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E822: EP Dissertation

Exploring the role of Learning for Sustainability within the Curriculum for Excellence: a literature review and action research proposal into the disconnect between Learning for Sustainability ideology and practical application in Scottish Primary Schools.

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Abstract

The term 'Learning for Sustainability' was coined in Scotland in 2012, and reports published by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland suggest that it should form the basis of curriculum design in the Curriculum for Excellence. Through this extended literature review, I explore the missed opportunities, inconsistencies, and misunderstandings that explain why many Scottish Primary Schools have never realised this ambition. This is followed by an action research proposal that examines how the school community of three rural Highland and Island primary schools characterise Learning for Sustainability and how, and to what extent, it is incorporated within their curriculum.

Keywords:

Learning for Sustainability (LfS)

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

Four Capacities (4Cs)

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Human Rights Education (HRE)

Action Research (AR)

Introduction

Education is often seen as vital in obtaining sustainability in a constantly changing world, and we must provide our learners with a sustainable curriculum that ensures education is fit to adapt to the challenges of a global society whilst maintaining a focus on the individual and the community in which they live. The Scottish Government states that every educational institution should have a whole-setting approach to Learning for Sustainability (LfS) that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated, and supported by leadership at all levels (2023, p.10). The concepts of sustainability can be found in literature from the Scottish Government around the time of the conception and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) as Scotland's new curriculum. In 2019, when the CfE was refreshed, the links became more explicit, stating the need for learners to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to become 'democratic citizens and active shapers of that world' (Education Scotland, 2019).

Around the time of this curriculum refresh, I took up my first headteacher post. I began the first module for the MA in Education - 'Learning and Teaching: educating the next generation'. One of the first pieces of reading I undertook for this was 'Understanding What We Do: Emerging Models for Human Rights', which examined three models of Human Rights Education (HRE): values and awareness, accountability and transformational (Tibbitts, 2002, pp 159-171). The CfE reflects these HRE models in many ways. First, it places each learner at the heart of education. Second, 'Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)', the Scottish Government's commitment to provide all children, young people, and their families with the proper support at the right time, 'endorse fully the UNCRC [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child] approach...GIRFEC is the methodology for ensuring that any practitioners helping children and their families work in a way that fully embraces UNCRC' (Scottish Government, 2013, p.4). Finally, at the centre of the curriculum are four fundamental capacities (4Cs) that reflect and recognise the

lifelong nature of education and learning, developing the skills and attributes learners need to thrive as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

Although Tibbits does not reference Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in this paper, I also saw tangible links in their principles, skills development and pedagogy. They share common goals (Wade and Parker, 2008), and the 'human development skills' Tibbitt highlights mirror Nussbaum's 'Central Human Capabilities' (2003) and UNESCO's 'Eight Key Competencies for Sustainability'. In turn, the participatory theories of learning that are often associated with ESD (Laurie et al., 2016 p,240), where learners develop skills and understanding through social interactions and play a key role in shaping their learning environment and experiences, can be seen mirrored in the active learning, team working, personal and learning skills, problem-solving and critical thinking advocated by the 4Cs (Scottish Government, 2009).

As a teacher, I was already aware of many of these ideas as individual concepts; when member states adopted the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, they became evident in many classrooms, and many of the schools I worked in were involved in Eco-Schools Awards. Then, the Rights Respecting Schools Award became the focus of schools in my local authority (LA). However, it was not until I reviewed Tibbit's paper, linked with my new professional responsibilities as a Head Teacher, that I saw substantial links between the HRE model of education and the importance of sustainability as a driver of curriculum change. Through my increasing interest in this area, I became aware of an overarching concept called Learning for Sustainability that covered several of the ideas and values I was teaching.

However, despite this new knowledge, I also knew that LfS was not high on my list of priorities as a Head Teacher because it was not one of my LA's priorities or part of Education Scotland's National Improvement Framework. On the one hand, a wealth of

government policy describes LfS as a fundamental part of curriculum design, whilst other evidence suggests it is not being prioritised at an LA or school level. I explore this discord through the extended literature review and identify four broad areas of concern: the emphasis placed on the importance of LfS is inconsistent within Scottish Government and Education Scotland documentation; the concept of LfS is interpreted in different ways, making its role and goal unclear; there is a lack of clarity about what it should look like for learners; and there is no national framework to help school leaders and practitioners ensure LfS is a CfE driver.

The subsequent research proposal will explore how these identified areas of concern impact how three rural primary schools in Scotland's Highlands and Islands region interpret and implement LfS within the school community. Reflecting on and evaluating practice is part of the General Teaching Council for Scotland's standards of registration (GTCS, 2019). It should form part of the daily routine for all teachers, personally and with the learners. This is why the research proposal adopts an Action Research (AR) approach. AR not only requires participants to 'engage with both theoretical and practical knowledge moving seamlessly between the two' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2006, p.107) but also specifies 'ongoing and evolving action as part of the process' (McAteer, 2013, p.12).

Furthermore, it views those involved in the research not as subjects but as active participants (Stringer, 1996 p.xvi), allowing the teachers, learners and parents to develop their understanding, knowledge and values alongside the principal researcher. Finally, the cyclic nature of AR lends itself to the primary aim of my research - to bring about real change for those involved. The four phases of each cycle (plan, act, observe and reflect) inform the next stage of research; there is an acknowledgement that research is not a linear process and allows for more of a reactionary approach which builds on the observations and reflections of prior stages of research.

Chapter One: What is Learning for Sustainability?

As a Head Teacher of two rural primary schools in the Highlands, I recognise the importance of learning for sustainability. I also know the overwhelming pressure that schools face to ensure that everything required by the Scottish Government is fitted into the curriculum. As someone 'inside', I know that government documents relating to LfS place it, rightly so, high on the educational agenda; it should not be an extra add-on, which is very often the case, but run through every facet of learning and teaching. It should be one of the foundation stones of a school's ethos. However, as this literature review will demonstrate, the approach taken by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to achieve this is confusing and frequently contradictory.

I will begin by introducing the widely recognisable definition of sustainable development presented in the Brundtland Report and the research and reports that led to the coining of Learning for Sustainability. I will explore the missed opportunities to address inconsistencies and misunderstandings during the refreshing of the CfE and end by asking if anything has actually changed with the latest government action plan, 'Target 2030'.

The literature review will be organised chronologically rather than thematically because it emphasises that despite the numerous reports, action plans and commitments made by the Scottish Government, the same mistakes keep repeating. These fit into four broad categories:

- Within CfE documents, the emphasis placed on the importance of LfS is inconsistent.
- The broad definition of LfS means it is interpreted differently, and subsequently, the concept's role and goal are unclear.
- LfS is a curriculum entitlement, but there is a lack of clarity about what this means for learners.

- LfS should be a unifying, whole-school policy approach, but no national framework exists to help school leaders and practitioners achieve this.

The Origins of Learning for Sustainability

In 1987, the United Nations General Assembly commissioned a report outlining a global change agenda. The subsequent report became known as the Brundtland Report, which aimed to define 'shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues' and consider ways the international community could deal more effectively with these concerns. A clear distinction is made between sustainability, a long-term goal where the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and sustainable development, the processes and means by which to achieve it (p.15). It concludes that sustainable development is where unity is reached between the need for resources, economic investments and institutional changes. It highlights three intertwined aspects - the environment, society, and the economy - and recognises the influences of culture (p.43). Despite being nearly forty years old, this document remains critical in assessing the understanding of sustainability development as a plan for meeting the planet's sustainability needs within Scottish Education.

In 2004, a Curriculum Review Group met to discuss the future of Scottish education. Whilst it made no direct reference to sustainability, it stated that one of the principal purposes of education should be to ensure that learners are aware of the 'values on which Scottish society is based and so help them to establish their own stances on matters of social justice and personal and collective responsibility' (2004). Four of the five ways it believes this can be achieved are directly linked to ESD.

