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Drama teaching: Understanding what we do

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Drama teaching: understanding what we do

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July, 2002

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Abstract

Drama teaching in secondary schools in Western Australia has become an increasingly complex discipline in recent years. This study has considered the work of Drama teachers from the point of view of those practising the discipline, using a phenomenological methodology which allowed the voices of the participants to be heard directly. In the discussion, consideration is given to the way in which these teachers practice the dynamic which is drama, are influenced by the art form of theatre, and deliver the school subject, Drama.

Declaration

I certify that thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;**
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or**
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.**

October 2002

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1. Introduction

Drama as a school subject in Western Australian secondary schools is a steadily growing area of endeavour. This project has sought to obtain an account of that endeavour from teachers currently practising, in order to gain some insight into the way in which they work with the dynamic which is drama and the art form which is theatre, within the parameters of the socio-cultural process which is schooling. Within that process, learning achieves coherence for the student in the person of the teacher. The content of learning - skills, knowledge, understandings and values; and the context of learning - environmental, social, cultural, political and economic; are mediated by the teacher in a meaningful way, so that each student, with all of his/her personal traits, abilities, experiences and contexts, is enabled to achieve the desired outcomes of schooling. Thus, the teacher's understanding of what s/he is doing in the classroom is of considerable significance.

The complexities of the task are considerable, since the teacher is dealing with three very powerful elements which are closely interwoven. At the heart is the element which I will term the "dynamic", and for which I will use lower case, "drama". This element is characterised by the embodiment of experience through role and the use of role to explore, develop, and communicate that experience. Its power lies in the way drama can alter perceptions, increase understanding and open the individual to further experience in ways which are not necessarily predictable. The second element is the art form of theatre, which is characterised by discipline and aesthetic understanding. Its power lies in the features of control and structure which give meaning to experience, communicate understandings and reveal new perspectives. The third element is the school subject, for which I will use upper case, "Drama". A school subject is characterised by delineation of content, its place in the school curriculum and specific requirements for assessment according to required levels of achievement. Its power lies in the social consensus which governs its undertaking.

Describing the complex area of endeavour that is Drama teaching is not easy. In a well-observed discussion of what amounts to teaching style, Errington (1992) considers drama teaching by focusing on individual orientation:

As a teacher I will only select particular kinds of drama if they agree with my beliefs about teaching and education. That is, providing the drama can be used to put my educational beliefs into practice, I will use it (p.1).

Much of the literature on drama education seeks to describe teaching practice according to variously held "beliefs about teaching and education", and there is a tendency to see the selection of "particular kinds of drama" as being solely within the control of the teacher and/or the students. On the other hand, much is made in the literature on education generally about the influence of the economic, social, cultural and political context in which education takes place. As Jonathan (1990) states:

The agenda of the debate surrounding education in any complex society is influenced by economic and socio-political circumstance and by the findings and fashions of educational theory (p.4).

Teachers in their work are affected by such 'outside' influences as they deliver an educational program. Wilcox (1990) has pointed out that:

... in a secular world the curriculum carries the increasing burden of being a major means for socialising the young. In providing young people with a basic understanding of their society and its values, the curriculum plays a vital part in maintaining the coherence of society and its continued existence (p. 520).

Teachers are employed to carry out such a curriculum and, in order to do this, the beliefs, both of individual teachers and of their students, must be reconciled with the value systems of the society which commissions that curriculum. Teaching practice is shaped just as much by conditions of employment, school/community expectations and externally moderated requirements for achievement, as it is by personal orientation and pedagogy, and Drama teaching is no exception.

Miller and Saxton (1998) raise a concern with the bridging of an identified gap between theory and practice in drama education. They see a need for a closer interaction between the processes of researching and those of teaching:

Our discipline is founded upon collaborative processes and dedicated to the making and communication of meaning. If those meanings are to have any power to move, to challenge, to entertain and to cause reflection, they must be framed in ways and with words that are accessible to everyone who comes into contact with them (p.5)

There are gaps to be bridged between the meanings given to drama education by policy makers and school communities, between educationists and theatre practitioners, between scholars and classroom teachers. It has been the purpose of this study to document the understandings of Drama teachers as a means of bridge-building, in a way which would not only provide a record of the meaning that the participants give to their practice but would also allow consideration of the way in which that practice is constructed.

Chapter 2 offers a context for understanding Drama teaching in Western Australia, as it outlines the influences which have shaped the subject's development. Chapter 3 explains the basis on which the research was constructed. The choice of a phenomenological methodology has proven to be of considerable value, because it has allowed for individual voices to be heard and for features of their particular discourse to be considered. Chapter 4 introduces the project itself and Chapters 5 to 7 present the data through a selection from the transcripts of interview, attending directly to the individual voices of the participants and considering the understandings thus revealed. Chapter 8 draws some conclusions about the value of the study.

2. Background

Significant features of Drama in Western Australian secondary schools are provided as a framework within which to interpret the references of the discourse exemplified in the data. It is a specialised one, able to deal with the multi-faceted nature of the work and the meanings which are constructed through it and of it. The following account is based on observation, personal experience and the literature, and is divided into the following sections:

- history: the development of the subject in Western Australia
- pedagogy: aspects of classroom practice and application
- curriculum: the way in which the content of teaching is determined
- context: external influences on teaching

These sections are intended to provide both a context for the study and information about the researcher's understandings of the field.

2.1 History

Drama as a separate school subject is a recent addition to the formal school curriculum in Western Australia if compared with the more traditional subjects which have been developing since schooling began. Definitions of and approaches to the subject have only been formulated within the lifetimes of many current practitioners and have provided a rapidly changing range of influences on their training and experience. An understanding of these influences will be important when considering the data.

Until the 1950s, drama in schools consisted of three strands. These strands operated in both primary and secondary sectors, the maturity of the participants being the only real distinction between practices in the two sectors. It will be necessary to describe these strands in some detail because they are still an important part of the community perception of drama in schools and thus influence the expectations which are placed upon Drama teachers.

The first strand was the extra-curricular production of scripted plays - often musicals, since musical theatre was (and still is) the great audience pleaser - presented to the school and sometimes the wider community. There were also festivals in which students presented performances in competition.

Responsibility would be undertaken, usually on a volunteer basis (qualification - enthusiasm) by:

- English teachers in secondary schools
- enthusiastic generalist teachers in primary schools
- music specialists in both sectors
- anyone with the energy and enthusiasm - member of staff, parent, community member or even senior student.

There was also the possibility in more affluent schools of employing an outside specialist - a theatre practitioner or studio speech teacher. The focus of this strand was on the art form as an end in its own right.

The second strand was the development of 'correct speech', either through English classes or, more usually, extra-curricular activities. At one time, an AMEB Speech qualification was accepted as a minor subject for Tertiary Entrance but it was usually taught outside the regular school curriculum. In this strand, dramatic speech was taught alongside voice production and public speaking techniques. Once again competitions were a common outlet for performance, as well as participation in the school's public occasions such as graduation ceremonies (tellingly called Speech Nights), and civic occasions such as memorial ceremonies. The same people, apart from the music specialists, operated the strand, but there was sometimes more English classroom time given to it as the cultivation of 'correct speech' was considered to be something which was a proper area of educational endeavour. The focus here was on the form as a life skill.

The third strand was the reading of drama texts as part of the study of literature. In the first two strands performance was the focus. In the third strand reading was the focus. Work on texts could take one of many forms, from reading aloud in class to full-scale productions of plays studied. The focus was the study of the written text, which would be enhanced by studying the language as spoken text coupled with movement/staging.

In the 1950s, Peter Slade's book, *Child Drama* (Slade, 1954), began a movement which, by the 1960s, added a fourth strand to the practice of drama in schools. For Slade and his followers, drama was a process for self-

expression, a release of the instinct for creative play. This approach was included in pre-service training for primary teachers, who began using such drama activities as role play as part of the move away from the more rigid structure of the traditional classroom which was occurring at that time. Eventually the process was picked up by secondary English teachers who would take Drama as a timetabled session. At the same time, drama was developing as a method of teaching in humanities subjects such as Social Studies in both primary and lower secondary classes. This understanding of drama reflected the changing educational ethos and a pedagogy was developed in order to support it.

2.2 Pedagogy

The seminal influence of Slade's work soon became apparent. Educationists were seduced by the notion of the drama of children as being solely child-centred. For the first time, drama became a recognized area of educational endeavour. Way (1967) draws a distinction between drama and theatre for the purposes of school-based drama as follows:

... the major difference between the two activities can be stated as follows: 'theatre' is largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience; 'drama' is largely concerned with experience by the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience (pp. 2-3).

Way's concern was that 'theatre' with its requirements of proficiency for the purposes of aesthetic satisfaction and communication, would "lead to artificiality and destroy the full values of the intended experience" (p. 3).

Way and others of his time saw child drama as an extension of imaginative play, an exploration of experience which the child could use to come to terms with him/herself. Because it dealt with affect rather than content it was important that it be allowed to occur naturally, and be an end in itself. This pedagogy, initially designed for young children, quickly spread to secondary schools. There it became the foundation of an understanding of Drama in which creativity was to be primarily expressive and only incidentally communicative.

During the 1960s, the emphasis moved towards the supremacy of improvisation and 'role drama', an extension of the 'play way' which had been developed as a result of Child Drama. Such improvisation came to be seen as a means of altering and/or manipulating the way in which students perceived the world in which they lived. Students were to be encouraged to explore their experiences through the medium of role and to devise their own dramas through the improvisation process.

At the same time as drama was being appreciated for its affective properties it became recognized as a useful teaching method. Anderson (1971) sees it as:

a means of communication and, as a means of communication, it is available to anybody who is in the communication business and teaches art ... any teacher, whether of Physical Education or Physics or Maths or Music would use drama, would employ drama in his teaching (p.74).

Role and improvisation were found to have instructional value and the capacity of drama to embody experience gave it status as a useful learning strategy. Anderson didn't believe that there was "any necessary reason why anybody should think of a separate subject called Drama" (p. 74). Anderson comes from a Social Studies teaching background and for him, the value of drama was as a means of exploring issues and entering into the experiences of others. This in turn became increasingly a preoccupation of educationists working within Drama itself. Bolton (1979), while talking about a separate school subject, nevertheless reinforces Anderson's view with his definition of drama as "a dynamic means of gaining new understanding" (p.112).

This definition is expanded by Burton (1987), who says that:

... drama is a way of exploring and understanding the world... a unique teaching tool ... [one which] allows children to explore the world directly ... in a number of different ways from a variety of viewpoints ... and emphasises a co-operative approach to learning (p.1).

The difference between Anderson's point of view and that of both Bolton and Burton lies in the kind of learning which the latter considered to be the focus of drama. While Anderson saw it as primarily a means of exploring external content, Bolton and Burton continued to represent an understanding of the dynamic which sees it as a means of exploring affect. However, unlike Way,

they want drama to be seen as having something to offer in the wider context of learning. All three viewpoints see drama as the application of certain skills and processes, loosely derived from the art form but more strongly related to play, which enhance learning and personal development.

Cecily O'Neill (1988) took up the concern for educational relevance and also saw the need to understand drama as a disciplined endeavour. She relates the subject more closely to the art form and states that, "even when we are working in process and improvisation, we are working in an artistic medium" (p.2). She also suggests a more specific idea of content and purpose for Drama:

The purpose of drama and theatre is to examine human role, identity and behaviour. ... Drama in education works on the principle of allowing us, by creating an artificial world and fictional roles, to escape from the limitations of our real world (p.7).

She argues that it is not enough to let the participants in the process determine the outcomes of Drama and proposes a more teacher-determined and theatre-related structure.

David Hornbrook (1991) goes much further in his advocacy for a focus on the art form. He attempts to counter the 'role drama' or 'process' work advocated by O'Neill and argues for "the importance of theatre culture as well as classroom culture to a balanced drama education" (p.2). He sees this as necessary if Drama is to be considered a suitable area of educational endeavour in a climate of economic rationalism. It is through promoting drama as an art form that its validity will be recognized, and it is as art that drama can be said to be "not of necessity a means to an end, however worthy, beyond itself"(p.41). In other words, the product is what justifies the subject. Hornbrook's apparent break with the work of other drama educators has been strongly criticised. O'Toole (1990) claims that it is "a tiresome retreat into a narrow past" (p.12). He argues that Hornbrook is debunking a pedagogy which no longer exists and that process is now defined as "the renegotiation of the elements of the art form of drama, in terms of the purposes of its participants" (p.12).

O'Toole's definition reflects a considerable shift in classroom practice, particularly in secondary schools. Errington (1992) uses the concept of "teacher orientation" to map this shift and suggest a further one. He identifies previous pedagogies as:

- neoclassical

the teacher is a figure of authority whose overriding function is to assist students in achieving and mastering clearly defined skills and practices. The teacher, as director, attempts to reduce the gap between students' ignorance and the mastery of skills needed for successfully communicating to others. The teacher is the expert (p.7).

- liberal-progressive

The chief task of the liberal-progressive teacher is to organise and facilitate the students' own personal expression of their experiences with a view to guiding them towards fuller autonomy in the learning process (p.16).

- individual-radical

An individual-radical teacher does not have to play a role him or herself; nevertheless, it is common to find the individual-radical teacher at the centre of the drama. The teacher aims to explore the implications of student assumptions and experience, revealed during drama and reflection time (p.28).

He then goes on to identify another orientation:

... the socially critical view of drama would investigate issues for their *particular* social, political and cultural meanings. Students would be made aware of their own impact on the world, as social contributors to its formation (p.42).

This latter view presupposes a critical approach to education generally on the part of the Drama teacher, one which not only recognises the context of education but also challenges it. There has been a change in the conceptualisation of the drama education process which has seen it move away from spontaneous play into a more focused activity using some of the skills of theatre - primarily those related to role. The purpose of drama education has also shifted, away from enhancement of the experience of the individual towards engagement with society. Process and product are accorded

equal significance and the Drama teacher needs to be able to deal equally with both.

2.3 Curriculum

Both the literature and the data used in this study suggest that Drama educationists generally give a primary place in the curriculum to the processes of drama and to their value for individual development and social change. However, for the community generally it is the product as it is represented in the art form of theatre that is more readily recognized as a valid object of study for vocational or recreational purposes. Devisers of the curriculum in the current political climate are concerned with establishing the credibility of Drama as a relevant and rigorous school subject which is capable of specification for purposes of moderation. To this end, the curriculum endeavours to wed educationally acknowledged process with culturally acknowledged product.

