

***Enhancing the teaching of drama:
school-based, needs-driven professional learning***

Rachel Perry (nee Darell)

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the teaching of drama can be enhanced through needs-driven, school-based professional learning. It was motivated by a personal ‘living contradiction’, involving the frustration that can result when beliefs and actions do not correspond. My learning journey continued through literature searches and preliminary work with teachers that resulted in an effective process of professional learning with five teachers.

The research design draws on elements of action research, situated, and action learning theories, to develop a process of ‘*facilitated action research*’. Informed, but not limited by existing models of action research, this collaborative process was responsive to teacher preferences in addressing the three research aims. Evolving over two phases with eleven teachers, the bulk of the study followed the stories of five teachers and their professional learning. Data collection tools included the use of semi-structured interviews, conversations, a questionnaire, survey and reflective journals.

The findings demonstrated that professional learning, responsive to context and self-identified needs, positively enhanced the teaching of drama. Teacher confidence and awareness of drama gradually increased, as did teacher ability to self-direct learning. Areas of skill development, integration and time management were initially identified as a focus for professional learning, with classroom and behaviour management added as school-based issues arose. Establishing a ‘common understanding of drama’ was acknowledged as critical for effective collaborative learning to take place. Personal factors including confidence, experience and belief, and the contextual factors of parental expectation, outcomes, time, space and past professional learning were found to facilitate or constrain drama use. The research found that professional learning, characterised by a respect for past experiences, assisted in the creation of a ‘safe space’ for learning. Tailoring professional learning to needs and the school context was also found to motivate teachers and was effective in enhancing the teaching of drama. My role as ‘facilitator’ became embedded in the collaborative process, adding to a personal understanding of role and school-based learning.

This study is significant for teachers, professional learning facilitators and those working in drama education. It contributes to the minimal research emphasising professional learning for drama, and strengthens existing arguments for needs-driven, school-based teacher development.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Story of the Research - Finding a starting point

I am sitting at my desk. It is starting to get warmer and the chill is no longer in the wind. I look at the cluttered student desks around me and smile. Outside I hear the children swimming in the pool across the driveway. Are any of my students there? They seem so engaged and happy. I know that drama would give them the same excitement in the classroom, and yet just can't seem to fit it into a day! I begin to wonder where the feeling of frustration stems from. I work so hard to do my best, and yet have problems using the teaching strategies, including drama, which I know will be beneficial. Why? What is it about my practice that is not allowing me to teach the way I wish to? Is it my level of experience? Is it the school and all the daily demands and expectations that are there? Is it in the lack of support and more importantly lack of effective professional learning?

I ask myself - What can I do? How can I do it?

This thesis examines how the teaching of drama can be enhanced through needs-driven, school-based professional learning. The above reflection was written to encapsulate the way I was feeling at the time I began work on this research. I considered drama beneficial for students from a social learning perspective and also for what it could offer in terms of an alternative and meaningful learning experience. Despite being skilled in the teaching of drama, I could not translate my values into practice. I experienced a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989), by which I was "... *unable to live according to what we[I] believe, for a variety of reasons...*" (McNiff, 2002a p13). My frustration stemmed from not understanding 'why' this dissonance or contradiction was occurring.

To better understand this issue of 'dissonance' between belief and practice, I was encouraged to undertake a doctoral study. I wanted to explore why beliefs don't always translate into practice and what could be done within the context of the primary school classroom and the teaching of drama to improve this situation. The research begins with an investigation of facilitating and constraining factors (including belief), and moves to the identification and evaluation of effective professional learning.

This chapter overviews the research outlining purpose (Section 1.2), significance (Section 1.3) the personal and general context (Section 1.4), and the research design (Section 1.5).

1.2 Purpose of the research

The primary purpose of this research was to examine how the teaching of drama could be enhanced. Supported by this focus, three research aims guided the development of the study. As outlined in Section 1.5, data collection for these aims was embedded in the '*facilitated action research*' process.

The first research aim grew from a desire to investigate *why* many teachers experience a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989), or dissonance between belief and practice with the teaching of drama.

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

Investigation of this aim included a consideration of the specific factors that influence a teacher's choice of pedagogy in his/her practice, specifically:

- the relationship between pedagogical choice and beliefs;
- the relationship between pedagogical choice and experience; and
- the influence of the school context on the teaching of drama.

Professional learning was identified as one way in which the teaching of drama could be enhanced. This emphasis guided the focus of the second research aim.

2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.

Investigation of this research aim included a consideration of:

- the style of professional development preferred by teachers to assist the use of drama; and
- an effective process for professional learning that directly addresses personal and contextual factors influencing a teacher's use of drama;
- the place and/or benefit of incorporating self-identified professional learning needs in a professional learning process.

The third research aim guided a consideration of pedagogical change.

3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

This research aim was investigated through a consideration of:

- ongoing pedagogical challenges faced following an increase in the frequency of drama use;
- the impact on a teacher's daily organisation and administration; and
- self-identified ongoing professional learning needs for sustainable change in practice.

I was aware I would not be with the teachers at all times, so considered their stories important for providing a holistic, personal picture of their professional learning journey.

1.3 Significance for research and practice

This study is significant for what it contributes to an understanding of teaching and professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama in primary classrooms.

The knowledge claims (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003) resulting from this study are significant as they:

- identify influential facilitating/constraining factors and demonstrate their influence on the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms;
- add to the growing body of literature and research supporting the use of school-based, needs-driven teacher development as a tool for professional learning;
- add to the body of literature supporting the value and increased use of drama in classrooms as a dynamic and alternative tool for providing varied learning experiences to engage a wider cross-section of students;
- highlight the importance of developing a culture of learning fostering sustainable professional learning and pedagogical change; and
- emphasise the influence of school leaders on participation in professional learning and the use of drama.

This study is significant and of interest to three key groups within the education sector:

1. Primary school teachers (mainstream and specialist)

The teachers in the study (mainstream primary and a drama/music specialist) were active in guiding the focus and style of their professional learning. It is anticipated that this engagement will assist their understanding of, and dedication to, the process of continuous professional learning. This research is further significant to teachers not directly involved who may benefit from the inclusion of such a self-directed process in their schools.

2. School leadership

The study is significant to school leadership as it presents an alternative process for professional learning that is long-term, needs-oriented and predominantly school-based. This style differs from a tradition of external, or one-off professional learning experiences, and may assist in the creation of a sustainable, career-long ‘culture of learning’ and reflection within school systems.

3. Adult educators and professional learning providers

This study is significant to adult educators and professional learning providers as it acknowledges the contribution of professional learning in promoting quality teaching. It is anticipated that monitoring the impact of school-based learning, driven by context and personal needs, will yield valuable data for professional learning providers entrusted with the formulation of policy and learning strategies for enhancing the teaching of drama.

While not being the focus of the action research, this study was also significant for my own practice as a classroom teacher, professional learning facilitator and researcher. Sharing the experiences of the teachers gave me insight into my own classroom practice and the style and focus of professional learning that would assist in personally enhancing my teaching of drama.

As a professional learning facilitator, I developed understanding of the complexity of roles adopted and of the expectations of various groups in the school community. Awareness of issues arising when expectations from various groups differ, will inform any future professional learning facilitation.

I began this study as a neophyte researcher. Adopting an atypical approach to action research complicated my role by requiring ongoing reflection to clarify relationships, purpose and expectations. The personal lessons learned are significant for what they will contribute to the clear establishment of my role as a researcher in future studies.

1.4 Overview of the context for the research

The context for the research takes place on two levels: first, the personal context that led to and influenced the development of the study and second, the broader context of drama in the classroom and teacher professional learning. An action research approach was adopted for this study, and by doing so a focus on context was emphasised with the starting point needing to be clarified (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993). Despite not being the central focus of this research, my background is important for the way in

which it provided the starting point, revealed personal bias, and informed my place as ‘facilitator’.

1.4.1 Personal context

A research project of any size has its conception within an individual’s mind. The thought that begins the process may be based on a current or past experience, be initiated by a discussion or based on a consideration of other research or anecdotal literature. The foundation for this study developed from my experiences and love of the creative arts and through an interest to improve school-based practice in drama.

The impetus that shaped the research stemmed from personal frustration with my practice as a classroom teacher. As described in the initial reflection, my frustration was based on a self-perceived inability to use drama to the extent, and with the effectiveness I desired. In addition, very little professional learning was occurring in my school to assist the development of teaching skills. Work undertaken throughout the course of this doctorate on an affiliated research project in the arts, as well as with the NSW Ministry for the Arts on an arts and education initiative, Arts Access, supported the need for research in this area. It became clear that numerous teachers were experiencing similar frustration with different areas of the creative arts, and were expressing an inability to integrate them into daily teaching practice.

My passion for the creative arts took on an academic form with a drama major being part of my Bachelor of Education degree and the focus of previous research (Darell, 1999). The study, completed in 1999, focused on the use of drama with English as a Second Language (ESL) students in mainstream primary classrooms. This previous project, while on a small scale, revealed first hand the benefits that the use of the creative arts has for all children in the mainstream classroom setting. These findings reinforced my own passion and support for the use of the creative arts in both a personal and educational format and were one factor that contributed to the topic of the thesis.

Over the past four years, I have performed in children’s theatre shows and the planning, directing and production of touring shows for children’s theatre through my role as part-time lecturer in drama at the University of Technology, Sydney. Instructing teacher education students in children’s theatre and educational drama revealed in many cases a

lack of intuitive understanding of the use of drama, thereby emphasising the need for more support in this area during tertiary and post formal education.

Prior to articulating my frustration and engaging with drama from an academic perspective, I spent many years developing skills in the creative arts as a performer, writer, director and teacher. A keen interest in the benefit that drama could have in a variety of settings, including that of community and education emerged. Being passionate about the creative arts led me to engage with them through a variety of activities over the past twenty years including school productions, studying music for my Higher School Certificate and receiving dance instruction in a number of forms throughout my schooling years and beyond. In addition, I found myself teaching post-school in music, dance and drama as well as continuing my participation in amateur and semi-professional theatre productions.

In most recent years I have taken on various roles including those of actor, producer, technical designer, writer and director. Being involved in numerous Shakespearean productions, plays such as *'Away'* (Michael Gow), *'The Crucible'* (Arthur Miller) and an adaptation of *'Pride and Prejudice'* (Jane Austen) was educational and fulfilling. The highlight, however, was being given the chance to write, produce and direct my own play in 2001: *'Secrets: 3 girls, 3 dreams, 1 room'*.

When reflecting on the problems with my practice, as well as that of other teachers through the lens of personal experience, I realised there were two questions that required answers:

- What factors are hindering the use of drama in my classroom?
- What kind of support is required to overcome these factors?

These two questions informed the planning and development of the research project and the three research aims outlined in Section 1.2.

1.4.2 General context

The general context for this study is based in two key areas:

1. drama in education; and
2. teacher professional learning.

Drama in education

Academics and researchers have taken an interest in understanding and maximising the use of the creative arts, including drama, for many years. Drama in education has been discussed in a wide variety of theoretical literature (Bolton, 1979; Courtney, 1995; Davis & Lawrence, 1986; Fleming, 2000; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Henry, 2000; Johnson & O'Neill, 1984; Way, 1967) as well as in literature presenting practical classroom based ideas and activities (Burton, 1987; Charters, 1986; Cusworth & Simons, 1997; Ewing & Simons, 2004; Moore, 1988; Neelands, 2000). Drama is one of four areas of study in the Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000). The others are visual arts, dance and music. The nature of this syllabus will be discussed in Section 2.1.3.

Teacher professional learning

This thesis emphasises the need for context-based or school-based professional learning based on two perspectives. The first stems from an ontological perspective that knowledge is contextually situated and therefore additions or changes to that knowledge base should come from within, and focus on the 'society', or context, in which an individual functions. Second, the application of adult learning theories of action learning and situated learning acknowledge the influence and place of social interaction, experience and context as critical to professional learning. Further discussion of these areas can be found in Section 2.2.1.

Current trends in educational research on professional learning demonstrate a move toward school-based professional learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b; Hoban, 2002; Hundert, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996). Professional learning for teachers has in the past, and is still predominantly structured around one-off transmission style workshops conducted after

school or on pre-term staff development days (Hoban, 2002). While the place and limited benefit of these external, or one-off, workshops is acknowledged, long-term sustainable change requires specific knowledge or skill development to be blended within a framework considering the workplace context and culture as inseparable from the learning process (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1992; Hoban, 2002; Husby, 2005).

A more detailed consideration of the place of context or school-based professional learning and its links to drama in primary school classrooms can be found in Section 2.2.3.

1.4.3 Assumptions

The design of this research is based on the following assumptions:

- The integration of drama techniques in primary school learning environments is beneficial to students' learning and should therefore be promoted.
- There are teachers working in schools who are frustrated with their practice in relation to the use of drama in their classrooms.
- Professional learning will positively influence the practice of these teachers in relation to the use of drama.
- Professional learning situated within the school context will be more beneficial than that located externally.
- Through a focus on practice there will be some level of positive pedagogical change by all teachers independent of what their particular learning entails.
- Collaborative engagement in professional learning will assist in developing teacher skills of self-directed learning.

Through adopting an action research approach, this study emphasises respect for the individuality that exists within the teaching profession. The following two assumptions, based on the principles of action research further influenced the design and presentation of the research:

- The inclusion of the voices and stories of participants are the best way to accurately represent their place in the story of the research.
- The researcher and participant are entwined in the process of the study and this relationship influences the data collected.

1.4.4 Limitations

The two key limitations of this research stem primarily from the methodological approach of action research, and are discussed further in Section 3.1.3.

- Generalisability

A traditional perspective of research requiring generalisability is not adopted within this research. Action research requires the “...*accumulation of individual stories...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p133), and it is with these stories that a culture of ‘collective learning’ can be created. New meanings are generated through what individuals adopt in practice from these stories, rather than from broader generalised statements (Section 3.1.3 for more details).

- Values emphasis

A second limitation, often considered a benefit, stems from the value-laden nature of the methodological approach. Locating the study within the lives and context of practitioners restricts the ability of the research to adopt a ‘neutral stance’ (McNiff et al., 2003 p16). My embedded place in the process and engagement with values allowed for a deeper understanding of nuances throughout the research process. Attempts have been made through the structure of the research to minimise bias through acknowledging researcher assumptions and by including wherever possible the voices of collaborating teachers.

More generally, this research is not aiming to:

- directly investigate student learning. Instead it focuses on collaborating teachers;
- manipulate variables, or test a hypothesis. Instead it allows the stories of teachers and their practice to guide the focus of the research.

1.5 Research design

Action research was adopted for this study to allow a personal and fluid approach to investigating the research aims. The '*facilitated action research*' process is an expression of this broader approach and draws on, but isn't part of existing traditions of action research. The general design of the study had a collaborative focus that emphasised the situated nature of learning.

1.5.1 Facilitated action research

...These are 'normal' teachers, who reflect on their practice to strengthen and develop its positive features. They are not prepared to accept blindly the problems they face from day to day, but instead they reflect upon them and search for solutions and improvements. They are committed to building on their strengths and to overcoming their weaknesses. They wish to experiment with new ideas and strategies, rather than letting their practice petrify.

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p5)

As outlined in Section 3.3, the methodology for this study has been described as a process of '*facilitated action research*'. The use of action research is supported by the purpose and aims of the study, which place the teachers and their contexts at the centre of the professional learning process. The methodology is atypical of traditional action research as the focus is not on my practice, but on that of the teachers with whom I was working. I adopted the role of facilitator and worked collaboratively with the teachers to identify needs and develop their professional learning experiences.

This study does not apply a pre-determined method, but responds to changing needs, preferences and contextual issues as they arise. The '*facilitated action research*' process has four key stages guided primarily by the work of Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993):

- Finding a starting point
- Clarifying the situation
- Developing action strategies and putting them into practice
- Making knowledge public

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p7)

In addition, three cycles of action and reflection were followed as part of the development and implementation of action strategies. The cycles within this process

were influenced by the work of Lewin (1946), Carr and Kemmis (1986) and McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003).

This methodological approach is consistent with the collection of data through semi-structured interviews, conversations, a reflective journal, questionnaire and survey. Data for the first research aim were collected through an initial questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with eleven teachers. The importance of emphasising professional learning as an ongoing focus was supported through analysis of data collected for this research aim. The style of professional learning was guided by the knowledge of personal and contextual factors with the need for respecting school contexts and experiences highlighted.

Data were collected for the second research aim during three continuous action-reflection cycles as part of the '*facilitated action research*' process. Collection tools utilised during this stage of the research included semi-structured interviews, conversations, a reflective journal, questionnaire and survey. These interactions focused on reflexivity involving the teachers sharing in the meaning making process regarding their learning and the teaching of drama. No new data collection was planned for the third research aim with existing data re-sorted (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). These evidence-gathering tools were ongoing and designed to address the changing nature of the professional learning and research process.

Interview, conversation, survey and journal data were analysed using a qualitative approach. Discussed further in Section 3.4.5, key themes and patterns were identified, with data then tagged, categorised and resorted (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Questionnaire data were also primarily tagged and resorted. The minimal quantitative data, collected via a Likert scale, required percentage figures to be allocated based on self-perceived confidence levels and teacher attitudes to various areas of the creative arts. This process took place in an ongoing manner within the action research cycles, allowing multiple perspectives on collected data to be revealed.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

Establishing clear definitions is important in any research project to convey the writer's interpretation of the terminology.

1.6.1 Drama

Drama in education is a complex area with this research supporting its dual status as 'pedagogy' and 'art'. The term 'drama' has both a fundamental nature and practical application. This fundamental nature focuses on the blend of experience, interaction and imagination to make meaning. The practical application, adapted from Pinciotti's (1993) description, allows for activities that fall along a continuum stretching from the spontaneous play of children to traditional theatre. The positive impact drama can have on student learning, self-esteem and communication abilities is also acknowledged (see Section 2.1 for further detail).

1.6.2 Professional learning

The term 'professional learning' describes supported teacher learning. It incorporates both formal and informal experiences. Formally, it includes pre-planned sessions that are individual or group-based and located predominantly within the school context. Informally, it includes the social interaction, collaboration and dialogue that occur between the teachers. These conversations allow for reflection and clarification and are critical within the formal professional learning (see Section 2.2 for further detail).

1.6.3 Belief

The term 'belief' includes 'general beliefs' and 'teacher beliefs'. Teacher beliefs are viewed as being influenced by an individual's general beliefs and are seen as "...*tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught...*" (Kagan, 1992 p65). General beliefs are regarded as a way of presenting or describing the relationship that exists between an event, task, action or person and the attitude of a person toward it (Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding & Cuthbert (1988 p53). These incorporate religious, familial beliefs, as well as those developed personally over time (see Section 2.2.3 for further detail).

1.6.4 Experience

The term ‘experience’ has three perspectives:

1. *‘personal experience’* - experiences of the world, the view of self in relation to others, the developed understanding of relationship between school and society, as well as personal, familial and cultural understandings (Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988),
2. *‘experience with schooling and instruction’* - the strong beliefs that are held prior to the beginning of teacher training (Ernest, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996),
3. *‘experience with formal knowledge’* - the necessary understandings previously agreed on by a ‘community of scholars’ (Richardson, 1996).

Experience is acknowledged as an important factor influencing beliefs, knowledge and actions (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Reynolds, Sinatra, & Jetton, 1996; Richardson, 1996). This study endorses the view of Ernest (1989) that if training teachers do not experience strategies through doing or having them modeled, then they are unlikely to transfer the ‘knowledge’ into practice (see Section 2.2.3 for further detail). When the term ‘experience’ is used and not qualified in this study, it applies to all three understandings identified. At other times, a specific understanding is denoted by adding a qualifier.

1.6.5 Primary school

The term ‘primary school’ is used in Australia to refer to a place where students from four to twelve years of age are educated. Within New South Wales there are five key providers of schooling: the government or state system, the independent or private system, the Catholic system, Montessori schools and Steiner schools.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

This introductory chapter has provided an introduction to the research including the purpose of the research, personal and general contexts relevant to the study and an overview of the research design. The significance of this research is presented and emphasises the knowledge claims of the study.

Chapter 2 presents two key bodies of literature. The first examines drama in education, considering the process versus product debate as well as current practices and syllabus requirements. The second reviews professional learning, conditions for sustainable development and preferred location and style. Embedded within this discussion is the conceptual framework for the study including a consideration of action learning, situated learning and support for school-based professional learning. Chapter 2 concludes with an examination of drama and professional learning, focusing on the literature and past research.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and research design. A step-by-step explanation of the 'facilitated action research' process is offered with data collection tools and data analysis procedures. The chapter closes with a discussion of two approaches that frame my role in the research.

Chapter 4 presents data pertaining to the first research aim. Personal and contextual factors are outlined along with the way in which the starting point for the research was acknowledged and the contextual situation clarified.

Chapter 5 considers data collected during the first cycle of action-reflection including the collaborative development of 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'. Also reported in this chapter is the influence of two teacher's negative professional learning experiences as well as an evaluation of the process to that point.

Chapter 6 presents data from the second and third cycles. Included in the discussion is a consideration of 'student gender and age', the importance of sharing a common 'understanding of drama' and the influence of 'management' issues in the teaching of drama. Detailed reflection on the process of professional learning is undertaken at the conclusion of Cycle 2 as well as what this meant for three teachers as they planned learning experiences for Cycle 3.

Chapter 7 focuses on three teacher stories, and examines the influence of the professional learning process on pedagogical change. The initial factors examined in Chapter 4 are revisited through this discussion.

Chapter 8, the final chapter in the thesis, presents the significant knowledge claims (McNiff et al., 2003) of this research. The importance of establishing a 'collaborative culture of teaching (Hargreaves, 1992) and the provision of further support for a continuing move toward school-based professional learning is emphasised. Implications for further research and the way in which knowledge from the research has been made public are also discussed.

Chapter 2 - Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature relevant to this research through focusing on two key areas: *drama* and *professional learning*. The first part presents a review of drama in education through examining international and Australian-based research in the arts followed by a discussion of ‘drama as pedagogy’ versus ‘drama as art’. School teaching of drama is then considered including a review of syllabus requirements and classroom practices.

As professional learning is a key focus within this research, a review of relevant literature in the field shapes the second part of this chapter. First the learning theories of action learning and situated learning are considered in order to position the style advocated in this research. Conditions for sustainable professional learning are then reviewed, focusing on location, experience and the need for collaboration and social interaction.

I conclude the chapter by drawing together the two focus areas of drama and professional learning and review the modest research connecting them.

Figure 2.1 displays the key areas of literature addressed, and indicates how these different elements connect to shape the approach to drama and professional learning adopted.

A consideration of research history and approaches to drama from an international and Australian perspective is essential for locating this study within a broader field of educational and creative arts research. The provision of a definition of drama is also important for the parameters such an explanation offers. The broader context for the study may then be addressed through a discussion of professional learning and adult learning theory.

A consideration of how school-based learning differs from externally conducted programs was important for locating the study within the history and traditions of past teacher learning practices. Identifying and addressing related conditions for sustainable professional learning are associated with the argument for school-based and needs-driven learning. They also relate to the adult learning theories of situated and action learning and to promoting the effective teaching of drama.

Figure 2.1 - Key Areas of Literature



2.1 Drama

...Drama is no longer considered simply as another branch of art education, but as a unique teaching tool, vital for language development and invaluable as a method in the exploration of other subject areas...

(Johnson & O'Neill, 1984 p42)

This section explores drama in three key ways. First, I consider the arguments for supporting much needed research in drama as it relates to education, teachers and classrooms. The importance of locating drama research within 'real' contexts and the need for more practitioner involvement in such research projects is emphasised.

Second, I engage with the long-standing theoretical debate considering the use of 'drama as pedagogy' or 'drama as art'. What this means for establishing a definition of drama in education is discussed.

Third, particular issues relating to the school teaching of drama are considered, including syllabus requirements in New South Wales, as well as the real and espoused approaches to teaching drama.

2.1.1 Issues and challenges for drama research

This section considers where the much needed body of literature relating to research in drama is located, and is influenced by, a broader tradition of 'creative arts' research.

International and Australian perspectives - creative arts research

Drama, as a subject area in education exists with dance, music and visual art, under the inclusive term 'creative arts'. Much research has been conducted into the 'creative arts', or 'arts', at an international level as well as at state and federal levels within Australia.

From an international perspective, the arts has been researched in recent times through such projects as the *Champions of Change* in the United States of America (Fiske, 1999), *Schoolplus* in Europe (Gil, Muller, Giro, & Creus, 2005) and through the *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* Report in England (Robinson, 1999). These reports all provided important information in regard to the benefits of promoting creativity and arts in education and the value of foregrounding such practices within schooling.

From an Australian perspective, recent research has included federally funded projects focusing on the arts in general as well as specifically in the area of education. One such general arts review was the *Australians and the Arts* report (Costantoura, 2001) focusing on better understanding the way in which the general public valued the arts. Another study addressing education issues, but not located directly in schools was the *Review of Theatre for Young People* (Positive Solutions, 2003). This study investigated “...the shift from Theatre in Education work to Theatre for Young People (TYP) from the 1980s to the current time...” (Positive Solutions, 2003 p3). While a valuable research project in that it considered ways in which theatre experiences could be better provided and utilised within schooling, these reports were still located outside the classroom experiences of teachers and students. They were state and federally funded and not linked to direct classroom-based concerns.

Reports such as these are important for the information they provide regarding the arts and education within a public and largely policy driven arena. Taylor (1996a) argues for research that is located in classrooms and guided by practitioners, challenging the current move toward ‘fitting’ research into pre-determined agendas driven by those providing research funding. This study engages with the aim of conducting research that arises directly from concerns of teachers (Taylor, 1996a). It began with personal issues with using drama when working as a teacher myself, and locates itself in classrooms where the participating teachers self-identify needs and guide the process of their own learning.

The focus, as advocated by O’Neill (1996) is on supporting growth and change:

...True research in drama will never be a question of creating theories and cataloguing facts. It will involve growth, or more precisely out-growth...As we learn to present our theories and practices as avenues to coherence and integration in other disciplines, drama will grow outward without necessarily compromising its position as a discrete subject worthy of study...Its purpose is to bring about change - change in practice, and changes in insight and understanding...

(O’Neill, 1996 p145)

A number of state-based research and education/arts initiatives emphasising change have taken place over the past few years. While state and federally funded, these projects have begun to focus more directly on the classroom lives of teachers and

students, providing valuable exposure to quality arts and acknowledging the expertise and knowledge already existing in the education sector.

