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Insights into drama in the early childhood setting: A rationale for the use of drama

Lynette Kaye Moss
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Insights into drama in the early childhood setting:
A rationale for the use of drama

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This paper is part submission of towards the Masters of Education
Degree(Drama) at Edith Cowan University August 2000
Masters by course work and thesis.

This research is an investigation into the implementation of drama in early

ABSTRACT

childhood education conducted in one Perth metropolitan primary school, over a three-week period. The six drama lessons were taught by the researcher / practitioner in a Pre-primary and a Year One class. These students were chosen for their limited exposure to the Drama in Education experience. The expectation was of a less conditioned response both in their conduct and expression within the drama environment

The lessons were captured on video and transcribed, then analysed utilising an ethnomethodological methodology.

The responses of these children were recorded in an attempt to disclose how a group of young children share knowledge during a drama class, and examine the social conventions, articulating the features of common rule-usage and assumed communication. The discourse also examines the complex and at times ambiguous nature of drama and the need to articulate and to analyse practices, to unravel how drama is constructed and perceived. The practice of drama in the early childhood classroom highlights the role and relationship of the practitioner and the children.

The study offers insights into the foundation issues within drama in education that are a product of the historical, cultural and social domains of knowledge and affect the implementation of drama in the early childhood.

This research provides information on drama in education within the pre-primary school setting. It would be of interest to any teacher or researcher who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that surround drama in early childhood years, and provides insights into the interactions of the participants.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in my institution of higher degree and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by any other person except where reference is made in the text.

Lynette Kaye Moss

Signature

Date *August 2000.*
August 2000

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Spontaneous drama is never about presenting. Neither is it concerned with the exploration of themes imposed by others. Rather, its value to us as humans is the freedom it provides for us-the freedom to explore contexts and situations which may be denied us in the 'real world.'

Julie Dunn, 1996. p20

1.1 Research Purpose

The drama class exists in an environment that is socially constructed from many interwoven pieces: play, ritual, culture, historical perspectives, the education system, and the practitioners beliefs. Examination of these constructs locates the research for both the researcher and the reader and provides a structure for the discussion of the mundane observation in the drama classroom.

1 Objectives

1. To discover the perceived knowledge that young students have about drama when beginning school.
2. To illuminate and document the mutually agreed but unspoken rules of the drama class, the ordinary assumptions and interactions that teachers and children demonstrate in order to accomplish socially acceptable behaviour in the early childhood drama class and in this way to elucidate the role of the facilitator.
3. To view foundation matters and problems encountered in the classroom from an educational drama perspective and thus consider changes to the inner structure of the social reality of the drama participants.
4. To outline and discuss implications for drama praxis consequent to the above observations.

In *New Perspectives on Classroom Drama* Bolton (1992) discusses rule-usage in drama in education and writes

Sometimes these rules are so familiar to us that we never give them a thought as we submit to them (p. 22).

This research explores and investigates rules and issues within the subject of Drama in Early Childhood Education. Observation of children involved in a complex form of symbolic play is necessary to elaborate the social role of drama. Exploring the complexity and possibilities in an early childhood classroom is fundamental to the reinforcement of the status and value of drama.

The use of ethnomethodology as a research tool allows for the gathering of data that combines an understanding of the organisation of drama culture and the 'reality' of the negotiated setting. Providing an understanding of the rule usage and interactions unique to learning in drama illuminates the belief system that is central to drama as an Arts education practice.

It is the intention of the research discourse to impose its own reality and expose the values inherited from drama conventions, attitudes, and 'tacit way of knowing' (Polanyi, 1966).

► The need for the research to inform and influence a better drama practice

Illuminating the understanding, perception, organisation, and rules of the drama setting with young children is an important step towards developing a sound framework for drama practice.

The practices and understandings that are routine in drama draw on a wide range of social/organisational concerns, activities, domains of knowledge and communicative practices. Theories in drama in education and claims made about drama practice, the obligations of the drama facilitator, and the organisation of activities within drama should all be under constant investigation to allow new, dynamic and progressive possibilities.

This investigation of drama in education will reflect the Education Department, its systems and sectors, cultural heritage and the biases within that culture.

Research employing the discourse of analysis as used in ethnomethodology can offer insights into rule usage and fundamental issues pertinent to drama and may demonstrate why the inclusion of drama in the early childhood classroom is critical.

Ethnomethodological analysis of language and interaction can be used to uncover the details of drama as a cultural practice and seeks to understand the logic of practical actions concerned with the organisation of a culture.

► The need to understand social and cultural practice

In analysing drama as a social and cultural practice, the bases on which we construct our 'reality' are encountered. The ethnomethodological 'reality' is the discourse of the 'mundane social praxis' (Pollner, 1987). The ethnomethodologist, uses this discourse to view the rules by which the

order of social practices are preserved. Discovering the 'practical mundane knowledge' used in drama to explore the 'normative demands' (Van Manen, 1990) that are placed on the child in the social practice of drama will feature enactment as a situation. In discovering the rules that govern this situation the moral and ethical responsibilities of the drama practitioner working with young children will also be highlighted.

► Researching foundational matters

This research is a much-needed contribution towards West Australian primary drama educational research. Taylor (1996) warned of the potential dangers faced by liberal arts education in the accountable world.

Accountability often equates to quantifiable assessment and is difficult to validate in relation to a fundamentally qualitative subject, such as drama. Research builds a strong base for that validation, yet to date limited studies dealing specifically with drama in the early childhood years are represented. A lack of research pertaining to drama in early childhood education has not allowed drama its rightful status within the curriculum. The location of the authentic voice of the child in the process of the drama document has been largely previously unrecognised and undocumented.

The Arts Report, Education Department of Western Australia (1996) on the Student Outcome Statement Trial identified the perception that the arts in schools are seen as extracurricular, optional and peripheral and this view must be questioned. Fleming (1999) believes we live in an era of excessive rationalism and quasi-science that dominates education.

However by developing and further investigating drama in the early childhood setting we add to the greater knowledge and body of work that places the arts as central to the curriculum (Eisner, 1985, Best, 1996)

Drama should be included in the classroom schedule of young students as they enter the school environment. Locating and contributing to expanding drama research may provide an insight into why:

Drama as a social praxis includes complex issues of collaboration, culture and a place for the younger child to investigate the social action of their world. The value of drama is that it allows an appropriate and dynamic place in which children can develop identity and interpret their world.

1.2. Setting the scene on drama research in the early childhood classroom

• Finding a common language

In 1998, during a workshop on drama, I surveyed a group of early childhood and primary classroom teachers and asked them to define drama. The teachers' responses demonstrated knowledge of a range of drama strategies and skills that may be apparent at any given time in the primary drama classroom. The answers included role-play, performing, speaking, speech, confidence, co-ordination, literacy, imagination, group work, listening, language, pretending, cooperation, self-esteem, appreciation of others, expression, gestures and mime.

In 1998, during this research I asked a group of pre-primary children to define drama.

'Drama is when you are sick,' said Sam.

The question imposes an adult logic on Sam and assumes that the adult reality and the child's reality in daily life will be similar.

Mehan & Wood (1975) believe this occurs when adults treat children as less complete versions of the adult self. Ethnomethodology rejects a developmental deductive model and will view the child through the direct unfolding of the descriptive talk and events of the classroom setting.

Drama in education is viewed with disparity within education (Rasmussen, 1996) and an interpretation of what is drama will be formed by factors of perception, experience, and expression. The shifting boundaries of where

to locate drama within education and the diverse definitions however need some common language. This standardisation of a common language is needed to solidify drama education and stop erosion of common understandings. Taylor (1996) however warns of the sanitising of such a language to control the rebellious possibilities in the creative drama classroom.

► **Appropriateness of previous research**

If drama in early childhood and primary schools is to be located in previous research this may be problematic for the National Association for Drama in Education – Australia (NADIE). Its database in 1993 listed 65 research projects in drama of which only four dealt specifically with primary drama (Taylor, 1994). Three of these were concerned with play and one with role-play. To date research into drama in the early childhood years has been even less visible and has been essentially empirical in nature (Kase–Polisini, 1985), with the focus on play.

Empirical drama research in schools blossomed in the seventies with the emphasis on analysing methodology, developing dramatic strategies and the social effect drama had on the participants (Kase–Polisini, 1985).

► **Play and self-expression research**

Fundamental issues in drama however and the knowledge that is 'taken for granted' is often subjective and left unquestioned (Best, 1996).

The focus on play and self-expression in drama research in early childhood education has previously concentrated on the physical, social, intellectual and

emotional well-being of the participants (Kase-Polisint, 1985)

Drama in the area of early childhood and in primary schools has subsequently been heavily influenced by theories of play and enactment for social development. This lack of critical thought reflecting on the identity of drama, as opposed to play may have led to a misunderstood view of drama and provides little credence for the validation of drama as a core subject option (Best, 1996; Wilkinson, 1996).

► **Drama - Justification within the curriculum**

Previous Australian curriculum guidelines in the field of primary drama propound that "learning through drama is important to gain insights and understanding by doing" (Kemp, 1985) and will "develop tolerance, sensitivity, spontaneity, imagination, lateral thinking, physical coordination and the ability to know oneself" (Curry, 1982).

Heathcote (1980, p.5) however claims that "so much is falsely claimed in the name of drama that it will be wise to take a close look at what it can do, and how it does what it can do."

Schonmann (1992) believes the challenge to affirm what drama is, is not helped by drama educators whose concepts of drama are diverse and conflicting even within professional publications. If drama in education can be ambiguous in nature to the drama researcher then the role of drama within the curriculum may also be equally obscure.

Unfortunately justification for drama can no longer depend on the 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1966) that creating, making and expressing through

drama is beneficial to the education of children because education trends have responded heavily to economic national interests and political expediency. Fleming (1999) cites an overloaded curriculum and the quest for objectivity and accountability as the reason aesthetic education is under threat. Nicholson (1999) regards the values associated with aesthetics in education as being problematic. Lankshear (1993) and McLaren (1993) believe that in recent years attacks on the progressive education have employed the technique of generalisations to appeal to prejudices. The putting forward of simple causes to very complex situations, Lankshear believes, is partially due to the lack of research on the cultural practices and politics in schools. Lankshear believes superficial explanations and quick economic fixes can not work in education but qualitative data that connects the everyday experiences and 'common sense' accounts of schooling can genuinely seek solutions within schools.

Understanding the role of drama in an accountable education system when there is no attempt to understand its complexity will result in the meaning of drama remaining hidden and ambiguous. Havell (1990) questions if the current interest in the aesthetics has come too late to save drama in education.

► **Marginalisation**

As a drama specialist in primary schools in Western Australia for the past ten years I have experienced the marginalisation of teaching drama as a subject in the education system. When I first came to Perth in 1990 there

was a healthy network of primary teachers as drama specialists in schools as confirmed by Errington (1991) who believed that primary drama was in a healthy condition in Western Australian schools at that time. However by the year 1999 there were only a few drama specialists in primary schools working in the state primary schools.

Currently few drama specialists exist in primary schools with non-specialist teachers left to teach drama. The schools directly employ support teachers in the Arts, subject to the school community acceptability and priorities for the year usually favouring music and visual arts.

The drama programme in primary schools provides generalist teachers a percentage of their duty other than teaching (D.O.T.T.) time. Generalist primary teachers I work with often express their desire for more time to address drama, while at the same time they are apprehensive about teaching drama.

► Training and Curriculum

Improving training and curriculum guidelines may help to alter perceptions of drama. Australian drama educators surveyed by Millett (1996) also hoped that in the future more drama would be undertaken in the primary sector as a result of improved training and curriculum guidelines.

Improving the status of drama in early childhood education will therefore require the continued exploration of the rules, context and organisation of the subject within the local and specific environment.

1.3 Chapter organisation

The following chapters set the scene for the research, provide a theoretical background for this report, present the research, then conclude with a summary of the demonstrations

Chapter Two reviews specific themes that impact on this study. The theme of drama in early childhood area is located in an 'outcomes' based world that is particular to Western Australia at the time of writing.

Chapter Three the use of ethnomethodology is discussed, justified and the rationale for data collection defined. The study design sets the scene for the procedure and ethical considerations of this study.

Chapter Four the research is demonstrated and the discourse of drama in these two early childhood classrooms is discussed.

Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the research and the implications for my own practice and comments on drama in the early childhood area.

CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.
ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE STUDY

...all children (even some adults) remain to a lesser or greater degree capable of regaining the belief in being understood, and in their play we can always find the gateway to the unconscious, and to the native honesty which so curiously starts in full bloom in the infant, and then unripens to a bud.

(Winnicott, 1968 p.146)

2.1 Drama in early childhood education

► History and Importance

In "The Arts in the Primary School: A Curriculum Statement and Profile Perspective" Emery (1995), gives four fundamental reasons why the Arts are important in the education of children

1. The Arts are fundamental symbol systems used for human communication
2. The Arts are forms of intelligence
3. The Arts are aesthetic forms of knowing
4. The Arts assist in the development of self

Drama in the early childhood setting is a recognised Arts subject with its own unique history, philosophy and theories. It is viewed as a method of teaching and a body of knowledge. (Cusworth & Simons, 1997)

Benefits of the educational experience of drama within the primary school and early childhood area, (Morgan and Saxton 1987, Isenberg and Jalongs 1991, Warren 1982) emphasise the social development of children.

► Factors working against drama

Regardless of the benefits, drama has relatively low status in primary schools and the teaching of drama is impeded by the opinion by some school principals that the arts are unimportant to the curriculum and this engenders similar attitudes in staff (Emery, 1995).

Chaine (1996) noted other more important factors that may influence the status of drama in the primary system in her article, 'Even In A Snug World'.

The content and demands of the primary curriculum, as well as simple school logistics such as an already full schedule and a growing number of required subjects authorise no more than the hope that drama will be able to hold its own at the primary school level (1996, p 102)

Chaine cites the reasons for lack of empowerment of drama in the primary schools as:

1. The choice of schools to select music or visual arts as a traditional historical choice.
2. No specialist training for teachers in the universities, leaving teachers who have inherited drama and unsure of which pedagogical approach to take.
3. The lack of support from administration.
4. The 'back to basics' approach that schools take.

