding issue during the research process. It would have been beneficial for the purpose of the research to have started on December or January collecting data and organizing it in order to have had more time for the analysis. However this time was efficiently used to design the methodology and to have a better understanding of what constitute the theoretical account of

democratic education. In addition to the limitations of time, one of the major difficulties found while doing the research were data analysis and its organization. There was a general experimented limitation of effort and time in translating the interviews from Spanish to English and then the proper transcription of them into word files and folders. Since interviews and some fieldnotes were collected or made using a tape recorder, the process of transcription and translation entailed consuming time and effort. Several days of work and effort were required to store all the collected data. It is important to address the challenge of translating from one language to another, especially when the register of the interviews has an informal tone of everyday language and it is filled with idiomatic expressions and slang. These procedures require double attention trying to not lose or miss the core meaning, the general intentions and the importance of what was said.

Chapter II

Research Problem

The present chapter delivers a historical review of democracy within the Chilean education that might serve as background for the research problem by addressing in a primary instance the consequences of the dictatorship in education, the educational censure and the silenced voices of students and other member of the school community. The chapter moves toward a description of the dynamics produced by the endeavors to regain democracy in the school and the outcomes of the aforesaid attempts. The chapter concludes with a discussion and proper analysis of how democracy has been historically expressed in the Chilean educational context.

A brief historical review of democracy in Chilean education

It is interesting to see the huge amount of national and international research publications that touch the period of dictatorship as a significant issue at the moment of studying Chilean education. It almost feels as if Chilean education began right after the Military came to power in 1973 and everything before is less significant or not that influential for the actual society. It has been almost thirty years since the democracy returned to Chile and society released from the oppressive and antidemocratic government, however, Chilean society continues talking and making emphasis on its 'legacy'. The truth is that, despite the fact that the researcher personally believes that it is time to turn to a new page and leave the past behind, the period of Pinochet has been the most radical and influential time in the country and there are remaining consequences of the actions implemented and the freedoms snatched. Therefore at

the moment of analyzing democracy in Chilean education, three different positions in relation to the participation, collaboration and influence of students, teachers and parents emerge as a *before*, a *during* and an *after* of the dictatorial government of 1973.

<u>Democracy in schools *before* Augusto Pinochet</u>

The periods of Chilean education from 1928 to 1952 had the influence of the left-radical governments that significantly collected the contributions of John Dewey. This view of education in schools promoted a more participative, collaborative and democratic notion among youth by creating and implementing Student Unions along Chilean schools, but also, it put special interest in the social and cultural formation of the students. It was a model of education that was coherent with the social movements and the sociocultural changes of those days. These governments acted consequently with the idea of a republican education, wherein the principles of social interests and general common good prevailed over and above the private interest. In this sense, the aim of the government was to inspire a free, universal and public education, a Chilean education focused on the formation of citizens in an equal and including society (Schneider, 2012; Redondo, 2009).

The educational reform of 1928 acknowledged the participation of parents and guardians in education. This recognition was an attempt to create a bond between home and schools; and where parents were allowed to participate and engage in the learning process of their children. In 1967 the Parents' representative association was born and it acquired the character of legal entity, this normative favored an active relationship between schools and the community. Furthermore, in relation to the participation of teachers, different educational proposals were discussed and implemented since 1925 where teachers were considered protagonists in several participative processes, creating a pedagogic thought and raising their voices, together with social associations, in favor of transformations in education and influencing somehow the normative and regulations of schools (Muñoz, 2011). This forwardness that existed in the centered left-governments of the time to provide, to some extent, the necessary opportunities that allowed a relatively active participation and to gradually include all the actors of the educational community in the educational process signified an important step towards a democratic education that, if it was not for the totalitarian, antidemocratic and excluding nature of the dictatorship, perhaps it would be consolidated to a certain point or in it would be in a very different process of understanding, acceptance and practice that the ones known in the present Chilean schools.

Chilean education and democracy *during* the Military Government

The arrival of the dictatorship meant the beginning of a neoliberal economic system that implemented radical changes in the political, socioeconomic, and cultural structure in Chile. Democracy was transgressed in many aspects and Chileans suffered the consequences of a totalitarian, exclusionary and segregationist regime that sought to establish a totally different system from the constitutional, liberal, democratic and republican process initiated in 1810. As consequence, all aspects of the Chilean social sphere were strongly influenced by the anti-democratic concept that signified the implementation in society of an authoritarian nationalism and neoliberal policies aimed to promote centralization and privatization of the education system. In education, one of the first consequences of the dictatorship was the persecution, murder, torture and exile of professors and students. In addition there was a collective effort on the part of the Chilean armed forces to dismantle and eliminate any dissident position to the military regime by incorporating ideological and nationalist principles in the curriculum and influencing in the teacher formation at universities (Moreno & Gamboa, 2014).

Furthermore, freedom of speech and influence in any form of participation for teachers or students were completely restricted. In this sense, the philosophical and paradigmatic nature of the pedagogical practice was avoided in the curriculum for the compulsory school, yielding to a pedagogy aimed at the fulfilment of objectives as the human capital required. Students' participation was controlled and repressed, limited to school activities and participation during the lessons. Students' participation was obliged to be 'conform to the pre-established norms'. Parents' association representative was seen as contributors of the educative function, but it could not intercede or participate in policies, the organizational function, neither discipline nor pedagogical practices. The function of parents in education was exclusively restrained to a neoliberal perspective where they are the consumers of an education for their children and their participation is seen as contributing economically (Muñoz, 2011).

Beside from the introduction of ideological and political mechanisms of surveillance, and threats to the teaching sector and the participation of student and parents, the dictatorship finalized its mandate promulgating the LOCE (*Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Educación* in

Spanish), this action was supported by the anti-democratic Constitution signed by the General Augusto Pinochet minutes before the end of the dictatorial period after the 1988 plebiscite. As consequence, the LOCE perpetuated the neoliberal nature of education in Chilean schools, ensuring the progressive privatization of education and decreasing the expense on public education; it also promoted the decline of the teaching career in the universities and implicitly restricted the pedagogical practices oriented to develop the analytical and critical thinking of the students. In addition, a voucher system was incorporated into education, which had as explicit objective, the introduction of market-oriented competence mechanisms among the schools. As a result of this measure, schools would compete to attract students, in this way, schools would receive the subsidy of the state and generating a dynamic of 'improvement' of the academic results, thus, the profit in the education and the selection of students was allowed. Finally the LOCE takes away the responsibility of the state in public education in a process of municipalization, where most of the decision-making, the subsidies and the control over the schools were delegated to the municipalities (Moreno & Gamboa, 2014; Redondo, 2009; Cornejo, 2006).

It might be argued that parent's freedom to choose an education for their children and the competition among schools for ensuring quality is something needed and valuable since it represents welfare of children and concern for their future. However this view is an individualistic one because it does not pursue the common good of people and it is not corresponding of democratic values in a democratic society. The kind of education that prevails in Chile is a reflection of an education more or less decent, a luxury available to very few but a failure in the search of an equal education for all.

<div align="center">The attempts to democratize education after Pinochet</div>

Education was part of that social sphere that was victim of the neoliberal and repressive policies that the government implemented and exerted during its mandate. As consequence, these policies segregated participation of students, prevented communication among the actors in schools, hampered cooperation between social communities (the relationship between school community and the social communities that surrounded it), and restricted freedom of expression in favor of an elitist and selective education. An education oriented to individualism, competition, performance, measurement, obedience and discipline. Given the structure of the inherited state, it was intended to satisfy the social needs in schools as far as possible, however, considering that Chilean society was recently emerging from a process of dictatorship and that social organizations were not fully democratized, social relations were

very uneven and there was no consensus or it was very difficult to reach them. Therefore, the voice which had more power and frequency raised higher and strongly, denying the possibilities of participation, collaboration for change and the necessary conditions to democratize any process (Inzunza, 2009). In this sense, it might be argued that the process of dictatorship in Chile not only lacerated democracy as a form government or sociopolitical structure, but also it diminished democracy in a sociocultural level, affecting considerably society and education.

When democracy returned in 1990 to the country there were several attempts to reestablish and reconstruct all those social aspects which intrinsically had an antidemocratic, discriminatory, authoritarian and repressive nature. In order to eradicate the legacy of the LOCE, the governments of the Coalition for Democracy made several efforts as an attempt to democratize an education that already had embedded the heritage of the dictatorship; however, none of them have been actually effective. Thus, in 1990, the decree no. 524 reestablished Student Unions in every school giving students the possibility to exert representation confronting schools authorities and to encourage their participation as citizens. Nevertheless, these modes of participation did not have any influence on important aspects such as school administration, decision-making in curriculum design or extracurricular activities that were more in the line of students' personal needs and interests. Additionally, their participation was always supervised by an adult, a 'teacher adviser' in order to assess that students obey and remember the norms and rules of the school (Muñoz, 2011). In 2001, the Ministry of Education recognized three level of participation for parents and guardians in the process of education. The *informative* level of participation is where parents had the right to stay informed about the educational processes of their children. The *collaborative* level of participation of parents is expressed in their cooperation in activities related to the school, group activities participation. Finally, the *consultative* level works directly with the Parents representative association and it is related to the influence exercised by parents in various matters of education, it involves an active participation in the decision making in relation to objectives, school actions and the management of economic resources. In spite of the good will of the Ministry of Education for incorporating new policies for the participation of the community and involve more actively parents and guardians, in practice only the informative and collaborative levels of participation are validated and pre-established (Mineduc, 2001).

The major efforts to fight the legacy of the Military Government and recover the democracy in schools and in education in a broader sense, was made by the same students that had lived

with the consequences of the implementation of neoliberal polices and the remaining nature of a repressive educational system. Thus, in 2006 and 2011, in front of the few possibilities for students to release from the situation, a new generation of youth born in democracy and characterized by being *students without fear* transformed themselves into several student organizations and social groups which emerged and protested against the law LOCE across the country. These students' manifestations were fundamental to settle the debate which proposed an ending to an education for-profit, the transgression of democracy in schools and other demands in relation to the end of the neoliberal nature of education (Cummings, 2015; Nem & Grugel, 2015; Pousadela, 2013).

In consequence, confronting the pressures of the students and many other social organizations to eradicate the LOCE and create a new law for education. Thus, the enacted law of 2009, The General Law of Education in Chile – *Ley General de Educación* (LGE) in Spanish– came as a replacement for the previous law created by the Military Government during the period of dictatorship between 1973 and 1990. This law regulated the whole educational sector in Chile, the general and cross-curricular objectives and the base curricular design. The LGE stated a series of regulations and principles in the educational community which suggested the implementation, spread and encouragement of different democratic values such as active participation, the awareness and respect for diversity, integration and opportunities for every actor in education. Additionally it proposes significant changes that might serve as a basis for a more active participation for the whole educational community, promoting a civic formation and structural and conceptual changes in the curriculum, normative and the administration in schools (Mineduc, 2009). Nevertheless after eight years of implementation of regulations and normative proposed by the LGE, there is an scarcity of educational experiences depriving participation in decision-making, integration of all to active change and establishment of social bonds within schools (Flores & Garcia, 2014; Prieto, 2005). Moreover the government of Michelle Bachelet in 2016, under the law no. 20.911, promulgated the Program for Citizenship Education – *Plan de Formación Ciudadana* – This law proposed the implementation of mutual cooperation in education, active communication among the actors and the construction of a social discourse aimed to promote the inclusion of democratic values and principles in order to democratize schools (Mineduc, 2016). These laws emphasized even more in the necessity to foster democracy within schools, and to translate the ideas proposed in the LGE into practice and reality.

<u>Chilean youth, participation, citizenship and education</u>

A study approved and later led by the Curriculum and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education between 1999 and 2002 investigated the processes of civic education, participation and the exercise of citizenship in students of last year of basic education and last year of high school. The study evaluated definitions and concepts that students had about democracy, cultural diversity, tolerance and citizenship, afterwards, the results were compared with an international sample of fourteen countries. The comparison produced results for the Chilean students that were significantly lower than the international average but showed greater knowledge than in previous years due to the immersion of democratic values in the national curriculum as an attempt to democratize schools. However, as it has been the tone in Chilean education in its unequal and exclusionary nature, the low-income students, with few expectations to continue studying and whose parents have an educational and socioeconomic level lower than the Chilean average, showed less knowledge in central issues for people living in democracy such as equality of rights, democracy and citizen participation.

Moreover when students were asked about their concept and ideas about citizenship, they related the concept of exercising citizen's rights with, for example, being a 'good citizen', but they also stated that participating in some way that allows to help others and collaborate with the community was part of the right of the citizens. Also, students reflected some knowledge on the meaning of civic duty and how to be a responsible citizen, however they did not delve into a more elaborate definition of the civic exercise, or about their duty with the community and respect for the thinking of others, there was very little in fundamental aspects such as collaboration, integration, diversity, participation, change and incidence as main actors in their own educational development, aspects that are essential in a democratic education.

The general definition of democracy among students was seen as that democracy is a form of government different from a dictatorship; it was also defined as a form of society where people are able to express themselves freely and capable of choosing political representatives in a democratic way. Nevertheless, they did not express a need for claiming social and political rights or to demand a more active participation in decision-making both in school and together with the community (Mineduc, 2003). It can be assumed that this situation occurred because back at the end of the 90s and the early 2000s there still was a remaining position of submission and resignation on the part of the society, typical positions assumed by the population during dictatorship and its undemocratic legacy. According to the above, the students showed a low participation in the Student Unions and a scarcity of involvement in

the political debate and discussions emerging from the school, not because of the lack of interest among students, but due to the traditional, structured and rigid programs of participation offered by the schools which never satisfied the interests and needs of the students. Also, the study affirms that there is a significant difference between the participation of men and women that shows a gender inequality that is maintained over time and persists to this day. This gender comparison indicated that men participate more actively than women in political discussions and social movements within schools, while women are not provided with the necessary opportunities to participate in the same way as men, since these political discussions never were part of their "general and main interest", this results evidenced great gender inequalities that still can be perceived in present days. Finally the study concluded that Chilean school have a fundamental role in students' citizen education and their responsibility is to create and allow instances of active participation in decision making and oriented to change and influence. Schools should also help them to develop their capacity of dialogue for the resolution of conflicts, reflect in order to solve, to constructively criticize, and in this way, move towards a more democratic and inclusive society.

The study *Paradojas de la participación juvenil y desafíos de la educación ciudadana en Chile* (Flores y Garcia, 2014) establishes that in great part of Latin America there is a low percentage of commitment among youth in relation with expressing democratic values and civic duty. There is also an embedded distrust towards institutionalism and political sectors. In Chile, the desired return of democracy between people has not been able to provide the necessary spaces or the right instances for students to express their ideas, concerns, interests and opinions. The governments have had a constant rhetorical participatory discourse within the enactment of educational laws and regulations which invite students and youth to participate more actively. The Chilean Ministry of Education has been motivating schools to work harder in order to build a more democratic education. Even so these discourses contradict themselves with what actually happens in school in teaching practice and through the interaction of students with the rest of the educational community. Additionally this situation also affects the incidence of other members in schools such as parents and teachers which have a low participatory influence in the decisions of the school. Today reality indicates that, after a decade of implementations of participatory and democratic rhetoric in the curriculum; and after several international studies that have been compared with Chilean students the results in the understanding of democratic values, civic processes, equal rights and moral and democratic obligations are below the international average. These results could

indicate a lack of discussions on the educational objectives, as for example, the inclusion of democratic concepts and definitions as base and obligatory content, equally important as math or history. As summary the expressed discourses in educational policies, followed by the programs implemented by the government and the norms established by the schools for the democratization of the education of the country and the citizen formation of the students, fail to create the foundations of a strong educational system , coherent and democratic because the lack of school experiences that promote integration and motivation to create social bonds, encourage dialogue, active communication and an alignment of the pedagogical practices with the curricular objectives.

Discussion

Chilean schools are places of restriction, segregation and repression. For years, Chilean students, parents and teachers have been waiting for a real opportunity to have influence in the strategies and the structural plan in the elaboration of the national curriculum, however, the constant power relations within schools – the relationship between teachers and students and the influence of the rector and the administrative group – are responsible for the restriction of the contribution of students in administrative, normative and disciplinary issues in spite of their strengthening discourse about active participation. Teachers, on their behalf, are assumed to be implicitly manipulated and obligated by hierarchical voices to repress any attempt of acting or saying something that goes beyond the norms and regulations of the school. Consequently, when these power actors are consulted about the non-inclusion and null influence of the denominated 'third' part in the programmatic, administrative curricular and structural design of the school, they answer that these kinds of initiatives of students' participation (and teachers) might be disruptive for their own educative formation and also, it might constitute a double-edged sword for discipline, restraint and order within schools. The truth is that those whose voices are ahead of other, fear for the participation of the excluded due to possible dismantling of their unquestionable power (Ortiz, 2006). At the end are the stakeholders - the persons that administrate the voucher money in Chilean schools - the ones who are the major characters in schools in decision-making; and even if the rector or the other actors of the educational community have a will for democratize education in the school or to encourage students to raise their voices demanding change and more active participation, they will restrict these intentions trying to 'avoid conflicts'. This is how power relations emerge in schools and influence the whole community in a chain of commands, obedience, restriction, exclusion and (Muñoz, 2011).