In Western Australian secondary school classes Drama had, by the 1970s, two manifestations - "Speech and Drama", which leaned towards the spoken word, included non- theatrical performance and was considered a 'personal development' subject; and "Theatre Arts", emphasising acting skills and staged performances and considered an "arts" subject by its practitioners. Each subject used both text and student-devised content and the courses were flexible. Teachers placed the emphasis on process or product according to their own educational understandings and experience. Concurrently, pre-service training institutions began offering Drama as a subject specialisation for trainee secondary teachers.

The establishment of the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) in the 1980s introduced formal curricula for upper school Drama with each succeeding syllabus becoming more and more prescriptive. Since then, the Curriculum Council has replaced the SEA and the two former subjects have been amalgamated under the title of "Drama", wholly school - assessed but closely moderated (Curriculum Council, 1998 b, c). There has also been the development of a further subject, "Drama Studies" (Curriculum Council 1998 c, d), the first Tertiary Entrance Subject in Western Australia to be assessed by a Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The syllabus for these subjects

provides for a range of prescribed content to be assessed through specified tasks which allow the student to demonstrate the achievement of various specified Outcomes. Students are now required to see Drama as containing a considerable body of knowledge and to understand the social and cultural significance of the product - theatre - as well as being concerned with various processes and skills. At the same time there remains a degree of flexibility in the teaching/learning program, as it is recognized that there is a range of pathways by which the Outcomes may be reached. Such flexibility is even greater at the Lower Secondary level.

In the 1980s, the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) introduced the Unit Curriculum, which included descriptions of Drama units for lower secondary classes. These were discrete units which attempted a developmental approach to the subject through a recommended sequencing. They were, however, usually offered as 'one-off' experiences, because Drama units competed with units in other 'optional' subjects such as Metalwork, Typing, Languages Other Than English, and Visual Art. Since the national designation of the Arts as a Learning Area and with the introduction of an Outcomes approach to education in Western Australia, an attempt has been made to recognise the developmental nature of arts learning but, as personal experience and the information gained in this study show, the exigencies of the school timetable, staffing needs, available space and competition from other subjects continue to influence practice in lower secondary classrooms. The Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998a), as the over-riding determiner of curriculum in Western Australia, has yet to reach full implementation, but the approach to the teaching/learning program signified there is bringing about a considerable change in perspective. The pedagogical issues remain much the same in essence, but are complicated by a shift in focus from the teaching objectives described in the Unit Curriculum (EDWA 1992) to learning outcomes. In the Drama classroom this means that it is no longer possible for the dynamic to rule the educational process as the emphasis has transferred from what students should experience in the class to what they should have achieved by the end of a teaching/learning program. The pedagogy and curriculum are theoretically freed from the need to conform to

specific requirements of content but the need to be able to recognise and account for student achievement requires some agreement between the system, the teachers, administrators and the school community generally. In the Arts Learning Area in general and in Drama in particular, the way in which notions of creativity, definitions of skill, forms of reflection and relevance of context are understood for the purposes of moderation and assessment will influence the content of the subject and the way it is presented to students.

In addition, as long as there is a set syllabus for the post-compulsory years, the need to prepare students for this syllabus must weigh heavily when teachers plan their lower school programs. At present, the Outcomes approach is being developed only for primary and lower secondary education (EDWA 1998), although a Post-Compulsory Schooling review is currently under way. Each course for upper secondary students in Western Australia currently has a syllabus which sets forth not only the knowledge, skills and understandings which students are expected to acquire, but also quite specific direction on the criteria by which they are to be assessed. In addition, there are external examinations for students who wish to gain Tertiary Entrance (Curriculum Council, 1998 b, c, d, e). The basis of each Drama course is a series of Common Assessment Tasks which must be undertaken by all students. Students are required to demonstrate various skills and techniques, a substantial knowledge of text and context and a well-developed ability to reflect on and write about the processes and products of drama.

The need to establish comparability of assessment, which has become increasingly paramount at the upper secondary level, necessarily affects the way in which Drama teachers program for their lower school students. On the one hand, teachers must provide a basis for those students who want to proceed to Drama Studies in upper school. On the other hand they need to retain the broader avenues of exploration and creativity which are available under an Outcomes approach. The resulting increase in regulation of content is at odds with the philosophy of an Outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. The processes undertaken to achieve the products specified may only ever be a limited set of the possible range and the teacher must reconcile the

assessment requirements with her/his own understanding of the needs of the students.

Making sure that their students meet the requirements of curriculum is a major concern of teachers since that is, at the end of the day, what they are paid to do. Adherence to that curriculum, in a way which satisfies their own pedagogy, the needs of the students in their charge and the school community generally, requires considerable skill. This is particularly so in the lower secondary area, where teachers are without the guidelines of a syllabus and must rely heavily on their own understandings of both the dynamic and the art form in order to present the subject. As a consequence, this study uses programming for lower secondary students as an entry point.

2.4 Context

The context in which teaching takes place is as powerful an element as any other in determining what the teacher does in the classroom. As Burns (1994) states,

A classroom never stands in isolation from larger cultural and social landscapes such as local and national political or economic processes and values (p.246).

The economic realities of education funding and school priorities can make the difference, for example, between lavish and limited resources, or between an appropriate and an inappropriate teaching space. A teacher's orientation may be towards developing competence in the art form of theatre, but s/he may work in a school with no staging facilities. A school administration which respects the subject can encourage in students a commitment to their learning, whereas a makeshift approach to time-tabling may denigrate the learning in the students' own eyes and the eyes of their peers. The provision of professional development for the teacher, an increasingly felt need in a time of great change, is also affected by funding and priorities.

Because of its nature, Drama has become a developmental area for many advances in educational practice. Observation suggests that in Western Australia its teachers already have more experience than many of their colleagues in the provision of student-centred learning, affective learning, inclusivity in education, open-ended assessment vehicles and other

preoccupations of the current policy makers. However the Drama teacher is still often seen by the school community primarily as the provider of public relations exercises and timetabled recreational activities, and the subject is seen as having minimal relevant educational or vocational content. In a climate of economic rationalism, such a perception affects the retention of Drama as a school subject and the Drama teacher needs to be aware of this "hidden curriculum".

A major indicator of the context of education in Western Australia can be found in the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998 a.). The core shared values upon which the curriculum is based are explicitly stated on the inside of the back cover and it would be hard to argue against these humane and responsible tenets. Yet the need to state these values suggests that they are not, after all, universal. If these are the values which the curriculum developers have agreed on, there may be a need for teachers to reconcile them with the values of particular school communities and groups of students.

A further indicator of context can be seen in the move to legislate for Teacher Registration. During the debate on the School Education Bill in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly on June 23rd 1998, an amendment was moved by Dr Elizabeth Constable, Member for Churchlands, which sought to include registration of teachers as part of the Bill. Dr Constable's discussion in support of the motion reflects a community concern that unless teachers are regulated, students will be put at risk, not only of abuse but also of inadequate teaching (Hansard, Tuesday, 23 June 1998, pp 4474 - 4476). An assumption underlying the motion is that it is necessary to standardise recognition of professional competence and conduct in order to protect the public interest. Such public scrutiny of teaching can be expected to have an impact on the way in which a teacher works, particularly in the affective learning climate of Drama.

Paisey (1990) states that:

Once [organisation and management] were implicit in educational activity, now they are explicit; ...once they were left to the practitioner, now they are matters of public concern and overt national policy (p.378).

This situation is reflected in such phenomena as the centralisation of curriculum, the corporatisation of values and the introduction of Performance Management for teachers. Teachers need to provide evidence of accountability in all areas of their practice and to do so in terms of prevailing educational priorities and values. For example, Pascoe (1999) draws attention to the need for Arts educators, including Drama teachers, “to actively exploit the current debate, to demonstrate how important drama is in the promotion and development of literacy” (p.122). Pascoe, who is himself an eminent drama educator, is seeking to validate the work of Arts teachers, including Drama teachers, within the wider context of community concerns about education, but his proposal begs the question of providing a value for the subject of Drama in its own terms. In such a context, the work of the Drama teacher must also include advocacy.

3. Methodology

O'Farrell (1999) considers that the ways in which research has represented Drama teaching have not been seen as relevant by practitioners and that the formalisation which results from the use of research based on specific methodologies has the potential to "distance the process of research from the object of its attention" (p.116). O'Farrell suggests a possible solution to the problem:

The idea of approaching research from the perspective of the type of question being asked rather than from the mechanics of a particular methodology may ... prove invaluable to researchers in their search for a method best suited to their particular goals (p.117).

The starting point for this study was the question:

What do Drama teachers understand to be the elements of their teaching?

The question arose from two concerns which arose from personal experience, reading and conversation with other Drama teachers. The first was that Drama teachers in Western Australia, coming as they do from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of qualifications and experience, did not necessarily share a common understanding of the school subject. In the traditional school subjects there may be some variation in content from time to time but everyone has a clear understanding of what Mathematics, or Physics or Geography or French or Music, is all about. This is largely because these disciplines have evolved over a long period of time and have developed conventions of content and procedure which are generally accepted in our society. As the history of the school subject outlined in Chapter 2 shows, Drama has not had the time to develop such general recognition.

The second concern was that, in spite of perceived differences in teachers' individual ideas and approaches to the work, there was also a common core of understanding which was not necessarily shared by other stakeholders in education, nor indeed was it recognized that there was anything special to understand. Once again, this is partly the result of the comparatively short history of the school subject. It is probable that it is also partly due to the complexities of the subject as already indicated.

The question in this instance is open-ended and asks for understandings about practice rather than interrogating the practice itself. There was an expectation that there would be a variety of understandings presented, but it was not considered productive to foreground the differences since there was also a desire to discover the commonalities. It could therefore have been limiting to provide a pre-determined structure for the data collection and analysis, so it was decided to base the research on a phenomenological methodology which would allow for individual voices to be heard, presenting their understandings without the limitations of pre-determined categories.

In addition, this methodology allowed for the effect on the study of the identity of the researcher, also a Western Australian Drama teacher known to participants as a colleague. The possible influence of this relationship, both for encouraging and inhibiting participation, needed to be taken into account when considering the information gained from the data, and the conclusions arrived at needed to be considered in light of the fact that the researcher's own understandings could unduly influence such conclusions. By choosing a methodology which focuses on the voices of the participants it was intended to limit the effect which such an influence might have on the research.

3.1 Research in drama education

Research is a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem (Burns, 1994, p.2).

Initially, answers to questions about drama in schools were supplied through exemplars of practice which were not explicitly recognized as research but which focused on many variables in the Drama teacher's work, particularly in the area of process drama. Descriptions of lessons and series of lessons abound in the work of Heathcote and Bolton and the many other practitioners who were developing pedagogy at the time. Questions were dealt with in a less formal way than the rigors of research generally demand, but the answers were used and extended in further practice. We can now see that the many accounts which have collected over the years formed a body of knowledge upon which further knowledge has been built in a more academically acknowledgeable way.

The increased acceptability of qualitative research methods which, as Burns (1994) points out (p.14), are often more suitable to the study of what happens in a classroom, has resulted in an increase in the research being undertaken in drama education and there is now a considerable body of endeavour which is recognized in the field. Since the 1980s, publications such as the *NADIE Journal* (now *NJ*) and *Research in Drama Education* have published the results of many research projects which can be related to specific methodological approaches. Most of the research is focused on what and how students learn, whether it deals with questions of language and literacy (Schaffner, 1986, McNaughton, 1997), patterns of student engagement (Warner, 1997), the relationship between art and education as exemplified through drama (Bresler, Wasser & Hertzog, 1997) or imaginative processes (Cremin, 1998). Investigation has been made of the use of educational drama with specifically identified groups such as women in prison (Trounstone, 1992), children with special needs (Warren, 1993) and pre-service teachers (McCammon, Norris & Miller, 1996).

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Drama teachers, policy makers, school communities and other stake-holders, all need to have a better understanding of what constitutes "our practice" and "our work" if it is to prosper. This study has been fruitful not least because it illustrates the statement of McCammon, Norris and Miller (1999) that:

Despite our differences, we all have one thing in common - we are drama teachers. Our stories can illuminate our differences and bind us together by what we have in common. (p.109)

3.2 A phenomenological approach

The philosophical discipline of phenomenology has given rise to a method of investigation which allows for open-ended, non-performative research and such an approach has proven rewarding in this case. The question addressed concerned the understanding that Drama teachers have of what they do. The methodology allows the participants to have control of the information provided and thus was intended to remove any fear that their performance was under scrutiny. It also allows the researcher's role in eliciting the information to be minimal, a factor which reduces the impact, in this particular study, of the identity of the researcher. Also, by choosing a phenomenological approach, it has been possible to exploit the strengths which Burns (1994) has identified:

Qualitative forms of investigation tend to be based on a recognition of the importance of the subjective, experiential "lifeworld" of human beings. Such reflection is the province of phenomenology. The phenomenological field of educational action embraces the host of personal meanings that are derived from the context of direct experiencing (p. 11).

The methodology allows themes and issues raised by the participants to be accepted as part of the data, whether these themes and issues have previously been identified by the researcher or not, thus enabling the study to more fully engage with the area of experience being investigated. It also makes possible the recognition of teachers' expertise and enables, inter alia, a description of and a reflection on practice, without the need for a judgment. Rather than ask the participants specific questions, it was possible to gather the data by providing a focus - programming for lower secondary classes, where, because there is no syllabus, teachers need to draw most heavily on their own understandings. Apart from providing the focus, the role of the researcher was to act as a sympathetic listener to the insights about their work which the participants wished to share.

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The Curriculum Council is also using teachers' stories as a means of providing support for the introduction of Outcomes-based education (*Getting Started: Using the Arts Learning Area Statement*, Curriculum Council, 1999). The Foreword points out that "there are no off-the-shelf guides to implementing the learning outcomes" and the use of case stories is intended to emphasise for teachers the processes by which they can come to an understanding of what needs to be done. The subject-based content with which teachers work is incidental to the purpose for publishing these stories, yet dealing with this content is part of the process and the teachers' comments can be revealing. For example, Paul, the Drama teacher whose account is included in the Case Stories says:

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Permeating recognition of the nexus between knowledge and perspective is the impact of the particular subjective baggage a researcher brings to her/his project.

