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Drama rising, starring the Famous Five: Investigating the relationship between current drama practice in Year 1 settings and the new Arts Curriculum

Christine Lovering

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Edith Cowan University
School of Education

Christine Lovering
M.Ed
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Background

Australian Curriculum for the 21st century

- 2007 - *National Education and Arts Statement* (MCEETYA)
- 2008 - *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*
- 2009 *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

Problem – the Arts in schools now?

"...in the latter part of the 20th century, particularly in western cultures and education systems, the Arts have increasingly been regarded as peripheral, relegated to the margins, the extra curricula" *(Ewing, 2010, p. 1).*

•Usual for one or two of the arts subjects taught;
•During child's primary school years, he/she may not experience all five of the arts subjects.

Reasons?

•Self efficacy beliefs;
•School policy and administrational directives;
•Teacher training - lack of sufficient in-service teacher professional learning in the Arts;
•Perceived lack of time.

Rationale

New Arts Curriculum:

- *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* – Oct 2010;
- *Shape of the Australian Curriculum Version 2.0* - Dec 2010;
- *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* – Aug 2011;
- *The Arts Draft Curriculum* – Aug 2012

All students from Kindergarten to Year 8 will experience and study all **five** arts forms: **dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts** for a minimum of **two hours per week**.

Rationale

EYLF - "extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through to the transition to school," (COAG, 2009, p. 5).

Year 1 - important transition stage for young children in their schooling journey.

New Arts Curriculum - "build on the Early Years Learning Framework and are taught using a purposeful play-centred approach" and "enhance play-based learning," (ACARA, 2010, p. 10).

Purpose and research questions

1. What are Year 1 teachers' perspectives of and practices in drama?

- Why do Year 1 teachers use drama?
- What are the forms of drama used?
- How do Year 1 teachers plan for drama and how often do they implement it?
- What factors support and inhibit the teaching of drama in Year 1?

2. What is the connection between drama in Year 1 and the new Arts Curriculum?

- What do Year 1 teachers know about drama in the new Arts Curriculum?
- How prepared are Year 1 teachers for the implementation of drama in the new Arts Curriculum?

Significance

- Teaching of drama in Year 1 and how this links with the demands of the new curriculum;
- Broader understanding of drama practice in Year 1;
- Advance paucity of research in this subject;
- Year 1 teachers' understanding of proposed Arts Curriculum.

Design and approach

Mixed methods:

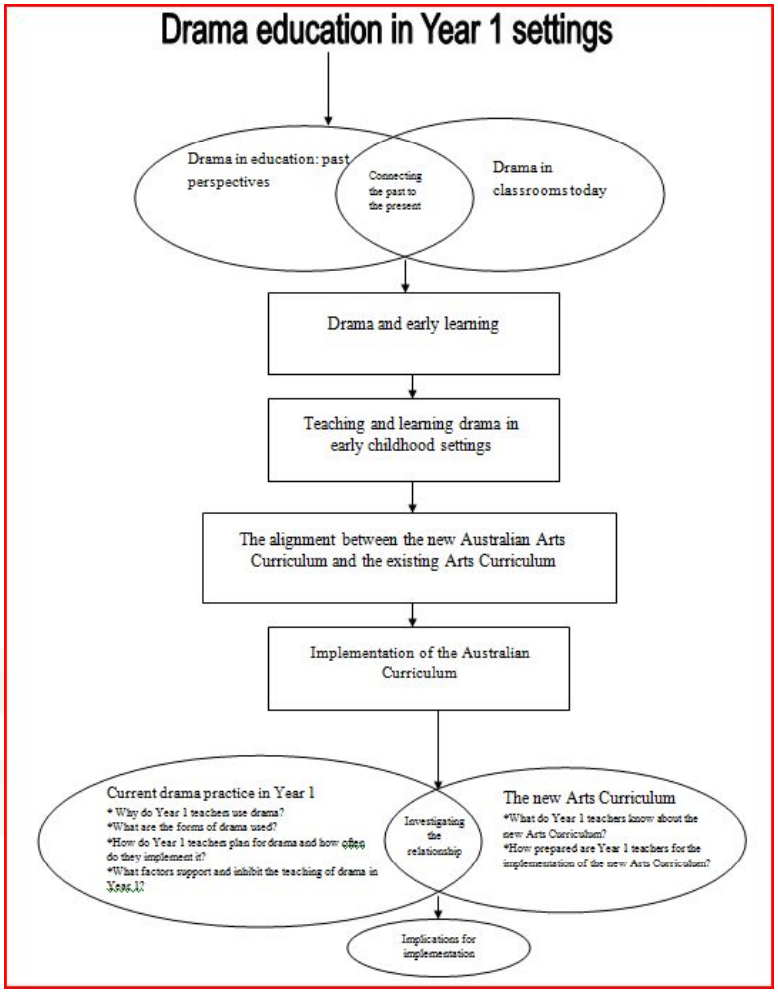
- Survey - quantitative data results - broad picture of the research problem – sent to 590 DoE schools;
- Interview - qualitative data providing further analysis and extension to the general picture;
- Survey – open-ended questions - expectation that some qualitative data collected concurrently with quantitative data.

Data analysis

Phase I:

- Similarities, trends and items of particular significance
- Overall analysis – SPSS

Phase II:

- Assembling and sorting into themes, clusters and categories;
- Organised and presented for accessible analysis and conceptualisation;
- Interpretation of the data - gaining sense of its meaning.

Conceptual framework