Mapping the ethnographic journey: A 'road map' for novice researchers wanting to engage in ethnography, critical theory and policy analysis.

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Abstract

In this article, the *researcher* narrates the issues faced by novice researchers in choosing the correct lenses to conduct research when searching for the truth via the use of qualitative methodology. It is argued that choosing an appropriate research approach and methodology can be described as an 'arduous' journey. For the inexperience

course from beginning to end but the quest for new knowledge overcomes obstacles faced thereby enabling the traveller to transcend the actual. The ethnographic journey narrated here, describing the struggle to embrace qualitative research, using research the use of metaphors, using appropriate theory, critical praxis, lens, research as crithe characteristics of qualitative research, the emancipatory paradigm, appropriating critical theory, ethnography, 'partial ethnography', 'policy ethnography', 'critical policy ethnography', entering the field, managing reciprocal relationships, 'purposeful conversations', interviewer skills, ethical issues, ascertaining the truth and reflexitivity, serves as a useful 'road map' for other novice researchers wanting to embrace ethnographic research.

Part A: The journey begins . . .

As the *researcher* embarked on his chosen project, his first qualitative project as a student researcher, he sought a simple but concise article or text that would assist him overcome some common obstacles   , 2001, p. 1) that confront novice qualitative researchers. This was not an easy task because researchers
alternative ways of conceiving reality and legitimating forms of knowledge and social

Michael, 1997, p. 8). In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also argue that there are multiple ways of observing and explaining social and other phenomena. These views posed a serious dilemma for the *researcher* but h   ) article entitled: *The journey of a beginning researcher*. This article proved to be an invaluable source of assistance and helped to overcome some of the obstacles that the *researcher* encountered on several occasions during his journey.

Stage one: Embracing qualitative research—initial obstacles

The *researcher's* initial readings of the copious literature on qualitative research intrigued him. He became enmeshed in a quagmire of alien terminology. He was oblivious of the fact

cal evolutions within the social

According to Coombs (1995):

> These inquiries each emphasise dissimilar variations of data analysis as found in their subsequent conclusions obtained from and during the research process. These include a veritable cornucopia of methodologies, paradigms and methods. (p. 1)

researcher with the basis for self-reflection. Reflecting on his limited previous research experience, he came to the conclusion that his knowledge of qualitative research was too simplistic in nature. It lacked any significant depth and understanding. This fact became a great cause for concern. Literally, he had ventured into the unknown world of qualitative research.

The *researcher* also had to bear in mind that what he wanted for his research project was a richer understanding of teacher performance management
experiences of performance management. What he was seeking was an account from teachers who were positioned to make credible meanings of a world currently not inhabited by himself. Thus, it became imperative that his research project should adopt an approach to make sense of what he was doing.

Using metaphor to find a theoretical way

An early struggle on this epic journey was the difficulty of understanding the place of theory in research. The *researcher* was of the view that theory provided a discourse and a vocabulary to describe and use in order to make sense of what researchers think.
The handbook of qualitative research,
helped the *researcher* to view the place of theory in his research project. For Richardson (1994
deconstruction, framework, form, and so on)

Richardson is supported by Lakoff (1993) who proposes the idea of metaphor as a means of mapping how we think and reason.
not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualise one mental domain in terms of
rch writing rests both on how
researchers make meaning and how they communicate their understandings, it becomes essential to consider how metaphors may illuminate and illustrate meaning (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p. 112). In this sense, a metaphor is a tool that moves both the researcher and the reader away from predictable lines of seeing. Thus, a metaphor can be viewed not only as a function of creative thought, capable of jolting researchers into new ways of

offers a structure that aids us in establishing a relationship between something that we already know and something else we are attempting to understand. Metaphors are particularly useful when attempting to explain abstract concepts

Downing, 1997, p. 113)

Because the *researcher's* project was concerned with issues of control, authority and power str *researcher's* intention to illuminate and illustrate these issues in the context of performance management from a new metaphorical angle. He began to consider theory as a map that would guide his decisions and give him direction as he tried to navigate his way through qualitative research.

Explaining the metaphor

In the *researcher's* project, theory provided the background for research and it also represented the ideas that the research project would uncover. In doing so, theory did not approach any kind of objective reality, but aimed to give an understanding of that reality. This was because different theories posit and subscribe to different epistemological and ontological assumptions that comprise and provide distinctions about the research process (Guba, 1990). Similarly, maps do not show reality, but merely represent it. Researchers have to apply what they see on the map in order to effectively take cognisance of their surroundings. The manner in which the individual perceives these surroundings is dependent upon individual experiences. Theory also provided a discourse and a vocabulary to use and describe what researchers thought. It becomes ineffective if researchers do not know how to apply it. Maps also become ineffective if researchers cannot interpret what they are saying (McCotter 2001).

Another similarity relates to the abundance of maps and theory. There are numerous maps in circulation, each serving a unique purpose. For example, there are road maps, topographical maps, political maps, and geographical maps each drawn to serve a particular function. Also, different maps encompass different ranges of area. McGee and Warms (1996) inform novice researchers that numerous theoretical models have been generated b

Utilising the metaphor

The *researcher's* first task was to conceptualise the theoretical framework for his research journey. As stated earlier, he wanted to situate the research experience within the qualitative paradigm. With this point in mind, he concluded that he needed a personal map to guide him. This map would provide the base from which he could begin. This being so, his first task was

controlling force in research. Decisions about design, measurement, analysis, and reporting all flow from purpose. Therefore, the first step in a research process is getting clear about

basis on which d   *researcher* believed that a sound understanding of a critical theory would aid his understanding of what teachers were now saying about performance management.

What do we mean by theory?

Theory, considered in a broad sense, is basic to the way people make sense of the world. The making and using of theories is seen by Smith (1994) as the basis of human knowledge. He views learning as the construction of increasingly complex sets of such schemata. Theory has manifestations in everyday life   in the assumptions, biases and stances that are part of all our activities. Wolcott (1990) observed that:

> Most people do not think in terms of grand design or regard themselves as theory builders . . . Personally, however, I am of the view that every human being is a profound theory builder, so long as the activity is defined to include the myriad

> life. (cited in Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p. 227)

Researchers often distinguish the popular use of th

personal philosophy and intuitive hunches to implicit assumptions, guesses, and suspicions

make coherent what otherwise appears as disparate and disconnected individual events. Theory is no means through which we learn lessons that can apply to situations we have yet

researche

However, within the qualitative paradigm, there are also differences of opinion as to the
                                                                                                who
are closer to the postmodern, constructivist and interpretive positions (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997). Comprehending these differences became less difficult for the *researcher*
                                                                        n theory. His account
amplified the *researcher's* feelings about theory and its use. Ball (1991) distinguished

                                                                ntains that this debate over the
nature and purpose of theory is actually a debate over the nature and purpose of the social sciences.