In 2007, McNaughton highlighted flaws within the new CfE concerning ESD. She reviewed the curriculum considering six key educational themes: systematic, holistic, active and participative, based on and in the environment, values-based, and competent to take action

(pp.630-632). Systematic refers to the need for partnerships to be built between Government, commercial and voluntary sectors, educational bodies and individual schools. McNaughton acknowledges that the Scottish Government made a considerable investment in the development of ESD policies but highlights the findings of a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 2006, which identified 'manifest gaps in knowledge base', 'inconsistencies in delivery pathways', and policies in place but 'no action taken'. A holistic methodology is evident in the CfE, which advocates an interdisciplinary learning approach. Successful learners are described as able to make links and apply learning to different situations. However, McNaughton raises the question of the teacher's knowledge, skills and confidence needed to teach this way. When examining the theme of 'active and participative,' she recognises the possible conflicts between the 'hard' and 'soft' curriculum, the attainment targets and improvements to be met model of education and the messy, connected, wide-ranging and values-driven one. The emphasis on using the immediate local environment is also a critical educational theme. Again, the lack of training and skills to enable teachers to engage fully with this is highlighted. Furthermore, whilst the Four Capacities (4C) describe the importance of having secure values and beliefs, as well as respect for those of others, McNaughton points out that the lack of detail and precision may result in a didactic values education rather than a learner-centred participatory approach. The final theme, competence to take action, can also be seen in the 4Cs but to a lesser extent. Although there were significant links between CfE and ESD, McNaughton reveals some crucial weaknesses in these initial endeavours.

In 2012, a report was published by the One Planet Schools Working Group, a group established on behalf of the Scottish Ministers to provide strategic advice and direction to support the Scottish National Party's 2011 manifesto. The report explored three concepts — sustainable development, global citizenship, and outdoor learning — concluding that each plays a vital role in building the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills young people need to engage positively with society's challenges. Therefore, it advocated bringing these three areas together to create a coherent whole-school approach; although

they all have common themes, they each bring unique features, and only together do they encompass the breadth of what is trying to be achieved. Consequently, 'Learning for Sustainability' was coined as the Scottish approach to sustainable education and development. It defined LfS as 'a whole school approach that enables the school and its wider community to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society.' (p.8)

Scottish Ministers accepted all thirty-one recommendations of the LfS report in March 2013, and the LfS National Implementation Group was established in February 2014 to deliver on these recommendations. This resulted in the publication of the Vision 2030+ report in March 2016, highlighting the progress already made and setting out a vision for LfS's future. It stated that the key challenge for the group had been ensuring that all learners receive their entitlement to LfS and not just in those classrooms where teachers are passionate enthusiasts. This 'necessitated an agenda for strategic change in Scottish education to remove systemic barriers and to ensure that LfS is effectively hard-wired into key policies and drivers' (p.15). It is unsurprising, therefore, that a consistent theme throughout this document is the recommendation that LfS is at the 'heart of government policy' and 'offers opportunities to deliver meaningfully on the educational aspects of many different policy areas, preventing a piecemeal approach' (p.9).

Three documents that are mentioned explicitly as requiring additional thought as to how they align with LfS are the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). Despite this, however, there is still no mention of LfS in the SAC documentation (2022) or the DYW: Career Education Standard (3-18) document (2015), although there is a brief nod to it on the DYW website with the 'My Climate Path' national programme. The 'Achieving Excellence and Equity 2024 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (Scottish Government, 2024) does state in its values the aim that every child should

achieve 'the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary to shape a sustainable future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors' (p.4) but LfS is not mentioned specifically and neither does it appear in the 'Key Priorities' or 'Drivers of Improvement' (p.5).

As part of the progress that has been made Vision 2030+ refers to the embedding into the Quality Indicators (QI) of LfS in 'How Good Is our School 4? (HGIOS)', the principal self-evaluation and improvement document used by practitioners in Scotland (p.14) and quotes:

Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an approach to life and learning that enables learners, educators, schools, and their wider communities to build a socially just, sustainable, and equitable society. An effective whole school and community approach to LfS weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning and children's rights to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences. (Education Scotland, 2015, p.7)

However, the term LfS is only mentioned in two QIs, whilst the phrases sustainable development education and global citizens are mentioned in others. Moreover, the quote above comes from 'Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms' rather than the document's main body. A separate 'Self-evaluation and Improvement Framework' is available. Still, you must know to search for it as no links are made to it within HGIOS 4 (further reference will be made to this document later in the chapter).

A final critical statement made by the Vision 2030+ report is that educators need to recognise that the individual aspects of LfS have more impact when approached collectively and integrated into real-world issues through the 'golden thread' that is LfS. The individual components and ideas are presented in a word cloud and far exceed the four concepts mentioned in the quote above from Education Scotland (p.12).

ESD was a key feature of CfE's values when it was founded at the beginning of this century. It developed into a uniquely Scottish approach which attempted to unite several concepts under the LfS umbrella. According to all the LfS-specific government documentation reviewed, LfS should have been a fundamental driver in uniting educational policies at all levels and should be evident in whole-school approaches to curriculum design. However, mentions of LfS are rare in other CfE documentation.

A Refreshed Learning for Sustainability?

According to Biesta, Priestly and Robinson (2015), one of the reasons why the CfE is taking so long to reach its sustainability potential is that when it was being introduced into schools through the Building the Curriculum documents, little thought was given to the cultural and structural conditions that would be necessary for this to happen. Autonomy was given to the schools and teachers to implement the new curriculum in the way that best suited their learners and local context, but there was a lack of consultation and opportunity for professional development, which meant that many teachers quickly became disillusioned with the process. If the implementation of LfS at the core of the CfE is to be successful, it needs to be more than offering teachers more autonomy to teach lessons about sustainability; a shift is necessary in the way the whole school approaches learning and teaching and for that to happen the involvement and attitudes toward change of all the teaching staff would be crucial.

A recognition of this point of view can be seen in the publication of a 'Learning for Sustainability Action Plan' (Education Scotland, 2019) aiming to bring the 'concept of Learning for Sustainability to life at the heart of the curriculum...To make a much broader breakthrough in practice and approach, culture and behaviour across the [education] system as a whole.' (Swinney, 2016, cited in Bushy, 2019).

It attempted to do this through the consideration of five recommendations from the Vision 2030+ report (all learners should have entitlement to LfS; in line with the GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate LfS in their practice; every school should have a 'whole-school' approach to LfS that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels; all school buildings, grounds and policies should support LfS; a strategic national approach to support for LfS should be established), and expanding on how they mean to achieve this and the specific actions required. This would support the development of the 4Cs, providing a means of fostering and working towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (2019, p.1).

Bushy (2019) reflects on this action plan on the Learning for Sustainability website, managed by the Regional Centre of Expertise on ESD, which works with different educational sectors across Scotland. He believes the plan should not be seen as an end goal but as a 'catalyst for a more prominent and effective role for LfS'. Furthermore, he asks four interesting questions:

- What is LfS working towards?
- How will it be referenced in a refreshed curriculum?
- What does learner entitlement look like in practice?
- How will we know when practitioners demonstrate LfS in their practice?

Several possible answers to the first question can be found in the documentation that has already been reviewed here - the development of values and skills that are compatible with a sustainable society (One Planet Schools Working Group, 2012 p.8); development of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary to shape a more sustainable future (Education Scotland, 2015 p.7), or achieving the SDG (Education Scotland, 2019 p.1). These possible answers already highlight a shift in the definition/goals of LfS from being sustainable citizens to actual involvement in achieving this or, per Brundtland's definition, from sustainability to sustainable development (1987, p.15).

When the Scottish Government published the refreshed curriculum in September 2019, it linked LfS and the CfE by stating that the 4Cs enable learners to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to become 'democratic citizens and active shapers of that world' (2019, Education Scotland). Further links can be found in the Responsible Citizens capacity, where learners act with respect for others and responsibly in political, economic, social, and cultural life. However, there are only two references to LfS in the refreshed curriculum. The first comes under the heading 'Curriculum Entitlements', which 'includes understanding the world, Scotland's place in it and the environment, referred to as LfS', a definition which is reflective of the one given when the term was coined in 2012 with no indication that learners have an active role to play in sustainable development. The only other mention of LfS is in a section on being clear on practical approaches in curriculum design and embedding LfS into this. At least here, the term is hyperlinked to a page of resources on LfS and a more recognisable definition. Therefore, the answer to Bushy's second question is that LfS has limited and conflicting references in the refreshed curriculum. This lack of a tangible definition is emphasised in the Scottish Government-commissioned literature review by Christie and Higgins (2020), which 'examines literature relating to the educational outcomes for LfS' (p.1). The report uses Brundtland's definition of sustainability but extends it to encompass all life on Earth (p.2). Interestingly, the report began by looking for studies on LfS as a whole concept but found that these were limited, and it had to broaden its parameters to include studies on individual concepts such as global citizenship, ESD, outdoor education and Rights of the Child (p.8). LfS is an overarching construct comprising individual terms with distinct objectives, and acknowledging the struggle between viewing LfS as a single entity rather than its separate components will be central to the research proposal.