[*In the exercise of participation, teachers and managers have the advantage regarding information and knowledge about educational policies and the daily work of the educational institution, which generates an asymmetry in the access and handling of the information that students and parents have... This ends by consolidating an aspect of the teaching culture, in that the issues of the school belong to the "professionals of the education*] (p.123).

Theoretical framework

Chapter III

Introduction

It is the belief of the researcher that, in order to perform the realization of this study, it is imperative to understand what a democratic education means, its significance in the history of education and what provides the most relevant research on the topic to perform further studies in democratic education. According to the latter, the following chapter of this study consists of a literature review inquiring the previous work made on democratic education which serves as a theoretical frame of the present research study. It is important to understand the main purpose of a literature review, its significance for doing research and how to write it in an organized way. A literature review can be described as a careful selection of published and peer-reviewed documents on a specific topic, which contains previously written statements, information and ideas to elaborate a point within a specific field or to express a viewpoint. In the elaboration of a Master thesis, for example, is the addition of analytical and original assessment of previous and published studies in order to summarize knowledge, to show possible bias, omissions, the strengths or limitations; and the creation of awareness of the state of knowledge in the subject area (Jesson & Lacey, 2006).

"A literature review is a narrative account of information that is already currently available, accessible and published, which may be written from a number of differing paradigms or perspectives, depending on the standpoint of the writer" (p.140).

According what the history of the democracy in Chilean education says, it is clear that the democracy in Chilean schools has been threatened and damaged, in order to have a better perspective of what constitute a democratic education the research requires the work of John Dewey and other contemporaneous authors that have written about democracy in education.

The present literature review compiles literature from several researchers in the field of social sciences and educational research but the input of criticism and the personal imprint of the researcher is expressed adding previous knowledge. In this sense, different journal articles and online and printed books were previously selected and analyzed attempting to give a form and a structure to this review. Moreover it was a useful selection that considerably enriched the knowledge of the researcher regarding democratic education. The purpose of this literature review is to compile the relevant research on democratic education and creates a link with current issues of Chilean education expressed in the final section of discussion.

The conception of democratic education

In order to understand what a democratic education is and what has been written in relation to democracy in Chilean schools, it is necessary to address and investigate the available theory. Several authors have extensively written about democracy in education. Considering the later it is important to underscore that the concept of *democratic education* has been approached from different and varied perspectives; many of them have related democratic education with other concepts and values that might be regarded as essential in education such as participation, inclusion and equality. While others authors have emphasized that democratic education means communication, critical thinking and diversity in education. Nevertheless most of them agree that a democratic education involves the participation of all the actors in the educational community. Participation in education can be defined as the deliberative action of all actors in an educational community for being part of different groups expressing their opinions and ideas, cooperating in joint activities, situation or place. Moreover participation involves the development of their sense of creativity and responsibility. Active participation in education means that they are allowed to play a role in decision-making and in generating demands, but also they are capable of producing critical, analytical and constructive comments and thoughts (Prieto, 2003).

John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas

The democratic conception of education has been primarily understood from the pragmatic and philosophical point of view of several authors. In this sense, it would be unthinkable to begin the discussion without John Dewey's contribution to the political and social sciences. His works on the comprehension of the concept of democracy as a *form of life* have been extensively used in the field of social sciences. According to Dewey, democracy must be seen as a form of life and not merely as a form of government or political model. He believes that

democracy is a form of life that requires pluralism and sociocultural diversity, because it is built – or it should be – on a basis of shared and varied interests and experiences, but also democracy expresses itself by means of interaction and communication between individuals, groups and society (Garrison, Neubert & Reich, 2012).

Dewey, who is considered as the father of democratic education, believed that the relation between democracy and education is reciprocal and mutual. He understood the importance of the educational process in the development of democratic societies and the importance of creating a democratic culture within society. Dewey extensively developed his concept of educational growth, which indicated that individuals *grow* through the reorganization and reconstruction of experiences in education. This means that people learn significantly from their own experiences, but also from the experiences of others. Dewey argues that *"every individual becomes educated only as he has an opportunity to contribute something from his own experience, no matter how meagre or slender that background of experience may be at a given time; and…that enlightenment comes from the give and take, from the exchange of experiences and ideas"* (p. 86).

Additionally he sustained that education should characterized by its transition from passive habits to active habituation of internal control of participation and recreation of experiences. These active habits allow sociocultural growth by integrating new habits and creating new experiences. The later implies learning from experiences and learning while 'doing' with others. Therefore, for the reconstruction of experiences in education it is necessary that schools provide learning environments that offer resources, ideas, inspirations, opportunities and occasions. These learning environments would be impossible to provide without the communication factor as a basic component (Waks & English, 2017). According to Dewey, communication is inherently educational among the actors of the school, and it reflects power for change. All communication is educative in some point. Participants in an educational community will have several things in common thanks to communication by partaking and sharing meanings in an educational context.

"Communication itself is a powerful means for significant learning, because in communication all parties must form in their imaginations some idea of the others and what they are making of each other's statements" (p.19).

Dewey deepened the analysis of democracy in education by including the ideas that guide students to self-governance in thinking and deliberative criticism of ideas, these concepts has

been equally important as the creation of experiences in education and the allowance of communication facilitating student's participation. With this in mind, the Deweyan belief is that thinking occurs when students are living different educational experiences and when they are exposed to the reasons and the consequences of actions in given situations within determined experiences. In other words educational reflection about experiences in school is the intentional and conscious endeavor of thinking about what has been done and the consequences of those actions. In these habits of thinking upon experiences, students are interested in active thinking, then, they select, observe and apply solutions, finally, students will have to probe and test their ideas making them valid and meaningful (Dewey, 2007). The potentials of education can only be reached through the awareness of benefits of criticism and self-criticism in educational contexts, but equally important by introducing a recontextualization of the modes of teaching and the immersion of central issues in student's thinking. This means to encourage students to criticize and analyze current issues such as marginalization of groups and individuals, economic and sociocultural inequalities, poverty, unemployment, exclusion and repression of sociocultural or political hegemonies, etc. These issues cannot be taken for granted in education; they should not be avoided and ignored by teachers and power structures within schools. These are problematics, situations and contexts that a democratic education cannot omit or ignore and they must be part of the daily thinking teaching and learning process of students.

For Dewey, this interaction between experiences, educational growth, communication and educative thinking is the heart of the educational process and is what makes participation possible. Accordingly the relevance of democracy, as an indispensable process in the life of students, needs to be recognized by every educational institution and outside school with the local communities. The variety of views, ideas and perceptions of life – namely in schools, social and political movements, social groups and the neighborhood – can provide rich insights in active and inclusive participation, but also better opportunities for a direct democratic involvement (Garrison, Neubert & Reich, 2012).

There must be a fight for equity, and to ensuring that participation, communication and critical thinking are held together, reciprocal and mutually and constantly coexisting. Fundamental democratic rights must be irrefutably respected and motivated in education, such as the right to express oneself freely, have a free, public and appropriate education, freedom of religious, intellectual or cultural convictions, the right and the provision of experiences that promote free communication between pairs and unalike. *"Belief in the potentials of education*

is an indispensable component in the democratic faith because it is only through realization in the life-experience of individuals in communities that democracy can flourish and be in turn enriched by a multitude of individual contributions" (p.85). Democracy in schools is not constant, fixed or permanent; it is not transmitted over time or generations, but it must be won under a struggle that constantly reflects the needs and problems of students.

In order to follow the pragmatic view of education it is necessary to mention the work of Jürgen Habermas and his approach to the communicative action which can be directly linked to the democratic nature of education proposed in Dewey's work. Habermas argues that there is a moral perspective of democracy that Dewey barely arouses. Instead, in education, he points out that the norms, values and knowledge can be legitimized through deliberation, cooperative and communicative action as similarly and in agreement with the importance Dewey relies on communication. The kind of education in the mind of Habermas is holistic and never focuses on the basics, rather in social engagement, mutual agreements and understandings through rationality (Murphy, 2013).

 It is by communicative action and social engagement that the concept of democracy in education can be understood and reached. In schools, social integration of all can be possible when communicative action takes place. The Habermasian cooperative and communicative notions of education are mutually interweaved wherein any sort of communicative action may be regarded as cooperative because it does not look after individual success but it attempts the harmonization of dialogue toward better understandings. This also happens the other way around, when cooperative action takes place in education, *'the better argument'* convinces through respect, dialogue and mutual understandings and not through power influences, force or thread. This mutual understandings emerging from the *better arguments* are the result of an effective communicative action and will be fundamental for a democratic education where better dialogue with others, better social engagement and interrelationships are part of student's knowledge. Another contribution of Habermas' work related with the understanding of democratic education is part of his work on Critical Theory which, in agreement with the Deweyan intentions to foster critical thinking in education, indicates that encouraging criticism in students might result in a kind of learning which stands for change and justice if whenever necessary in society. Criticism and active communication in education are essential for students in their self-reflection, for being emancipated and to release themselves from any possible repressive form of life or rigid and antidemocratic ideology (Roth, 2001).

Paulo Freire and his democratic perceptions upon education.

The democratic thought in education was also widely expressed by Paulo Freire. Freire Understood the importance of having an education for change, similarly to what Habermas affirmed regarding the proliferation in education of the idea of communicative action, Freire believed in the efficiency of dialogue, social consciousness and the power of the words as democratic forms to release from oppressive situations. The critical pedagogy proposed by Freire was concerned on how an emancipatory education can validate the discourses of the members of the school community and their internal cultures make them significant and valuable, while at the same time it empower individuals. For Freire, meaningful knowledge was a synonym of power, therefore, a democratic education – emancipatory as it might be called as well – also includes that students learn the necessary knowledge that fosters critical thought on them and transform into knowledgeable individuals. (Feinberg & Torres, 2014)

The neopragmatic view of democratic education and Dewey's criticism

Despite the fact that John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas introduced the educational-philosophical view of democracy in education, and the other way around, they have not been exempt from criticism and disagreements. In an attempt to reconstruct Dewey's work into current and relevant contexts several authors have emerged in what might be called the neopragmatic new visions for the relationship between democracy and education. This new recontextualization of democratic education suggests the development of new capabilities in schools, aiming diversity, equality and deliberative communication (Englund, 2000). Richard Rorty is one of the neopragmatist whose philosophical approach to the concept of democracy within education has been widely discussed as a new interpretation of Dewey's work. According to Rorty the democratic nature of education rests in the existing and utopian solidarity between individuals and do not relies much in the creation of experiences for participation of groups, as Dewey proposed. Accordingly, it is in the expansion of the sense of solidarity among individuals that the different can be included and being meaningful. The understanding between democracy and education can be reached during the interaction between learning and solidarity (Truchero, 2008). Moreover another pragmatic author, who takes the line of Dewey's work but reintroduce context into present education, is Hilary Putnam. Beside the fact that Putnam openly recognizes the value of Dewey's democratic education, he identifies two problems that need to be recontextualize in Dewey's statements;

the first one is that education is the development of capacities in students which enable them to intellectually solve social problems and wherein they are empowered in the process, however, education should not be only perceived, as in Dewey's mind, merely as a social form but as a precondition for democracy. The second problem in the democratic education of Dewey that requires an actualization for practical uses is his view on pluralism and the discrepancies with the current multicultural diversity, also in the use and understanding of habits and the fear of creating routines from constant habituation in experiences for participation (Putnam, 1990; Putnam, 1993).

Finally, contrary to Dewey's arguments on the mutual and reciprocal relationship between education and democracy as well as total integration and collective participation, are Jürgen Oelkers ideas about democracy in education, specifically in the notions of curriculum design and participation for decision-making. He states that society and schools belong to a different social sphere, therefore, cannot be treated as equals and mutual. Since we live in a democratic society and schools are not intrinsically democratic places, they cannot be compared. Oelkers claims that including the views, ideas and perspectives of all in participatory action might be dangerous, especially at the time of elaborating an educational curriculum for a whole community. By including different demands and interests in the curriculum there is a possibility of legitimize individualization and particularization of something that should safeguard collectiveness and public well-being. A democratic sort of education, according to Oelkers, must never serve to personal interests or being exposed to interference or fragmentation (Oelkers, 2000).

<u>The contemporary idea of democratic education</u>

The concept of democracy is a dynamic structure which renew itself through education, similarly as any other social structure, it require changes and transformations over time so that education moves toward democracy goes, and viceversa. It seems that the movements in the conception of a contemporary democratic education grasp the centralism of progressive views in education but these contemporary movements also include issues affecting current societies and the problematics of the 21th century. Therefore one task of a contemporary democratic education might be, firstly, to create democrats (democratic citizens) in order to democratize society. Secondly, a democratic education of the present days must face the contemporary problem of inclusion, which is central for the implementation of a democratic education but also represents one of its major challenges due to global cultural diversity. The question is

how to include everyone and consider their ideas, needs and demands without leaving people behind, so instead of excluding some and let in others, a deliberative transformation is necessary. This deliberative approach in education based on communication transform individual wants into collective needs (Biesta, 2010; Noddings, 2007). For some authors, democratic education is directly linked to the above mentioned problematic of diversity and multicultural schools. In this sense, democratic education should focus on equal participation of everyone regardless religion, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic or cultural background etc. It is a democratic education that fosters tolerance, respect and responsibilities towards others, accepting cultural diversity and the contributions of different groups (Gutmann, 1993; Gutmann, 2009; Halphin, 1998).

Hence a democratic education proposes that the nature of democracy resides within the boundaries of schools, and it is expressed in democratic structures and processes that provide experiences. Thus, democratic schools are meant to be democratic places and where participation, inclusion, cooperation and collaboration rather than competition and the encouragement of the common good for the whole community are the general rule. Nevertheless the democratization of schools requires a reevaluation of curricular design and to reconsider and renew any repressive, antidemocratic and exclusive structures. In this way a new curriculum will be integrated and might include student's questions, demands and needs but also would favor instances for their critical reflection and to raise their voices (Apple & Beane, 2007).

The formation of a democratic society requires the pluralistic nature of the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of the country. A democratic society is characterized by a critical opinion, free and strong, emerging from active and informed citizens. Moreover the essential requirements in a democratic education are to fostering interest in the educational community on social relations and to develop intellectual, moral and practical capacities. The also rationality among actors in a democratic education is based on mutual respect. The type of education that creates citizens with these characteristics, constantly advocates the inclusion of democratic freedoms, values and rights such as veracity and intellectual honesty, the ability to justify arguing through dialogues, without violence and promoting a critical attitude which allows actors to be conscious of the processes and their consequences (Meza, 2013).

Furthermore democratic education means the solidary participation of all, by building a democratic social order. This solidary participation implies learning to solve conflicts as

something strictly necessary for a democratic coexisting in schools, but it also signifies to be supportive, guide and motivator of school activities, in the acquisition of responsibilities and making students the agents of their own educational process - empowerment of actors- . Schools which succeed in spreading awareness of the value of democracy among every participant, usually stresses the right of think differently without repercussion and the right of expressing oneself freely without repression (Prieto, 2003). Finally a democratic education should strive for accentuate the participative values of inclusion and acceptance of differences. There exist a profound respect for the decisions of the majority and acceptance of the divergent and dissenting voices of minorities. Thereupon tolerance for confronting opposition is a characteristic of a democratic education alongside with the capacitation of individuals and groups to exert criticism, with bravery, efficiency and in a constructive manner (Pizarro, 2003).

Discussion

After reviewing the previous studies on democratic education it can be determined that exist several agreements in the literature regarding the importance of an active participation and communication for all the actors involved in education. The agreements on participation are not conceived merely in a superficial level, where students and teachers participate collaboratively in school activities and have lower forms of representation. Instead, the literature suggested the kind of participation emerging from specific experiences oriented toward inclusion and participation involving change, partaking in decision-making and in the intellectual discussions for the design of their own educational process. Furthermore these agreements also include the importance of communication in education as a key aspect of the democratic nature of schools. This communication between groups and individuals materialize itself while it intends to make mutual agreements through respectful dialogue, constructive criticism and tolerance. When comparing the democratization of school in Chilean education with the democratic notions of education in the work of John Dewey, it is arguable to say that in Chile there has been a moderate progress in the introduction of discussions towards a more active participation of all educational actors. However, citizen participation, and specifically educative participation, still remains as a non-approached theme which is also never addressed in everyday life of the school. The problem of participation and representation is not central for policy makers, and represents a rhetorical resource expressed in educational laws and regulations that do not maintain an evaluative and advisory follow-up on school practices. These rhetorical resources, which intend an approach

of democracy to schools, are truly perceived as an attempt to bring the government in turn to public education, but contrary to what might be expected of a beneficial and democratic approach, it is the continuation of neoliberal practices, focused on the formation of labor force, oriented to the continuous performance of the students and the formation of human and economic capital. The social, the community and collaborative side that Dewey proposed for education has not been able to take the necessary force for implementing radical changes and to ensure an education that guarantees inclusive participation, emancipation and being for all actors of the educational community. Additionally in regard to the opportunities for dialogue and active communication in Chilean schools and the comparison with the communicative action theory proposed by Habermas it is fair to say that Chilean education has not even began the serious and formal discussion for a balance in the produced modes of communication that Chilean school's structures have. The remaining hierarchical and power relations influencing the relationship between students and the rest of the educational community make impossible to establish a proper communication for radicalism. Once recognized the benefits of implementing the concepts expressed in the communicative action theory, it is important to question at what point Chilean students negotiate their understandings, their participation and values in order to reach mutual agreements. Also, what are the real chances for active communication of students where they can debate in order to reach these mutual agreements? How students may accept the justification of the better argument, if there is not a culture in schools for proper communication? In what moment Chilean students will learn that mutual dialogue entails freedom from oppression, control and hierarchical power? Even though if students are capable to reach that level of communication and emancipation, then, what assure them that their voices will be recognized if the modes of participation infantilize and diminish their contribution?. Chilean students need to be recognized as equal and important people. It is imperative their recognition as competent individuals with interesting ideas and convictions, capable students to propose and decide intelligently whose voices must be listened and promoted in the educational community.