The "baggage" of the researcher in this study is considerable. As a Drama teacher with forty years experience of drama in the classroom, as a participant and sometimes leader in forums concerned with curriculum and policy, as a provider of professional development for colleagues, as a supervisor of pre-service teaching practice, as a long-term member and officer of the professional association, as a writer and editor of support materials for drama teachers, as a participant in amateur theatre, as a life-long devotee of theatre performance in all its aspects, as a continuing student of education generally and drama education in particular, it has not been possible for the researcher to approach the topic from the "outside".

All of this "baggage" is relevant to the study, from the framing of the question to the conclusions that are drawn. Because of the time span – more than fifty years if you count her own schooling as well as teaching experience – the researcher has been an active participant in the evolution of Drama and has

been subject to the influences of prevailing theory, practice and context as these have appeared. The range of involvement in professional activities outside the classroom has provided an opportunity to reflect on the work and consider the complexities already referred to. Such involvement is also an indication that the work is of considerable fascination to the researcher and one which she believes wholeheartedly to be most worthwhile – an affective response which needs to be recognised.

Issues for the research which could arise from the impact of the researcher's identity needed to be considered during the course of the research and need to be taken into consideration by the reader of the discussion. Such issues were seen to be:

- (a) the widespread occurrence of ellipsis in the data, arising from an assumption by the participants of shared referents.

In order to counter this for the reader, a comprehensive background to drama teaching in Western Australian secondary schools, which reflects the researcher's experience (see Chapter 2), has been included. Further recognition of this situation is dealt with directly in the discussion of the discourse.

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A review of the transcripts of the interviews and the researcher's personal journal of the research process reveals that, in general, this proved to be a benefit rather than a hindrance, as participants felt free to pursue their own reflections because of the assumption of shared understandings. It meant that participants could assume the researcher's involvement in the discussion without her having to respond overtly to any extent.

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- (d) the possibility of bias on the part of the researcher in assessing the results because of her familiarity with the participants and the subject of the study.

The non-performative nature of the research and the substance of the thesis which has arisen from it have to some extent precluded this concern, since any bias will be accounted for in the background provided, and in the way in which the data is exploited.

Although these issues have been addressed, they have not necessarily been resolved and it has been important to keep in mind, along with Brown (1998), that:

... as researcher, mine is the privileged position - my understandings are seen to be the more powerful ones. If I want findings which are a genuine expression of multiple realities, I must take great care not to let my voice drown out the voice of others.

3. Methodology

O'Farrell (1999) considers that the ways in which research has represented Drama teaching have not been seen as relevant by practitioners and that the formalisation which results from the use of research based on specific methodologies has the potential to "distance the process of research from the object of its attention" (p.116). O'Farrell suggests a possible solution to the problem:

The idea of approaching research from the perspective of the type of question being asked rather than from the mechanics of a particular methodology may ... prove invaluable to researchers in their search for a method best suited to their particular goals (p.117).

The starting point for this study was the question:

What do Drama teachers understand to be the elements of their teaching?

The question arose from two concerns which arose from personal experience, reading and conversation with other Drama teachers. The first was that Drama teachers in Western Australia, coming as they do from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of qualifications and experience, did not necessarily share a common understanding of the school subject. In the traditional school subjects there may be some variation in content from time to time but everyone has a clear understanding of what Mathematics, or Physics or Geography or French or Music, is all about. This is largely because these disciplines have evolved over a long period of time and have developed conventions of content and procedure which are generally accepted in our society. As the history of the school subject outlined in Chapter 2 shows, Drama has not had the time to develop such general recognition.

The second concern was that, in spite of perceived differences in teachers' individual ideas and approaches to the work, there was also a common core of understanding which was not necessarily shared by other stakeholders in education, nor indeed was it recognized that there was anything special to understand. Once again, this is partly the result of the comparatively short history of the school subject. It is probable that it is also partly due to the complexities of the subject as already indicated.

The question in this instance is open-ended and asks for understandings about practice rather than interrogating the practice itself. There was an expectation that there would be a variety of understandings presented, but it was not considered productive to foreground the differences since there was also a desire to discover the commonalities. It could therefore have been limiting to provide a pre-determined structure for the data collection and analysis, so it was decided to base the research on a phenomenological methodology which would allow for individual voices to be heard, presenting their understandings without the limitations of pre-determined categories.

In addition, this methodology allowed for the effect on the study of the identity of the researcher, also a Western Australian Drama teacher known to participants as a colleague. The possible influence of this relationship, both for encouraging and inhibiting participation, needed to be taken into account when considering the information gained from the data, and the conclusions arrived at needed to be considered in light of the fact that the researcher's own understandings could unduly influence such conclusions. By choosing a methodology which focuses on the voices of the participants it was intended to limit the effect which such an influence might have on the research.

3.1 Research in drama education

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4. The research process

In establishing the process for carrying out this study, attention was paid to the non-performative, experiential emphasis of the methodology. The process relied heavily on the researcher's identity as a colleague of the proposed participants in both the selection of participants and the ambience of the data collection. The researcher, as a listener with an informed and sympathetic interest in the work, was able to respond appropriately where necessary in the interviews, but was also able to be largely passive in the situation. There was no need to allow for any initial stimulation other than providing the general topic of discussion, nor was it necessary to provide reassurance, since a strong atmosphere of trust already existed between the participants and the researcher. There was little need to encourage or assist the participants to communicate their understandings freely since all involved were accustomed to sharing their reflections with each other.

4.1 The participants

The participants were self-selected after some consultation. Colleagues with whom the researcher came into contact on professional networking and professional development occasions were made aware of the intention to undertake the research. Telephone contact was made with those who had expressed interest in participating and those who were able to spend the time required were then formally invited to take part. All those to whom the project was mentioned gave general interest and support, and those interested but unable to commit the time expressed disappointment at not being able to take part. This response was most encouraging and could be seen to indicate an appreciation of the value that such a project could have for Drama teachers. There was a definite wish for the voices of Drama teachers to be heard.

Of the six teachers who participated in the study, five were well known to the researcher. These five had all served with the researcher on the committee of their professional association and one of them had worked briefly with the researcher in a school. The sixth participant knew and was known by the researcher mainly by reputation. In all cases there was an already demonstrated commitment to students and, particularly in the case of the five who had participated in the work of the professional association, a further

commitment to their colleagues as well. The decision to participate can be thus seen to indicate both a felt need for Drama teachers to have a voice and implicit trust in the researcher to represent that voice to others. The collegiality so expressed made the data collection easy.

As the participants were self-selected there was no attempt to control the demographics, but these are of some interest. Although a majority of secondary Drama teachers in Western Australia are female, four of the participants were male. There were three each from the State and private sectors. One of the former worked in a specialist school for the arts and two of the latter worked in single-sex schools. Backgrounds were varied and covered such experiences as:

- training/teaching in another country
- teaching in more than one system
- teaching a range of subjects other than Drama
- teaching in both regional and metropolitan schools
- specific/no specific qualifications in Drama teaching
- participation in amateur theatre
- work in the theatre industry
- work in other occupations
- academic qualifications both within and outside education, at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Such diversity of background reinforced the decision to allow the participants to talk about their work in their own way. On the other hand, it presented a challenge in the reporting of the research if the anonymity of the participants was to be preserved. Drama teachers in Western Australia belong, in general, to a small, tightly knit community, where the very individuality of the understandings collected could serve to identify the participants. The willingness of these colleagues to accept this and to take part in this project is a feature of the study which is gratefully acknowledged by the researcher.

4.2 Data collection

Participants were initially invited to a group discussion at the home of the researcher. The venue was chosen to provide an atmosphere of informality

which it was hoped would facilitate the free exchange of understandings. Because other commitments on the part of participants made timing a problem, there were three of these discussions. At each of these preliminary discussions the group consisted of the researcher and two participants, and, as it happened, each pair consisted of one State school teacher and one private school teacher. Participants were asked to come prepared to talk about programming for their lower secondary school classes. Other than this general context, there was no attempt made to influence the flow of the discussion in any formal way.

The second stage of the data collection consisted of individual interviews, once again an hour in length, where some attempt was made to fill in perceived gaps in the first lot of data. Personal philosophies of drama were sought, as well as information about personal experience and details of practice and interaction with other Drama teachers. Once again, apart from starting or stimulating the discussion with such questions, the researcher rarely intervened. No direction was given by the researcher to what was said unless a participant asked for it and this did not happen often. Participants were free to raise issues and provide information and insights as they felt these to be central to their work. There was no need for the researcher to be other than a sympathetic listener, as the participants had plenty to say. When the researcher intervened in the discussion it was to either clarify a point made or to maintain the flow of the discussion, an intervention which was rarely necessary, as the participants were fully engaged in talking about their work and often continued the discussion after the hour allocated to recording the discussion had finished. At times the researcher was drawn into the discussion as a colleague, rather than as an observer, but on the whole, the voice of the researcher was seldom heard.

The fluency of the participants and the relative lack of direction needed from the researcher meant that collecting the data was a fairly simple task. However, organising it for the purpose of analysis proved to be much more of a challenge. In order to identify themes pursued by the participants, the transcripts of each individual's contribution in both interviews were edited separately to eliminate the words of other participants and identifiable

references to schools and other teachers. The transcripts were also edited to provide a continuous written statement by eliminating hesitations, false starts, repetition and other unnecessary features of the spoken language. They were then given to the participants to remove any references which they thought could breach confidentiality or which were infelicitously worded.

4.3 Working with the data

It became clear, once the data was considered, that some further decisions would need to be made about the focus of the thesis. The sheer scope of the data, in which the participants recount, comment, argue and reflect on their work, presented some problems. It covered classroom practice and curriculum content, personal philosophies and experience, engagement with the dynamic, the art form and education generally; and a great deal about the school context. It was tempting to let the edited transcripts stand alone, as a sufficient outcome of this study, since the question originally posed was, in one sense, answered in a fairly powerful way. The work of McCammon, Norris and Miller (1999) suggests that there is much to be gained by practitioners attending to the reflections of their peers and this was certainly so for the researcher.

It seemed important, however, to re-contextualise the data according to the perceived demands of the dynamic, the art form and the school subject to foreground some of the issues raised by the data. These included the diversity of emphasis in recounting practice and the ways in which it was validated, as well as the pervasive influence of context and the over-arching role of “teacher”. In order to do this it was necessary to select from the data and re-order the material, while at the same time endeavouring to retain the power of the individual voices and to ensure that they were authentically represented. To this end, a close reading of the transcripts was undertaken, with attention paid to the identification of such discourse features as the use of language, the topics discussed, the examples chosen and the themes emphasized. Various threads in each discussion were identified and considered, both separately and in the context of each other, the context of the discussions, the general background of the subject and the researcher’s knowledge and experience. The transcripts were then subjected to further readings which focused on the issues thus identified and the extracts which form the bases for the following

chapters were selected. It was decided to include a considerable body of direct quotation so that the reader could "hear" at first hand the voices of the participants. Stewart and Valentine (1990), in a study of the language use of battered wives and their husbands, found that:

We were so impressed with the power and intensity of the words that we wanted to ensure that any analysis conducted would not remove us too far from the experience and emotion that the words seemed to evoke.

The evocative accounts of their work offered by the participants in this study brought forth a similar response in this researcher. However, in the section which deals with the school context, the considerable differences between schools and the specific circumstances of each participant are such that this section of the study could have threatened the anonymity of the participants and be seen as a criticism of particular school administrations. It was therefore decided to use a more generalized approach to the discussion at this point, without direct quotations. The use of pseudonyms rather than numbers or letters in the discussion of the data has been a deliberate attempt to heighten the sense of personal narrative while preserving the anonymity of the participants and the order in which the quotations are presented is purely alphabetical.

5. What we do: the dynamic

At the heart of the Drama teacher's work is the process called "drama". Because of the controversial division between "process" and "product" in the past, and the limited definition which was given to "process" in that debate, it was considered more appropriate to refer to a "dynamic", a term which at once suggests greater power and a more specific type of process - one which is interactively constructed rather than linear and in which the outcomes are also elements of the process, rather than just end products. On the evidence of this study, the power of the dynamic is derived from its capacity to foster creativity, learning and personal growth. O'Toole's (1990) definition of the process as "the renegotiation of the elements of the art form of drama, in terms of the purposes of its participants" (p.12), is to some extent born out by the data, but the element of play, with its potential for the reconstruction of the living experience, is also retained.

The elaboration of the process definition since Peter Slade's seminal work on drama as play (Slade, 1954), is testimony to the power it wields and the potential it holds for those engaged in it. By attending to the narratives of the participants in this study, it is possible to glimpse some of the complexities which attend any attempt at a definition, since it is in the operation of the dynamic that it tends to define itself. The term, "play" is nevertheless a significant one. The way in which the Drama teachers in this study have used the word reveals the extent to which the positive connotations of the word - enjoyment, informality, exploration, stimulation and simulation, as well the notion of performance - can be applied to their understandings of what they do. As "Fran" states,

I guess I can honestly say that in my job I'm one of the few people who get to play and have fun every single day and I love it. That's what I love about it - the sense of play and fun and finding ways of getting through a whole heap of content that needs to be taught.

"Colin" also understood play as a key feature of his work:

I play all day... I can go in there, play around, do theatre sports or whip up a script, be some Restoration lord with a high cane and a snotty-nosed voice. You can let more of yourself hang out. The kids walk into the room and they

know there's a whole different set of values and barriers and working worlds.

The other participants too saw play as an important part of the teaching learning program.

"Alex", re body awareness and movement:

...I give them a little bit of playing in front of the mirror first and then playing to an audience so that they have to develop the awareness of a space, their body in the space and their connection with the audience. They also have to incorporate the movement structures they've been playing with previously.

"Bruce", re voice work:

...when I shift roles I shift voice and play around with voice and I'll use that as a way of getting them into it, but I would never give a formal voice lesson

"Deb", re Drama's role in development:

I think also that drama is very important because, even though you're dealing with teenagers, kids are about play. They've got quite good imaginations and they're very expressive. Drama's such a great way for them to play and to get all those other things out of doing what they do.

"Eddie", re production:

We do interpretations, we light them and play around with them.

For the teacher there is, however, a responsibility to go beyond the informal and exploratory towards particular and formal ends and a further strength of the dynamic is that it allows teachers to incorporate activity which has aesthetic and academic goals. The participants engage with the art form, not only as aesthetic endeavour per se, but often with a focus on the communicative properties of the form and its potential to provide students with an enhanced sense of self-worth. The disciplines of theatre are incorporated into the dynamic and interact there with the purposes of schooling to form the work of these teachers.