Chaine was citing the Canadian experience but similar problems exist within the Western Australian primary education system. Drama has been reaffirmed in secondary schools in Western Australia by being granted Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) status however in primary schools and early childhood classrooms little drama practice is offered other than the assembly item and the employing of unstructured play.

Ross (1996) warns that drama has no claim to curriculum tradition outside of English literature and the drama may decline as rapidly as it arose on the

educational scene. It however drama is not to decline as a subject in schools the differences to other subject areas, e.g art, science etc must be valued in education

John Blaking (1982) in the article 'A case for Higher Education in the Arts' believes that the reason for the arts being different is that they are about sharing. Drama interprets shared expressions of feelings and ideas, and describes them in symbolic form. Sharing knowledge and interaction is not unique to the drama class but what is unique is in the way students receive knowledge and express it by collaborating.

» Enactment and the drama classroom

Enactment requires a high level of personal engagement and participation for the individual child when exploring via multiple perspectives

Enactment involves spontaneity, imagination, role-play and exploration of mind and movement. Drama differs from the standard classroom environment in purpose and value by being sociologically based.

Individuals within groups can be interactive in the active process of play-based activity that employs elaboration. (Heathcote, 1971).

It is this elaboration that employs imagination and can be a catalyst in which the experience of reality is bolder and easier to clarify. The active 'larger-than-life' experience allows a greater understanding and perception of the environment and the rules, symbols and patterns used to make meaning in society. The expressing, reflecting and redefining of our social role examines the human experience.

Heathcote discusses the process of expression when she defines drama as “the selective expression of human interaction in which codes and patterns of behaviour are examined” (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p. 202).

The three components of dramatic play are described by Bolton (1992) as the process of agent, recipient and rule. ‘Making it happen,’ is what Bolton calls the agent to the recipient. It is in the process of ‘making it happen’ that rules are acknowledged and defined in relationship to what it is that is being created. Bolton acknowledges the subtle balance and complex factors of participating and perceptions when watching the experience.

‘When children are in the make-believe, playing on their own, they are for the most part using an experimental mode. They have ‘contracted’ to make a fiction: they are agents as well as recipients of the ‘experience’ (Bolton, 1993, p.40-41).

Students and teachers engage emotionally and physically in the drama classroom. The intention to ‘make’ dramatic play acknowledges a dual perspective (Bolton, 1992).

Boal (1979) refers to this dual perceptive as metaxis or a heightened awareness; when one is playing in an agreed fictitious world in order to create and be creative.

Bolton (1992) believes that the difference to ‘real life’ is that in ‘real life’ the conscious mind is working at social context but in dramatic playing one is also conscious of the ‘effort’ it takes to work at the social context.

Drama creates a replica of the outside world by adopting a descriptive mode of social events. The difference from the outside world is that in the drama classroom the use of make believe is experiential where students have responded to the fiction and Bolton (1992,1993) believes the students have agreed to creating the fiction.

The 'making it happen' by the teacher and the 'creation' by the participants demand a subtle balance of the complex factors of enactment, comparison, experimentation and reflection referred to as 'socially critical' drama (Errington, 1992).

► Rule usage in the drama classroom

The recognition of the rules, values and cultural meanings help construct new insights into our knowledge (Errington, 1992) allowing for the recognition that society is 'not fixed' and ensuring that the language, hidden agendas and values are not beyond criticism. This 'unfixed' quality provides a socially critical framework, and allows new possible alternatives for teachers using drama to create dramatic meaning.

2.2 The outcome-based approach to education in Western Australia

› Overview

Outcome-based education in Western Australia began with the review by the Schools Curriculum Development Procedure and Process in WA in 1994, to identify priorities in the curriculum. The main recommendation was the creation of a common curriculum direction that enabled schools to develop and adopt curricula to the advantage of their students. The Curriculum Council (WA), developed a new Curriculum Framework in 1998. The Framework established learning outcomes expected from students from a Foundational Level to Year 12.

› The position of drama within the Outcome Statements

The Curriculum Framework document has affirmed valuing drama in the primary schools of Western Australia.

The philosophy of the outcomes for the learning areas in the curriculum documents are a series of progressive levels (Kissane and Willis, 1995) and based on a developmental model of learning. Drama is one of the five Arts learning areas in the Curriculum Framework for Western Australia, along with music, media, dance and visual arts.

► Problems with Outcome Statements

a. Dominant culture

Developing local outcomes to suit individual schools or school districts could have been a better option in Western Australia where the school population is nearly 370,000 students (Moran, 1999) with disparate cultural and economic status within those schools. Instead Student Outcome Statements in Drama for schools were designed from a centralised metropolitan department that used developmental theories of social development of the individual child in drama (Pascoe, 1997).

The Arts curriculum reflects the beliefs and values of the developmental stages of personal learning, but Courtney (1982) warned of problems that exist when using a developmental approach to age-related stages in drama as they apply to English-speaking children in industrialised countries only. In Western Australia there are over 1050 schools in over 1 million square miles (Pascoe, 1997) and although 80% are in the metropolitan region these schools are extremely diverse in local conditions. Pascoe (1997) sites the issue of inclusivity and aboriginal arts as two areas that were not integral in the process of developing the outcome statements but were rather an 'add on' in the project.

Kissane and Willis (1995) defend an outcome-based education, even though it favours the dominant culture, by suggesting that curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment of student work should not be uniform.

Darvell (1992) reminds us curriculum, "is a way that teachers find purpose

and cohesion in the vast array of possibilities but must be flexible enough to allow true communication between students and teachers and to accommodate cultural, social and political differences” (p.4).

Insufficient research into primary and the early childhood area in drama in education in Western Australia before the introduction of outcomes, has implications on the implementation of the curriculum framework. Pascoe (1997) believes the arts in schools reflect the arts in the community as clearly identifiable art forms. This may be the case if Pascoe is referring to the drama production, but drama in the early childhood education is perhaps more elusive. The emphasis on play is not just ideological but an important element involved in developing the aesthetic and cognitive skills of young children. The Curriculum Framework accommodates and encourages the aesthetic process but a curriculum designed to demand improvement and development rather than emphasising the experience, is open to criticism. Not surprisingly the Arts community with a history of liberal humanistic education is sceptical of this changing development (Pascoe, 1997).

b. Responsibility and reporting

The reporting in the Arts, and engagement in drama in primary schools, is the responsibility of generalist primary and early childhood teachers. How they do this will vary individually and may provide some disparate application because of the lack of cohesion in the schools and the teacher's value systems towards drama. The Outcome Statements however have been

allied with Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE) and Pascoe (1997) suggests that this will test and monitor improvement in learning. MSE is a quantitative approach to testing and predictably validates developmental learning sequences (Pascoe, 1997). The two tests developed for drama, a process and an analysis test, were both pen and paper tests. The process test also included viewing a performance in progress. The literacy of the students was vital in the results, as were the skills of the product.

The creating and making for sharing is a formal process that Fox (1987) noted often leaves teachers and students with negative feelings. Access to exploring the human experience, values and the acknowledgment of the social world should not be excluded from a curriculum for young children by teachers who teach to performance standards. It is important to find some additional way to validate the process of meaningful encounters in drama.

By including drama within the Arts in the curriculum it has been provided with a legitimate place however the main challenge in implementation of drama in the early childhood and primary area will be the lack of teachers with a specific knowledge in drama, their lack of resources, and the lack of research examining and acknowledging the social function of drama.

2.3 Drama and play

► Drama as a 'natural' activity

The moment that babies start to smile and develop, the family watches and may even photograph, film or document their child. The child becomes a performer and an actor for the world to comment on. Children are social actors and Burton (1987, p.1) claims that drama is a natural part of a young child's activities and does not need to be taught as it is an extension of play that is ongoing from birth. The need to imitate, play out and take pleasure in performing the personal and social existence has always been an intrinsic part of human nature and the exploration of the shared experience of drama in defining and redefining what it means to be human is an instinctive source of pleasure (Russell Brown, 1995).

► Drama and play in education

Drama and play made a re-entry into education in the middle of the nineteenth century following Darwin's evolutionary proclamations leading to developmental theories (Courtney, 1974) that supported the notion of play. It is Peter Slade (1954) who is recognised as the father of primary drama and his position remains unchallenged (Bowgett, 1996; Courtney, 1982, O'Hara, 1996). Slade's book *Child Drama* based on empirical observation, cited by O'Hara (1996) as a 'holy writ' legitimised child play as an educational strategy. Play soon became a catch cry for drama in early childhood and the use of play as a natural way to learn was accepted and encouraged. Brian

Way in 1968 wrote *Development through Drama*, a manuscript that developed a system to allow self-expression in children. Teachers were encouraged to use play in the classroom and to be part of that play. Today the progressive paradigm in education takes for granted the use of play in primary drama. 'The first strand' in the *The Arts: Student Outcome Statements, Outcomes and Standards Framework*, Education Department of Western Australia (1998) under the heading of Communicating Arts Ideas, written specifically for early childhood, is a good example of how important play is perceived in the early childhood area.

The student values and uses ideas and imagination as well as play and sensory experiences as the basis for making and sharing arts activities(p.12).

The rationale for using play in the classroom supports the notion of identity and preparing the child for the future.

Play is exploratory. Often, without being clearly aware of the learning taking place, children are being initiated into the wider world and developing their identity. (p.12)

In *Primary Arts: An Outcomes Approach*, Fantasia (1997) play receives emphatic support as a teaching strategy in drama and the Arts.

Our particular concern is that the playful processes used in the Arts are too often taken for granted or, worse still, not regarded as 'real teaching and learning'. We strongly oppose this view, instead claim that children's experiences in the arts reflect the most 'natural' way in which children learn.

Smigiel (1993) in her article 'Rehearsal for Life' however maintains that young students must not merely be allowed to play in drama as understandings are not necessarily developed and that drama must be planned to ensure a dramatic focus. In her article the purpose of drama is discussed in relation to language development and to personal, social and theatrical skill development. Wagner (1998) also agrees that drama must be anchored solidly in education by making sense of information and experiences through drama.

Smigiel (1993) and Warren (1996) believe that drama is a safe and appropriate way to transfer power from adults to children and explore the option of power in education. However teachers who venture into drama, through play, with an agenda for transferring of power to young children must first deconstruct the morality and cultural significance of this obligation.

Neelands (1992) believes the drama teacher already uses the children's existing experience as a basis for making drama. The planning of a dramatic experience and the details are negotiated along the way. The purpose of drama, Neelands maintains, is to empower the students with the means to explore the experience and develop their own understanding of their world.

This notion of child-centred curriculum allows the child's knowledge to inform the understanding and challenges teachers to help students make sense of the experience. Booth (1994) believes exploring the human

narrative" is the search for our own stories in the stories of others and helps to understand the past so as to look towards the future.

Lottich and Wilds (1965) hold the child centred psychological point of view in education should not impose adult standards. The process of child-centredness however has highlighted the immediate concerns of individuals in education rather than the more historic goals of social objectives (Lottich and Wilds, 1965).

The early childhood area became recognised as an important area from which to work in a child-centred paradigm as supported by theories in developmentalism attributed to Lamark, Darwin & Huxley (Lottich and Wilds, 1965).

Since education was a matter of directing and controlling growth and development, they believed that there must be continual observation and experimentation to determine the psychological principles upon which such an education process could securely rest. Since the early stages of the child's progress were recognised as important factors in determining the course of his later development, they aimed particularly at a careful control of the elementary years of the child's schooling (Lottich & Wilds, 1965, p.300).

The influence of developmental stages to describe approximate behaviour of the child and to control learning accordingly is foundational to child centred learning. Cusworth & Simmons (1997) when discussing child

centredness in a dramatic context for learning state, "Child centredness has never meant restricting learning to what the child already knows, for unless the teacher promotes more than the status quo, there seems to be little point in the lesson (p.12).

Courtney (1982) believes the basis of developmental drama theories first put forward by Peter Slade firmly puts the onus for learning on the individual student and also has implications for the teacher to truly understand the nature of personal drama and the ethnological background of the students.

The facilitator who understands the nature of drama in order to enhance the learning through questions, perceptions, feelings and the belief system, provides a framework for the lesson. In developing this structure the teacher is still challenged to provide activities to enhance the voice of the children rather than that of the facilitator and in the early childhood classroom this may only be possible through uncensored play.

► **Play: Previous research and belief systems**

Play is a hallowed concept in early childhood education even though there are few longitudinal studies on play (Pellegrini & Boyd,1993). Pellegrini & Boyd can only maintain that play may influence social and cognitive development. Therefore there is the need to investigate the act of play before claims that play and drama can create identity as opposed to conformity can be ascertained.

Play nevertheless can prove difficult to research because of the numerous

dimensions of play that also occur in non-play (Pellegrini & Boyd, 1993)
Opie (1970) believes that when researching play in the early childhood
setting the notions of developmental education rely heavily on the author's
childhood reminiscences and that the verbal lore of children is
often overlooked.

Definitions and theories as to why children play can vary from an
abundance of surplus energy, rehearsal for adult life, the repetition and
expression of freedom, or a way of framing and interpreting the world, or
simply a transpersonal activity in human development (Ellis, 1973)

Play in early childhood drama education builds on the social theories of
children defining identity and rehearsing for adulthood.

Play involves physical and mental activity for diversion,
amusement and growth. Play is a natural way of trying out life
and discovering her or his world (James and Jongeward,
1977, p.164).

Investigating play as a drama educator with the affliction of gazing on
child's play as an inferior developmental model of the 'mature' theatrical
adult will have ramifications. Investigating the complex construction of
play by young children in relationship to others may transform the
romantic and inappropriate models of drama in education.