Chapter IV

Methodology

Introduction

A qualitative ethnographic design was used in order to address the research questions which aimed data collection and, subsequently, its proper analysis. This chapter provides a brief theoretical framework which helps to explain and support the chosen research design that upholds this study. Later it moves on through an intended thick description of educational ethnography as a research approach and methodological tool for data collection. The chapter also remarks on descriptions of the inquired physical and social setting. Additionally description of the research participants and their context is provided. Finally the chapter discusses the procedures of data analysis in the study and explains the role of the researcher in the field and in the life of those who have been investigated.

A qualitative design and its degree of suitability for the study.

The main purpose of this investigation was to uncover how democracy is expressed within education according to the participants' perceptions, understandings and thoughts, but also living in the field and experiencing the processes, the interactions and way of living in two different schools in Chile. The study involved individuals who daily interact in a social context — students, teachers, parents, school authorities —. Certainly, a democratic approach to education, or rather, schooling as a democratic process, involves the introduction in education of concepts such as active participation and communication, integration, equality and awareness of hierarchical and power relations among educational actors. All these concepts are highly associated with complex social interactions and processes which are influenced by individual's personal background, experiences, beliefs and attitudes. Due to the complexity of human social interactions, the kind of data collected and the inquired sources in the process, was it necessary to use a qualitative design which is intrinsically interpretive, highly inductive and made to investigate and analyze the subjectivity of social human interactions. A qualitative research design differs from a positivist conception of the world, in its epistemological and ontological orientations, but also in how it approaches to the relationship between theory and research. Epistemologically speaking, a qualitative research design is hermeneutic which in contrasting to the natural sciences, attempts to understand human behavior rather than to explain it. The ontological position of qualitative research

support the idea that the world does not only constitute itself from individuals socially interacting, but it sustains that social reality constantly changes and requires a reevaluation of its states. Moreover, social reality is constructed by individuals and is never definitive or unmodifiable (Bryman, 2012). The ontological consideration of qualitative research takes distance from objectivism whereby the social nature of human beings might be given, categorized or separated from social actors as in quantitative research approaches. This social construction is expressed in qualitative research whereby knowledge and conceptions of the world are built by research participants. As the theory of social constructivism suggests, investigating the most important experiences, thoughts, ideas and understandings of learners, teachers and others educational actors regarding democracy within their own school requires a face-to-face interaction, a social interaction in and for everyday life. This would be, by definition, a face-to-face interaction that represents people's subjectivity and gives extensive attention to their construction of knowledge, their close expressivity and their self-perception of reality. Additionally, constructed realities and co-constructed knowledge differ between individuals depending on different social contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Intentionally the selected research design, specifically the guidance of the social constructivism, produces the sort of data that rises from these face-to-face interactions and constructed knowledge, This data position itself is in the same line of the democratic interactions that this study was interested on, and the communicative knowledge created in community that were proposed by John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas to a great extent. The sort of close interaction that the social constructivist proposes describes the approach that the qualitative design attempted to achieve during the research process, but more specifically between the relation of the researcher and participants. Thus, in qualitative designs, the interaction between researcher and researched people is significant in two main aspects. Firstly participants and researcher are involved in an interactive process during the investigation, a process which coexists with personal beliefs, values and own notions of the same world, making the process of investigation dependable of these factors. In this case, the main task of qualitative researchers was to understand social complexity from the point of view of those who experienced and interpreted democracy in education. And secondly, the researcher attempts to comprehend their social constructions, namely, the meaning people give to facts, knowledge and daily situations (Salgado, 2007).

Ethnographic methodology.

Ethnography was the chosen methodology to cover the investigation as a whole. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson in the book *Ethnography: principles in practice* (2007) place the origin of the term ethnography in the anthropology of the nineteen-century, where it was usually perceived as an essential anthropological fieldwork. Ethnography was initially defined as a qualitative tradition and an interpretative method designed to describe or inquire into an unknown, outsider community or culture. Afterward, at the early twenty-century, the characteristics of ethnographic fieldwork were related with living extended periods of time with a group of people, investigating, interpreting and describing their customs, beliefs and values. Since the 60's onwards, ethnography has fulfilled and important role in the social sciences evolving into a multidisciplinary and key methodology for data collection and analysis in cultural studies of urban, rural, Western and Non-western societies. The shifting on its focus, its inductive nature and the extension of the method to a more flexible approach in the relation between researcher and researched, made the tradition something considered ambiguous and properly undefinable. Ethnography is in the process of constant redefinition and recontextualization in its form and function since it has been influenced over time by several movements and theoretical positions such as phenomenology, pragmatism, feminism, constructionism and post-modernism. Nowadays ethnographic research presents particular features for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. It concerns on people's actions and everyday contexts utilizing unstructured procedures for data collection such as participant observations, field notes and unstructured interviews. Furthermore it attempts to collect data in naturalistic settings where environments are not controlled or influenced in any manner by the researcher; however, the investigation process entails an impact in the reality of participants and, as an outcome, the relationship between researcher and the researched people becomes significant.

One of the purposes of ethnographic methodology is to understand from a given context or setting, the different activities of a group of people, the way they interact and the social meanings they construct. So, in order to access the aforesaid constructions, ethnography involves doing research closely with informants, analyzing documents, discourses and implies having an active participation from both the inquirer and the inquired (Brewer, 2000). As in support for Hammersley and Atkinson's view of ethnographic studies, Brewer proposes that ethnography must be considered as both, a method and a methodology. It is a method because it is regarded as a qualitative perspective which influences the view of the researcher in the

way he or she looks into a whole. But also, ethnography is a methodology that provides different ways researchers actively do research as, for example, within a physical fieldwork, collecting data, investigating real-life situations and participating in community. Finally, it might be associated to an unstructured, open and flexible methodology. The election of ethnography as a method and methodology seemed as the most suitable and appropriated decision for this study because it approaches and unifies the problematization, its theory and the methodology together into a holistic and integrative manner. In order to explain the decision: some of the main intentions of this investigation were to inquire in the processes of the participant's active participation and communication, also their mutual collaboration among equals and their modes of daily interaction in a denominated democratic Chilean education. On the one hand ethnography as an approach, allowed a more flexible, open and unstructured standpoint of the researcher upon participants; a methodological approach regarded as perspective towards people and their life. Ethnography invited to dialogue, to made people express more freely and to be involved in non-invasive environments. On the other hand the election of ethnography as methodology is directly linked with its methods for data collection; this means that the informal conversations, participant observation and unstructured interviews entailed an active role of the researcher wherein participation, communication and constant interaction is persistent for both researcher and participants. As consequence, ethnography emerged in this study as the most democratic method to investigate, describe and build up knowledge from a reasonable, harmonious and holistic interconnection between the selected methodology and the democratic conceptions of the research topic.

<u>The choosing of educational ethnography as main method for investigation.</u>

In this chapter, ethnography is presented as the chosen method and methodology as a inferable approach toward a more democratic research design within its purpose and its function, additionally, the ethnographic design of this study might be perceived as a more participative and interactive methodology for participants and the researcher, something that goes hand-in-hand with the main topic of investigation. In order to go deeply in the notions of performing ethnography in educational settings, a subarea of ethnography seemed to be epistemologically essential for the nature and purpose of this research. This is how educational ethnography played an important role in shaping the researcher's position and his standpoint, as well as his ideas regarding the context and the location where the investigation was carried out and the form in which it was done.

Educational ethnography –also called school ethnography– arouse during the early 60's from the anthropological field and from the increasingly need for inquiring within educational settings and producing research outcomes from school studies. One of the main purposes of educational ethnography was to explore educational problems of special, cultural and social groups. Moreover it came out increasingly to champion the rights and interest of marginalized people. The sort of educational ethnographic research produced in those days was totally shaped and influenced by social responsibility and ethical implications of researchers who were progressively more involved in understanding problems and issues from different educational contexts and settings. Over the years, the conception of educational ethnography systematically evolved by incorporating current global issues that influence and shape education and the societies where it coexists such as the problems of representation, inequalities in education and cultural shifting targeting reproductions of class, gender and race (Yon, 2003).

It was necessary to delimitate, specify and to narrow the methodology from ethnography to educational ethnography for one fundamental reason. This research intends to inquire and comprehend a global phenomenon, meaning that in the world, democracy is seen as a form of living, a goal to achieve of great value for many societies and cultures, therefore, democracy is a broad research topic to investigate which occupies considerable space and field within the social sciences. The qualitative approach of ethnography, as merely methodology, places its efforts in the holistic comprehension of a phenomenon, in the unity of that whole and not segmented or divided. For this reason, in order to go deeply into the research topic, educational ethnography presents several characteristics which facilitate the position of the study within the school institution; it also inserts the study inside the network of interactions between the actors, the teaching-learning processes and the negotiation or supply of values and principles. Educational ethnography inserts itself in schools, searching for educational processes and not educational results. In this sense, this perspective does not allow delving into academic results, qualifications, school performance or achievement in competitive international tests, but rather it is interested in the complexity of meanings, symbols and habits that school actors live every day (Lopez, Assael & Neumann, 1991). Actions and events occurring in schools gaining meaning in the course of the investigation, they are contextualized, subsequently interpreted and finally they acquire significance, relevance and social importance. This actions and events in the life of schools actors are not meaningful because of the frequency they occur but due to the social impact that they exert and produce.

The main contribution of educational ethnography relies on its capacity to illustrate researchers about the educational context in question, allowing the research to understand daily dynamics and situations of the school. Additionally, one essential characteristic of an educational ethnographer is the *strangeness* he or she needs to look into a whole. This form of perceiving and interpreting educational situations and experiences must occur even if the researcher is a native – as it is the case in this research study – or even if the research partially acknowledges and recognizes the social interactions that he witnesses or is a current participant of the studied reality. *Strangeness* in the mind of the researcher allows the researcher to detach himself from known spaces, previous conceptions or materiality that seems familiar and might influence in a certain way or impact in its interpretation of observed and experienced situations. Moreover, remaining strange in front of a studied culture or reality, guarantee and maintain the capacity of the researcher for being astonished and being surprise with the consequences of observations, listened conversations, facts, different situations and interactions that in the condition as native or pertaining of the culture might be overlooked, irrelevant or trivial. These overlooked situations might have an important value for the study and might be absolutely worthy of consideration (Alvarez, 2011). Finally the produced text emerging from educational ethnography are not just narrations or merely descriptions of what has been observed, talked, written or listened. The descriptive nature of school ethnography is simultaneously analytic and interpretive; the statements made by the ethnographer about the experienced in schools are constantly supported empirically, by collecting data form a direct source, and theoretically by relying statements in the previously made theoretical framework. These statements justify themselves coming from real and concrete data which come from [*"aspects of real quotidian life of the community, the school and the classroom, the feeling, the attitudes and the ways of implicate with other person, different ways of thinking and acting in teachers, students, family members, school authorities and other groups which shape educational communities."*] (Calvo, 1992, p.16).

<u>Describing the setting of the research: the place, the society and the education</u>

The process of data collection was performed in a city named Villa. This city is located within one of the twelve regions in Chile, South America. Villa has a population of estimated 126.548 inhabitants and the city involves a mixture of rural and urban spaces, typical geographic scenario of the Chilean central coastline. The city is highly industrialized, governed by multinational companies and retail. It has plenty of private inversion which capitalizes the incoming trade from the city and it is commercialized by micro, small and

medium-sized enterprises. The city is a place with a varied distribution in the population in terms of space, sex and age. Villa – and Chile as a country in general terms – has experimented a increment in immigrants shifting due to its political and economic stability which make the country an attractive destination for thousands of people upcoming from other South American countries such as Venezuela, Colombia Peru and Bolivia, but also this shifting has been seen mostly in people from Haiti and some countries of Asia. Chile is, in fact, the country where immigration has grown most in comparison with any other country in Latin America.

The *Villian* – the gentilic used for people from Villa – are mostly middle class working people living in the center area of the city or in the suburbs with a visible differentiation in their socioeconomic status. The variation in schools in Villa represents the reality of education in many other cities of Chile, where neoliberal policies have influenced in the establishment and creation of three kinds of schools. 1) Private schools: schools made for the most accommodated part of the population which has the means to afford the payment. Usually these schools counts with several resources emerging form private inversion that allow these schools to provide a better quality of education, gathering highly qualified teachers who are receive a considerable salary and obtaining overall better results comparing with other schools. There are no more than three private schools in Villa. 2) Subsided-private schools: These schools receive support from the municipality and from private inversion, they represent the majority of schools in the city with at least ten or more, since most of the population in Villa belongs to a middle class population some of them who possess the necessary resources might be capable to afford these schools. 3) Public schools: There is one big public school in Villa. Education in these schools is totally free and most of the low-income population study there. Public schools have historically dealt with lack of material and human resources, problems of infrastructure, low educational outcomes in national tests, etc.

<u>Describing the setting of the research: the process choosing the right schools.</u>

It is important to understand the setting where the experiences and understandings of the school community occur as consequence of using an ethnographic methodology and where the process of data collection and its post-analysis have taken place. In order to initiate the process of research and data collection, six schools were taken into consideration, after further deliberation and time consumption, two schools were selected for the realization of the

investigation and they granted complete access to the researcher. These two schools were chosen because of four main reasons:

1) During the process of obtaining and negotiating access to perform ethnographic research in the schools, the researcher presented the aim and the purpose of the project to the whole six schools in order to display the main characteristics of the investigation and to inform school's authorities about what would occur during the process. Under this manner, the concept of democratic education, and everything what it entails, was introduced together with descriptions and guidance of what an ethnographic methodology and approach implies for the school community regarding the post-effects of the research and its consequences. The two selected schools in particular demonstrated special interest for the realization of this investigation. Furthermore, they were willing to actively participate by putting everything necessary on the researcher's disposal and introducing him from the beginning to the whole school community. Additionally at the beginning of the research, when access was obtained, one of these schools requested the researcher to prepare a presentation aiming the group of teachers and school authorities almost at the middle of the process of data collection. This request was proposed as one hour of presentation during the teacher's council meeting that conducts every week in the school. Moreover the presentation was intended to explain, introduce and teach the conception and importance of a democratic education in the life of Chilean students and within education in general. This presentation was, at a large extent, significant and meaningful for the researcher and for the investigation itself. This significance and the outcomes of the presentation will be presented further in the following chapters where the results of the research are presented and discussed.

2) Despite the fact that both schools are similar in terms of their purposes with the students, their vision, function and structure –more specifically the academic intentions which attempt to achieve quantifiable results and have a simplistic view of their democratic life, namely 'to cultivate good grades and good individuals for future society – schools presented several differences regarding: 1. Their financing and the discrepancies from where/who do they obtain their resources – their economic nature – one is a public school and the other one is a subsidized-private school 2. They are different in their sociocultural status within the reality of Chilean education, and finally 3. They are different in their approach to religion as an essential component for

the formation of the students. The subsidized-private school is a catholic one and the public school has a secular nature. These differences between both schools were interesting, worthy and considered meaningful for the purposes of the research. The significance of these differences will be exposed later in the results chapter.

3) Both schools are located in a central and easy access for the researcher who, by the time of data collection, was living in the proximity of the schools and reaching closeness and creating a trust relationship with the community. Consequently, the proximity of the inquired physical place and the approach to the community, where most of the research participants live, facilitated the access and the research process on its own. The two schools are separated from each other in not more than one kilometer of distance, which made it possible to expend a lot of time doing research in both places without inconvenient of time consuming travel.

4) These schools were chosen mainly because they are representative of the current diverse schools existing in Chile. This representativeness will be presented in the following section.

Describing the setting: The chosen two schools

The two selected schools are located in Villa in Chile, both schools have elementary school *educación primaria* – which belong to compulsory school – and *educacíon media* or secondary school. It is common in the educational system of Chile that most schools have both systems of education therefore the usual view of students in several schools in Chile is, in fact, a mixture of small kids playing around together with adolescents sharing the same physical space. The schools have students whose range of age is between 6 and 18 years old. Furthermore the two schools start their day early in the morning at 8 am, and they end the lessons around 3 or 4 pm. It is important to mention that between these hours, students have 1 hour for lunch and two other separated breaks of half an hour each. These breaks were important for two reasons: 1) this time was used for approaching students, teachers and other members of the school outside the context of the classroom or the teacher council. The breaks were useful time for data collection as in previously agreed interviews, observations of students and other participants' behaviors, writing notes or having some conversational interviews in the hallways of the school. 2) breaks were meaningful for the researcher as an ethnographer and his possibility to actively participate with the school community, especially during lunch and break where, beside the fact that there was a researcher observing and taking notes, there were major intentions for meeting new people, creating trust relationships among

the students and the staff; and finally becoming part of the community by sharing mutual affect and respect. In order to write about the inquired schools in this research was important to have ethical considerations and protecting their identity as an entity the identity of the participants, therefore the names of the aforesaid schools will be referred as SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B.