One such research project, the *Education and Arts Partnership Initiative (EAPI)*, took place in 2003 and was funded primarily by the Australia Council for the Arts. As part of this initiative, four state arts-based educational projects were conducted in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

The New South Wales project is of particular interest to this study. The focus was on numeracy and literacy student learning outcomes through the use of the arts, however various styles of professional learning were provided by the NSW Department of Education and Training, the NSW Ministry of the Arts and the University of Technology, Sydney (Bamford & Darell, 2004). While the style and content of learning was still driven largely by external forces, the *location* of learning had begun to shift. Artists and NSW Department of Education and Training consultants worked with teachers in their schools, attempting to tailor the learning for each particular school need and focus.

Another such project emphasising the importance of working directly with teachers grew from a relationship developed during the *EAPI* experience in New South Wales. *Arts Access*, funded and coordinated by the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts, in partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training, “...*was developed to address the lack of access to quality arts experiences for students and teachers in CAP (Community Area Program – rural) and PFSP (Priority Funded Schools Program – socio-economic disadvantage) schools...*” (Darell & Irvine, 2004 p1). Quality arts experiences are provided through this ongoing education and arts initiative with consultation taking place with teachers and artists at regular points each year. Despite the overwhelming success of *Arts Access*, the core elements of this strategy are still not located primarily within schools and are driven by education managers of the relevant state body, rather than evolving from the direct needs of teachers.

This study recognises the importance of continuing to support a shift, believing that not only should the learning be taken into the school environment, but that the teachers should also be collaborators in the research process. A discussion of the theory and

approach to situated, or school-based, professional learning as supported in this study can be found in Section 2.2.

Drama education research

...Whatever the focus of our research, we are never working in a vacuum, and our efforts must rest firmly on those of our predecessors if we are not to find ourselves ceaselessly reinventing the wheel. Knowledge and understanding in either science or art do not appear in a vacuum. They spring from an immersion in existing practice and theory, and an appreciation of the central traditions, rules, demands and possibilities in the field...
(O'Neill, 1996 p136)

This research falls within the broader field of 'creative arts' research, but focuses on the specific area of drama in education. The research conducted supports the contention of O'Neill (1996) that research does not take place in a 'vacuum', but rather requires a tradition of research existing within the field of drama. Included is a focus on three key *issues* that have hindered the advancement of research. These are the reticence of practitioner engagement in research, the place of theory, and the need for locating research with the drama practitioner and specific contexts. Important *challenges* facing researchers in the field are also considered.

The volume of research in drama education has begun to increase in recent years (O'Farrell, 1986). While this is a positive step, research has not always been readily accepted and utilised by drama practitioners (O'Farrell, 1986; Taylor, 1996b). Various reasons have been offered for this practitioner reticence including a perception that research is 'disconnected' from classroom practice (Taylor, 1996b). Drama teachers are also likened to 'artists' who believe that the creative process may be inhibited by too much analysis that research is believed to require (O'Farrell, 1986).

The analysis concerning drama teachers is most commonly founded on various theories of drama and it is with the need for an understanding of theory that a key issue with drama education research arises. As argued by O'Farrell (1986), "...a drama program without some kind of theoretical basis is rudderless and vulnerable..." (p25), and yet many practitioners avoid a thorough investigation of theory due to its perceived connection to research. Research is viewed as one way of assisting in the development and evaluation of theory, and yet it is research that is shunned by many drama practitioners.

This study supports the belief that theory needs to be considered to enhance a practitioner's use of drama. Taylor (1996a) suggests the need for research that is located with practitioners and is reflective in nature. This differs to a positivist, disconnected research approach involving a researcher entering a research site and conducting research 'on' rather than 'with' the participants. While presenting his argument through a discussion of reflective practitioner research, this study connects with Taylor's suggestion through the emphasis on the teachers, their thoughts, contexts and reflections.

Unlike a true model of reflective practitioner research, I did not research my own practice, but worked with teachers in their 'real' contexts. From an outsider's perspective, I could have been seen as conducting '*educational commando raids*' (Eisner in Taylor, 1996a p31) where I entered the classroom only to collect data. This picture is not correct for the '*facilitated action research*' conducted in this study (Section 3.3) which is more representative of Schön's '*reflective contract*' (1983) rather than Eisner's '*commando raids*'.

In Schön's (1983) '*reflective contract*', "...*I join with the professional in making sense of my case, and in doing this I gain a sense of increased involvement and action...*" (p302). I did not wish to join the body of research that 'researched' others. The aim was to work alongside the teachers collaborating in the process of professional learning to enhance their teaching of drama. Through doing so, a form of '*reflective contract*' was entered into where we (the participants) collaboratively reflected on the action taking place, using this knowledge to move forward in our learning of drama in education.

A review of literature offers three key challenges to prospective researchers in drama education. First is the need for research in drama that encourages creative thought, problem solving, knowledge construction and theory development, being "...*as essential for development in the arts as in the sciences...*" (O'Neill, 1996 p138). Taylor (1996a) supports a creative form of research and encourages a focus on the exploration of possibilities and the need to "...*raise an agenda rather than test a problem...*" (p39). The key challenge is engagement with problems that involve initially unknown answers so that genuinely authentic research can take place (O'Neill, 1996). It is the

unpredictability of the classroom environment in which such a challenge can be addressed.

Locating research within the drama classroom is viewed as a second challenge. The demands of an active and physical subject area, such as drama, are considered one possible reason why drama educators have demonstrated reluctance to write of their practice in the past (Taylor, 1996b). The challenge is to engage teachers in research within their classrooms through ‘reflective practitioner research’ (Taylor, 1996a) or ‘action research’ (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1996). Both these methodological approaches are offered as appropriate for supporting classroom teaching of drama. I have adopted an action research approach to take up this challenge when investigating ways of enhancing the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

A third challenge relates to the need for those researching in drama to work as a ‘community of researchers’ as well as functioning as a ‘community of practitioners’:

...Collaborative learning and shared discourse, which are among the distinguishing features of drama, are not merely desirable objectives but essential for the survival of our work...
(O'Neill, 1996 p144)

This concept of ‘community’ is not new and is further supported by the approach to professional learning adopted and discussed in Section 2.2. Through functioning as a community of drama researchers, knowledge previously contained in workplaces and classrooms is more likely to be shared with a wider audience. This allows the existing division between ‘practitioners’ and ‘researchers’ in drama education to be bridged. This research aimed to foster such a community through situating the research in the teachers’ context and through fostering collaborative work and group reflection sessions.

In this review, I have focused on some of the key issues and challenges in ‘creative arts’ and ‘drama’ research. It is through engaging directly with such issues and challenges that those working with drama in education can be recognised as more than ‘experienced practitioners’. The transition can be made when practitioners are seen as effective researchers in their own right, contributing to the development of theory and the growing body of arts-based research.

2.1.2 Drama as pedagogy, drama as art - developing an understanding of drama

Before engaging in a discussion of drama as ‘pedagogy’ or ‘art’, I consider the terminology issues relevant to understanding drama in education. This allows for the parameters of this research to be highlighted. Second I discuss the approach to drama adopted, and the way in which the teachers in this study developed their own collaborative understanding of drama.

Terminology issues

Terminology issues are particularly relevant in the area of drama in education, a field that is considered “...*a transitory and ephemeral medium...*” (Taylor, 1996b px). The development of a common terminology, and understanding of the use of drama in education, remains a controversial issue when encouraging teachers to apply drama effectively in their daily teaching practices. One perspective advocates the need for a common terminology to allow those within, and without a field to understand what is being done (Libman, 2000). An opposing perspective is that the provision of such a definition “...*is to misunderstand the nature of an artistic-aesthetic curriculum, and...rejects the numerous cultural traditions that feed it...*” (Taylor, 1996c p272-3).

Through the following discussion of ‘drama as pedagogy’ and ‘drama as art’, the approach, and therefore definition, I support is presented. Throughout the study the term ‘drama’ is used as a generic way of discussing all aspects of drama engaged in by the teachers. While data are not traditionally drawn on in a literature review, the approach collaboratively agreed on has been acknowledged to support the adopted approach.

Drama as pedagogy, drama as art

...At the forefront of the discussions was the belief that drama education research operates within an artistic medium. The institute [of Drama Education Research] could not separate drama as pedagogy from drama as art...

(Taylor, 1996b pxii)

As alluded to by Taylor (1996b), the division between ‘drama as pedagogy’ and ‘drama as art’ is a complex issue when considering the place of drama in education and research. While a recognised conceptualisation of what drama and drama education is,

has not yet been clearly outlined, a shift is needed to focus on finding a way of maximising the effectiveness of drama use in classrooms.

Academics and researchers have taken an interest in understanding and maximizing the use of the creative arts, including drama, for many years. Thirty years ago, Lundy (1975) suggested that the way in which dramatic education is viewed is the foundation for why the concept of learning through drama (drama as pedagogy) is ambiguous and not broadly adopted. Historically, the basis for dramatic education in England was play, while in America it was primarily theatre or performance (Lundy, 1975). While ‘theatre’ alone has not been emphasised as a sole approach when considering drama in education, it is through the work of individuals including Heathcote, (1995) Bolton (1979; 1986) and Neelands (2000) that educational drama (pedagogy) rather than purely theatre is now being emphasised.

Even with such a shift to educational drama, the distinction between ‘pedagogy’ and ‘art’ when considering an approach to teaching drama still exists. Simply delineated, ‘drama as pedagogy’, focuses on drama as it is used as a tool for learning, while ‘drama as art’ focuses on the artistic nature of drama. The latter approach emphasises the need for maintaining subject integrity and respecting drama as an ‘art form’.

When reviewing various texts supporting the teaching of drama, this delineation is less obvious. Past writing in the area of drama engages with the ‘pedagogy’ or ‘art’ debate, primarily focusing on maintaining such a division (Fortier, 1997; Way, 1967). As demonstrated through the work of Brian Way (1967), the importance of understanding each aspect is highlighted where “...*theatre is largely concerned with **communication** between actors and an audience; ‘drama’ is largely concerned with **experience** by the participants...*” (p2-3). A varied approach is that of Heathcote (Johnson & O’Neill, 1984) and Heathcote and Bolton (1995) who emphasise learning through drama as needing to occur in context with their ‘mantle of the expert’ approach. It is the ‘contextualisation’ that is considered a key to the success of this classroom based way of doing drama (O’Neill, 1995).

A contextualised focus supports an inability to separate ‘pedagogy’ and ‘art’ (Taylor, 1996b) with drama viewed as “...*both a **method** of teaching/learning and a **body of***

knowledge in its own right...” (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p3). Ewing and Simons (2004) refer to drama as being primarily about ‘enactment’ where the body is used for exploration of “...*issues, questions, perspectives or ideas...*” (p3). This connects with the emphasis on ‘experience’ as advocated by Way (1967) forty years earlier. Similarly, Heathcote (1984b) defines drama from a general perspective, emphasising the involvement of people “...*in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters, are the chief concern...*” (p61).

I support an emphasis where drama is respected for the learning opportunities it can provide (pedagogy) as well as engaging students in experiences respecting drama as a discrete body of knowledge (art form). More specifically, I consider drama to have both a fundamental nature and practical application in education. The fundamental nature of drama focuses on the blend of experience, interaction and imagination to make meanings. The practical application, adapted from Pinciotti’s (1993) description, allows for activities to be included that fall along a continuum stretching from the spontaneous play of children to traditional theatre. Through adopting such a broad approach, I support the descriptions offered by Taylor (1996b) as well as Ewing and Simons (2004) in considering drama as **both** ‘pedagogy’ and ‘art’.

While not commonly included within a review of literature, it is important to acknowledge the support for an approach favouring drama as ‘pedagogy’ and ‘art’ as offered by teachers participating in Phase Two. The five teachers who participated in the professional learning worked together to discuss what they viewed as the place of drama in their classrooms (Section 5.2.1). A wide variety of opinions of what comprises drama were initially offered. These are presented in Figure 2.2.

As demonstrated, perceptions of drama can vary, from imaginative play and fantasy, to the more concrete examples of script writing and musical theatre. The key outcome of this collaborative session occurred when the teachers engaged in a discussion of ‘drama as pedagogy’ and ‘drama as art’. While these specific terms were not used by the teachers, with ‘integration’ and ‘art form’ preferred, the consensus of needing a balance of both perspectives in a classroom supports my personal belief as well as that outlined in the literature.

Figure 2.2 - Drama Is...

Musical Theatre	Mime
Analysing	Fantasy
Situational Acting	Tableaux
Action	Audience Involvement
Improvisation	Creative form of expression
Interpreting	Imaginative play
Reflecting	Theatre Sports
Stage	Mirror Acting
Technical Theatre	Role Play
Fun	Script Writing
Technique	

A detailed discussion of the classroom teaching of drama takes place in the next section. The focus is twofold, considering syllabus requirements as well as the reality and purpose of classroom drama.

2.1.3 Classroom teaching of drama

...Indeed it is true to say that drama, so far from being new, is closely interwoven in the practical implementation of both the spirit and substance of every Education Act that has ever been passed, especially the idea of the development of the whole person...

(Way, 1967 p2 emphasis in original)

Despite the reported benefits and past traditions, drama remains a rarely taught subject area within many New South Wales primary classrooms. A number of reasons are provided for this restricted use including a lack of training or skills, fear of losing control and most influentially, time pressures (Bamford & Darell, 1994; Cusworth & Simons, 1997; Darell, 2003a; Ewing & Simons, 2004; Moore, 1988). Time constraints force teachers to prioritise their classroom choices, and as a result teaching within the creative arts, including drama, often suffers. This study aimed to address classroom-based issues by working with teachers within their particular contexts to assist effective teaching of drama.

Syllabus requirements

The Creative Arts K-6 syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000) is one of six detailed by the New South Wales Board of Studies that forms the primary school curriculum. Teachers in government primary schools in New South Wales are required to teach from these curriculum documents and are held accountable for teaching to the prescribed outcomes.

The key learning area, *Creative Arts* combines the four core arts areas: music, visual arts, drama and dance replacing their prior independent syllabi. The Education Act 1990 requires study in all six key learning areas of the curriculum for each child over the course of a year. The study of art and music are required inclusions in this teaching, with dance and drama being suggested in the attempt to broaden students' creative arts knowledge and experiences (Board of Studies NSW, 2000).

The ongoing debate within the creative arts considers whether the different areas of study should be emphasised as art forms, or utilized as teaching and learning tools (pedagogy) within education (Section 2.1.2). The developers of the Creative Arts K-6 syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000) emphasise the preservation of the disciplines, and while acknowledging the use of drama and dance in other key learning areas, state that each should be treated predominantly as independent art forms.

When focusing specifically on the drama section of the syllabus, teachers are encouraged to engage students in 'making', 'performing' and 'appreciating' drama. It is anticipated that students will develop "...*knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes...*" (Board of Studies NSW, 2000 p14) through work in each of the three areas.

Making provides students with opportunities to actively work with drama. Four key areas are important within this focus area: role, dramatic context, elements of drama and drama forms. *Role* taking is considered crucial within drama work and involves "...*shifting from the everyday context into an imagined situation...*" (Board of Studies NSW, 2000 p14). A further discussion of role and its place in classroom or educational drama is discussed below. Engagement with the *dramatic context* requires students to decide on:

- what they are doing (the topic, idea, issue)
- where they are (fictional setting)
- when the drama is happening (time)

(Board of Studies NSW, 2000 p14)

The scenarios or context for the drama action is guided by the teacher and should allow students to make these choices.

The *elements* and *forms* of drama are the final two areas considered within the ‘making’ strand. The elements are considered important for the creation of dramatic meaning and include dramatic tension, contrast, symbol, time, space, focus and mood (Board of Studies NSW, 2000). Drama forms provide a practical assistance to teachers in that they are often viewed as the ‘activities’ in which students can engage. The forms suggested within the syllabus include improvisation, movement, mime, storytelling, readers theatre, puppetry, mask, video drama and playbuilding (Board of Studies NSW, 2000). It is with ‘making’ in particular that the teachers participating in the professional learning were interested (Chapter 6).

Performing is the second strand within the drama syllabus and is considered necessary for “...*providing students with opportunities to communicate their roles and imaginative ideas to others through voice and movement...*” (Board of Studies NSW, 2000 p15). The inclusion of this focus emphasises the ‘art form’ approach advocated within the K-6 Creative Arts Syllabus.

Student engagement in **appreciating**, the third focus strand for drama, emphasises reflection on their own work as well as that of others. Developing this skill requires teachers to provide student access to a variety of performance types and spaces allowing them to investigate “...*the actor-audience relationship...*” (Board of Studies NSW, 2000 p15)

The syllabus is limited in that it provides outcomes, suggested units of work, as well as guidelines as to the making, performing and appreciating requirements for drama in the classroom. While teachers in New South Wales government schools are required to follow these guidelines, very little assistance is given in the syllabus to guide inexperienced teachers of drama.

Classroom practice

...the question might be ‘What is a blind person?’ The reply could be ‘A blind person is a person who cannot see’. Alternatively, the reply could be ‘Close your eyes and, keeping them closed all the time, try to find your way out of this room.’ The first answer contains concise and accurate information; the mind is possibly satisfied. But the second answer leads the inquirer to moments of direct experience, transcending mere knowledge, enriching the imagination, possibly touching the heart and soul as well as the mind. This, in over-simplified terms, is the precise function of drama...

(Way, 1967 p1)

I acknowledge that drama is often viewed in schooling as taking place through school musicals, creative arts nights and end of year concerts beyond classroom based activities. Those whole school, ‘theatrical’ forms are not the focus in this section which considers the value of drama in the classroom setting, and the inhibitors and challenges for teachers of drama.

Literature on drama in education is traditionally theoretical (Bolton, 1979; Fortier, 1997; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Henry, 2000), or designed to assist teachers via practical hints and suggestions (Burton, 1987; Charters, 1986; Ewing & Simons, 2004). Minimal practitioner accounts of drama use in the classroom can be found and are largely of an anecdotal nature (Erickson, 1988; Flynn, 1997; Gray, 1987; Moore & Caldwell, 1990). Most commonly, literature reports on drama in schools, and through teacher education, but are written by an outside researcher (Anderson, 2003; Bunyan, 2003; O'Mara, 2003; Pinciotti, 1993).

Despite the differing approaches, one point is clear through all writing in this field: the difficulty teachers face when wishing to incorporate drama in their classrooms. Teacher valuing and belief in drama is crucial in encouraging its use in the classroom (Garcia, 1993). Similarly, establishing a clear understanding of what drama can and should be within a classroom is also required. The remainder of this section engages with such a discussion considering *emphasis* for drama, *value* of drama in the classroom, *factors* which inhibit its inclusion, and ways to overcome such problems.

Drama in education needs to have an **emphasis** on fostering change as “... *It [drama] does not freeze a moment in time, it freezes a problem in time, and you examine the problem as the people go through a process of change...*” (Heathcote, 1984a p114). To allow for problem solving to take place, drama involves interaction (Heathcote, 1984a) and also requires students and teachers to participate in an ‘imagined world’ (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p3):

...Students develop their understanding of this imagined world through the same meaning-making processes that they use in everyday life ...Groups of students collaborate in role to express and explore ideas. There is no outside audience and no intention to communicate beyond the participants themselves. So, although the participants work in role, their acting ability is not usually important: all that is needed is that the participants willingly suspend their disbelief...

(Ewing & Simons, 2004 p4)

The need for students to suspend reality and ‘imagine’, is a common theme within the literature on drama, and the need for developing skills to role-play, empathise and walk in the shoes of others are considered key values of drama in education.

The **value** of drama in education has been articulated in a variety of ways. The ability for drama activity to encourage empathy is fore fronted as a key benefit, along with its ability to develop the whole child (Board of Studies NSW, 2000). This perspective is supported by Ewing and Simons (2004) who argue that:

...Used well, drama will help your students to develop empathy, challenging them to consider how others think, feel and respond to the work. They will explore who they are, and they will improve their talking, listening, reading and writing skills...

(Ewing & Simons, 2004 p1)

Other arguments for drama emphasise the sociologically based nature of drama as encouraging interaction (Heathcote, 1984b). A further value is its ‘play-based nature’ where drama is viewed as having “...*a defined area of intention (as in games - a football team knows it will not end up playing at darts!) and employing elaboration...*” (Heathcote, 1984b p70). Through this defined nature, boundaries are clear and the purpose of drama in a particular classroom can be understood.

While various **factors** are discussed in Section 2.2.3 as generally influencing classroom practice and pedagogical choice, a number of factors are considered in the literature as directly inhibiting classroom use of drama. The first of these inhibitors is a ‘teacher’s confidence’. Drama requires teachers to first understand the boundaries of security in a classroom so that “...*they may gradually push back these security needs and accept more tenuous positions in order that eventually they may teach from positions for calculated risk...*” (Heathcote, 1984b p63). Drama is considered to be a ‘risky’ subject area that encourages the ‘unpredictable’ (Ewing & Simons, 2004) with responses not always what the teacher expected or intended (Simons, 1997).

Even when a teacher wishes, the desire to teach from such a 'riskier' perspective is often hindered by context-based issues within the school including restrictive timetables and outcomes-driven syllabi (Heathcote, 1984b). The importance of acknowledging context-based issues was highlighted in this research and focused upon during the initial investigation of factors facilitating or constraining the use of drama (Chapter 4).

The connection between teachers' beliefs and their use of drama in the classroom is a further inhibiting factor. Numerous studies have been conducted connecting beliefs with other key learning areas, especially that of science, mathematics and information technology (Ernest, 1989; Garrahy, 2001; Henry & Clements, 1999; Middleton, 1999; Norton, McRobbie, & Cooper, 2000; Tosun, 2000). In all cases, beliefs were considered highly influential in guiding classroom-based choices.

For example, the results of Garcia's (1993) research, identified three areas of beliefs crucial in guiding the inclusion and style of drama activities applied in a classroom:

- a teacher's belief - regarding the support received for the use of drama in the school environment;
- a teacher's perception of the value of drama - affecting the frequency of drama use;
- a teacher's belief in the ability to structure effective drama experiences that impact on self-confidence with the use of drama.

(Garcia, 1993 p10-12)

A consideration of beliefs influencing pedagogy, and its necessary inclusion when planning professional learning, is undertaken in Section 2.2.3.

Various other factors were considered to inhibit the teaching of drama including noise level, available space, group comfort level, preference for the way decisions are made in the classroom, the 'subject' interests of the teachers and the preferred method of evaluation (Heathcote, 1984b). These factors, specific to drama, were mirrored when considering inhibitors in other subject areas where research identified time issues, confidence, training, room size, class size, school context and expectations and parental expectations as highly influential (Ernest, 1989; Henry & Clements, 1999; Middleton, 1999; Norton et al., 2000; Tosun, 2000).

To overcome inhibiting factors, teachers who wish to include drama in their classroom face a number of challenges. They must accept that by doing drama, human material will be used: “...*not fancy ideas, not cool abstractions of facts. You are using the human condition of your students, their attitudes, their philosophy, their ideas, and you have got to use them as they really are...*” (Heathcote, 1984a p115). While needing to suspend reality, drama engages with real students, their attitudes, lives and beliefs. Through doing so, teachers need to acknowledge and respect student attitudes as guiding classroom based interactions.

When discussing her ‘tree of knowledge’, Heathcote (1984a) refers to attitudes of the child and the influence this has on learning:

...We have as our roots now the attitudes the child brings to school. Often we try to push those attitudes under in order to try to get some kind of conforming from our classes so that the curriculum can be taught, but the real roots of the inner attitudes are going to be there all the time. One of the big problems of teaching today is that as more and more cultural ideas become diffuse and people become their own experts, it is much harder for a teacher to handle the variety of different roots that the children bring into the school...

(Heathcote, 1984a p121-2)

The challenge here for teachers is to recognise the ‘roots’ of their own and their students’ knowledge and the influence this has on all classroom based choices and activities. The importance of recognising and working with pre-existing attitudes and cultures is further supported within the K-6 Creative Arts syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000).

Through acknowledging attitudes, a further challenge links to a teacher’s planning of drama. Heathcote (1984a) encourages an approach that emphasises the ‘*internal structure*’ (p117) of classroom activities which differs from an outcome or curriculum-based approach. Through focusing on the internal structures, teachers work with the skills and attitudes rather than approaching learning from a subject-based, or topic driven perspective of drama in the classroom.

There is a need for clear establishment of rules and expectations to minimise the overexcitement and confusion that can arise when newcomers begin to work with drama (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p1; Heathcote, 1984b). This challenge is emphasised in a variety of literature assisting teachers to feel more comfortable in gradually pushing

their self-imposed boundaries. A need to be aware of the final process of any drama activity links to this challenge (Heathcote, 1984a). By making sure that students do not struggle indefinitely with the problem, their trust and understanding of the process will be enhanced. Even if a solution is not reached, drama encourages people to look at the problem being faced differently.

While not being a guidebook for classroom teaching of drama, the following guidelines are considered a way of demonstrating the approach to educational drama advocated in this research. Generally, “...*Dramatic activities are concerned with crisis, the experience of life, small or large, which cause people to reflect and take note...*” (Heathcote, 1984b p69). To be able to easily engage students in such life experiences, the inclusion of four key areas necessary in dramatic activities are considered important: *role, focus, symbol* and *tension* (Ewing & Simons, 2004). While some of these terms have been previously addressed through the discussion of syllabus requirements, the approach outlined here provides teachers with another way of understanding classroom teaching of drama.

Stepping into another’s shoes is a key aspect of educational drama and is assisted through the use of **role**: “...*By taking this step, students learn to assume roles that are both similar to and different from those of their real lives, temporarily adopting another person’s perspective...*” (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p5). It is important for a teacher to focus on student ‘protection’ and the creation of a safe environment in which student roles must differ to that of the normal ‘self’. A number of roles can be adopted within drama: dramatic play, mantle of the expert (students speaking as if they are the ones who ‘know’), role-playing (adopting another’s point of view), characterising (representing an individual lifestyle), and acting (moving out of the classroom and performing for an audience) (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p7-8).

Through emphasising **focus**, drama activities need to be centred on a ‘worthwhile educational goal’ (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p10). To ensure student engagement, it is helpful for teachers to focus drama through using “...*an aspect of life that the students know from their own experience...*” (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p10). Related to the emphasis on focus is that of **symbol**. Symbolism can be encouraged through drama at a number of levels with students drawing on real life experiences to allow for the

development of personal symbolism. Encouraging students to explore symbols through drama allows them to look at a particular object and consider it from multiple perspectives and shared meaning (Ewing & Simons, 2004).

For effective drama, teachers need to encourage situations where a state of **tension** can exist. This usually occurs when conflict is unresolved: “...*Tension produces the excitement, or the ‘edge’, that engages learners both intellectually and emotionally, and motivated them to become involved in the drama activity...*” (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p10). The inclusion of tension can be problematic for teachers as it is at the most ‘tense’ times that the feel of losing control can be highest. Ensuring the clear establishment of boundaries and a safe environment within which the drama can take place can reduce such problematic scenarios.