As will be seen, there is considerable variety in the way in which the participants have chosen to present their practice. It is through the dynamic, however, that they work towards their goals, whether the focus is on personal growth and development, preparation for theatrical performance or successful

achievement of curriculum outcomes. The following selections from the transcript are presented to provide a picture of the practice of each participant as he/she has presented it for the study. The selections have been chosen on the basis of the activities recounted, in order to show the range of the dynamic as it is engaged in by each teacher.

5.1 "Alex"

In the classroom a lot of the first stuff is trying to get the kids to participate all together - the group building stuff.

I try to get them to create for themselves and I'm less concerned about the polish of the performance, but more interested in the process and the structure and the ideas behind what they create.

They went into role to experience what it might be like to be snubbed as you're coming aboard - whereas the white immigrants were getting all the high class treatment the Chinese immigrants were getting things like, "Ok you just go off that way and get a lime wash or something before you're allowed to hit shore." Experiencing what it's like to experience injustice, what's it like to be imprisoned simply because someone who was born in the same country as you is at war with people. ... Some were indignant - it was really interesting to watch the kids getting indignant about the way the character they had presented had been treated, the more they thought about it.

Nearly all of it was their idea. I would occasionally say, "I think this is a good point to put something in, what can go in there?" and they would generate the content. At other times the kids would generate a piece of work and I'd say, "Where can we put it in?" I really do work very much on letting them create as much as possible. Some things I suggested ... but it's a two way thing, it would be really hard to draw the line between what was exactly theirs and what was exactly mine because we'd get talking about it and the idea blossoms.

I had the opportunity to have kids play with masks - have a neutral mask and because it's a neutral mask it's plain, just blank, so blank is all you experience. "Now discover this place for the first time" Leave them to do that for 45 minutes and they have to release all their preconceptions and rediscover where the chair is, rediscover the difference between floor and wall and almost strip away language and get to that introspective quality, get to genuine exploration. One kid discovered how scientific method worked through doing that task. He discovered the notion of experimentation,

trial and error, observing difference. He noted and tested them a few times and said, 'I think now if I push this, this is going to happen.' And his character, this neutral face character, discovered that and explored it so that I saw the invention of science and for me that was fantastic.

I often throw masks on people, and say look in the mirrors ... The mask is a great way of working, particularly when you can access the mirrors, because they can just focus totally on body shape. It's raising the awareness of their own movements.

I do some introduction to mime at various points, a very simple mime class. "Show me that there's something in front of you, now you're moving along it and then working around it." I'll do that sort of stuff occasionally but very often it's just simply, "Show me that you're sweeping a floor, show me that you're painting a wall." And that's often in the context of doing something else - it might be while they're doing simple clowning

I generally work either thematically or on a project-driven basis so that the need to learn a particular skill or particular bit of knowledge or a particular way of doing something is inherent in the process. What I do is I set up a need for the kids to know how to do something so they can't complete the task without knowing how to do it, without having to pick up the skill on the way.

I get them to visualise movement based on an understanding of stuff like Feldenkreis, where as soon as you begin to think of a movement your body begins to engage the muscles - so that they're starting to develop an awareness of their body.

The stuff that I've been trying to do ... has been just raising their awareness of space and simple movement within the space. They've got a goal they're working towards in this situation where they have to use some of their skills, so the movement needs to be specific for what they're doing but there also needs to be that general raising of their awareness - when I'm in a space and I want the audience to experience something or to notice something, how I direct attention can be a totally a movement thing. How do I draw focus to myself on a stage just through movement or through absence of movement? Sometimes it's the absence of movement. You don't move, you just become completely still and everyone notices. So it's all about relationships - that is what I am constantly wanting them to notice.

They've got no prop, they've got nothing but the space to work with and they start to shape the space anyway. I think they're very used to doing that from make-believe games as

kids. I give them something on grouping as part and parcel of that.

5.2 "Bruce"

Drama to me is a holistic exercise so it has a skills component certainly from the acting side of things - looking at the verbals, non-verbals, developing those skills.

... it's about the students exploring themselves and their culture in society, so looking at rituals, looking at symbols, looking at what's important to them, and getting them to explore that in a safe environment, and coming hopefully to a greater understanding of themselves and the society in which they live.

I really enjoy getting the kids to come up with ideas, then follow them through and build the skills that are necessary into the lessons. This is what they need so that's what we show them, that's what we help facilitate. In some ways it's much more of a facilitation.

We'll work individually, we'll work in small groups or in large groups and as an entire class, we'll do all of that it's very important to allow the students to have ownership

I think what happens depends on the group dynamic. I've had classes where the group dynamic is not particularly supportive at times and other classes where the whole class has been absolutely wonderful, but generally within the class there will be some sort of support network or some sort of trust built up with a number of the students.

I would rather the kids tell me what's going on in their lives and work from that and then I can build up my content into that. I've never had a year or a situation when I couldn't build the content that I wanted the kids to learn into the issues that are important to them and to give them ownership, to make them feel they're important, it's their ideas, it's their work.

What I tend to do initially, in early days, is jump in and take on the role of protagonist and then, when I've got them arguing, swap immediately into the opposite and start arguing against what I've just said.

To give the students voice work I tend to mingle it into warm-up exercises. Also when I shift roles I shift voice and play around with voice and I'll use that as a way of getting them into it, but I would never give a formal voice lesson. I would never do that any more. I just make it part and parcel of what we are doing. As actors you have your voice, you have your body, both of them have to be flexible. You've got

to emphasise that and the kids usually get into that quite well. There are always kids who aren't particularly fit a lot of the time so there are all these flexibility and stretching exercises you can do that don't leave them totally at a loss. I focus very much on what we're doing as drama in education though. I'm not training them to be actors. That's a possibility if they want to go on but it's also just learning to be flexible communicators in a variety of situations and that includes your body language, that includes your voice.

I've just finished a unit on drugs with Year 9s where we used that as a central focus for improvisation skills and also just incorporating different theatrical styles. Their final performance had to include a song and some movement and a poem and monologue and a few other things. It took them about four weeks to prepare and we had kids going through the net looking for poems, we had kids bringing in songs and saying "We found this song and it's about drugs". Some of them went back to the 1960s, some of them were 70s, 80s, contemporary, all sorts of things. The kids were absolutely enthused about it.

To me part of the facilitation, part of the guidance, is to select the appropriate material. "If you want to do *Medea*, ok, let's try it. Now how are you feeling? Why do you think...? How does this person ...?" It doesn't allow you to demonstrate your skills adequately if the material's inappropriate.

It's quite a challenge to get kids to that level. It means that they have to step outside themselves and look at the emotion through different ways. The kids will have had the emotion at some point. They may not have had the intensity or anything like that but they will have had some sort of experience that they can tap into. That can at least give them a glimpse into how the other person may have felt that they can then use to infuse their performance, give it some veracity. That's the important thing. Whether they're playing it stylised or whatever they've still got to have that veracity in the performance. It's got to be something that gives a sense of belief, of truth. So it doesn't have to be realistic but it does have to have that sense of truth.

... working out how they move, the types of language they use, the way they do their non-verbals, what type of things would they feel uncomfortable doing. It's like when kids do toilet humour. Inevitably they try it early on because they can get a cheap laugh and again it's the same thing. Where would it be appropriate? Is it appropriate here, is it appropriate there? Why not? How could you change it if you wanted to suggest this? How can you do it without being so blatant? The students know they're not allowed to use rude sign

language, so how can you show someone you're really angry or annoyed without giving somebody the finger or hitting somebody? What you're meant to do to convey that, getting them to explore notions of tension. ... Just getting them to play with body language and again that comes with a lot of movement and activity and so forth. Getting them to actually see the connection between movement and emotion in subtle ways.

5.3 "Collin"

The group thing is the dominant dynamic for the junior section I've had to abandon the monologue concept and instead what I make them do is if we're doing a group devised work they've got to each have a special moment and that special moment may be movement. All it does is just focus in on them and them creating that space for a moment. They pipe up pretty quickly if they've missed out or if someone else's missed out but it still keeps that group support around them.

... last year I got the Suitcase Circus guys in and I had kids that would normally be perfect models - you know with the little braids - tumbling and standing in towers and stuff like that because they felt safe. But I know that if I'd had the boys in there, because boys are naturally boisterous and that's what boys do, they would have taken those roles and the girls would probably have gone to more peripheral things.

It's teaching structures more than anything I spend an intensive first few weeks, if I possibly can, doing masses of trust work and group building and a bit of fun - a lot of the games like in theatre sports - failing sometimes and succeeding sometimes. I do that quite intensively at first and I continue that, tapering down to more rigid structures. You've got to play

At the end of last year I finally had some time at the end of my program and we'd done my assessing. I said, "Right, we've got six weeks, let's put on a night." And I threw out about twenty different scripts and said, "We'll workshop them and then we'll play them." I ended up with about six groups doing 15 or 20 minute short plays. Ironically all the kids that did the plays have gone into 11 Drama. Every one that didn't actually get to perform and get that success from the audience - being asked by the Year Coordinator to perform it again at Year Assembly, all those follow ups, going home to mum and dad saying, "You were so wonderful," and parents crying in the audience - none of the kids that didn't do it have gone into 11 /12 but the kids that did have committed to it. And they understand the commitment because they knew they came to rehearsals and

they knew that at rehearsal I would grump at them if they didn't have their lines.

Recently I had a girl - she's just a 'Satisfactory' really - I've had time with this kid for various reasons when kids have not been in class and I've got a very small class. She's been really working on this piece and working on this piece. She's had feedback from me and I've got another teacher in to give her feedback and we've workshopped and I can see what that can do. I talked to her today and I said, "Figure out where you started and where you are now." It's still not brilliant theatre but this kid has come so far that she's reaching into the 'Highs' now as opposed to failing. It's been really satisfying to see her going on that journey and to walk that with her - as well as picking her up and lifting her over and other times pushing her over.

You might have a bunch of kids in a year and all the teachers know that they're 'horrible'. They're the kids that never do any work except for Drama. The fact that they've stood up and learnt three lines and moved four steps across the stage by themselves is an achievement, even though you're sitting up the back going, "Oh my God, this is the worst school play I've ever put on in my life." It doesn't matter. That's one of the real pros, because the educational value of it is there and you don't have to worry about the polish - the artistic integrity side of it.

The kids walk into the room and they know there's a whole different set of values and barriers and working worlds. It allows you to get away with a lot more things.

Standing up with the script in front of you, waving your arms about, isn't good enough. It's respecting the art and valuing the art, making sure that if you've got a show on and you say you'll do the show you meet those deadlines. You need to instill the thought that you're on a journey and that there's always so much of that journey ahead, and that I'm also on that journey too. To say "Oh, where I'm at is good enough." or "Where I'm at is the end of it." is wrong. That's where you are now, maybe I have to mark you on that now, maybe that's all you have time for now, but to drop that, to forget about it now, it's wasted. The thought that we've don't all have wonderful skills - this kid may sing very well in this class, this one may be an amazing mover - but we all have those special things and if we don't make use of what we've got as well as we can then that's waste and that defeats the purpose of doing the art.

Greek theatre was always exploration of the three unities - unity of place, time and so on - but I'll say, "Hey, it's more

than that. This is the body and this is how it moves, this is how the whole theatre space is. It's part of the whole concept."

With the kids in the creative activity, they usually resolve any conflict by one kid giving way. I was actually reading a journal entry about that very thing the other day. I've got this one girl who is such a deep thinker. She's an incredibly deep thinker... Recently she had a victory, as she put it in her journal, because the group accepted her ideas and her proposal. Before, they would normally go along with this other student who is very good dramatically and has got more of a bright bubbly personality - it's the bright light which attracts the moth. The 'deep thinker', who often has the most amazing thoughts but is probably more serious and deep and dark about the way she will present it, isn't necessarily as attractive in that group sense. But she said that this time she decided to push the issue. She really felt it was worthwhile and pushed through, explaining and showing it, and so had it accepted. It was a good thing both for her as a person and for the group, because they realised, "Hey, this person maybe does have something."

5.4 'Deb'

I tend to have a very focused approach because a lot of them would never have done Drama before so they have no confidence. All the getting-to-know-you kind of things - we always have real issues with that and they're very uncertain. I always make a big point of not letting them work with their friends. I explain why I make a big point about that - that it's really important that you get to know everyone and that you get to see everybody's ideas - that's a really important thing. Also establishing the boundaries of performance and all those kind of things

... we're looking at the old Youth Theatre, exploring and discussing issues and those kinds of things and interestingly the kids can look at it sometimes quite differently to what you'd expect. My expectation - we always used to do the real doom and gloom bit - 'to cut your throat by' sort of thing. There's been a real change in that kind of thing in the culture of the kids, how they think about things. Last year they focused a lot and they looked at love and stuff. They liked the idea of *Romeo and Juliet*. They liked that concept of bringing in that very traditional kind of theatre and looking at different ways of playbuilding and that sort of thing.

It's a very empowering thing to get kids to perform or to do something. This Year 10 class - I've got two of the worst boys in Year 10. I love them to bits but they're just the terror of all else, they smoke and they always get in trouble and

they just can't help themselves. One of them did the lights and one of them did the sound for me. Every lunch time, every day after school, they were there getting ready, preparing. They did ten shows and they did everything right. The kid with the sound - I couldn't help him work out the system we had because I didn't have time, so I said, "Look, I just can't help you." I had to get instructions too because I wasn't exactly sure myself. It was a case of me learning first to tell him. By the time I got to: "OK, I'll show you what to do." "Oh no miss, I've sorted it." The pair of these - one of them in particular is very resistant to coming to school, never wears his uniform and all those kind of things - socially he's learnt that he's part of a team and that that process is about being involved - all of those sorts of things.

I think if you're going to run Drama you have to teach a structure, a format for how it's going to work. A lot of that has to do with discussion and negotiation with kids on their ideas, but a lot of it also has to do with structure. It might be through games or whatever, but concentration, commitment, focus on tasks, whatever those things are - things like improvisation and teaching proper techniques for improvising and extending improvising - are important because that's all about the play. That's really important. Sometimes you think, "I'm a bit bogged down. You think, "I'm going in this direction and this is where I want to go." And one day you don't quite go as you're supposed to and you have to give them something else and then they say, "I just had so much fun ". You go, "Well ok, obviously what I was doing wasn't quite what they wanted to do." And you see that fantastic little whatever it is in them that really sparks them off and they come up with these great ideas about different things.