only be or can be best kno

mode where there is understanding and insight. As a result, he describes his work as

be viewed as a means to understanding and insight. Seen in this light, theorising functions as
-conscious replication of the processes of knowing and making sense which are

According to Ely, Vinz, Anzul and Downing (1997), theories:
> provide us with sets of eyeglasses through which we look at the world . . . [and] may bring into focus, sharpen, and angle for us our understanding of what might otherwise be a blurred stream of perception . . . sometimes hamper us, can cut off angles of vision, peripheral or otherwise. (p. 228)

Thus, theories enable researchers to structure their knowledge of their discipline or profession and they guide researchers in their choice of a focus for research. They can select sets of lens that will help them to see up close or at a distance, different sets for different purposes. Having ascertained what theory was, the *researcher* was now confronted with the problem of

Choosing the correct lens

Encouraged by this new-found knowledge of theory, the *researcher* set out to locate the different approaches to theory, more so, for one that would suit the purpose of his research project. As stated earlier, his project embraced the qualitative paradigm. The *researcher's* reading of the literature on qualitative research revealed that this type of research was subjected to shift through five periods or moments which are all acting on and within the present. Denzin and Lincoln (1994a) described these periods as the traditional period (1900s to World War II); the modernist phase (post-war to 1970s); blurred genres (1970 to 1986); crisis of representation (1986 to early 1990s); and the postmodern present (early 1990s to present). This movement of qualitative research resulted in an increase in the number of paradigms that scholars could now draw from.

Paradigm, in this context, refers to an interpretive framework or a set of beliefs that guide
temological and ontological premises
which   regardless of ultimate truth or falsity   become partially self-
1972, p. 314). Thus, paradigm refers to the focus of research and related ways of approaching inquiry (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Instead of working out of a particular paradigm, some scholars draw from more than one paradigm; for example, Patti Lather works at the intersection of post-positivism, critical theory, postmodernism, and feminism. However, Denzin and Lincoln (1994a) argue that all qualitative research is interpretive, guided by a set

the most general, four major interpretive paradigms structure qualitative research: positivist-postpositivist, constructivist-interpretivist, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), feminist-

chosen to identify and divide the major paradigms in different ways. An alternate set of paradigms include: functionalist, interpretive, critical and postmodern.

The *researcher* also discovered that qualitative research was an umbrella term that had numerous variations. Depending on the writer, such variations could be called orientations (Tesch, 1990), theoretical traditions (Patton, 1990), strategies of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a,b), genres (Wolcott, 1990), or major traditions (Jacob, 1988). The issue of variety is elaborated by Tesch (1990, p. 58), who presents a list of forty-five approaches to qualitative

research. Her list is a mix of designs (action research, case study), data analysis techniques (content analysis, discourse analysis), and disciplinary orientations (ethnography, oral history). The *researcher* was now confronted with the problem of deciding which of these

h aided in solving this problem.

Lather (1994, p. 105) depicts various paradigms of the qualitative and arranges them according to purpose. The column for

ist

exclusive approach to generating and legitimati   rest to the *researcher* was   ing on the purpose of his research project, one of the primary areas of focus was the emancipation of teachers and this paradigm seemed most appropriate. However, it must be stated that the *researcher's* interest in this tradition was influenced solely by the purpose of his research project, rather than its identifying label. Another motivating factor leading to the endorsement of the emancipatory paradigm in the *researcher's* project resulted

discusses

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Educational research as critical praxis

core of emancipatory social science is the dialectical, reciprocal shaping of both the practice of praxis-oriented research and the development of emancipatory theory. Lather (1988) maintains that:

> In praxis-oriented inquiry, reciprocally educative process is more important than product as empowering methods contribute to consciousness-raising and transformative social action. Through dialogue and reflexivity, design, data, and theory emerge, with data being recognised as generated from people in a relation. (p. 572)

She also states that there are three interwoven issues in the quest for empowering issues to inquiry:

- the need for reciprocity;

- dialectical theory building versus theoretical imposition; and
- issues of validity in praxis-oriented, advocacy research. (Lather, 1988, p. 572)

In his research project, the *researcher's* task was to look at critical efforts toward empowering research designs, focussing mostly on his own empirical efforts to study performance management as a means of teacher evaluation. In other words, his research project developed a critical dialogue with teachers based on an emancipatory intent. In a similar vein, Hollingsworth and Sockett (1994) characterised the *researcher's* impulse toward critical praxis within the teacher research movement as:

work], a concern with teacher autonomy, and a growing understanding of

knowledge as a source of power in society created through an ideological convergence which provides a clearer realisation of the interconnected nature of knowledge, research and practice. (p. 9)

Sirotnik (1991) defines critical inquiry, in this context, as taking an ethical stance, committed to empowerment. The *researcher's* project had
relation to performance management. Thus, this critical inquiry called for a purposeful investigation into the values and beliefs s   knowledge and conscious consideration of the emancipatory intent before they could be adopted.

active dialogue. It acknowledges that our reality as researchers is so complex and that there are many sources of truth which must be woven together to generate our understanding. According to Sirotnik (1991):

> If we interpret dialectical methodology broadly as a knowledge-building process where what is presumably known is continually re-known through questioning, arguing, counter arguing, reflecting, challenging, contradicting, reconciling, modifying, revising, and so forth, then we can acknowledge and celebrate more formally what teachers already do and could do even better as they use and generate knowledge in the context of practice. (p. 247)

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Smith (1994) likewise recognise the importance of a community of communicators:

> We have defined intellectual communities of teacher researchers as networks of individuals who enter with others into a search for meaningful work lives and who regard their research as part of larger efforts to transform teaching, learning and schooling. (p. 32)

Sirotnik (1991) also suggests that to be critical, an inquiry must begin with a definition of current circumstances, followed by an exploration of the historical events leading to these circumstances. This is followed by delving into the values and beliefs involved, the interests being served by the situation.