It is difficult to specify what drama actually is in the classroom. Various writers advocate specific approaches, for example Heathcote’s emphasis on role-play and improvisation through her ‘mantle of the expert’ approach (Heathcote, 1984b; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). A broader approach is adopted in this research where:

...Drama has many different faces in the classroom. Sometimes students perform prepared scripts in front of others. Sometimes the teacher joins with the group to improvise in role. Sometimes students work in pairs or small groups, preparing and then sharing their improvisations or depictions with the whole class. Sometimes they remain very still - thinking, planning or reflecting...

(Ewing & Simons, 2004 p4-5)

It is important to allow time for reflection when doing classroom drama. This allows students to articulate their learning and share meaning with others. It also provides time to assist them in disengaging from the roles they have played (Ewing & Simons, 2004). As discussed in Section 2.1.2, drama activities can, and should, fall on a continuum ranging from the creative play of children to activities representative of traditional theatre (Pinciotti, 1993).

This section has considered the place of drama in this thesis. The need for further research in drama education is argued, as is the desirability of considering ‘drama as pedagogy’ and ‘drama as art’. Challenges for teachers as well as the common inhibiting factors including those of time and confidence are acknowledged:

...Drama is such a normal thing. It has been made into an abnormal thing by all the fussy leotards, hairdos and stagecraft that is associated with it. All it demands is that children shall think from within a dilemma instead of talking about the dilemma...

(Heathcote, 1984a p118)

2.2 Professional learning

... Do adults learn differently from children? What distinguishes adult learning and adult education from other areas of education? What particular characteristics about the learning transaction with adults can be identified to maximise their learning?

(Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p271)

This section reviews relevant literature on adult professional learning and associated learning theory. As this study emphasises the process of learning, I consider two relevant theories and discuss how they shape the conceptual framework and support the methodological approach. The history and conditions for sustainable professional learning are then argued focusing on the need for linking learning to teacher experiences and beliefs, as well as the importance of collaboration and social interaction. I consider locations for professional learning, arguing for the need to situate such learning within a school context.

2.2.1 Learning theory - situated and action learning

This section provides an overview of the conceptual framework for this research as shaped by theories of situated and action learning.

Learning is not easy to define or theorize, being viewed as originating within philosophical investigations into the nature of knowledge, what it means to actually know, and the human mind (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). An emphasis on ‘change’ underpins a majority of contemporary learning theories, especially when connected with concepts of experience. Such an emphasis enables ‘adult education’ to move toward ‘adult learning’ which highlights social and cultural experiences rather than psychological (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997).

More broadly, there is “...*little consensus on how many learning theories there are or how they should be grouped for discussion...*” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p250).

Such theories include constructivist, behaviourist, humanist, social learning and cognitivist perspectives. Theories or orientations to learning are used primarily to provide a vocabulary through which to interpret observed examples of learning. In

addition, they provide a place to look for solutions to practical problems (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). It is the explanation of what happens when learning takes place that is considered to be the learning theory. Experiences are drawn on and engaged through such an explanation.

Considering experience and learning as entwined within adult education “...*involves adults’ connecting what they have learned from current experiences to those in the past as well as to possible future situations...*” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000 p246). It is experiences that we use to ‘define’ ourselves (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), however care needs to be taken to ensure that non-educational experiences do not become a negative influence (Dewey, 1938). Experience as it is drawn on as a condition for sustainable professional learning is further explored in Section 2.2.3.

Experiences are best explored through a process of reflection. Adult learning theory engages with this area, especially through the work of Schön (1983) and his reflective practitioner approach. It is not the intent of this section to engage with the ‘reflective practitioner’ as a theory of learning (Usher et al., 1997). I do wish to acknowledge the importance of reflection, irrespective of its status as a learning theory, within the approach and methodology for this research. This area is further discussed in Section 2.2.2 and in more detail in Section 3.4.3.

Simply, learning is about reflection, experience, social interaction and context. Keeping these components in mind, I now focus on a discussion of the specific theories informing this study: situated learning and action learning.

Situated learning

...To situate learning means to place thought and action in a specific place and time. To situate means to involve other learners, the environment, and the specific place and time. To situate means to locate in a particular setting...

(Stein, 1998 p1)

As can be inferred by the term itself, situated learning ‘situates’ learning in the workplace. This is however a simplification of a more complex approach which “...*cannot separate the learning process from the situation in which the learning is presented...*” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p241). Situated learning theory is referred to within diverse fields such as education, computer science and business (Gieselman,

Stark, & Farruggia, 2000). Writers on situated learning, or situated cognition, support the embedded nature of the context and learning process, as it places learning within a realistic and meaningful environment (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Gieselman et al., 2000; McLellan, 1996c; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Stein, 1998). This approach has also been referred to as “...*context-embedded learning*...” (Hendricks, 2001, p302).

Unlike ‘context-embedded learning’, a traditional schooling approach is perceived as de-contextualising learning as it removes knowledge from its meaningful environment. In the same way, professional learning that removes teachers from their workplace and instructs them in non-context specific and potentially non-transferable skills is also de-contextualising learning. School learning is not bound to its context (Boaler, 1993) and skills cannot be generalised to school situations when practised in real-life and visa versa (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996). The issue of transferability as an argument for supporting the need for professional learning that is situated in the work context can be found later in this section.

Learning takes place when people watch and interact with each other in a social setting (Gieselman et al., 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Stein, 1998). Situated learning theory considers learning as relying on social interaction with the goal of acquiring new cognitive skills and strategies (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000; Hendricks, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). If “...*learning and doing are inseparable and that learning is a process of enculturation*...” (Hendricks, 2001 p302), then removing teachers from the social environment where the learning will be played out will negatively impact on the effectiveness of any professional learning program. By situating learning within the specific context and focusing on the needs of a particular organisation, support is given for problems drawn from a natural, authentic environment. Adopting this perspective, it is the “...*context [that] provides the setting for examining experience; community [that] provides the shaping of learning*...” (Stein, 1998 p2). A change in practice is more likely to occur under these conditions as it is more directly relevant to teachers’ classrooms than when development is externally located.

Table 2.1 offers eight situated learning strategies (McLellan, 1996b) drawn on in this study that are helpful within ‘situated’ professional learning programs: stories,

reflection, cognitive apprenticeship, collaboration, coaching, multiple practice, articulation of learning skills, and technology.

Table 2.1 - Situated learning strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Description</i>
Stories	- Sharing personal experience stories - Gathering stories within literature
Reflection	- Thinking back on practice - Considering changes in own practice - Considering actions and changes in students - Considering the classroom environment and its impact
Cognitive Apprenticeship	- Building a relationship between expert and novice - Gathering of new knowledge/skills in an authentic environment
Collaboration	- Engaging with collective problem solving - Considering ineffective strategies - Participating in small group work, teamwork & peer teaching
Coaching	- Engaging with a 'guide on the side' approach - Providing a framework to help support new process
Multiple Practice	- Ongoing, repeated practice of same skills (increasingly less support required)
Articulation of learning skills	- Separating out of skills to assist with learning - Articulating knowledge & problem-solving processes
Technology	- Engaging with 'hard' technology e.g. internet, computers etc - Engaging with 'soft' technology e.g. processes

(McLellan, 1996c)

How these strategies have been drawn upon in the development of the professional learning process appears in Section 5.1.

Action learning

... Action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group or 'set' of colleagues, working on real issues, with the intention of getting things done...The collaborative process, which recognizes set members' social context, helps people to take an active stance towards life, overcome the tendency to be passive towards the pressures of life and work, and aims to benefit both the organization and the individual...

(McGill & Brockband, 2004 p11)

Action learning theory was developed by Reg Revans in the 1950s when attempting to raise the performance of coal miners in the United Kingdom (Barker, 1993; McGill & Brockband, 2004). This theory emerged within an adult learning context where 'experts' trained others even though research suggested "...that in adult learning the significance of personal experience is crucial..." (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p11-12). Traditionally, action research is found in management development and corporate

business (Barker, 1993; McGill & Brockband, 2004) as opposed to the schooling sector. There is acknowledgement of the benefits of action learning within educational institutions, although this is less directly addressed in literature than is action learning within a management context (Barker, 1993; Gregory, 1994).

Learning in ‘context’ is emphasised, including social context (Gregory, 1994). This theory reflects a “...*growing recognition that learning and development can be, and is, supported by a social context in which learning is shared as a social activity...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p12). The importance of fostering learning as a social, shared activity, taking place in context, is discussed in the next section within situated and action learning theories as they combine to form the conceptual framework for this study.

There are four key characteristics of action learning relevant in informing the learning approach within this research. First is that of **experience** with an action learning approach placing ‘life experiences’ at the fore (McGill & Beaty, 1992; McGill & Brockband, 2004). It considers the sharing and critiquing of them as central to the learning process (Margerison, 1988). Respecting **beliefs and values** is a second characteristic of action learning (McGill & Brockband, 2004) linking directly to the approach adopted in the research. A connection between belief and experience is acknowledged with such beliefs and values shaping actions, which then in turn are the basis for new experiences. These experiences are shared within the collaborative focus of action learning theory. **Collaboration** as a characteristic of action learning is discussed further below through the combining of situated and action learning theories.

While action learning involves learning about how to work on issues collaboratively (Barker, 1993), it has a simultaneous characteristic of developing learner **autonomy**. For an autonomous learner, the focus is on personal issues and working through a process of action to resolve them (Gregory, 1994; McGill & Brockband, 2004 p20). Learners are “...*recognized as the expert[s] on their situation in terms of their context, feelings and knowledge...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p22-23). Learners are encouraged to work at their own pace (McGill & Brockband, 2004) with the ultimate goal of effecting a ‘change’ in practice (Gregory, 1994).

While the learning is located with the learners, action learning acknowledges the place of a facilitator who acts as an ‘agent for change’. The facilitator “...*lead[s] the process...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p13) through assisting the development of skills that allow autonomous learning to take place. While such autonomy is encouraged, the process of learning is still considered a social one in which individuals can work to resolve their own issues within a social context. Action learning doesn’t offer a ‘best’ or ‘preferred’ solution to a problem, instead it assists learners to work to a solution through creating conditions that assist the process within the constraints of a particular context (Barker, 1993). This concept is drawn on within the research where teachers self-identify needs, but collaborate to reflect, develop and further refine their skills.

Experience and collaboration, key characteristics of action learning theory, encourage a focus on ‘connected’ rather than ‘separate’ knowing (McGill & Brockband, 2004). With connected knowing, “...*dialogue is about understanding what the person is saying - their experience...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p88). Through emphasising understanding of such experiences, reality of problems in the workplace can be confronted rather than learning that relies on ‘hypothetical’ situations (Barker, 1993). In situated learning theory, skills are used ‘in situ’ rather than needing to transfer them when they are learned in an external environment (Barker, 1993; Gregory, 1994).

Action learning is a flexible theory that can be adjusted to the needs of a particular workplace (McGill & Brockband, 2004). It can be viewed in a number of ways with approaches ranging on a continuum from learners choosing personal development issues, to management of an organisation choosing the focus issue (McGill & Brockband, 2004). This research is more reflective of an ‘independent action learning set’ where “...*Members form sets for their personal needs without support or constraints by an organization...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p31). While support was given for the teachers to participate in the research and for it to take place within the school context, no time or other support mechanisms were provided by the school. The research also differs in that while the teachers decided on the specific focus and approach to their own learning, these choices were made within the given area of ‘enhancing the teaching of drama’.

Situated and action learning - a conceptual framework

Two key areas connect situated and action learning as they combine to form the conceptual framework for this research: *learning as a social, collaborative, context-located* process and the importance of *reflection*. Considering these learning theories together raises a number of issues when encouraging professional learning. The two related areas and the six key issues are discussed in this section.

- **Learning as social, collaborative and context-located**

Learners are often working in a context where isolation is common and support minimal. This is particularly relevant in many schools in which the nature of teaching locates individuals in their own classrooms, restricting their ability to interact and work collaboratively with others. Action learning promotes a **social, collaborative process** (Gregory, 1994) where learners “...*share their concerns, issues and proposed actions...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p13). A support network is provided which focuses on developing support for learners within their situated context (McGill & Brockband, 2004). Similarly, situated learning views learning as not effective when removed from the social situation, or context, in which it will be played out (Hendricks, 2001) with the “...*activities of a domain...framed by its culture...*” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989 p34). Learning is seen to occur “...*through interaction and cooperation with other people in the natural work environment...*” (Gieselman et al., 2000 p263).

Cognitive apprenticeship (Brown et al., 1989; McLellan, 1996c) is one strategy offered within situated learning theory to encourage social, collaborative learning within a natural work environment. Within cognitive apprenticeship, learners are engaged in authentic activity through an approach that has them working alongside a more experienced individual. It is reflective of traditional craft apprenticeships (Brown et al., 1989), but able to be applied in a traditional classroom context. The focus on ‘sets’ within action learning theory acts in a similar way where workers with different levels of experience and knowledge work together within an authentic environment to solve an authentic concern. In both cases the learners collaborate to further their learning experiences.

Collaboration is a central part of situated learning (Gieselman et al., 2000; McLellan, 1996b; Stein, 1998) and action learning theory (Margerison, 1988; McGill & Brockband, 2004):

...Participation describes the interchange of ideas, attempts at problem solving, and active engagement of learners with each other and with the materials of instruction. It is the process of interaction with others that produces and establishes meaning systems among learners...

(Stein, 1998 p3)

Four strategies considered effective for promoting ‘participation’ or ‘collaborative learning’ provide a strong connection between situated and action learning. First, situated learning theory emphasises the need for *collective problem solving* (Brown et al., 1989; McLellan, 1996b), connecting with the focus approach of any action learning ‘set’ (McGill & Brockband, 2004). Second, the structure of an action learning set requires participants to take on *multiple roles* (McGill & Brockband, 2004) that are considered important when emphasising collaborative learning from a situated learning perspective (Brown et al., 1989; McLellan, 1996b).

Third, is the focus of both theories on “...*confronting ineffective strategies and misconceptions...*” (Brown et al., 1989 p40). The collaborative nature of the learning and problem solving encourages reflection and requires learners/set members to re-evaluate any issues being faced. Through the need for reflection, a fourth common area is exposed where the use of collaborative interaction encourages the development of *collaborative learning skills* (Brown et al., 1989; Gieselman et al., 2000). While not directly acknowledged, I believe that a natural result of participation in learning fostered by action learning theory would be the development of such collaborative learning skills explicitly acknowledged within situated learning theory.

- **Reflection**

Reflection is the second key area connecting situated learning and action learning theories. While central within action learning theory, the need for reflection is also acknowledged within the situated learning strategy: articulation of learning skills (McLellan, 1996b). Within this approach, learners are encouraged to:

...articulate their knowledge, reasoning or problem-solving processes in a domain. By articulating thinking and problem-solving processes, students [learners] come to a better understanding of their thinking processes, and they are better able to explain things to themselves and to others...

(McLellan, 1996b p12)

In a similar way, a focus on reflection within action learning theory places the learning processes in a 'domain' where the "*...realities of professional life and practice...*" (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p94) can be engaged. Reflection is considered necessary to enhance both the ability to 'act' as well as the process of learning itself (McGill & Brockband, 2004).

The provision of time to think about action is important within both learning theories (Gieselman et al., 2000; McGill & Brockband, 2004). The place of 'experience' is also central. Action learning theory considers reflection to be "*...a necessary precursor to effective action and that learning from experience can be enhanced by deliberate attention to this relationship...*" (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p13). From a similar perspective, situated learning theory advocates the need for reflection on 'new information' for how it fits with prior knowledge and experiences (Gieselman et al., 2000). A balance between 'experiential' and 'reflective' cognition is emphasised, ensuring that critical reflection becomes a focus (McLellan, 1996b).

Reflection was utilised as a data collection tool for this study (Section 3.4.3) as well as emerging as a focus during data analysis (Section 5.4.2).

Six key issues emerged when fostering professional learning supported by elements of situated and action learning theory. Each is discussed, drawing on relevant literature within each learning theory:

- Confidentiality
- Need for empathy
- Voluntary or compulsory participation
- Acknowledgement that development takes time
- Complex role of the facilitator
- Assessment

- **Confidentiality**

Collaborative learning provides a key link between situated and action learning theories resulting in confidentiality becoming an issue. Working in a collaborative environment requires learners to place trust in their co-learners, as often confusion and uncertainty can occur within a problem-solving context. Through developing and maintaining confidentiality, learners may feel safer in sharing deeper, more critical reflection and experiences that would further enhance the collaborative professional learning process.

- **Need for empathy**

A second issue, connected to the need for confidentiality is that of empathy. The definition of empathy is drawn from action learning theory and considered to be “...*the understanding of the position, context and emotional state of the other set members...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p23). As with confidentiality, being empathetic of other learner insecurities and supporting discussion of concerns and experiences would more easily foster an effective professional learning environment.

- **Voluntary or compulsory participation**

The importance of engaging learners who are voluntary participants willing to engage in the learning process may also further encourage the maintenance of group confidentiality and empathy. This third issue is underpinned by the belief that “...*learning does not work where it is imposed on the person...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p18). By involving only voluntary participants, as in this study, increased motivation and dedication to ongoing professional learning can result.

- **Acknowledgement that development takes time**

The acknowledgment that development takes time allows for issues to be addressed as they change and evolve over the professional learning process. Time for professional learning is required as the focus is on development of skills as well as development of the associated learning processes (McGill & Brockband, 2004). Learning from these theories is not about just solving a problem or implementing a new directive in a top-down fashion. Learning that comes from the learner allows for issues to be resolved in a sustainable and ongoing fashion.

- **Complex role of the facilitator**

The role of the facilitator can be problematic and is referred to more prominently within the literature on action learning. The facilitator guides participants as “...*The purpose of action learning is to enable the participants to take responsibility for their learning, their actions and to develop and/or enhance their autonomy...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p189). The issue is with making sure that the learners work through the process of becoming ‘self-directed’ (Husby, 2005) or ‘autonomous’ learners. As became obvious in this research (Section 5.1.3), the initial desire by learners is to have the facilitator direct the learning rather than taking responsibility themselves. The role of the facilitator or ‘teacher’ should be that of a support rather than someone who directs learning (Gieselman et al., 2000).

- **Assessment**

Assessment, or evaluation, of the learning is a particular issue within situated learning (McLellan, 1996a) and action learning, particularly relevant within educational applications (Barker, 1993; Gregory, 1994). Action learning sees assessment as continuous, however reports and presentations are considered the key tangible assessment tools (Barker, 1993; McGill & Brockband, 2004). Situated learning theory adopts a similar perspective with:

...Evaluation in a situated learning context...based on a dynamic, continuous, ever-emerging assessment of the learning process, the learner’s progress, the instructional strategies deployed and the learning environment...

(McLellan, 1996a p101).

In both cases the key focus is not on reporting progress, but on considering how the process of learning could be improved. The way in which methods for assessment link with issues of validity and the methodology for the study is discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Theory and methodology - the connections

The previous section considered theories of action learning and situated learning as they shaped the conceptual framework for this research. Here, I consider the connections between these theories as they relate to the methodological approach of action research. A detailed discussion of action research and its specific application can be found in

Sections 3.2 and 3.3. It is important, however, to acknowledge the transition to this approach from the adopted learning theory.

There can be confusion about the similarities and differences between *action learning* and *action research* due predominantly to the place of each as a learning tool or research methodology.

...Action research” and “action learning”, each has a literature promoting itself as both a methodology for the professional practitioner to improve practice and as a technique that may be used to educate. Although having a common thread, the research on each tends generally to be exclusive to itself, and an examination of the literature reveals that there are essential distinctions, as well as a confluence in the processes involved...

(Gregory, 1994 p41)

As described by Gregory (1994), a common thread between the two traditions exists. While action learning forms part of the conceptual framework for this study, it is with the need for assessment and reporting that this research first diverges from a traditional action learning approach.

There is a recognised tension for some proponents of action learning in regard to assessment and reporting. One opinion of the founder of this theory, Reg Revans, involves the emphasis in action research on “...*the collection of data, analysis of data and writing/publication of case studies...*” as tedious (Gregory, 1994 p42). Similarly, many advocating action research are suspicious of action learning. While the idea of action group learning is attractive, they consider the problem solving approach too ‘elementary’ (Gregory, 1994 p42). Both approaches incorporate the need for assessment or reporting of some kind, with the difference between them stemming from the emphasis placed on this particular aspect of the learning process.

Assessment or reporting is considered crucial in the methodology as it is the rigorous collection of data that allows respected self, peer and wider public validation (McNiff et al., 2003) to take place. As opposed to much action learning which exists to support learners within a particular context, action research supports the need for the knowledge to be made public as it is through the provision of such stories that the ‘claims to knowledge’ (McNiff et al., 2003) can be shared. It is with the need for the wider sharing

of knowledge that this research diverges from a traditional theory of action learning, and adopts the more rigorous approach advocated within action research methodology.

Despite this divergence, a number of elements of situated and action learning connect easily with the adopted approach. A first element links to the social and context-driven nature of the learning theories. Situated and action learning theory advocate the locating of learning within a natural and authentic context, with the use of the actual workplace a preferred option. Action research similarly requires research, and hence associated learning, to take place within the natural working context.

Within an action research approach, practitioners are encouraged to take control of their specific contexts (McNiff, 2002a). It is considered a “...*practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be...*” (McNiff, 2002a p6).

Researchers research themselves, drawing on emerging and natural issues that are occurring within their own workplace contexts. Collaboration between teachers in these workplaces is acknowledged through variations of action research such as collaborative action research (Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Sagor, 1992) or community-based action research (Stringer, 1999).

Collaborative and community-based action research draw on the social principles advocated within situated and action learning theory. A facilitator is usually a part of these approaches as is the case with this research. As discussed in Chapter 3, I do not advocate the use of a particular method of action research, however principles relating to the role of this facilitator have been drawn from situated and action learning theory as well as the various collaborative approaches to action research.

A second connection between theory and methodology relates to the action-reflection cycle (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Lewin, 1946). Frequently seen within action research, this cycle is similar to the process of participating in an action learning set. The following example describes the way action learning was to be applied in the design and implementation of a Master’s course in the United Kingdom:

...By researching on the problem, working it through collaboratively with others in a similar situation, presenting different ways forward in the light of challenge by others, and finally applying the solution in the workplace (from where the cycle may start again) the process is subject to a rigorous form of accountability which draws together the two elements of “action” and “learning”...

(Gregory, 1994 p44)

Four key stages are articulated by Gregory (1994) presenting similarities to three of the four key stages in a basic cycle of action and reflection (Lewin, 1946). Figure 2.3 presents the stages of an action-reflection cycle as offered by Lewin (1946), with Table 2.2 demonstrating the links between the two approaches.

Figure 2.3 - Traditional Cycle of Action-Reflection

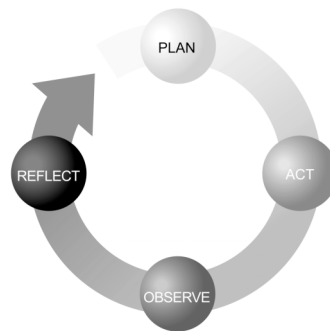


Table 2.2 - Comparison of action learning process and cycle of action-reflection

<i>Action Learning process</i>	<i>Stages in Action-Reflection cycle</i>
researching the problem	plan
working it through collaboratively with others in a similar situation	reflect
presenting different ways forward	plan
applying the solution in the workplace	act

As outlined in Table 2.2, the ‘observe’ element of Lewin’s (1946) cycle is missing within an action learning approach. The need for observation allows for data gathering which in turn informs the ‘assessment’ required within action research. As outlined in Section 3.3.1, observation is included within reflection for this research as the process entwines these two stages of the cycle.

A third area, the emphasis on focus, purpose and style of learning coming directly from the needs and experiences of the learners, connects the learning theory and methodology for this study:

...Action researchers enquire into their own lives and speak with other people as colleagues. Action research is an enquiry by the self into the self, undertaken in company with others acting as research participants and critical learning partners...
(McNiff, 2002b p15)

As described by McNiff (2002b), the focus is on the self investigating the self. By doing so, the specific focus and purpose of the learning is driven by the context in which learners are conducting their practice. Situated and action learning theories emphasise the importance of learning taking place within such an authentic context supported by an action research methodology.

Professional learning is about engaging professionals in the learning process. Through drawing on elements of situated and action learning theory, this learning becomes located in the workplace, and the context and personal experiences of the teachers are central to the process. Action research connects easily with this conceptual framework as “...Action research is about individuals’ learning, in company with other people. People are always in relation with others in some way...” (McNiff et al., 2003 p12-13). The required emphasis on reflection, experience, social interaction and context are common to these theories and the methodology incorporates these elements.

2.2.3 Professional learning for schooling - conditions for sustainable development

...When we hold these twin beliefs - that schools are about student learning and that learning occurs primarily through the efforts and talents of teachers - then it becomes clear that school reform should focus on nurturing and developing the teaching profession...
(Sagor, 1992 p1)

This section considers professional learning in four ways. First, a history or background to professional learning in schooling in New South Wales is considered. Second, the focus of professional learning is discussed and I argue for learning that emphasises the teacher, in a specific context. Third, conditions for sustainable professional learning in schools are addressed. Of particular focus are the areas of experience, belief and social interaction for the recognised influence they have on practice, as well as for their links

to the conceptual framework for this study. Fourth, the location of professional learning, and its impact on sustainable professional learning, is addressed.

Professional learning in New South Wales schools

The past fifteen to twenty years has seen a growing emphasis on professional learning, or development, to assist teachers in their practice. Such professional learning is increasingly being informed by the schools themselves, the academy, as well as through shifts in policy and practice of the employing educational organisations (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003 p2).

In New South Wales, two key bodies provide professional learning for teachers: the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) and the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). Traditionally, both these organisations have supported development that is primarily located external to schools and is usually one-off in nature. Due to the growing support and research advocating school-based learning, both these organisations are shifting their focus for teacher professional learning.

The previously external emphasis, common at the time data were collected for this study, is moving to an increased focus on respecting that which takes place within the school and classroom context. As argued:

...Traditional one-off training workshops or initiatives of short duration, unconnected to the needs of individual teachers and students and other professional development activities are viewed as having little impact on practice...A commitment to the professional growth of every teacher should be supported with professional learning opportunities that respect and acknowledge that teachers are adult learners who learn in different ways, come from different backgrounds, work in a variety of context specific settings and cater for the needs of diverse students...

(National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 2003 p1)

Consistent with the advice of the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, DET and the AIS are now emphasising the need for teachers to share any external learning within the school community. To do so, resources are provided so that, in the case of the AIS, teachers are encouraged to share part of the course they attended with colleagues (Thompson, 2005b). In addition, online resources are offered with the opportunity to work with a consultant in targeted curriculum areas (Harriman & Darell, 2005).