Mention has already been made to what learner entitlement might look like in practice. An understanding of the world, Scotland's place in it and the environment all come under the Social Studies aspect of the CfE, but other than references to understanding rights/responsibilities and workings of democracy, there are no Experiences and

Outcomes that could be seen as explicitly LfS, and there is no separate document outlining what these might be. Consequently, there is still no nationally recognised benchmark for learner entitlement for LfS.

More progress has been made on the final questions around practitioners demonstrating LfS in their practice. Alongside the curriculum refresh and the Action Plan launch, the professional teaching standards were changed to include 'every practitioner, school and educational leader should demonstrate LfS in their practice' (GTCS, 2021). Therefore, teachers and school leaders are now professionally required to make sustainability key to their classroom practice. Further support is available from the 'Self-evaluation and improvement framework for LfS', the principal document published at a school level, which aims to help establishments evaluate and improve LfS leadership and management, learning and teaching, and assessment. Christie and Higgins (2020) emphasise its inclusion in HGIOS 4 as a significant development, making LfS development a 'visible and high priority in Scottish Education' (p.558). However, as has already been mentioned, this document is not included in the main HGIOS 4 document; it is not even found on the same website, and no mention is made there. Furthermore, unlike the principal HGIOS 4 document, it is not used in school inspections; no mention of LfS was made in any of the inspection reports for primary schools in the Highland Council LA in 2024. Although the document offers examples of what LfS would look like at the 'start of the journey', 'building on achievements,' and 'highly effective practice' and asks 'challenge questions' to help schools determine where they are on the journey, I would argue that this document offers little more than a self-evaluation tick-list of how to check if a school is covering LfS. It describes the desired final result rather than providing a valid improvement framework, a supporting structure that gives an unambiguous definition of LfS and how schools can use this to plan for its implementation. In chapter two, I will discuss several conceptual frameworks that would better aid leaders and practitioners in developing a whole school LfS policy.

The 'Self-evaluation and improvement framework for LfS' uses the definition of LfS and the word cloud in the Vision 2030+ report and again links many ideas under this overarching term. One aspect of LfS outlined here is 'global citizenship'. However, Anastasiadou, Moate, and Heikkinen (2021) argue that a critical element of global citizen education (GCE) - 'planetary phronesis' - is missing from the Scottish curriculum. By applying the Aristotelian idea of knowledge as a 'critical lens' for analysing significant CfE documents, they conclude that whilst *phronesis* (wisdom, judgement and decision-making) is present in the CfE, *episteme* (scientific knowledge) and *techne* (skills) dominate the curriculum. They acknowledge that whilst establishing wisdom, compassion, and justice may form the basis of the curriculum, it lacks depth. Even when *phronesis* is indicated, it is done so in terms of acquiring skills rather than a feature of disciplinary knowledge. Therefore, they argue that global matters are dealt with from individual perspectives; all mentions of interconnectedness or the problems caused by a rapidly changing world are avoided in preference for a discourse on skills which aim to determine what an individual should be (p.10). They do not deny that *episteme* and *techne* are essential but believe that it is *phronesis* that will enable individuals to make the best decisions and should be, as Kemmis highlights, 'taught as opposed to something that develops through experience as a capacity (2012, cited in Anastasiadou, Moate and Heikkinen, 2021 p.11).

It is interesting to note that Anastasiadou, Moate, and Heikkinen do not refer to the 'Vision 2030+' report, 'Learning for Sustainability Action Plan' (Education Scotland, 2019), or the 'Self-evaluation and Improvement Framework' (Education Scotland, 2019), in their paper and consequently miss the links being made between GCE and 'tackling climate change', social and cultural diversity and 'local to global' which appear on the LfS Word Cloud (Scottish Government, 2016, p.7). Nevertheless, they make a valid point as the 4Cs do refer to the skills and qualities that learners are supported to develop, and there is no practitioner guidance on how learners should demonstrate that they have used them to become 'democratic citizens and active shapers of that world'; it is neither systematic

(McNaughton, 2007) nor does it outline what learner entitlement looks like in practice (Bushy, 2019).

Christie et al. (2019) state that since 2014, LfS has emerged as a central concept within Scottish Education, has developed to 'underpin much of the formal curriculum structure', that it forms part of the inspection process evidenced in the HGIOS 4 document (p.46). However, that point of view contradicts the analysis of the publications made here, which suggests that a huge opportunity has been missed to address inconsistencies and misunderstandings because, despite the curriculum refresh, there are still vast discrepancies between LfS-specific documentation that maintain it is a fundamental policy driver and what is found in CfE policy. This was perhaps understandable fifteen years ago when both CfE and ESD were in their infancy in Scotland and even twelve years ago when the term LfS was first coined, but the wealth of reports and documentation that has come since made no difference to the value placed on LfS in the CfE at the time of its refresh. Moreover, there is still no coherent framework, benchmarks or single definition of the term produced or used by Education Scotland and, consequently, practitioners.

'Target 2030' - has anything changed?

Before producing their latest LfS document, 'Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity' (2023), the Scottish Government commissioned two pieces of research, one from the University of Dundee (Ward et al., 2023) and one from the Children's Parliament (2023). The research conducted by the University of Dundee assessed the understanding and implementation of LfS amongst young people aged 14+ and the practitioners responsible for their education. Although this age group is outside the scope of my research project, the final report identifies memories of learning in primary school as the most frequent mention of LfS across all groups and, therefore, offers valuable insights (Ward et al., 2023, p. 23). Through World Café focus groups for young people and practitioners, the research team found there were gaps in participants knowledge and use

of the term LfS - the most prominent responses related to terminology where some stated that they had never heard of the term and had difficulties understanding the subject without having been taught LfS under this heading. Some participants recognised sustainability as climate change and Environmental Science. (p. 19). The Children's Parliament (2023) conducted similar research for 3 to 13-year-olds and the practitioners working with them and drew similar conclusions; most children were experiencing aspects of good practice in outdoor learning, global citizenship, and sustainable development, but it was not always clear that these elements fell under the umbrella of LfS (p. 10). However, there was a fundamental difference between these two reports: the Children's Parliament research approach was 'guided by the principles and furthered the realisation of the rights of all children as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', and the report's opening paragraph describes the LfS curriculum as embedding 'social justice and children's human rights in education' (p.1). This is a stark comparison to the research conducted with secondary learners and practitioners, where I found only one passing mention of children's rights (Ward *et al.*, 2023, p. 28) and two of social justice (Ward *et al.*, 2023, p.31 and p.39).

The aim of the 'Target 2030' document (The Scottish Government, 2023) is to inject a 'new, bold and ambitious LfS intervention into the education system' (p.9), ensuring a 'cross-curricular approach which enables learners, educators, learning settings and their wider community to build a socially just, sustainable and equitable society'; and as an 'effective whole-setting approach which weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences' (p.1). Yet, despite the evident absence of literature around what constitutes LfS, evidence that both learners and practitioners are uncertain about what the term means, and inconsistency in research commissioned by the Scottish Government over the role of children's rights in LfS, this new Action Plan does not attempt to address these issues. Instead, it asks educators and senior leaders to embed LfS into their

teaching and improvement plans and introduces an entirely new phrase, 'sustainable learning settings' (p.9).