Thus far, the *researcher* has narrated his initial struggle to endorse an appropriate empowering approach to inquiry in his research project. The *researcher* now turns his attention to elaborating on some of the characteristics of qualitative research for he believes it

Characteristics of qualitative research

Some scholars and researchers engaged in research tend to be guided by the assumptions

have implications for doing qualitative research. Listed below are some of these
Naturalistic inquiry (1985,
pp. 14   *Qualitative research for education* (1992, pp. 29 33):

- *emphasis on qualitative methods*: Researchers most often use qualitative methods because of their ontological and epistemological assumptions. These methods include participant-observation, interviewing, and document analysis;

- *research done in field (natural) setting*: The researcher carries out research in the field   in the natural setting   to develop contextual and in-depth understandings;

- *human instrumentation*: The researcher(s) uses herself/himself as the primary data-gathering instrument instead of so-   ;

- *non-random (purposive, theoretical or representative) sampling*: Because of their interest in developing in-depth, contextual understandings about a particular topic or

  ;

- *open-ended, emergent design*: Researcher tends to use an open-ended design so that important understandings/insights are not foreclosed and overlooked. For example, research questions may be substantially modified during the course of the study and
  ;

- *grounded (inductive) generalisations/theory*: While some articulated theoretical notions (theory, perspective, assumptions) may guide research, understandings and generalisations are primarily grounded in the data collected and analysed. Further studies may be used for verification;

- *qualitative research is descriptive*: Data are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Data include interview notes and transcripts, fieldnotes and transcripts, photographs, memos and videotapes;

- *'sensemaking' is the primary focus*   -
              ways in which people make sense of their worlds;

- *inductive and deductive data analysis*: Although variously informed by theoretical notions, data are generated inductively and tested deductively in an ongoing or
              ;

- *negotiated interpretations*
  participate in the data analysis, that is, in developing as well as testing understandings/interpretations/generalisations;

- *tentativeness in generalising*: To the extent they generalise, researchers are likely to be
                                             ;

- *case study/multiple case study reporting mode*: In contrast to traditional reporting, many researchers use narratives and stor

- *multivocality in reporting*: In reporting their findings, researchers are inclined to represent the diverse voices of multi-
  narratives and quotations;

- *reporting and textual voice*: Some researchers are careful to distinguish their voices

              ; and

- *evaluation*: Traditional evaluation criteria, such as validity and reliability are still stressed though their form may change shape (many members of critical, constructivist and postmodern schools of thought reject these criteria in the evaluation of their work, preferring alternative methods, such as multivoiced texts, personal responsibility, verisimilitude).

In his research project, the *researcher* too was guided by many of the above characteristics of qualitative research. To summarise, his research project aimed at understanding and representing teache   which are often obscured or neglected. The *researcher* had to articulate
evaluation in an illuminating language understandable by all. He had to describe and explain the complex trajectory that performance management followed and the outcomes resulting from such policies; and by using qualitative research, he looked carefully at the nature and effects of performance management as it was

The next discussion briefly examines the emancipatory paradigm in qualitative research. In doing so, it describes the lens that the *researcher* had to employ in this research project and the finding of his theoretical route. Emanating from this discussion, the *researcher* presents an account of critical theory. This account examines why he appropriated critical theory in his research project and some of the philosophical underpinnings of critical theory. He also presents
latter serves to reinforce the emancipatory intent of his research project. He then proceeds to discuss ethnography and policy ethnography. This discussion has two purposes: firstly, it argues for the use of ethnography in his research project; and, secondly, it sets the foundations for the continuation of his ethnographic journey.

The emancipatory paradigm

By emancipation the *researcher* refers to the liberation of people resulting from social action. That is, people become emancipated, through their reflection and their own social action, from an oppressive, problematic situation. Through the use of emancipatory theory, people rationally and freely determine the direction of their own lives by changing and improving their situation on a daily basis. In this case, theory becomes embedded in everyday life.

research is value-laden and is inevitably political, since it represents the interests of particular

and marginalised groups in society. Also, these groups are considered subjects, rather than objects of the research. The primary purpose of research is to develop a better understanding of the world in order to change it. Lather (1991) describes this concern as such:

> -   -oriented
> inquirers see emancipatory knowledge . . . [which] increases awareness of the
> contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings, and in doing so it
> directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation. (p. 52)

In a similar vein, Bernstein (1976) states that the experience of emancipation is the result of critical insight, through self-reflection, into the relationships of power, so that quasi-causes can be determined and remedied. However, this is only possible if theory is not abstract and obscure but accessible and translated into everyday life (hooks, 1994).

the oppressive

in which dominant groups come together to form a bloc and sustain leadership over

meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and

5). Apple (1990, p. 11) goes on to explain that because hegemony is so total, it becomes part of the daily, taken-for-granted actions that are part of everyday life. These actions are not

necessarily identified as oppressive, particularly by the oppressors. He also suggests that

Another major theme of emancipatio
maintains that resistance emphasises that individuals are not simply acted upon by abstract
structures prevalent in modern society. To make sense of resistance, they have to negotiate,
struggle and c

the
ideology or ascribed roles of society. Sometimes, this opposition can successfully allow
people to create new roles which were not formerly part of the culture; at other times, the
opposition can close doors for individuals by precluding any interaction with dominant

(1995) does not totally negate
ls as resistant sets up a binary between
oppression and resistance, and does not leave open space for another option, where systemic
n McCotter, 2001, p. 8). In his research project, the
researcher found resistance an important and useful concept because primarily the project
was
policy.

The *researcher's* project was guided in several ways by the traditions of emancipatory
research. It was here that the theme of resistance was the key. The *researcher* observed
teacher resistance to hegemonic practices in two ways in his research project:
- Some of the participants in the study resisted accepting the traditional functions of
  evaluation.
- By including the voices of his participants in his research, the *researcher* tried to resist
  the traditional paths of an independent researcher who is a disembodied, neutral
  authority.

The *researcher* was also guided by what Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983) had to say about

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- their concern with social theory encompasses such issues as the nature of social structure, power, culture and human agency; and
- criticality intend their research to refine social theory and change social structures, rather than merely describe social life. (p. 3)

The above tendencies strongly echoed the *researcher's* perspective of the world. Further motivation to endorse this theoretical perspective stemmed from his reading of Weiler (1988) who maintains that these theorists:

> share a concern with the relationship between individual and oppressive social structure; demonstrate the tensions between paradigms of production and reproduction as theoretical approaches; and emphasise that social structure and knowledge are socially constructed and therefore open to contestation and change. (p. 4)

With this in mind, the *researcher* now proceeds to describe the second stage of his journey. Stemming from the first stage of his journey, he was now confident that he was headed in the right direction   towards critical theory. In this stage of the journey, he discusses why he appropriated critical theory in his research project.

Stage two: Critical theory

Appropriating critical theory
As stated previously, the aim of the *researcher's* project was to critically examine the experiences and perceptions of teachers in relation to performance management as a means of evaluation. The rationale for this study lay in the use of a critical theory approach in responses to performance management because most people will always be subject to, and therefore interested in, oppression. Critical theory has the potential to open personal perspectives to important questions of self and schools, the character of teacher extent possible, the ways in which all forms of teacher evaluation affect the consciousness, conscientiousness, and freedoms of people and the environments in which they work (Nichols, 1990).

Most importantly, perhaps, people need to continually try to understand why it is that they have become enmeshed in power relationships. In struggling with this most important of questions, perhaps people can do justice to teachers who a

policy makers can consistently have honest and open conversations about issues of evaluation, researchers will have begun to make progress in understanding this contentious

In other words, the *researcher* used a critical theory approach in his research project to:
- acknowledge that research was theory-driven. This had afforded him opportunities of choice and multiple avenues of exploring the issue of teacher performance management in South Australia;
- illustrate that there was a link between theory and value. He was opposed to the use
;

- accept   ies narrated in this research project were by no
                                                                                        only
  partial stories intende

- defend the partiality and engagement, by making use of the arguments of critical theory in relation to conventional research.