The AIS offer schools the opportunity to participate in ‘customised professional development’ with services that are described as “...*tailor-made to suit the needs of each individual school...*” (Thompson, 2005a). The inclusion of this opportunity is positive, however, the list of available areas for such customised development is limited. By suggesting modules and a specific focus for the various areas offered, this program is not working directly with the schools and teacher self-identified needs.

Over the past eighteen months, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) has taken the locating of school-based development one step further through shifting power and capacity to provide teacher learning to the schools themselves (Harriman & Darell, 2005). While also providing consultant support in targeted curriculum areas, the bulk of any learning is driven by school leaders in each individual context (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2004).

Through locating funding for school-based development, on a pro-rata basis with schools, the DET is now able to target learning in areas directly related to the needs of the teachers and their school. While a positive move, this shifting of power to the schools also carries with it a concern. As was found in this research, not all individuals have the experience or knowledge in self-directing or facilitating effective school-based learning (Chapters 5 and 6). The responsibility for guiding learning is then placed with external consultants who may or may not understand the real needs of teachers and the school.

One such successful partnership, involving external consultants, is the ‘Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools’ (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003) which works with nine schools across metropolitan Sydney. The focus of this coalition is on school-based learning emphasising evidence based practice, the development of an interactive community, contributions to a broader professional knowledge base, the building of research capacity within and between schools, and the sharing of methodologies appropriate to practitioner enquiry to transform teacher professional learning (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003 p2-3).

This initiative is positive for the emphasis on long-term support assisting the provision of sustainable development and effective change in practice. As the move to school-

based learning within the Association of Independent Schools and the NSW Department of Education and Training is only recent, it is yet to be seen whether the way they are independently facilitating school-based learning will be successful in the long term.

I now turn to a more general consideration of professional learning for schooling. First, the focus for professional learning is discussed with particular emphasis on the development of the 'teacher as a person'. Second, conditions for sustainable development are highlighted emphasising the areas of belief, experience and social interaction. The third area re-visits arguments for locating professional learning experiences externally, within the school or from a situational perspective.

Focus of professional learning

The main focus of professional learning, or development, has been discussed in a variety of fields such as healthcare, hospitality and education (Fien & Rawling, 1996; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996; McIntyre, 1995; Tyler, Smith, Groves, & Brown, 1999). Despite frequent references, teacher development, or professional learning, is generally not clearly defined (Evans, 2002). The comments in this section encourage a view of professional learning that addresses teacher learning from a holistic perspective respecting each as a person as well as acknowledging the situated context in which their practice and learning takes place.

Professional learning provides a means for professionals in any field to update or change their knowledge in the hope of improving workplace practice. In addition it is viewed by educational leaders as a way of taking their schools in new directions (Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996). Some writers state that new information and techniques can be imparted; others disagree believing that the central goal of any professional learning experience is to elaborate and expand on an existing knowledge base (Borko & Putnam, 1995). Regardless of the specific focus, a common thread is that a change in knowledge and hence practice will occur. I wish to add a further area of change to this broader argument - the need for "...*changing the person the teacher is...*" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992a p7).

Professional learning in schooling now encourages a consideration of the 'person', or self, rather than focusing purely on cognitive or epistemological development (Fullan &

Hargreaves, 1992; Husby, 2005). The importance of the ‘person’ and his/her ‘context’ is credited to a growing understanding that teaching is more than just about imparting specific skills, but that it is also intuitive (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Tyler et al., 1999). To respect the intuitive and holistic nature of a teacher’s practice, professional learning in schooling should focus on three key areas:

- teacher development as knowledge and skill development
- teacher development as self understanding, and
- teacher development as ecological change

(Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992a p2).

By emphasising more than a traditional skill-development approach, the teacher as a ‘person’ as well as ‘context’ can be addressed. A move is being made toward the teaching of pedagogy, classroom management, and problem solving skills emphasising the belief that “...*Many insights are founded in classroom practice...*” (Tyler et al., 1999, p194). A particular approach on emphasising pedagogical development, to in turn improve student learning, is supported within the ‘Quality teaching in NSW public schools’ model (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003). Teachers are engaged in self-reflective practices with the aim of improving teaching. The NSW model has three key dimensions: *intellectual quality*, *quality learning environment* and *significance* (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003 p9). This approach differs to that in this study as it explicitly relates to pedagogical development locating such change purely within the classroom.

While acknowledging the need for addressing pedagogical development, I drew strongly on the need to consider a teacher’s *purpose*, who they are as a *person*, the real world *context* in which they are working as well as the *culture* of teaching existing in their school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p5). These four elements shaped the focus of professional learning in this research, and guided the collaborative and personal nature of the interactions as well as the way in which the desire to enhance the teaching of drama was approached.

Conditions for sustainable professional learning in schools

If the primary aim of professional learning is to effect change in the person and his/her practice, then the factors that influence such change need to be addressed. Three general areas are viewed as crucial to the development of successful professional learning and

link to the conceptual framework for this research: *reflection* (Crystal, 2001; Fien & Rawling, 1996; Guskey, 1995; Huberman, 1995; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996; Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003), matching a program to the *context* of the workplace (Guskey, 1995; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996) and *collaborative* development (Guskey, 1995). Drawing on these areas, three key factors are addressed in this section and considered important in the encouragement of sustainable professional learning:

- Experience;
- Beliefs; and
- Social interaction.

All three are viewed as central to professional learning for the influence they have on an individual's actions (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Following this discussion, professional learning to effect a change in practice is outlined.

- **Experience**

Students and adults are both considered able to bring a variety of experiences to the learning environment. The experience of learners is considered to have the highest value within the process of adult education (Dewey, 1938; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). As previously acknowledged, some experience does not have the potential to educate and can negatively influence learning (Dewey, 1938). This study views respecting and incorporating experience as critical within the process of learning, but is careful to acknowledge that not all experiences are helpful to learning and aims to encourage professional learning that draws on positive experience.

Experience is acknowledged as one factor that has significant influence on an individual's actions, as well as influencing how beliefs and knowledge are developed (Bain et al., 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Reynolds et al., 1996; Richardson, 1996). Three categories of experience are referred to, and drawn on within the discussion of data (Section 4.3.2 and throughout Chapter 7):

- Personal experience
- Experience with schooling and instruction
- Formal knowledge (education) experiences

(Richardson, 1996 p105-106)

Personal experience includes experiences of the world, the view of self in relation to others, the developed understanding of the relationship between school and society, as well as personal, familial and cultural understandings (Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Richardson, 1996). Personal experiences are formed from birth with understanding of these experiences usually located within a particular cultural and social context. As this research is focusing on the teacher as a person, the place of experience of this kind becomes a central concern for professional learning.

Experience with schooling and instruction is viewed as assisting the formation of the strong beliefs regarding schooling held prior to the beginning of teacher training (Ernest, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Personal theories of teaching and learning are formed through personal experiences of the schooling process (Richardson, 1996). Engaging with memories of such experiences was important within this research as is presented throughout the discussion of data, but particularly in the teachers' stories outlined in Chapter 7. They were helpful in developing deeper understandings of current classroom choices and practice and informed ongoing learning and reflection.

Experience with formal knowledge (education) is the third category of experience and incorporates the necessary understandings previously agreed on by a 'community of scholars' (Richardson, 1996). This aspect of experience is important for understanding previous professional learning in which the teachers engaged. While not all past formal education experiences may be impacting on classroom practice, their existence in shaping each teacher must be acknowledged.

Personal experience and that with schooling and instruction are considered to be most powerful in forming a teacher's conceptions of schooling. While acknowledging the place of formal education, the pedagogical training received in teacher education programs is considered less directly influential on practice (Richardson, 1996).

As experience is to be respected as influencing a teacher's classroom practice, there are resulting implications for intended professional learning. Negative experiences with past courses can impact on the motivation and engagement of an individual, with timing and location also affecting attitudes to development. Locating the learning within the workplace, and developing a process that is empathetic to the changing needs and pressures of teachers is critical in order to alleviate some of these issues. While a negative experience can never be erased, incorporating the teachers' self-expressed needs, and negotiating development styles and timing will hopefully change any negative perceptions that may have developed over time. The provision of this personal control in professional learning is considered important for assisting motivation and giving learning meaning (Clark, 1992; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Thiessen, 1992).

- **Belief**

Belief can be referred to in a variety of ways, so the establishment of a clear definition is important. For the purposes of this study, beliefs involve “...*understandings, premises or propositions... that are felt to be true...*” (Richardson, 1996, p103). They are also seen as being “...*cited in support of decisions...referred to in passing judgment on behavior of others.*” (Goodenough, 1963, p151). Beliefs are influenced by experiences in different subject areas as well as through the development of pedagogical knowledge, and are seen as falling within two categories: general beliefs and teacher beliefs.

General beliefs are a way of presenting or describing the relationship that exists between an event, task, action or person and the attitude of a person toward it (Eisenhart et al., 1988 p3). These can incorporate religious and familial beliefs as well as those developed personally over time. This concept can also be narrowed when referring to ‘*teacher beliefs*’ viewed as, “...*tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught...*” (Kagan, 1992 p65). Teacher beliefs, as influenced by an individual's general beliefs, encapsulate the approach within this research study.

The theory and approach to learning in this research encourages a focus on the individual which results in ‘personal beliefs’ being important when planning professional learning. Beliefs impact on the performance of any individual, drive, direct

and underlie practice. Teaching behaviours are formed by past experiences and likely to be influenced by their beliefs (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). When considering, therefore, that professional learning aims to change practice in the workplace, prior experiences and beliefs that are brought to a course need to be acknowledged.

A related issue is that of measurement. As beliefs are considered to be an internal motivator, then those that have influenced teacher behaviour must be inferred from what is said and done as they cannot be directly measured or observed (Pajares, 1992). An aim in this study is to respect and address individual teacher beliefs within the development of the professional learning framework.

- **Social interaction**

The importance of social interaction is the third area influencing the learning process and has taken a central role in previous discussions of learning theory and the methodological approach. It is acknowledged that a consideration of social interaction has implications for the style, location and content of any professional learning process developed. Two key areas directly related to professional learning do however need to be addressed when planning to incorporate social interaction: *locus of control* (Lefcourt, 1976) and *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1997).

Locus of control involves individuals describing external forces or factors over which they feel they have no control. These are described as influencing actions taken, failures or successes (Lefcourt, 1976; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Understanding where the teachers in any environment place their locus of control is important to allow for strategies to be planned that can counter the impact of these factors and further empower the teachers. Generally professional learning aims for increased knowledge and skills and encourages a change in practice. When driven by teacher needs, as in this research, professional learning relies on teachers placing this locus of control with themselves. The need for such autonomy is addressed within situated and action learning theory advocating collaborative learning.

Self-efficacy refers to self belief in regard to the level of competency felt in a particular environment (Bandura, 1997; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). As with locus of control, understanding the level of self-efficacy of teachers involved in professional learning has

important implications for structuring programs and selecting topic areas. When hoping to enhance the teaching of drama in primary classrooms, the level of self-efficacy enjoyed by teachers impacts on motivation and engagement in any offered learning. A professional learning process would need to be responsive to these levels of self-efficacy. Through asking teachers to reflect directly on their level of competency, self-efficacy levels could be made explicit and then addressed within the professional learning process.

- **Changing beliefs and practice**

Changing beliefs and practice is a key focus of this research and a complex area within professional learning. The possibility of effecting change is considered by various writers as ranging along a continuum from ‘impossible’ to ‘very possible’ (Garcia, 1993; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Two primary tools are offered to assist with change. These are reflection (Bain et al., 1999; Spalding & Wilson, 2002) and professional learning (Richardson, 1996).

The importance of reflection has been discussed in learning theory and is again addressed through its inclusion as a data collection tool (Section 3.4.3). Professional learning as an agent of change to enhance the teaching of drama forms the primary focus of this research. It is with the style of professional learning that a more complex discussion is required.

To implement change, professional learning programs that encourage teachers to focus on themselves, are considered most beneficial. This approach is also supported by the participatory and context based nature of the conceptual framework for this research. It is important to recognise that teachers come to workplace innovation with different ideas and experiences (Henry & Clements, 1999). By acknowledging this reality, teachers will come to any professional learning experience with prior ideas and beliefs. These beliefs incorporate a teacher’s personal philosophy of education and learning, the philosophy of education of the school they work in, and the nature of their formal training. It is important to include all aspects of a ‘teacher as a person’ (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992) to allow for meaningful change to occur.

Meaningful change in both beliefs and practice is seen to be easier at the ‘practising teacher’ rather than the ‘pre-service’ level. Practising teachers are the focus for this study and locating it with professionals has implications for the location of professional learning as discussed below.

Location of professional learning

The decision to locate the teacher development, or professional learning primarily within the school context was based on an investigation of literature and personal experiences. The current debate surrounding the best location for professional learning as external or school-based, provides support for the decision made in this research.

Primarily, the argument for location of professional learning provides a dichotomy where learning is either *external* (Huberman, 1995; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Matthews & Wright, 1995) or *school-based* (Crystal, 2001; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b; Hundert, 1996; Husby, 2005; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996). A third area supported within this research involves choosing the location of professional learning from a *situational* perspective (Guskey, 1995; Monash University, 1998).

Externally based professional learning is supported by recent research (Fien & Rawling, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996; Matthews & Wright, 1995; Tyler et al., 1999). The benefit of this style of development is its ability to focus on skill development that is considered an important part of providing teachers with ‘opportunities to teach’ (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992a). Recent times have demonstrated a swing toward school-based professional learning (Thiessen, 1992), however external courses are still the primary development style within countries such as Austria, Germany and France (Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996). In these countries, the power of designing professional learning experiences is placed in the hands of universities and training colleges (Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996).

There is considerable opposition to externally located professional development for three key reasons:

- motivation,
- relevance and
- transferability issues.

If a course is based externally, the *motivation* to attend and participate can become an issue. Teachers may be asked to travel to courses that occur after school or on weekends, taking time away from their lives outside the working environment, and this may cause resentment rather than excitement. Motivation to attend professional learning has been addressed in a number of ways. One example is the design of a course that would also be credited to a formal qualification, such as a Graduate Certificate (Matthews & Wright, 1995). Through providing such tangible motivation, the aim is that teachers are more encouraged to attend the externally located course. Programs such as this can assist with motivating teachers, but are still external to the normal working week.

While incentives, as discussed above, may provide motivation for some teachers to attend external courses, the question of *relevance* to individual workplaces still comes into question. If an individual teacher goes to an external professional learning course, what impact does this have on the school community? (Tyler et al., 1999) How relevant is it to their daily practice? As previously acknowledged, learning is considered within this research as needing to be situated in the workplace, and therefore the ‘context’ in which teachers work must be considered for sustainable learning and a change in practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Thiessen, 1992).

If the context is not addressed, or support in external professional learning is not established for expanding on and developing any knowledge gained, then its effectiveness is suspect. This was a primary concern when developing my own understanding of professional learning and the preferred approach within this research. The collaborative and flexible nature of the process that emerged (Chapters 3-7), I believe reflects an effective professional learning process characterised by its respect of the teachers, their knowledge, experiences and context.

The third reason offered in opposition to external professional learning is in relation to the *transference* of skills. The provision of specific skills may occur in external

professional development, but the issue of transferability to the workplace or classroom can still arise (Hendricks, 2001). The findings of Hendricks' (2001) study are significant when considering the use of externally based professional learning courses. If transference is not automatic for many people, and if it is not easily taught, then the ability of participants in any external course to transfer the knowledge and skills gained to their workplace is dubious. As learning is grounded in everyday action, knowledge can only be transferred to similar situations (Stein, 1998). The need for situating learning within the workplace to reduce issues of transference has been argued in Section 2.2.1.

Recent trends show support for a move toward **school-based** professional learning as opposed to encouraging participation in external courses. These trends also support what has been presented as the main aim of professional learning - creating change in the workplace (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992a; Hoban, 2002; Hundert, 1996; Husby, 2005; Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996; Thiessen, 1992).

School-based professional development can be viewed on two levels: development that occurs generally within the *school context*, and that which occurs specifically in a teacher's *classroom*. There are varied opinions as to the most effective location. One view is that learning should be located primarily in the classroom and be focused on the interaction and learning that takes place with the teacher and students (Thiessen, 1992). The other is that for effective change, the 'culture' and broader context of the school also need to be addressed (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1992; Hoban, 2002).

I consider both perspectives important in emphasising the need for classroom based learning as it is within these 'safe spaces' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) that teachers can recognise the influence of any change in practice. The external environment of the school, however, must also be acknowledged to develop a collaborative culture that can foster "...*qualities of openness, trust and support between teachers and their colleagues...*" (Hargreaves, 1992 p233).

While much support is given for professional learning within the school context, potential problems that may occur when doing so must be acknowledged (Joyce &

Showers, 1980). First, few schools have *processes* in place that allow for collegial support or assist collective or group decision making to occur. The need for developing the culture of a school can assist to alleviate such a concern, and while this was attempted in this research, cultural problems still impacted on the success of professional learning (Section 8.2).

Second, *economic constraints* can prevent schools from sending staff to in-service programs and affect their ability to organise it within their specific school context (Lakerfeld & Nentwig, 1996). Due to the cost of most external programs, the allocation of funds is often spent on more material resources within the school environment. The priority given by school leaders to further develop the skills of their teachers is linked to these constraints as funding allocation is always a question of choice. The role of the principal is central in this decision making process, as this individual is credited as “...*a key factor in bringing about and maintaining the change and as a factor in the teachers’ own development...*” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998 p138). Also linked to economic constraint is the ability to make any professional learning that does take place in the school *sustainable*. To allow for continued change in a school, an ongoing capacity to foster teacher development, or professional learning, is required (Wideen et al., 1998).

Third, the *social context* of the school impacts on professional learning initiatives. As discussed, social interaction is a key to learning. A school that does not encourage and provide support structures for interaction, group discussion and reflection between its teachers may be negatively impacting on motivation and effectiveness of any learning taking place. As previously advocated in this chapter, collaboration and social interaction are critical to fostering effective professional learning. Teachers are often uncomfortable when attempting new techniques or strategies within their classroom. The support structure given by a group, “... *provides time to hone newly forming skills and provides encouragement to help counter initial anxiety...*” (Wideen et al., 1998 p141). Throughout the planning and process of professional learning, the need for collaboration and social interaction was never questioned. Throughout this research, it became a positive inclusion in the learning process for all stakeholders.

Rather than considering the location of professional learning as a dichotomy, I fostered a middle line which emphasised location as **situational**. Sometimes referred to as ‘customised professional learning’, such an approach grew from a belief that one professional learning approach would not necessarily cater for all needs (Monash University, 1998). Learning to teach is considered to be “...*a deeply personal endeavour...*” (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000, p247), and is therefore the core of what teaching and learning is. It also highlights that the motivation for each individual would be different.

These ‘differences’ are acknowledged within this study through the continued emphasis on the teacher as a person who is located within a specific context. Professional learning in this study was defined primarily from a school-based perspective linking with the conceptual framework for the research. The effective nature of such a location for fostering learning and a change in practice also guided this decision. Unlike some school-based learning, I did not consider it helpful to exclude externally located opportunities. A balance was fostered where teachers were encouraged to attend external sessions with the school-based environment then used for necessary follow-up and reflection.

This section has discussed professional learning for schooling, considering the need for an approach that respects beliefs, experiences and social interaction through emphasising a focus on teachers and their contexts. Conditions and location for sustainable professional learning were presented with a situational approach focusing predominantly on school-based learning which was considered advantageous for enhancing the teaching of drama. The next section draws together the two key areas of literature: drama and professional learning.

2.3 Pulling it together: drama and professional learning

...If we are to give more than lip service to creativity in children, we must actively support the creativity of the teacher. That is to say, we must come to recognise the creativity of good teaching...

(Heathcote, 1984b p80)

Literature connecting drama and professional learning takes a number of forms. One approach considers externally located development by which drama teachers participate in sessions to improve practice (Kempe, 1998; Somers & Sikorova, 2002). At the other end of the scale is learning located within the school context targeting mainstream classroom teachers attempting drama in classrooms (Garcia, 1993; Hundert, 1996). An alternative approach is the use of drama within learning and development (Monks, Barker, & Ni Mhanachain, 2001), however this approach to drama as a learning tool in management development will not be further explored.

Externally located courses designed for teachers of drama is the most common style of professional learning in this subject area (Hundert, 1996). While advocated only in balance with school and classroom-based learning, such an approach has benefits for skill development. One such project conducted in the Czech Republic focused on developing teacher understanding of drama (Somers & Sikorova, 2002). A balance was sought with techniques and approaches being shared as well as time being provided to explore “...*relevance of the work to the teachers’ professional contexts...*” (Somers & Sikorova, 2002 p95).

By acknowledging the relevance of context, this in-service course was beginning to bridge the gap between external learning and the workplace. Through focusing on relevance, issues of transferability common to external learning were reduced. As occurs with much development in drama, teachers were inspired by their participation, with clear evidence six months on that some teachers had drawn on activities learned within the course, adapting them to their particular contexts (Somers & Sikorova, 2002).

Coming to professional learning in drama with limited or no prior training in the subject area is common (Garcia, 1993; Hundert, 1996; Somers & Sikorova, 2002). This raises important issues regarding subject choice within teacher training and prior professional learning. The provision of ideas and pedagogical modelling within the external course demonstrates the benefits of this approach and supports the inclusion of some such skill based development in this research. Teachers found ideas and insight gained, along with the modelling necessary in drama in-service, as helpful in guiding future teaching practices (Somers & Sikorova, 2002).

Such modelling is not enough for many teachers who believe that “...*watching a specialist work with students for a morning or afternoon was hardly sufficient exposure to drama for teachers hoping to implement it themselves...*” (Hundert, 1996 p201).

While not implying that the above course was limited to such basic modelling techniques, an interesting point is raised regarding the need for teachers to be offered continued support when attempting the inclusion of drama.

A school, or site-based, initiative was developed in response to the perceived limitation of simplistic modelling with the focus being determined by specific classroom needs (Hundert, 1996). Through doing so, teachers became less information recipients, because they were allowed increased ownership of the learning process and enjoyed an enhanced focus on themselves (Hundert, 1996). Such a focus has been advocated in this research through the supported approach to professional learning.

A number of stakeholders were involved in this school-based professional learning initiative including a district superintendent, the school principal, the peer-coach (drama expert) as well as the teachers (Hundert, 1996). Each of these parties had different responsibilities within the process, however the need for their participation emphasises the importance of a collaborative and supportive culture to foster effective learning.

The findings of the study confirm the role of administrative support in influencing motivation and participation due to the value placed on the process of learning (Hundert, 1996). As is discussed in Chapter 6, a lack of administrative support did not reduce participation in the professional learning in this research, but disappointed participating teachers. Other findings link directly with the development of this research, including the importance of fostering professional satisfaction to further motivate teacher learning (Hundert, 1996). Similarly, the preference for collaborative, school-based learning as revealed within Hundert’s study supports the approach adopted in this research.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the literature relevant to this research considering the areas of drama and professional learning. The approach to learning and style of drama supported in the research has been addressed throughout the chapter, and the way in which the learning theory connects with the methodology is discussed in Section 2.2.2. In summary, the knowledge gained shaped the research in the following ways:

- Research in drama education should be located with teachers in classrooms and involve them in a collaborative process of investigation.
- Theory and reflection should be included in any attempt to enhance the teaching of drama.
- Those researching drama education need to work as a ‘community of researchers’ as well as functioning as a ‘community of practitioners’ in order for knowledge to be shared.
- Drama in education should be viewed as both ‘pedagogy’ and ‘art’ and a consideration of this dichotomy should be included in any professional learning.
- Professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama should recognise that teachers will come to the use of drama with varying degrees of confidence, understanding of its value, belief in its benefit, and skill level. In addition recognition should be given to the contextual factors inhibiting its use including syllabus requirements, timetables, noise tolerance and the provision of space.
- Understanding learning to be a social, collaborative process reliant on reflection is critical for implementing effective professional learning.
- The role of a facilitator within the professional learning process should be that of an empathetic support, or guide, rather than a director of learning.
- Effective professional learning should involve voluntary participants and be predominantly school-based.
- For professional learning to be effective it should address the ‘teacher as a person’ who is motivated by beliefs, needs and experiences.

A balance between ‘drama as pedagogy’ and ‘drama as art’ was emphasised in the chapter as was the need for ongoing, continued research in drama at both an

international and Australian level. Valuing drama was considered crucial to motivating its inclusion in the classroom, with a discussion of constraints involving externally located factors within the school context and some internally located with the teacher.

The place of the teacher as central to the learning process was emphasised within the discussion on professional learning. A conceptual framework comprising elements of situated and action learning supported the need for social, collaborative learning situated in the workplace, or school context. Current trends in professional learning for schooling further supported this approach, with a situational perspective taken that encouraged a blend of school-based and externally located sessions.

Finally, this chapter concluded with a consideration of literature directly linking drama and professional learning. While success was realised for the key initiatives discussed, the benefits of school-based learning supported by the conceptual framework and general literature on professional learning, links directly with the purpose and research aims of this study.

The next chapter presents details of the methodological approach outlining the '*facilitated action research*' process, data collection tools and analysis procedures. In addition, profiles of the participants are presented along with a clarification of the role of the researcher.

Chapter 3 - Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This study was designed to explore ways in which the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms could be enhanced. I adopted a process of '*facilitated action research*' (Section 3.3) as the most appropriate method for exploring the three research aims:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.
2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.
3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

Various data collection tools were employed to address these aims as discussed in Section 3.4.

The adoption of action research as a methodology was determined to a large extent by the focus of the research. There was a cyclical process in which the 'action' allowed for the specific focus and research aims to be further clarified. Through this process, my learning could be considered alongside the learning of the participating teachers. Respect for the voices of the participants embeds itself in the methodology, with the importance of presenting these voices central to an action research approach.