Chapter Two: Pedagogies and Conceptual Frameworks

Despite the wealth of government documentation on LfS, explicitly expounding its importance as a cornerstone of CfE, LA and school policy, this is not the practical reality. At first glance, this may lead to the assumption that inherent differences in pedagogies prevent LfS from being fully incorporated into CfE design. The previous chapter examined some of the differences or flaws which McNaughton believed existed between the CfE and ESD, as well as those of Anastasiadou, Moate and Heikkinen, who argue that LfS leaves out critical aspects of global citizenship education. Nevertheless, despite these views, CfE and the four principal components of LfS (sustainability, children's rights, outdoor learning and global citizenship) share common ontology and epistemology. Therefore, this chapter will look at three main areas:

- CfE and the principal components of LfS: what should be learned and how
- The standard for Teacher Registration in Scotland and LfS
- Four conceptual frameworks to help incorporate LfS in the CfE

CfE and the principal components of LfS: what should be learned and how?

The CfE emerged from the five 'National Priorities for Education' of achievement and attainment, a framework for learning, inclusion and equality, values and citizenship, and learning for life. These were to be developed through the 4Cs (Cassidy, 2018), which aim to equip learners for a life of 'autonomous well-being' (White, 2011, p.10) and enable the pursuit of personhood and autonomy-free for all to flourish (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2016 p.12). This autonomy is obtained through active learning, teamwork, personal and learning skills, problem-solving and critical thinking (2009, Scottish Government). These ideals closely align with the eight competencies of ESD (2017, UNESCO) and the participatory theories of learning often associated with ESD (2016, Laurie et al. p240), where learners

develop skills and understanding through social interactions and play a key role in shaping their learning environment and experiences. The *Green Flag Award* is a scheme frequently used by primary schools to 'cover' ESD. It asks the learners and practitioners to use the *Sustainability Development Goals* to decide on areas within their school that need improvement and then plan, act and reflect on this.

The 2019 curriculum refresh brought the 4Cs back to the forefront of the CfE. It summarised them by stating they would help learners know themselves as individuals and develop relationships with others in families and communities, gain the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to thrive in an interconnected, digital, and rapidly changing world, and become active shapers of their world. In *Scottish Education*, Bryce (2013) explores how the CfE fits into the constructivist view of learning. One document that supports this view is *'Building the Curriculum 2 - Active Learning: a Guide to Developing Professional Practice'* (Scottish Government, 2010). Constructivists believe that people learn by building meaning around what they already know and that learners should perceive relevance in what they are doing and learning. This is reiterated in the active learning document, which states that the best learning environments are authentic, real-world settings where learners are involved in planning learner and have the opportunity to raise questions and prompt enquiries. In addition, it puts forward the view that learning involves moving progressively from concrete examples to the use of symbolic representations and that, in this way, practical experience provides a secure basis for subsequent theory. The document discusses the importance of building in reflection time and ensuring learners know the concepts, skills and understanding they have acquired to deploy them in different contexts. There is also a social constructivist element as it acknowledges the social dimension of learning and encourages collaborative learning.

There has also been a closer link made between CfE and the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the convention outlines that children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions considered when adults make decisions that affect them

(The Gordon Cook Foundation, 2021). This can be seen as a progression of the above pedagogies; learners are encouraged to develop their identities and participate through dialogue with adults on matters concerning them (Scottish Executive, 2005). Teachers should establish progressive pedagogy through the 4Cs, cultivating pupils' capacity to think critically and creatively and to work effectively with others (Priestley, 2021). For this reason, there is now a learner version of HGIOS, a 'resource to support learner participation in self-evaluation and school improvement' (Education Scotland, 2018). The Highland and Islands have a designated Rights Respecting School co-ordinator, so it is clear that a significant priority is given to the achievement of this award, through the improvement of rights within establishments. The award has three different levels: teaching the rights, working through the rights and standing up for them, and encourages the development of pupil voice and agency.

The next component of LfS, outdoor education, allows for learner-centred pedagogical approaches, which provide a rich platform for developing interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies (Mann et al., 2022). Outdoor learning is experiential learning that allows learners to be actively involved with new experiences rather than learning about an abstract concept in the classroom (Quay, 2005, cited in Mann et al., 2022). Learning experiences that are inherently interesting and relevant to their experiences and curriculum goals allow learners to understand and internalise their sense of agency in the learning process (Sibthorp et al., 2015, cited in Mann et al., 2022). One of Education Scotland's curriculum documents is devoted entirely to outdoor learning, 'the core values of Curriculum for Excellence resonate with long-standing key concepts of outdoor learning. Challenge, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning are at the core of outdoor pedagogy' (p.7). It helps develop enquiry, critical thinking, and reflective skills and connects children with the natural world, Scotland's built heritage, culture, and society. The Highlands and Islands are a beautiful part of the country, and schools in the ASG regularly work with Forest

School Leaders, rangers and wildlife groups. Children discover that learning can happen anywhere and in all types of weather.

In their discussion of global citizenship, Anastasiadou, Moate and Heikkinen note a need for interconnectedness in the CfE. The idea of reaching beyond the learners' local environment is undoubtedly vital to global citizenship. The Asia Society defines global competency as the capacity to understand and act on issues of worldwide significance and details four distinct areas. Learners should investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, recognise and consider multiple perspectives, communicate ideas to diverse audiences and take action to improve conditions (cited in Butcher 2019). A document published by Learning and Teaching Scotland in 2010 describes the need for people who 'recognise the importance and value participation and making their voice heard' (p.6). It is a holistic approach which views the 4Cs as a means to help learners become 'independent, creative and critical thinkers, confident in themselves, secure in their own beliefs and values, committed to active participation in society, respectful of others and willing to find solutions to local and global problems' (p.10). It again emphasises active learning, collaborative working, participative learning, and the need to make connections in real-life contexts as critical learning methodologies.

The main components of LfS and CfE share common ontologies and epistemologies, so LfS should work seamlessly with CfE. However, all of the documents reviewed so far in this chapter concern the different aspects of LfS, not LfS as a whole, which means that primary schools in the Highlands and Islands often 'buy into' schemes such as Eco-Schools or Rights Respecting Schools Award that add beneficial elements to their curriculum but do not work together to reshape it through LfS.

The standards for Teacher Registration in Scotland and LfS

The General Teaching Council for Scotland has already laid out professional standards that include requirements centred around social justice, trust, respect and integrity and states that teachers should be 'embracing global educational and social values of sustainability, equality, equity, and justice and recognising children's rights' (2022). Teachers have a much more significant role than simply imparting knowledge and skills to learners. This is strongly influenced by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which says that education should be committed to the 'full development of the human personality' (United Nations, 1948). Therefore, teachers have a professional and ethical duty to recognise students as more than their 'test scores, skills mastery or future employment' and to see them as democratic citizens and humans (Gibson and Grant, 2010). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) have identified three types of knowledge about teaching: 'knowledge for practice', which has been received from teacher training; 'knowledge in practice', which relates to the knowledge demonstrated through a teacher's practice; and 'knowledge of practice', which comes from teacher inquiry into their practice to gain a fuller appreciation of or even challenge their 'knowledge in practice'. This third type of knowledge is most relevant to implementing a LfS -based curriculum. Teaching professionals must incorporate LfS into their practice and need to be given opportunities to reflect and envision what they want this to look like.

Four conceptual frameworks to help incorporate LfS in the CfE

Robinson, Philips and Quennerstedt (2018) have drawn on Tibbitts' (2002) three models of Human Rights Education (critical consciousness, accountability model and transformation model) to develop a framework in which teachers' responsibilities are categorised into three areas. It begins with knowledge and values and a teacher's responsibility to inform learners about their rights and help to develop their understanding of the values that accompany them. Unlike Tibbitts' models, there is a natural progression to the next stage,

attitude and environment, where the teacher is responsible for creating an environment where rights are respected, upheld and enacted. Finally, the agency and action section of the framework sees the teacher as responsible for educating learners to uphold these rights and using teaching practices that explicitly encourage learner agency and action. This framework is very similar to that of the Rights Respecting Schools. Each of these themes follows naturally from the one preceding it and would fit comfortably alongside the Four Capacities, especially Responsible Citizens, who should demonstrate 'respect for others and a commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life' and Effective Contributors who 'make informed choices and decisions'. Although this framework is primarily concerned with the rights aspect of LfS, it could certainly be extended to meet the broader values-based principles of ESD and global citizenship. However, there is a danger that this framework would be imposed on the existing curriculum, still existing as a separate entity.