The *researcher* explains the use of critical theory in greater detail in the next section where he examines the philosophical underpinnings of critical theory.

Critical theory examined

1997, p. 20). In other words, critical theory questions the manner in which social and institutional power relations have come to be and ascertains whether these power relations are

better. For Horkheimer (1972)
oppositional and which is involved in a struggle for social change and the unification of theory and practice.

Critical theory examines social and political phenomena as total entities and not as separate

which leads towards the construction of a larger picture of the whole . . . to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole a
Nicholls, Ozga & Pollard, 1997, pp. 20 21). Thus, in educational policy, for example, performance management, critical policy does not attempt to provide solutions to the problems that teachers are encountering. Here, the critical theorist must endeavour to engage in research activity that is associated with social justice. The research must critique and

and practices underlining such policies that limit freedom, social justice and democracy.

Furthermore, according to Menter, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga and Pollard (1997), critical theory in relation to education policy can contribute to research in three ways:
1. It can draw attention to and challenge the assumptions informing policy and it can expose the effects of policy on the ground, in particular where policies increase inequality and impact unfairly on particular groups.

2. Research can set out how injustices are produced, reproduced and sustained.

3. Research can provide illumination of injustice and inequity that assists change

   outcomes and indicators. (p. 21)

                                                           nter-relationship between organisational

critical work is important because it:
- questions the common sense view within the literature that [schools] are objective realities that can be controlled towards particular goals;

- emancipate[s] those who are disciplined through objective power structures by questioning the power base of those located within privileged elite positions;

- problematises language, practice, beliefs and what are current and taken for granted assumptions about [school] realities and structures;

- reveal[s] the existence of contradictions and dilemmas within [schools] and the productive contribution of conflict;

- provides alternative ways of understanding [school] reality as a meaning of supporting critical evaluation; and

- supports practice through moving beyond tasks and techniques by conceptualising action within a social and political context. (1987, pp. 6 9)

Stemming from what Menter, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga and Pollard (1997) and Gunter (2001) had to say about critical theory and critical thinking, the *researcher* made the following comments: My
of performance management policy as being implemented in South Australian public schools by illustrating how it affected teachers. The research project also informed readers of the manner in which the text of the *Performance management guidelines* had placed considerable constraints on public school teachers in South Australia. Finally, the research project
r evaluation.
To summarise, my research project adopted a critical theory approach which gave a particular

s a critical view of new management discourses to be foregrounded; one that reads the underlying principle as

Ozga & Pollard, 1997, p. 15). This being so, how can critical theory lead to the possible emancipation of teachers?

Critical theory and the possible emancipation of teachers

According to Usher (1996), the aim of critical inquiry is to critique and transform the dominant structures within society. It seeks to identify and reveal the beliefs and practices limiting freedom, justice and democracy. The prime motivation driving this process is restitution of rights and privileges of dispossessed and oppressed groups. Critical theory seeks a more just society in terms, not only of all people having equal access to the good things of life, but also and perhaps more importantly, of people being in cultural, economic and political control of their lives. Critical theory privileges the values of dialogue, communication and
This establishes the principles under which dialogue about substantial moral norms and
, and

importance of teacher engagement with policy that was the subject of the *researcher's* project.

However, it must be remembered that the critical theorist does not regard research as a process of adding to existing knowledge so much as engaging in a dialectical revision of existing understandings with the aim of subjecting them to intense scrutiny and re-examination. This is exactly what the *researcher's* project aimed to do. It scrutinised and re-examined the current issue of teacher evaluation in the present context. Thus, critical research in teac   informed by principles of social justice. It was not simply a matter of challenging the existing practice of teacher evaluation, but of seeking to

understand what made this practice exist in the form it did, and challenged that, whilst

review and persistent questioning.

Therefore, critical theory mirrors the broad aims of the emancipation itself and it requires individuals (teachers) to understand themselves as producers of, and products of, the social world (Peters, 1977). Peters also argues tha
to reject conformity and dogma, and be willing to learn and revise opinions when confronted

Personal values must impact on social research because critical researchers cannot separate their work from their lives and contexts (Firestone, 1990, p. 122). Thus, the selection of a research question and how it is framed is likely to derive from personal concerns, interests and values. Also, Firestone (1990) has sought to clarify the purposes of critical research as follows:

1. Research to achieve value-free knowledge with no larger political intention at all.

2. Research as social control in which the inquiry is conducted from within existing power structures as a means of exercising control over the rest of society.

3. Research as social engineering in which knowledge is sought that will improve the lives of those deemed [marginalised] by those in power.

4. Research as advocacy of the interests of the [marginalised]. This is conducted from outside the existing power structures. The interests of the disempowered and [marginalised] are promoted and presented to the power elites who may or may not take notice of the research.

5. Research as a means of educating the [marginalised]. Here the research provides the means by which the [marginalised] sections of society come to a realisation that their status is not natural, necessary or inevitable. This realisation, and resultation liberation is reached via research and education.

6.   here the fundamental changes to existing social, economic and political structures are needed, and how to accomplish them. (p. 119)

The purpose of critical research in the *researcher's* project was located primarily in the third and fourth points above. The research project questioned the prevailing power relations being played out within the arena of teacher performance management and questioned how it served the interests of teachers (or not)   one which involved a framework of empowerment; one which gave voice to the subjects. It also examined how power relations in the educational workforce have led to the alienation and demoralisation of teachers. It has also meant the loss of autonomy for teachers. The *researcher* believed that critical theory could lead to the

(Menter, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga & Pollard, 1997, p. 19). To elaborate, Linklater (1992, p. 83) informs us that critical theorists rely on discourse ethics to change the world. Thus, critical theory is concerned with ways to overcome the exclusionary situation in the world as

it is, by emancipation. To solve this problem
of discourse ethics (Devetak, 1996, p. 179), in which Habermas distinguishes between a technical-instrumental interest on learning that enables humans to extend control over nature; a moral-practical interest through which humans learn how to achieve more consensual relations; and an emancipatory interest that leads to the identification of unnecessary confinements and constraints (Ashley, 1981, pp. 204 236). The *researcher* was of the opinion that the emancipatory interest should be the driving force of the discourses that he mentioned above. The emancipatory interest could lead to, the *researcher* believed, a moral-learning, for example questions on exclusion and inclusion derived from a decision (teachers and policy making) within a society. Thus, educational conflicts could be resolved by discourse ethics, thereby enabling critical theorists to advocate for and pursue some form of action for change in the world. These discourse ethics are fostered by the application of ethnography as a research tool.