Character work is very important for kids. They love that because that's all about the imagination and play and developing character. Voice and movement and all those sorts of things are very important too because it gives kids kind of recognition or something. To give you an example, the other day in my Year 10 class. I've got this boy who's really - the other kids would describe him as "feisiy". He's not the nicest kind of kid, he's quite able in Drama but they kind of keep their distance from him a bit because he is strange and he is a bit of a prickly kind of a boy, he just does grunt a lot. Just as a little impro activity with my Year 10s, because we're doing a whole unit on super heroes and the myths and trying to link back, - I'm trying to take them into the Greek history a little bit, start with the modern and suck them in a bit and then work backwards - this first little activity we did, we were looking at stereotypes before we move onto the super hero kind of concept, and heroes and all

that sort of stuff. It was about gangsters. ... Most of them picked up the script and more or less tried to follow what was applicable, just looking at the character side of things. These two boys - one who's the feisty one and another one who's a partly deaf child and is another kid who's in trouble a lot as well - did this piece. It was all on character and whatever they thought of and they had this little routine sorted out. ... - it was all about the voice and how they sat. The other kids were just like "Oh that's excellent." It transformed how they work now, just that expression. And those boys were just like "Oh yeah we were pretty good weren't we?" - that elevation of profile.

I think teaching them time is really important, starting off with very basic one time one place one situation. They tend to do the epic in that ten minutes. It never makes any sense and they're going from this place to that place and this is happening and they're flying out in that plane. And teaching the concepts of what theatre means, because their concept of movement and acting is usually film and that does have that bigger expanse but in theatre they don't. So teaching that sort of stage craft is really important in terms of the time, place, action and the use of space.

... in Year 8 just at the moment I spend a lot of time doing get-to-know-you things. I see them for an hour a week and that's often interrupted, depending on what day of the week it is and all those sorts of things. This term I'm looking a little bit more at body language and, because they all get very excited, to try and bring them back I look at body language and how you can express yourself and talk without actually saying anything - all the kinds of symbols that they use as people, the symbols that mum uses, all those sorts of things. With my group in Year 9 I'm doing a lot more work on improvisation because the Year 8 course is a bit "nyeer" in terms of skills. It's a nice little warm fuzzy for them. My focus is on them having a really nice time and feeling really confident - that's part of the cycle. In Year 9 it's about extending those improvisations skills and about structuring a performance - that's a goal, to have the performance at the end. They love learning to play things like Space Jump and those sorts of things. They're very good tools for helping teach those sorts of things and developing those skills a little bit, but for me it's important that they actually work on extending that. I always get them to do some kind of text in their piece at some point - it might be a poem that they've written or they've chosen or something like that - but there has to be something in there that they have to actually try and learn.

In the first half of the year, if we try an extended improvisation that they perform in the second half, you script it - they devise it and then they actually script it, they write it down and they have to learn it. I think they're very important things. I think that gives kids confidence too.

I tend to do published scripts in Year 10, so Year 9 is for their sort of thing, for their confidence and the Year 10 is the extension into published scripts. This year for the Year 10s - I'm going to see how it goes, because we've got a real mix of very very bright kids down to the "don't like reading" brigade - I'm going to mainly lead them round a little bit to some of the Greek legends, whether or not I pick something out from a chorus to give them to learn or whether I just have an outline of what the particular play is. Oedipus is always a nice one because it's so bizarre for kids.

... unfortunately, the bottom band kids are not great physical people either. A lot of them don't do sport, they really lack motivation. You've just got to try and give them something to encourage them to come along a little, which is a real shame. I am hoping with those kids I'll be able to get to do some circus skills and stuff.

5.5 "Eddie"

They may have done some small play in the primary school but I just start from scratch using an impro approach, quite a few theatre sports activities - getting them used to one another, feeling comfortable in the group. Basically the first exposure they have to theatre really is fun. I try to make it light hearted and not demanding and use the game approach or the play approach as Year 8 drama and then follow that with some puppetry work. I've found through experience that they like making little things and sometimes for the less able kids who feel a bit vulnerable they like to be able to speak behind the mask or puppets so that's basically an intro that I kick off with the kids and explore.

Last term I had quite a successful little Year 9 group - I've still got them for the rest of the semester. I introduced a rag doll into the centre of the drama studio, put the spotlight on it and asked them to imagine the life this doll has had. They imbue a personality onto that and they give it a background and then away we go. They use a lot of props as well. I've got a big props box and they have dress-up time, particularly with the Year 8s. By the Year 9s we're beginning to establish a routine, a way of approaching drama and particularly theatre, and then I start introducing some stage craft such as exploring the use of the lights, the sound and all that sort of stuff.

Year 8 is the exploration. I give them basic script interpretation which underpins work which is basically theatre skills or impro skills and we do a lot of game playing, theatre sports, so I really go heavily into the improvisation, the creating of drama, at Year 8 level. They don't do an actual script. They will do little extracts but that's only a mechanism so that I can test them on their fluency, articulation, ability to interpret language. There is no onus on them because there are some kids who are going into drama who have got very poor literacy skills. I give them the option to just watch, or be a part or help create, support another group.

I try and establish where they're at in those initial, team-building, impro-skills type game plays and from there I can have a good idea of whether they can lead the group. Then I pick out the leaders within the group and I assign the tasks to those leaders. Then they'll form up their teams. It's basically from the improvisations that you get a better idea of their ability to use language. Some of them go, "Oh how're you going? Yeah. Fine. Nice day today isn't it?" That's the basic level of their ability.

Those kids who can articulate and have got quite a good vocabulary to support their impro work - I make those team leaders. In any of the theatre sports activities they're in teams. The ones that are less capable, I give them the opportunity to rotate leadership as well. I get the more quiet members of the class to actually take on a leadership role but only for about five or ten minutes. I give them the opportunity of doing that and I say to the more able kids, "Support them, they'll need your support."

From creating their own drama they actually start interpreting the text so Starting Theatre is actually doing a full-on production where we're putting on the show and we look at the elements, the theatrical devices, the elements of presentation which are the lighting, sound, the costumes, all of that sort of stuff. Really, Starting Theatre is a production unit. They separate themselves into twos or threes and we read enormous numbers of texts. I go through seven or eight different extracts from texts and if they find the extract interesting I'll give them the play so that they can then explore. Then they do the full rehearsal, learning lines, the whole bit, but obviously not a full-on production of the total text, because that's one and a half hours or whatever. We do interpretations, we light them and play around with them and then we video them.

We explore stage craft stuff, blocking, those things - again the voice [of theatre] comes in, refining the voice, designing the voice, so that they're used to dealing with the metaphor.

... we explore the shape of character - what does it look, feel, sound like? I've got little activities to do that with, so that they can actually start looking at characterisation in a three-dimensional way. I've used mask or puppet in that before but I've found it's just too much preparation and when you're dealing with back to back units on a fairly heavy day it just requires too much setting up, striking, all that sort of stuff. If the opportunity does arise then I can insert mask. - I've got a range of white masks that we can start with - what we call the neutral character. We then build from the neutral character, take the mask off - what does the mask reveal?

It also depends upon the actual group itself, what they're interested in. Last year we did a bit of Commedia in Year 9 Starting Theatre. They quite liked that. They're given a whole course outline but then I say to them, "We may not be able to get through this course," because of all the other things that go on in a school. I don't usually follow it slavishly. The kids loved the Commedia thing so we just went straight off the course. I try to make it as student-centred as possible within the constraints of your space and your time.

... this year they had a go at *Dags* which you know is an innocuous little thing. It gives the opportunity for some monologues, interior monologues and stuff for some of the good kids to have a go at, and we gave them *Fossils* - again it's talking about Australian issues and the Australian environment. I've used a few of those Australian Theatre Workshop series. There was one play which I did last year, *Bean Sausage Exotica*, which was just a fun poke at the stereotype soapy but within there I insert some text from Louis Nowra.

5.6 "Fran"

... when you first meet them you've got such a variety of backgrounds. I tend to do a lot of introductory work, game playing basically. We play a game called Clumps in our first lesson. Boys are fairly physical and the way that they touch each other tends to be fairly aggressive - pushing and shoving - so to actually get them to work together in a group is through game playing so that it's ok to work with one another and actually physically touch another person and make them do something. They don't realise they're actually doing it, they're having so much fun. They're really competitive in nature so I set up team events and they can compete against one another and at the end nobody's a

winner or a loser, it's just we've all had a lot of fun. If there's a prize then everybody gets one. It's an interesting concept. Their faces indicate that they're not quite used to that - there's always been a winner and a loser in their life - so they enjoy it.

What we base our course on is improvisation, mime, lots of physical stuff because boys are so physical. Also they need to be stimulated a lot during a lesson. It needs to be a full program. I've taught in co-ed schools before so for me teaching in a single sex school has been quite an adventure. When you've got a co-ed situation you can actually set kids to a task and expect them to go on and do them whereas in an all-boy environment you tend to need to break that situation up right through the lesson and move them along - move them along to the performance side of things. The boys are quite immature in Year 8, in fact this year my groups are very much into playing in the imaginary.

... they get so absorbed in the fun they're having in this other world they've created that they forget that there's an audience. I say to them, "You can use as much space as you want." And they do. So we have actions happening from outside the room, from up the stairs, inside the room. They're really good at using space and they're very good at improvising but they tend to shove the audience down one corner and forget all about that they're there.

We've got an option of doing some stage fighting which, depending on the group, we sometimes do and we sometimes don't - depends on what their behaviour is like. There's some dance because I enjoy dance and it's one of the things I like doing. We do radio plays with them and they do some solo voice activities. They do this all through game playing so most of the work that they do is group work. Occasionally we'll throw in pairs and then solo work so that they're not so frightened about being up on their own, but that's not until towards the end of the semester.

We also do a small scripted play which is terribly stereotyped but they love it, they get into it. It's one way of them learning lines. They're good at taking off TV and all the soapies that they watch - there they can remember the lines really well. If you give them a stereotype piece they're actually really good at remembering that so they achieve success and they've been in a scripted play and everyone's happy about that.

[Boys] move a lot more, they're much more active, they don't sit very long, so it's a case that if you've got something that you want them to do you've got to get in there, get the information to them. If it's a discussion thing you've got to

keep it moving and then you can send them off to go and do activities. They're champing at the bit all the time to go off and do. I found that the boys tend to get in there and do rather than sit and think and plan, so I often work in reverse. I say "This is what we intend doing and you've got a number of options of how you go about it. Go play with it, see what you can come up with, then come back and write about how you did it and what was your ultimate - what worked and what didn't." They're quite happy to do that.

All the way through they're always given the choice of how they're going to go about it, so it tends to be really collaborative - the kids have always got ownership of what they do, which I think works really well. I think it is why we end up keeping so many kids. In Term two we play on script interpretation and improvisation. We talk about movements and motivations, about why people do things. We sometimes get into some really in-depth conversations - completely throw the lesson out the window and sit and talk - and the kids really enjoy that. They don't get an opportunity to talk about things that matter to them and be listened to and be able to ask an adult any question they've ever wanted to ask. It works quite well because we can channel that into performances. I say, "The people in the play obviously have motivations, certain reasons. In this situation, how do you think they'd cope?" And suddenly, because they've been talking about what matters to them, it becomes more real, so we play that.

We play around with movement in Term 3, we do comedy and fractured fairytales and creating their own improvisations. Great fun. Then we do a big group-devised production so we play around with the production roles. We talk about what people do, the director and the producer and the costume people. Then we sit down and use a thematic approach and play with butcher's paper and white boards and basically we come up with a big "What do we want to do? We're going to put this on. Let's do it for an audience." And they decide who their audience is going to be and from there they make it relevant to that audience. If it's going to be adults then we have to make sure that it's going to be entertaining - all those sorts of things.

I think the most endearing thing that you can hear from a student is when they say during the year, "We didn't do much really, we just had a lot of fun." and I say, "Well go back and have a look at your folios and see what you actually did." When they actually reflect on that they go, "Oh yeah. We did a lot but it didn't seem like it." Then you know you've at least succeeded in making it a joyful journey.

Drama for me has always been a place where people can flop and off-load, not just dramatically but personally as well. There's an opportunity to be a sounding board and a listener and offer an opinion if it's required. That sometimes has its drawbacks too but it's a place, a safe haven for a lot of people. I try and make it as non-judgmental an environment as possible so that if you were a quirky person with some really strange habits then that's ok and it's expected that everybody, even though they may not like it, they are tolerant of it. You get kids in that category who choose it because it is a place that they can be a bit strange.

I suppose drama is risk-taking for everybody and that's nice. It's really great when you see kids taking risks that they normally never would - putting themselves on the line. I've found that I actually like working with boys because they're so physical. Girls have this funny - it's a generalisation but a lot of them are very much concerned with how they look and how they're perceived by other people. It's very external, and the opposite of that is that the boys are into very physical things. They don't care if they look bedraggled, reckless, or whatever, they just get in there and do it. When I'm actually giving them a task, they don't like to have to sit and listen for too long. It's a case of "Just give me what I have to do." so they can get on with it. They physicalise everything. They do everything with their bodies first and if it doesn't work then they might go back and sit down and write about it and think about it in another way.

The kids are really quite intrigued by having to examine self and I find that quite fascinating, because they're very honest, surprisingly honest actually. They're used to being pretty cagey at home, you know, when they haven't done homework, or at school in other circumstances, but when they are actually evaluating what's happened for them they are surprisingly honest and what they do say about themselves and others is really insightful.

This somewhat lengthy introduction to the voices of the participants has been offered for two reasons. The first is that working with the dynamic, as it has been defined here, is basic to practice. It is what Drama teachers do daily with their students and forms the medium by which both the art form and the school subject are presented to the students. The second reason for presenting such long quotations is to enable the reader to develop an "ear" for the speakers. Familiarity with the voices will make a difference to the way in which the further quotations are "heard" as the participants communicate their understandings of the art form and the school subject.