In 'Education for Sustainable Development: a movement towards pedagogies of civic compassion', Warwick (2016) refers to the Sustainable Development Goals as forming his basis of sustainability but argues that achieving these is not enough. Education should not simply be looking to create a more efficient and 'for all' delivery system. Instead, the purpose of education and the organisation of learning needs to be reconsidered so that it fuses concerns for social justice and environmental stewardship (p.408). Therefore, Warwick offers an alternative approach calling for an 'education system that considers the need for biosphere, spatial and temporal dimensions of care for the common good' (2016, p. 407). He refers to the larger sense of ESD and endeavours to broaden the 'horizons of our compassion for others' (p.407). The biosphere encompasses people and the environment, and requires the development of social justice competencies, systems thinking and ecological literacy; the spatial dimension encourages an active concern towards people and the environment across place, from local and global, and offers opportunities for agency; and finally, the temporal dimension looks across time and considers the well-being of not just the present but future generations. Unlike Robinson,

Philips and Quennerstedt's framework, he advocates a participatory model where learners are shaping their own learning through different learning spaces. The first space is for compassionate conversation, where staff invite learners into dialogic conversations to discuss sustainability issues. Learners are viewed as joint authors making decisions and negotiating solutions with staff. The second space is compassionate enquiry, which engages learners as researchers so that they can, with support from staff, deepen their learning and seek out different perspectives. The final learning space is compassionate action, where learners are the creators of knowledge and learn collaboratively by leading their own sustainability projects (p.410). Warwick believes that by implementing this participatory learning process, learners will be more able to engage more deeply with the values, skills and knowledge needed for Education for Sustainable Development. To truly realise its potential, his civic compassion calls for a reorientation of education; the adoption of a new mindset where sustainable development is an integral part of education. However, although he argues that learning needs to be reimaged, the example of his framework in action (Future Leaders Programme) demonstrates that elements of Warwick's dimensions and learning spaces could be adapted into current CfE lessons or could be taught as a discrete subject.

In the paper 'Epistemological Approach to Sustainability', Fernandez et al. (2017), approach the difficulty of incorporating ecological sustainability into existing policy from a corporate perspective. However, the points that they raise reflect those of LfS as they argue that the 'problem will go completely unsolved if it is not framed within the far more complex issues of justice and sustainable economic progress... a common endeavour must be to strive to achieve, if not an alternative economy, then at least economic development which combines justice and sustainability, and, ultimately, combines progress with fairness' (p.97). They attempt to draw together some of the theories around sustainability and examine the different dimensions of a conceptual framework. The first dimension is 'envisioning', which is subdivided into 'identifying' (seeing the existence of something) and 'revising' (seeing something in a new way). The next is 'explicating', which can be broken

into 'delineating' (seeing something precisely) and 'summarising' (condensing and consolidating). The third kind of conceptualisation is 'relating' whose subsections are 'differentiating' (see pieces that comprise a whole) and 'integrating' (to see previously discrete components as uniting to form a whole with a meaning different from its individual pieces). This dimension is particularly important as it could lead to a more accurate understanding of the concept of LfS, which is, after all, an over-arching construct that is made up of individual terms with its own distinct objectives. LfS is made up of many different concepts which far exceed the main four of SED, global citizenship, rights and outdoor learning and when the term LfS was coined there was an acknowledgement that the different concepts under its umbrella all brought their own unique features. However, what it failed to do, and is still failing to do is to 'integrate' these discrete components into a new whole with its own identity. The final 'debating' dimension of conceptualisation consists of 'advocating' (to justify or support a way of seeing) and 'refuting' (to challenge or question a way of seeing) (2017, pp.99-100).

Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019), echo the need for a 'relating' stage which brings by arguing that one of main problem faced by educators is that sustainability as an educational endeavour has not been adequately defined, often being vague, abstract and lacking clarity. Furthermore, as different communities and cultures may have alternative views on sustainability and how to achieve it and be at various stages of the process, it is impossible to come up with a vision that fits all needs. Therefore, they have developed a 'participatory conceptual framework for sustainability transformation through education', which they believe will enable schools to develop sustainability effectively (p.3). It will, they argue, build a shared vision of sustainability by looking at the big picture; it helps define aspirations (sustainability), their connection to capabilities (ESD) and pedagogies (how the capabilities become functioning) (p.5). The framework starts with creating a shared vision (visioning) of how the Sustainable Development Goals should be localised to meet the community's needs. This should be achieved through dialogue and partnerships that allow stakeholders and learners to collaborate on a vision for a sustainable future. As

part of this stage, Kioupi and Voulvoulis advocate using the Sustainable Development Goals, putting them into integrated groups with similar systematic characteristics (p.7). This could be extended to include the competencies of HRE, global citizenship and outdoor education. Once a shared vision has been co-constructed, participants work backwards from the desired outcome to identify the competencies and pedagogies needed to achieve this goal (back-casting), defining the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes. This will then, in turn, shape the curriculum, pedagogies, training and learning environments. Finally, there is the monitoring and evaluating stage to measure progress toward a sustainable state (p5). Again, Kioupi and Voulvoulis believe involving all stakeholders in this process offers wider opportunities for improvement, accountability and meaningful changes in an adaptive and dynamic process (p.11).

The CfE and the four main components of LfS share similar ontology and epistemology. They see the world as a place that needs to be experienced, and that learning and knowledge develop through active involvement in that world, not only as individuals but also as members of social groups such as the school community. ESD, HRE, outdoor learning, and global citizenship are separate areas already being addressed in primary schools in the Highlands and Islands. The four frameworks I have discussed demonstrate how these establishments could unite as a school community and become active agents in developing an LfS curriculum that integrates these components into one distinct idea.

Chapter Three: The Research Proposal

The extended literature review has highlighted the Scottish Government's aim for an underpinning LfS policy that permeates every aspect of school life and curriculum. However, despite common pedagogies common to both LfS and CfE, there is a disconnect between this goal and the priority given to LfS in many Scottish Government and Education Scotland documents. Furthermore, it is not a national or LA educational priority. My research questions have developed from this inconsistency in message. Originally, I began with just one question - what is the role of LfS in the Highlands and Islands Primary Schools? With tutor feedback, I quickly realised that this was too large a scope, and I needed to limit my participants to a more manageable size. I subsequently decided to narrow it down to three primary schools and select rural schools, as these were the ones that I am most familiar with. The next question development was around what I specifically wanted to find out. What did I mean by the 'role' of LfS? Through the course of my reading, I identified four different recurring issues in official documentation referring to LfS:

- within CfE documents, the emphasis placed on the importance of LfS is inconsistent.
- the broad definition of LfS means it is interpreted differently, and subsequently, the concept's role and goal are unclear.
- LfS is a curriculum entitlement, but there is a lack of clarity about what this means for learners.
- LfS should be a unifying, whole-school policy approach, but no national framework exists to help school leaders and practitioners achieve this.

Building on this, I decided that it was key for me to research what the term LfS means to school communities and if there was any shared understanding of how they arrived at this definition. Secondly, after considering the conceptual framework of Fernandez et al., Kioupi and Voulvoulis, I realised that evaluating any frameworks and planning documents

they used would give me an insight into whether there was a unifying whole school approach or something more piecemeal in place. Initially, I used the question, 'What framework/planning documents are they using to ensure LfS is embedded into the curriculum?'. However, the word embedded assumes that the schools are near the end of their LfS journey, and this may not be the case. Consequently, I changed the wording to allow for the fact that the three schools may be at different stages in their development of LfS. In order to keep my research proposal manageable, I decided not to add a third sub-question relating to what learner entitlement of LfS looks like, but this would warrant further consideration at another time.

Final research question:

What is the Role of Learning for Sustainability in Three Rural Highland and Islands Primary Schools?

Sub questions:

How do these schools define LfS, and how did they arrive at that definition?

What framework/planning documents are being used to incorporate LfS, or elements of LfS, into the curriculum?

Chapter Four: The Research Design, Research Methods and Analysis

The research design that I have adopted for my research proposal is Action Research. In this chapter I will discuss why I believe it is the most appropriate research design to investigate the role of LfS in three small, rural Scottish primary schools, my positionality within the research, and how both of these have influenced my choice of participants, data collection methods and data analysis methods.