SCHOOL A: This school is a subsidized-private school of the city of Villa in Chile. It is a catholic school with 820 students which are divided in 12 levels, two classes for each level from *1ro básico* to *4to medio* –from first year of primary school to last year of highschool– and having around of 36 to 40 students in every classrooms. SCHOOL A has 24 teachers and around 15 other members of the staff, among them, kitchen workers, the person in charge of IT, the cleaning and fixing staff and school authorities such as *UTP unidad tecnica pedagogica* which is the teaching unit, the inspector general, the Mother Superior, who is the person in charge of the Christian order of the school, and the Principal. The use of school uniforms is compulsory and they are demanded and listed at the beginning of every school year. The researcher of this investigation was invited as participant in all the Teachers Council Meeting which was carried out every week. The school was recognized with academic excellence in 2016 by the Ministry of Education providing economical resources, financing and funding projects and awarding good students with scholarships. The school is provided with renovated classrooms with TV screen in some of them and a projector in all the classrooms. The computer room is equipped with high-speed internet and more than 45 computers. The school webpage share their vision and offers the following description about the school and their commitment with the students:

[*The duty of the SCHOOL A is to form responsible, engaged, creative and participative students, students provided with a solid intellectual construction based on moral and Christian values. The students of SCHOOL A are capable of facing the challenges of life when they are inserted in society. The education provided by this school has an Humanistic nature, it emphasizes in the social, the cognitive, physical, artistic and affective development of the student by considering as important all their different learning process.*] During the middle of the process of data collection and investigation, the school requested a formal presentation of the research topic, the methodology and the purpose of the research.

SCHOOL B: This school is a laic public school located in Villa, in Chile. This school has more than 1250 students with 12 levels and 3 classes for each level. The levels are divided as,

for example: *1ro basico A, 1ro basico B, 1ro basico C*. This would be the equivalent to three different courses in 1ˢᵗ year of compulsory school (A, B and C). Each class has around 45 students and only one teacher in every subject. The school has 33 teachers and more than 23 members of the staff including authorities. The researcher of this investigation was invited as participant in all the Teachers Council Meeting which was carried out every week. The school deals in a daily basis with the problematics of having thousands of students coexisting in difficult environment where some of the students come from a vulnerable socioeconomic background and others have criminal records or other problems such as parents suffering from alcoholism or drugs use. This school in particular has demonstrated to have hardworking students who strive for obtaining good grades, regularly assisting to the lessons and moving forward from adversity. It is important to mention there is precariousness and vulnerability in the physical space of the school, namely the classrooms, the offices, the computer room, the kitchen, the shower and the front and backyard where students have their breaks. This situation adds itself to the fact that the school has little and scarcity of resources such as old tables and chairs inside the classroom, obsolete IT and computers and lack of proper literature translated in a poor library filled with old and out-of-date books. In spite of the difficulties presented in this school, the members of the community showed great interest and willingness to participate and being part of the research.

<u>Describing the participants: The school community</u>

For the purpose of this investigation several members of the school community participated and were taken into consideration for the process of data collection. Some of them were part of interviews and addressed in observations and notes written in the field. The purpose of researching participants using ethnographic methodologies in the school was to understand the current status of democracy within Chilean education, therefore, the life of the participants, as well as their thoughts, ideas, behavior, knowledge and experiences were considered fundamental for the study. It was considered important to provide a description of the participants because it gives context to the study and allows understanding of the persons from whom data was gathered. The selected participants were chosen because, according to the belief of the researcher, they represent in its entirety the composition of a school community. These people are in constant social interaction, coexisting within the confines of the school, communicating with each other and being mutually participant and meaningful of their own development. Moreover another important reason for the election of these participants is their natural characteristics for being significant under the perspective of

ethnography as an inquiring tool. The participants in this research have been denominated as: Students, Teachers, Parents and School authorities.

<u>Students as research participants.</u>

The research used as participant for data collection, 20 students from *7mo Basico* to *4to Medio* – 7th grade of compulsory school to last year students of high school – who were randomly selected from SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B. These participants have a range of age between 13 and 18 years old and they study together within the same physical space, in other words, they study and coexist in the same school. The students were interviewed in unstructured interviews previously agreed and consented; others had conversational interviews with the researcher during breaks or in the school corridors. Furthermore the interaction between the students, their behavior and their action were observed and recorded in fieldnotes. The students were initially curious by having a strange person asking questions and observing around, therefore, little context and explanation of the purpose of the research was given to the students in both schools. Later on, during the research process, the authorities of both schools informed about the researcher's presence and his purpose. It is important to mention that all the students show themselves participative and willing to answer the questions of the researcher. They seemed comfortable and relaxed about been inquired.

<u>Teachers as research participants.</u>

Considering teachers as participants, was equally important than addressing the significance of the students as subjects of study in the investigation due to their close daily connections and interactions. Teachers form an essential part of the students' life, they are meant to be guiders, supporters, motivators and they play an important role in the learning, flourishing and empowerment of the students. In this research, 15 teachers from SCHOOL A and B were interviewed in conversational and unstructured interviews, and where the most of them were observed, analyzed and they shared more than one instance of participation with the researcher. The process of data collection occurred during breaks and time agreed after school. Some of the teachers had great disposition to participate by answering openly and sincerely to questions, while others, refused to answer or demonstrated evident lack of interest to participate or being investigated. There were two major instances of participation, deliberation and conversation with teachers regarding the notions of democracy within education. The first one was a spontaneous discussion in SCHOOL B - the public school - which emerged in one of the Teachers Council Meeting which is organized every week by the

General Inspector, the UTP and the Principal of the school. The other one was a formal required presentation of the research topic, its methodology and the purposes of it in the SCHOOL A, also during the Teachers Council Meeting. In both schools, these instances of interactions between teachers and the researcher had great significance for the study because it translated itself into a major opportunity to collect data, to directly inquire, observe and to meet their ideas and thoughts about democratic education. Finally these invitations to the Teachers Council Meeting partially avoided the bureaucratic and sometimes tedious process of materializing informant consent or agreeing interviews with teachers.

<u>Parents as research participants</u>

While that is true that parents do not represent the formal portion of the daily social interactions that occur in the school, they do represent a major component in the life of the students. Thus parent's relevance and their importance in the formation and learning processes of their children, plays a role in terms of the extension in which they participate, as an active part, within these processes. The integration and communication of parents with teachers and school authorities has been widely accepted by the school community and educational research. Parent's involvement which concerns the academic programs and the social activities, where they have an active participation and influence regarding decision-making, has a positive and valuable impact on the life of the students and the school community, their organizational composition and structure (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the parents of students in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B were considered important and significant. Additionally 12 parents were asked about their perception on key concepts related with the democracy in the school of their children, their levels of participation and deliberate incidence in decision-making. Consequently the relation between parents and teachers/school authorities was observed and written down, by being the researcher a participant in such interactions. Also conversational and unstructured interview were mostly conducted and there was a high degree of interest and participation from parent's behalf. The researcher assisted to two monthly Parents' class meeting, one in each school, and one to the Parent's Representative Council Meeting in SCHOOL A. These meeting were fundamental for data collection in this research.

<u>School authorities as research participants</u>

Most of the theoretical sphere in educational research that handles the interactions and modes of power relations among the participants in school community refers to the interrelation between students and teachers. This issue is understandable considering that the nature of education, the process of teaching and learning and the historical principles of schooling relies on the conception that there exist a teacher and student. Hence, it is in this interaction teacher/student where relations of power and agency, meaning, affection and social constructions daily emerge. It is also common to state, from a critical perspective, that power within schools is exerted by teachers over students, influencing their worldview, shaping their ideas and motivations, or restricting their life and behavior to acquiesce to the normative and the authority. Nevertheless, school interactions and its social constructions entail a more complex scenario which might involve other variables rather than just reducing its complexity to simple understanding of the relation between teacher and students. Accordingly, it is in this scenario where a relation of power and control might be analyzed by including other sources of influence or other groups of people that daily interact within the school boundaries. School authorities, in this case, are an important and always present part of the social sphere of the school; school authorities have the absolute power and control over all the other members of the community and they have major influence in decision-making. Thus, in consequence, every idea, project, modification of the curriculum or the pedagogies, any change or addition in the pre-established normative of the school have to be primarily handle, assessed and approved by the school authorities. Additionally, this group of people sits on the top of the pyramid of command; assessing all the members of the school, deciding the participation of parents in the education of their children and constantly supervising the performance and the behavior of teachers and students, in order to maintain control and order. Finally, for the purpose of this study, inquire a Chilean democratic education must consider a perspective that includes school authorities as a powerful influence which directly impacts the democratic options and opportunities of the rest of members in the school community. School authority is a chain of command within the school, similarly as if it was a militarized place where hierarchy matters at a great scale, and controls over how people are placed, treated and considered as a whole.

This research study considers the school authorities in SCHOOL A as the General Inspector, the Superior Mother, The *U.T.P* who is the Pedagogical-Technical Unit in Spanish, and the Principal. On their behalf, SCHOOL B has, as school authorities, the General Inspector, The

Pedagogical-Technical Unit, and the Principal. The relationship with these authorities was friendly, cordial and inviting; always open to dialogue and communication. There were several unstructured and conversational interviews with all the school authorities in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B, there were also many observations during their duty in schools and fieldnotes written down which reflected their behavior and their attitude toward the rest of the community.

<p align="center"><u>The process of data collection and its methodological techniques.</u></p>

The process of data collection of this research demanded 1 month and 3 weeks of ethnographic fieldwork. It initiated in February 12th in SCHOOL A and February 14th in SCHOOL B, when teachers and others members of the school community began the preparation and the planning of the school year. The process of data collection ended in both schools in March 27th when the researcher finalized his work at the schools and returned to Sweden. The researcher expended nearly three hours in each school from Monday to Friday with some exceptions. Therefore, the process of data collection and inquiry with a physical presence of the researcher in the schools concluded with around 230 hours of fieldwork. These hours were split for data collection in:

- Lunch breaks and other leisure time.
- Recreational time for students and teachers.
- At least nine lessons inside a classroom in different subjects and levels, actively participating with students and teachers.
- Assisting to two Parent's Meeting in SCHOOL A with the presence of parents and the head teacher of that class.
- Participating and being part of one invitation to the monthly Parent's Council Meeting in SCHOOL B where parents usually meet and discuss school issues.
- Assisting to at least five Teacher's Council Meeting, three in one school in two in the other. These meetings had the presence of the school authorities and all the teachers of the school. One of these meetings had a formal presentation in SCHOOL A about the research purpose and its main theme.

The sampling of the research included participants with ages that range between 13 to 69 years old who were categorized as students, parents, teachers and school authorities. These participants were randomly selected or they participated voluntarily because of their own

interest for being part of the process of inquiry. The intentions of randomized the sampling attempted to deliver a sense of equality and diversity in the research, this might have been reached, perhaps, by the conceivable thought that every member of the school community has a possible and real perception, experience or understanding on the topic of democracy within education. Accordingly, it is acknowledged that the sampling might seem broad with respect to an ethnographic study and it might deal with the problematization of credibility and reliability. However, the sampling is regarded as representative of the school community, it covered the depth that was searched and made the process of research a more participatory and democratic instance. Finally, it is believed that the decision of considering the whole school community as a valuable and reliable source of data, gave the research an open-ended exploratory nature.

In order to collect data, different procedures were adopted and used according to different situations and within of different instances. There were three main qualitative methods, which are characteristic of most ethnographic research, that were essential for data collection and its subsequent analysis. Most of the process in participant observation where verbal interaction occurred, in addition to the data of all the interviews and conversations in the research was gathered by a voice recorder SONY ICDBX140 which allowed the researcher to have access to verbal data and to possess a register of all the interactions in digital audio files in the researcher's personal notebook. The chosen data collection techniques were participant observation, unstructured and conversational interviews and the writing of fieldnotes.

Participant observation

Participant observation was part of the whole process of investigation in both schools from the very first days of negotiation the entry to the community, until the last day of inquiry in the schools. Participant observation is an important component of ethnographic research since it places the researcher in a stand position of privilege respect of the objectivity nature of a phenomena but it does not give complete exclusivity of social reality due to the disparity in the concepts of participation and observation. An ethnographer cannot observe objectively from distance as if he or she examines a subject for further description; and the ethnographer cannot participate entirely with a strange community as if he or she completely belongs as a native or knowledgeable of their social reality –despite the fact that this was the reality of the researcher–. Therefore ethnographers must involve themselves in a high degree of participation in order to grasp, through observation, the most important insights of people,

emerging from experiencing sociocultural empathy. Participant observation allow researchers to balance the positive side of active participation and the subjective side of observation by looking into the large and wide picture of social realities and analyzing, comparing, criticizing and creating their own understanding based on these experiences. Participant observation encourages the actors of an inquired field to actively contribute and participate, sharing knowledge and experiences (Murchison, 2010).

Using this research technique for data collection, the researcher approached the field seeking direct interaction with the participants, grasping the meanings of their social life by experiencing their own life within the process of schooling. The researcher took part in every possible moment of group activity, formal meetings of parents and teachers and other instance that involved social interaction. These instances were acknowledged as essential and valuable chances for witness, firsthand, the spheres of behaviors, interactions, interrelations, perspectives, understandings and world views. Additionally the researcher, in an initial state was regarded as a strange; however after a few days of fieldwork he behaved, shared and felt as part of the community, not only due to the intentions and purposes of the research, but also because of the pleasant and friendly environment that was achieved among the members of the community. The process of participant observation in both schools led to a relationship of mutual understanding, a high sense of respect for the work of the researcher and for the life of the participants, and finally, the researcher obtained a profound sentiment of responsibility toward the life of the participants within the school in two aspects: 1) To have a constant state of mind which include proper ethical considerations that protect and safeguard the social , physiological and physical integrity of the members of the school community. 2) The responsibility of addressing, reporting and to properly inform the state of democracy within education of both schools since, in the eyes of the researcher, the democratic life of school members must be protected and regarded as a sensitive topic of national importance.

Interviews

As related with interviews one might validate them as a reliable and useful resource for data collection because of their constant use in the methodology of ethnographic studies; and because interviews have demonstrated to be, as productive and necessary as participant observation, in the field of social sciences. Interviews are described, to a certain extent, as conversations governed by roles and rules. In a formal level of description and definition, interviews occur when *"one person takes the lead and asks as series of questions of others.*

The other has agreed that this is to be a special form of conversation, and is prepared for his or her views to be continuously questioned without the usual ability to be able to return the question. The topics to be covered are largely under the control of the 'interviewer', and the 'interviewee' is expected to have opinions or information on each of the questions asked". (Walford, 2007, p. 147). Interviews are expected to be meaningful and to have social significance for the study by reconstructing and reproducing interviewees' experiences, knowledge, opinions and different perceptions over daily life issues. Additionally, interviews are often exposed to certain conditions which make ethnographers ask themselves if answers truly constitute reality in their nature, core and essence. Accordingly, conditions such as continue lack of veracity, avoidance of particular questions, misinformation and sudden change of perception and opinion over an specific topic might be problematic trying to consider these data as worthy and reliable. However, an ethnographic interview, as Walford states, involves all forms of conversations: the formal, the informal, those with a certain structure and the ones that seems not having much importance. Through interviews, ethnographers are more interested to achieve previously contemplated objectives, understand participants' perceptions and experiences on a particular topic and to put their efforts into answering their research questions. In this research study, two different types of interviews were used: conversational and unstructured interviews. These kinds of interviews were mainly used because they were considered as suitable with the ethnographic approach and its methodology.

Unstructured interviews

The use of unstructured interviews, in contrast with structured or semi-structured interviews, consists in asking open-ended questions to participants which, through an inductive manner, attempts to understand the perception of participants on a particular social issue or reality. Unstructured interviews do not employ questionnaires or a pre-design set of questions, whereas they utilize vague questions which might lead the conversation to where the researcher would like to go, but always leaving enough space and freedom so that participants might express themselves openly in front of any question (Firmin, 2012). The use of this data collection technique in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B was crucial in this investigation for two main reasons: Firstly unstructured interviews are particularly rich providing depth in the answers of the participants which allow them to give detailed information about a phenomena. Secondly, for ethnographic purposes, they are a powerful source for data collection and gathering information in a daily basis, in natural conversations of everyday interaction.

Conversational interviews

The importance of conversational interviews in an ethnographic study is reflected as follows: *"In making use of conversational interviews in prolonged fieldwork, ethnographic interviewers are better able to emulate the spontaneity of conversation in their interviewing practice when they pose casual questions to participants about what is going on as part of their participant observations. Qualitative researchers must abide by institutional procedures for informed consent, and the requirements for obtaining written or oral consent from participants for their participation in research also deviate from everyday conversation. Thus, conversational interviewers must work against these formal constraints by simultaneously orienting participants to the purpose of upcoming interaction and setting an informal and casual tone for extended conversation"* (Roulston, 2012, p. 2).