6. Why we do it: the art form

This chapter looks at both the motivation and the purpose for what these Drama teachers do. The informing influence for the development of the dynamic has been an understanding of the art form. Art is an end in itself, outside the process which has created it, and is separately accessible. As an embodiment of the imagination and a re-creation of experience, theatre is an encompassing medium which utilises any and all of the material, cognitive and emotional resources of humanity to describe, explain, interrogate, analyse and enhance human existence. At the deepest level, this is where the dynamic springs from and why it is so fruitful as a schooling process. The reason that theatre is treated separately here is because it has another, aesthetic, dimension – one which gives meaning and value to experience - and this dimension is also seen by the participants in this study, not only as informing their work but also as an area of abiding interest. Theatre is a discipline and for these teachers there is a personal as well as a professional involvement.

6.1 Experiencing the art

Each participant has come to Drama teaching by a different path, but all attest to the way in which theatre has gripped them and led to the involvement which has caused them to choose Drama teaching.

"Alex":

I studied psychology and I picked up some Theatre and Drama electives. I stayed an extra year at university so that I could do all the Theatre and Drama units that were offered and ended up with my degree in Theatre/Drama and not in psychology. That same year I also started working in professional theatre, just by helping out back stage, and eventually progressed through so that by the end of about four years of university getting that Drama degree, I was also working full time professionally as a stage manager. I worked a lot in production areas but I also did my own clown performances. I also later on started a Theatre In Education company where I did some writing and directing. So I've done a little bit of everything as far as professional theatre goes, primarily in the production area but I have also done performance, writing, directing, designing and administration.

"Bruce":

I've always enjoyed performing. I've loved music, I've loved dance, I've loved drama, so that was always a part of my life. ... Actually getting into drama teaching, I sort of fell into it more than anything. When it came to Year 12, selecting what I was going to do, I was looking at medicine and law and architecture and psychology and I happened to see ... the Communications degree, which was Media, Speech and Drama, and English. That looked absolutely wonderful to me, just in terms of sheer enjoyment and pleasure, so I put that down and ended up doing my degree and my associateship and then started teaching. I've come out occasionally and gone back and studied science and done a few other things, but each time I take a break from teaching I realise it's actually what I enjoy doing.

"Colin":

I've always been heavily involved in the arts. ... I was brought up with a love of the arts. ... I fell into teaching as a kind of default. I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I left school. The Uni courses I wanted to do were far too expensive for my family to afford - basically they were all interstate and we weren't a wealthy family by any means. So I kind of fell into teaching at my university which was my home town uni. And at that time I really started getting heavily involved in singing. I was doing a lot of choral work and having vocal training in classical singing technique and that led to me working with a local choir which was very into musicals - I suppose I was 17 or 18 at this point. Then I started doing shows - musical theatre, opera, operetta, rock musicals, stuff like that. I was pumping them out - about 4 or 5 a year - plus all the various sundry things. ... As far as Drama teaching is concerned, I suppose it's the frustrated artist in me. ... This way I produce theatre all the time, I'm learning all the time.

"Deb":

I've always been a bit of a performer. I'm sure if you speak to most drama people they always have. I was a great one for showing off and putting on costumes when I was little. My grandmother was a dressmaker - she was a great one. Every time she made something - she'd make several things - I would always have to go out and show them off and have my photo taken with different sets of shoes on and all kinds of bits and bobs. I got quite used to performing for people. I started off like that and then just did the usual things you do in primary school - *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and stories like that. It was probably when I was in Year 8 that my real interest in that sort of performance developed. In

Year 6 we did a musical production of *Oliver!* I wanted to play Nancy, but I missed out because I'm not a fantastic singer - I mean I'm ok, but I'm not fantastic - so I got to be one of the narrators instead and I wanted to continue with that.

"Eddie":

For me, drama teaching came out of acting school. I trained as an actor but opportunities were limited - there were young actors in London, there were thousands of them. I went straight into it from school. I always had an interest in the annual Shakespeare production at school - in grammar school - since day one. My father was in television so I had that exposure to the media if you like. Then I was a member of an amateur theatre group which was a very large one in Newcastle called the People's Theatre, which was the biggest amateur theatre in England. They had massive membership, a huge theatre. I got into there fairly early as a member of their youth theatre group which they ran on Saturdays - I was in there really from the time when I was in England at the age of 12 and straight through grammar school. I was always performing either on a Saturday with the youth group at People's Theatre or preparing for the school production.

"Fran":

Probably my first taste of Drama was when I was in Year 11 at high school and I was involved in *Oliver* - the production. I didn't do it in Year 12. ... Mum said, "Why don't you go and do teaching. You'd be good at that." So off I went and enrolled - I actually enrolled in Home Economics - and I did that for a year. ... Then I discovered that they had a Drama course. ... I discovered all these people having all this fun and I thought, "I want to do that." It was the best thing I ever did. I had the best time - it was just really good fun and I met all sorts of really interesting people. We ended up doing this rather bizarre *Midsummer Night's Dream* where three of us were Puck at the same time.

Whether purposefully or by default, each of these teachers was drawn to the work by her/his own engagement with theatre.

6.2 Using the art

The technical skills of theatre, of staging as well as performance, played a prominent part in the programming of all the participants.

"Alex"

If you're going to take, for example, the skills of the traditional form of Commedia - that is, the French way of

doing it - you look at all the moves and the shapes of the characters - you can teach that in isolation, but very often if you actually start with the situation, with the characters, and then bring in the idea of the moves at the other end so then they see the need for the stylised movements - it's like teaching stuff in isolation as opposed to teaching it in context . Then I say, OK, they've got the shape of the piece, now it needs the chiseling and I introduce the moves.

When they're preparing their own performances I work almost entirely with bare stage and minimal props, ... very likely the only thing we'll think about is perhaps costumes and props and again they'll be basic. I tend to say, "What's one thing you can add to your basic black outfit that will suggest who you are?" And for the set it's very often, "You're going to have black curtains hanging behind you so how can you create the space? How can you transform this bare black space that was two minutes ago a school playground and you now have to turn it into outback Australia?"

"Bruce"

Drama ... has a skills component certainly from the acting side of things - looking at the verbals, non-verbals, developing those skills. It also has cultural implications historically, so I like the students to get a very brief overview of some elements of theatre history, incorporating the skills level so that when we look at the history it's not a history lesson. We look at skills and incorporate a little bit about the Greeks if we're doing masks - non-verbals and verbals and so forth.

... we'll introduce the different styles, making them aware of ways of acting, of presenting work, so that we're always expanding their consciousness, their awareness of possibilities within theatrical forms.

"Colin"

[When programming] I looked at what I felt was important. Say for Year 9 and 10, a very strong movement base, moving then into a lot more verbal base towards the end of 10, beginning those text analysis things before the end of 10 so they're ready for 11, that sort of thing, according to your own intrinsic sort of knowledge. Then I brought them together in terms of how I wanted to deal with them so I came up with some basic things, such as I had to have each year level looking at at least one text.

[In Year 8]They do the basic skills like freeze tableau and we add little bits of skill and little bits of text there. Then in

Year 9 I look at the concept of using relationships as my central focus and I go from that. We can use physical relationships, movement relationships and then spatial relationships, and that develops into looking at the text of *Spitting Chips*.... then in Year 10 I start to introduce quite strongly how context can influence things - go right back to the beginnings of drama, say drama emerged from just ritual etc. We explore the context of mask and how that's developed through time until I get to the idea of the body as a mask and characterisation and so on. That flows into my next text which has very strong stereotype characters, *Fossils*.

"Deb"

... my Year10s produced a fifteen minute piece for the Anzac Day ceremony Because I didn't want to get into the whole bit of a little scene of this and a little scene of that, I researched a piece of music - Albemoni's Adagio. There were a few other pieces but that was one was my aim. I wanted to ask kids to pick which one was the best but I'd set up the whole bit. They went, "Oh yeah, that one." We looked at the pace of the music and how the audience is affected mood-wise - by the music, by their movements. We discussed what effect it would have if the movements weren't in time and about timing the movement to suit the music, because there's a particular crescendo in the piece which is very dramatic. At that point in the performance there was a light change - it was about going out onto the battle field - the whistle would blow and they'd go like over the wall in slow motion. With the music and the red light it was really very very strong. We worked out the kind of movement to go with that and it went really well.

"Eddie"

My philosophy - approach - is, I take the concept that the actor prepares, the designer prepares and the spectator prepares - the audience - and I do that from Year 8 right through.... It's a very practical approach. I introduce the concept of the voice of theatre right from Year 8 level. The voice of the theatre is the many ways that theatre speaks to its audience, like puppetry, the forms. I introduce the notion of the voice so that they're used to the idea of a metaphor right from the word go, so they're beginning to, hopefully, laterally think at the Year 8 level.

When they're actually creating, playmaking, when they construct plays, I feed in some of the theatrical language like the use of tableau. That's where they start exploring the voice and getting a way of working and fundamental to all that is trying to create a discipline within the class, a disciplined and focused approach.

"Fran"

With Year 9 in first term we do a lot of developing acting skills - being on stage, being able to be up front. ... we do lots of vocal exercises in first term and we do monologues and prepared speaking and reader's theatre. They make masks in first term and they use that with their reader's theatre piece. We invite the junior school boys up, Years 3 or 4 - they decide - and then they perform for them.

[In Year 10] As far as developmental work is concerned they do observation, sensory recall, they work with scripts, they do work with particular periods of history. Sometimes we play around with musical theatre - we do that in Term 3 - we play around with different styles of musical theatre. I have them for six periods a fortnight so I see them for a minimum of three times a week which is great. We get a lot done, we play around with Stanislavsky and melodrama. ... We do work on fast forwarding, doing things slowly, where does it work in slow motion, why does it look good in a piece of physical theatre to do that, focus points. We go through a whole gamut of different things and I think at the end of it they're pretty clued up about what works on stage and what doesn't.

Both the motivation and the reward for engaging in these activities is, of course, ultimate engagement with an audience. For these teachers, the product is part of the process and they see it has considerable significance for their students.

"Alex", for example, emphasises the need to communicate when he is working on skills development:

I try and keep the inward focus of what they're exploring and the fact that they're communicating it to someone else linked all the time. Thinking up a scenario is probably more of an inward idea and the audience doesn't necessarily have to be aware of the whole process of creation so the kids can sit down and jot down a few key point ideas or steps in a sequence, but when they start moving that in a space they need to be developing an awareness of an audience.

Having to create something for a much younger group they had to explore a whole range of different skills which I don't think they've been exposed to. We directly related to the audience, running up to the audience, bringing the audience down on to the stage.

"Bruce" explains the value of developing the role:

... they have to step outside themselves and look at the emotion through different ways. The kids will have had the emotion at some point. They may not have had the intensity or anything like that but they will have had some sort of experience that they can tap into. That can at least give them a glimpse into how the other person may have felt that they can then use to infuse their performance, give it some veracity. That's the important thing. Whether they're playing it stylised or whatever they've still got to have that veracity in the performance. It's got to be something that gives a sense of belief, of truth. So it doesn't have to be realistic but it does have to have that sense of truth.

"Colin" argues for the emotional dimension:

You've got to learn where to find your rights from in a production, you've got to learn the techniques for doing mask work or Elizabethan theatre, you've got to learn what the context was, where Brecht came from and why that caused this; but if you don't have that underlying, that emotive feeling, that passion, you're not going to convey that to your students. Their reaction to you and what they produce - what you produce together - will never match that of the person who instills that love, that value, that drive. If the kids can appreciate that they have to really come in and polish to achieve the level that they're hoping for.

"Deb" recognizes the empowerment which performance for an audience brings:

You don't pick Drama so that you can do your own little thing in some corner of the classroom. You pick Drama because you want to do something and you want other people to see it, that's the ultimate reality. Not that you necessarily want to show off but you want to work, to do something that ultimately you want to perform.

I get them going by just telling them that this is going to be their year. The assessment structure makes absolutely no difference. If I say, "You're doing it in front of your year group", they go into it. For them it has to be a very tangible thing - marks aren't tangible but audience response is very tangible.

They love Shakespeare, they love to do it, they think it's such a fantastic challenge. Even if they don't understand it, they love it. It's a great tool. It's got status. Even kids who know nothing about Drama have heard about Shakespeare. They know what he's about. They know he's difficult and if they can do something with him it's a really really powerful thing.

"Eddie" begins his program with the art form as a way into the dynamic:

[They] do the whole of the Festival of Perth thing so that I would get maximum exposure at the beginning of each program - Year 8 Year 9 Year 10, 11 and 12 - stash in at the beginning of the year when they're very enthusiastic, when they're ready to go. Theatre exposure, professional theatre. Out of that I usually get sufficient material through review writing - which I'm beginning to get into quite heavily now with the kids - for the ideas to come forward. I'm using basically a viewed performance to actually get them into developing their own.

"Fran" uses the need to communicate in order to focus the work of her students:

They have very little concept of an audience so to try and actually get them into that I give them exercises. For example, we're talking about different genres - "If you were doing a stereotyped western performance where would it be?" and those kinds of things - and trying to say, "Well you need to do this for an audience. You're telling a story with your body to an audience. You're actors in a play." To try and encourage them to actually do that is hard because they get so absorbed in the fun they're having in this other world they've created that they forget that there's an audience. I say to them, "You can use as much space as you want." And they do. So we have actions happening from outside the room, from up the stairs, inside the room. They're really good at using space and they're very good at improvising but they tend to shove the audience down one corner and forget all about that they're there.

The range of content is, of course, constrained by the curriculum, a fact which will be discussed in the next chapter. Of interest here is the way in which the participants have understood the potency of theatre and provided a program which develops the students' abilities as artists.

7. Context and construct: the school subject

Errington's understanding that teachers select particular kinds of drama according to their orientation towards the work has been only partially supported by this study, unless we consider that the choice of occupation is in itself an indicator of orientation. He comments that:

Despite the claims of drama practitioners, all drama is problematic. One of the major reasons for this is that drama is taught and learned in school classrooms. This may be stating the obvious, but drama education is often presented as if it is an objective body of practices, knowledge and understandings beyond the influence of teachers and learners (1992, p.34).

Errington sees this as a denial of realities of drama teaching and implies that "the taken-for-granted aspects of drama, beliefs, philosophies and practices in relation to life in schools", are not sufficient as a basis for practice. The data collected for this project, however, reveals that the selection of "particular kinds of drama" is influenced strongly by such factors. Both the dynamic and the art form are of necessity practiced in the school environment, as Errington states, and accountability demands that teachers work with "an objective body of practices, knowledge and understandings" which is formed outside the classroom by, and in consultation with, other stakeholders. It is the teaching which emerges as problematic in this context, quite as much as the drama.