The Research Design: Action Research (AR)

When considering what research model to adopt, I kept coming back to the sense of community and shared effort that Scottish Government's ambition for LfS in every Scottish school is trying to achieve:

'[LfS is placed] at the heart of the education system, revolutionising what and how students learn, how the setting manages its physical environment and resources, how staff and learners relate to each other, how they work with their local community and how they reach out and connect to the wider world.' (Scottish Government, 2023)

The desire shown here to bring about change to the whole school community, both in the environmental and social aspects, led me to the AR approach. There are many different definitions of AR, and I have continuously referred back to the above quote to inform my view of what AR means.

McNiff (1988) describes action research as the name given to a 'particular way of looking at your [practitioners] to check whether it is as you feel it should be' and, therefore, is often called 'practitioner research or practice-led or practice-based research' (p.23). I believe this definition is too simplistic and describes what many teachers do daily. Critical

reflection is a key component of AR but there is more to it than that. Reason and Bradbury (2016) suggest that there is a difference between first person AR where an individual practitioner evaluates their own practice, second person AR where a group of people work together to see how they can address issues affecting them all, and finally third person AR which aims to connect individual researchers with wider communities (2008 p.6). Again, these descriptions do not go deep enough. They do not go beyond what the Standards for Full Registration require of any teacher in Scotland. These state that 'our [teachers'] commitment to career-long professional learning is a critical part of developing our professionalism'; 'enquiring and collaborative professionalism is a powerful force in developing teachers' agency'; and 'values the contribution of others... applies critical thinking to make effective decisions, in the interests of maintaining and improving the quality of education' (GTCS, 2019 p.5). Therefore, AR must be more than reflection and the changing of practice for an individual or group of individuals.

Sometimes, a distinction is made between AR, which results in a change in practice but does not involve participants in the research project, and participatory action research (PAR), where participants are actively engaged and the change is more socially broad. For the purpose of this research proposal, the term AR is interchangeable with PAR, as I feel an essential element of AR is the fact that it replaces 'subjects' who are researched with active participants (Stringer, 1996). Another element of AR to consider is the link between the practical and theoretical. Lewin (1946, cited in Munn-Giddings p.85) and Elliot (1991) both characterised AR as a way of gaining knowledge about social situations whilst trying to improve them. This is echoed by Stringer (1996) who believes that it has the capacity to result in both practical and theoretical outcomes.

It is clear from the definitions already mentioned that the members of the community should engage in AR and that presumably they should be the recipients of any benefits

achieved. However, Wells (2019) asks how often research actually improves the experiences of its participants; often, the results and benefits of research come long after it has been completed. This should not happen with AR as a cyclic model is adopted. Each cycle of this model has a plan, act, observe and reflect element. The reflection undertaken at the end of this cycle then informs the planning stage of the next cycle, making it an iterative process (McAteer, 2013). This allows the participant practitioners to become involved in that cycle of reflection and inform the research, and it echoes the self-evaluation process already undertaken through using HGIOS 4.

AR has many layers, ranging from practitioners reflecting on their own practice to bringing about change that will affect the whole community. Some writers view it as something that a single researcher can undertake, whilst others believe those being researched should be viewed as co-researchers. After taking all of this into consideration and once again reflecting on the quote at the beginning of this chapter, I have defined AR as consisting of the following four essential components:

- it is based in theory but aims to bring about practical change within the community being researched.
- the researcher is positioned 'inside' the community.
- it is participatory and collaborative; there are no 'subjects' but valued participants who are seen as agents of change.
- It is a cyclical model that allows all participants to reflect on the research undertaken, which then informs the next cycle; the change benefits the community in a timely manner.

Positionality

The role of an action researcher positions me as an 'insider'. The three schools I will be basing my research on are small, rural single- teacher schools with at most twelve children registered in each. I work in the same *Associated School Group (ASG)* as these schools and have worked with the teachers and other members of staff on previous occasions. This past collaboration with staff places me in a position where I am already a trusted colleague. However, being a Head Teacher in this situation is a delicate balance. I believe that all my colleagues have an equal right to express their values and views and that these should all be considered when forming school policy; it is part of what being a community is about. However, I am also a senior leader and have targets and priorities to meet. LfS is an area that staff and learners have been developing in the schools I lead, because I believe it is important. For this reason, I have decided not to include these two schools in my research. Although my position as an 'insider' is an important aspect of AR, I do not want to influence the results unduly; my staff and learners know how important LfS is to me, and I believe that this would, consciously or unconsciously, influence their participation. Even within the other *ASG* schools, my professional position makes a 'value-free' research approach impossible. The traditional view of research rising above personal biases and values is unrealistic (Schulz, 1974). The Scottish Government has certain expectations of educational institutions regarding LfS as do the professional teaching standards (GTCS, 2021), but I also know that it is not one of the LA's or *ASGs* priorities. Therefore, I am already approaching this research with preconceived views that little will be known about LfS in these schools. This is naturally going to affect how I approach my research. However, one of the benefits of AR is its cyclical nature and I will outline how this will help me stay objective during my discussion of data collection methods.

Who will participate in the research?

McNiff (1988 p.29) describes action researchers as perceiving knowledge as a living process building on people's experiences of living and learning and the Scottish Government describe LfS as a policy that should be driven by the whole school community and develop how its members relate to each other. Therefore, I intend to ask members from all the different areas of these school communities to participate; learners, teachers, pupil support assistants, clerical, cleaning and catering staff, parents and any wider community members/agencies involved with the school. Due to the small size of the schools, I intend to invite every member of these groups to participate. Each of these groups will likely have a different understanding of what LfS is, may see it being put into practice in different ways, and may or may not be involved in planning for it.

Ethical considerations

Before beginning my research, I will send a proposal outline, including the study's purpose, the research's intended aims, what processes will be involved and what will happen to the data collected (Oliver, 2008, p.158); the language will need to be understandable yet accurate. This will be followed by a meeting to answer any questions. I will then send out information letters to everyone who I am inviting to fill in a questionnaire or attend an interview (see appendices 2-4). When arranging my interview groups, I will ensure that I do not include any learners who have not had the consent and assent form signed by a parent/carer (see appendix 5). The information letters ensure participants of anonymity. I will ensure this by not asking for names on the questionnaires and not recording names on any of my semi-structured interview sessions. As soon as I am able, I will compile the answers from the questionnaires and type up my notes from the interviews, keep them secure by using a passworded file and destroy any written notes. No individual names, or names of establishments will be identified in the final thesis. As this is action research, I aim to give timely feedback on specific data to the schools so that they can use it to enact

change if appropriate. Sharing examples of good practices and common difficulties with the LA may also be beneficial for developing LfS at a national level. However, the research will be presented as comments and reflections from the collection of questionnaires and interviews rather than being attributed to any particular individual/s.

Data collection methods and analysis

As my epistemological position is that social reality is constructed by the individuals participating in it, I need to be aware that any questions I ask, or observations I make may change the nature of the present reality and lead to new and unexpected avenues of research. As previously stated, I intend to adopt a 'cyclical procedure' of collecting and analysing data, which allows for planning, acting, observing and reflecting at each stage. I envision three separate cycles as part of this research, each guided by questions asked by McNiff (1988 pp. 94-96): how do I show the current situation as it is; how do I show and explain the situation as it develops; and how are practices and thinking modified in light of the evaluation.

How do I show the current situation as it is?

After initial discussions with all participants about the aims of my research and how I intend to carry it out, my first step will be to examine the school policy and planning around LfS. This will allow me to gain insight into the value placed on LfS within the school and identify which LfS aspects are being prioritised. In other words, I will be looking for two key things: is there evidence that aspects of LfS are part of school policy/being planned for and taught and/or is there evidence of an LfS framework that weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development, outdoor learning and rights to create a coherent, whole-setting approach. One of the inconsistencies I highlighted during my literature review is what the term LfS means. It is an umbrella term that covers many

essential ideas and concepts, meaning that it is possible that even if the words LfS do not appear in policies or planning, they still happen. Furthermore, there is no single national framework for schools to assist them in developing LfS; instead, there is a series of documents describing what it should look like. Therefore, the documents I receive will likely differ from school to school and may even consist of various frameworks within the same school. For example, a school may give me their Eco-Schools plan, their Rights Respecting Schools Plan and their Standards and Qualities Report, whilst another may document their outdoor learning using a floor book. Additional evidence may also be available on a walkthrough of the school and display areas. Given my prior knowledge, I believe that it is unlikely that I will be given a 'LfS Policy Document'. For this reason, when I evaluate these documents, I will begin by highlighting keywords and phrases that relate to LfS. I will also use the LfS word cloud referenced in chapter one to help identify these, as well as look for examples of common themes such as those outlined by Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019) - dialogue and partnerships, and the identification of the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attributes needed to achieve LfS. This method of data collecting, and analysis can be viewed as quantitative; I am identifying how often a set of words and phrases appear. However, once I have compiled a list of what aspects of LfS are being addressed, I will need to reflect on my findings and make a professional judgement on whether LfS is being approached as a single idea or as many separate concepts.