► **Play: Dispelling the romantic model**

The early childhood area of drama can become locked into the paradigm of 'romantic naivety' where young children are unaware 'of the learning taking place' (Fantasia, 1998) and who are only developing an identity. The affliction of viewing play naively in the early childhood area may be overcome if the complex and highly serious business of play is investigated through drama.

Ellis (1973) and Weininger (1985) noted that children in their early childhood years at approximately the age of five do not often fit the models of described play and that play is at its most complex form around this age. This also coincides with the most major period of cognitive, linguistic and social advances in children (Weininger, 1985).

► **Play: The role of imaginative and informal play**

Piaget (1952) observed two categories of play; fantasy and imitative play, both of which made use of imagination. Piaget considered that cognitive development was closely linked to play and without social interaction among peers, children can construct neither their logic nor their social or moral values. Isenberg and Jalongs (1991) maintain that informal play is the earliest and most spontaneous form of drama and includes socio-dramatic play and dramatic play and is most complex.

Drama is a serious business for younger students (Slade 1954, Courtney 1982) and an ethnomethodology dialogue from the young child is significant in dispelling the romantic notion of play.

2.4 Drama and ritual theory

► The nature of drama and the impact of ritual theory

O'Farrell, (1994) believes it is essential that ritual-based theories should be considered in discussion about the structure and function of drama, to clarify the purpose and nature of drama in education.

Richard Southern (1964) describes drama—as opposed to theatre—as the thing done, not the manner of the doing. Theatre is the act or the affectation but the drama is the embodiment of the doing, not the making.

Whereas theatre is a reactive art (Southern, 1964), drama is a proactive art, taking the early form of a tribal assembly, to communicate a shared experience in the ritual form of dramatic expression. The ways socio-dramatic play, creative drama, improvisation and role-play create meaning are in accordance with the origin of dramatic primitive rite and have their roots in ritual (Courtney, 1982).

d'Aquili & Newberg (1999) define ritual as a practice of a group that helps to bring members of that group into a sense of cooperative unity. Ritual expresses the social construct through the symbolic use of movement and gesture in order to articulate meaning. Barnes (1990) believes that ritual is to make the perceived reality work for people and to make the reality more real.

The everyday rituals of the classroom or the school environment are the symbolic representation of actions and beliefs the school and society uses to organise the system. The drama classroom is a ceremony that is dramatic by nature. The ritual in the drama class gives permission for experience and

feelings to be absorbed by the individual or the collective. The exact nature of the ritual may be deeply hidden (Southern, 1964) but the symbolic creative force that acts on the unconscious thoughts of the group helps create the social order and morals of a community plus it has the power to transform the individual (Streng, 1976, p.86)

• Drama as ritual

Ritual is dramatic in actions and performance and in the imitation of creating fiction (Courtney, 1982). The creating of dramatic fiction therefore through symbolic enactment has the intent of also determining and developing ritual in the drama classroom.

The symbolic nature of drama reflects elements such as enactment used in ritual. The use of ceremony in ritual and drama is functional in integrating an experience for the collective. A social form of expression is inherent when living in a socially structured reality as both rituals and drama become the models for integrating experiences.

The structures and phases of ritual can be observed in the drama classroom in the warm up (phase one), the content in the middle of the lesson (phase two) and the conclusion (phase three). Linking drama and ritual can explore the notion of identity, social order and culture.

Turner noted the relationship of ritual and in the liminality in religion and ritual in the liminoid of the secular society. Turner (1969) identified three phases in ritual. The initial phase of separation from one's own identity to a levelling process allows one to be part of the group. The second stage is the

liminal phase where the potential to explore, create and express limitless creativity is dramatic in nature. The third stage is the reaggregation phase where transformation and change of the individual can accrue.

► **Ritual and play**

Factor (1988) confirms the relationship of drama and ritual by maintaining that when children are engaged in play they enter a temporary indispensable separation from the material world. This state allows the child to enter the interior world of feeling, thought and dream. Factor contends during a child's play it is possible to test and protest, to explore and experiment symbolically and that a state of change occurs.

Winnicott (1971, p. 60) defines children's play as "a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated."

McLaren (1993) builds on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) by drawing on critical sociology, symbolic anthropology, ritual and performance studies to investigate the ethos of play in contrast to 'work' in schools.

An analysis of schooling from the dual perspectives of ritual and performance suggests important explanations for a wider range of patterned behaviour and transactions that exist inside the urban school (McLaren, 1993, pg. 5).

It is this patterned behaviour that ethnomethodology attempts to uncover, through the collective experience of drama. Practitioners who recognise this 'collective dimension' (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977) become aware that social ritual in drama reinforces the belief system and the socialisation of the individual within the culture.

2.5 Drama and culture

► Overview

The culture as a body of belief will impact upon this research because the rules and roles adopted through cultural factors such as language, improvisation, comprehension, social familiarity, humour and play within the drama classroom by the participants will be engaged.

Culture as a belief system is a transmitted process. Communication through interaction allows the transmission of knowledge about culture.

Education establishes and maintains a communication process. To exercise power and control over this process is to influence the cultural system.

Cultural systems meet the needs of the participants in many areas such as belief, habits, customs, rules and order. Individuals become members of a system that works for the survival of that particular group of people. Students as learners are engaged in investigating first their informed idea about society and then secondly the diversity of a more detached global viewpoint.

► Addressing social change

Johnson (1992, p.9) believes "that drama is vital to address social justice issues, to break down prejudice, intolerance and hatred". The drama lesson with the emphasis on play and social interaction is an important place to discuss social issues.

Individual construct will vary according to the needs, learning styles and member's reality. Personal, political, social and cultural understandings are explored during group-work in drama.

The drama class offers an ideal environment in which to develop an understanding about role, the individual and interaction in the process of socialisation. Drama as a process of enactment and the reflection of the experience on social issues is what Errington calls 'socially critical drama' (Errington, 1992, p.42).

A socially critical drama might provide an ideal vehicle for the experimenting with alternative constructions of society. Teachers using drama in this way have a strategic role to play in creating new possibilities (Errington, 1992, p.45).

The recognition of what may be happening in the drama class and the power of philosophical thought in drama allow recognition that society is not 'fixed' and that pluralism is to be celebrated (Chalmers, 1996). The investigation of how knowledge is shared by the students and teacher is critical Errington believes in aiding understanding for change. (Errington, 1992).

Students recognise their own views and understandings through the elaboration or the ritual of drama and reflection on this process. Enhancing the voice of the child during their transition into school is important because it allows students to move from a position of mere supervision to one in which they create a structure within the system that allows freedom to meet their particular needs. It is the role of the educator to assist in this development and drama may be an ideal strategy to allow for a more inclusive curriculum in the early childhood area. Drama may not be able to

cure all the ills of the world but is ideally placed in the curriculum for examining some of the issues around problems that beset schools. Schools need to be places for living not just for learning (Ashton-Warner, 1985) and practitioners of drama and art must help students to become aesthetically aware of culture past and present (Haynes, 2000). Peter Slade asks the question "Can we really make every one equal? Of course we can't. We can only give equal opportunity" (Slade, nd. p.18).

The opportunities that drama can evoke for an inclusive curriculum come from developing experiences that exist outside the child's own cultural construct.

By questioning their experiences, and those of the teacher, students develop their own personal, informed theory about society, as well as an awareness of the subtle relationships between power and knowledge (Errington, 1992, p.49).

The drama class may be a safe place for cultural exchange but the role to facilitate this lies with the individual practitioner.

► **Renegotiating the status quo**

Drama is a subject that involves sharing and interaction in a socially – critical paradigm (Errington, 1992) where students are encouraged to recognise and value their own political, cultural and social meanings in drama work can construct new insights into our knowledge through the reflection process.

In drama group work we can construct new texts, or blueprints for our lives, by weaving new insights into our web of personal constructs (Arnold, 1991, p. 32).

Drama uses skills and provides elements in order that children express and be objective about their socio-cultures and is therefore an ideal teaching strategy to address the inclusive curriculum. Recognising diversity and celebrating the differences that occur in drama is critical to the notion of working together, and will also reflect the needs of the individual within the class. Drama education can be an empowering and appropriate medium for marginalised groups within our community.

However students who cannot improvise in the language of the dominant culture are put at a disadvantage in a community as language is power. (Nacmanovitch, 1990)

2.6 Drama and the facilitator

► Historically locating the facilitator in drama

Pemberton-Billing and Clegg in 1965 stated “that children are naturally conscious of the need to invent”. And “a drama teacher’s job is to discipline and direct the child’s play into channels where they make worthwhile decisions and discoveries.” These sorts of statements by drama educators in the past that play must be shaped into work by the authoritarian teacher who imposes reality and moral judgments about the nature of play, have done little to enhance drama to schools.

It is however important to acknowledge the past and what Cockett (Somers,1996) calls ‘charismatic drama practitioners’ who interpreted and preached the content of drama in schools and did much to legitimise drama. The charismatic notion of practitioners is echoed by Joyce Wilkinson (1996) who questions the role of the personalities that have dominated the field by stating:

How can we critically examine the various methodologies that have emerged, comparing and contrasting their outcomes, analysed collaboratively the content and structure of each form, exclusive to our reactions to the personalities associated with them? (Wilkinson 1996, p. 30)

This idea that drama teachers use methods of teaching preferred by one theorist and embracing all the assumptions and biases that practitioners represent is unlikely but it is one reason why it is timely to focus on the

fundamental issues of the nature of drama and assumptions of interaction.

Wilkinson (1996) points out that drama theorists like Slade and Heathcote are practitioners who have reversed the notion that good practice is theory-driven. This acknowledges that drama practitioners have built a social context with mutually agreed rules that are influenced by theories but more likely derived from shared educational practices or aesthetic ideologies.

Locating an historical perspective on drama theorists and the manner by which their theories have emerged in relationship to the young child experiencing drama in education may be worthwhile but perhaps it is more critical to the practice of drama to discuss the everyday rules that are the interactive vehicle for communication.

► The current role of the drama teacher/facilitator

The drama teacher has a role in the social setting of the classroom as an integral part of the culture of the school and has a facilitator position within that community.

The school environment is central in providing a daily meeting place and forum for both the children and the wider community needs.

Discovering the needs, wants and addressing problems within the communities is essential as the school is a public meeting place where children, teachers and parents gather. Southern (1962) tells us the gathering place will be the carrier wave on which communication and the group psychology will be reflected.

Barker (1982) proposes that drama teachers facilitate the student's self-concept by the creation of a class environment that essentially develops the students' own self-images.

The success for participants in drama depends on the teacher and the strategies and techniques the teacher provides. What is essential is to allow the process to unfold exploring new possibilities; the teacher's art is to connect the living bodies of the students with the living body of the knowledge (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.20). Teachers attending to the children's rituals of enactment and trusting in the process of self-learning (Ross, 1996) are teachers free to the questioning of perceptions of group dynamics and open to discovery of new possibilities.

Yet it requires a facilitator to be committed to this process and a level of interaction with the community that goes beyond the normal classroom practice of a controlled and formal setting. When planning and designing the curriculum Heathcote warns of the inertia a group may generate to begin with and of the difficulty of group decision making, (Heathcote, 1971), but by understanding the rules of negotiation and collaboration, interaction is rewarding.

► Taking the challenge to allow the process

Drama is a subject that even experienced teachers may find difficult to teach and yet they may not have the same apprehension regarding other subjects.

As a primary drama specialist for the past ten years in both Perth and rural Western Australia, I have had contact with many teachers in schools who

are seeking ways of addressing the challenge of teaching drama. During my experience working in primary schools I have noted a fear by many teachers and hesitancy in tackling drama even when the curriculum framework requires it. Exposing the children to situations where they are 'acting a fool' or getting 'hyped up' is an issue many teachers have expressed as a concern about teaching drama. Several primary teachers have told me they feel insecure teaching drama and would rather not tackle drama because they don't have the confidence to function within the dramatic situation and feel they don't like the idea of children 'running riot'.

A teacher who likes to be in control may feel threatened by the extent to which drama allows freedom of expression and the way in which it is different from other subjects to teach. It is important that a teacher feels secure when teaching drama activities and a teacher who prefers to be in control may feel that drama is a difficult subject to teach (Bolton, 1993).

Neelands believes that many teachers still remain unsure about drama and what is involved in teaching drama "and that a teacher's decision to adopt drama into their programme depends on the teacher's own value system" (Neelands, 1992, p.9).

The effective application of the curriculum will be determined by a teacher's reflection upon one's own experiences, beliefs and self-image.

The teacher's beliefs about self and about the students become evident in his or her classroom communication and behaviour (Barker, 1982, p.160).

The vital role that drama plays in the arts curriculum in the process of enhancing the individual voice and developing self concept within a social setting may be disadvantaged however, by the teacher that is unprofessional in their own agenda by the need to control the experience (Ross,1996).

“The facilitator must be alert, sensitive, knowledgeable and insightful” (Thompson, 1978, p.19). The need to test ones own values and hidden agendas as a teacher is important but often over-looked as a contributor to classroom dynamics (Ashman & Conway, 1993, p. 29). The teachers’ judgments about the work done in a drama class will often reflect the teachers’ manipulation and not “the pupils’ expressive impulse” (Ross, 1996). The sensitivity to leave the players alone to explore the experience allows the teacher to remain in a witnessing and neutral cultural stance.

The discipline for a teacher is to accept the present condition of the group as revealed by their work and later groups must forge their own truths for them themselves. (Ashman & Conway, 1993, p.114)

CHAPTER THREE:
METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

*There is a time to just do anything, to experiment without fear of
consequences, to have a play space safe from fear of criticism, so
that we can bring out our unconscious material without
censoring it first.*

(Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 69)

► Complexity in finding a research methodology for drama

Finding a research methodology to view the drama landscape and explain the complexity of a situation in the early childhood classroom is difficult. Interaction with children can lead to the phenomena of children disappearing in the research and the sociologists writing an 'abstract gloss' (Turner, 1974).

Research of children from an adult perception ignores the interactional nature of the adult-child relationship. The child's reality and distortion by the perception of the researcher makes drama in the early childhood a shifting and precarious area for the researcher. Any attempt to view or hold a definitive reality of the young child's world will often say more about the researcher than the subject.