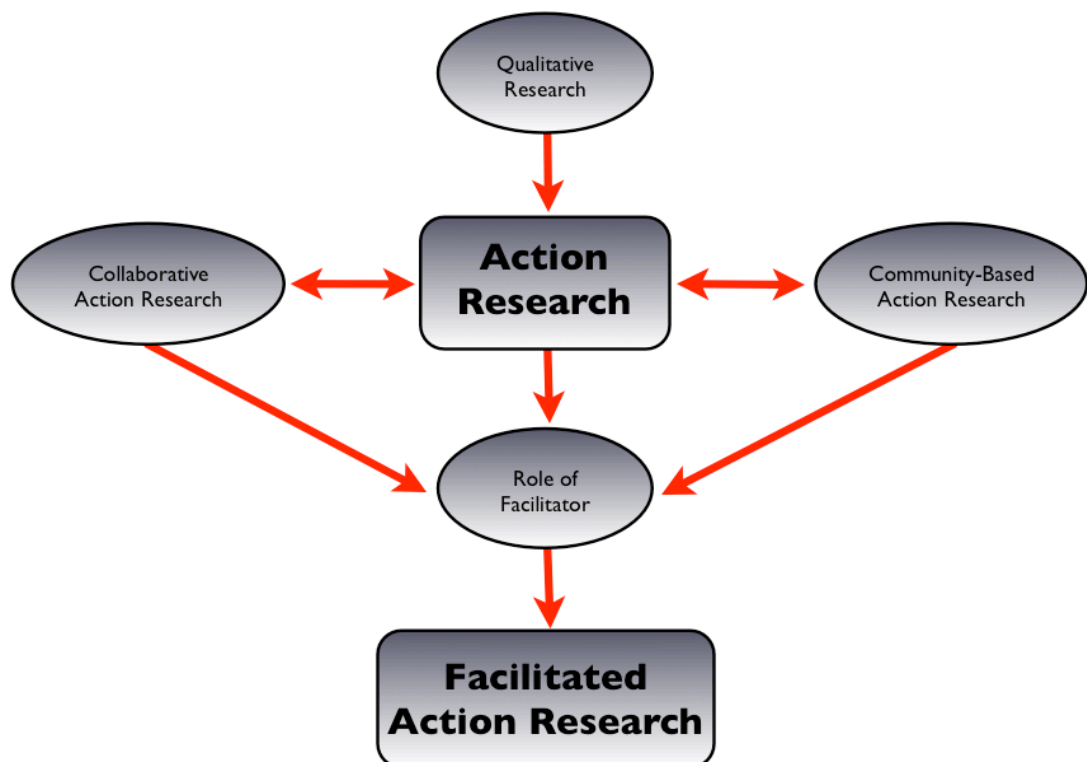
This chapter reports on the way in which this research was designed and implemented and is presented in five key sections. First, an explanation of the overarching *methodology* is provided considering the selection of qualitative research, adoption of a broad action research paradigm and the advantages and limitations of this methodological approach (Section 3.1). Second, the *participants* and *schools* are outlined highlighting the selection process and their place in the study (Section 3.2). Third, the *design* of the research is discussed providing a complete account of all stages

of the ‘facilitated action research’ process (Section 3.3). Fourth, *data collection* tools and the plan for *analysis* are presented (Section 3.4). Fifth, I discuss the integral *place of the researcher*, adopting two different methods for considering the roles I played and implications for data analysis reporting (Section 3.5).

3.1 Methodology

The approach followed in this research can be described as a fluid process as opposed to a prescribed ‘method’. The ‘*facilitated action research*’ process emerged from this approach and draws on, but is not part of existing traditions of action research. Figure 3.1 provides a visual explanation of how ‘facilitated action research’ is connected with the broader area of qualitative research as well as with collaborative and community-based action research traditions.

Figure 3.1 - ‘Facilitated Action Research’ connections



In order to trace how the methodology for this study developed, characteristics and traditions of action research are considered. First I locate the study within a broader

qualitative perspective showing the natural links to the action research paradigm and purposes of this study. Second, I consider action research, its characteristics and traditions, and discuss relevant aspects of collaborative and community-based action research. The role of the facilitator as it informed the ‘facilitated action research’ process is also addressed. Finally, I consider the advantages and limitations of adopting a qualitative, action research oriented approach.

3.1.1 Qualitative research

...All research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feeling about the world and how it should be understood and studied...

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 px)

The purpose of the research was to gain an in-depth picture of each teacher’s understanding, teaching practices, and professional learning, to enhance the teaching of drama in a particular school. This ensured the need for a research environment that “...builds a complex, holistic picture...” (Creswell, 1998 p15) also emphasising the importance of conducting the study “...in a natural setting...” (Creswell, 1998 p15). Qualitative research locates itself primarily in the social context for investigation, making this overarching approach particularly relevant to educational research of this kind (Merriam, 1988; Schratz, 1993).

Qualitative research of the type undertaken is both descriptive and interpretive. I attempted to understand in-depth the participants (including myself), our thoughts, actions and interactions. The focus was on how the learning developed within the social setting of the school (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

A qualitative approach is supported through the conceptual frame adopted whereby knowledge is socially constructed. Knowledge construction in education is seen to occur on a storied ‘landscape’ that incorporates moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Schools and teachers are located within their own socially constructed realities. Each constructed ‘society’ or ‘school community’ comes with its own rituals, routines, expectations and culture. Respecting these cultures as well as each individual’s ‘constructions’, became a focus of this research.

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the conceptual framework for this study draws on theories of situated learning (Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McLellan, 1996c), and action learning (McGill & Brockband, 2004; Revans, 1982, 1983). These connections further address the links with the social construction of knowledge and social learning practices:

...When the social context of learning is recognized and collaboration is valued rather than penalized, the significance of relationship in learning makes sense, prioritizing involvement and connection, nurturing joint endeavours and stimulating the creativity of constructed knowledge...

(McGill & Brockband, 2004 p21)

The framework encouraging social learning, but also respecting the need for individual development, is consistent with *action research*, where the research is conducted in a ‘natural setting’ (Creswell, 1998). The understandings of the ‘society’, or context, in which the study took place could be respected through this method as an embedded part of the research. A detailed discussion of action research as the overarching methodology for this study follows.

3.1.2 Action research

...Action research is research by practitioners, undertaken to improve practice. For practitioners, it is not enough to develop theories about a situation: they also want to change the situation, as a result of their new knowledge, to improve the working and learning conditions for themselves and their students.

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p155)

...People do action research when they want to investigate what is happening in their particular situation and try to improve it...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p14)

...asking questions with a view to improvement can reveal the hidden complexities of a situation and allow important dilemmas to be surfaced and addressed, and help us to learn how to find a way through, or to live with them...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p22)

Traditional research is viewed as commonly taking place separate to the lives of the participants, and as a result can be considered deficient when investigating “...*experienced reality*...” (Stringer, 1999 p6). Action research is a methodology that places the participant at the fore, with participants most often the researchers themselves (Altrichter et al., 1993). The work context to be investigated is inseparable from the participant, with me as the researcher needing to be embedded and respectful of this

relationship. At the end of the research a change in practice is expected (Stringer, 1999) with the need for making the gained knowledge public. This is a key characteristic of the action research paradigm (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003).

Action research as an approach to improving professional practice is viewed as growing from school-based or educational settings and is possibly a response to the relative isolation within which many teachers work and hence develop. This isolation differs from other professional organisations in which the primary workplace may be more team-oriented and suitable for true action learning (Section 2.2.1). While not adopting a 'pure' action learning approach, the way in which it shapes the role of the facilitator as well as relationships between participants is discussed further in Section 3.1.2.

The tradition of action research can be viewed as dating back to the 1940's with the work of Kurt Lewin (1946). There was a move away from this paradigm in the 1960s (McNiff, 2002b), with it re-emerging again in Britain with the work of Lawrence Stenhouse (1975). The basic action-reflection cycle, offered initially by Lewin, has since been taken up and adapted in the work of other theorists such as Wilf Carr and Stephen Kemmis (1986), as well as that of John Elliott (1991).

A common theme across the various discussions of action research centres on encouraging a change in practice in the environment within which a person works (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003; Sagor, 1992). Furthermore, 'community' is emphasised in some explanations (Sagor, 1992; Stringer, 1999) with the emphasis on change being both individual and social (McNiff et al., 2003).

A key consideration I faced when adopting action research was its similarities to 'good research practice' (McNiff et al., 2003) or 'professional' practice. Professionals would argue that the process of problem identification, action taking and reflection on that action would constitute 'good professional practice' within any occupation (McNiff et al., 2003):

...It [action research] lies in the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which teachers and students work in schools. Action research is intended to support teachers, and groups of teachers, in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way...

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p4)

Identifying the differences between ‘good practice’ and ‘action research’ was important. A key difference comes from the ability of action research to address broader issues of curriculum development, assist with development of the profession, and advance educational research. This is only possible through the rigorous collection of evidence and thorough reporting required in action research. In further support of this distinction, Stenhouse (1975) advocates that action research has a responsibility to make theories of education and teaching available to others in addition to improving personal practice. Recognising the importance of making such theories public allowed for the process of learning to be transparent. This study supports the need for such a public sharing of knowledge and theory as discussed in Section 6.6.

Various writers have offered suggestions on what constitutes ‘action research’ (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003; Sagor, 1992). That presented by Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993) was most influential in developing my own broader understanding of the action research paradigm:

1. Action research is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched.
2. Action research starts from practical questions arising from everyday educational work.
3. Action research must be compatible with the educational values of the school and with the work conditions of teachers.
4. Action research offers a repertoire of simple methods and strategies for researching and developing practice...Methods are tailored to what is achievable without overly disrupting practice.
5. ...it [Action research] is characterised by a continuing effort to closely interlink, relate and confront action and reflection, to reflect upon one’s conscious and unconscious doings in order to develop one’s actions, and to act reflectively in order to develop one’s knowledge.
6. Each action research project...has a character of its own...we hesitate to provide an elaborate step-by-step model.

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p6)

When considering these characteristics, five key areas emerged from the literature that were helpful both for the development of this research, and in distinguishing ‘action research’ from other expressions of ‘good professional practice’. These were:

- social/cultural emphasis;
- focus on values;
- the connection of action and reflection;
- links to real practice; and

- practical assistance for teachers.

Through a discussion of each area, the appropriateness of action research for this study is highlighted.

- **Social/cultural emphasis**

Adopting an action research paradigm was appropriate for this research as it is primarily concerned with the social situation being studied (Altrichter et al., 1993). In addition, it is able to respond to the social situation (McNiff et al., 2003) viewing it as an integral part of the research. I was interested in investigating how the teaching of drama in primary schools could be enhanced. The importance of social interaction as well as respecting the 'society' in which a teacher's work takes place needed to be emphasised. The ability to address the social situation and the necessity of doing so within an action research paradigm supports this methodological approach.

- **Focus on values**

All teachers have predetermined values which they bring to a school, and which in turn are shaped by the culture of the school. An action research paradigm respects these school-based values believing that any research must be compatible with them (Altrichter et al., 1993).

I believed that allowing for an emphasis on the values base of practice (McNiff et al., 2003) was important within this research. The participating teachers were all recognised professionals in their field and therefore the values underpinning their practice needed to be respected. My own values as researcher and ex-teacher were also embedded. Adopting an action research paradigm allowed for these values to be acknowledged and respected as inseparable from the study.

- **The connection of action and reflection**

The need for a balance between action and reflection has been encouraged within education, however the work of Schön (1983) and his writing on reflection-on and -in action has been influential. The aim of this research involved teachers in a process of reflecting on their practice and the teaching of drama. I considered actions taken in the

past, and actions planned for the future, important in guiding the direction and shape of the study.

- **Links to real practice**

The importance of action research beginning from “...*practical questions arising from everyday educational work...*” (Altrichter et al., 1993 p6) is emphasised. An action research study must concern the teaching and learning process and be within a practitioner’s scope of influence (Sagor, 1992). McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003) include the need for ‘change’ within their characteristics of action research with the “...*self the locus of control...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p12-16).

This research grew out of a personal issue with my practice. I was frustrated with my own teaching of drama and wished to investigate how I could improve. This focus then shifted to emphasise the practice of other teachers through my no longer being located in a school or classroom. There are further links to practice within this study as the content is located in teacher’s classrooms and their daily work.

- **Practical assistance for teachers**

An aim of action research is personal and social improvement (McNiff et al., 2003). Through participating, professionals are encouraged to reflect and question their knowledge and practice with the aim of workplace change. Those discussing action research purely within education extend this idea believing that the particular ‘phenomena’ being studied “...*must concern the teaching/learning process...*” (Sagor, 1992 p9).

While my own learning was enhanced through the process of the research, the learning of the teachers assumed a parallel focus. Practical assistance was embedded through the action research methodology.

Combining principles from each of these five areas provided a further rationale for the way in which action research differs from just ‘good practice’ or ‘good research’.

Collaborative and community-based action research

Understanding forms of ‘collaborative’ and ‘community-based’ action research is important for what they contribute to the ‘*facilitated action research*’ process developed in this study.

There have been a number of definitions offered as to what ‘collaborative’ and ‘community-based’ action research involves (Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Sagor, 1992; Stringer, 1999). These explanations focus on “...*teams of practitioners who have common interests and work together to investigate issues related to those interests...*” (Sagor, 1992 p10). While the collaborative, or community focus is emphasised through certain professional learning activities, the focus and key responsibility for learning was individually located.

The focus on ‘*sharing of experience*’ and ‘*discussing outcomes*’ in the following excerpt support the style of professional learning in this research and connect with the situated and action learning theories:

...We use the term ‘collaborative research’ when several teachers...collaborate in their research by sharing experiences and discussing outcomes, though not necessarily sharing the same focus...

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p181)

The acknowledgement that teachers can work collaboratively through this process, but do not need to share a focus, respects the individuality of classroom practice and the change process that enhances it.

The ‘environment’ supported within ‘community-based’ action research is reflected in this study as the aim was to encourage equality, maintain harmony, avoid conflict and encourage cooperative relationships rather than foster isolation (Stringer, 1999). While external influences were difficult to control, harmony between the participants was maintained. As a result, ongoing support and shared learning extended beyond the scope of the current research.

The importance of sharing knowledge gained is considered a way of delineating the action research process from good reflective practice. In the case of this research, I was

the one who would be constructing the major report in which the change process and learning would be presented. While drawing on teacher comments and experiences, they were not active contributors to the structure or academic reporting process.

A process of action research is encouraged within schools as a way of fostering improvement in teacher practice. Time constraints and varying priorities and demands result in much productive school-based action research not being reported. My ability to take on primary responsibility for reporting learning, rather than being a deficiency, became a positive feature of the ‘facilitated action research’ process (Section 3.3). Through encouraging teachers to report regularly through reflection and conversation, I could embed their voices in primary reporting, while meeting their diverse school-based needs.

The facilitator

Considerations of what action research is and why it was utilised are important in terms of how they influenced the unique adaptation of action research in this study. Identifying my role in the overall picture was a challenge, as traditionally in action research, “...*there is a clear intent to intervene in and improve one’s own understanding and practice...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p19). This study included this element, but due to my not being located within a classroom, it focused more directly on working with teachers to develop *their* understanding and practice of drama.

A number of characteristics of ‘community-based action research’ are typical of the role of the researcher, or in this case facilitator, in this study:

...In community-based action research, the role of the researcher is not that of an expert who *does* research but that of a resource person. He or she becomes a facilitator or consultant who acts as a catalyst to assist stakeholders in defining their problems clearly and to support them as they work toward effective solutions to the issues that concern them...

(Stringer, 1999 p25)

I was a *catalyst*, to *stimulate change* through addressing current concerns. The emphasis was on *process* by which teachers were encouraged to *develop their own analysis* of issues. My role of researcher/facilitator was to *assist in the development* of plans of action and to assist in *implementing* the plan (Stringer, 1999 p25-26).

Action learning theory supports this view of the facilitator within a collaborative approach to learning. The facilitator works with learners to “...*release and enhance the set member’s capacity for understanding and managing his life, his development...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p193). The role of the facilitator was not to ‘instruct’ or ‘teach’ the participants, but to act as resource and guide. Core qualities, particularly empathy and response to emotion (McGill & Brockband, 2004), were considered important within this study and drawn on in my interactions with teachers. My role in the research is further discussed in Section 3.5 where I consider the two drama-related approaches taken to assist in understanding the various roles I played.

While acknowledging the links to ‘collaborative’ or ‘community-based’ action research, these conventional methods have not been adopted in this study. To alleviate issues with terminology confusion, the term ‘*facilitated action research*’ is applied to encapsulate the methodological approach. I was the facilitator of this process working collaboratively with teachers, assisting them in identifying a focus for their professional learning and preferred ‘action strategies’.

Unlike an ‘outsider’ researcher who researches ‘others’, as facilitator I became a participant in the action research process on two levels. First, from a classroom perspective, I team taught with the teachers through the inclusion of modelled lessons enhancing my understanding of their practice and classroom contexts. This allowed me to be more effective in my role as professional learning facilitator. Second, I was also a participant in relation to my focus on self which considered my roles of professional learning facilitator and researcher. Being ‘self-critical’ of these dual roles of practitioner and researcher is considered important when conducting action research (Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004).

Facilitated action research

The ‘*facilitated action research*’ process stands as a unique adaptation blending aspects of various recognised ‘methods’ or ‘traditions’ of action research. It emerged through consideration of the previously identified aspects of action research, and through collaboration with research participants.

Synthesising the key features of the process, ‘facilitated action research’ *involves* the following characteristics of ‘traditional’ action research methods, community-based and collaborative action research. The ‘facilitated action research’ process:

- resides with practitioners;
- respects the ‘social situation’ and is context-based;
- allows for and encourages engagement with values;
- respects the need for ‘making knowledge public’, or ‘sharing outcomes’;
- encourages a change in practice;
- emphasises the importance of balancing action and reflection from an individual and social perspective; and
- focuses on sharing experiences (but still locating individual learning with individual focus).

This approach also meant that I *deviated* from traditional approaches to action research through the:

- interpretation of the role of facilitator;
- emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness; and
- adaptation of the plan-act-observe-reflect cycle.

While aspects of the ‘facilitated action research’ process reflect collaborative or community-based action research, their focused guidelines and ‘methods’ led me to follow an emerging process guided by the needs of the teachers and context within which they worked. A detailed explanation of the growth of the ‘*facilitated action research*’ process is discussed in Section 3.3.1.

3.1.3 Advantages/Limitations of the methodology

The first limitation of this study relates more broadly to the field of qualitative research as well as specifically to that of action research. Reliability, or the ability to generalise based on the data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1988) is considered a concern.

McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003) suggest that a traditional criterion for generalisation is “...*inappropriate for the new scholarships of action research...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p133). Within this ‘new scholarship’, knowledge is shared through stories that exist within individuals:

...The accumulation of individual stories constitutes a culture of collective learning. The stories, and the knowledge they represent, are always in transformation; what is known today can transform into a new form tomorrow...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p133)

Through this perspective, individuals make their knowledge available for others to critique rather than submerging it within a collective or group knowledge.

The aim of action research is to improve individual practice. By doing so in a social, collaborative context, changing knowledge was shared by the teachers allowing for new meanings to be generated (McNiff et al., 2003). While knowledge is shared within this smaller community, the opinion that research is “...*good quality if people can do the same thing with the same results, and if the method and findings can be generalised to all similar situations...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p133) may be predicted, but can not be addressed.

Second, the values emphasis, while considered positive and a necessity within this study, can also be viewed as a limitation:

...Action research is value laden, which differs from the neutral stance claimed for some other types of research. Action research becomes a process of living in a way that practitioners feel is right...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p16)

That the action research paradigm locates a study so completely within the lives and context of the practitioners has implications for the replication of the study. Through making knowledge public in a wider forum, new understandings can be shared. Through the sharing of stories, lessons applicable to other contexts can be drawn from studies such as this.

The inclusion of an ongoing and summative evaluation, assisting me as the researcher to maintain focus on the original research aims, is offered as a positive method for overcoming the perceived limitations of this methodology (McNiff et al., 2003).

3.1.4 Validity

...Validating refers to the process of testing the truthfulness of a knowledge claim by making it public for critical scrutiny in relation to appropriate standards of judgement...
(McNiff et al., 2003 p135)

The aim of testing validity is to demonstrate how different people negotiate interpretations of experience (McNiff et al., 2003). Three levels of validity are drawn on as important for consideration within this research: *self-validation*, *peer validation*, and *wider public validation* (McNiff et al., 2003 p29).

Self-validation refers to the explanations offered by the individuals involved in the action research (McNiff et al., 2003). In this study self-validation was undertaken by me and the teachers. Reflective journals were the main tool for self-validation and assisted in informing the focus of the peer validation.

Peer validation occurs when others who understand the context work through data to understand any claims (McNiff et al., 2003). Peer validation took place in a number of ways. The teachers discussed their thoughts and actions in group reflective sessions and in conversations and semi-structured interviews. In addition, I checked my understanding of data with the teachers involved. Sharing my understanding also occurred through a peer-formed group as part of my doctoral studies. In these meetings writings on our individual studies and explanations of data were shared and discussed. Similarly, sharing with doctoral supervisors also allowed for peer validation.

Wider public validation occurs when information about the study is made public and an attempt is made to convince strangers of the '*truth of our claims*' (McNiff et al., 2003 p29). This was done to a limited extent by the teachers when sharing their experiences in staff meetings. This allowed them to present evidence (changed programs) of their enhanced teaching of drama. Further public validation occurred when other teachers in the school began to comment on student change that resulted from an increased teaching of drama. Wider public validation also occurred when the action

research study was presented for public scrutiny through a number of local and international conferences, and through this thesis.

Through a consideration of self, peer and wider public validation, the importance of validation became an ongoing, formative process (McNiff et al., 2003).

3.2 Voices in the research

As both myself and the teachers were ‘embedded’, it is important to introduce the ‘voices’ weaving themselves through the text before further unpacking the process of ‘facilitated action research’ (Section 3.3):

...You are the person at the centre of the research. Action research reports use ‘I’ as the author, and reports often take the form of personal stories...The emphasis on the living person ‘I’ shows how individuals can take responsibility for improving and sustaining themselves, and the world they are in...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p20)

The ‘I’ in this study refers to the collective voices of the teachers who were encouraged to articulate their own learning. The importance of hearing the voices of the participants has been highlighted to minimise issues of selective interpretation and bias on reporting. By allowing the teachers space in the text, the experience of the research can be more fully understood. That I selected the excerpts included is acknowledged, however personal bias and assumptions have been identified with an attempt to minimise their impact throughout this study.

The research was conducted in two parts: *Phase One* and *Phase Two*. **Phase One** investigated the first research aim considering factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama. Identification of school-based professional learning, during this investigation, resulted in a focus on context and needs being supported. Due to participation in the parallel research study, the two participating schools were already engaged in professional learning. As a result, a third school was required as the focus of Phase Two. **Phase Two** involved one school, and addressed the final two research aims. The involvement of five teachers was considered an ideal number due to the in-depth, detailed nature of action research as a methodological approach.

3.2.1 Participant selection

Commonly, participant selection in action research is non-problematic. When teachers or professionals research their own practice, they become the focus, or participants, of their study. This study differs from more traditional practitioner-based action research as it incorporates me as facilitator instigating the process and working collaboratively with teachers. As a result, participant selection became an issue.

When planning participant selection, I was conscious of maintaining ethical standards of consent and safety. A case study approach to participant selection was adopted following the principle that “...*we do not study a case primarily to understand other cases...*” (Stake, 1995 p4). It was the uniqueness of each individual context, or case that was the focus.

The three schools were selected for the variety of contexts they could offer, as well as for accessibility. Schools One and Two, involved in Phase One, are state, or government, primary schools in New South Wales and were selected due to their involvement in a parallel research study on the creative arts (Bamford & Darell, 2004). Due to methods being repeated, it was not necessary for the schools participating in Phase One to participate in Phase Two.

School One is located in rural New South Wales with a student population of approximately 240. *School Two* is a larger school situated in the western suburbs of Sydney boasting a student population of 400. Three participating teachers each came from Schools One and Two. The six teachers were selected by school leaders and were all teaching Years 5 or 6 (Stage 3). Due to their involvement in the parallel research study, neither of these schools was appropriate for Phase Two focusing on school-based professional learning.

School Three was selected for inclusion in Phase Two. An average size private school located on the northern beaches of Sydney, this school was selected due to accessibility. I had previously worked at this school and enjoyed a positive relationship with staff. School Three boasts a student population of approximately three hundred. The five teachers participating in the professional learning from School Three were all volunteers

eager to develop their pedagogical practice and teaching of drama. Following the distribution of an information letter regarding the study, and notice by the school principal, each of the five teachers independently approached me to express interest in participating in the research. I gave the school no expectation in relation to gender, grades on which the teacher was working, or their role in the school as a mainstream or specialist teacher.

Despite not requesting specific grades or a blend of gender, the breakdown of teachers from all three schools was representative of traditional ratios of teaching in terms of gender, with three out of the original six teachers from Schools One and Two being male. One male teacher participated from School Three with the teachers from this school collectively teaching Kindergarten, Grades 1, 3 and 5. Two teachers taught Stage 1 students (Kindergarten and Year 1), one each taught Stage 2 (Year 3) and Stage 3 (Year 5) with one teacher working with students from all ages in his role as music specialist.

Table 3.1 displays details of the sample, providing fictitious names of the teachers, the schools from which they came, and grades taught.

Table 3.1 - Overview of Participants

Time	Phase One Aim to 'clarify the situation' to plan action strategies		Stage
Nov 2002 - April 2003	School One - Greg - Catherine - Abbey	Year 6 Year 5 Year 5/6 composite	Clarify the Situation
	School Two - Kate - Jack - Daniel	Year 5 Year 5/6 composite Year 6	
April 2003 - April 2004	Phase Two Aim to further 'clarify the situation' and plan action strategies for remainder of the study		
	School Three - Amy - Jenny - Mark - Leanne - Sally	Year 5 girls Kindergarten boys Specialist Music Year 3 girls Year 1 girls	

A more detailed discussion of each participating teacher, including excerpts in which they outline their classrooms and ‘ideal classroom environment’, can be found in Section 3.2.3.

The focus of the study did not include:

- consideration of the school leaders or students (except the way in which the teachers perceived them as influencing professional learning);
- consideration of high school teachers;
- focus on student learning outcomes in the classroom; or
- investigation of the way the professional learning influenced practice in other NSW Department of Education and Training Key Learning Areas.

Prior to schools and teachers being approached for the study, university ethics approval was sought and granted (HREC 02-145). Due to the late inclusion of School Three, an amendment to this ethics approval was given early in 2003 (HREC 02-145A). Schools One and Two are government schools located in New South Wales, therefore further ethics approval was sought and granted through the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Following university and government ethics approval, the schools were officially confirmed and a process of consent was entered into directly with the school leaders. Following school-based approvals, consent forms (Appendix 3.1) were completed and information on the study was provided. Teachers could opt for the use of pseudonyms. While a number of teachers consented to their real names being included, pseudonyms have been used for all teachers and students to protect the identity of those who did not authorise use of their real name. Due to the limited number of participating schools and teachers, the ease of identification would have been increased.

3.2.2 School context

...Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things...

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1995)

This section presents details of the eleven teachers and three schools. To allow for meaningful data, I believed it important to first paint a detailed picture of each school context. Specific details of the teachers and their classrooms are presented in Section 3.2.3. The following descriptions are written in a storied format painting a picture in words of each school, based on field notes, journal entries and my own emotional recollection of each context. The figurative nature of the description conveys my attempt to capture the school's initial impact. My own thoughts and feelings are central to my role as facilitator of the action research (explained in Sections 3.1.2 and 3.5).