Alongside this collection and review of documents, it will be vital to gain an understanding of how school community members perceive LfS. Therefore, I will send out a brief questionnaire to all staff members, parents and school partners at this stage. This will be a quantitative method of data collection as the questionnaires will be structured as a series of statements (e.g. I understand what the term LfS means), with a Likert-scale to gauge how well they feel they understand the term LfS. A final question will also ask them to write down any words they associate with LfS, which will then be compared to the LfS word cloud. A written, structured questionnaire would not work with the learners; therefore, this initial stage will be conducted as individual interviews. Again, however,

there will be only a small number of structured questions to gauge what they think LfS is. The questionnaire/interview data will be tallied and compared with my findings from the document review. This initial plan, act, observe, and review cycle will enable me to gain insight into how the different community members define LfS and what frameworks/planning they are currently using. Furthermore, approaching this initial stage from a quantitative data collection approach will help minimise any unconscious bias on my part.

How do I show and explain the situation as it develops?

Due to the changing nature of knowledge, my presence and initial research will have started to change the understanding of LfS, even if it has just brought it to the forefront of people's minds. The next cycle of plan, act, observe, and review will delve deeper into the research questions and begin to explore the 'how a definition of LfS was arrived at' aspect. The exact nature of these questions would depend on my findings from the previous cycle, as it will indicate where to begin. For example, if none of the learners has heard the term LfS, I would need to adapt my questioning to discuss its various separate components. The data collection and analysis approach will be more qualitative than quantitative at this stage. I will conduct semi-structured interviews with the different groups of participants. These will be done in group situations rather than individually. AR is as much about the process as the answers to questions, and inviting the participants to speak within a collaborative group will allow for the evolution of ideas. Asking questions 'face to face' will enable me to discuss their answers more freely, considering facial expressions and hesitations, and allow for clarifying follow-up questions (Dexter, 1970). I will also ensure that the questions are open-ended to 'catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour...which are the hallmarks of valid qualitative data' (Cohen et al., 2018, p.474). Opie (2004 p.118) adds a word of caution about semi-structured interviews as they allow for the possibility of researcher bias, no matter how unintentional, in any follow-up questions; I will need to plan my questions carefully and be

aware of the danger of 'steering' the conversation. After each set of interviews, I will reflect on the data using a colour-coded system looking for recurring themes, concepts, patterns, repeated words or sentences, no responses and common criteria (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and reading the data several times to identify themes and patterns. I will then compare the analysis of each data group with those from the interviews with other community members to identify unifying factors.

At the end of this stage, I intend to present my data to the participants involved in the research as soon as possible. This way, they can use their work to bring about change within the school community.

How are practices and thinking modified in light of the evaluation?

One of the key components of AR that I identified was that it is a cyclical model that allows all participants to reflect on the research undertaken, informing the next cycle; the change benefits the community promptly. In this final cycle, I would revisit the schools in the following term and ask, 'Has the research I conducted been of value and has anything changed?'. To evaluate this, I would conduct semi-structured interviews with the same participants and explore how their understanding of LfS has changed, if at all, and how this has affected policy and planning within the school.

In summary, the purpose of this research proposal is to answer the question:

- **What is the Role of Learning for Sustainability in Three Rural Highland and Islands Primary Schools?**

And the sub-questions:

- **How do these schools define LfS, and how did they arrive at that definition?**

- **What framework/planning documents are used to incorporate LfS, or elements of LfS, into the curriculum?**

By adopting an AR approach, all school community members are involved in answering these questions as they are treated as participants with their own values and ideas rather than subjects. Furthermore, due to the cyclical nature of AR, it is possible to inform practice and change knowledge through the process rather than waiting for the results of the research.

Postscript: Narrative critical reflection

LfS is an area of interest that has grown throughout my studies. As I began to understand its importance, I introduced it into my workplace practice and shared it with colleagues. Indeed, when I recently began a new job and introduced myself to my new colleagues, I spoke about my belief that LfS is a fundamental aspect of curriculum design. This linking academic reading to my practice is very important to me as I undertook this MA to help support and develop my professional life, and it has helped give meaning to my study.

During the last module, I became more adept at selecting and organising the material I needed to focus on. One way I did this was by using OneNote to organise my notes. I found this easier than keeping a physical journal. However, I faced one fundamental problem when searching for relevant papers, documents, and research in my chosen area. It wasn't easy to find research about LfS's relationship with the CfE published in the last five years (see Appendix 6 for tutor feedback on this). I could find research commissioned by the Scottish Government to comment on LfS, but this was often biased, focusing on positives rather than exploring difficulties. Until I began my research for the dissertation, my focus on LfS was on what I believed to be clear links between it and elements of the CfE. However, the more closely I examined official documentation, the more I noticed these inconsistencies. As a result, I decided to explore these biases and discrepancies, which ultimately led me to focus my literature review on the discord between the Scottish Government and Education Scotland documents.

OneNote also helped me keep track of new terminology and its meaning, which I sometimes struggled to understand. This was particularly true of the terms ontology and epistemology. I knew that ontology refers to what someone sees as true and real, what exists, and epistemology relates to how that truth is known and how you can find out about it. I could also discuss their different philosophical positions, e.g., positivism and

interpretivism. However, I struggled to relate ontology and epistemology concepts to my LfS study. In the feedback for TMA 2, my tutors suggested that I 'deepen my understanding of the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of LfS by more closely examining specific theoretical frameworks proposed by authors like Fernandez and Kioupi (see Appendix 6). I had previously looked at these frameworks but was unsure where they fit into my dissertation. This feedback and a 1:1 tutorial helped me clarify and sort my ideas around ontology and epistemology into broad categories, forming the basis of my discussion of pedagogy and conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, it has developed an interest in discovering more about the theory behind the original development of the CfE.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Appraisal Form

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

a.	Student name	Louise Taylor
b.	PI	
c.	Project title	Exploring the role of Learning for Sustainability within the Curriculum for Excellence: a literature review and action research proposal into the disconnect between Learning for Sustainability ideology and practical application in Scottish Primary Schools.
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Steve Burnage

e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	x
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)		
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	EP research Proposal	
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	EP research Proposal	
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	Highlands and Islands	

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	x	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? ¹	x	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	x	

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure ('police check') can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give

4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so, have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		x
5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		x
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so, have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?		x
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	x	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?		x
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?		x
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		x
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		x

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/committees-and-services/res-and-recs/>).

informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

⁴ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

Appendix 2: Information Letter: Questionnaires

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport

Study related to Masters module 'E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'

For participants invited to complete a questionnaire

E822 Information Letter: Questionnaires

Dear _____

I am currently studying on the Masters module 'E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth' at the Open University in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport. My studies are being supervised by a personal tutor, and I am following research protocols recommended by the University, which have been approved by a named supervisor in this setting. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to answer the question '**What is the Role of Learning for Sustainability in Three Rural Highland and Islands Primary Schools?**', as part of a small-scale investigation aimed to help me better understand and develop Learning for Sustainability here and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

I invite you to complete a survey by questionnaire in _____. The questionnaire is estimated to take no longer than 15 minutes. This is to be completed on paper and I would appreciate the return of the questionnaire by ____]. This has been agreed with the organisational leadership (this would be the name of the Area Manager for my area). Please feel free to ask me any questions about the questionnaire in advance of offering your consent to participate.

Information collected will be de-identified and kept confidential, stored securely on password-protected devices. In the case of paper copies of the questionnaire, these also will be kept confidential, and responses will be typed up as soon as possible. The original notes will then be destroyed. If you do not consent to participate, this is absolutely fine: do not complete the questionnaire. It is not possible to withdraw your consent because the questionnaires are de-identified and, therefore, cannot be identified for removal.