Ethnomethodology as a research method restores a discourse between the adult and child based on the rule usage of common language, how people display meaning to the word and the reflexive articulation of the situation. The child perception, and interpretation of the changing culture are what Mackay (1974) believes make children the competent interpreters of their social world. Mackay warns the study of adult-child interaction can become the study of cultural assimilation, and therefore a study into the interpretive basis of intersubjectivity.

If there is a possibility of achieving a naturalistic observation when working with children, it must provide details of the social interaction between the adult facilitator / researcher and must declare biases.

The language of new texts created by research in Drama in Education are the systematisations of the researcher's construct and reflexive knowledge (Mehan & Wood 1975).

Creating this construct and exploring language central to the research McKenna (1994) demands the researcher interrogate and investigate personal assumptions and beliefs.

Current drama research encourages this reflective stance and Errington (1992) and Orton (1994) see the potential of 'Action Research' to change the practices of those involved. Bailin (1996) argues for an analytical philosophical model of inquiry to explore sound practice for drama education.

Fox and Holmes (1996) however call for acknowledgment of an eclectic methodological approach to research and utilise the methodology of teaching that they feel is often denied. The teaching methodology might highlight concerns and admit alternative drama practice by the practitioner/ researcher. An example of this is given by Taylor (1996) when he considers the reflective practitioner paradigm.

Taylor's 1991 research in a New York elementary school focused on the question "What makes drama so unique?" (Taylor,1996). To allow the stories of students to emerge Taylor utilised role-play. However this required a methodology that could effectively record the process from multiple perspectives. Taylor designed a reflective interventionist technique in collaboration with a social studies teacher. Taylor, acting as a mentor

transcribed interviews, noting aims and gains for both the researcher and participants, reflecting on frustrations. This research includes not only the insights of the researcher, co-researchers and the students but also notes on his own teacher interventions. In this study Taylor was both the facilitator and co-participant.

Taylor (1996) believes that this reflective practice puts teachers and researchers back in touch with their 'streams of consciousness'. The researcher's responsibility, Taylor claims, is to produce a narrative style that describes and links common themes, insights and issues.

► **Empirical domination**

Selecting a methodology for research has not always been so enlivening with an empirical standard model of quantitative studies clinically measuring and pursuing the 'truth' in education research.

Timms's (1992) research exploring the impact of dramatic improvisation strategies on the oral comprehension skills of children from a low socio-economic background employed a quasi experimental design that engaged both qualitative and quantitative methods. Utilising what Blumer (1956) referred to as 'variable analysis' and observation, Timms's study set out to discover if drama has an impact on language skills and as predicted concludes that it does. The use of a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods may have been an appropriate methodology for the developing discourse at the time of her study where universities demanded a rigorous intellectual framework to discover the 'truth'.

The use of ethnomethodology, as a method to research foundation matters, does not resemble the traditionally understood study in social science (Buttton,1991).

► **Ethnomethodology as an appropriate research method**

Ethnomethodology is a more appropriate method to illuminate the everyday rules of the social situation of the drama class. The examination of socially structured realities investigates the system that takes for granted knowledge. Through the discourse within the setting of drama in the early childhood area, the respecification of the foundation concerns are under investigation.

► **Introduction to ethnomethodology**

Ethnomethodology as a methodology rejects previous work in the area of study and while arriving at no final conclusion welcomes ambiguities of the individual human experience.

Every judgment is situational absolute, based on the realisation that some later determinations may change the certainty of the here and now (Mehan & Wood, 1975 p. 75).

The use of a methodology in educational research does not subscribe to the idea that a truth exists nor does it attempts to offer a new theory, but it brings about awareness of the complexity, the historical position and the fragility of the system (Lather, 1991). Ethnomethodology is an attempt to

makes sense of the practices of everyday 'lived' experience and the community's socially acceptable behaviour. Ethnomethodology highlights the knowledge and practices that members of the community engage to organise social situations and provides an understanding of interaction behaviour. It illuminates the complex, subtle and pulsating nature of human concerns.

Ethnomethodology is principally attributed to Garfinkel (1967) whose publication '*Studies in Ethnomethodology*' was an attempt to re-organise a structural-functionalism social theory of interaction proposed by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons (Bulton, 1991) and Schutz's theories in structural and semiotic approaches (Van Manen, 1990).

► **Ethnomethodology**

Sociology and phenomenology were both considered precursors to ethnomethodology; the former questions the practices, rules and rituals of a community of people (Van Manen, 1990).

Sharrock and Anderson (1986) believe it is important to understand ethnomethodology's background and how it is different from phenomenology. Phenomenology, they maintain, is the study of the unique experiences, personal stories and interpretations to gain knowledge; ethnomethodology is the study of broader foundational issues of experiences brought to the surface by documenting the *rules* for demonstrating consistency, compatibility and coherence of meaning.

Ethnomethodology, like any study into educational theory is an inquiry

into the theory of social systems and Garfinkel (1967) acknowledges that ethnomethodology is a systematic approach, but that it differs from other methodology by attempting to understand how social actors make sense of the practices of everyday 'lived' experience and what rules are used by the community to impose socially acceptable behaviour (Patton, 1990; Van Manen, 1990).

Qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which view the system from other than that of rule usage, may not uncover the foundational issues at stake. Benson and Hughes (1991) suggest that one reason for this obscuring of the main issues could be the need to justify the methodology. They state:

...serious methodological discussion has become obscured by the need to attack, defend or otherwise justify general stances, rather than trying to deal with the problem of securing adequate empirical reference [for our studies] (p.110).

► The role of discourse in ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is a method of investigating the social construct through discourse therefore its paradigm is semiotics and material is investigated for verbal interaction and dialogue and not from a viewpoint of static organised practice (Garfinkel, 1967).

Garfinkel (1967) argues that as social actors we are constrained by the social facts we must 'accomplish' and ethnomethodology studies the methods of constraints that are used to achieve such accomplishments.

The children's social reality in which we place them in during a drama class will be reflected in the language and the social interaction they construct to make sense of their experience.

► **Beyond discourse**

This study is not limited to the verbal action only but takes into consideration the interaction analysis in the drama classroom as experienced by the participants as commonsense thinking of the 'reality' through communication (language and gesture).

Sharrock and Anderson (1986) recognised three primary maxims in ethnomethodology set out below.

A researcher employing ethnomethodology will:

1. treat activities as reflexively accountable.
2. treat settings as self-organising and common sense as an occasioned corpus of knowledge.
3. treat social actors as inquirers into those settings and accounts.

Ethnomethodology impacts on other social sciences by inquiring into the problems that originate in the theory of human sciences such as philosophy, psychology, history and sociology (Button, 1991) by fundamentally seeking to discover the properties and order that members use to conduct social context (Mehan & Wood, 1975).

It is the researcher's belief that ethnomethodology is a research method that can create an awareness of the complex considerations that are deeply entangled, socially and culturally, in the drama classroom. Discovering the drama rules that young children use when first encountering a drama class will aid in understanding of the emerging role of the teacher and students alike.

This discourse provides an understanding of the organisational cultural practices in schools and is important to drama practice in the early childhood area where limited research informs what is the perception of the situation.

► **Analysis techniques of ethnomethodology.**

Investigation is of the utmost importance in ethnomethodology and the researcher requires trustworthiness as a major criterion; in order to uncover embedded assumptions.

The credibility of a study using ethnomethodology comes from persistent observation, and the use of rigorous agreement among cultural colleagues (Garfinkel, 1967).

Gubrium (1988) whilst acknowledging the subjective nature in the methods employed to look at rule-usage and the layering of the analytical form of ethnomethodology, nevertheless believes that philosophical engagement is welcome in the ongoing search for theoretical improvement in education practice.

The observation, theorisation, and reflexivity brings a multi-layered perspective to bear on drama in the early childhood area.

Ethnomethodology as a method for drama research does not rely on axioms but seeks to understand the practical action in the drama room.

The notion of truth in human experience exists only temporarily— bound by time, history, culture and society, and is subject to much prejudice.

It would be remiss and misleading to describe the assumptions of human experience without defining the anomalies and to acknowledge that social interaction is changing.

► **Breaching experiments within ethnomethodology**

Garfinkel (1967) used what he called 'breaching experiments' to construct the common perspective of the members; the taken for granted rule-use and activities that members employ unconsciously by a random act that disrupts the common rule-use.

The use of 'breaching experiments' is important to bring the actions of the class to the surface in order to make visible the effort that it takes to reach a common understanding and the reason behind social order.

(Garfinkel, 1967).

Using the technique well known in drama as 'teacher-in-role', the understanding of fiction and enactment is investigated. The children may not have experienced this situation before and focusing on this experience illuminates the class members' perspectives of finding a common approach to an unusual situation.

► Procedure for collecting data

The research was recorded by the use of video-taping, to capture the allusive and sometimes subtle nature of children's interactions.

Documentation, capturing of the setting and social actions occurred and the researcher made an analysis of the lessons. Ethnomethodologists use video and tape recorders to study conversation and allow the detailed analysis of the intonation, pause, and nuances in the relationship of the participants. In this research the video-taping was openly revealed and initial infringements by the children were expected. Some reactions were recognised as children acknowledged the camera but as the lessons progressed the reactions diminished and dissolved.

Data is collected and coded to produce a description of participants' processes to achieve social order and ascendancy. Coding is read as a 'grammar of rhetoric' (Garfinkel, 1974). Detail to accuracy, clarity and distinctness is necessary in order to question presupposed organisational practices.

The coder therefore will eventually assume an authority to make sense of the system for the reader.

» **Transcription notations used for this research**

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---------------|--|
| (.) | A dot in parentheses marks a micropause (i.e., less than one-tenth of a second |
| (1) | Parentheses around a number on a line or between lines indicates in seconds the pause |
| ((Cough)) | Items in double parentheses provide characterisations of events not fully transcribed. |
| (| Open brackets indicate the onset of simultaneous talk between utterances. |
|) | Closed brackets indicate the ending of simultaneous talk between utterances. |
| ,?. | Punctuation marks indicate intonation contours. They do not indicate grammatical status, such as a question. |
| , | A comma indicates upward intonation at the end of a word. |
| ? | A question mark indicates upward intonation on a whole word. |
| . | A full stop indicates a downward intonation at the end or over the course of a word. |
| Word | Underlining indicates emphasis. |

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---------------|---|
| WORD | Capitals indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk. |
| : | Colons mark the prolongation of the preceding sound. |
| .h | The letter h preceded by a period indicates aspirations in the course of a word, commonly laughter. |
| h | Without a full stop h indicates outbreath. |
| names | For obvious reasons the names have been changed in the text but the names of the speakers reflect the gender of the original child. |
| T | The abbreviation of T is used for the teacher/ researcher |
| CT | The abbreviation of CT is for the class teacher |

The notation conventions employed are taken from a set of conventions designed by Gail Jefferson and are noted in Watson & Seiler (1992).

» **The setting for the design**

The co-participants in this research focus were children in Pre-primary and Year One in a Perth metropolitan primary school.

The primary school was chosen as it was not homogeneous having students of mixed socio-economic status who were rich in cultural diversity.

The intention was to derive samples devoid of specific bias.

The participants were students of Pre-primary and Year One classes and they experienced a series of drama lessons.

To satisfy the research questions without explicit bias these students had limited previous drama in education experience. The students in Pre-primary had been at the Pre-primary school six months and both groups had never had a specific drama education lesson before the research.

► **Ethical considerations**

The teachers of the classes, the students and the parents and/or guardians of all the children were all notified and provided with information on the study. An option was incorporated to allow the withdrawal of children from the drama lessons if parents and guardians desired. However none took the option and all students participated. Parents, students and teachers involved were given an opportunity to ask any questions about the research.

Information for the parents or guardians stated the purpose of the research and was sent to all co-participants' homes.

The Principal of the primary school and students were all informed of the researcher's role and the design and purpose of the research.

The students were not subject to coercion, prejudice or penalty at any time during the research and all individuals had the right to self-determination and free choice.

All data was treated in a non-judgmental manner recognising and valuing the uniqueness of the individual voice. The videotapes were observed and locked away in a safe place for five years. The viewing of tapes was confined to the researcher and a 'cultured colleague' (Garfinkel, 1967) and under no circumstance were the videotapes shown to other interested parties.

Confidentiality was assured and the use of pseudonyms employed when writing up the data. Prior to data-collecting the proposal was reviewed by the appropriate ethical review committee and this thesis contains no identifiable information about the teachers, students or the school involved.

The unique philosophical commitment to ethnomethodology and the complexities in the structure of social reality provides data interpretation of a reflexive reality that articulates a critical view of the evidence beneficial to the drama curriculum.

The use of observation by video provided a multidimensional spectrum of data and allowed the actions to be viewed many time. This would not have been possible in real time, so the data was able to be analysed in a more intense and complex manner. As a result, the study was more detailed and the data collected was more accurate and meaningful.

Chapter Four:

The Study of Drama in

Early Childhood

*Where the wild harebell grows to a blue cave and the climbing
ant is a monster of green light the child clings to his
grassblade. The mountain range lies like a pillow for his head
at night, the moon swings from the ceiling. The wave that
timeless moves through time, imperishably bright.*

Judith Wright, 1994, p36

4.1 The reflexivity on the drama class

In any lesson there is the entry and the exit point and the internal structure (Psathas, 1992). These three phases will be discussed in more detail later

As stated in the section on the design of this topic, two classes were chosen and three lessons were taught to each class by the researcher/ practitioner. In the lessons for the Pre-primary students the space used was the Pre-primary classroom. The Year One students went to the library which provided a preferable, larger space to conduct the drama class.

The length of the sequence of the three phases was half an hour for the pre-primary students and forty-five minutes each lesson for the Year One students.

In all of the cases analysed here, the entry point was marked by the introduction with the students sitting in a circle and being greeted by the research/ practitioner and welcoming them to another session of drama.