7.1 Curriculum and content

The first factor which influenced the practice of the participants was the need to provide a teaching/learning program which fits in with the way in which Drama is recognized by the Western Australian education system. Without this recognition, there would not be an opportunity to practice. As a school subject, Drama must provide content which will lead to outcomes that can be moderated externally and for which the teacher is accountable. There is also a need to be aware of and maintain standards of achievement. Prescription of content is most detailed for upper secondary classes, where there is a syllabus and formal moderation. In the lower school programming on which this study is based there is theoretically more flexibility, but there is clearly a recognition in practice that the subject is defined for the teacher. The definition is not an

arbitrary one, since it has been developed over many years and is, to a fair extent, consensual. A commonality of understanding has been further advanced through professional development programs conducted by schools, school systems and Drama West .

The inclusion of Drama as one of the Arts subjects has focused attention away from the earlier emphasis on the use of drama as a learning tool and an area for purely personal expression and development, although these properties of the dynamic are demonstrably utilised in practice. The four Arts Learning Area Outcome Statements of the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998a) provide the scaffolding for a course in the subject:

- Students generate arts works that communicate ideas.
- Students use the skills, techniques, processes, conventions and technologies of the arts.
- Students use their aesthetic understanding to respond to, reflect on and evaluate the arts.
- Students understand the role of the arts in society.

These indicate the general range of content and emphasis, which is made more specific for each individual Arts subject and which is well represented in the data, as will already be clear from the extended quotations in Chapter 5. The transcripts also give a clear indication of the way in which the subject in lower school is influenced by the demands of the upper school syllabus.

"Alex":

Where I am now they're trying to put in place an 8 through 12 Drama pathway which is mapped out in loose descriptions so everyone in Year 10 - that's what I'm teaching at the moment - in first semester is looking at theatre forms and carnivals and community theatre, that sort of stuff, and each teacher brings their own understanding of that to whatever class they're with.

My Year 10s are devising a piece for Open Day. It's got to be on the stage where we're committed, we have to put something on. They're not really at the stage where they're ready to entirely shape it themselves so I had to lay out some structure, lay out some descriptions of various sections and give them the opportunity to create within those parameters. I have to take that into account when I come to assess them, so I can't necessarily assess them on the product, but I can look

at the bits where they've worked and I can see ... I know I did this much for them, what have they done? That's where the assessment element comes into it as well.

In the current context we're given a sort of a guideline of what we're supposed to be teaching in the term, very loosely based. In Year 8 it's often the journey, so we're looking at the notion of narrative story telling. The notion of transition/transformation can come into it as well. "I suppose I'm aware of that sort of stuff - priorities, I don't know. I suppose if there was something in the curriculum that I was particularly aware needed to be addressed. Is characterisation more important than presentational ability? It would depend I suppose. Certainly with Years 11 and 12 I'd consider what they need to demonstrate with a particular task.

"Bruce":

For us at the moment it's very much making sure they've got a good background for 11 and 12, in fact the option, but you can broaden that to a nice general background in theatre and drama because it's so important for English, for communication in general, for so many other subjects.

The Outcomes are very generic, they're very broad. I don't see that it's actually any different from the way I've been working for years. I think in Drama we have worked towards Outcomes, we have worked on an Outcomes basis, we have worked on a process basis.

For programming I get together with my drama teachers and we talk about each year group. We do a debrief at the end of the year as to what's worked and what hasn't, what we need to include or what needs to change, if we're happy. We work out who's teaching what, we work out the broad overviews of the courses together and then the programs come to me again. The person who's responsible for a particular year group or class works on the program for that and then we'll talk about it. We do get together and talk about how things are going and where we want to head so we have a shape. At times things change. Something will come up - "This really worked well and it's great." - but there is an overall shape that we want them to have, a body of skills or at least to be introduced to a body of skills and a body of knowledge.

The lower school program syllabus ultimately rests with me in the school. There are no guidelines other than the ones I put in place and of course I do that in conjunction with my other drama teachers, looking at what the Year 11 and 12 courses demand. With the Year 8s we've just had a meeting and we're looking at the Curriculum Framework and the

Outcomes. We're looking at revamping each individual subject. We've already made it Outcomes-focused but we want to readdress the entire Year 8 program because it hasn't really been modified for the last 10 years or so.

"Colin"

I did a breakdown of the expectations in the TEE and CAF courses - the difference between 11 and 12 and so on. I firmly established what was my goal - what I had these kids for at the end - and what the culture was now. I suppose I work backwards and forwards. They were plotted backwards in terms of developing skills, for the document with all the strands and that in it.

I mirror in a sense the tasks of 11 and 12, where basically they look at a text, they perform a scene in style, do an improv based on theme, and context things. Then we go to a free performance task at the end.

I've got a core class in Year 10 that has an extension program for those kids that want to do Drama in 11 and 12, so I see them twice a week. With them I do a sort of in-depth study, so that the core kids might have just done some neutral mask work and started on some Commedia. I will have done basic mask work as well as extensive physical workshops as well. Then we study *Antigone* when the others are just studying the chorus - how to use a chorus - without actually doing a study of *Antigone*.

When I first arrived at the school my Year 12 girls didn't have any folio journal work or anything and so I had to go right back and hopefully demand and insist on it in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11.

I'm working with Outcomes in lower school. Last year we got the Outcomes out and mapped them against all our thoughts and all our ideas. Then I sat down and planned through, keeping blocks that I wanted to flow through all the way. I considered the difference between 11 and 12, Drama and Drama Studies, TEE and non-TEE and how that affects everything else. I then used that as a basis for tracing back to what I really felt I needed to cover or that needed to be dealt with so that at the end, whether they took Drama or Drama Studies, and in terms of the strands and the levels, they'd be able to meet the Outcomes.

"Deb"

The reading is a nightmare so in terms of TEE Drama my Year 10s this year might be bright enough and academically inclined but most of the kids who do Drama would do Voc English or Senior English and would probably be sitting on

Cs and Ds, so a lot of those concepts and a lot of the study of theatre is really very difficult for those kinds of kids. You really have to focus on the lower school. I decided last year that the upper school kids really are a dead loss. Lovely kids, you can get them through, but most of them sit on 'Satisfactory' to verging on the 'Not Demonstrated'. Some of them are better but on the whole that's where they are, 'Satisfactory'. I'm not out to have a terrible time. They should do the best they can and enjoy it as much as they can. My other focus has to be in the lower school getting that confidence to be prepared to have a go.

I suppose sometimes really in Year 10, because I haven't had them in 9, it's often a very squished out course of everything you might do in lower school to prepare them in any shape or form for upper school. My kids never had to learn anything for anything so last year with my Year 11s, getting them to do two short scenes was a nightmare. It was just so incredibly difficult for them to learn anything and I even got them just to start as a practice - very short, not even a whole speech - just a verse from one of the Shakespeare's - any speech really - fairly basic, fairly simple ones. It was such a struggle, so I think this year, towards the end, I'm going to focus on memory work and, just as important as that, understanding of why that needs to be there.

I always get them to do some kind of text in their piece at some point - it might be a poem that they've written or they've chosen or something like that - but there has to be something in there that they have to actually try and learn because I've found that by the time they get to upper school, if they haven't done anything like that at all in lower school, particularly my kids, they just can't do it. I've had kids - last year I had Year 12 students who couldn't learn four lines and that's really desperate.

"Eddie"

For next year I'm having serious thoughts about splitting my Year 10s into a TEE streaming, exactly like, say, the Lit classes and English do. I can't see any harm in doing that at all, running a separate class. I mean all units are dead now, so I'm saying this is the Drama TEE stream and this is the other. I don't think [there's a danger in asking kids too early to make those sorts of decisions] because you're otherwise risking a lot of kids. English asks the kids to make choices at Year 9 level for going to university - that's what happens in our school. Also there's a skills level. We can pick the kids that have got good lateral thinking and good cognitive skill and who are actually preparing themselves for that path. A lot of the kids are doing that at Year 9 level.

We need to prepare the kids in the lower school program. The lower school program to a fair degree has got to reflect in certain key areas like the forms, the jargon, the whole method of actually viewing performance and rationalising performance. That's got to be introduced, I think, towards the end of Year 9 and most definitely in Year 10.

The Year 11 and 12s drive the whole program virtually, and my time, so for the poor lower school it's slotting in whenever time and energy is available to do that extension work. I'm taking the Year 10s in their Performance course in the second semester now because it comes before upper school, so my Year 10s are preparing for next year's Boardwalk their group devised piece for Year 11, monologues and duologues, They're preparing pieces of literature for performance so you get the continuity going through.

By Year 10, with the kids who've actually survived two years into styles and forms and presenting character through production, we get into Stanislavsky. I do Stanislavsky fairly heavily in Year 10 because that's "the actor prepares", so they have a way of interpreting text quite rigidly, they're being asked the questions. We cover quite a few texts in that process. That's a lot of folio work as well so I'm into the folio quite heavily. The kids who aren't TEE bound are still getting that because the option is for just normal Drama, but they've all got that the folio is crucial for all both Drama and Drama Studies.

"Fran":

We are on the Curriculum Framework and part of that is the Arts Learning Outcomes.

We originally did it - and I'm going to do it again this year - where the kids have actually got an option. They can either write a script for the stage and create it for a stage performance - a live performance - or they can do it for a movie. Either way, they work out how they're going to assess it, what points are important to them about the process that they're going through, so they end up with a scale that they're working with. It's quite good because in Year 10 it's an Outcomes-based course so they can look at which Outcomes are relevant to either one.

[Re preparation for TEE] As far as developmental work is concerned they do observation, sensory recall, they work with scripts, they do work with particular periods of history. Sometimes we play around with musical theatre - we do that in Term 3 - we play around with different styles of musical theatre. I have them for six periods a fortnight so I see them

for a minimum of three times a week which is great. We get a lot done, we play around with Stanislavsky and melodrama. By the time they're actually making movies they've already got a sense of the different genres and styles and they can really play around with it. We do work on fast forwarding, doing things slowly, where does it work in slow motion, why does it look good in a piece of physical theatre to do that, focus points. We go through a whole gamut of different things and I think at the end of it they're pretty clued up about what works on stage and what doesn't.

This year I guess the only other thing programming-wise for me - something that's significant for me, it probably isn't for other people - is that we attempted to do the folio thing all the way through. I haven't done that in the past and I'm actually finding that quite a worthwhile experience, more so than I had thought it would be.

Each of the participants acknowledged the influence of the curriculum in their selection of the drama they presented to their students, either directly or by inference. The definition provided by the Outcome Statements and particularly by the upper school syllabus - that Drama is an Arts subject which deals with creative communication, technical skill, evaluative reflection and social and historical contextualization - is clearly acknowledged by these teachers.

7.2 Context and practice

The second constraint on practice was provided by the school itself. Details of timetabling, available space and school community expectations were constantly referred to. In addition, the participants made it clear that their practice needed to take into account particular social and cultural features of the group of students with whom they were working. This was emphasised by the frequent comparisons between the current school and others in which they had practised. These teachers selected their drama by a consideration of what practice they believed would best enable students to achieve the required outcomes, given the particular context in which they were working. Of course, this does reflect the participants' beliefs about education and could be said to be part of their orientation, - a general orientation as "teacher", within which individual beliefs must be accommodated. All these teachers understood that dealing positively with the school context was part of their job, a task that included responding to the logistics of timetable, space and staffing

requirements, advocacy of the subject and the art form, and attention to the demographics - the nature of the student cohort.

The schools represented by the participants were very different. There was a general distinction between private schools, where expectations for extra-curricular involvement are specifically included in teachers' contracts, and State schools, where there is only an informal expectation, which nevertheless had to be met. Apart from this, the conditions shared by these teachers were surprisingly similar in general terms and were frequently presented as being part of a more general "culture", a concept which reflects the complex integration of an almost infinite number of variables that together make up the entity that is a school. This means that every time a teacher moves to a new school a new culture must be learned, an understanding that was recorded as being shared by all the participants. Because the culture of each school is thus so distinctive, for ethical reasons the discussion in this section of the study will be a more general one, without direct quotation.

From a logistical perspective, Drama is just one subject of the many offered in any large metropolitan secondary school. There is therefore strong competition for a suitable place in the timetable and an appropriate space for the subject.

Time table constraints which were identified in the data were:

- fragmentation, because lower school units were not necessarily presented as a continuous program throughout the year, but were offered by term or semester.
- loss of contact, because other school events were given priority
- competition with other optional subjects, so that at times it was not possible to offer the subject at all.
- time clashes within the subject which meant that non-specialist teachers had to be assigned to teach some lower school classes.

Problems with the space available were less general, but included:

- space of an inappropriate size
- an insufficient number of spaces to accommodate a number of Drama classes running at the same time
- lack of a suitable production space

- the relationship of the space available to the rest of the school
- use of the space for other activities.

A third area of constraint of a primarily logistical nature was the need to use teachers in the Drama program who were not specialists. Some of these voluntarily undertook the task, while others were assigned to a Drama class because of a need to fill their timetable. As a result, some of the participants had to program in such a way as to provide not only the content but also the pedagogy for these teachers and to modify their own programs accordingly. This situation arises partly because the school administration needs to balance the staffing according to the numbers of students taking a subject, but it also reflects the limited number of secondary teachers who have Drama as one of their subjects.

In order to ensure that the logistical difficulties were minimized, the participants were active in promoting their subject. They all saw the need for a proper appreciation of its value to students, as both a developmental and a creative area of endeavour. Efforts towards this included discussion about the difference between the dynamic and the art form with the school Principal, the advocacy of the Arts as a distinct learning area with the corollary of a corresponding allocation of time, and promoting the use of drama as an assessment vehicle in other subjects. There were several anecdotes about persuading other staff members and parents to look favourably on the work and not to dismiss it as a time-filler or purely recreational activity. The participants were also active in promoting theatre within the school and to the school community as means of validating the subject in other than personal terms. These teachers sought to use the product of Drama as a means of demonstrating the quality of the students' work and hence the worthwhile nature of the endeavour.

The demographic of the school cohort was a third determiner of the type of drama selected. Teachers in single-gender schools frequently contrasted their practice there with previous experience in co-educational schools. The socio-economic status of the students was another factor which was taken into account, as was the general level of academic achievement. The choices, of circus skills to increase the physicality of performance for girls in one instance

and of socially disadvantaged students in another, activities to harness the aggressive physicality of boys, the gradual introduction of memorising as a means of overcoming literacy problems and the use of public performance as a motivation for learning, were all shaped by the nature of the target group as a whole. Participants in private schools mentioned the need to consider the religious affiliations of those schools when determining what was suitable material for the students to work with in their drama, and the teacher at the designated Arts school built on the extra skills of the specialist students to enhance those of the generalist students.