In this research, a conversational interview entailed the researcher elaborating briefly on what implies a democratic education within the school and then lead the conversation to that topic motivating the participant to elaborate profoundly and providing details, experiences and thoughts regarding that topic and all that might come to his or her mind in that moment. This technique of free conversation without a structure or boundaries in relation to the participant's expansion over a topic permits to obtain a great amount of data which hinder, at some point, the process of post analysis due to its vagueness and ambiguity. However the expansion and openness that emerges from conversations brings major details and richer data. As Roulston states, this sort of conversations creates a more friendly environment wherein participants feel comfortable and free to expound on and share their perceptions and understandings over democracy in schools.

In this ethnographic research, both kinds of interviews demonstrated to be emancipatory and empowered to participants due to their high degree of freedom, participation and treatment as equals in front of the ethnographer, who has attempted to convey his theoretical approach to the methodology of this research.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes are considered the basis of ethnographic research whereby a consensus after academic differences and similarities regarding its definition and utilization might be set out as a written record of what has been seen, heard, thought and perceived. These notes are deliberatively taken in respond the limitations of memory and where ethnographers write

down dates, time, thick descriptions of the physical space where research is been carrying through, also reflections and thoughts about the materiality and their perhaps existing meaning and significance for people. Furthermore some ethnographers utilize huge amount of fieldnotes while in the field and some others write the necessary under their consideration for further expansion and analysis. The challenges of ethnographic fieldnotes are related to grasp from their expansion, the most significant and valuable data for the purpose and problematization of the research, and create from them something structured, with an understandable form and fuller in relation to their function and meaning (Walford, 2009). Together with the data generated from interviews, the work and post-analysis of fieldnotes was one of the most challenging and demanding task during the process of data collection in this research. At least one hundred pages of writing were handled and created in a blending of descriptions of what was seen, heard and perceived in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B, but this process also included a simultaneous analysis of the situations. Thus the process of writing fieldnotes involved a double work and treatment of data. Firstly, fieldnotes were written as empirical descriptions of everyday life interaction in the schools, and secondly, fieldnotes were simultaneously written by managing interpretation and analysis.

The implications of working in the field: The role of the researcher and the consequences of ethnographic research.

It is important to clarify the procedures of the ethnographer during the process of research since this makes it transparent and gives to the investigation more credibility and veracity. Ethnographic research tends to provide satiating descriptions of the research procedures conducted in the field. This description has relation with writing accurate and interesting narratives of the methodological work since, for ethnographic research, the methodology has a major significance due to the reliance of the approach on its methods. Providing a narrative filled with thick descriptions of the methods and procedures of the ethnographer, in addition to the implications and consequences of his stay in the inquired place, is a very important issue to address in the methodological framework of any research study. I argue that the role of the ethnographer impacts not only on himself as researcher, affecting emotions, the humor, his previous knowledge and his personal background; but mostly have an effect in those who are being investigated. This role had three main stages that where part of the process.

1) The access, in a primarily instance, entailed to compromise the identity of the researcher from the beginning, introducing himself as a student from Gothenburg

University and currently studying in the International Master program of Educational Researcher. It was explained that the oncoming research was part of the process of writing the Master thesis and the schools are the places where data collection would take place. In addition in both schools the main topic of investigation was revealed in addition with the purpose of the research. As Walcott (2009) suggested in one of his several articles about ethnography, the researcher carefully attempted to detach himself from initial prejudices or preconceived ideas over any matter or particular issue, always trying to learn and apply the formal rules and routines of the school normative, and constantly integrating respect as an essential component in the research process. This distance over pre-conceptions and pre-knowledge about a setting was a difficult task, and frequently problematic due to the condition of the researcher as a native of the country, an older student of the city and as an integrant of the educational community as former teacher in the region. It is a hard work to keep in mind and to exert the labor of *strangeness* in a known setting. Consequently the researcher attempted to distance himself from previous experiences that might affect the work which was proposed in a natural, foreign, strange and unknown setting, a place filled with events and new things that must be uncovered and studied. Nevertheless the truth says that the ethnographer in this research is part of the community, a person who has worked before within Chilean education in schools, by interacting with students and communicating with other colleagues. The social reality of the ethnographer has an influence in the research itself, since he has been part of the setting and the context, but additionally, he has actively worked with the inquired participants –he worked with different students but students of the same age and level–. The implications of the study initially start impacting the life of the researcher after attempting behave as a stranger but naturally belonging to the community. These implications had an important incidence on the research results and in the overall perspective of the researcher in relation to the problematization of the research, namely, the democracy perceived in the schools. The consequences of doing research in this setting took immediate significance after the access was granted and the process of data collection began. This is how, for example, the compulsory and imposed use of school uniforms in both schools evoked in the researcher personal recollections that evidenced a connection between the research topic, the school as a physical space and the routines as a form of materiality of schooling. This research consider the theoretical perspective of the materiality in schools as important because, as school uniforms did,

the objects, the spaces and the routines recover meaning in the in the life of the educational processes in former students. There is a life of meaning, social emotions and history in the memories about educational objects, routines and school spaces, something that had most of their significance invisible in the eyes of researchers and people involved in educational research, but that have been important a as a part of past recollections or previous experiences (Lawn & Governor, 2005). In the eyes of the researcher of this study, his own personal recollections about past experiences of schooling and the abstract character of school uniforms, their obligated use and their importance as subjects of inquiry which represents major forms of oppression, control and power exertion in educational institutions, will be important along with the research analysis and for answering the research questions of this investigation. The recollections of the researcher regarding school locations and routines altogether with the meaning of school uniforms and its significance in the life of the researcher and for the purposes of the research will be addressed as research results in the next chapter.

2) Doing educational ethnography implies the researcher to be aware of how best to be around people, in this case, to know what entails to be around students, teachers and others school members seemed to be necessary and important for the purpose of this educational ethnographic research. However, ethnographic work involves much more than simply learning 'how to be around' or 'being there' with people. The role of the ethnographer is to primarily negotiate access to complex social networks and to create social relationships with the research participants from that point. This role is certainly not about to befriend with subjects in any matter but rather to empathically connect and understand them by reading and comprehending the social situations they are involved in. It is important also being aware of the reciprocities that create from mutual agreement and understanding, in the sense that people accept being inquired and asked; and the researcher assume a position of respect and objectivity toward school members, recognizing every emerging emotion from the self as an inquirer and from the participants as subjects. Further, the mediating role of the researcher attempting to understand the social life of the participants, helping them to make sense of their own processes and social constructions, sharing their routines and daily activities, and actively participating in the process of data collection seems to be crucial to a successful ethnographic work in educational settings (Mills & Morton, 2013)

Considering the above perspective, it is important to mention that social relationships were immediately created from the moment that the research initiated. At the beginning, the researcher was seen and treated as a stranger by the members of the school community. In that moment, the only thing school members knew about the researcher was that he is a native and that he could speak their same language. The initial approach to the members from and upon the researcher was prudent and distant. Then, as days went by, the curiosity of students, teachers and some parents became noticeable, making questions and observing the work of the researcher all the time, as if the roles were reversed. Subsequent to the initial presentation and brief explanation of the purpose and presence of the ethnographer, a cordial relationship of mutual trust was established with most of the school members which allowed an active participation in different activities in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B, such as the presentation and speech of the Principal the first day of school and the welcome dinner at the beginning of the school year. The researcher had the opportunity of talk and share with students and teachers during every break from Monday to Friday and to visit several lessons in different subjects and levels inside the classrooms, directly witnessing social interaction between teacher and student. Moreover, with the passing of the days, several more students and other members of the school community knew the purpose of the investigation and the inquired topic of it. As consequence, the members of the school community were not only demonstrating curiosity and respect toward the work of the researcher, but rather, they showed great interest in participating and being part of the investigation, especially students and teachers. In this phase of the research the role of the ethnographer attempted to integrate the ones who were willing to participate and to make this research part of their own experience. After adopting this position, several students and teachers approached trying to have conversation, a revealing of their experiences, ideas and own notions of democracy within education. It would be precise to say that one could breathe the necessity of these participants for being heard and understood. In this sense, the role of the researcher evolved into something more similar to guider, a teacher, an adviser or a counselor. During this process of mutual interest of students and teachers for the investigation, combined with the established social relationships of trust and respect between researcher and participants, there was a production of plenty of data which was recorded and analyzed.

3) As previously mentioned the role of the ethnographer changed over the curse of the investigation. Initially seen as a stranger, later one as a native member of the local community, as a teacher, as a researcher and finally as a school adviser. These characteristics of the ethnographer were not formal or real in practice but it was the feeling of being present in the field was what represented those changes in the role. The nature of the role of the ethnographer was not deliberately modified, but the characteristics of his work required assessment and arrangement regarding the process. In consequence, the role of the researcher during the investigation marks a milestone in the research process and the results of it, as there was a before in the general conception of a democratic education in both schools, and then, after the presence of the researcher there was an extra approach in their understandings and new perspectives regarding democracy inside schools. This milestone will be addressed in the research results.

Data analysis

The process of data analysis in qualitative ethnographic research entails arduous work, it is a delicate and complex procedure which entails great amount of data that must be managed, interpreted, analyzed and even cast aside due to its suitability with the process. The collection of data sometimes leads to the simultaneous analysis of it, putting focus on some of the data or disregarding some other. The absence of an analytical strategy might lead into huge amounts of data without a proper discussion on the data itself, this means that fieldnotes would not be part of the generality of the study due to its unreliability. Additionally improper data selection or categorization would signify questionable raw data, based on simplistic interpretations of social reality (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). Indeed, data analysis implies a constant reflection work over data, which will facilitate the later work of organization and selection (Creswell, 2014). Additionally data analysis is regarded as essential for the process of research in terms of its credibility and involves 'dissecting' the data into parts and adding the ethnographer's impressions, observations and real meaning to these parts (Alvarez, 2011). Furthermore data analysis in ethnographical studies might include descriptions, interpretations and explanations of social issues in the life of a group or community. This process in an ethnographic qualitative research must be addressed and it needs to specify the steps which allow *"making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities"* (Cohen, 2007, p. 461).

In ethnography, the analysis of data   involves preliminary thick descriptions of the participants and the setting in where the research was carried out, additionally, these mentioned ethnographic analysis concerns the creation and uses of themes, situations and issues as categories or codes in forms of description and later writing (Creswell, 2009). Most qualitative researchers trust the analysis of data on systematic, structured and organized procedures which might help to support research's reliability. These approaches, among others, are grounded theory and content analysis which have been widely used in qualitative research and some aspects of both approaches have been regarded as useful for this research such as coding of GT and the inductive interpretation of data which is common in content analysis, nevertheless, the whole use of this strategies for data analysis seem inappropriate since they demand preparation, a proper learning of these strategies and considerable amount of time (Bryman, 2012; Cohen, 2007). Moreover the approach that entails grounded theory and content analysis are, at a great extent, contradictory with the nature of the present research perspective and its methodology whereas the general aim is to investigate using a democratic, flexible and open structure whereby research data has been treated and managed as such.

In his helpful guide for qualitative researchers, Creswell (2009) provides a description of general procedures that he regards as prominent for the handle of qualitative data. These procedures have been taken into account by the purposes of this research. Data analysis was carried out according the following procedures: 1) Organization and preparation of data. 2) Revision of data. 3) Coding process. 4) Generation of themes or categories 5) Representation of data.

Organization and preparation of data

Data was organized and prepared for analysis both manually and digitally in a computer. No computer software was used in the process of data analysis in spite of the awareness of the researcher of the software NVivo which might be helpful providing an organized storage system and the data files can be readily accessed, additionally the researcher can locate units of data easily and it can be coded with several numbers of codes so that data can be retrieved and organized in any number of patterns and themes limited only by the researcher's inductive insights and creativity. However, due to time limitations and the ignorance of the researcher regarding the proper use of the software, the idea was rejected. As consequence, the researcher used the common folders of the computer as valuable option to organize, prepare and store data collected. Thus, all the fieldnotes were transcribed and typed up into Word files, all audio files were stored in folders and the interviews and conversations were

translated from Spanish into English – a process which resulted in one the most demanding work during the investigation in terms of time and difficulty – these were also typed up in Word files and stored in folders.

Revision of data

The second step involved reading and listening through all the data available. These facilitate the process of obtaining a "*general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning*" (Creswell, 2009, p.185). At this moment researchers attempts to understand and to have a general idea of the tone of the participant's answers. This second step of data analysis entailed listening personal audio files recorded in the field with different descriptions and analysis of what was heard or observed. Additionally all the transcribed interviews, conversations and fieldnotes were carefully read. Additional notes emerged from this analysis of data, a process that seems to be recurrent every time data is segmented or a piece of it is carefully analyzed. The analysis of data creates new data, to put in simple words.

Coding process

 The codification of data is a troublesome and complex procedure but usually employed in qualitative research. This investigation utilizes some of the features of the codification of data becoming form Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is an inductive general methodology which its purpose is to generate theory emerging from data. In this, previous data collection and the analysis of it is regarded as systematic and acknowledges that the world of the participants is naturally integrated and interconnected. People create and make connections in everyday life and Grounded Theory systematizes those interactions and interconnections using systematic methodologies. The process of coding in Grounded Theory involves segmenting and chunking data, attempting to easily grasp a better understanding of the meanings in the life of people (Cohen, 2007).

The process of coding in Grounded Theory is simplified and eased in the writings of Bryman (2012) and Charmaz (2006), who establish two phases of coding that have been understood and important for this research: initial and selective coding. Initial coding, on the one hand, gives detailed codification of every piece of writing providing primary assumptions, ideas and impressions of the collected data. This, in an initial stage goes from the general to the specific. As it is in the process of this research, texts analysis are covered with written several codes which describes, for example, the research participants, their roles within the school, their

levels and age, the influence over other members of the school, their modes of participation, their perception over democratic education, the power relations among members, the role the religion, the authority as a form of repression, the extent of communication, collaboration and integration among members, etc.

With the utilization of selective coding, on the other hand, the researcher put his focus on the most relevant, revealing and interesting characteristics of the initial coding process. The proper analysis and selection of the codes was fruitful for later categorization and a possible meaningful interrelation between codes (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2006).

Generation of themes and categories

In consideration with being consequent and coherent with the approach and methodology of this investigation, it is acknowledged that a proposal toward a codification of data must differentiate itself from any rigid structure of codification that might stereotype the perspectives of the participants into codes, codes that might assume that the social reality of the participants is solely the one that has been initially categorized. The fundamental idea of codify in this investigation is to provide a reduction and an order of the data and, in this way, to facilitate the possibility of interrelate codes, groups and categories; or that through analysis it might emerge new codes. The codification has manifested in relation and according to the studied communities, in an ethnographic way; but most importantly, demonstrating consequence in the procedure of how they have been inquired. The labeled codes written in this research have not put in a frame the life meaning of the social interaction in participants, neither have arisen boundary lines between groups or categories because the fundamental intentions are to comprehend as whole and not from the constant fragmentation. For these reason, the inclusion of themes and categories have been important. Themes and categories rise from descriptions and analysis of codes, they can be part of additional and more complex layers of analysis within an ethnographic research, and usually, being part as a narrative or a major finding in the study.

Representation of data

This process entails the representation of the above created themes and categories. As a final treatment of data this involves the use of the previous descriptions, stating interconnections among themes and creating narratives of findings. The representation of the data was, in this ethnographic research, the whole conception in the mind of the researcher of the state of democracy within both schools; it also signified a major drawing of what happens in the

schools setting and in the social life of the participants and their relation with the school democracy. Representation of data translated in the facts that would be presented as research results.

Chapter V

Presentation of research results

Introduction

In this chapter the results obtained during the process of data collection in SCHOOL 1 and SCHOOL 2 will be presented. As it was stated in the methodological section, data was previously collected and meticulously analyzed by the categorization of codes and themes. This data was collected using a qualitative ethnographic methodology which inquired, during almost two months into the life and daily interactions between students, teachers, parents and school authorities. These participant's interactions and social constructions were taken into account regarding their experiences, perceptions and understandings on the topic of a recently introduced democratic education proposed by the General Law of Education enacted in 2009. According the interpretation and analysis made by the ethnographer, the most significant and relevant elements have been added as research results. The process of interpretation of data has meant a reassessment of the current state of democracy in education, based on the history of democracy in the Chilean context previously stated in the problematization of this research. Additionally, the democratic education and values intended to be included in education by the LGE have been constantly compare and interrelated with the conception of a democratic education included in the theoretical framework of this research. The main purpose of this chapter is to describe and present the most significant results of this study. The results will be presented organized into themes according the experiences of the researcher in the field and the data collected.

The compulsory use of school uniforms, militarization as a form of control and imposed dress code among students and teachers: unjustified formalisms.