The exit or closure was either when the researcher left the space or the children exited.

1 Phase 1

The first phase of the lesson usually consisted of warm-up games lasting about 5 to 10 minutes. The warm up games were chosen to release energy, enhance physical coordination, and warm the body up. Two examples of these games are given below from the second lesson in the Year One class. These games relate and build onto the topic from the previous lesson on dragons.

Game one: Dragon cooperation tag.

The children join together to form a chain that represents a dragon by holding on to each other around the waist. Two or more dragons are formed.

The last person of each dragon line has a scarf tucked into the waist-band of their track-pants. The dragons have to grab the other dragon's tail while guarding their own tail.

Game two: Dragon to guard treasure.

This is a game where one child as the dragon, stands with their back to the remaining class. The children sneak up and if they are spotted moving by the dragon as it turns around they have to go back to the starting point.

► Phase two

The second phase or the internal structure in drama develops the theme and the direction of the drama; the majority of learning takes place in this phase. It is in this section that rule-usage and the ways of negotiating in the classroom become most apparent. This section took up the majority of time and lasted 20 to 30 minutes depending on the class.

► Phase three

Reflection on the drama through discussion was critical in this phase to assist the researcher/practitioner in assessing learning and discovering the common assumptions of the situation. Obtaining insight into the understanding of the child's play by the children reporting was critical to the research.

► **Teacher Participation**

Classroom teachers were encouraged to join in and be co-participants:

however both teachers interacted with minimal participation in the lessons

The pre-primary class teacher did participate in the lesson when the children were moving around the room but seemed reluctant to sit in the group during discussions. The Year One teacher contributed to the class when she perceived it necessary to discipline a student as an outside observer.

► **Behaviour**

As the researcher/practitioner I was interested in all manner of behaviour, so after the first lesson with the year one class where the teacher felt it was necessary to intervene, to discipline a child with a severe warning I negotiated to allow the students a little more freedom than she would tolerate in her classroom.

► **Creating a new space**

A new space was symbolically created by clearing the desks, the use of props and physically using the bodies of the students to create a shape in which to work. This was necessary to allow the students to have a sense of freedom that was greater than usual within the school setting. The pre-primary students' symbolic place was an island created from a large cloth with newspaper underneath to make contours. The Year One class used their bodies to create a space in which other students in the class could explore a journey through a cave.

4.2 Organisation of the drama classroom

In a negotiated setting, decisions are heavily influenced by the teacher both in the content and the structure of the lesson. The instructions from the teacher may be descriptive in nature, as seen in the example below. The description indicates the action to be taken, the roles that are to be entered into, where it is to be set and the emotional feeling that it may contain.

1 Descriptive instructions

- 1.T: in pairs(.) one of you is going to be the dragon (.)the other
2. going to be the dragon tamer(1.0) get into pairs and then
3. decide first (1.)who is the dragon tamer and who is the dragon.
4. (10.0)((Children move to find partners))put your hand up if
5. you are the dragon.(4.) ((hands go up, except for one group))
6. who in this group is the dragon(1.) good so the other person
7. must be the dragon tamer. Who, finds, the dragon so put your
8. hand up(.) right? (1.0)now the dragon goes and finds a place to
9. hide in the room (.)((children start to move into positions))
10. remember when you are found you may be scared of the
11. person(6.0) now the person who finds the dragon (.)the dragon
12. tamer(.)go and explore the forest until you find your dragon
13. remember? Your dragon may be unfriendly?

These instructions are broken up to allow for action, but also pauses allow the children time to understand one rule of the drama before developing

the next rule. The use of rising inflection in the teacher's voice can provide an indication to the children as to what may be important to remember in this improvisation.

► **Specific instructions that add value judgements**

- T.1 today we are going to create our own plays(1) but you must
2. have a dragon in your play(1) first thing (.)all. I. Want. You.
3. To.Do? Is to sit in your group (.)and discuss what is going
4. to happen in your story: (.)I don't want you to hurt the
5. dragon(.) or just chase your dragon around (.)it :doesn't
- 6 have to be very long but choose the characters that you
7. need for your play and decide whom you are going to be(1.)
8. when you know the story (.)then practice your play a few
9. times(.) and then you, can, show, every, one your play if you
10. want, to (.)I want you to get into groups with friends? That
11. you can work with.

The value statements within this text set the guidelines for the expected behaviour of the children. "...I don't want you to hurt the dragon.." (Line 4,5) is foreshadowing expectation and highlighting that this is not a rough and tumble play but one with characters where the actors co-operate because they need to "...get into groups with friends that you can work with"(Line 10,11).

In the former examples where the research / practitioner gave instructions there was little room for negotiation by the students in the early childhood classroom.

4.3 Negotiation in drama

McLeod (1989) believes that the setting up of a situation in drama, which allows negotiation and a shared learning experience, can accommodate individual differences in the group. This negotiated situation allows transfer of the child's reality into an adult's reality and the adult's reality into the child's reality by defining the context and the content of the drama.

► Defining what the students know

1. T OK hands down. What sort of things might you find on
2. an island
3. Natasha aaaa (1) sea snails aaa (.) octopus (.) seahorses and star fish
4. T: excellent? You might find all of those things on a island
5. because being on a island you would have a lovely coast
6. line(1) beaches and shells and fish fantastic?

In this case the rising inflection by the teacher indicated that Natasha has answered the question with an answer that is pleasing to the teacher.

Natasha has indicated that an island is surrounded by sea and therefore things to do with the sea will be found on the island. Natasha is adding to the knowledge of students who may still be unsure of what an island is.

This dynamic group discussion allows children to pick up the concept of what an island is without an explanation by the teacher. The group perception therefore ripples through the class and creates a shared reality between students and teachers.

► Turn taking in negotiation

Both classes understood turn-taking through the physical indication of a show of hands. This was in use before I started teaching drama lessons.

Although some children did call out from time to time during the research, the majority of the children complied with 'putting up the hand' and waited their turn during discussions.

1. T we need to have a name for our island (1) what are we going
- 2 to call our island?
3. ((Children start to call out))
4. T: hands up) hands up who, has got a really good name for
5. our island (.)((Points to Emma)) here
6. Emma: colourful island
7. T: colourful island? That's a great name for our island(.)
8. let's see if any one else has a suggestion and then we'll
9. pick one

In this example the teacher in line 4 discourages the students who have started to take a turn and are calling out the answer. The children with a good answer are to put their hand up and this reinforces the social rules of negotiation in the large group.

► Student alliances

A student in this group of pre-primary children displays an imaginative solution to supporting a friend.

10. Graeme: bali

11. T: Oh. (.) bali well there is already an island called bali can we

12. call it something else(.) can you think of another name (3)

13. David : I think he said barney

14. Graeme: barney

Barney seems like an odd choice for a name for an island. It may have been prompted by the idea that it had sounded like Bali. Paul appears to have used word association to help Graeme out when challenged to find another name. The teacher has asked Graeme to rethink the name and David support's Graeme by telling the teacher he didn't say Bali originally but Barney. This support that David displays for Graeme is maintaining alliances, the students together and the teacher separate. The logic is reinforced by the teachers acceptance of the situation and the turn-taking is continued. The downward inflection on 'Oh. Barney' indicates a negative response to the name.

1.T Oh. barney

2. ((points to Stan))

3.Stan: money island

4.T: money island did you say(.) good,

► Inequity in the negotiation

In this follow on example the negotiation to name to the island is in process. One child is reprimanded for calling out where others are not.

5. Paul money island money island

6. T: you think of something for me paul rather than calling

7. out(.) what can you think of , (5)

8. Paul : colourful island.

9. T: we have already got colourful island can you think of

10. another name we could call this (island.

11. Gerry: rocky island)

12. T: that's a great name because it's really rocky isn't, it's. ok

13. someone else (.)yes

14. Sam: rocky island

15. T: do you say rocky. That just what you said Paul (.)you have

16. to listen carefully((points to Kate)) over here

17. Kate: umm seaside

18. T: seaside island that's a great name to (.)ok lets pick one.(.) we

19. have got colourful island(.) rocky island(.) and umm seaside

20. island and (aa...

21. Stan: money island)

22.T: yes money island.

23. ((lots of calling out of the names eg money island...rocky

24. island, seaside island, colourful island and waving of arms))

Here Gerry calls out the name Rocky Island and because the teacher placed value on the name the interruption was allowed. Gerry has also helped Paul out of the situation of answering the teacher. Stan was allowed to interrupt as he was reminding the teacher of the last name she had forgotten— however the interruption in line 5 by Paul had not been allowed. The teacher is changing the rules to suit the situation and the purpose of the lesson.

► **Teacher power and manipulation.**

To achieve the purpose of moving the action forward the name is negotiated or manipulated by the teacher to achieve the name Rocky Island. In line 12 above the teacher has given a value statement to the name Rocky Island by suggesting it is a great name and justifying the choice because the “it’s really rocky isn’t it...”. The stated preference may have influenced the vote of the children but even if it didn’t, the teacher manipulates the situation further by taking back the control of the naming of the island.

1. T: -HANDS DOWN because (2) shhh shhh we are just going to
2. pick one of those four(.) we have got colourful
3. island, umm rocky island and seaside island and money 3.

4. island what are we going to call it(.) hands up if we think
5. we should aaaa hands down now (.) because you don't
6. know what I am going to say yet(.) ok hands up(.) if you
7. think: we should call it(.) colourful island, OK quite a few.
8. Hands down. Hands up?(.) people who think we should call
9. it rocky island. A lot of people (2) hands up if you think
10. we should call it seaside island? What about money island?
11. Ok (.)a few again.
12. ((Some children keep their hands up all the time throughout
13. the four choices, others raise for one or several of the
14. choices))
- 15.T. rocky island I think we will call it rocky island because we
16. seem like we had lots of hands up (.)and I think that is a
17. great name for it.

Here the teacher has made the decision for what was to be a group process. The situation did not have a clear solution so the power of negotiation was taken back by the teacher. Originally the rule to decide the name as decided by the teacher was to vote on the name. The children did not understand the rule of voting for only one answer and the one they liked best. The teacher instead of explaining the rules took back the control of the situation and named the island for the students.

► Students as collaborators

1. T: how can we make a cave using all our bodies. (30 children)
2. Kate: would we could stand
3. have some children ummstand on the side
4. and um make them like a tunnel and we put someone (in
5. side it...
6. T: O:K
7. Kate: .. and we) make them stand that way(.) with their
8. hands on the top(.) so they join other people's hands.
9. T: would you like to direct us Kate to make the cave (2) could
10. you choose the students to make the entrance of the cave

Kate has demonstrated she understands the concept of the cave and is prepared to take the role in creating the cave. Throughout this research most students demonstrated how willingly they agree to creating fiction with an adult.

4.4 Social conventions

► Language to suit the local situations and achieve social order

1. Axel: I saw an island when I went to the beach(.)
2. and it had lots of grass on the hills
3. T: lots and lots of grass on the hills,
4. well we are going to put some hills on our island,
5. and I'm going to look for some people sitting up beautifully
6. and they are going to help me put some mountains and
7. hills on our island (1)by scrunching up this paper and
8. putting it underneath our cloth
9. ((children given the paper proceed to do this placing it
- 10 underneath the cloth))

The teacher is going to look for people 'sitting up beautifully' (Line 5) and only those people can get a turn at putting the newspaper under the cloth. 'Beautifully' does not mean in this instance that only the beautiful students can have a turn. It means complying to the rule of sitting in the circle, keeping quiet, not calling out and putting the hand up to take turns during discussions, all rules that the children already have in place from experience within the system. This is an example of the use of language to suit the local context and understanding for the situation.

► **Students exert pressure on fellow students
to comply**

The rules of social convention are often illuminated however, in the instances when people break social rules. This following section highlights the mutually agreed but unspoken rules the drama class considered to be socially acceptable behaviour. The assumption that the teacher controls the social rules in the class may not always be correct.

In this example it is the children that apply pressure on a student and accomplish social control by involving the teacher who then makes the student comply

(Two students Sam and Jessie are chosen to walk into the cave.)

- 1.T: someone is coming through our cave ((Jack breaks from the
2. cave structure and runs through))
3. ((Four students call out – JACK, JACK))
- 4.T: ah:ah:ah jackjack(excuse me out of there
- 5.CT: I. Will. Count to five for you to get out of there.) one...

As the teacher had been ambiguous by not naming the students who were to walk through the cave, this gave Jack a reference point to act and join in the action.

The response from the other students was forceful in reply to his action and it seemed that Jack had broken the rules. It was the students who put the pressure on Jack to confirm by alerting the teacher to the situation by

calling out Jack's name. The children were alerting the teacher to the expectation of student behaviour. Jack hadn't been chosen to go through the cave and this was not acceptable behaviour.

Jack retreated and complied when both the classroom teacher and the drama teacher put pressure on Jack to come out from the cave. The classroom teacher used the threat, that if Jack did not leave the cave within a certain time demonstrated by her counting that there would be a negative consequence. Jack complied to the pressure by following the rules enforced by fellow students, teacher/ researcher and classroom teacher.

Jack returned to his position in the structure of the cave and the lesson continues with the two children chosen by the teacher exploring the cave.

► **Suspension of disbelief**

Heathcote (1973) believes within drama the willing suspension of disbelief is important to bridge the difference between reality and fantasy so that drama can happen. In this demonstration Kate is willing to suspend belief to create fiction.

1. T: just listen to see if you can hear something(3)
2. Kate: footsteps like a bear.

It was interesting that Kate chose her words carefully at this stage and didn't want to preempt or assume it was a bear in the cave as no agreement had been made to what was in the cave. Kate has agreed to the fiction but is unsure of what the fiction is. Kate could have suggested anything was in the cave but the thing she chose was a bear.

The suspension of disbelief Warren (1989) believes is not always so defined for younger children and may need to be clarified for some children.

► The guided drama and the imagination

The following is an example where the reality of the child does not coincide with the action set up by the teacher. In order for Adrian to continue in the drama he needs to be acknowledged that he has already achieved the imaginative process.