Errington (1992) identifies orientation by the way in which teachers interact with their students and considers the context only in relation to a call for socio-political activism. Nicholson (1996), on the other hand, suggests that:

Teachers, in performing their professional roles, are influenced by their personal beliefs and theories, their personal and professional experiences throughout their life history and career. At the same time, the professional context in which teachers live and work shapes their teaching. Activities in classrooms and schools are also influenced by the educational system and society at large.

It is through this complex range of influences that teachers, including Drama teachers, understand their work.

7.3 Constructing the role

An unanticipated outcome of the study has been the information provided through the data on the way in which Drama teachers not only perceive but also construct their roles. The agendas of the participants are primarily formed by the need to be concerned for and supportive of their students' development and wellbeing. To this end they see the need to be both responsive and proactive, not just in the drama but also in the broader context. A role is a construct which is most commonly associated with social function - mother, interviewer, friend, administrator and so on. Errington's description of teacher orientation in practice includes a differentiation between the various roles - in terms of function - that a teacher might assume in the classroom, according to which style of teaching was undertaken. He posits the roles of director, critic, crafts person, guide, observer, creator, participant, social critic, collaborator and resource person (p.52). The participants in this project certainly indicated

that they undertook all of these functions and more. For example, with due regard for the importance of context, representative of outside agencies, values and agendas could be added to the list.

Such generalizations, however, are only of limited use in referring to what the Drama teacher does. The role of director provides a good analogy - maybe the director is a guide or participant in the creation of a performance, rather than a controller, as Errington portrays the role. The function is predetermined but the way in which the role is undertaken is up to the person. For many in the school community, Drama teachers are expected to have a persona which is exotic and fun-loving rather than academic or political, since the role is seen to be that of a provider of the lighter side of schooling and entertaining public relations events. In this environment the curriculum is seen to be of lesser importance and even irrelevant. On the other hand, curriculum policy makers and systems administrators see the role of the Drama teacher - and all teachers - as being responsible to society for the achievement of desired educational goals. For example, in addition to providing entertainment and publicity for the school, some of the participants were expected to act as the manager of the subject for other teachers, whether or not this role was formally recognized, and to teach another subject. Often they were also expected to take on a role as guardian of affective learning and to provide a special kind of pastoral care. It is in cases such as these that the teaching becomes problematic.

"Alex":

Where we are there is an expectation of public performances.
... There's a different emphasis and there is far more sense that we are shaping kids for a performance career to some extent.

I found that in a couple of schools I've been in I've had counsellors or other guidance people in the school saying, "We're going to put Johnnie in your class. He's got a few problems, perhaps you could find a way to work through gang ideas and let him find his own voice." They do this without asking what you're doing in a class, without discovering whether there's any way of accommodating that ... Well I'm not a social worker for one thing. I'm not allowed to use drama as therapy anyway in the Drama classroom. That's happened more than once.

"Bruce":

[Re public performances] We have those imposed. We have drama nights and performance nights. They're imposed. As a private school it is expected that we'll have public performances and they will be of this particular standard. ... That's all expected and there's also the Talent Night. I loathe it, absolutely loathe it. You've got the expectations of the school for a polished public performance. It's publicity for the school and creates kudos for them.

I find that I get used as a counsellor a lot and it's because I think the relationship between staff and students is quite different a lot of times in a drama class and you can get used in that way.

The lower school program syllabus ultimately rests with me in the school. There are no guidelines other than the ones I put in place and of course I do that in conjunction with my other drama teachers, looking at what the Year 11 and 12 courses demand.

"Colin":

We normally have a primary schools feeders concert. Because we're a private school we've got to get business - that's what it's all about, get some business, go on a tour. But ironically the whole responsibility falls back on arts people as opposed to everyone else.

[As]I actually only have them for 8 weeks for a block of one and a half hours, and don't have a teacher that's a drama teacher doing it, I've created a course that looks at the dramatic elements. ... I even give them videos of lessons - "ideal Drama teacher lessons".

When I first arrived at my school one of the things was, "Oh it's just drama." There was no value in terms of the intellectual aspects of it, no value in the physical control associated, no value in terms of creativity. I would get things chucked at me - "Oh this is the Drama teacher. You've got to expect him to be dramatic." - and I'd be sitting there very quietly not saying a word. They made those judgments.

Having worked extensively in English I often find them very snobby about Drama teachers because it's not Lit. I say, "Hey, you're only talking about it. We're doing it, showing you what it is, what it's about, we've got to put it into practice." They forget that sometimes. I find that a bit frustrating.

"Deb":

... basically we go out to the three feeder primary schools, we do a lot of advertising about the program

I think the other thing too is that it's ultimately what parents want to see as well. You need to find a bit of a balance between the popular culture and the sort of theatre stuff [students]'ve created that has a lot of their ideas together, and then that very traditional drama that people have an expectation that they'd like to see

I've got teachers that have no Drama and wouldn't teach Drama except that they had a hole in their timetable, so you're retraining them again and again.

"Eddie"

My pressures are different [from those in private schools]. I have a Performing Arts complex to run. I don't have a theatre man in there to help.

We do [a community festival]. We've been asked to do quite a bit of stuff ... That took up a hideous amount of time, so I say to the people who approach and say "Can you give me a couple of musicians ... ?" or something like that, I said, "Well I've got a couple of kids who may be interested but it's up to you. I'll send them to you, it's up to you to take it on."

I've been caught before where I've had one and a half drama teachers. I've had more classes than I could handle but never enough for two, so you're getting in someone from English and doing a half English, half Drama loading.

When we have our information evening at school I'm usually up there talking about the drama program.

"Fran":

We talked [with the Principal] about theatre and, from a public performance point of view, we came to the agreement that what he wanted was a theatrical performance, not necessarily students' own work because that wasn't going to be at the same level as a polished piece of script.

The other two Year 9 classes are split between the other Drama teacher and a Science teacher who takes these kids for three of their six lessons. ... You've got to keep the two classes running parallel to one another all the time because the other Drama teacher needs to make sure that the Science teacher is keeping pace with what's happening.

Everything is done fairly collaboratively, but ultimately the buck stops with me. I get my butt kicked if it needs to be kicked.

There is no suggestion that any of these teachers sees the work as consisting of an "objective body of practices, knowledge and understandings beyond the

influence of teachers and learners", but the need to work in a school means that the kind of classroom autonomy that Errington envisages is not a real option. They do not work in isolation, nor are they free to work without direction. Their own beliefs about education and drama are only part of the construct. Even "Eddie", who claims that the Drama teacher must "train the school, you don't allow the school to train you", points out the need to be seen to be meeting the expectations of the other stakeholders:

... as long as you're coming up with a healthy robust program within a theatre, you're putting stuff on and it's painfully obvious that kids are demonstrating outcomes.

The participants have worked actively, not only to alter school community perceptions of their role where they believe that this is necessary but also to adapt to the projected role. They see such activity as part of their commitment to the students and the subject (and sometimes also a case of self-preservation!) Theorists see Drama teachers as everything from catalysts for individual catharsis and self-discovery to agents for social and political change. Theatre professionals often see the Drama teacher's function as providing the present and future audience and a "taster" for those with talent who will become the artists of the future, rather than as being closely related to the discipline of theatre directly. However, the teachers see themselves first and foremost as teachers - that is, in a much more holistic way. The understandings about the work provided by scholars and artists are utilised by the participants to inform but not to determine their practice. For example, "Alex", who is most concerned to give students the opportunity for self-expression and ownership of the drama and supports this concern by referring to psychological theory, nevertheless explains the ways in which he manipulates that drama to other ends which are required by the context. "Fran", who focuses on the fun that is drama, nevertheless is able to convince her Principal of the difference between the dynamic and the art form. "Colin", who is primarily interested in the discipline of the art form, is also concerned to ensure the status of the school subject.

8. Conclusion

The participants' understandings of what they do indicate that the Drama teacher is no different from other teachers in being subject to all the influences, both personal and professional, referred to by Nicholson (1996). Features of the dynamic and the art form are addressed in the school subject, not as ends in themselves but as part of the wider context of school education in Western Australia. These teachers see themselves, first and foremost, as teachers. As such, they are subject to the agendas of education generally and those of the system and school in which they work in particular. This understanding is common to them all, whatever their experience, personal philosophy or student cohort. The other striking common denominators are their concern for and involvement with their students and their enthusiasm for their work. Beyond that, there is an appreciation of the power of both the dynamic and the art form as valid components of educational endeavour.

Qualitative research, and particularly that which is phenomenologically based, does not lend itself to categorization, either of the participants or their understandings, since the focus is on the individual experience. To generalise from the data any further would be to violate the research process and is certainly not the intention of this chapter. The value of the study must rest in reflection, by Drama teachers and other stakeholders, on the nature of the work, rather than in direct instruction. In the discussion there has been no attempt to evaluate the practice of the participants or to suggest that one person's understanding takes precedence over others. As readers reflect on the understandings presented here they will naturally compare such understandings with their own and determine where they differ. Such reflection can only serve to broaden and deepen understanding of what to some is a rather esoteric area of endeavour and to others an unattractively constraining one, and if this is the case the study will have served an important purpose.

Most important of all, however, is the affirmation that the work is valued and respected in its own right - something which is not always forthcoming in our society. Drama teaching, as the data shows, is more a way of life than many

other occupations, including teaching in other areas. The fact that it brings its own rewards, which is also clearly indicated, should not mean that its value to both students and to society as whole should go unrecognised. Such is the bias of the researcher, but the study should not be viewed merely as her apologetic. To this end the participants have been allowed to speak for themselves as much as possible, both through choice of topics within the general framework of programming for lower secondary Drama and also through the ways in which they have chosen to discuss these topics.

Because of its sheer volume and the scope of its subject, it has not been possible to fully exploit the data. For example, there has been no attempt to examine the detail of individual practice, either for the purpose of identifying such categorizations as Errington's descriptions of teaching styles or to provide a commentary on the way in which the Curriculum Framework is realized, although either of these purposes could well have been fulfilled. Nor has there been any attempt at a thorough analysis of the way in which participants have chosen to speak about Drama teaching. An analysis of textual features could provide a powerful indicator of values and beliefs and would further reveal the way in which these teachers understand their work. However, it should be said that such considerations have incidentally informed the reading of the data and will have affected the way it has been presented in the thesis.

Nicholson (1996) makes the point that:

Multiple perspectives bring about the issue of multiple realities. Qualitative research with a phenomenological orientation explores, or at least recognises, the multiple realities of the actors in a changing social scene. The multiple stories and the divergent traits present dilemma and complication in attempts to study the world of teachers. The question is not just "Whose story?", but also "which story?"

The purpose of this thesis has been to present just one of those stories.

Appendix: Correspondence with participants

1. Letter of Invitation

5/5 Nile Street

East Perth 6004

Dear

As you already know, I have taken the plunge and decided to undertake a program at Edith Cowan University for Master of Education degree. I want to investigate the perceptions which secondary Drama teachers have of the important features in a learning program which is beset by so many, often conflicting, requirements and expectations. The idea is to look at lower school programming and talk about the reasons why we program as we do.

It is hoped that this project, when completed, will provide a better understanding of the nature and value of our work for ourselves, our peers, our students and our employers. Of even more direct benefit to you yourself is the possibility of using your reflections as a component of your professional portfolio - such a necessary item these days! I am really keen to have your input.

The collection of data will be very low key. If I can get together a few of us for a chat we can discuss the kinds of things we are called upon to do, the way we go about doing them and why we choose to do them the way we do. Then I would like to talk to each person individually to tease out the details. It would involve, altogether, two or three sessions of about an hour. We could meet at my place and have something to eat and drink at the same time.

I am proposing that we meet on Sunday, March 26th at 11am for the initial discussion and we can then make another time that suits you to follow that up if you are happy to continue. There is a map enclosed showing how to find me.

The discussions will be recorded and a transcript will be made. No-one apart from my supervisor and examiner will see the transcript. Identification in the thesis will be concealed. Items in the transcript which could lead to identification will be left out and participants will be distinguished in the discussion only by symbols. You can have a copy of the transcript of your own contributions if you would like to reassure yourself that the recording accurately reflects your experience and understanding. There will be a consent form for us both to sign which protects your right to remain anonymous and to withdraw at any time if you don't want to continue.

If you have any questions about the project, please don't hesitate to ask me (phone 9235 7151) or you can contact my supervisor, Tarquam McKenna at ECU (phone 9370 6207).

Regards

Val Johnson

March 23rd, 2000

2. Consent Form

Project Title: Drama Teaching: Understanding what we do

I, [... ..], have been informed about all aspects of the above research project and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published, provided I am not identifiable.

Participant _____ **Date** _____

Investigator _____ **Date** _____

3. Letter re transcript review

5/6 Nile Street
East Perth 6004

Dear

At last, a message from the outer darkness where academic endeavour takes place. I guess you have been wondering what has happened to the great interviews you gave me so that I could bring some light into this region. Finally all the thesis is coming together - I'll send you a copy when (or if!) it is accepted - and it has been very exciting for me to work with what you have said about your work. I only hope that I can communicate some of this in the writing up!

You will find, with this letter, transcripts of the two interviews, edited:

- for coherence - full sentences etc.
- to remove the words of the other participants
- to contextualise a comment which was made in response to what someone else said, when the context of your discussion would otherwise be unclear
- to remove all proper names which would identify you or others.

Because I want to make sure that it is your voice that is heard I would like the transcript to be as complete as possible. However, I do not want to include anything that you feel would be embarrassing or compromising in any way. I am therefore sending you a copy of the transcript to read. At this stage it is not possible to reframe or rephrase anything, or to add anything, but if there is anything you would like cut from the final version could you please mark it on the enclosed copy and return it to me as soon as possible? If you note any typos I'd also appreciate it.

I should say that, as far as I can see, the transcript reflects a committed and professional understanding of Drama teaching and you should feel very proud of the contents, so I hope that you won't want to cut anything! If this is the case, don't bother to send the transcript back, but just give me a ring to say it's OK - 93257151.

Thanks a million for participating in this project - it would not have been possible otherwise. I only hope I can do you justice as I attempt to communicate your insights.

Regards

Val J
6/12/2000

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