School One

Stepping out of the car it is hot and dry, the Australian country! Looking around, you wouldn't suspect there would be a school tucked away amongst these suburban houses, but here it is. Walking in the entrance, the first thing you see is a large green grass area ringed by covered walkways. You believe they probably lead to the classrooms. The grass is a welcome surprise in a time of drought. On your right is the administration block where you sign in to prove you are a real visitor. Everyone is very friendly and helpful in pointing you in the right direction. Walking across this green space you see that your first impression of the classroom location was correct, so you walk through one of the doors leading inside. Space is the first thing that you notice, plenty of space to do wonderful drama activities, as well as the absence of small doors. Each classroom is open to the corridor by wide archways. Walking along the corridor, the noise is quite something - apart from those couple of classrooms doing quiet work. You feel this is a happy environment to learn in, one that is spacious and non-cluttered.

School One was a government school located in semi-rural New South Wales, approximately four hours drive from Sydney. The school population is made up of established families, families from public housing, and a sizeable indigenous population. Most children were born in Australia and the community could be described as of lower socio-economic status (Bamford & Darell, 2004). The school itself is large with each teacher having the space of two classrooms in which to work. Each group of classrooms has its own wet area and a number of pottery kilns are dotted around the

school. The grounds are lovely and green, with plenty of space for the students to run around and interact for sport or during breaks from the classrooms.

School Two

It was a little difficult to find this school, twisting and turning through backstreets, but here it is. What greets you first is an old demountable where the administration and principal's office is located. The floor is a little creaky, with thin carpet laid on top. It is a very hot day, and very little breeze makes its way through any window. The staffroom is air-conditioned, and you feel lucky that is where the meeting will take place. Walking through this administration area you see a large concrete area bounded by more concrete buildings. The odd token tree dots the playground area. You notice one little section of grass off to your left. This school feels old and a little bare - a little drama activity might brighten things up! Peeking into some of the classrooms, the view is happier in some and just as desolate in others. The students seem crowded in their rooms, like there isn't enough space for them to spread out in the way they would like to. Finding space for drama in this school would be an exciting challenge!

School Two is a government school located in the western suburbs of Sydney. There is a highly multicultural student population with over sixty different ethnic groups. The area could be described as working class (Bamford & Darell, 2004). The land space for School Two is small in comparison to School One, with very little green area on which the students could play. The majority of outdoor area is concrete and the classrooms are all close together, many in need of some repair. The composition of the teaching staff reflects the multicultural nature of the student body.

School Three

Walk from the car park, the end of an old looking building greets you. To your left and across the driveway is the 20metre swimming pool, covers half on as it is now winter and only the die hard swimmers go in before the summer heating is turned back on. Turning back to the end of the building you notice high metal fences, painted a nice dark green, but there to clearly dictate the boundaries of the school area. Having worked at this school in the past, none of these physical indicators were strange, but stepping back for the research helped to see things in a clearer light. Heading through the gate at one end of the school, its expanse starts to become clearer. The high school section of the school towers over the Junior school building and stretches back up into the distance. Looking at the end of the Junior school building there are three balconies, one on either side and one down the middle separating the classrooms that run parallel. It is a two story building that needs new carpet in most rooms, ones that would be seen as quite small and bare if not for each teacher's personal flair brightening up the learning spaces - drama would help make the learning experiences just as exciting!

Walking along the middle corridor, you are met by lines of blue school bags hung on hooks (most of the time) and zippers done up (most of the time). Emerging from different classrooms are different sounds, and you walk slowly down this corridor absorbing these school noises. From one room, a teacher is instructing students on a new Mathematics task, in another, students are completing independent work - where is the drama? As you walk along the corridor a couple of young students walk quickly past after having run an errand or visited the bathroom, you are unsure. There is a feeling of intensity in the school. Of smiles that seem occasionally too tight and tired, but satisfied eyes.

School Three is described as a twin school environment where girls and boys are both in the school, but taught in single sex classes. Some activities are co-educational, but the majority of time is spent learning and playing with students of the same sex. It is an independent school located on the Northern Beaches of Sydney catering for students from pre-kindergarten to Year 12* . In addition, the school runs courses for non-English speaking students of all levels. There are approximately three hundred students in the junior, or primary, section of the school with sixteen mainstream and four specialist staff members. There is a mixture of male and female staff, as reflected in the study sample. Specific details of the participating teachers and their classrooms are presented below.

3.2.3 The teachers and classrooms

While eleven teachers participated in the study, only the profile of the five teachers involved in the professional learning (Phase Two) are outlined in this section. Details of the six teachers from Schools One and Two can be found in Appendix 3.2.

Teaching in New South Wales primary schools can for some teachers be an individual and isolating experience. A teacher's classroom becomes his/her domain, and what takes place in this space can be viewed by outsiders as 'secret'. Another way of viewing this space is as a safe one, where teachers can go about their daily duties in the way they prefer. These safe spaces are also referred to as 'in-classroom places' where teachers are "...free to live stories of practice..." (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999 p25).

This section presents a brief description of the teachers and an overview of their personal experiences with teaching and the creative arts. Following each description is

* Schooling runs in NSW from Kindergarten (5 years old) to Year 6 (Primary School) and then from Year 7 to Year 12 (High School). Students can optionally attend Pre-Kindergarten (3-5 years old) and are able to leave school earlier than Year 12 once reaching the appropriate age.

an excerpt describing each teacher's ideal classroom environment. These descriptions are reported to provide more information in regard to their working contexts. They include the physical surroundings and the way in which each teacher viewed the relationship and roles that they and their students take within this space. The full transcripts of these descriptions can be found in Appendix 3.3.

Leanne

Leanne had been teaching for 7 years at the time of the study. She originally trained in the United Kingdom and had primarily taught upper-primary grades (Years 4-6). She was employed in this school to teach Year 3 girls (students of 7-8 years of age). Leanne did not consider herself very confident with drama, dance or music, but felt comfortable with including visual arts in her classroom. She was excited about participating in the study as she felt starved for professional development since being in Australia and wanted to improve her skills in the areas in which she lacked confidence.

...I think definitely it's not just a classroom; it's a learning environment...I try and make displays, things that they can learn from...I like to work in groups, differentiated groups...everybody gets an equal share of my time, otherwise I've found...you always give all your time to the weaker ones, always, and it's not really fair on the bright ones, and the middle ones don't get stretched, and the bright ones don't get stretched...I try and be very, very positive with the kids...I like to try and incorporate IT [information technology]... I like to see myself as a role model for the kids and...I like to think that they see me as a role model...probably role model's the wrong word, maybe motivator ...

Leanne Interview 1 - 24.06.03

Jenny

Jenny had been teaching for 17 years at the time of the study. She primarily taught lower primary grades (Kindergarten - Year 4) and at the time of the study was working with the Kindergarten boys' class. Jenny specialised in Visual Art at college, but considered herself lacking in confidence with the other three areas of the creative arts. She recognised the benefits and scope that drama could offer her young students and while being nervous about participating in the study, was keen to improve her skills.

...I suppose my role is just there to provide props or things that they need rather than obviously not being in there guiding them...and it might be...on safety or something like that, or rules in their family where they have to act out what rules they have in their family...things like that would be obviously more teacher guided...Sometimes they'll get into a group and organize their own little play...and other times it's more teacher directed...

Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

Amy

Amy had been teaching for 6 years at the time of the study, working previously as a specialist language and science teacher. She was the most confident of the participating teachers in relation to the use of creative arts in her classroom considering drama to be her strongest area. Amy was enthusiastic to participate in the study as she wished to work more collaboratively with other teachers in the school - something she believed was not fostered enough in daily practice.

...I try to make it as unstructured as possible, so they can learn and remember from it, because if it's coming from them then they will remember it more than if it's coming from me... sometimes they go down a path that you hadn't even thought of that opens up this whole new area... You've got to deal with that area first, because otherwise they'll go away from the lesson going, "Well, what about my idea?" So you have to try and talk and discuss through that idea first...

Amy, Interview 1 – 17.06.03

Mark

Mark is the only male teacher who participated in the professional learning. He was still in the process of completing his teacher training, being employed part-time as a specialist music teacher in the school, working with girls and boys in all primary school years. Mark had experience in this role from a previous school, however was keen to develop his drama skills as part of a plan to move to a full time position as creative arts master the following year. Mark believed strongly in the need for ongoing, effective professional learning and was very excited about participating in this study.

...I think it's an area where everybody collaborates in order to establish the ground rules...so that the students actually have ownership of how the coordination of this room came about to be the way it is...twice a year I give them [students] a questionnaire that just has four questions. It has, what is it about the music room that makes it easy for you to learn? What is it about the music room that makes it hard for you to learn? ...And the second two questions are, what is it about me as a teacher that makes it easy for you to learn? And what is it about me as a teacher that makes it hard for you to learn ...

Mark, Interview 1 – 30.07.03

Sally

Sally was the most experienced teacher, having worked in education for approximately 40 years. Over her career she had taught a variety of specialist subjects including remedial work in English and Mathematics and English as a Second Language. She was currently teaching Year 1 girls, and ran the school drama club at the time of the study, only allowing girls to attend. Sally considered herself to be reasonably confident in the use of drama and dance, but felt concerned about her ability to engage students in visual

arts and music. She wished to develop her drama skills further, hoping to incorporate them more into her daily teaching. Sally viewed this study as an exciting professional learning opportunity.

...my role is to sort of, organize and that sort of comes into programs and getting resources ready and facilitate learning and to create motivation ...in general terms...a happy classroom...get a good balance of what they're learning, not just to specialize in things that you like, but to balance everything... to make them articulate and able to say what they want so they can make sense, and arouse their curiosity so they feel they can have a viewpoint and say it and it's appreciated by people...to set up a situation where they develop their own discipline...I mean, not calling up, putting your hands up, the smallest thing, developing that sense of pride in their own work..”

Sally, Interview 1 – 23.06.03

3.3 Design

This section reports on the research design. It provides a step-by-step outline of the process that assisted identification of factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama. That data were then used to implement a school-based, participant driven process of professional learning with five teachers in one school, in which I operated as facilitator.

First I discuss the growth of '*facilitated action research*'. Second, a chronology of the research, including the timeframe for different stages is presented.

3.3.1 Not a Method! The growth of '*facilitated action research*'

This section outlines the growth of the '*facilitated action research*' process arguing for the process to be viewed as guidelines rather than a set '*method*'. Action research can take a variety of forms and as a result a number of models are offered. There is also a growing movement toward presenting action research as “...*a set of techniques, a 'tool' that aims to ensure specific behavioural 'outcomes'...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p2). This shift is problematic as it takes action research from considering processes where people work together on goals to being a more '*fixed*' series of steps to be followed (McNiff et al., 2003). While these various tools may share common elements and be helpful to some practitioners, the extent to which they are adopted as a '*method*' by some, remains problematic and may jeopardise the fluid nature of the research.

This research was guided by an original conception of action research that does not rely on a '*model*', or set of tools (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff, 2002a, 2002b; McNiff et

al., 2003). It argues for not applying specific ‘methods’ within an action research approach to classroom change, but considers the process undertaken as shaped by broad guidelines (McNiff, 2002b). By doing so, spontaneity and the ‘unexpected’ can be addressed:

...Practitioners should be advised that they do not have to follow the models [of action research] for the models are not necessarily representative of the realities practitioners will experience. Practitioners need to see these models for what they are: guidelines for how we hope things will eventually fall out...

(McNiff, 2002b p52)

Adopting this flexible approach to action research enabled me to view a variety of basic models, but not be constrained by their procedures. This freedom ensured that I continued to respond to my own and the teachers’ self-identified needs and experience for enhancing the teaching of drama, and resulted in a natural process of professional learning.

The basic structure for the ‘facilitated action research’ process was influenced by the following four stages of action research.

- A Finding a starting point
- B Clarifying the situation
- C Developing action strategies and putting them into practice
- D Making teachers’ knowledge public

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p7)

The methodology is presented below in a step-by-step format that builds the process textually and visually. How it developed and any links to various action research traditions and theorists is embedded in the discussion. A visual representation was developed to present the different approaches to action research blended with the ‘facilitated action research’ process. As each element is discussed it is added to the diagram allowing for easy interpretation.

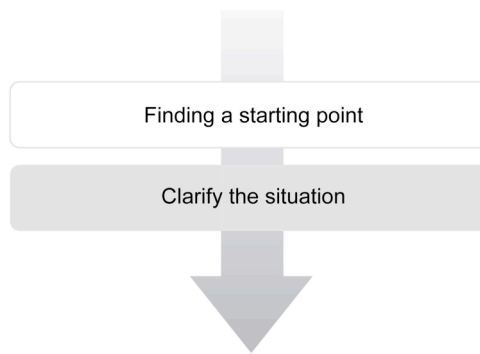
The process of action research begins with ‘**finding a starting point**’ (Altrichter et al., 1993) from issues within one’s practice. Finding a starting point takes two perspectives in this study, the first stemming from my personal issues, and the second from issues perceived as relevant to other teachers in my school.



From my perspective, I was experiencing in my teaching a ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989), by which a person is “... *unable to live according to what we believe, for a variety of reasons...*” (McNiff, 2002a p13). I strongly believed, and valued the use of drama, but was not applying this belief in my daily teaching practice. I considered drama beneficial for students from a social learning perspective and also for what it could offer in terms of an alternative and meaningful learning experience. Despite being skilled in the teaching of drama, I was frustrated with my inability to translate my values into practice.

I began to focus on colleagues and their practice. What I saw and heard anecdotally about other classrooms supported concerns with my own practice and fostered a passionate conviction to investigate what teachers know, and what and how they learn. I recognised that I was not alone in my concerns about my teaching practice not matching my beliefs. I also saw teachers restricted in their professional learning due to school structures and classroom-based isolation.

The collaborative structure of the research links with my initial concerns that any decisions and development opportunities were not imposed, but developed in communication with staff. Following discussions with a colleague, regarding my concerns and personal ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989), I decided to undertake a doctoral study to investigate more broadly the issue of dissonance between belief and practice to enhance the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms. While removing me from the classroom environment, the research allowed me to connect with other teachers facing similar frustrating issues.



‘**Clarify the situation**’ (Altrichter et al., 1993) is the second stage in the framework, and was repeated within the ‘facilitated action research’ process. In Phase One, the process of clarification allowed for a consideration of the first research aim:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

For Phase Two, the process of clarification was undertaken to add to the initial data and shed light on the ‘situation’, or context, relevant to the third school (five teachers) before the professional learning began.

To investigate the first research aim, I considered my own beliefs as well as discussing with the initial six teachers what they believed facilitated or constrained their use of drama. These data drawn from conversations and interviews were then analysed (Altrichter et al., 1993). This analysis, presented in Chapter 4, revealed a number of personal and contextual factors that were considered to facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama. One of the contextual factors was ineffective professional learning that did not address teacher contexts, needs or experiences.

In Phase Two, ‘clarifying the situation’ reaffirmed findings from the first research aim and allowed for appropriate action strategies for effective professional learning to be developed and put into practice (Altrichter et al., 1993 p7). The emphasis in this second stage is similar to that of a “...*reconnaissance phase*...” (McNiff et al., 2003 p60). In a reconnaissance phase, steps are often tentative and muddled, with collected data being less convincing than later in a study. The process becomes clearer as the action research

develops and becomes more systematic through developing appropriate action strategies.

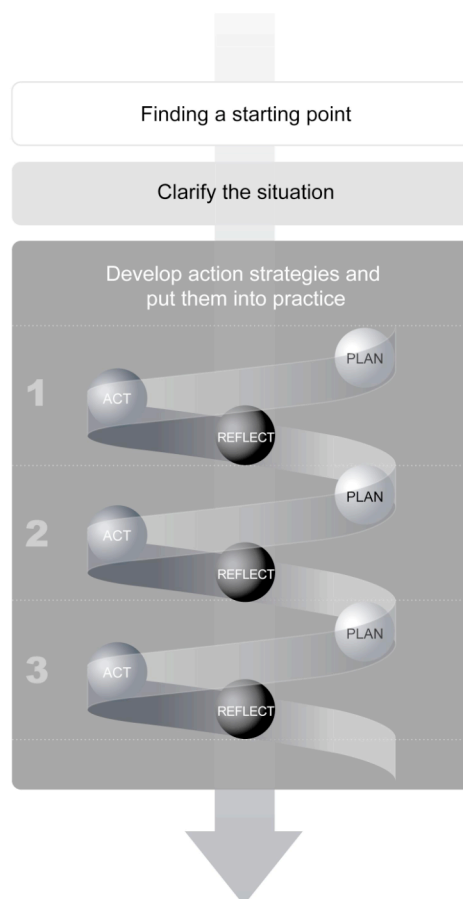
The importance of regularly revisiting the situation to allow further clarification, and therefore enhanced action strategies to be undertaken, is an important feature of the next stage of the process:

...As rule it is not expected that new action strategies will solve a problem immediately. Therefore, their effects and side-effects need to be monitored in order to learn from experience and further improve the action strategies...

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p7)

When considering learning through action research, it would be rare to reach closure within the situation being investigated, as any solutions would lead to new questions (McNiff et al., 2003 p13). As a result, emphasis is placed on the understanding of learning that takes place, and subsequent development of ways forward.

Once the situation has been clarified, the third stage in the process is to ‘**develop action strategies**’ (Altrichter et al., 1993) and put these into practice.

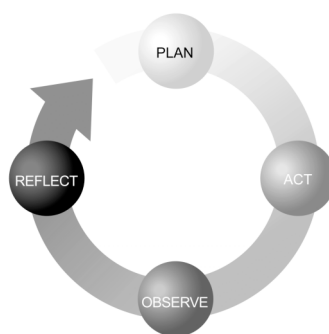


The broad focus for the action strategies adopted was drawn from data analysis in Phase One. Professional learning that respected teachers' experiences and was able to address classroom based needs was identified as critical by the initial six teachers in the study and further emphasised by the final five (Section 4.4). This style of professional learning is supported by a current move toward school-based professional learning (Clark, 1992; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b; Hoban, 2002; Husby, 2005; Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003; Thiessen, 1992). The importance of context and allowing for an emphasis on a teacher as a '*person*' is respected. Theories of learning underpinning this study connect with the style of professional learning requested by the teachers.

The suitability of action research as a methodology is further supported as a result of the professional learning focus. Action research is characterised by the importance of foregrounding an individual's working context, (the place where the research is conducted) (Altrichter et al., 1993).

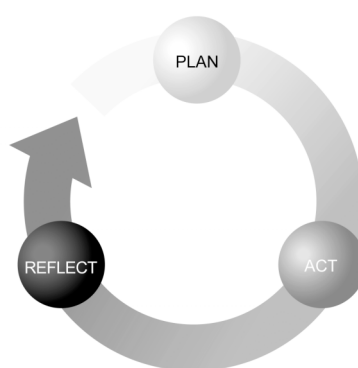
It was during this stage of the study that other models of action research influenced the process. A number of adaptations have occurred since Lewin (1946) initially presented an action research spiral, including work by influential educational action research theorists such as Carr and Kemmis (1986), Elliott (1991), and McNiff (2002a; 2003). The simple action-reflection cycle offered by Lewin (Figure 3.2) is used in this framework to describe the cyclical process within which the teachers' understanding and ownership of their own learning grew.

Figure 3.2 - Traditional Cycle of Action-Reflection



Within this study the ‘observe’ and ‘reflect’ aspects of this cycle are discussed using the term ‘reflection’. While incorporating formal sessions for ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1983), this study encouraged the teachers participating in the professional learning to undertake ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön, 1983). Through so-doing, the need to observe and reflect became entwined, and the reporting of practice incorporated both aspects simultaneously. The adapted cycle used in this study is represented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 - Adapted Cycle of Action-Reflection



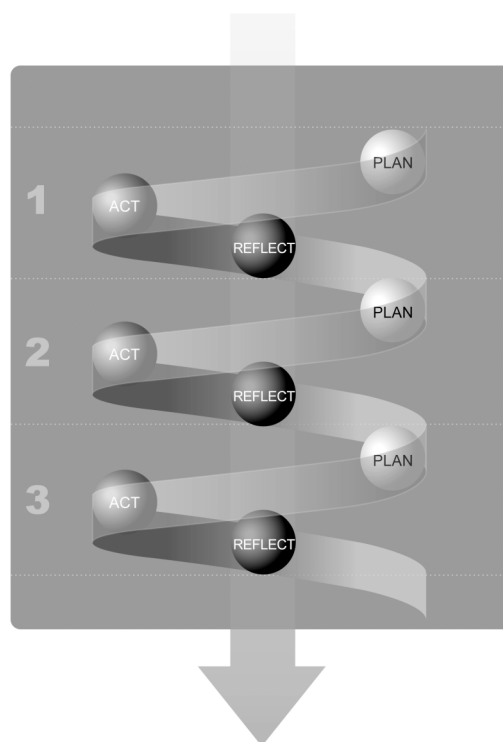
Unlike the original cycle offered by Lewin (1946), the process undertaken in this research resulted in the formation of three action-reflection cycles outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. These connected cycles are indicative of the ‘self-reflective spiral’ presented by Carr and Kemmis (1986) as a way of taking action to improve an educational situation. Allowing for flexibility within the cycles enabled unexpected issues and concerns to be addressed.

As the cycles progressed, the teachers in Phase Two began to take more control of their learning, and that learning was enhanced by increasingly critical reflection of their own practice and ongoing needs. What occurred has been referred to as connected cycles of action-reflection (McNiff, 2002b p40), where the reflection from action taken in one cycle informs an altered plan for the next (Figure 3.4).

Parallel with these connected cycles, within which I was a participant through my role as professional learning facilitator, was a simultaneous focus on ‘self’. As will be discussed in Section 3.5, I identified a number of ‘constructed roles’ adopted in this study. Through this focus on ‘self’, I explored my understanding, but did not put any

deliberate action strategies in place to formally record or develop my progress. Instead, my growing understanding of my role enhanced my relationship with the teachers and made me more aware of the way in which they perceived me. It made me critically aware of my dual role as participant researcher and facilitator and what that meant for data collection, analysis and the writing of the research.

Figure 3.4 - Connected cycles of action-reflection



The final stage in the broad framework is that of ‘**making knowledge public**’ (Altrichter et al., 1993). The way in which the knowledge was made public is detailed in Section 6.6. The aim of this study was to make the knowledge public from two perspectives: the teachers’ and mine, the researcher. The teachers engaged in peer reporting with other participants in the study and with the wider staff community in the school. This reporting took place at various stages during and after the conclusion of the research.

As researcher, this study was conducted with a doctoral dissertation planned as the primary report. In addition, regular reporting to the school community took place with presentations at local and international conferences. A joint journal article, co-authored with a teacher in the study is also planned.

Both factual accounts and subjective accounts (McNiff et al., 2003) are drawn on in this research as primary descriptive tools. Factual accounts are usually based on “...*transcripts of conversations and meetings, or summaries of data from questionnaires and interviews...*” (McNiff et al., 2003 p23). Subjective accounts are considered as they are one person’s viewpoint and often take the form of reflections and observations (McNiff et al., 2003).

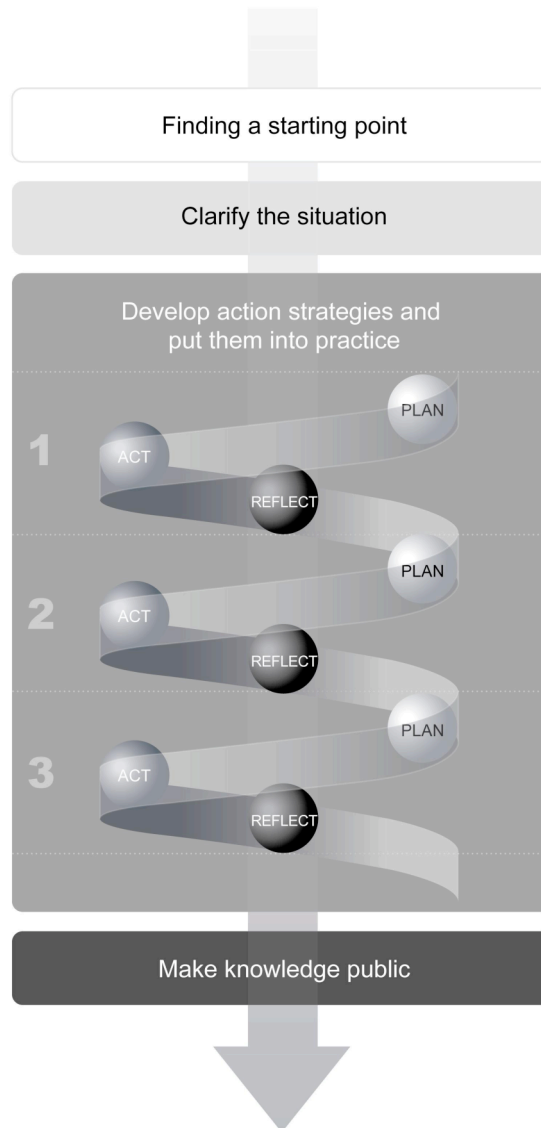
The ‘report’ of this research was designed to consider ‘description’ *and* ‘explanation’. While aware of the need to separate these elements (McNiff et al., 2003), their interwoven nature through the context and accounts resulted in the separation being problematic. Section 3.2 presented a ‘*description*’ of the specific context relevant to the teachers with the ‘*explanation*’ of the professional learning undertaken in Chapters 4-7. While simplistically delineated in this way, ‘explanation’ will be found in other chapters with ‘description’ also required at times to enhance reader understanding.

Figure 3.5 presents a visual description of the structure of the complete ‘facilitated action research’ process. It is important to re-emphasise that this outline is not being offered as another model of action research to be followed, but a representation of the methodology for this study.

3.3.2 Chronology

The data collection for this research commenced in February, 2003 to ‘*clarify the situation*’ specific to the first research aim. Two schools (six teachers) were involved in Phase One. Preliminary analysis of initial data revealed a number of personal and contextual factors identified by the teachers as influencing their teaching of drama. A key contextual factor was the ineffective professional learning being experienced. The request was for professional learning that was school based, and that respected experiences and classroom needs. I recognised professional learning as one factor I

Figure 3.5 - ‘Facilitated Action Research’ process



could practically address as a way of working with teachers to facilitate pedagogical change.

The focus for Phase Two shifted location to a third school (five teachers). Work with this group began in May, 2003. The time difference between the data collected early in 2003 and that collected for the third school from mid-2003 allowed the semi-structured interview questions to be refined. Data reported in relation to the first research aim (Chapter 4) were drawn from all eleven teachers.