- 1.T: s:tart to slit:her(2) but as you are learning how to sl:ither(.)
2. it may be difficult (2)try your voice out (.)to see if you can
3. make a sl:ithery sound(.)try to grow bigger(1) the only way
4. to get.bigger is to eat (.)so go and find something to eat
- 5.Adrian: I already have had something to eat
6. T: (.)you are growing b(igger
7. Adrian: I have) already had something to eat
8. T: that's fine Adrian (2)snakes like the sun and are not very
9. happy about the cold (.)so it is time to find some shelter
10. (.)as it is starting to get cold.

► **Cultural dominance**

Kate had already identified that in the fiction she identified with bears. A similar response was received in another class.

1. T: what might be in this place,
2. ((5 children called out tiger, bear in a chorus.))

The first thing that the children thought of when asked what might be in the cave or what was making footsteps was either a bear or a tiger. This occurred in both the Pre-primary and the Year One class.

The previous stimulus the children responded to must have involved bears and tigers. This group of Australian children selected from animals outside their country. Identifying with animals such as the bear and the tiger reflects the influence of stories from other countries. The exotic appeal was stronger than the local snake and kangaroo.

► **Manipulating the child's stimulus to create the drama**

In this next demonstration the stimulus suggested by the child is manipulated to create the drama.

1. T: ((To Sam and Jessie)) did you notice anything about the
2. temperature of the cave.
3. Sam: it it was cold (.)and then hot
4. T: why, what could be making hot air

5. Sam: a dragon.

6. T: was? It a dragon in the cave.

7. Sam: it was a baby dragon.

Line 1 and 2 indicate that the teacher is asking about temperature because something about the temperature is worth investigating. The response from Sam that it was hot and then cold allows the teacher to ask what could be making the hot air. The teacher is pushing for an answer to suit the purposes of the lesson. Sam provides the answer, the dragon. To get the others to agree to the fiction the teacher asks the question —“Was it a dragon in the cave?”.(Line 6) This is not to allow objection to but to seek agreement from the group. It is meaning “Are we all up with the state of the situation and do we confirm that we can use the dragon to create fiction?”

Sam confirms that it is a dragon and it is in fact a baby dragon that is little with green scales. Sam has made the decisions for the group on what is to be placed in our cave. His ability to play along with the teacher with the concept of a cave singled him out to help create the reality for the rest of the group.

4.5 Obscuring the reality of the child

Ambiguity of the reasoning

Drama transfers information and the imagination is at play (McLeod, 1989).

This can result in ambiguity and distortion of the reality of the child.

8. Brittany: it(.) might have been a water dragon

9. Peter: was the cave close to the water

10. T: there was? Water dripping off the back of the cave

11. Brittany: it must have been a water dragon because Emily Griffen

12. brought one to our class(.) and the class saw it and it had a

13. long snout

14. T: did it breathe fire.

15. Brittany: NO it was dead.

Brittany's reference was to a leafy sea dragon (a marine animal) found off the coast of Perth. She had seen this when Emily showed the class. Brittany had no practical circumstance to come across a medieval European dragon. The reality for Brittany was a leafy sea dragon.

Brittany's notion of a dragon was different to the dragon in the cave the teacher had imagined with a forked tongue and scales. Previously the discussion on the temperature of the cave allowed the teacher to see the potential of a fire-breathing dragon. Brittany has shown that not all students perceived what the teacher thought was practical reasoning. The adult

competency and the child's competency both employed scientific rationality (Mehan & Wood, 1975) but do not necessarily share the same reality

► **Logic of language and reasoning**

The practical reasoning and the logic of language are sometimes substituted in the early childhood classroom for the use of practical personal purposes for language.

1. T: excellent? You might find all of those things on a island
2. because being on a island you would have a lovely coast
3. line(1) beaches and shells and fish fantastic?
4. Jessica: I learn violin and go to lessons
5. T: you what,
6. Jessica: aaaa Ivve been to an island

Jessica wanted to let the teacher know about her violin lesson. The common sense of the situation was disrupted and because Jessica's comment (line 4) was out of context with the island discussion, the teacher didn't register her response. Mishearing the statement by Jessica restored the adult social order as Jessica ignored her own divergence. The answer "I have been to an island," demonstrated that she understood the situation. The inorganic hearing or selecting of voices in the classroom is controlled by the adult reality.

► Post experience reflection

Teachers assume knowledge that children have as conceptual understanding but this may not be the case with young students or they may not have the language skills to describe the understanding.

1. Katie: my (.)sister(.) goes to drama.
2. T: does she?
3. who CAN (.)tell me what(.) drama is (3)
4. any idea, tell. Me. What,(is. drama.
5. Axel: sick sick
6. T: what) did we do (.)today(1) that we called drama
7. Sam: drama is when you are sick
8. T: ((laughs)) You .h think .rama is when you are sick.
9. what(.) is(.) the(.) drama that we did in here.
10. the things that we did (.)today together.
11. Axel: make stuff.
12. T: what? (.)sort of stuff=
13. ((several unknown sources)) HILLS ISLANDS

The question of "What is drama?" (Line 4) is too difficult to answer . The children apparently do not know how to respond to the question. The 'deviant' answers of sick came over four lines and from two different students. This may indicate that one student was copying the original

student and demonstrated the willingness of the students to answer the questions regardless of knowing how to answer.

Children of five are almost as proficient at speaking and understanding as an adult (Fromkin, Rodman, Collins & Blair, 1990) but the cognitive reconstruction of the process to the question "What is drama?" demonstrated that the question was difficult to answer. Only when the question was asked "What sort of things did we do in drama today?" was there a response that demonstrated that the children could articulate what they did in the lesson.

The discussion continues with Fred responding to the phrase.. "We made stuff?" Fred had previously demonstrated the convention of putting his hand up.

14. T: I'm asking Fred(2) what do you think we were doing.

15. Fred: we made fathers day presents,

16. T: you made fathers day presents for your father,

17. h good. But what sort of things did we do today in drama

18. Chris: we learnt things about dinosaurs.

19. T: did we?

20. Georgia: we made castles and things (.)and you play with

21. things

22. Sam: it was just lego

23. Chris: dinosaurs are toys

- 24 ((much spontaneous talking across the circle on dinosaurs and toys
25 and the discussion is finished))

Within the group, the children are vague and unfamiliar with the term drama. The language by which to describe the experience and the terminology was not available to the children perhaps through lack of knowledge of classification. This implication of a lack of experience in a shared dramatic language could be perceived as a lack of concept of the dramatic mode. This will have implications in the reporting and the assessing of students, if the testing only validates developmental learning sequences based on language it would therefore be pointless.

The power of role within drama and the moral and social obligation within the drama fiction appeared not to be unfamiliar to the children. As did the physical experience of drama as demonstrated in the following examples.

4.6 The power of role

In this next exchange the students are reflecting on enactment and give descriptive statements on what has occurred. The state of role has a powerful attraction as noted in the action of Jack during this discussion.

1. T: what happened when you found your dragon?
2. David: I (.)taught my dragon to do a backflip
3. Gavin: my dragon chaised me around the room
4. T: so your dragon wasn't very tame
5. did you get to tame your dragon,
6. Gavin: yes(1) I got him to roll over(.) and sit (.)he did it all at the
7. same time
8. Daniel: my dragon was so silly he thought he was a clown.
- 9 ((Jack crosses the circle and jumps (on Daniel in role as
10. a dragon))
11. Daniel: he was my dragon)
12. T and CT -Jack, Jack.
13. ((Jack returns to his place in the circle))

During the reflection, the role of the dragon seems to have a powerful attraction to Jack. Jack slipped back into role and was recreating the dynamics between him and Daniel. Possibly he may also have been manipulating his partner into not disclosing more about what happened in the drama.

14. T: did you manage to tame your dragon,

15. or did it stay wild

16. Daniel: he stayed wild

17. HE STAYED WILD

The choice of the word 'tame' by the teacher has repercussion on the concept of socialisation of the young child. Jack is demonstrating that in role he is still wild and will not be tame and compliant in the play.

Reflecting on this as the teacher / researcher the social concept I had investigated in the drama was social compliance. The paradox is that the last thing I was hoping to set out to do was to 'tame' the children or colonise the learning but to allow ownership of the drama by the children.

► Symbolic transformation and role

1.T: the creature in the cave(.) is an Australian creature. it is a

2. lo:n::g creature(.) no arms, no legs,

3. ((Several children call out--it is a snake, snake))

4. T: yes,(.) it is a serpent (.)or a snake (.)but, this snake is

5. coloured(1)a rainbow serpent (.)lets make a rainbow serpent

6. can we make a snake, (1)lets line up together and make a

7. snake(1) altogether? like we made shapes. last week

8.T: Hannah? could you come up. and we will line up behind you.

- 9 ((Children line up behind each other (15)))
- 10.T: Fred you can join back in. (8) put your hands on the
11. shoulder of the person in front of you(11) good and we will
12. walk around as a serpent
13. ((Children spontaneously break into making the sound of
14. SSSSS.))
15. Children weave in and out and teacher guides the students.
16. T: can? you curl up as a sleepy snake

The children keep in line as the snake weaves in and out of the pre-primary classroom' with the students joyful in their procession.

► Drama- an integrated approach to the curriculum

Although the Western Australian 'Curriculum Framework' (p.77) supports the Arts a major focus is on an integrated approach to the curriculum in the early childhood area. Drama in the early childhood area is not compartmentalised but utilises opportunities to explore knowledge in other areas. This extract demonstrates why drama is an ideal strategy to use in an integrated approach to education.

1. F: does any one know, how a snake is born,
2. Michele: it comes out of a egg.

3. T: it? does? come out of an egg(.) and it taps its way out
4. (.)with its front fang.
5. Mark: I saw a snake's egg(.) a real one?
- 6.T: where,
7. Mark: in my last(.) pre-primary.
8. T: if you find(.) a snake what might you do
9. Stan: he might bite us?
10. Sam: cobras are dangerous.
11. Stan: cobras are big snakes
12. Amy: we are going to a cabin
13. T: where are you going to a cabin
14. Amy: down south.
15. T: when you go(.) to the cabin watch? out for snakes?
16. what should you do (1)if you saw a snake,
17. Sam tell your parents
18. Graeme: scream.
19. Sam: put it in a box(1) and take it (1)to the zoo
20. T: if I saw a snake(1) I think I would stand(1) very still(1) a bit
21. like if a big dog rushes up to you (1)stand very still (1)if I

22. saw a snake I would stand still (.)and see what the snake does.
23. Axel: try and be a statue
24. Katie: I know(.) some snakes aren't poisonous.
25. Ronald I saw a python at the zoo
26. T: you can see (.)lots of different types of snakes (.)at the zoo
27. Ronald: I saw a rainbow serpent at the zoo.

► **Teacher-in-role**

Teacher-in-role is recognised as a technique that allows the teacher to take on a role within the drama. The teacher can work the role to apply or release pressure on the situation that is evolving. The teacher-in-role in the early childhood classroom can encourage participants or contradict the situation to allow the objective of the lesson to come into focus. The following is a description of the use of teacher-in-role and highlights the power of this technique in the function of engaging and committing to the drama.

- T:1 into a nice big circle ((waits for the students to form a circle
2. and be seated)) because I have a very important thing to tell
3. you (2) I have some news. Better sit down ((to two students
4. who have remained standing)) as the meeting is about to
5. start ((Children laugh as teacher slips into role by putting on
6. a top hat and simulating a deeper voice of authority))
- T:7 as you know (.) as mayor of this town I have some

8. important business to get through today and the thing I
9. would like to discuss is this dragon (1)that has come to
10. town (1)as the mayor of this town(.) I think the best
11. thing(.) is to get rid of this dragon (.)because it will get
12. bigger and may set the town alight(.)OR cause s:erious
13. trouble. we have an (.)im:portant decision to make?
14. Children start to talk
- T:15 order in the meeting (1)I declare we have (.) an(.)
16. important(1) decision to make(.) we need to discuss what
17. we will do with this dragon? that. has. come. to. town.

The children were then asked to select roles for themselves and break up into various groups depending on who they were in the town to discuss what should become of the dragon. The children choose people that they would like to represent in the community. One child does not stand up and was asked why in the following extract.

- 1.T: who are you,
- 2.Gavin: I'm the dragon.
- 3.T: GREAT (.) come with me (.)I need to put you in a cage over
4. here (5) ((the teacher takes Gavin to be placed in an
5. imaginary cave)) fellow citizens (.)I want you to break into
6. your groups, and discusses this important issue.

7. ((The students were then directed into places for the
8. shopkeepers, hospital workers and school community etc, to
9. gather. The groups become lively and animated with much
10. discussion heard. The teacher takes off the hat and goes to
11. the groups to see if the students are on task. The 'de-
12. masking' of the hat allows the teacher to slip out of role in
13. the drama and return to the role of teacher))

1 Children as co-constructors of the drama

The children are learning to be part of a democratic social decision-making process. The dialogue that the groups generated had been lively, interactive and could be perceived as heated discussion at times. The visual observations on the video tapes also demonstrated in one group a child leaving the group upset only to be bought back into the group by two children confronting the child.

- 1.T-I I declare this meeting open again(.)
2. this is a special meeting to decide the fate of the dragon(1)
3. first, of, all, I, want to hear from the shopkeepers.
4. ((Lively discussion in the circle))
5. T quiet in the meeting
6. Brittany we should hide and when he comes we should try and
7. trap him

8. John we should train it and (.) but when it is bigger we should
9. kill it(.) we should use some of the weapons ((points to
10. Johnathan))from his weapon shop-
11. T: and who should we get to kill it,
12. Elliot: the toy shop owner-
13. Luke: no the police (1)we should throw something big, at the
14. dragon. And squash it?
15. Jonathan: we we should put a cage over the dragon(.) and then
16. kill it(1)
17. Jack: It's not fair if the dragon gets killed,

This is the first child that has spoken out against the mayor and who questions the authority of the status quo the teacher had established in the role of the mayor, who consistently believes the dragon should “be got rid of.” Jack thinks it is wrong to kill the dragon and displayed a moral stand even against the authority and peers. This was the same Jack that had broken social convention in the first lesson when he had previously run through the cave when it clearly was not complying to social rules. Lankshear (1993) believes that resistance or non-compliance of students is linked to circumstances that students feel may be oppressive to them. Jack may have previously felt the learning was structured to repress him rather than to enhance his learning. Jack had challenged authority in the first lesson and voiced his moral objection to the adult reality in the second lesson.