The next section, stage three of the journey, the *researcher* focuses on ethnography. He describes the philosophical underpinnings of ethnography, explains
and argues why the research project was   ethnographic study. Leading from this discussion, he provides an explanation and discu
researcher also illustrates

Stage three: Using ethnography in the research project

Ethnography and 'partial ethnography'

As stated in the introductory sections of this narrative, the *researcher* wanted to situate his research within the critical paradigm. It was for this reason that he had to envisage a research tool that would meet the demands of the research project as well as be potentially emancipatory for all involved. The research method he
ethnography. As a way of introducing his understan   cy   , the *researcher* wishes to elaborate on the epistemological underpinnings of ethnography. ethnography first, followed by a discussion on ethnography,
              and then proceeds   critical policy   in order to fully comprehend the rationale for the choice of this research method.

The epistemological underpinnings of ethnography

Ethnography, as an approach to qualitative research, has its origin in the discipline of anthropology. Under the influence of Malinowski (1922), traditional ethnography was

anthropology and sociology, which have argued for its importance as a research method to
                              er & Asher, 1988, p. 39). For the *researcher*, ethnography was a method of inquiry which involved direct and sustained contact with teachers, thereby enabling him to write about their experiences of performance management. Through the use of narratives, he provided
in a disciplined and deliberate recording of their   in the lives of teachers, he provided
comprehension of the world quite different from the act of conscious decoding that is

The underpinning assumption in ethnography is naturalism   an approach that was developed

-response

uiry embraces the

argument is that the social world should be studied, as far as possible, in its natural state, remaining undisturbed by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 6; de Laine, 1997, p. 21). It is for this reason that ethnographers immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study for long periods of time. This point is elaborated by Van Maanen (1996), who maintains that ethnography typically refers to fieldwork (alternatively, participant-observation) conducted by a single investigator. This investigator usually lives with and lives like those who are studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state:

> The ethnographer participates, overtly or
> extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking
> questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the
> issues with which he or she is concerned. (p. 2)

However, while describing a group or culture, the researcher must adopt a respectful attitude towards the culture that is being studied. It is significant that the researcher remains loyal to the phenomenon under inquiry, and does not give priority to the methodological principles. A naturalistic ethnographic approach to inquiry focuses on the existence of reality within the culture. Reality is constructed through the perceptions of those under study. The methods are mere instruments that must be frequently assessed in order to determine whether they respect the nature of those under study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; de Laine, 1997).

What is ethnography?

Traditionally, ethnography has been used as a research tool in anthropology and entered contemporary usage via the interpretative paradigm of research where researchers draw on experiential knowledge gained from physical participation in the field (Boyle, 1994). The role of the ethnographer is to draw a detailed picture of the social experience of people, in this

ctices, rather than

gain a comprehensive view of the social interactions, behaviours, and beliefs of a community

lends support to the traditional aim of

ethnographers may inform others of their findings with an attempt to derive, for example, policy decisions from such an analysis.

To reiterate, for many, the defining feature of ethnography is the use of participant observation entailing prolonged fieldwork (Holy, 1984). Van Maanen (1996, p. 263) makes a

fers to

fieldwork (alternatively, participant-

163), who states that the essence of ethnographic methods consists primarily in participant

d in community life, observing

the levels of involvement in observation comprise four modes: the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant, and the complete observer. However, a

typical ethnographer employs three kinds of data collection: observations, interviews and documents (Hammersley, 1990).

d, on-the-

However, they do concede that this does not necessarily mean that the ethnographer must engage in participant observation of those being studied. The role of the ethnographer may

r & Spindler, 1992, p. 64).

Wolcott (1997) makes a similar observation. For Wolcott:

> There is no way one could ever hope to produce an ethnography simply by employing many, most, or all of the research techniques that ethnographers use. Ethnography is not a reporting process guided by a specific set of techniques. Ethnographic significance is derived socially, not statistically, from discerning how [teachers] in their customary settings go about their everyday lives. (p. 333)

Acknowledging what Spindler and Spindler (1992) and Wolcott (1997) had to say about the role of the researcher in the field, the *researcher* chose to engage only in a single method of data collection
this particular stance was that much of the *researcher's* teaching experience was guided by
area of evaluation. This
emancipatory intent had helped him to clarify his purpose in engaging in this research

experiences of performance management; interpret the performance management policy as one associated with the issue of power and control; and to involve teachers in a dialogical process of meaning-making in relation to performance management policy.

In this instance, the *researcher* maintained that he cou

has the ability to provide some useful insights into performance management, he believed

what the teachers are currently saying about performance management. He maintained that much of the richest data which ethnography can capture comes from the whole realm of informal talk betw

is that the researcher does not have a formal list of written questions, but rather a set of guiding questions and a repertoire of question-asking strategies (interviewer skills) to select
-
informant to control the discussion.

In his research project, the *researcher* used semi structured-interviews to aid his conversations with the teachers. Furthermore, by using semi structured-interviews, he directed his attention to the main issues being investigated but still allowed for a slight degree

(Agar, 1996, p. 140).

In the *researcher's* case, the findings in his research project sought to inform the reader of the manner in which performance management, as a means of evaluation, had radically changed the nature of te   *researcher* now proceeds to describe how his research project constituted   ethnographic study.

Explaining 'partial ethnography'

S   arch, the
researcher's project was

was the sole method of data collection.

Furthermore, drawing on the work of Massey (1998), the *researcher* argued that the research project was   ethnographic study for the following reasons:
- This research project was a study of a culture teacher culture. It attempted to understand the behaviour, values and meanings that teachers attach to performance

  described within the wider social structures of teaching. Some questions that were asked in order to make sense of what teachers are doing were
  schools presently? How does teacher evaluation work for you? Why do teachers do

- Another cause of concern that the *researcher* faced was the use of myself as instrument in the data collecting process. Here, he was faced with the dilemma of building himself into this study as both a source of data and observer. He had to establish the uniqueness of his own experiences, as a former teacher, and to suppress his own participation in this research project in order to avoid discriminatory representations of the teachers. Therefore, he had to keep an open mind about what was currently happening in the arena of teacher evaluation. He also had to determine the most effective ways to write about what was being studied. Thus, he had to work in a systematic fashion, constantly engaging in a process of reflexivity. This entailed
e? Why were certain
questions asked, whilst others were not? Why was the data to be generated in such a

the research, and what it [meant] to acknowledge [myself] as part of, rather than
;

- The *researcher* also had to look at what teachers were telling him from a wide range of lenses and perspectives. It is common knowledge that individuals perceive the realities of the world in unique ways. Therefore, he
evaluation in a manner that fostered critical and systematic examination. Whilst acknowledging that his role as researcher warranted him
narratives in the foreground, he   at was
seen or heard, that is, he had the authority to construct the final account. In order not to abuse this position and to provide credible narratives, the *researcher* was culturally open-minded from the beginning whereby he challenged his own theories and understandings. He also presented a wealth of data from which the reader could evaluate what teachers were saying about performance management. Furthermore, he shared with readers precise data to support particular claims about performance management. Also, the *researcher*
respect to performance management. Here, he did not rely on preconceived frameworks for the collection and analyses of the data. These direct interactions with teachers provided him with opportunities to discover and create analytical frameworks for a deeper understanding of what they were saying about performance management;