A full account of the overall research design and chronology is illustrated in Table 3.2. The left hand column indicates the time line from November 2002 to December 2005. The top section outlines the main steps in Phase One. Following this is the process undertaken in Phase Two. The right hand column indicates which stage in the broad framework presented (Section 3.3.1) relates to a particular time-frame. What these stages entailed has been discussed more fully within the explanation of the ‘facilitated action research’ process. Data collection tools are discussed in the following section.

Table 3.2 - Chronology of the research

Time	Phase One Aim to ‘clarify the situation’ to plan action strategies (Schools 1 & 2 - 6 teachers)	Stage
<u>2002</u> Nov - Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of initial research tools (semi-structured interview points, journal guidelines) 	Clarify the Situation
<u>2003</u> Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approvals to conduct research (ethics, schools & teachers) 	
Feb - Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering of contextual information (Schools 1 & 2) • Initial semi-structured interviews with three teachers from each school • Initial semi-structured interviews with principal from each school • Establishment of journal expectations and guidelines with teachers • Preliminary analysis of data • Development and refinement of semi-structured interview points 	
	Phase Two Aim to further ‘clarify the situation’ and plan action strategies for remainder of the study (School 3 - 5 teachers)	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approvals to conduct research study in School 3 (ethics, school & teachers) • Gathering of contextual information (School 3) 	Clarify the situation
Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial semi-structured interviews with five teachers • Data analysis & subsequent investigation of school-based professional learning • Establishment of journal expectations and guidelines with teachers 	
Jul - Sept <i>Cycle 1 - Term 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of focus areas • Development and negotiation of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ (action strategies) • Implementation of strategies • Ongoing conversations/reflection - teachers & school leaders • Development of cycle 1 semi-structured interview points • Cycle 1 semi-structured interview conducted with each teacher (end Term 3) • Plan confirmed for following school term • Preliminary data analysis 	
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of research progress at international conference (Annual Conference of British Educational Research Association) 	Make knowledge public

Oct - Dec <i>Cycle 2 - Term 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-clarification of focus areas • Implementation of strategies • Ongoing conversations/reflection - teachers & school leaders • Development of cycle 2 semi-structured interview points & survey questions • Cycle 2 semi-structured interviews with each teacher & survey conducted (end Term 4) • Plan confirmed for following year • Ongoing data analysis 	Develop action strategies (Cycle 2)
Dec - <u>2004</u> - Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of research progress at international conference (Annual Conference of Australian Association of Research in Education & New Zealand Association of Research in Education) • Presentation of research progress to school 	Make knowledge public
Jan - Apr <i>Cycle 3 - Term 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of strategies • Ongoing conversations/reflection - teachers & school leaders • Development of Cycle 3 semi-structured interview points • Cycle 3 semi-structured interviews conducted with each teacher (mid-Term 1) • Ongoing data analysis • Preliminary writing work for dissertation 	Develop action strategies (Cycle 3)
May - Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further analysis of data • Regular follow-up communication with teachers 	
Dec <u>2005</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of research progress at local conference (Annual Conference of Australian Association of Research in Education) 	Make knowledge public
Jan - Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and synthesis of interview and journal data • Writing of dissertation 	

3.4 Data collection & analysis

...data typically provide us, as researchers, with access to a reality to be investigated. We take them as representing reality, but must bear in mind that they are not reality itself, but only its traces. They are always chosen or constructed from a certain perspective...
(Altrichter et al., 1993 p71)

Traditionally, data collected within action research are reflexive and based on experiences. As such this study acknowledges the collection of data as a constructed event and recognises the place of personal belief as embedded in the process. The planning of data collection for this study was guided by the research aims, considered to be an important tool for this purpose (Altrichter et al., 1993). The research aims also allow appropriately focused evidence to be collected. The focus of data collection in this study is on gathering evidence of each teacher’s practice in relation to how their use and understanding of drama changed over the course of the study.

The adoption of an action research paradigm allows for multiple and varying data collection techniques to be applied. While strategies are listed below, it is important to reiterate that they must be agreeable to all participants involved, and no way impede or

dislocate the professional learning that is occurring. A number of strategies were drawn on as appropriate for addressing the key research aims, and these strategies were collaboratively agreed upon by teachers as a way of monitoring professional learning:

- interview;
- conversation;
- written questionnaire/survey; and
- reflective journal (including observational notes).

The application of multiple methods for data collection served two purposes in this research. The first was to incorporate techniques that would allow the underlying thoughts and experiences of the teachers to be considered and represented in multiple ways. Individuals who may express themselves confidently in writing through a journal, for example, may feel more inhibited in a verbal one-on-one interview and visa versa. Applying multiple methods to gain information assisted in the development of a three-dimensional, and hence more realistic, picture of the participants.

The multiple methods enabled methodological triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1996; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994). The use of triangulation allows for any deficiency in one particular data collection tool to be countered via the strengths of others (Merriam, 1988). In addition the use of triangulation also looks at phenomena in varying ways allowing meaning to be clarified (Stake, 1994).

The following sub-sections discuss the various data collection tools. A broad discussion of the tool is followed by its specific application. An explanation of data analysis follows this discussion with collection and analysis considered a “...*simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read...*” (Merriam, 1988 p119-120).

3.4.1 Interview

The use of interviews as a tool for data collection has developed from “...*everyday conversation...*” (Altrichter et al., 1993 p101). The specific form and style of oral communication distinguishes interviews from conversations. Interviews can be in oral or written form (Altrichter et al., 1993).

Interviews are primarily concerned with a relationship between people. The aim in these interviews is to gather points of view or interpretations to gain greater understanding of a situation (Altrichter et al., 1993). Through doing so, an interview provides the researcher with a “...*main road to multiple realities...*” (Stake, 1995 p64).

An interview is considered to be of assistance in a number of scenarios. It is useful for revealing what can't be directly observed, and for obtaining details about events that have occurred in the past. In addition, interviews are considered appropriate when investigating how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 1988).

There are a number of interview types available, ranging from highly structured, formalised interviews to unstructured conversations (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 1988). The purpose behind gathering particular data determines the style of interview to be applied. Action research, as influenced by case study methodology, lends itself to semi-structured interviews. Within this paradigm, individual, unique experience is fore fronted to gain “...*special stories...*” (Stake, 1995 p65).

I was concerned that the interviews might become too constrained and wished for natural conversation and stories to be available, while still making sure specific focus areas were covered. Semi-structured interviews allow for this individuality, but enable a schedule to be followed (Stake, 1995). As a result, common themes and issues can be revealed while still respecting the individual nature of each teacher's experience.

A process of trial and error assisted the formation of semi-structured interview points. These guiding points (Appendix 3.4) were written and tested with colleagues before being implemented as part of Phase One. Conducting a trial, at least through mental rehearsal is considered an important aspect of planning an interview (Stake, 1995) and as such was included before the implementation of each. In Phase Two, I made minor changes to the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 3.5). These predominantly involved small details and ensured that a focus on professional learning was included. The three semi-structured interviews, which took place over the duration of the professional learning in School Three, were piloted. The teachers were aware that each interview would take place at the juncture between the cycles of action-reflection in the study. They were also aware they would be asked to reflect on their teaching and

evaluate the process of professional learning. As action research is responsive to the ongoing needs and experiences of the participants, further interviews, reflection and action evolved from my experiences and those of the teachers.

3.4.2 Conversation

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, informal pair and group conversations took place. The emphasis within these conversations was largely reflexive with this data collection tool included as a deliberate research method. As a result the group conversations were not formally run as would be in a focus group. It was important within the 'facilitated action research' process that conversations be spontaneous outpourings of ideas and feelings between me and the teachers. As a result, some conversations were taped and transcribed, and others were recorded via field notes (Appendix 3.6).

Conversations are considered helpful for two key reasons. First, they are important to assist in developing a person's theory of practice (McNiff et al., 2003). They were used within the 'facilitated action research' process to unravel the complexity of teaching, and allow the sharing of 'stories of practice'.

Second, conversations were used informally to support teacher reflection at both a verbal and written level. The use of verbal interaction (conversations) has been discussed within literature on reflection, being perceived by participants in a number of studies to be both a beneficial and important part of the reflective process (Bain et al., 1999; Farrell, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Riley-Doucet & Wilson, 1997; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Deeper reflection was usually attained when conversations with a 'critical friend' were coupled with written reflections (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Through these conversations an outsider's perspective could be given, resulting in a reconsidering of experiences in a different way (Bain et al., 1999). The use of 'critical friends' was not an explicit inclusion in this study, however, the informal conversations and group reflective sessions were designed to fulfil the same role.

As one of the main weaknesses of using written journals (Section 3.4.3) is considered to be its solitary nature (Bain et al., 1999), a blend of verbal interaction-based techniques (conversation) and individual writing was considered helpful to encourage deeper levels

of reflection. The emphasis on fostering conversation in this study served to alleviate concerns with written reflection, with some teachers switching solely to this verbal mode.

The conversations that took place over the course of the study allowed for social interaction, and encouraged deeper reflection by the teachers on a variety of issues. While some group reflective conversations were planned, a majority took place informally within the school day with a number of teachers commenting on the benefits of these ‘corridor conversations’.

Many of the conversations were viewed as taking on a ‘storied’ form. Story as a way of collecting data allows the experiences of the participants to be presented in their own words through a medium that embodies a commonly understood form of communication:

...Much of our gathering of data from other people will take the form of stories they tell and much of what we can convey to our readers will preserve that form. One of the choices each of us will make in presenting the case is how much we will use a story form...
(Stake, 1995 p1)

Individuals relate experiences through the use of anecdotes and narratives. The inclusion of storied conversation assisted in the development of a holistic picture of the journey taken by each of the teachers in their professional learning.

Story was not considered in this research as a direct data collection tool, having its own associated techniques and traditions. Story is however considered important in the social construction of knowledge and any situated learning experience. It is viewed as a tool for reflection, relating experiences within a meaningful context (McLellan, 1996c). The stories and anecdotes offered by the teachers when reflecting were drawn on in the study, with these vignettes being used to illustrate issues and themes within the study. The inclusion of vignette is recognised as valuable in qualitative research (Stake, 1995).

3.4.3 Reflective journal

Methodological literature both supports and questions the inclusion of journal writing for reflection. Journals have been applied widely in university contexts as well as in professional practice, especially in the field of teacher education. Journals are also

considered a way in which understanding and response to or analysis of events, experiences and concepts can be gathered (Ballantyne & Packer, 1995).

Reflective journals are considered a powerful way of representing experiences, allowing for personal and professional elements of individuals' lives to be woven together. Emotions have a big impact on an individual's motivation and desire to complete tasks. Teachers may be reluctant to participate in organised reflection as it can require them to disclose feelings of vulnerability through drawing attention to their beliefs and opinions. I was aware of, and respected, any hesitation or fear, and encouraged the development of a safe space for the teachers to openly share their concerns, successes and challenges. The benefits of establishing such a space were revealed through Mark and Amy's open reflections on their negative experiences (Section 5.3).

Action research advocates the use of reflective journals, also referred to as self-reflective writing (McNiff et al., 2003) or a research diary (Altrichter et al., 1993). A number of reasons are given within this research paradigm to support the inclusion of what will be referred to in this study as a 'journal'. Keeping a reflective journal is considered useful within action research to build on everyday skills, to store data, to record ideas about research issues as well as to assist in developing self-understanding (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003). In addition, a journal can be used to record observational notes to assist in the research process (Altrichter et al., 1993).

Theoretical literature further supports the use of reflective journals citing similar uses and benefits to those offered within the action research paradigm. Journals are considered a good way to provide a record of thoughts and experiences (Dacre & Mackey, 1999; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Spalding & Wilson, 2002), aid the development of internal dialogue as well as helping to establish and maintain a dialogue with an instructor, or in the case of research, the researcher (Canning, 1991; Dacre & Mackey, 1999; Riley-Doucet & Wilson, 1997; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Reflective journals also assist with the provision of a safe instrument for personal concerns or frustrations (Bain et al., 1999; Dacre & Mackey, 1999; Riley-Doucet & Wilson, 1997; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Journals can be viewed as assisting the integration of theory and practice, the development of personal theories of practice, and the examination and evaluation of held beliefs and concepts (Bain et al., 1999 p52). For reflective teaching to

occur, opportunities must be provided for teachers to consider their understanding of the relationship between thoughts and actions (Farrell, 2001). Participation in reflection is also considered to result in new comprehension, changes in beliefs, attitudes and/or values and emotional traits or states (Ballantyne & Packer, 1995).

There are four key issues from the literature relating to the use of reflective journals relevant to this research. Issues of *time*, *confidentiality*, guidelines for *content and focus* as well as the place of *tacit knowledge* are all discussed below with the ways they were addressed.

Time is a problematic and frustrating issue faced by practising teachers. While it is acknowledged that for my research a regular daily or weekly entry would have been beneficial, this expectation was not viable. To establish a balance, I asked teachers to share thoughts in their journal when they had a conversation or interaction relevant to their professional learning plan, or when they attempted drama strategies in their classroom. The method of recording thoughts was also flexible and included bullet points, drawings and jotted notes rather than exclusively prose. As a researcher, I had to rely on teachers finding or making the time to record reflections.

Confidentiality is an important ethical issue in all research practices. Research that asks teachers to reflect on practice and delve into beliefs, underlines the need for confidentiality in establishing a culture of trust allowing deeper levels of reflection. There is no agreement in the literature as to whether individuals are more likely to achieve an honest and deep level of reflection if their journals remain private rather than being made open to scrutiny.

In this research project, I discussed expectations with the teachers, raising confidentiality issues. They were told they were free to staple together two pages if they did not wish me to read them, on the condition that they reflected on what was in the closed page and the reasons why they wished to staple them closed. At no point was this option taken up.

The desired **content** or **focus** of a reflective journal and the reality of what is written in the journal can differ. It is important to engage participants in training about reflection

(Canning, 1991; Farrell, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Riley-Doucet & Wilson, 1997; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Within this training, a consideration of what reflection is, types of reflection, the different means by which reflection can occur, and the relationship of reflection to enhance the teaching and learning process need to be addressed.

Training was given to the teachers at both an individual and group level. They were encouraged to discuss their views on reflection, and its uses within their practice. To assist the teachers with focusing their reflection, Table 3.3 was placed for reference in their reflective journals. The aim was to focus the reflections from a variety of perspectives.

Table 3.3 - Focus guidelines for reflection

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Focus on Teaching</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General teaching issues - Specific lesson or incident - Behaviour management - Other (lesson management, content, homework) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Focus on Self</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own skills as a teacher - Own teaching approach - Other (feelings, identity, learning)
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Focus on Professional Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School-based issues - Social/ethical issues - Out-of-class activities - Teaching as a profession 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Focus on students or class</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student/class behaviour - Student/class characteristics - Relationship with specific students - Teaching of specific students

The place of **tacit knowledge** is important when focusing on the inclusion of beliefs and emotional comments. Individuals have difficulty describing motivations or reasoning behind an event or action when they have acted on instinct or a ‘hunch’. While reflective practice attempts to assist in uncovering these inner motivations and spontaneous prompts to action, there remain truly indescribable elements in each person’s knowledge. Further consideration needs to be given to understanding the impact of this type of knowledge and an acknowledgement of its place in reflection.

In addition to the teachers keeping a reflective journal, I also continued to record thoughts and observations throughout the study. These reflections assisted in providing contextual details as well as my own interpretation of significant events. While not

being analysed in detail, these records provided insight into the atmosphere and emotional response to particular events and situations. My entries were predominantly written on exiting the school following interviews/conversations, team teaching or general group professional learning experiences.

3.4.4 Questionnaire/Survey

There are two broad types of questionnaire: open and closed (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). As with oral interviews, the purpose of this data collection tool guides the style selection and design of a written questionnaire. Open questionnaires are considered to allow for more flexibility in response, but require more effort in analysis. Alternatively, closed questionnaires limit the response and are usually designed with an expectation of what data may be gathered. Data analysis for closed questionnaires is therefore considered to be faster and is generally more statistically oriented (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

For the purposes of this research, *questionnaire* has been used to describe the initial written document completed by the participants in the study (Appendix 3.7). The questionnaire was designed as a blend of open and closed questions. The *survey*, given to the teachers at the end of six month's participation included only open questions (Appendix 3.8).

Action research cautions against relying too heavily on questionnaires, offering two key reasons for utilising this data collection tool:

- to find out information that cannot be ascertained otherwise
- to evaluate the effect of an intervention when it is inappropriate to get feedback in another way

(McNiff et al., 2003 p122)

The initial questionnaire was designed for the first of these reasons. Background information regarding each of the participating teachers was gathered prior to the initial interviews. A focus in the study was to emphasise the teacher as a '*person*' (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), and to do so a holistic picture including demographic information as well as experience and attitudes to the creative arts needed to be gathered.

The design of the initial questionnaire was tested with colleagues prior to being utilised in Phase One. Wording changes were made during the testing process allowing for questions to be succinct, but also encouraging the desired blend of an open and closed focus. Responses to the initial questionnaire were used to guide the discussion in the initial verbal semi-structured interviews.

The purpose of the survey, given six months into the study, links to the second reason offered by McNiff et al (2003). While a verbal interview was also conducted at this time incorporating similar questions, responses from the open written survey allowed for comments to be cross-checked, and more detailed, reflective information to be gathered. The teachers had time to consider their responses for the survey.

As with the initial questionnaire, the survey questions were tested with colleagues prior to being used within the research. Only minimal changes were made to clarify the wording of questions.

A number of guidelines for administering the questionnaire and survey were considered in this research. I was conscious of ensuring that the print-out was clear, and discussed the questions with the teachers to ensure any queries were answered prior to them completing the document (McNiff et al., 2003). In addition, confidentiality was ensured with the use of pseudonyms and security of documents as described within given consent forms (Appendix 3.1).

3.4.5 Data analysis

Adopting the view that data collection and analysis are entwined (Merriam, 1988), the need to step back and reflect in an ongoing manner throughout the research process became critical. Shifting roles and understandings needed to be considered alongside collected data. Data were analysed informally from the moment the research aims were developed. Choices were made throughout the process of the study based on analysis of what was said and done by me, as researcher, and the participants. Often data analysis is presented as an isolated activity, and while some isolated data analysis was conducted, the emphasis remained primarily on arising issues.

The various roles taken by myself as researcher impacted on the way in which data were viewed. Considering controversial incidents from the perspective of different roles made me realise the importance of making the process of arriving at a statement about data explicit. One example of this inner journey is given in Section 3.5.1 during a consideration of researcher role.

Analysis - Phase One

Data analysis at all stages of the research followed a similar pattern. As is shown in the chronology of the study (Section 3.3.2), preliminary data analysis began in February/March 2003. Data utilised in this initial analysis came from initial questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Schools One and Two.

Qualitative data analysis often begins with “...*the identification of key themes and patterns...*” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p26). Initial **interview** and **conversation** data from this study were analysed from this perspective, aiming to identify initial factors that facilitated or constrained the teaching of drama. To obtain these themes I entered into a process of coding viewed as a blend of data reduction and data complication (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Two key steps were followed: *tagging* and *re-sorting*.

Through tagging, a category (or many if required) can be given to a particular segment of text (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Following this initial step, a re-sorting of the categories then took place by which I considered the context within which the data were gathered and the broader aims of the study. As a result, re-contextualised and sorted data could also be considered.

Category development caused initial concern as there was tension between allowing categories to emerge from the text as opposed to imposing predetermined ones. Both perspectives are considered valid starting points for analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Data gathered in Phase One were initially analysed using general ‘criteria’ relating to the identification of factors, experiences, and comments regarding the creative arts. This focus was guided by the semi-structured interview points developed as a guide for these interviews.

Based on initial categories, personal and contextual factors were identified. I then considered the collated text for each larger category to reveal specific themes and details through a process of further ‘tagging’. Through allowing the themes to emerge, the key issue of ineffective professional learning was identified, and this then guided the focus of Phase Two.

While qualitative data from **questionnaires** were analysed by tagging and re-sorting, the questionnaire also provided data that could be quantified. A Likert rating scale was adopted (de Vaus, 1995) by which teachers were asked to rank their confidence in teaching the various areas of the creative arts. Data were then collated, and percentages allocated, to gain a better understanding of the areas in which participating teachers were lacking, or strong, in confidence. Simultaneously, these data were drawn on in the collaborative development of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ (Section 5.1), and in enhancing my understanding of each teacher through my role as facilitator. Data came from a limited sample (six teachers for Phase One and five for Phase Two) and were used solely for these focused purposes.

Analysis - Phase Two

A similar procedure to that undertaken in Phase One was followed for analysis in Phase Two. **Interview**, **conversation**, six month **survey** and **journal** data were all treated in the same manner. Data were tagged and re-sorted to allow multiple perspectives and interpretation of the data to be revealed. The initial **questionnaire** was also treated as in Phase One.

The key difference with data analysis taking place in Phase Two was the starting point for categories. Data were read from a general perspective allowing for themes to emerge, rather than be pre-allocated. These emergent themes were collated onto a spreadsheet with appropriate document and line numbers being allocated for easy retrieval. Once all data had been ‘tagged’, the categories were considered and re-sorted into like sections. These broader categories were colour-coded, allocated specific key words and re-sorted into a working coded spreadsheet (Appendix 3.9). While not including the broader re-sorted categories, the lower level (key words) were included as an identifying column at the edge of each transcribed interview or conversation, and written beside journal and survey data (Appendix 3.10). By providing different levels of

coding, data could be retrieved from either a broader perspective or with a more specific focus in mind.

This process of coding assisted in organising the data, but did not constitute interpretation. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) offer a series of three key steps to assist in facilitating the process of moving from coding to interpretation in data analysis. They recommend that the researcher first *retrieve data*, then engage in *playing with categories* and finally move to *interpretation* where the coded data can be transformed into meaningful data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p46-7).

The first step in the process undertaken in this study was to retrieve the data. To assist in the retrieval process, text excerpts were collated into new documents grouped via the broad headings, and segmented via the more specific categories which emerged from the data.

The second step encouraged “...*playing with and exploring the codes and categories that were created...*” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p46). Data were first grouped in these new documents chronologically. A further process of coding then took place by which any common themes within this more detailed level of categories could be revealed. An example of one such collated document can be found in Appendix 3.11. I paid particular attention to identifying the ‘misfits’ or ‘negative’ findings as these revealed interesting perspectives. It was during this process of exploring the data that the emphasis on gender and student age discussed in Section 6.3.2 became apparent.

The final of the three steps involves the process of moving from coding to *interpretation*. To do so, I looked for relationships in the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) as well as continuing to focus on those pieces that did not appear to fit. At the interpretation stage, I also began to look at the data from a personal perspective by collating teacher stories. I considered gathered data on the experiences of three teachers for what was shown of their learning process, change in the teaching of drama and change in their approach to the teaching and learning process. The presentation of this data and discussion is presented in Chapter 7.

3.5 The researcher and the research

...It [action research] involves you thinking carefully about what you are doing, so it can also be called a kind of self-reflective practice...Action research is an enquiry by the self into the self, undertaken in company with others acting as research participants and critical learning partners...

(McNiff, 2002b p15)

The researcher plays an important role in research. The researcher is ultimately the one who sorts and selects data deciding on the way it is presented to an audience. A consideration of the place of the researcher in this research became an increasingly central part of the study. Two approaches for considering the voice or role of the researcher are adopted in this thesis. The first focuses on the roles I adopted and what this meant for the research process. The second considers a metaphor of ‘researcher = theatre director’:

3.5.1 Roles in the research

A chance conversation with a colleague resulted in a focus on ‘self’ being important for inclusion in this study beyond my collaboration with the teachers. Our conversation highlighted an issue with my perception of the ‘role’ I was playing in relation to the participants in Phase Two and the influence this had on my understanding of professional learning relationships. Reporting on changed understanding, and learning resulting from an investigation of this kind, is also considered an important aspect of action research (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff, 2002b).

While the place of the ‘self’ is a characteristic of action research, this particular study differs slightly due to its focus on me, as researcher, acting as facilitator. The role I saw myself playing has been described in various ways including that of ‘collaborator’ (Flores & Granger, 1995). For the purposes of this study, the term ‘facilitator’ is adopted. My interpretation of the role of ‘facilitator’ is ‘atypical’. In this research, as with the work of Flores and Granger (1995), the ‘collaborator’ (or facilitator) was working with others conducting action research, but not directly focusing on their own practice.

Throughout this section, I consider how the process of self-reflection clarified my thoughts and helped me address ‘living contradictions’ (Whitehead, 1989) in my

practice at the level of classroom teacher and facilitator. The presentation of my own learning provides another set of evidence considered necessary for contributing to knowledge existing in the wider field of education (McNiff, 2002a).

The first aspect of my growing understanding came through a consideration of whether it was in fact ‘self’ at all that I was considering. I came to realise that I was playing a number of constructed roles within the study. These were based on my own expectations of what a researcher must do as well as those I perceived were expected by the schools and participants in the study. These roles were similar to those an actor plays in a production, and are guided by the set, script and context of a show.

It was during the process of collecting initial data in School Three that the critical conversation with my colleague took place. I was concerned with the dependence on me being shown by teachers, and with the lack of confidence they expressed with their own practical knowledge of the classroom. They were requesting my opinions for the way forward. This caused me problems as I was just the ‘researcher’. I believed I was facilitating a process of learning within which the teachers self-identified needs and collaboratively developed their learning process. My colleague raised the important question, ‘was I **just** the researcher?’ This question opened a new door, through which the realisation of the complexity of my role became clear.

A second experience further fore-fronted issues with my understanding of role and highlighted the need for me to explore the roles I was playing. Amy’s negative experience (Section 5.3.2) in relation to an assembly item led me to question in detail the way in which she perceived me when reporting this incident and what it meant for data collection, analysis and the writing of the dissertation.

I engaged in reflection on Amy’s experience through journal writing and verbally with a colleague. Drawing on principles of self-study methodology, the process of reflection as an individual and collaborative process is important with “...*Learning... especially likely to be significant when we make the effort to reflect upon moments of disruption in our practice...*” (Wilcox, Watson, & Paterson, 2004 p276).

I experienced a 'disruption' through questioning of role and was required to consider more deeply my place within the professional learning. Reflection focused on the way in which I perceived myself, the way I was perceived by the teachers, and more importantly what this meant for the process of professional learning.

This process of reflection allowed me to identify a number of roles I consciously played within the research process:

Student - I was a student conducting post-graduate research and going through the process of reflection, growth and lack of confidence associated with that role.

Researcher - It was important for me to present myself confidently in this role to the schools and teachers. I attempted to remain focused at all times on the study being undertaken.

Confidant - The teachers clearly trusted me and openly expressed frustration, joy and anger over issues that arose.

Ex-colleague - I had worked at the school in which the study was taking place and as a result had developed a personal relationship with some teachers in the study.

Through verbal reflection with my research colleague, I was encouraged to consider a role constructed by the participating teachers, that of '*drama expert/professional learning expert*'. The implication of being viewed this way was important and clarified the unwavering trust and confidence demonstrated.