17. Jack : It makes me sad,(.) when I think we are going to kill it.

Jack had reason to be suspicious of the situation as the teacher-in-role was testing and inviting the children to challenge the control and manipulation of the adult reality.

Jack demonstrated a voice of resistance to the power of the authority allowing other children to view the situation from a different perspective as noted in the dialogue that follows. Jack's powerful authentic voice in the social group also allows the learning in the group to be a co-operative process that identifies the student as co constructor of the drama.

1. Kate: we should take(.) the dragon to another village.

2. Daniel: I think we should keep(.)the dragon(.) and he can torture

3. the baddies?

4. John: I think we could make(.)a big hole and cover it up and

5. when he walks on it we could trap it

6. Brittany: I think we could train it to do jobs.

7. Chelsea: we could fly on him(1)and if anyone is sick(.) then we could

8. fly to them

9. Blair: we could use him against our enemies.

10. Sylvia: I think we could keep him (.)and have him help us

11. Jack : with the dragon we could open a pottery shop(.) because of the fire

12. Emily: we could train him to be like a pet (.)and look after him(1)

13. Jack: If we kept training him he will always be good
14. Olga: we could draw pictures of him
15. Peter: If we give him food he won't be angry with us
16. T: there is one thing we haven't heard from it's the dragon(1)
17. what do you have to say dragon?
18. Gavin: please don't kill me
19. T: let's take a vote to see what we will do with this dragon
20. children voted in a show of hands to get rid of the dragon
21. from the village.

The concluding vote was that 5 students thought that the dragon should be not allowed to stay in the village and 22 thought that we shouldn't get rid of the dragon from the village.

22. T: and as disappointed as I am (3)((changing from role by
23. taking off the hat and changing voice from the role of the
24. mayor back to the teacher))
- 25.T. I think you made the right decision.

Jack is congratulated for sticking up for his opinion and praised by the teacher for not being swayed by the majority of other people from the village.

4.7 Demonstration of female / male dualism

In this next exchange the students demonstrate the female / male dualism that exists and is already apparent in the early childhood classroom. The dualism or natural division of the gender social world is the lived experience of the early childhood student. Children can cross the gender divide and other students recognise and accept this (Davies, 1989). The identity of traditional gender roles by the social actors of this research is noted but it is not the intention of the researcher to further the discussion on gender in the early childhood when such excellent texts are available elsewhere (Davies 1989, Walkerdine 1990).

1. Chelsea: I taught my dragon to read(.) we read Dorothy the
2. Dinosaur (.)and the Rainbow Fish (.) and I taught it to be
3. nice(.) to people.
4. T- : how, did you teach it to be nice to people,
5. Chelsea: (1) I told it to sit down and eat what people say
6. T: (1)did anyone else teach their dragon(.) to be nice(.)
7. to people,
8. Brittany: I taught it to eat ice-cream (.)and he was good(.)
9. by not spilling it on anything
10. Elliot: my d:rag:on dragged me along
11. Luke: my owner (.)was not very nice to me.

12. Elliot: (1)my T-shirt came out and he hurt my back

13.T: how did you feel about this,

14. Elliot: (4)I don't know I felt funny on my back

15.T: I wouldn't like it(.) if my trainer did that to me.

► Identifying with gender roles

In this demonstration the children are selecting a role from which to conduct the dramatic experience and develop an understanding of the society in which they function. These children in pre-primary are working on a re-telling of the story of the rainbow serpent through enactment and are defining roles to work in groups to discuss the rainbow serpent moving to our town. The children have defined the role of a member of society in terms of work or a job and displayed conventional male and female gender roles.

- 1.T ((In the role of the mayor))First I want to speak to people
2. of this town (1)and I want you to tell me(.) what you do in
3. this town(1) tell me what do you do ((Points to Jack))
4. you do
5. Jack: I am an office worker
6. ((teacher nods and points to Sam))
7. Sam: I work in the hospital
8. T: what,(.) else(.) do people do,

9. ((teacher points to Sylvia))
10. Sylvia: (2)I help old people
11. Jake: I work in an office
12. ((teacher points to Chelsea))
13. Chelsea: I am a nurse
14. ((teacher points to Daniel))
15. Daniel: I am a doctor
16. ((teacher points to Jessie))
17. Jessie: I am a taxi driver
18. ((teacher points to Charlie))
19. Charlie: I am a policeman
20. ((teacher points to Dena))
21. Dena: I help people across (the road
22. T Great
23. Charlie: I'm a motor)bike police
24. Brittany: I am a nurse
25. ((teacher points to Fred))
26. Fred: I am a doctor

The preceding text indicates already conventional gender roles are prescribed by male and female students.

4.3 The inability of language analysis to capture the intrinsic nature of drama

Drama is the act of doing and the following three examples demonstrate the instinctive action of the physical body in the making of dramatic meaning. Drama is the art of action in embodiment and the action of the body cannot be captured in a language discourse or methodology.

► The physical nature of drama

Kate and Jessie are in the cave and pretending to be scared and run from the cave with arms around their own bodies in a gesture of being frightened. The other children become visibly excited and drop into the structure of the cave to also act in a frightened manner. The intrinsic nature of drama has taken over and assists in the role playing of an imaginary situation. The action of being frightened is embodied and is taken up by the other class members as embodied activity.

► Controlling movement in the classroom

Movement around the classroom is exciting but the limited space makes mass movement often precarious and at times challenging. The use of slow motion in this game of chasing allows the students to explore the room and the body in a less frantic way than running.

1. T first we are going to play a game (1) this is a tag (.) or
2. chasing game (.) but if we run around in here and play tag
3. or chase there is not going to be much room (.) so we are

4. going to move in slow motion (1) this game is called slow-
5. motion animal tag (.) does anyone know (.) what I mean by
6. slow motion
7. Gerard on my the computer (.) you can make it move in slow
8. motion
9. T great?
10. Axel: a spider moves slowly
11. T: good what else moves slowly(1)
12. Jessica: an elephant moves slowly
13. T: good elephants can move slowly(.) O.K? I'm going to begin
14. by being in(1) so (.) find a space(1) on your own(12) and
15. let's start to play. (.) I think we will be elephants first
16. (4) here I come (3) ((Chasing begins)) slowly slowly nice
17. and sssllll:ow (11) I got you Zoe? (1) what animal will you be?
18. Tom: a crocodi(le
19. T: I'm asking Zoe
20. Zoe: (2) a crocodile ((chasing begins again)) (7)
21. ((Sam is tagged.))
22. T: what are we going to be Sam.
23. Sam: it's a surprise

24. T: (5)tell us so we know what to do

25. Sam: let's be spiders

26. ((The group acts as spiders))

► **The tussle**

What seems like a straight game of chasing ends in a tussle for control by two boys as they change the rules on the group. The following conflict demonstrates the conflict between Chris and Fred.

1. ((Chris is tagged.))

2. Chris: Zebras?

3. ((The group moves as Zebras))(5)

4. Fred he got me, he got me,

5. T: what, are we going to be.

6. Fred: dinosaurs, ((Game continues))(3)

7. Chris: I didn't tag him (2)

8. Fred every one keeps saying(.)Get Me Get Me

9. T (1) of course but you wouldn't, get those people(.) would

10. you, only get people who are really trying to get away.

11. Chris he got me,

12. Fred NO I didn't?

13. ((Fred hits Chris))
14. T No Fred you don't hit Chris (.)this is tag() and you are not
15. to hit any one on the head (.) (3)((Teacher removes Fred
16. from the group to the side of the classroom)); you can sit
17. here Fred
18. T: (4)Emma (.)you can have a go(.) what are we going to be
19. Emma
20. Emma: Zebra
21. T: Zebras(.) again (1)OK (.)last time

The conflict between Chris and Fred arose when Fred was wanting to have a turn at being the person that tags, even though he had not been tagged. The teacher assumed that Fred had been tagged because he said in line 4 "He got me, he got me." Fred chooses the class to act as dinosaurs and the game continues. Chris said he didn't tag Fred (Line 7) but the game continues. When Chris got no satisfaction from informing the teacher he informs the group that Fred has tagged him (Line 11). Fred tells the group that he didn't tag Chris (Line 12) and hits Chris over the head with his hand. The drama teacher intervenes and Fred is made to sit out of the game. Emma is chosen to continue the game.

What is not evident in this encounter but captured on video is while the disruption with Fred and Chris is taking place, the camera captures Jessica rubbing the top of Axel's head vigorously knocking him to the ground.

There seems no altercation but an outpouring of excitement that could not be contained by Jessica. After Axel is knocked to the ground they both go their separate ways.

Spontaneous and physical outpouring of movement is also evident in the following enactment.

► **Emotional release**

During the first lesson in the Year One class exploring the theme of dragon the children enacted with a partner the finding of a dragon and the interaction that this may bring. On discovering the dragon many students demonstrated surprise and the action that followed is briefly described. It is not long before the noise level starts to rise and dragons are rolling over, sitting, walking around and the action shows visible excitement. Two girls are cuddling and another girl is gesturing wildly. One girl jumps on another's back and is piggy-backed around the room.

One boy looks like he is miming licking a lollipop while another looks like he is swimming. Many children are skipping or running around the room. Every child is engaged in the activity of enactment.

One male child grabs another male child knocking him to the ground and twists his body over the child that is reclining. A third female child calls out "Stop it!" to the child on top and after a short time when he doesn't stop she pushes him off and the three go their separate ways. One child is being dragged by the hand and another by the foot. One child head-butts

another's bottom. Another child is playing 'dead' lying in wait to pounce on the partner when he arrives. Every child is engaged in this dragon play and if there are rules about this interaction it is difficult to discover what they would be. The adopted physical process allows spontaneity in a rich and playful way.

4.9 Dramatic conventions

The most meaningful encounters in the three weeks of this early childhood setting occurred when the children recreated short improvisations and enactment for sharing. The barriers of more formal teaching disappeared and the children experimented with shared language and interaction. Drama may have been a foreign term to these students but the students displayed conventions and skills in voice, body improvisation, and interpretation.

When working towards preparing these improvisations the students spent most time rehearsing the action and less time on discussing what they were going to do in the improvisation. The lack of negotiation or discussion as the children started their rehearsal process, was evident in both groups. The choice to perform for the class was optional but all students displayed no hesitancy. Students were aware of the roles they were working in and most had developed a plot. To reflect on the improvisations and conventions used I have used the words of the children as consistent with ethnomethodology.

1. Ben: I was the policeman(.) and I took the dragon(.) and took
2. him to the farmer and I played with the dragon(.) and I told
3. the farmer the dragon had run away .

The children played multiple roles in their improvisations and reflected on what they valued in their improvisations.

- 1 Fred I was the farmer() and I lost my pet()
- 2 I was also the little dragon that got up to mischief.(1)
- 3 It was funny () I liked it when we played chase

Students demonstrated an awareness of when the dialogue worked well and what would make the audience respond favourably.

- 1 Kate thank you for listening to our play.(1) I was the baby
- 2 dragon.I and the others () helped me to find my mum
- 3 and dad
- 4 I liked it when they said best friends
- 5 I told them to do that (2) as I knew that people would
- 6 laugh() I told them to do that () I wanted people to laugh

Some students also broke from the playing space to move into the audience. One student talking to the audience in the middle of an improvisation said "hello? (2) who ever you are."

In the following chapter the implications of understanding the rules and convention used by students and teachers in the early childhood classroom, are discussed

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

*Children are resourceful, resilient, and hopeful. Wherever two
or three gather they build small, shifting islands of play,
separated by an invisible sea from the large land mass which
all must tread.*

June Factor, 1988, p 222

› **The reflective researcher / practitioner**

The intention of this research initially was to provide the reader with a understanding of interrelating and multiple realities and encounters that occur in the drama classroom in early childhood years. Through an ethnomethodological process, the interaction between the participants within the setting of two drama classrooms was examined.

Ethnomethodology favours a discourse that welcomes the ambiguity of working with children and understanding multiple realities, uncovering commonsense and both shared and individual perceptions. Whilst the researcher has provided an analysis of sections that were perceived to be of interest, the findings in Chapter Five display no final conclusions and are the formal statements derived largely from the process of perception and observation. The series of demonstrations should provide the reader with a sense of action that evolved in the drama classroom amongst the participants.

› **Research method revisited**

Mehan and Wood (1975) give many examples demonstrating the dangers of conducting research that requires a formal conclusion or of assessing student's ability in research. This is a problem not faced by ethnomethodology because it allows an uncensored non-judgmental approach by a researcher / practitioner and allows the discourse to be the formal conclusion.

The researcher reviewed and discussed many approaches and methodologies before beginning the research process. Reasons and rationale for the selection

of the ethnomethodology are outlined extensively in Chapter Three, yet it became apparent as the research evolved, although ethnomethodology supported a vast number of the criteria from which to view drama interaction there, was still a need for a methodology that embraced and exposed the drama interactions. The discourse of language analysis could not demonstrate the physical interaction between the participants.

► The involvement of the facilitator

One of the purposes of this research was to make sense of a drama situation. The contemporary drama classroom breaks down the barrier of the formal classroom setting and invites, at times, instinctive and physical play. Drama with roots in play, as a means to educate, attempts to connect the social order of the system along with the symbolic process of shifting logic, interaction, rule usage and the roles adopted within the drama classroom by both the participants and the facilitator.