- In his research project, the *researcher* used the information gleaned from the data to build on and modify present theories of teacher performance management. In this instance, he   performance management
as it was played out   consistent with the

needs to be looked at and reported on may change, and explanations of what is going
; and

- The *researcher* was also conscious of the intention and the outcome of the research project. He had to make sure that the content and format of this ethnographic research project was dependent on the information needs of the primary stakeholders and the purpose of the research. Therefore, the *researcher* did not generalise the findings but provided the actual narratives of teacher evaluation as echoed by the teachers themselves. In this instance, focus was essential because he wanted to achieve a specific kind of understanding of teacher evaluation. Furthermore, by using vignettes
means of data representation, the *researcher*
construct coherent (stories) that take the reader into a deeper and richer appreciation of

of an

outsider to describe a social setting. The resulting description is expected to be deeper

The next section stems from the *researcher's* discussions on critical theory,

particular viewpoints and sets of interests culminating in temporary truces or uneasy

Also, teachers in Australia, like those in the United Kingdom, have also been bombarded by a series of educational policies intent on reconfiguring their working lives. One such policy currently responsible for this reconfiguring is the performance management policy that is being implemented in South Australia. This policy, whilst professing to advocate the professional development of teachers, is, in the *researcher's* opinion, the case of managerialism exerting greater control over teachers.

From the discussion presented in the previous paragraphs, it is obvious that there are numerous contentious issues associated with educational policy as it impacts

is still being generated and implemented both within and around the educational system in ways that have intended and unintended consequences for both education and its surrounding

important role to play, because this research tool has the capacity to transform the policy

p. x).
Arising from the *researcher's* previous discussion on the emancipation of teachers and critical theory, he introduces
the existing power structures in policy issues.

'Critical policy ethnography'

of marginalisation that occur in policy due to political, economic and social contexts. This point is elaborated upon by Thomas (1993) who locates ethnography in social and political conditions, raising questions of power structures and discriminatory practices. Thomas (1993) further raises features of critical policy ethnography, which involves a framework of empowerment, giving voice to the subjects of the research, the study of a particular culture, not just to describe it, but to change it, and its simultaneous hermeneutic and emancipatory being. Thus, the *researcher's* project has contributed to critical policy ethnography in the following ways:

- The *researcher* employed and organised the problematic of performance management policy in a consistent fashion. He studied this policy as it operated in some South Australian public schools in order to determine its action and meaning. This was done in order to encourage critique of the policy and to provide opportunities for teachers to challenge inequitable educational practices and unjust educational structures.

- The *researcher* situated his research project within a public sphere, that is, schools. This was the starting point for a critique and transformation of the oppressive and inequitable regulations of performance management policy. This enabled teachers to understand their mediations with the performance management policy and the political, economic and social contexts in which they were currently working.

- The *researcher* clearly reflected the emancipatory intentions of his research project. He maintained that the emancipatory interest was the key insight to understanding critical policy ethnography. He also believed that by stating his emancipatory intent, teachers would become conscious of using critical policy ethnography as a resource to

appropriate aspects of their work, to clarify their role functions and endeavour to seek new possibilities for transforming the performance management policy. (adapted from Simon & Dippo, 1986)

To summarise, critical policy ethnography seeks to locate policy practices under study within their wider social, historical and symbolic context. Simon and Dippo (1986) are of the opinion that critical policy ethnography is frank in its political motivation because it sees itself as having a practical purpose in revealing and challenging oppression from policy text, as experienced by those being researched.

Thus, in critical policy ethnography, the focus and process of research is concerned with issues of power, domination, voice and empowerment, as exemplified in the rhetorics of policy. The individuals (teachers) being studied are located in contexts of power and interests predetermined by policy texts. Thus,

Also, the focus of the research project was on teachers themselves identifying, describing and interpreting their perceptions of performance management as a means of teacher evaluation. The method used, therefore, was qualitative. As mentioned previously, qualitative research re intimate familiarity with social life, and provide more valid knowledge

With these viewpoints in mind and leading from the disc
begins ... , this Part B: Continuing the research journey , narrates the *researcher's*
begins by discussing his entry into the field and the management of relationships with informants. He proceeds to explain how the data was collect 001a, p. 157). Following this, he presents a discussion on what he considers an important component of data collection   researcher skills and essential criteria required for successful conversations.

Thereafter, the *researcher* presents a description of how he went about collecting the data (conversations), analysing the data and the process used to identify common themes prevalent in the conversations. He concludes this part of the journey by discussing three important concerns associated with ethnography: namely, ethical issues in purposeful conversations, and the question of reflexivity in his research project.

Entering the field

Delamont (1992) makes the point that obtaining access to educational settings is the critical first stage of the research journey. Many researchers experience difficulty in making the first contact, because this means that the researcher must put him/herself on the line in order to get fruitful cooperation (Michrina & Richards, 1996), without a clear pathway to follow. This is

and strategies . . . discovering obstacles to access, effective ways of overcoming them and

p. 54).

In his research project, the *researcher* planned his initial approaches to the schools, bearing in mind Dela   (1992, p. 80) caution that access is a process and not a simple decision, and

embedded in larger bureaucra   chose to conduct interviews as

with teachers in public schools in South Australia. Here, he wanted to engage with teachers in

-
Cannon, Edwards, Wilson & Wurst, 2000, p. 24). The *researcher* recognised that he had a

Thus, permission was first sought from the Department of Education, Training and Employment in South Australia to conduct research in two state schools. The relevant ethical clearance forms, together with a copy of the proposal, were submitted to the research

Unit. Thereafter, permission was sought from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University. The senior educational management of a public high school and a primary school in South Australia were then contacted regarding their

willingness for members of staff to participate in the study. When selecting the schools to research, the researcher was aware that, being a South African Indian, his physical presence might be considered obtrusive in a school environment which was predominantly Caucasian and Australian. Furthermore, he was also mindful that a school, having a reputation to protect, might not welcome an unknown foreign researcher in its midst. However, a letter from his supervisor, introducing him as a student and outlining the nature of his research project, assisted in overcoming these problems. Copies of the proposal and guiding questions for the interview with teachers were submitted to the principals of these schools. The principals then raised this issue with members of staff at a formal staff meeting. Seven interested teachers then contacted the *researcher* telephonically and voiced their willingness to participate in the research project.