The first signs of democracy were inquired within both schools, and are addressed in the interrelation between the mandatory use of school uniform and the notions of control, power and vigilance exerted by the school authorities. Primarily, both schools A and B specified the norm about the use of uniforms at the middle of February 2018, one month before students

and teachers initiated the school year. The uniform norm came as a remainder for parents and guardians in the official website of both schools. This is one extract of the message sent in in the official website of SCHOOL A, reminding the compulsory norm established by the School Environment and Discipline Regulation Plan (PCED in Spanish):

[Dear parents: we are glad to inform you that the PCED has already posted the rules for school uniform from 1st year of primary school to 4th year of high school corresponding to the school year 2018. Please note that any accessory such as: scarf, woolen hat and gloves must be navy blue color. For males: classic grey pants tight to the hip, a black belt, traditional white shirt, the official school tie, grey socks, black shoes, official school sweater with the official school insignia attached on it and white school protective apron. For females: formal grey skirt, traditional white shirt, the official school tie, white socks, black shoes, official school sweater with the official school insignia attached on it, white school protective apron, hair bands and clips must be blue or black. In relation to the formal appearance of the students: males and females must have a regular haircut; we encourage male's students to have a short a proper haircut adequate to the norms of the schools, and female's students to wear a bun in the hair. Additionally, it is not allowed to have painted or long nails and the use of cosmetics in the school.]

Both schools reiterated in several occasions – especially before the school year began – the pre-established norms and rules regarding the clothing and the appearance of the students. In this sense, SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B highlighted from the beginning, the obligatory nature of wearing school uniforms for all the students. During the stay in the field of both schools, the researcher noticed the strictness in the compliance of the norms, observing that several students who did not wear some part of the school uniform were primarily reprehended and sanctioned with a negative observation in their *gradebook* – a register book in each level which contains the grades, but also the attendance record, and all the information about each student in relation to their performance, behavior and discipline. This register is expressed in the form of positive or negative written observations made by the teachers –. When a student accumulates three negative observations, his or her parents are called to the school and the student is suspended for a period of three days.

What stands out more from this situation is not only the rigidity of the schools in their attempts to meet the pre-established norms, but to realize that the schools do not respect a governmental educational law enacted in 2015 – *Ley de Inclusion* in Spanish – which states

that school uniforms are no longer obligatory in the Chilean educational system and that schools cannot suspend students or denote the action of not wearing school uniforms as a negative observation or as a lack of discipline on the students behalf (*Ley de Inclusion* N.º 20.845, 2015). In fact, after three years of promulgation of the law that incapacitates all educational institutions to provide the nature of *compulsory* to school uniforms, most of the schools have not entirely comply with the norm and most schools in Chilean education still mandate the use of uniforms. According to the later, the Principal of SCHOOL A was asked about the remaining use of school uniforms in his school despite of the statements of the Inclusive Law of 2015. He answered as follows:

Principal: [We are informed about the law and we are reconsidering to modify the internal norms and rules about the use of school uniforms, maybe they might come to the school with the official sportswear but this is a decision that must be taken including the parents and the students]

Researcher: [But it has been almost three years since the law forbid schools to force students to wear uniforms, why are the students still getting suspended or being sanctioned in their gradebook because they don't use some part of the uniform?]

Principal: [Take a look about how we both dress… - we dress formal clothing- , we are in a formal context were students come to learn and they need to wear their uniforms because they are part of this school. But I can give you two more other reasons why we encourage students to wear school uniforms. One is because we believe that their uniforms help them to behave according the school norms and they know that they represent an institution inside and outside the school, and second we want to prevent bullying among students since not everyone has a good economy that allow them to buy good pants or t-shirts so they don't harass each other comparing their clothing.]

The answers that the principal provides supporting the use of school uniforms are reasonable and justifiable, considering that wearing school uniforms are mostly conceived in the academic field and in the available theory as a synonym of safety, equality and discipline. As Sue Stanley emphasizes in her article *School uniforms and safety* (1996) stating that the promotion of uniforms has several benefits and advantages among people such as in their general sense of membership and belonging, contributing to their feelings of safety and responsibility towards the institution that the uniform represents. Stanley sates also that in the context of educational policies the use of school uniforms has improved discipline, academic

performance, student achievement and respect among the school members. Additional main arguments from students, parents and teachers in favor of school uniforms emerge justifying how they reduced discrimination due to social status and socioeconomic differences, by distance schools from fashion discrepancies. In this way uniforms motivate peer acceptance by building paths of unification among different sociocultural groups and soften the dynamics of tension that often involves diversity and ethnicity (Stanley, 1996; Burkemper, 2008). As opposite to the later, disagreement among students and teachers is shown regarding the benefits of the mandatory implementation of school uniforms since they might restrict self-expression, freedom and creativity as an imposed dress code (Park, 2013). Additionally the lack of empirical studies supporting the benefits of wearing school uniforms question the positive attitude toward this kinds of implementations. Accordingly some students believe that wearing any sort of clothing must be a life choice rather than an enforced imposition by the school or any authoritarian educational policy which do not consider the rights of free expression, uniqueness and individuality (King, 1998, p. 34). The discrepancies that emerge from both perspectives made the researcher to question what is it that makes schools to oblige students to wear uniforms.

Hence the value of a material-discursive perspective emerges by playing an important role in considering how school uniforms, in the form of an object, entail historical, sentimental and social meaning as a significant issue in the life of the school community. The perspective of materiality of schooling establishes that school spaces and objects are given meaning from the perspective of those who have a story, a past, a recollection or a routine which involves real interaction, feelings, sensations, and physical and psychological reactions with the materiality within the context of the school (Lawn & Governor, 2005; Rasmussen, 2014). For example, Björn Nolin in his the article *School jailhouse: discipline, space and the materiality of school morale in early-modern Sweden* (2016) describes how a school jail, that was introduced in Sweden in order to shape behavior and encourage order among students through imprisonment and physical punishment, evolved over time into other modes of discipline and approaches. His article is based on materiality of the school and describes how behind the incarceration of students and the use of traditional tools for physical punishment, lie repressive forms of school discipline, extreme isolation and hunger in students . Following his principal theory expressed in his theoretical framework, Nolin states that "*educational space, materiality, objects, and social routines must be seen as interrelated, and can only be sufficiently understood if put in a particular social and historical context and also by*

recognizing the discourses that activate and link them. The relational as well as the contextual element is thus central". (Nolin, 2016, p.265)

What is important in considering the materiality of school uniforms in this study is that they represent a whole world of social meaning that involves personal experiences, feelings, sensations, ideas and perceptions, therefore, they cannot be merely seen as inert objects which their only meaning must be perceived as functional in terms of safety, performance or discipline. There is a world of social meaning behind the use of school uniforms. According the experiences in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B, wearing school uniforms represents forms of power and control from the school authority due to their obliged and punishable nature which decrease and lessen any redeeming benefit that might come from their use. Students and parents were not consulted or participant in the discussion over the use of school uniforms in any instance. They were just informed about the obligatory nature of uniforms and what are the consequences regarding the omission of this decision. School uniforms can also be perceived as tools for shaping students' behavior and for the encouragement of conducts that might be better implemented in military settings and militarization of the character rather than on educational contexts. In this sense, the relationship of school uniforms and an existing militarization of education in Chile should be further analyzed and discussed. In addition, extreme forms of formalism are left as a residual negative consequence of a society that experienced the military dictatorship; imposed formalisms that has continuously influenced the way teachers and students must dress and look over time.

The materiality of school uniforms, the control, the vigilance, the formalism and the remaining militarization of society still present in the Chilean schools, can be better understood in this observation about every Monday's mornings as a routine were all the members of both schools participate.

Monday's mornings and students are accustomed to line up in front of the national flag; ready to sing the Chilean national song with a stuck hand in their chest. Students wear impeccable uniforms, black shoes and a perfect tie; the Principal drifting around, watching carefully their movements, no laughs allowed. He verified that everyone wears the uniform. The sun reflected on the metal of the school insignias, those carefully attached to their blue blazers. Every insignia was shining with the exception of one of the students who apparently forgot it at home. She forgot the badge that bores the symbol of the school; she forgot the one that fills school authorities with satisfaction and pride. The Principal went to the Inspector

General and whispered something near him, after that, the Inspector General went to the girl and removed the student from the line with vehemence in the moment that he corroborated the absence of the insignia, and afterwards he reprimanded her. Finally the inspector wrote a disciplinary note in her gradebook, suspended her for three days and called her parents to inform the situation. (Personal note about school uniforms in SCHOOL B)

After this situation, the researcher had a conversation with the student who still showed great discomfort with the measure, she was evidently sad, sobbing and angry.

Research: [I saw what happened there, was it because of your uniform?]

Student A: [Yes, I forgot my fucking badge, now my parents will be upset with me. I'm tired of this shit, I have a test tomorrow and I've been studying the whole week, now I'm suspended and I studied for nothing.]

Researcher: [Do you think it was a fair measure? Is it always like this when someone forgets something from the uniform?]

Students A: [It is always like this! Every Monday everyone must have their complete uniform because we sing the national song and we must line up in front of the flag, I know that! I always wear my complete uniform on Mondays, but today I just forgot the badge. Was it necessary his attitude and to get suspended?]

Other issues related with imposition of dress coding and several comments of the physical appearance of teachers in SCHOOL B were not overlooked rather taken into account and regarded as significant. As it was noted in an observed interaction between a teacher and the Inspector General were the main issue of concern was the clothing of the teacher, specifically his red shoes and his beard. The Inspector General rebuked the teacher in front of the researcher and students, as if it was not the first time that he comes to the school with bearded face and without the formal suit of tie and black shoes that the school requires to teachers to wear every day. After this situation the researcher approached the teacher and had a conversational interview with him. The following is an extract of that conversation:

Researcher: [Did the Inspector General tell you something about your shoes?]

Teacher A: [Yes, he did, but not only about the shoes but the beard as well.]

Research: [What did he say about it?]

Teacher A: [He told me, basically, that the way I dress and the way my face looks, doesn't fit with the norm of the school. I told him that students like my shoes and that's why I use them, besides I feel more comfortable using them and the same with the beard. My face gets irritated if I shave it almost every day.]

Researcher: [Did you tell him that students like your shoes or that you like to wear them? or did you say anything about your beard?]

Teacher A: [Naa. Why? It is a waste of time. Even if you defend yourself and you argue with them, they always have the excuse of the normative and the rules and etc. It sounds funny but sometimes it's better to bow your head and say, yes, my mistake. I'm sorry.]

Research: [How does it make you feel when the Inspector General tells you how to dress and how to look?]

Teacher A: [Bad, obviously, I consider myself part of those who think that my quality as a teacher doesn't really change because of the way I look, I can perfectly dress in an elegant dress everyday but being quite shitty as teacher in my subject, it doesn't really matter. He – referring to the Inspector General – will always have something to find in order to tell you what to do, that's how it works here. It's all about formalism and obedience but then we expect to have students who can express themselves freely and have a critical way to look things.]

It was infrequent to find teachers criticizing in such manners to the school authority but it is rarer to realize how frequent the control and vigilance of the school authorities occur inside the schools and the classrooms. The interactions expressed in all the interviews between the student, the teacher and the Inspector General expressed forms of control, authoritarianism and repression. The addressed social interactions revealed that the norms established by both schools about the imposition of school uniforms, but specifically the reprehension and the suspension of the students – the negative consequences of not wearing uniforms –are opposed to those ideas claimed in the General Law of Education and the Inclusion Law, which guarantee active participation of the whole school community contributing to the process of decision-making and forbidding schools to suspend or negatively connote the omission of wearing uniforms (Law 20.370, Article 15, 2009; Law 20. 845, 2015). Additionally these forms of schooling have little in common with was has been established in the theoretical framework as a democratic education, wherein, for example, the provision of educational

experiences suggested by Habermas, which prioritize communication among the school members, might achieve mutual understandings through dialogue and the inclusion of "the better argument". These mutual understandings are not influenced by power exertion or control but they are a consequence of social engagement and mutual agreements through rationality. Consequently the imposition using uniforms in the school are inconsistent with any sort of mutual agreement, dialogue or a consequence of good communication between the members of the school community.

Perceptions over democracy in schools during the presentation in the Teacher Council

As it was described in the methodological part of this research, one of the agreements made with one of the inquired schools was to prepare a presentation for teachers and school authorities. This presentation occurred during the process of data collection, specifically on Wednesday 14th March during the weekly meeting of the Teacher Council in SCHOOL A. The presentation explained the purpose of the research and the conception of a democratic education by primarily describing the work of John Dewey and his ideas about experiencing democracy as a way of life. Moreover his several thoughts and remarks on achieving an active participation among the school community and the deliberated creation of instances of communication, collaboration and interaction were explained. The presentation included briefly the theoretical and historical background that accompanied the researcher, this previously acquired and learned knowledge was attempted to be transmitted and to orientate teachers and school authorities about what the research itself entails, and the basic ideas of democratic education. During the comment section of the presentation, some teachers agreed that these theoretical orientations, or in other words, this form of perceiving education from a democratic point of view is something that was never taught, learned, discussed or even mentioned within the boundaries of the school or during their teaching formation at universities. One teacher went further and referred about this new knowledge:

Teacher B: [I think that this form of education that you mention is something that faculties of education in universities doesn't touch too much, because they put their energies and resources trying to teach future teachers about the practices and the dilemmas of the classrooms… but specific theories or other views of teaching is something that we must to learn and experience on our own.]

Afterwards, when the researcher asked teachers and school authorities on what would it be a democratic education for them, some of the teachers raised their hand and said:

Teacher C: [For me, a democratic education is related with allowing students to make their own choices based on their actual needs […] we, as teachers, have the duty of helping students to express themselves freely and to listen what their opinions and their ideas are.]

Teacher D: [I agree with you, but it is not easy to leave students make their own choices, as you say. If we let them to do whatever they want it would be chaotic, there must be a structure and rules otherwise teachers couldn't do their jobs and they wouldn't have any sort of authority.]

Researcher: [Maybe it isn't about to let them to do whatever they want or let them always make their own choices in the school. I think it is more related with let them to actively participate in their own process of formation, thinking freely and critically and being part of the decision-making that influences their life in the school. I must to remind you also that this approach to education involves not only students but the whole community, everyone construct the democratic experiences as a group by participating together, having a good communication and mutually understanding with each other. The school also, either teachers or school authority, must accept that students and parents have their thoughts and perspectives contributing to the school as well as constructive criticism and empowerment of these individuals.]

Teacher E: [I believe those ideas sounds very nice, inspiring and something that every school might try to achieve if possible. I have previous knowledge about democratic education and the ideas of Dewey are familiar for me. However I think that in the practice of schooling everything is different. I always listen my students and I make them to participate during Math, but I don't think students can influence in the way I do or I prepare my lessons or in the normative and the rules of the school. That's a work of an adult and responsible people. I mean the people in charge of establishing the norms.]

Teacher F: [I might have a different opinion about that, is not that simple as you mentioned – she says the name of teacher D–, I think everyone here in the school has the democratic opportunity to influence in the life of the other, as – she says the name of the researcher – says, the whole community have the right to participate, to create some changes and to make students feel that they are responsible of their own processes and important as individuals, that is for me a democratic education.]

These reflections during the presentation on democratic education in SCHOOL A evidence the existing discrepancies among teachers regarding their own understanding and perceptions of democracy within schools.

Fear and threats through religious implications in SCHOOL A

One aspect that Frederick Erickson points out in his article *What makes School Ethnography 'Ethnographic'?* (1984) as significant while doing ethnography in educational settings is that religion, as part of the rituals and routines of the school community, might be regarded as meaningful and influential to the research participants and ethnographers must be aware about this situation. SCHOOL A is a private catholic school which imparts religion and the word of the Bible as modes of teaching and value inculcation. The Mother Superior – considered as part of the school authority of SCHOOL A – openly recognized that for students *"their religious formation is equally important than their academic formation, students are assessed according their behavior and attitudes confronting the word of the lord. They must have a simultaneous progress in the formation of their religious values and their educational performance"*. The LGE established that Chilean education is intended to be rebuilt under the perspectives of a democratic, secular and diverse education, tolerating and respecting diversity of culture and any form of religious belief (General Law of Education, article No 4, 2009). Catholic school as completely legitimate in Chile but, according the new law, they are not allowed to force any member of the school to believe in religious beliefs or to discriminate students with different religious values. In this sense, the LGE is clear expressing that students have the rights to that their personal freedom, their liberty of conscience and their religious convictions must be protected, tolerated and respected as an integral part of the general educational community of the Chilean society (General Law of Education, article No 10, section A, 2009)

During the stay in SCHOOL A there were several instances where religion was used as a mechanism of social control and exertion of fear and threat by some members of the school community, specifically by the Mother Superior. The manners that she was referring to the students and teachers were proper of a former and conservative from of education that might be linked to the intended formalism and a militarized education mentioned above. This sort of education coexists under the regulations of progressive and democratic educational policies but remain using old-fashioned and ancient methodologies and pedagogies which are not

consistent with any current democratic education. As an example, it was common to hear school authorities threating, controlling and shaping the attitudes of smaller students with comments such as: [*The kind of behavior you have now is not part of the kingdom of god*.], [*God is always looking at you, and he controls everything, so learn to behave properly.*] and [*What do you believe god thinks about what you're doing now?*]. Besides this forms of inculcated threat and fear using the religion as a form of oppression, there were several opportunities were students participated of mass in the school church, they were conditioned to pray every morning as a routine rather than a necessity or an expression of will. From the perspective of the ethnographer, the time expended in mass would have the same amount of time in other instances of active participation, improving intellectually and communicating with the community. These results do not represent a transgression to the democracy of SCHOOL A but also they have minimal in common with what was proposed by the LGE or the democratic emancipation of students proposed by Paulo Freire wherein the spreading of a critical pedagogy aimed to fill students with significant knowledge which allow them to release from oppressive and controlling situations that might put at risk their freedom and their democratic voices.