What I had not appreciated was the way in which, as a practitioner, I had organised, manipulated and controlled the learning environment. I wanted the children to provide the stimulus, to shape the ideas, create the concepts and devise the storyline and take control over the drama. This proved problematic at times and more difficult for me than I realised. It was not because of the students' inability in the learning but in the controlled way that the lesson was constructed. The last thing I had imagined I would be doing was colonising the learning, but it appears that because the educational system demands the experience of the child not only to be

valuable and rewarding but to be advancing the child in some regard, this colonising seemed in retrospect to be inevitable. The social order is facilitated by the adult practitioner in an early childhood classroom and therefore the content they are teaching, expressing and responding to constructs the cultural and political conditions, and collective identity that reflects the classroom.

The teacher of drama who believes that they can control the learning, enhance the development of the child or teach social practice through drama must be cautious, for the social world of the child appears very complex and the rules discovered in this research indicate that children are suspicious and resistant to an adult dominated world. Learning through drama and the value placed on developmental student advancement and social practices can be heavily loaded with our own moral and cultural judgments.

Drama as a subject is fraught with subtext like, "Whose social conventions and whose symbolic cultural icons are being enacted here?".

► **The dynamic drama space**

The research exposed unique approaches to problem solving. The participants were able to 'organically/chaotically' evolve towards a solution through a process of understanding, acknowledging, then developing stages of rule usage, providing a dynamic, cumulative exploration of solutions. The expansion of the exploration was modified by the teacher yet there was a freedom to include and accept the random or seemingly obscure input.

10. Sam: cobras are dangerous.
11. Stan: cobras are big snakes
12. Amy: we are going to a cabin
13. T: where are you going to a cabin
14. Amy: down south.
15. T: when you go(.) to the cabin watch? out for snakes?

This reflects drama as a synergetic creative activity, where the acceptance and adoption of an apparently un-associated idea leads to the creation of a more imaginative solution. This creative acceptance (perhaps not experienced in other school classroom situations) allows the children to make sense of complex and dynamic experiences. The research displayed on numerous occasions that once the participants understood that this process was an accepted rule by the facilitator, then greater input was generated. Adopting new realities is seen as central to the creative process. Drama can be used to create other ways of knowing the world for children.

► **Play-the mundane interaction**

The safe, empty space (Brook 1968) of the drama room can be a contentious and complex situation as children tussle, construct and negotiate for social control. Nachmanovitch (1990) believes humans are most human, when at play. At times it was difficult to discern if students were engaged in 'valuable problem solving' and still on task or just 'playing around'. However the

demonstrations indicated that the students understood the task involved and at times the problem was solved swiftly. The freedom offered in the drama class environment allows a relaxed and socially creative environment to negotiate entire solutions.

4. I liked it when they said best friends.
5. I told them to do that (2) as I knew that people would
6. laugh(.) I told them to do that (.)I wanted people to laugh.

► Transitions

In early childhood children are coming to terms with entering school and for these children the rules and cultural practices are changing dramatically. The nature of the drama class is ceremonious as an experience to a common group linking ritual, action and sound. The social conventions in the class are an attempt to make meaning of the world through play. Drama as an education arts practice exposes intrinsic knowledge by providing a forum for the participants. Drama, enactment and the interaction of students is a powerful embodied experience when the rules and devices to create social order are allowed to emerge from the process-a process that reveals the complexity of the interactions through the mundane.

- 10.T: Fred you can join back in. (8) put your hands on the
- 11 shoulder of the person in front of you(11) good and we
- 12 will walk around as a serpent

- 13 ((Children spontaneously break into making the sound of
- 14 SSSSS.))

Children weave in and out and teacher guides the students.

The new and tacitly understood set of rules that appeared to be beyond the guidelines are for the persistence of the process to bring forward a conclusion and results.

Drama is symbolic, both in language and gesture using imagination and intuition. Exposing people to experiences that celebrate instinct, imagination and insight in a symbolic form is important to make connections with the logical sensing world and to make meaning of life. Drama enactment and interaction externalise the voice of the child throughout the transitional period of entering school.

► **Individual and the group**

The everyday knowledge of the early childhood student is transitional and diverse. The drama class caters for group interaction and individual self-definition within the drama class. The definition is framed by the social constructs enforced by the group, an example of which was displayed by the group when interacting with Jack.

- 1.T: someone is coming through our cave ((Jack breaks
2. from the cave structure and runs through))
3. ((Four students call out – JACK, JACK))

The critical decisions based on the drama experiences for the class Wolland explains offers individuals greater opportunities for personal decision-making (Wolland, 1993, p 62) and group dynamics

By using group work, the teacher ensures that 'the language of teaching and learning is most compatible with the students own words' (Ashman & Conway, 1993,p.113).

Individual needs, dynamics of group interaction, discipline, language usage and physical interaction are communicated and negotiated throughout the drama lesson. The drama teacher is adapting constantly to the current requirements and beliefs of the group. Heathcote called this 'shifting on your feet' (McKenna, personal anecdote).

For the children who wish to grow up and become 'Pokemon Masters' (as recently expressed to the researcher) and for the children who show a resistance to learning through conventional means, education must allow opportunity for self-definition. Self-definition is the sharing of perceptions and ethics and allows for the dynamics of a group to be explored. Exploring such experiences of young students while taking part in enactment allows an expression of personal identity that may not necessarily be explored in other curriculum areas.

► **Cultural bias**

Exploring one's own culture in relation to the phenomena of dramatic practice enables us to see what is unique about our own culture and then on viewing other cultural practices we begin to understand what makes

people human through similarities differences and universalities
in knowledge

The dramatic play of the children as they enter school is the beginning of
important discoveries. The interactions of the children demonstrated an
awareness of cultures other than their own and ironically cultures which
may work at the exclusion of their own. A personal response to the world by
developing human experience of enactment and observation can allow the
rethinking of cultural aspects.

1. T: just listens to see if you can hear something(3)

2. Kate: footsteps like a bear.

1.T: what might be in this place,

2. ((5 children called out tiger, bear in a chorus.))

Why were no dingoes or bunyips in the cave in these two early childhood
classrooms? It appeared that the stories that the children are familiar with
and that are providing the stimulus were non Australian as demonstrated in
the discussion of snakes.

8. T: if you find(.) a snake what might you do

9. Stan: he might bite us?

10. Sam: cobras are dangerous

11. Stan: Cobras are big snakes

Drama can redress this imbalance and the use of the stimulus of the rainbow
serpent was explored to extend the interests in young children.

4. T: yes, () it is a serpent () or a snake () but, this snake is
5. coloured (1) a rainbow serpent () let's make a rainbow serpent
6. can we make a snake, (1) let's line up together and make a
7. snake (1) altogether? like we made shapes last week

In the group no criticism was cited to reprimand or solicit comments that demonstrated a purely personal note with apparently no relationship to the topic.

1. T: excellent? You might find all of those things on a island
2. because being on a island you would have a lovely coast
3. line (1) beaches and shells and fish fantastic?
4. Jessica: I learn violin and go to lessons
5. T: you what

There was rather an acceptance throughout the verbal interaction, that perhaps demonstrated that the collective group was still exploring language and concept development, and there was no point for reprimand, only acceptance. It is interesting that this was not the case when physical actions transgressed the boundaries.

1. T: someone is coming through our cave ((Jack breaks
 2. from the cave structure and runs through))
 3. ((Four students call out – JACK, JACK))
- (strong student comment)

In discussion, sometimes children gave random, seemingly inappropriate answers to questions. Other students would support their peers when they

perceived that the student hadn't responded to the teacher appropriately, showing that students aligned with each other over the dominant teacher. Children could also be persuaded by peers to change their minds against the establishment or system's status quo. The power that drama has in education is both the reinforcement and the contesting of social values through human interaction by focusing interaction and discussion on what are the elements of the human condition.

• **Reluctance**

Classroom teachers who may be reluctant or hesitant to teach drama need support and although it is unrealistic to expect every primary teacher to be comfortable teaching drama, the new Student Outcome Statements adopted by Western Australian government schools in 1994 will require classroom teachers to be teaching, assessing, reporting and showing accountability in all areas of the Arts. Drama is one of the five Arts area that teachers are required to teach. It is therefore important that the classroom teacher becomes aware of the complexity of drama and the complex social interaction that makes drama unique.

Theories of practice in drama should reflect what it is teachers do in their drama classroom. Opportunity to share ideas, reflect and 'play' with professional personnel in drama is important. A lack of primary schools engaging in drama in Western Australia makes this difficult for teachers and this problem requires examination.

► Teacher-in-role

A greater degree of student response was registered when the facilitator adopted a teacher-in-role attitude. The adjustment to this new rule was achieved by the complicity of the group allowing the facilitator to be positioned outside the role of teacher.

- T:1 into a nice big circle ((waits for the students to form a circle
2. and be seated)) because I have a very important thing to tell
3. you (2) I have some news. Better sit down ((to two students
4. who have remained standing)) as the meeting is about to
5. start ((Children laugh as teacher slips into role by putting on
6. a top hat and simulating a deeper voice of authority))

Some children however remain suspicious as to why a drama teacher has hijacked their play in the last remaining powerful situation they have. The control and manipulation an adult has over child-learning through play is questioned and subverted by disruptive behaviour. Younger children have less conventions than older children but throughout primary years compliance and social conditioning is expected. A student like Jack (p.81) must have been wondering why was I blurring the boundaries between play and drama and for what purpose was I hijacking their play for my own devices. The freedom granted to young children to play in their own way is allowed but I broke this rule and entering one of the last hallowed domains children are allowed to keep when entering school. Resistance to learning through drama is evident until trust is established by transferring the

power to the students. Power is transferred to students throughout the hearing of the child's voice, icons and symbols and allowing children to establish their own social conventions.

► Drama in education needs to retain its singularity

It is important that drama is seen to be a subject in its entirety rather than a watered down tool for implementing other curriculum areas or as a means to a product for good school public relations. Relegating drama to a subject used to showcase the 'talented children' to satisfied parents, or alternatively only as unstructured play in the early childhood home corner, will not reinforce drama or enhance drama as a core subject area.

A role of this research is to provide a greater degree of information towards the understanding of drama. The research shows that with careful analysis of the interactions, correct facilitation and with an awareness of the importance of the apparently mundane drama, rewarding outcomes and a fully rounded educational experience can occur for the participants.

When investigated, the early childhood area in Western Australian primary schools appear to be omitting the art of drama as a core learning experience.

The problem lies in the imputation by the observer that certain behaviours look as though they are tied directly to life support, and are therefore important or work (Ellis, 1973 p.110).

It is my belief that the perception of drama has not been tested in the early childhood setting. To do so, knowledge is required to understand the complex social dynamics embedded in drama praxis in the early childhood class. The case for drama in education is clear in an early childhood classroom where students and teachers together enact to generate both ideas and process. The uniqueness of this environment and the responses that maintain the order explored through drama are issues of ethics, tolerance and empathy.

Drama education engages the child intellectually, physically, and emotionally and Emery (1995) holds that schools have a responsibility to respond to this Arts intelligence. Documenting the process in drama and the rules which the group use should lead to greater understanding of the role of drama and the difficulties in implementing a successful drama programme. The focus may be the key to the survival of drama in our state primary schools.

► **Explorations and reflections**

Exploring the human condition is a complex issue. Personal understanding and discovery of meaning in drama focuses on the human condition. Drama imparts important life skills and is a powerful medium for teaching awareness, understanding, acceptance, tolerance and other humanistic values. In drama the ability to explore ourselves and the lives of others through enactment, encourages increased awareness and reflection on reality.

Heathcote (1980) sees drama as a medium where individual attitudes can be explored. Schools are comprised of diverse understanding with students holding varying attitudes and beliefs, which they bring to school on a daily basis.

Although drama may lack status within the system the teacher of drama has an obligation to children to allow the freedom to play and explore creatively.

Adults wanting to increase the creativity of the child must allow a place in the system for drama and informal play. Drama allows the students to be free for just a moment in Kairos time, unruly as opposed to what Paulo Freire (1970) classified as industrial time. Child time where activities are not achievement orientated but are in dreamtime where possibilities are endless and the dreaming will shape the future of the child's and the future of our nation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Letter to parent or guardian .

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

June 1998

Dear

My name is Lynette Moss and I am currently studying for a Masters Degree in Drama in Education at Edith Cowan University. I have worked for fifteen years as a drama specialist in a number of government settings. Over the years I have worked as a consultant to the Education Department during which time I have developed a special interest in working with young children.

I am writing to invite your child to participate in a research project with a working title: "Rethinking drama"

Your child's class will be participating in a series of drama lessons that will be looking at the understanding of the drama experience in young children. The children will be participating in drama activities that will encourage role play and will be supervised at all times.

Confidentiality

All lessons will be conducted in the classroom environment with the researcher and the child's teacher will be present. All participants will have free will about participating in the activities. The lessons will be video- taped but no individual will be identified in the final report, the schools will not be named and any quotations used will remain anonymous.

The researcher will ensure that the tapes will be kept in a secure location where no person, other than the researcher, will have access to them. When the research has been completed, and a period of five years has lapsed all tapes will be erased.

If you need further details regarding the research project please contact me and I will arrange a mutually convenient appointment.

Your sincerely,

Lynette Moss

B. Ed

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Dear Ms Moss,

I have read the accompanying letter about the research project titled

“Rethinking Primary Drama” and I hereby agree to allow my

child..... to participate in the research project

: Rethinking Drama.

Signed

Parent /guardian.

Date

Researcher: Lynette Moss Phone. (08) [REDACTED].

Appendix 3

Letter to teachers

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

June 1998

My name is Lynette Moss and I am currently studying for a Masters Degree in Drama in Education at Edith Cowan University. I have worked for fifteen years as a drama specialist in a number of government settings. Over the years I have worked as a consultant to the Education Department during which time I have developed a special interest in working with young children.

I would like to invite your class to participating in a series of drama lessons that will be looking at the understanding of the drama experience in young children.

I will need the teachers concerned to allow me to teacher a series of drama lessons that will encourage role play while you observe and take notes.