The participants for the research project were representatives of two groups of teachers: teachers from a high school and teachers from a primary school. At his first meeting with the teachers, the *researcher* outlined the purpose of the research project. He followed up the talk with a letter in which he again outlined the purpose of the research project. He invited the teachers to give him a contact phone number. This was to make contact with each teacher to arrange a convenient time and place to talk. He did this because he wanted the teachers to have the chance to discuss their interest in participating in the research project. He did not want teachers to feel obliged to volunteer because of his presence in the school. Thus, the *researcher* was attempting to set up research conditions that would be relatively free of his influence on the teachers.

Having successfully gained entry into these schools, the *researcher's* next task was to manage a professional and reciprocal relationship with seven teachers who had indicated a willingness to participate in the research project.

Managing a reciprocal relationship with the teachers

Initially, the *researcher* had reservations about how he was going to interact with the teachers. His first meeting with teachers was characterised by nervousness and anxiety on his part. To overcome this, he engaged   inquired about the nature of

the *researcher* shared a common concern: that is, ascertaining the state of public education as it exists presently. During this meeting, he also courteously asked the teachers when he could talk to them again. He informed them that he was mindful of their busy work schedule and that he was available to meet with them at their convenience. He also informed them that   ast no more than thirty minutes. The teachers could also choose   e. The teachers then informed him that they would contact him telephonically to set up convenient times to meet.

Subsequent to this, the *researcher* had several individual meetings with each teacher in which they
These meetings took place at the school, the *researcher's* home and, in the case of one teache   -teaching time and after-school hours. There were occasions, however, when scheduled meetings did not occur because some of the teachers were sick, some were busy with school examinations, some had to attend staff meetings or professional development programs or some were too busy with administrative duties. In these instances, the teachers concerned were very apologetic and rescheduled meetings.

Collection of data through 'purposeful conversations'

When the *researcher* first met with the teachers, he informed them that he was interested in speaking to them about performance management. He seldom used
because he was afraid that this might conjure images of formality, thereby compromising the trusting and friendly relationship that he

00, p. 4),
Woods (1996) suggests that the interview is not just a mechanism for gathering information,

2001, p. 22). Further, the *researcher* was conscious of the fact that his relationship with the teachers would determine exactly what they were willing to share with him. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) comment on this relationship as such:

> [Teachers] are often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself. They will try to gauge how far he or she can be trusted, what he or she might be able to offer as an acquaintance or friend, and perhaps also how easily he or she can be manipulated or exploited. (p. 78)

Hayes (2001, p. 22) warns that, although the c

categorisation or interpretation
a method of inquiry that might alleviate some of these concerns expressed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), Woods (1996) and Hayes (2001).

The *researcher* now explains   nversatio   used this method of inquiry in his research project.

oponents argue the use of both unstructured and semistructured interviews to obtain understandings from

than interviews when describing this method of inquiry. For the purpose of the research project, the *researcher*
. The reason for this was that the *researcher*   genuine space within which teachers [c]ould reveal what is real for
referred to the list of guiding questions to redirect conversations when he found them deviating from the issues being discussed. Conversations were also important because he wanted the teachers to see themselves as more than mere respondents in the conversations.

accessing meanings and understandings.

Kennedy, Smith, Jimenez, Mayer and Mellor (2001) cite the works of Clandinin and Connelly (1992, 1994, 1998) and Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) to illustrate the idea of

> Central to this work is the idea that teachers are professionals whose stories about their world are powerful reconstructions of their lived experiences. What is highlighted in these stories is not the researcher, or the research questions or a

particular approach to methodology. Rather, what are central are the stories that teachers have to tell and the powerful learning that such stories can generate. (p. 10)

To summarise, the *researcher*   urposeful research project was appropriate because the wide range of issues that he was investigating were simply not amenable to observation. In this case, asking teachers about their perceptions of performance management represented the most viable means of obtai

. In conversing with teachers, the *researcher* also became more aware of his inability to know the situation facing them. In his case, he had experience of being evaluated as a teacher in South Africa and he now became conscious of allowing South Australian teachers to speak freely and honestly about their experiences.

However, before the *researcher* describes how he went about identifying the common themes evident in the conversations, he would like to comment on the issue of interpersonal skills of the researcher. Here, he argues that a good range of interpersonal skills enhances the

terms   a conversation between two individuals in which one seeks data from the other   then the *researcher* maintains
conveniently ignored. However, the importance of this issue cannot be overstated in his research project as conversations were the main source of data collection.

Interviewer skills
The *researcher* reiterates
interpersonal skills of the researcher. Paterson (1997) makes a similar observation by stating:
> As such, all [purposeful conversations] have their basis in human interaction. In my own experience, an awareness and knowledge of inter-personal skills has been an invaluable asset to the inquiry process. (p. 1)

Emanating from this viewpoint, he

To reiterate, the *researcher's* initial meetings with the teachers were conducted in an informal but respectful manner. He clearly explained to the teachers who he was and spoke about education in South Africa. The majority of them showed a genuine interest in this topic. This came as no surprise to the *researcher*, for all of them admitted that this was the first time they ccount of the situation in South African schools. When questioned about some issues of teaching, both in South Africa and South Australia, the *researcher* answered in a genuine and truthful manner. He was also candid and honest about the purpose of his research project. He indicated to the teachers that he was:

> interested in what [they] had to say . . . believe that the thoughts and experiences of [teachers] being interviewed were worth knowing. In short [he] had the utmost respect for people who were willing to share with [him] some of their time. (Paterson, 1997, p. 7)

2. Respect, acceptance and trust

ent on the

with the researcher can greatly influence responses. Another important factor influencing success is the value that the researcher places on the teacher. It is important that the researcher respects teachers and accepts them for who they are. Thus, the researcher must adopt a non-judgemental stance. But, in doing so, the researcher is confronted with the predicament of distinguishing between rapport and neutrality. Paterson (1997) explains:

> Rapport is a stance vis-a-vis the person being interviewed. Neutrality is a stance vis-a-vis the content of what the person says. Rapport means that I respect the person being interviewed . . . Yet the content of what I am being told will not be subject to my judgement. (p. 7)

The *researcher* faced the same dilemma. How could he be non-judgemental of what South Australian teachers were saying about performance management in view of his experiences of evaluation? Would his bodily reactions, for example, nodding his head in agreement or disagreement or the widening of his eyes to indicate disbelief adversely affect the interview

. In a few conversations where the *researcher* encountered this problem, he tried to impleme experienced great difficulty in its implementation. This could be attributed to the fact that the conversations he was now hearing sounded all too familiar he was subject to similar experiences.

3. Empathic understanding

should not embark on the research journey to verify a particular theory or control the data to

world as it is, to be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and to be balanced in reporting both confir

with teachers and it involves a complete understanding of the teachers, as well as seeing the

by adopting their frame of reference.