How does democracy manifest itself within education in Chilean schools?

Democracy is perceived in different ways and tones among the actors in the inquired schools. This disparity and diversity in the perceptions of participants on how democracy is experienced have several different meanings which are consequently significant for the research question. In spite of the dissimilar and scattered conceptions about democracy in both schools, there exists a common thread regarding its definition and understanding as a concept and as a way of life. In this sense the observations, together with several interviews with many members of the school community, suggest that students, parents and even teachers only think about democracy as form of government or a state of society. According to the own words of some actors in SCHOOL B, democracy is a political process and they live in a different political process in comparison with countries wherein dictatorships or wars take place. Several students stated that societies such as Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea are not democratic places and they were linked to communism and repression. Also it might be stated that, as a general rule, the community of both schools coincided that Chile is a democratic place with a democratic society. For them, the definition of democracy is associated with political and electoral procedures which are guaranteed through suffrage and the free and popular vote.

There exists a connection between this conception about democracy among both school communities and their perceptions regarding citizenship, understanding that one of the fundamental values of democracy relies on the capacity and freedom of the society to freely and democratically choosing their representatives. Accordingly, some students openly manifested that citizenship, or their civic responsibility, do not represent major importance in their everyday life due to a general dissatisfaction and disappointment toward the political class and because of a general strong belief that the political class is not representative of the ideas of students and youth in general. Whereas others, especially teachers, parents and some members of the school authority stated that the civic duty is fundamental in producing and maintaining a stable democracy along the society. According to them, it is the school responsibility to encourage and to foster citizenship among students, promoting civic education and teaching the democratic values of voting and the participative nature of elections.

In a primarily instance, democracy manifests itself in Chilean schools merely as a political and social state, which is constantly linked to civic responsibilities of people and to political representations. Despite the fact that the encouragement of citizenship and a promotion of the civic duty are good initiatives in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B in order to maintain democratic practices, it does not represent the conception of a democratic society, or more specifically, it does not represent the real democratic value of educational processes. As consequence the current notions of the schools on democratic education and the perceived democracy inside schools have a superficial, desultory, short-sighted and basic nature. The perceptions of some of the students in both schools, on basic ideas about democracy in the actual Chile of 2018, are quite similar to several studies performed by the Ministry of Education between 1999 and 2003 where the main intentions were to inquiry on the state of democracy inside schools after 10 years of regained democracy in the country. The produced results of those days of research demonstrated that, in all of the surveyed schools, there was remaining features of an education that was implemented during dictatorship, this means that the general perception in schools over fundamental concepts such as citizenship, the value of the vote, the suffrage, and the democratic right to participate in free elections were influenced by this features of education. These results dating from more than 20 years ago, in similarity with the results that detach from this current research, do not indicate a real major interest from the school community in favor of claiming democratic rights, as if their voices require motivation, empowerment and to be raised.

However, one significant difference in contrasting to those previous researches is that actual students, teachers and other members of the school community express an interest and a necessity of growing regarding a more active participation of the community inside the classrooms and in Student, Parents and Teachers Unions. There is a perceived general interest that their voices can be heard and that the thoughts and ideas of those who have been marginalized can be integrated. These voices are in constant struggle and resistance against the hierarchical power exertions becoming from the school authority, in this case, school authorities are implicitly ruled by the educative proposals of policy makers, attempting to make prevail antidemocratic normative and rules in favor of an unmeasured neoliberal education that reduce any democratic feature of education to formalisms, militarized discipline, school performance, competence and comparative results. The democratic values that should thrive in Chilean schools are not compatible with the current conditions that have major influence in Chilean education.

<u>Students and their democratic participation.</u>

The researcher made several questions to the students in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B in regard to their knowledge over different concepts such as their participation, collaboration and integration in schools, as well as their social interaction. Democracy was asked according its definition and purpose, and finally, the communication among students. There was especial interest in how they perceived the group organization of students. The answers vary between students but there exist a general sense in relation to how they perceive their own participation. The results of these questions indicate that the general definition of participation – as it occurred with the definition of democracy – has plain, superficial and basic orientation. Following the answers of the students, an active participation emerging from empowered experiences and aiming change and impact in decision-making was reduced to mere participation in school activities or workgroup. Some interviewed students referred school participation as a way to approach in groups and collaborate together in specific activities proposed by the school, rather than significantly influence on their own learning and formative processes or in the experiences of the schooling. This can be appreciated in this conversation with a student of 3rd grade of high school in SCHOOL B when she was asked about her thoughts on participation in her school.

Researcher: [What can you tell me about your participation and the participation of your classmates inside the school?]

Student F: [The participation? […] Well I think it depends of what kind of participation you are asking about. We participate in the classrooms with the teachers in different subjects and we participate in the school through different activities.]

Researcher: [So, let's say the participation in your school with activities.]

Student F: [Emm…we participate in certain events such as preparing everything for the anniversary of the school every year; we participate in the parade of the 21th of May and many other different activities like the Teacher's day, where we celebrate teachers with acts and dancing, then we have a Science week and an English week where we have to prepare a project or something to present.]

Researcher: [Do you have another kind of participation or experiences, for example, in the discussion about how teachers and students should interact with each other, or in any sort of experience that allow you to participate in, for example, the decisions that the school make over norms and rules?]

Student F: [No, I have never participated on something like that before neither they have done it – pointing out to her classmates –. That is something that the Student Union does but they are just there because they want to skip classes, besides, the Inspector General never take their ideas seriously, so I don't know really.]

Consequently from the conversations and interviews with student, two main modes of participation in students were identified a denominated as internal and external participation.

Internal participation

The first mode of students' participation, named internal participation, is the one that students have inside the context of the classroom in everyday subject and with different teachers. This form of participation is important due to the great amount of hours that students expend in classrooms and subjects related settings. In fact, this mode of participation emerges directly from the interaction between teacher and students, socially merging in complex everyday interrelations of power and agency, thrust, agreements and understandings of the same world.

The first observations made inside the classroom point at teachers constantly motivate students to participate during the lessons. However this understood participation is exclusively confined to give opinions and to answer questions regarding the subject or any other relevant issue related with learning. As a matter of fact, students are periodically

assessed by teachers according to their participation during the classes, providing monthly and biannual reports to parents and school authorities about student's personal and academic progress and formation. It can be acknowledged as a positive issue that most of the teachers in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B are constantly encouraging students to listen and to respect the opinions, ideas and thoughts of their equals. Thus, as a primary instance of participation, it might be argue that the participation of students inside the classrooms, in both schools, is expressed under a base of tolerance and respect, these are lessons in accordance with democratic processes that, to a certain extent, harmonize and correspond with some of the features of democratic education proposed by Dewey. Concretely, a participation based on respect and tolerance would promote the instances for generating proper experiences and environments upon a more active participation of students and, in the same way, it can be effectively linked to the Habermasian thoughts wherein learning and knowledge are produced through communicative action by transforming the social interrelations and everyday interactions between teachers and students into something highly significant.

Nevertheless some democratic features within the classrooms, in this case, a more insightful, transformative and active participation for all the students was, in several occasions, perceived as limited, restricted and excluded by hierarchical relations of power in the interaction student-teacher. According to Dewey, in his theoretical perspective about democracy in education, the integration of an active participation must be deliberated and oriented to the student's flourishing and empowerment through participative experiences as individuals, and altogether with the school community. Considering the latter, students do not participate actively because they do not possess the power or a provided thrust that allow them to create and administrate, jointly with the teacher, their own learning process or being part of the planning and design in the subjects that are taught during these processes. As it was observed, teachers delimit in advance, organize and design the contents, the methodology and the learning strategies that will be used during the school year. As consequence, students are confined to be part of a process and a pre-established plan in which they had no contribution or opportunities to influence significantly as an integral component of their schooling. Some inquired students manifested their concerns when they were asked about the attitude of teachers in confront of the students' needs. Students were observed and heard several times demanding to being listened and evidencing their malaise because they felt silenced and excluded. Informal conversations with one student from SCHOOL A and another one from SCHOOL B altogether with a registered fieldnote inside a classroom of SCHOOL B

revealed student's discomfort regarding their participation within the classrooms and toward the teachers' attitudes:

Student G from SCHOOL A: [Just a few days ago I was talking with my Math teacher on behalf of my classmates, trying to *negotiate* with him if he can change the way he makes his lessons, the contents he teaches and the activities we do during his subject, I mean… we are always working with guides but he never explains better in order that everyone can understand that, but then then he continues with the another content and we are like… What? He always tells us what to do and we always listen to him and we are very respectful. Why can't he do the same for us? This is not the first time we try to talk with him.]

Student H from SCHOOL B: [Many times we have tried to talk with the science teacher because we have being doing monotonous things and, honestly, we don't understand too much. We usually complete activities from the book or we are writing from the whiteboard or from her PowerPoints, I asked her if we can do more fun stuffs and I suggested her to watch Interstellar, the movie, because it has to do with science, right? She said that she respects my opinion but, at the end, is she the one who decides. Then, she said that she will put the movie but that never happened.]

Fieldnote written from SCHOOL B: *Tuesday 11th March. English subject and classroom. Morning lesson with 8th graders. One student raises her hand trying to ask something to the teacher. The student asked if they could watch a movie in English but with Spanish subtitles so they could learn more from reading subtitles. According to the student, this was something that the teacher assured to do some days ago. The teacher refused her question and said that it is impossible to do what they want because she has already planned the lesson and said that that day they were meant to do something else. Surprisingly, the teacher said that she does not understand the point to tell her what to do, that they cannot tell her how to do her job.*

Although it is true that students are mostly excluded from active participation and decision-making in subjects or norms, there were also instances where students from SCHOOL B participated in creating something new, learning form the experiences and *by doing in community* as Dewey reflected on his thinking about schooling and learning. The students were part of their own learning process and established a relation of thrust and confidence with the teacher. In this instance of active participation and extensive communication between students and the teacher, the initial tensions reflected from repressive or power influences

observed in the use of uniforms or the avoidance of teacher in confront of the students' needs and ideas were not perceived. This instance of experimentation is reflected in this fieldnote:

Fieldnote from SCHOOL B: *The teacher created a project in the English subject named the week of the lesson plan – La semana de la planificacion de clases, in Spanish – during this week the students read the Chilean curriculum for compulsory school in year 8 and then for a whole week they have to work in groups planning the content, the methodology and the activities for that week. Students were active during this project and they took part in the design of their own learning process. In addition to the creation of the lessons in the English subject, they do the lessons playing the role as teachers. The teacher is, in every moment, a motivator, a guider and a provider of experiences who empowers students and makes them to think critically and as a group. This project is something unique that might be related with a democratic education due to, firstly, the thrust, faith and responsibility that teacher gives and demonstrate to the students so they feel comfortable organizing, planning and designing something that might seems the work of an adult. And secondly, because this initiative involves that students communicating upon action by doing activities, collaborating with each other and discussing mutual agreements which, as final outcome, overcome the boundaries established by the authority or the menace of repressive power.*

The sort of implemented democratic education in everyday school context goes hand-in-hand with the ideas of Hilary Putnam, who agree in several terms with the democracy in education elaborated by Dewey, but who also recontextualized Dewey's' work by incorporating the empowering conception in education for all the students allowing them to intellectually solve problems that are self-experienced in the social context of schooling (Putnam, 1990; Putnam, 1993). Additionally this initiative addresses a more contemporary idea of a democratic education, which not only regards the introduction of experiences for active participation in the school community, but also reconsiders the value of inclusion and diversity as essential. Thus having several students with different ideas and perspectives demands to transform their individual wants, personal ideas and thoughts into collective needs (Biesta, 2010; Noddings, 2007).

<u>External participation</u>

The second mode of participation in this study is named external participation, and belongs to the significant participation of the students in the school in a general context. This type of participation emerges from the instances that students have in order to significantly influence

within the administrative, normative and regulation processes. In this context, the Student Council is the entity that must represent the voice of the students and establish the link and the connection between the students, teachers and school authorities. The Student Council demonstrated constant involvement and interest to participate significantly and served as representatives of each student in both schools. According to the president of the Student Council of SCHOOL A, their duty involves that everyone respects and recognizes de democratic values and rights of the students. As it could be observed and perceived in both schools through the research process, the Student Councils are well constituted with representatives in each level and a president who worry about assisting to the meetings with other representatives deciding and scheduling further meetings where his or her presence is required. Through the participant observations of the researcher in the procedures of Student Unions in school A and B, and the held conversations with the participants of this meetings, it might be argue that the participation and influence of the Student Union – as it occur with the internal participation of the students during their classes – has a mundane, superficial and rigid nature. As consequence, Student Unions do not represent an utility for change, for transformation or restructuration of internal policies, norms and rules established by authority. The president of Student Union in SCHOOL B reflects over the several efforts of many students in order to convene and to exhibit their concerns and interest in confront with the excluding character of the school authorities based on a strong stance of power and hierarchical exertions.

Researcher: [What kind of influence do you think the Student Union has over the decisions that the school makes? Do you consider that the Student Union plays a role in planning of or in addressing the interests and perceptions of the students?]

President of Student Union in SCHOOL B: [We meet punctually with the representatives of every class every week. In these meetings I give them the opportunity to everyone to expose their problems, proposals and ideas to improve our life as students and in the school, in a general sense. However, every time we need to put the results of our meetings on display, we don't have the instances and chances that allow us to express ourselves as we want, we are not being listened, and only few teachers give us the opportunity to be more involved. Even when our proposals are heard, they are rarely considered or carried out, I personally don't feel myself included and I know that the same happens to many of us.]

<u>Parents and their influence in both schools</u>

The inclusion of parents in Chilean education has been historically seen as informative and economic level. After the application of the LGE and its attempts to include parents more efficiently in the discussion of the internal normative of schools, parents have constantly waiting for the opportunity to participate for change and to be able to include their ideas, demands and interests facing the norms and rules that influence the life their sons and daughters. The results of this research reveal that in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B parents participate in the discussion of what seems to be better for their own kids, however, this form of participation works as an individual stage, and the benefits of an insightful and collective participation of parents in order to achieve changes and new approaches as institutional level are completely excluded and ignored by the school authorities. Parents usually gather in the monthly Parent's meeting organized by the lead teacher of each year and level, but this instance function for informative purposes and to organize different activities where usually parents are required to contribute economically in benefits of their kids and that are associated with the leisure time of the students. The president of the Parents Council was asked about what are the functions and influences of the parents at an institutional level.

President of the Parents Council in SCHOOL B: [We have two opportunities to participate in the school; the first one is when we are called by the UTP or the Inspector General to inform us about the situation of our kids in the school, their grades and how they progress in the school. There we can work with the teachers thinking about what is better for them and what can we do as a family in order to improve their performance at the school. Then second one is that some parents offer themselves to organize different events and sometimes they participate in those events like presenting, dancing or as part of a stage play or celebrating the anniversary of the school.]

<u>Teachers and their democratic influence within the schools</u>

Maria Meza, a Chilean Professor of the Catholic University wrote in her article *What does democratic education means?* **(2013)** that the role of the teacher in a democratic education entails the provision of necessary participation for the all the member of the school community aiming to solve conflicts, allow communication and integration of all. Educator must serve as motivators, a guide and a supplier of democratic experiences which allow students to take actions over their own educational process. This means, as teachers, to put their efforts directed towards the empowerment of students, the make them flourish according

their intellect and to regard their agency as essential for individuals. However, as it was previously stated in this study, the participation and communication of students in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B have, to a large extent, a superficial, plain and monotonous character which does not represent a real empowerment or an intellectual emancipation of the students. These differences between the theorization of democratic education and the current state of Chilean schools might partially be explained by considering the role that the teachers fulfill in this problematic.

As it was previously mentioned, there exists a constant relationship of power in the interaction between teachers and students which directly affect the active participation and the communication in the students during their classes in different subjects. It has been observed that students can participate and to have a lower level of influence while they interact with the teachers, nevertheless when it comes to try to express themselves freely and at their own will, making their voices clear and active, the value of their proposals and ideas is diminished and oppressed just by the mere presence of the teacher as a form of authority. This means, that most teachers only recognize the superficial and trivial nature of participation but lay unaware of the significant and democratic value of it. Moreover the power and the hierarchical influence that teachers exert over students reflect a scant confidence on them and a lack of trust in all their actions. One teacher of SCHOOL A acknowledged the influence she has over, for example, the Student Union of the school, as she was part of the designed teachers in charge of monitor students. The teacher commented in this conversation with the researcher as follows:

Researcher: [What do you think about the influence of the teachers in the active participation of students? How do you think teachers help or affect students in their decisions and the way they should face their schooling?]

Teacher G: [I can tell you my own experience as former coordinator of the Student Union but I cannot talk on behalf of other teachers. The representatives of the Student Union are elected by the students and the head teacher of each level. The head teacher always picks that one student who stands out most because of his grades or good behavior. Generally is this student who keeps teachers informed regarding what happen in the meeting of the Student Union. I guess that they like to have a sort of *informant* inside the Student Union and, in that way, control if there is order, or emm… if the rules are respected, if they behave properly mostly… you know. I have never agreed with this because there are disputes and problems between the

students because of this, the group work breaks up and then it is segmented so the purpose of Student Union changes.