If you consent, please complete and return the questionnaire. If you would like more information about the questionnaire before completing it, please get in touch with me on _____.

Yours sincerely

Louise Taylor

Appendix 3: E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual's perspective on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This particular interview is designed to help answer the question: **what is the Role of Learning for Sustainability in Three Rural Highland and Islands Primary Schools?**

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research question. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 30 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you and others in the setting to be mutually convenient. If there is anyone else affected by the interview, such as a member of staff, they will also have been consulted about when would be a convenient time and permission has been granted from [this would be the name of the Area Manager for my area]. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it form part of the final dissertation. Your contribution will be recognised by a pseudonym and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name should be used. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out your perspective on what the term Learning for Sustainability means to you. I can share the questions with you in advance if you would like.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our

professional setting as agreed with the senior leader overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the organizational Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed _____.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at

Appendix 4: E822 Information letter for children and young people (pre-18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain your view on what Learning for Sustainability is like at _____.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on a masters-level course at The Open University in which I am carrying out a small-scale investigation. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to answer the following question **what is the Role of Learning for Sustainability in Three Rural Highland and Islands Primary Schools?**

This is aimed to help me better understand and develop Learning for Sustainability here and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen because your views would be valuable in answering the question set for the study and I hoped you might be prepared to talk to me about your experiences and opinions.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes and I will make sure that I have checked with your teachers that when and where we talk is the most convenient for you and them. Our conversation will not be recorded but I will make notes about what you say. Permission has been given from [this would be the name of the Area Manager for my area]. for me to invite you to this interview. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. In any part of the interview which will be shared with my tutor or form part of the final dissertation report you and anyone else you name during our discussion will be referred to by a false name (pseudonym) and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name I use.

What will we be talking about?

In the interview I will ask you questions about what you think about: what you think Learning for Sustainability means in your school. I can share the questions with you in advance, if you would like to see them.

Will what I say be kept private?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information about you, such as contained in your consent forms, will be shared more widely. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept private only to me and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you let me know anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this information immediately to the organisation's Designated Safeguarding Officer. When I make anonymised records of the interview, as outlined above, these will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes will then be destroyed. I can confirm that neither you as an individual

nor the setting will be identifiable in my submissions to the University or any presentations I make of my findings to interested audiences.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet with your parent/carer, please read and complete the consent form. This means that you and your parent/carer sign your and their names and the date to say you are all happy for me to set up a time and place for the interview. Whether you agree or not is entirely up to you and your parent/carer, as the invitation is for you to take part voluntarily. You can change your mind later and withdraw from the study by letting me know and I will destroy the information (consent forms and interview files) I have created. This will be possible up until the time I am using your information as part of my assessment

_____.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any questions about the study, I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at

Appendix 5: E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

ECYS/WELS

(to be completed by all participants and, if the participant is a child/young person under age 18, with and by their parent/carer/guardian)

If this request relates to a child/young person under the age of 18 and a child or young person would benefit from this, please would a parent, carer or guardian read these questions to them and, if necessary, complete the replies for them.

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by ***** to Louise Taylor at ***** Primary School

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview?	YES	NO
Has someone explained this interview to you?	YES	NO
Do you understand what this interview is about?	YES	NO
Have you asked all the questions you want?	YES	NO
Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?	YES	NO
Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time?	YES	NO
Will you have an adult present with you?	YES	NO
Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded?	YES	NO
Are you happy with how your data will be stored?	YES	NO
Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview?	YES	NO
Are you happy to take part?	YES	NO

If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** sign your name.

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name and today's date

Your name _____

Date _____

If the person to be interviewed is a child or young person under 18 and you are happy for the child or young person you are responsible for (as their parent, carer or guardian) to participate, please could you also sign and date below.

Print name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

Return form to Louise Taylor at ***** Primary School

Thank you for your help.

<u>Appendix 6: EMA Reflection Evidence Grid</u>		
Category	Feedback Received	How did this shape my dissertation
Knowledge and Understanding	TMA 1: In order to improve here, start to think about how you might engage with more current thinking and practice around your chosen area of focus.	<p>I did a further online search for LfS and found the recently published 'Target 2030' document. This also led me to the research that had been carried out in order to produce this document. I was able to identify the ambiguities that I had found in previous reports being repeated in this one.</p> <p>I spent more time discussing the theoretical frameworks and considering how they could be used in practise in the dissertation than I had in previous writing. This allowed me to make a clearer link between theory and practice.</p> <p>I also spoke about this area with my tutor during 1:1 tutorial. I found it extremely useful to go over my ideas and, with his</p>
	TMA 2: Deepen your understanding of the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of LfS by more closely examining specific theoretical frameworks proposed by authors like Fernandez and Kioupi.	

		<p>support, put them in categories for discussion.</p>
<p>Critical engagement</p>	<p>TMA 1: You now need to give further thought to the challenges and issues of using research literature that is (in educational terms) so dated. In addition, engage more critically with your chosen focus and consider how practical the scope and scale of your research might be given the limitations of time and focus for this dissertation.</p>	<p>I carefully considered why I felt using dated literature in this context was important. By ordering my literature review in chronological order I have been able to identify the same inconsistencies in official documents from when the term LfS was coined to the present day.</p>
	<p>Dissertation chapter feedback: The chronological approach to presenting the concept and challenges surrounding LfS is generally effective, providing a clear historical context. However, consider whether a thematic structure might offer additional clarity, particularly when discussing the recurring discrepancies between policy and practice.</p>	<p>When I submitted my first chapter for feedback, I asked about the validity of presenting my work in chronological order. After receiving the feedback, I decided to try the thematic approach and organised my work under the four problems that I had identified near the beginning of chapter one. However, I did not feel that this was as effective as highlighting the fact that these issues kept reoccurring every</p>

		<p>time a new policy or plan was produced by the Scottish Government.</p>
	<p>TMA 2: elevate your critique by comparing the SG's LfS conceptualisation to specific elements of the frameworks you've analysed. Provide a sharper assessment of which framework might be most suitable for the context you'll be studying.</p>	<p>As noted above I spent more time analysing these frameworks than previously and examined them as a practical tool as well as theoretical framework.</p>
<p>Application to your own professional context</p>	<p>TMA 1: You clearly evidence sound and strong links between your chosen area of research and your own professional context.</p>	<p>I had been uncertain whether to use an Action Research or case Study approach for my research proposal, as I felt both would be beneficial to my context.</p>
	<p>TMA 2: Expand on how your research findings could directly inform practice within your Associated School Group and how learnings might benefit other schools in the region. What specific actions could be taken at the school level based on potential outcomes?</p>	<p>However, when I considered what I wanted the outcomes of this research to be I decided that action research was the better methodology. I want the research to directly inform practise in the schools I am using in my study. Furthermore,</p>

	<p>Dissertation chapter feedback: Consider further exploring the practical implications of the identified discrepancies for educators and learners.</p>	<p>I wanted it to be an on-going reflecting and improving process rather than review of 'this is what it is like here'.</p> <p>When deciding how on my data collection methods I considered how these discrepancies may affect the data I collected. It influenced the questions that I asked and how they were presented (interviews rather than just questionnaires).</p>
<p>Overall comments</p>	<p>TMA 1: take time now to consider sharpening the focus on your research and accessing a range of literature that encourages more current as well as historic thinking on your chosen topic.</p> <p>TMA 2: Streamline your language in certain sections to maintain a sharp focus on the core research questions.</p>	<p>I kept coming back to these overall comments around sharpening and streaming language, to remind myself to continuously check my work to ensure that I wasn't wasting words and that I was framing my ideas at the beginning of chapters and 'sign-posting' these throughout my work.</p>
	<p>Dissertation chapter feedback: The chapter could benefit from a more explicit framing at the outset, outlining the key arguments and the chapter's</p>	

	<p>overall purpose within the broader dissertation.</p> <p>The inclusion of your positionality at the beginning of the chapter would strengthen the theoretical framing and provide context for your analysis.</p> <p>The chapter would benefit from a more explicit connection to your research questions. Consider how the literature review and critical analysis inform your research design and methodology.</p>	
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