In the conversational situation, empathic understanding is enhanced if the researcher acknowledges and accepts that different teachers will use dissimilar words to describe similar situations, and similar words to describe completely dissimilar situations. It should be noted that empathy and respect go hand in hand. Empathy is strengthened when there is respect for the teacher in the conversation. The *researcher* respected the teachers and valued their ideas and contributions to the conversation.

genuineness; respect, acceptance and trust; and empathic understanding. These qualities, without doubt, did provide a clear yet effective conceptual framework for the *researcher* to make sense of the wide range of skills required for effective conversation. Personally, it was of tremendous benefit in his coming to grips
means of data collection. In all of the conversations conducted, the *researcher* strove to work within the parameters of this framework.

Identification of common themes

Working with the transcripts; which were obtained from the *researcher's* audiotaped conversations with the teachers; he began to search for categories and patterns (themes). Common categories and themes were coded accordingly. He then engaged in a process of constructing the outline of the analysis (Fielding, 1993).

In the *researcher's* case, the identification of themes was made less difficult as a result of the initial preconceptions in the form of theoretical assumptions that he had brought to the conversations. It must be stated that these assumptions informed the guiding questions he asked and the type of information he was seeking. However, he must confess that although the assumptions informed the questions he asked and the type of information he was seeking, they did not dictate a firm research orientation. Rather, the *researcher* used these assumptions as sensitising concepts, alerting him to what he should listen for and question while assisting in confirming or denying his initial assumptions. As he identified categories and themes, he began to develop a relationship between the themes and this helped form the beginning of an abstract level of understanding of the manner in which teachers viewed performance management. LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 272) maintain that ethnographic findings may be applied to theoretical findings that already exist. When data fits that framework, it is confirmatory and thus more general applications are indicated by the research findings.

Through frequent re-readings of the data, six major themes became clear. These were: performance management was a driven, top-down policy imposed on teachers; the purpose of performance management; the effectiveness of performance management; the question of time and resources; the issue of trust; and the professional recognition and development of the teacher.
Another interesting feature to emerge from the
the manner in which they fabricated their work in order to accommodate, resist or transform the performance management policy.

Ethical issues in 'purposeful conversations'

According to Smith (1990):

Ethics has to do with how one treats those individuals with whom one interacts

account. They must request further meetings with the particular teacher to verify the truth.

Hayes (2001), drawing on the work of Bridges (1999), maintains that researchers should differentiate between the forms of truth that they are seeking by offering five alternatives:

we must recognise our subjectivities and vulnerabilities. Behar (1996, p. 6) maintains that the researcher must be aware of and record his or her own emotional involvement with those

own emotional involvement represents another way of understanding the lives of the researched.

Research generally implies a process in which the researcher endeavours to find out more

including the meanings given to and generated by research, are discursively constructed

reflexivity is the hallmark of ethnography:

> Neither positivism nor naturalism provide an adequate framework for social research. Both neglect its fundamental reflexivity, the fact that we are part of the social world we study, and that there is no escape from reliance on common-sense knowledge and on common-sense methods of investigation. All social research is founded on the human capacity for participation observation. We act in the social world and yet are able to reflect upon ourselves and our actions as objects in that world. By including our own role within the research focus and systematically exploiting our participation in the world under study as researchers, we can develop and test theory. (p. 472)

The point that Quantz (1992, p. 472) makes is that in ethnography the researcher should be

social event being studied

making sense of the world, what his or her interests are in the research, and how this influences his or her understanding of the received knowledge (Haraway, 1988). In this instance, the researcher can also acknowledge that the research is shaped by the social contexts in which he or she is operating. Thus, the information that the researcher offers represents a partial account of a way of life of a group, rather than a total picture of the wider world. By acknowledging the limits and partiality of listening to and learning from the different accounts of the real world, there is a greater possibility of acquiring a more realistic representation and understanding of the limits and contradictions of culture (Haraway, 1988).

When the *researcher* embarked on this research project, he realised that his fieldwork would be central to his understanding of performance management as perceived by a select group of teachers in South Australia. His decision to engage in the area of teacher evaluation was guided by several considerations. First, his personal experiences of evaluation in South Africa instilled in him a desire to research this area further. Second, he discovered the available literature on teacher evaluation to be limited in South Australia, particularly writing related to

management as a method of teacher evaluation was a contentious issue that warranted critique. His discussions with friends and colleagues convinced him that this would be a fruitful avenue of research for himself, for teachers, for the academic community and for society in general.

Also, the *researcher*   nces and perceptions of performance management from a different angle, from that of a researcher. As with any ethnographic study, this one took place at the dynamic intersection of self, other and text. It was clear that the dialectical nature of this project could prove interesting, that his subjectivity made him, as

ek a personal

reality is the core of most ethnographic research (Agar, 1986). This ethnography attempted to
s within specific contexts; in this case,
performance management (Agar, 1996). The ethnographic research approach was primarily emancipatory in its intent, and generated new questions and theories that were grounded in

n interpretation of such

mode of teacher evaluation.

As stated in previously, the research participants in this study were a group of male and female teachers from a public high school and a primary school. These teachers had identified themselves as having experienced the process of evaluation in their work and they were willing to describe and share their experiences. The *researcher's* intent was to present a multivo
agenda was to help with the
ice to

reflexivity because even when we think our research is useful or even emancipatory we are
nd Usher (1996) maintain

how we contribute to such discourses despite

Turner (1986) maintains that the reflexive nature of ethnography involves a sharing of the
hose being observed (Bruner, 1996). Thus,
for those researchers studying experience, self-reflection can offer understandings of the other (Geertz, 1988). Thus, the dialectical nature of social research can be seen in part as a process of self-discovery (Bruner, 1996). This process of self-discovery should, according to

relationship where both the researcher and researched are changed.

Changes to both the researcher and the researcher are dependent on personal experience. According to Abrahams (1986), both the researcher and the researched must experience the research on two levels: of participation, and of reporting the action. Indeed, all ethnography may be seen as an interaction between these two experiences
d of the
researcher (Bruner, 1996).

From the outset, the *researcher* was engaged in an intense process of self-discovery where he began to make sense of what South Australian teachers were saying about performance management. He allowed himself to find some common ground with the experiences described by the participants. Thus, it was critical that he remained reflexive at all times. His

stories of performance management. Thus, the analysed data was meaningful to him because

he could identify with what teachers were saying about their experiences. Furthermore, the conversations also afforded him a new opportunity to reflect on his life as a teacher; draw comparisons of his personal experiences of evaluation with teachers in another country; and fill many voids that still existed in his

work. Also, by reflecting upon his experiences of the conversations, questions emerged about his   nd about the fieldwork. He questioned who he was and what he believed he was doing in the conversational setting.

To summarise, the *researcher* acknowledges that he came to the research process with bias, attitudes and values that influenced the research technique that he used, the data that he gathered and the way in which he interpreted the data. In short, he acknowledges his subjective involvement in the research project. However, he also acknowledges that his subjectivity represents one of a number of ways of making sense of what South Australian teachers were saying about performance management.

Part C: Ending the journey . . .

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