Researcher: [So you actually think that teachers significantly influence in the Student Union?]

Teacher G: [Yes but this isn't totally the teacher's influence that impact in the Student Union. – She originally says the name of the Inspector General– designated in the last meetings of the Student Union, one teacher that acts as a guide or counselor that supervise the work of the students in these assemblies. But to be honest, is that designated teacher the one who takes decisions and influences the proceeding of students' representatives and administration.]

As it might be understood from the last interview, the behavior of teachers facing the guidance of democratic experiences in the school, does not mainly represent an intentionally or voluntary will to dismantle and undermine the active participation of the students and their social and functional influence within the classroom. Rather, the little contact and the ignorance of teachers over fundamental concepts in a democratic education occur because the inner character of teaching as a profession, is also strongly influenced by hierarchical and power relations coming from the school authority, but mostly restricted and limited by the compulsory allocations expressed in the governmental programs and curricula. Thus the obligatory character of the educational programs and curricula constrains teachers to fully comply with the standard norms in education, its expressed structures and conceptions that might be contrary to the values and perceptions of teachers. Correspondingly, any sort of educational intentions becoming from teachers in order to democratize the schooling process, might be considerate as incompatible with the required governmental programs and curricula. The following extract of a conversation between the researcher and a teacher from SCHOOL A reflects on the disparity regarding the attempts of teachers to take control over their own teaching process and the governmental normative that exert pressure over the application of their own-designed programs and curricula.

Researcher: How do you see, from your perspective as teacher, the influence of authority and over the school? And how do think this affects the democratization of students' participation inside the school?

Teacher J: [That's not an easy question to answer, but I like it because I can reconsider my ideas about teaching while I reflect on your question…emm…as teacher I have to recognize that sometimes I play the role more as an authority with my students instead of guider or a

builder of democratic experiences, as you mentioned it yesterday. Unfortunately we as teachers must to adapt ourselves and our will, to the things that the school expect from us to do, but this goes beyond that because the school is governed by the state and it will arrange and set everything to fulfil the state's requirements. This is something like a lineal process involving those who demand and those who obey, where the ones who demand put their own objectives over those without voice, unfortunately the only disadvantaged from this situation are the students.]

In addition to the latter, the hierarchical organization of Chilean education and the premises of the school authority taking care of the interests and intentions of 'outsider' policy-makers who regard teachers as simple object of employment of educational programs and curricula, seem to be the overall tone in the inquired schools. The following conversation with one teacher of SCHOOL B evidences this vertical hierarchical relation affecting the performance of teachers:

Teacher G: [During the meeting of the Teacher Council some days ago, the theme in relation of the influence of the teachers over the content and the flexibility of the curricula was treated because students are not responding positively over certain contents in subjects and the way we approach to them as teachers, certainly this is the responsibility of teachers and authorities in general. So that day, - she gives the name of the another teacher - proposed in the Teacher Council some other alternatives to, you know, make the lessons more interesting or fun, so she proposed outdoor lessons in the backyard and to try to use the spaces of the school more efficiently, she said that it might be a good idea to have more fun and less dreary, monotonous alternatives and that we should tackle this as an institution level. The Principal asked us to please stick with the pre-established plans and programs, that is really difficult to do out of the norms of the schools and to authorize something like because it requires the parent's consent. He finally said that he would evaluate the proposal since he believed that it is important, but the evaluation never came and everything remains as always. The teachers? We don't have a say in this school.]

Chapter VI

Discussion

In this chapter the results obtained by the researcher inquiring in SCHOOL A and SCHOOL B are further discussed and analyzed. Although since the previous result's chapter was merged, at a certain extent, with discussion of the findings and post-analysis it is necessary to delve more into the discussion of how democracy was perceived according the participants of this research study by relating their perceptions on democratic education and what how it influences their everyday interaction. The results are examined regarding the research questions and the problematization previously highlighted in the introductory part of the research.

The Chilean State and its policy-makers

The research results demonstrated that the participation, collaboration and communication of the members of the school community in SCHOOL A and B are influenced and dependent of a hierarchic and vertical line of power relations. What was a appreciated during the stay in the field is that, at a certain extent, education still remain captured under the consequences of militarized and oppressive forms of power and control, characteristic of a period of dictatorship, forms that this time, are undermined by the excuse of living in democracy. Here, the top of this hierarchical vertical line is shared by the State and policy makers who have constantly influenced education since the return of the democracy with their neoliberal policies aiming individualism, production, privatization, performance and competence. These neoliberal strategies serve as a tool for legitimation of imaginary quality in education, that instead of reinforcing teaching, learning and the value of the social sphere in schools, have deteriorated pedagogy and disconnected the social participation of the school community by adding the economic value to the equation and enhancing the neoliberal discourse in pedagogic settings (Puiggrós, 1996, p. 6). The power relations are reflected in the neoliberal character of policy-makers designing the programs and curricula for every private or public school in Chile. Policy-makers and the Ministry of Education exert pressure and power to force schools to follow their designed programs and, thus, perpetuate the neoliberalism in education.

The School Authority

Thereupon the vertical line of power relations follows by having the school authority as the second level of power. At the school, authorities play a hierarchical role over the community and their main function is to foster, implement and safeguard the application of the programs and curricula. The school authority in its embedded and, perhaps, unintentionally eagerness to conduct the neoliberal application of these programs, have implemented repressive and controlling rules and norms that attempt to shape behavior and impose disciplinary sanctions. The repressive features of the school authority can be perceived in the imposition of school uniforms and the control over the physical appearance of the students, additionally this control extends over the mind of teacher and students, when the values of fear, threats and religion are applied. The school authority need obedient, submissive and silenced students, parents and teachers that go hand in hand with the conservative, productive and competitive nature of the their intended schools.

Teachers

Teachers occupy the third level of influence in this hierarchical line. Teachers have a controversial role due to their dominance as subjects that exert power over students, but also by being influenced by higher levels of hierarchy where obedience and the confrontation with their own values are reflected in the results of this research as conflictive. This perspective upon teachers responds over their current influence within the classroom and in conflict with their own plans or methodologies. The levels of forced acceptation were observed and heard in the discourse of the teachers facing the antidemocratic structures imposed by the school authority. To emphasize, when the social interaction between teachers and the school authority was observed, it was determined that teacher's significant participation, their active communication with students and the total integration of teachers in their place of work was simplistic, controlled, questioned and declining. In this sense, the labor of teachers obey norms and educational policies which foment production, performance and the incorporation of neoliberal policies that have, as conception of education, the quantifiable objectives and competitive and comparative international standards. However, the democratic value of teaching and the experiences of participating actively in community are not compatible with the neoliberal thought which abound in both Chilean schools. The current situation affecting the procedures of teachers puts individualism and production ahead of any form of democratic

education and it vanquishes the value of group collaboration, collective participation and the empowerment and production of critical thinking in students.

<u>Students and Parents</u>

Finally at the bottom of the vertical line lay the students and the parents as the last level of agency and without the necessary empowerment to leave from constant repression and control. Students have the Student Union as the only form of representation and voice within the boundaries of the school. However their function is exclusively limited to inform over external decisions, changes in the school program as well as organizing extracurricular activities for the rest of the students. Student and Parent Unions are a mere informative entity which do not represent a major group of force that allow students and parent to work along with teachers, collaborating with other members of the school community or to reinterpret and modify the normative, rules and the decisions promoted by the school authority. The democratic right of students and parents to exert influences within their own process of education, participating actively and significantly in school, was relegated to a social entity which does not represent the needs and interest of the marginalized and does not empower or raise their voice in order that they can be listened and considered as a meaningful part of the school community. The marginalized actors in the Chilean school have several predetermined roles which are not modifiable or interchangeable:

1) The teachers perform their duty as deliverers. They display, describe, dictate, dispose, mandate and organize. Therefore their perception as subject of inquiry in this research was partially regarded as repressive and controlling, in opposition with the characteristics of a democratic educator that might motivate, create, build, guide, dialogue and include.

2) Parent fulfil their roles as 'the person in charge' of the students, they are seen as economic contributors of the school and they are usually informed rather consult over any issues in the school. The relation of the parents and students is not seen from the family perspective, as a constituent component and fundamental for the development of the students in their educational process, therefore the family is not properly integrated to the discussion for decision-making or to participate actively together with school authority in order to make the school a more *democratic* place.

3) Students, in their role inside the classroom, receive and store information, they barely process and analyze, and additionally students obey and comply with the norms and rules.

A real democratic education in the Chilean context would involve the Habermasian discussion over the development of critical thinking and the motivation of students to act for change behaving as influential and emancipated beings. The kind of required critical thinking in education would be achieved if the school community could harmonize their inner interrelations toward an active communication and mutual collaboration. Thus, through active communication in the interaction between students, parent and teachers mutual agreement might be taken and it would facilitate a better comprehension of the experiences of each other. The democratic nature of the Chilean education should be seen merely as a set of processes with predetermined roles, instead it should provide the required experiences for active participation and different pedagogical structures which might allow to bringing up proper values and principles of a democratic education. One of the school missions is to make emphasis in the labor of the collectivity, the democratic consciousness formed around no oppressive interrelations.

The hierarchical relations of power and control infantilize and stigmatize students' participation by assuming that children and youth are not mentally prepared to confront educational problems. Schools do not know how to democratically respond facing the student's needs. Therefore when students are in their classrooms are constantly exposed to decontextualized subjects, dictation and memorization of content. Moreover the procedures of assessment created by teachers usually include school texts, questionnaires and instructions; these modes of assessing students are part of a routine and monotonous according to the students and do not include neither deep reflections on the analysis of their own formative process nor the utilization of critical thinking, debates, discussions on central issues for education and issues for change. There exist evident stresses in schools for building an education based on a rigid structure, obedience and an authoritarian discipline where the reiterative and normative discourses of teachers, in addition to the repressive and exclusive practices in the classroom, do not represent a propitious environment for an active participation. In this manner students' voices are not recognized, and what constitute their thinking and their feelings about their own educational process is not considered in decision-making. Contrarily, the same studies demonstrate that when students have had the right experiences to participate, they have proposed different activities to collaborate and discussed

different aspects linked to daily lessons or about disagreements in the contents of subjects. Undoubtedly students know how to interchange ideas and opinions with their equals, with their teachers and the members of the educational community in an organized, respectful and deliberative way; however, in the present they constantly demand participation within a deeper and wider context, they require opportunities for reflection and proper assessment, a critical and inclusive revision of curricular content and objectives which contribute on building social relations based on dialogue, respect, collaboration and active participation for the whole Chilean educational community.

Chapter VII

Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration in educational ethnography

On one side, doing ethnography research implies to take several ethical considerations before, during and after the fieldwork due to the close and complex interaction with the social life of individuals. On the other side educational ethnographer come into the life of the research participants and place themselves in the practicality of everyday school context. Under these considerations, doing education ethnography regards difficulties and it often represents dilemmas in ethnographer on how to behave ethically while performing research, especially if one might expect to follow the rigidity of institutional guidelines or structured ethical self-impositions. However most of the ethical considerations are taken into account by ethnographers even before they gain access to the field by endeavors of constant reflexivity over the principles that might safeguard and secure the integrity of research participants and the integrity of them as researchers (Dennis, 2010). One of the first ethical considerations that were taken in this study regards the protection of the trust negotiated with school authority which granted access to the field, and the trust gained with the participants through mutual respect, participation and confidence. It must be acknowledged that to respect the initial agreements and promises made with the school authority was a difficult task. The research outcomes were not beneficial or fair for all the members of the school community, especially for school authority. The researcher attempted to not misrepresent or exacerbate any local tension in order to not cause harm, deceive or to hurt any member of the schools. However facing the current manifestations of power and hierarchy in school and the fundamental

purpose of the research, it was the duty of the ethnographer to collect the voices of the individuals who had been marginalized, excluded and deliberately silenced by the authority. It was the duty of the ethnographer to expose the causes, the responsibles and the consequences of that their voices were repressed. In this sense, the initial negotiated trustworthiness with school authority was not properly managed by the researcher and authorities were unethically exposed by the subjectivity of the ethnographer according his previous thoughts and values. Nevertheless the trust and confidence gained in the field with parents, students and teachers were considered as a sensitive issue and protected during the whole process of research In order to avoid deceiving participants, and they were constantly reminded of the voluntary, willing and participatory nature of the research but also the purpose of it as a subject of study.

The sensitivity of trustworthiness was reflected according the respect the ethnographer had regarding the constructed meaningful relationships with the participants rather to put their signatures in a contract as symbolic compromise. Accordingly, the whole process of data collection was allowed by willingness to participate and to express freely during the conversations instead of propose pre-established consents. (Bresler, 1996) Two other ethical considerations were taken into account during the course of the research. The first one was related with the lack of equilibrium existing in the relationship between researchers and researched, where one might influence over the other by unbalanced levels of power and agency or represent biases. Moreover during interviews, this lack of equilibrium might result on stressful or uncomfortable situations where participants might feel forced or that their principles and values are distant from the researcher's questions, therefore the relations of power were considered important and there was a proper reflection regarding the questions posed during the interviews. The second ethical consideration was that exploitation of participants was avoided. In this sense reciprocity and respect of the life and privacy of the individuals were essential (Creswell, 2014). Research participants of both school communities kept the conception of what entails a democratic education and they could actively participate and express themselves through the process of research. The reciprocity of their collaboration was the provision of a voice and a careful listening of their needs. Participants were heard, included and regarded as significant beings. Finally the ethics of confidentiality and anonymity were also considered as important in this study. On the one hand anonymity of participants was impossible to achieve due to the nature of the research, its methodology and the strategies utilized for data collection. On the other hand, the confidentiality of participants and the non-disclosure of their answers were partially achieved. Intending to address real,

empirical and honest perceptions of the participant's social world, some of the interviews were explicitly exposed in the result's section without the whole consent of, for example, all the students and several parents. This decision has been appreciated from an ethical perspective and not made without considerable thinking and concern to possible consequences. Nevertheless the identity of the physical context – namely the city where the research was carried out and the names of the two inquired schools – was protected with code names. The same occurred with the names of the participants, who were only identified without individual or personal names, using capital letters in order to protect their identity and not cause harm, pain, embarrassment or any other possible consequence that might negatively influence the life of the members of the school community.

Conclusion

In comparison with previous studies, the emerging results from this research indicate that the understanding of what might be seen as a proper conception of democracy vary among the interviewees. Democracy is still conceived as a sociopolitical state of the society which influences the culture and the way people live in Chile. Nevertheless the features of an education centered in democratic values and the virtues of participating actively and democratically remain unknown for both school communities. According the observed and the answers of the participants, the imposition of school uniforms, dress coding and the extreme formalism in both schools represent clear forms of power exertion, control and remaining attempts to militarize the character of students and teachers. There were several attempts in both schools from some teachers to democratize their lesson by trying to include, empower and motivate students to make their voices valid and significant, something that was linked to the expressions of tolerance, democracy and respect expressed in the LGE and in the Deweyan perspective of education. However the perceived overall participation, communication and collaboration between students, parent and teachers was regarded as miserly and scant. Additionally participation is influenced by hierarchical relations and exertion of power preventing student's empowerment and agency by impeding the participation of student and any meaningful collaboration and influence of parents in decision-making. Additionally by generalizing the findings in SCHOOL A it might be argue that, in contrast with secular public schools, private Catholic education in the Chilean context function over exertion of fear, thread and conservatism, Catholic schools use religion as a tool of power by favoring the word of the Bible over democratic choices and deliberate participation of students and teachers. Freedom of expression is undermined and the voice of

the students is restricted and silenced. The findings in SCHOOL A represent major forms of transgressions to what entails a democratic education and the proposals of the LGE. The participation in Student and Parent Unions was not considered as significant, efficient or meaningful because they function at an informative level rather than a consultative or decisive level of active participation. Parents are usually seen as economic contributors and students lack the necessary thrust, confidence and responsibility from teachers and school authorities. Finally, the presence of the ethnographer in the field and the research study itself marks a turning point in the life of school members of both schools. Teachers became more aware about the democratic value of teaching. The benefits of an active participation and an education centered in democratic processes were appreciated by students and parents. The school authorities recognized the positive engagements of group communication and mutual collaboration. It is essential that during the formation of teachers and other agents that will work in a nearly future in educational settings have an appropriate education based on democratic concepts and the theory of what might be now perceived as a democratic education, beginning with the importance of Dewey and the relation of the school with democratic processes. In confront of the several perceived influences of power, control and hierarchy impacting the life of students and other members , it would be important that student might be able to learn the sort of critical pedagogies and seen in the works of Freire and Habermas respectively. These perspectives would orientate the school community to develop critical and constructive thinking in a deliberate and constantly way. Accordingly, the application of concepts related with a real democratic education might be fundamental for obtaining an active participation, collaboration and communication. The present investigation might serve as a basis for future research in the study of school participation and democracy as well as it might be the initial point of departure of an action research project attempting to democratize education involving different methodologies or theoretical frameworks.

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