To attempt to understand the implications of role in this incident, I developed a dialogue representing the simultaneous roles I was required to play. This imaginative and non-literal transcript is an expressive way of capturing the competing voices within me. The dialogue was developed following Amy's negative incident (Section 5.3.2).

Characters: *Renee* the researcher
 Erica the ex-colleague
 Claire the confidant
 Sally the student
 Dale the developer

Renee We need to consider what we can do with this piece of data. It is an interesting part of Amy's journey and highlights issues of...*(interrupted)*

Erica 'Interesting piece of data!' That is very clinical to relegate it only to that. This was a frustrating and upsetting incident that Amy had on her journey, which should be treated with more respect.

Renee I'm not suggesting to treat it without respect, but there are broader issues that are revealed in this situation rather than just the emotional impact.

Claire Was Amy describing this situation to just get it off her chest to people she trusts? Did she expect it to be part of the research?

Erica Good questions!

Sally Hold on a moment, isn't there a place for both these viewpoints?

Renee What do you mean?

Sally I may only be new at this, but it is important to consider how the session was handled. Was she asked if it was alright to include this and more importantly, will the interpretation of this situation be checked with her?

Renee Amy was asked at the beginning of the session if running the tape was alright. She said it was. Throughout the session when she began expressing her feelings in strong language, she was also asked if she wanted the tape turned off.

Sally Her agreement with this situation is important to remember.

Dale All this may be so, but when looking at what was specifically said, the impact on Amy's choices in relation to drama performances were strongly affected. This has ramifications for future development and reflection sessions.

Erica That is good and well, but based on my knowledge of that school environment, sometimes your frustration can take over and as a result I have an ethical concern of how this data will make Amy look.

Sally Doesn't that depend on how it is written?

Renee Yes it does. It is also important to raise at this point the other contextual information impacting on the school and the principal at the time this situation took place. There were a number of pressures facing the school leaders external to assembly performances and it may have been, rightly or wrongly, that the principal reacted in a more extreme manner due to these other pressures than he normally would have.

Sally This being the case, then maybe, and again I'm not sure of this, but maybe could this situation be used within a discussion of the place or impact of school leaders, rather than focus on it within Amy's own story or journey.

Renee Good thinking!

Claire As long as she is consulted in regard to interpretation, that seems like a good way forward.

Erica Hear Hear!

While the characters in this dialogue came to an agreement about data presentation, the varying opinions regarding treatment of this piece of data and implications for professional learning are not ones that can result in clear-cut answers. My learning from this analysis focused on the importance of recognising the various roles played by a professional learning facilitator in an action research study of this kind. Through this

recognition, I, as facilitator, became more aware of my own place in the learning process of the teachers.

Unknowingly being cast in the role of '*confidant*' caused me further problems in my relationship with the school principal. Believing it important to regularly report on progress, I met with him frequently over the duration of the study. Within these meetings, he often shifted the conversation to general school-based issues. While these conversations always involved a discussion of drama, a clear contradiction between my and the principal's perspective on what drama was and its place in the classroom began to emerge. This contradiction is discussed where relevant throughout the dissertation as it relates to perceived support in the school context, the varying views of drama and how this influenced the professional learning.

McGill and Brockband (2004) provide ten core qualities required by a facilitator when adopting the action learning theory. Four of these qualities relate to recognising, understanding and managing emotion as well as the need for empathy (p195-200). I recognised that understanding these personal qualities and their 'real' influence on choice in learning was important for considering my interactions with the teachers over the remainder of the study.

3.5.2 Researcher = Theatre director: a metaphor

It is important to judge how an objective stance adopted by researchers is changed as they become actors in the research drama and resulting text (Polkinghorne, 1997). One view is that researchers need to approach their work as storytellers, placing their subjects as "...actors in a research narrative..." (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997 pxi). Another perspective considers the actions of a theatre director as a metaphor for shedding light on the style of research adopted.

Adopting this metaphor is fruitful as an analogy of the research process, in particular emphasising the style adopted, and providing a different way to view my role. The metaphor reverberates as it relates to the subject area being investigated in this study as well as to my personal experience working as a theatre director over many years.

Table 3.4 presents the parallels that link the processes and choices made by a theatre director and those of a researcher.

Table 3.4 - Researcher = Theatre Director

<i>Theatre Director</i>	<i>Researcher</i>
Theatre directors have a vision of their show cast, rehearsed and being performed for a respectful, but critical audience. The journey to reach this opening night is filled with negotiation, repetition and selection as the cast are finalised and scenes set.	Researchers embark on a study with a vision in mind of what they might achieve. They establish what they wish to discover and questions to be answered. In addition, they establish the means by which this information may be gathered and analysed.
<i>This Research</i>	
<i>I embarked on this research study with the aim of enhancing the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms. I wished to work with teachers considering the context in which they work and the issues those contexts raise in relation to their practice. This vision has remained with me throughout the research process.</i>	
<i>Cast</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Directors cast their show with height, personality and character in mind for each role, ensuring that those selected will contribute appropriately to the final performance.	Participants for a study are selected with the aims of the research in mind. The individuals or groups selected need to be appropriate for the research and be able to provide the study with helpful data.
<i>This Research</i>	
<i>While not entering into the study with specific grade levels in mind, I was hoping to involve teachers who had a desire to use drama in their teaching, but who felt they were not doing so effectively. The participants in the major part of the study were all volunteers and met my expectations. Due to the embedded nature of action research, I needed to question the style of 'director' I was, as I was also becoming an active cast member. This distinctive split role places me in a less than traditional role when considering my place from either side of the metaphor. I was both a theatre director and player or researcher and participant.</i>	
<i>The Set</i>	<i>The Context</i>
The set design for any production helps to create the ambiance that will encapsulate the performance. The set is the first thing an audience will see as they enter a theatre and therefore what it says to them should connect with the acting to follow. Sometimes the set is designed to contrast with the performance where the actor's dialogue may contrast or be in conflict with what the audience expects. At other times the set is naturalistic and what is revealed within its bounds fit with convention. Despite which occurs, the set establishes the context within which the action occurs.	Action research exists within a specific and naturalistic context in which the actions of the participants play out. The establishment and description of the setting/context is critical to assist a reader in understanding the study more clearly. The context is also embedded within the study as it is inseparable from the participants contained within.
<i>This Research</i>	
<i>I recognise the establishment of the context or setting for the study as critical in the research process. In addition, the place of context as influencing the actions of the participants also plays a central role. The professional learning took place within the workplaces of the teachers and issues with practice were seen as located in and influenced by each individual's context.</i>	

<i>The Rehearsal Process</i>	<i>The Research Design</i>
Every director is different when approaching the rehearsal process. Some directors are fixed in what they wish to occur and direct their actors in such a specific manner that no negotiation or flexibility is allowed. Other directors like input from their actors. They ask them to live the characters and allow these characters to shape the direction in which performance moves. This latter style of director talks with the actors and is responsive to their suggestions while still ensuring the overall vision for the production is not lost.	An action research paradigm allows for flexibility in the details of the research design. Unlike much predetermined scientific research, a qualitative study of this kind allows for the research to shift as it progresses dependent on collected data. The aims for the study do not change, but the way in which they are addressed may shift.
<i>This Research</i>	
<i>While having a basic idea of the research design for the study, I wished to be responsive to any possibilities that may arise. Changes did occur throughout the duration of the research based on collected data and contributed to the rich experience of research undertaken.</i>	

This table has provided an overview of the parallels between the role and perspective of a theatre director and that of a researcher when considering the overall style and choice in a production or research process. These parallels were helpful in shaping the relationships that formed between me and the participants, their contexts and data from the study. When balanced with the earlier consideration of role, I was able to better understand and accept my choices and embedded place in the research process for this study. I was as much a participant experiencing change as that of the teachers participating in the professional learning.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach and design for this study, and has justified the adoption of a ‘*facilitated action research*’ process. In addition, data collection and analysis were discussed along with the ‘voices’ that weave their way through this study.

The next four chapters present collected data and my interpretation through the ‘*facilitated action research*’ process described in Section 3.3. Chapters 4-6 consider the starting point and three cycles, while Chapter 7 presents the ‘change’ stories of three teachers in relation to their professional learning and enhancing the teaching of drama.

Chapter 4 - Finding a starting point & clarifying the situation

Introduction

...Action research is primarily concerned with change, being grounded in the idea that development and innovation are an essential part of professional practice...

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p201)

The next four chapters provide an explanation of the step by step process undertaken with the teachers, demonstrating how it was shaped by action research methodology. Data are presented to highlight how the process was guided by my own experiences and those of the teachers, respecting the embedded nature of the researcher, facilitator, and learner in the process of professional learning. Important lessons learned from the study are presented with critical incidents to highlight key professional learning issues.

Due to the embedded nature of experience, the use of the first person is adopted in these chapters, acknowledging the importance of giving clear voice to all participants (learners and facilitator). The use of the first person is appropriate when reporting stories and the process of action research.. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) state that *“teacher development ... must actively listen to and sponsor the teacher’s voice...”* (p5). From a methodological perspective, multiple voices, that of the ‘I’ and of the audience must be taken into account (Elijah, 2004 p247). While not adopting self-study as a methodology, this research recognises that it is these ‘voices’ that bring out the ‘living contradictions’ (Whitehead, 1993) in practice.

Data from this study are discussed over the next four chapters with reference to the data source outlined in footnotes. Chapter 4 makes meaning of data collected for the first research aim:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyse data for the second research aim:

2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.

The third research aim is addressed through teacher stories of change presented in Chapter 7:

3. To explore factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

Drawing on principles of action learning (McGill & Brockband, 2004) and situated learning theory (Brown et al., 1989; Gieselman et al., 2000; Lankard, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McLellan, 1996c), any plan for professional learning needed to be located in the school context and address the needs of the teachers. This theoretical approach also respects the style of professional learning requested by the teachers:

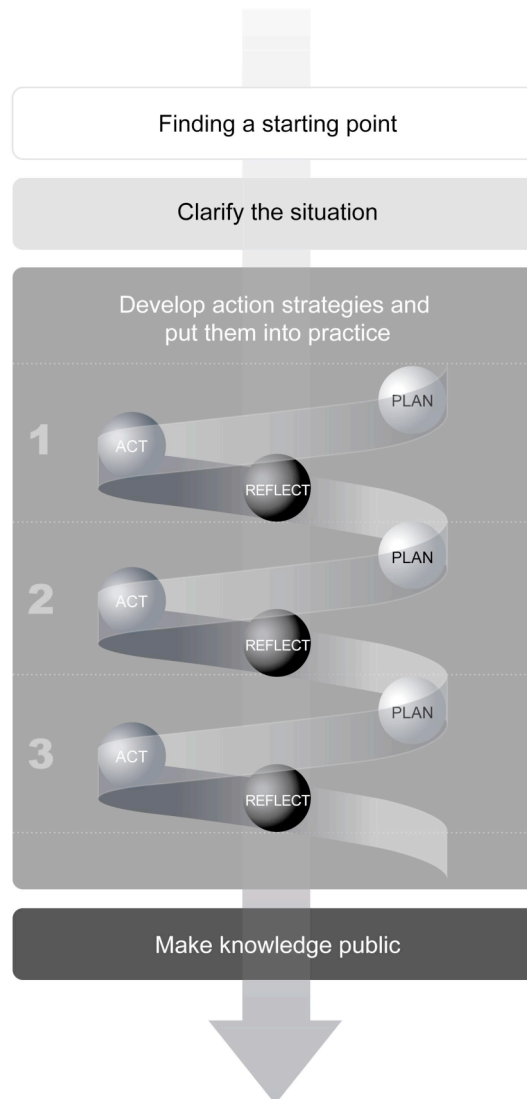
...Action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group or 'set' of colleagues, working on real issues, with the intent of getting things done...

(McGill & Brockband, 2004 p112)

It is the emphasis on 'continuous' and 'working on real issues' in this definition that drove the process of professional learning. I wanted to view professional learning as a process by which teachers and myself were collaboratively involved in 'understanding', 'monitoring' and 'evaluating' (Sagor, 1992) or, adopting a more traditional action research cycle: 'planning, acting, observing and reflecting' (Elliott, 1991; Lewin, 1946).

Figure 4.1, previously discussed in Chapter 3, was developed to represent what I viewed as the 'facilitated action research' process, and guides the reader through the following chapters.

Figure 4.1 - ‘Facilitated Action Research’ process



4.1 Clarifying the situation

...The first interpretation of a situation does not always get to the heart of the matter...our first impression often relies on familiar assumptions and long-standing prejudices...
(Altrichter *et al.*, 1993 p46)

Finding a starting point is the first stage within the ‘facilitated action research’ process. Details of how this study began have been discussed in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 3 and will not be revisited here.

Clarifying the situation is important within action research, as what the researcher believes about a situation may not in fact provide an ‘accurate’ picture (Altrichter *et al.*,

1993). I had to be careful to collect enough data at this stage of the study to avoid a limited or restricted interpretation of the issues being faced. It is important to test interpretations in various settings to confirm first impressions, that are often shaped via tacit personal assumptions and previous experiences (Altrichter et al., 1993).

4.1.1 Phase One - Background interview and questionnaire

The use of a background interview and questionnaire occurred twice. The first version, conducted during Phase One, was designed to gather information on work context and teaching preferences. Most importantly, information was also gathered on personal and contextual factors facilitating or constraining the teaching of drama (Research Aim 1). The second version for Phase Two, (Section 4.7), provided further information on contributing factors, but also contributed to the planning and implementation of effective school-based professional learning drawing on teacher self-identified needs. Two sets of interviews and questionnaires were conducted with the different teachers for Phase One and Phase Two.

Background interview

Data were collected for the first research aim from all eleven teachers in the study. This was done in two stages with six teachers involved in the initial part of the study (Schools One and Two). Five additional teachers (School Three) were then included through preparation for the professional learning which shaped Phase Two.

The focus of the semi-structured interviews in Phase One emphasised:

- beliefs regarding creative arts and drama;
- beliefs regarding the teaching and learning process;
- personal experiences with drama (school and outside);
- drama they are currently doing/have done in the past (in teaching);
- preferred programming style;
- past experiences with professional learning; and
- preferred style/strategies for professional learning.

Only minimal alterations were made to the semi-structured interview schedules for Phase Two. The primary change was the inclusion of an emphasis on self-identification

of professional learning needs in relation to enhancing the teaching of drama. Further details on the need for such a background interview, and the gathering of personal and contextual data as critical for the professional learning process, are reported in Section 4.7.

Questionnaire

Prior to participation in the background interview, all eleven teachers completed a questionnaire (Appendix 3.7) which requested information on:

- background information (qualifications and work experience);
- details of past experiences with professional development; and
- skill specific details relevant to the creative arts (previous training, current participation in the creative arts, confidence with teaching the creative arts).

It was important to gain an understanding of the teachers' backgrounds and understanding of the various aspects of the arts as well as demographic information. By asking the teachers to provide this detailed personal information, the '*teacher as a person*' (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p5) could become the focus of the study and catalyst for professional learning. The data provided knowledge to assist in initial teacher interviews and were also drawn on in Phase Two to compare changing understandings as the study progressed.

A detailed discussion of the way in which the background interview and questionnaire were adapted for Phase Two can be found in Section 4.7. Comments from all eleven teachers are drawn on in the following discussion of personal and contextual factors facilitating or constraining the teaching of drama.

4.2 Factors

Teaching is located primarily within two specific and individual contexts, or in and out-of-classroom spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). I was concerned with investigating what it was within these spaces that was facilitating or constraining the teaching of drama. As the 'in-classroom space' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) is unique for each

teacher, I needed to remain aware that factors reported were specific to each school and classroom context. Some factors did arise as relevant to a majority of teachers.

This section is presented in three parts and focuses on the meaning made of the first research aim:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

The first two parts identify personal factors of belief and experience influencing the teaching of drama and the third section considers contextual factors.

Emerging *personal factors* included:

- teacher beliefs (students, classroom and academic material) as influenced by general beliefs (familial, religious, societal) and the valuing of drama;
- beliefs about the social factors that influence pedagogical choice;
- confidence and perceived skill level; and
- experience (personal, with schooling and instruction and with formal education).

Emerging *contextual factors* included:

- syllabus outcomes and parental influences;
- space;
- programming;
- time pressures; and
- professional learning.

It is the combination of these personal and contextual factors and their relationship to pedagogical choice in drama that is unique to this study.

The study values the relationship between beliefs, experience and pedagogical choice as critical in understanding and shaping teaching practice. This relationship was determined through a searching, but general discussion of experiences and beliefs, rather than through responses to explicit questions. This approach was based on the

assumption that beliefs and experiences have a strong influence on pedagogical choice (Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

The personal and contextual factors emerging were grouped from a thematic perspective.

4.3 Personal factors

...The teacher as a person has been neglected in teacher development...in more recent research, we are seeing that age, stage of career, life experiences, and gender factors - things that make up the total person - affect people's interest in and response to innovation and their motivation to seek improvement...

(Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p5)

Data revealed that the factors considered to *facilitate* the use of drama in primary classrooms were predominantly personal rather than contextual. This contrasts with those factors considered to *constrain* the teaching of drama. These were viewed as largely contextual.

Teachers referred primarily to their teacher beliefs (Kagan, 1992), or professional beliefs (students, classroom and academic material) when considering curriculum choices. Their experience had a direct bearing on their teaching practice in general rather than on their teaching of drama in particular. The benefit to student learning was stated as a factor motivating teachers to incorporate drama in their classrooms. Personal factors including reduced confidence and a lack of personal skill, and the contextual factors of inadequate or ineffective professional learning, were blamed by the teachers for what was perceived as their insufficient use of drama.

Literature (Garcia, 1993; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996) and data analysis supported the reporting of **belief** according to the following:

- teacher belief and valuing of drama;
- social influence; and
- own practice.

Data analysis supported the reporting of **experience** according to the basic classification of Richardson (1996), who considers experiences in these three areas to influence pedagogical choice:

- personal experience;
- experience with schooling and instruction; and
- experience with formal education.

4.3.1 Belief

As stated in Section 2.2.3, beliefs are one of the three key areas considered to influence and impact upon the learning process. The other two are experiences and social interaction. Data have been grouped according to the definition of teacher belief adopted in this study. Teacher beliefs (including beliefs about students, classrooms and academic material) as influenced by general beliefs (including familial, religious and societal influence) are of interest due to their recognised sway on pedagogical choice.

Belief is defined as incorporating assumptions about students, classrooms and academic material (Kagan, 1992). These teacher beliefs are influenced by an individual's general belief including familial and religious influences. Traditions and customs within an individual's society/culture will also influence these beliefs.

Teacher beliefs and valuing of drama

For drama use to be a conscious pedagogical choice, teachers need to value it as a positive learning experience for their students (Garcia, 1993). There have been many studies anecdotally recording the benefits and value of using drama in the classroom (Bamford & Darell, 2004; Bolton, 1979; Burton, 1987; Cusworth & Simons, 1997; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Johnson & O'Neill, 1984). The purpose of this study is to enrich rather than refute these findings.

The teachers in this research clearly valued the use of drama and were able to provide a number of reasons why it was beneficial to their students. As the teachers were aware of the emphasis on drama, data regarding academic material were focused on this subject area. Teacher belief in regard to the benefit of drama for students was positive with each of the following claims being made by several teachers. Drawn from initial interviews

and conversations, these areas demonstrate the various reasons why the teachers valued drama. An illustrating quote for each area is given.

- **Encourages creativity and imagination**

Drama allows students to express ideas that may be considered outside the norm, rather than giving expected responses. The use of drama provides students with an expressive output and encourages creativity, the use of imagination and alternative modes of expression.

...So there's that and drama in the same sense...I think it manages as a vehicle to bring something that is imagined into reality. So it connects between what you can create abstractly and what you can take from that and turn into something that's real and tangible. So, it creates thought processes that kids are not going to be able to come up with in other subject areas...¹

- **Is a mode of appreciation**

Drama allows students to explore the world in a different manner to other subject areas. Students can be encouraged to physically and/or verbally represent their opinions about the world as well as expressing personal comment and reflection on important issues.

...I'm just thinking of some of the plays I've seen and how it really relates to you and how you just gain some understanding of the human dimensions of life. And that can go right down to child level...I remember one of the little books that we read... after I read a few pages, I got them to dramatise it, how would you feel in this situation and they had to try and get the look on their face. It just gives them that empathy with situations that are happening across all...not only in this country, but other countries and different sort of groups and so it makes them more tolerant in that respect...²

- **Is hands on and meaningful**

There was a perception among the teachers that what children love, they do well. The hands on, practical nature of drama provides learning where students are encouraged to work in this alternative style. The physical expression explored through dramatic activities provides a hands-on way of exploring knowledge and the world.

Drama was perceived as assisting in making learning meaningful. It was considered to be another tool to assist students in exploring new concepts. They are able to guide the

¹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

² Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

direction of their learning, with the ownership of the process undertaken in the classroom given to the students.

...I'll sort of relate it to the Amazon work. I gave the children a scenario where they were a group that had been lost in the Amazon and I would give them either a verbal or a written situation and see how they run with it. I'd just give them that situation and see how they run with it. If it gets out of hand, or they're not going along the path that I want them to go along I sort of go, "Heh, just stop for a second, what do you guys think about...this". And then they'll probably go "Oh, ok", or "we didn't really agree with that", and see how they carry on from there. I try to... with general integrated drama, I try to make it as unstructured as possible, so they can learn and remember from it, because if it's coming from them then they will remember it more than if it's coming from me...³

- **Be used for engaging a variety of skills**

The teachers viewed drama as a useful learning tool when integrated with other subject areas. The teamwork aspect of many dramatic activities was viewed as a benefit in creating a positive learning environment in the schools.

...And also putting on plays for assembly, I mean, the whole class is working together and it just pulls them together and they feel good after it and it increases that class spirit...⁴

The variety of skills that can be accessed within integrated activities is useful for developing students' learning. Amy gave a further example from her unit designed to explore the Amazon rainforest where students were encouraged to physically represent a creeper vine, then write an information report. To do so required them to conduct research on the vine and apply English as well as drama skills.⁵

- **Allows students to express what they may be unable to in words (difficult topics or troubled pasts)**

Drama has been used as a tool for assisting students to explore and express emotions. The schools in the study recognised drama as beneficial for dealing with issues such as bullying and behaviour management. School Two, for example, drew on drama activities to assist refugee students in exploring their experiences and related emotions when participating in harmony day activities.⁶

- **Helps develop self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment**

³ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

⁴ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

⁵ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

⁶ School Two

All of the teachers in the study referred to the benefit of drama on students' self-esteem and enjoyment. Drama is viewed by the teachers as a mode of learning that encourages students to express themselves as individuals. Teachers recognised the 'fun' side of drama when students are participating in activities in which they are active participants, but where effective learning is taking place.

...Drama they seem to lose all their inhibitions, they become some body else and they can just be free in that role and do whatever they feel like doing. They can be loud if they're a quiet person, or they can be soft if they're a loud person (*laughs*) and I've just seen so many children come out of their shells because of drama...⁷

- **Develops cultural and social awareness as well as life skills**

The potential for developing cultural and social awareness through drama activities was referred to by a majority of teachers. They viewed drama as a way of breaking down barriers and assisting with the creation of empathy between students from varying backgrounds and past personal experiences.

...I think it is also culturally beneficial. It is going to be something that no matter what, any student from any background, no matter what their experiences are, they will have experienced some music, or they will have experienced some creative arts in some way because they are so closely linked with every culture on the planet. So, if you've got a child who feels isolated because they've just come from another country or they're from a different religion, or a different kind of background from everybody else, you can connect with them through the culture of where they've come from and that works with music and visual arts and drama and I suppose dance as well would come into that. And it teaches children, it teaches kids in the dominant culture of what other cultures can be like...⁸

The opportunity to further develop students' social awareness and interaction skills was also discussed. More discussion of drama in fostering cultural awareness can be found through a consideration of understanding drama in Section 4.7.3.

At the beginning of the study, the teachers felt motivated to incorporate drama in their teaching to assist with student learning, but primarily because the students enjoyed it. They considered it important to give the students ownership of their learning as they would engage more with it. There was also the belief that what students enjoy, they do well and that engagement will result in more attention.

⁷ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

⁸ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

... it's [drama] open for a mode of appreciation, where kids can look and appreciate other kids work, and compare... I think it's very hands on, which kids love and what kids enjoy, they do well...they're enjoying themselves...that generally coincides with their paying attention and their learning...⁹

Drama was considered a way of engaging students' imagination and creativity. It was perceived as allowing students to express concepts and emotions they may not otherwise express. Some of the teachers in the study had tried to use some drama in their classrooms and felt success at different levels. One particularly telling example is when a teacher attempted some improvisation that did not initially work. He believed this was because the topic area did not come from the students themselves: they didn't have ownership and therefore did not engage.¹⁰

Despite stating these many positive benefits, only minimal use of drama was evident by the teachers at the beginning of the research. When a dissonance between belief and action occurs, the teachers can be described as experiencing a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989), by which they were not living according to their beliefs. That the teachers were experiencing this 'living contradiction', contrasts with one of three assertions made by Garcia (1993) when researching beliefs and drama. In her research, she argues that "...*the use of drama is contingent on a teacher's belief regarding its value...*" (p11). At the beginning of this study, the teachers were positive about the value of drama, but this belief alone was not sufficient a motivator for most to include drama on a regular basis.

While a majority of teachers were not regularly using drama, their participation demonstrated a desire to improve their practice in this area. The process of change manifested through practice is examined in three personal stories (Chapter 7). What became increasingly clear during the study was that in all cases, the facilitating and/or constraining factors involved a blend of both personal and contextual issues.

Social influence

A number of 'societies' including students, parents, colleagues and school leaders influence a teacher within the schooling environment. These social influences were referred to in different ways, and impacted to different degrees.

⁹ Kate, School Two - Interview 1 - 05.03.03

¹⁰ Jack, School Two, Interview 1 - 21.03.03

The influence of *students* and their need to guide pedagogical choice was implicit in the majority of discussions. They were referred to as the most influential motivating or guiding force on classroom practice.

...I feel a little guilty at times...only because I feel the boys just love it so much. I thought I should have been doing more of this. That's where I felt a little bit guilty because they just couldn't wait. Like the little plays we put on for Transition B, we finally got that done toward the end of the term, but it was like they were just so excited and everything. They just loved it all...¹¹

As demonstrated in the quote, it was the student enjoyment of the subject area that was cited as a key reason for teaching drama. Such student responses were a factor that encouraged ongoing participation in the professional learning for a majority of teachers.

What teachers felt as ideal for their students, was often seen as being inhibited by two other parties in their social circle, namely parents and school leaders.

...Its just having the time to be able to get them to learn by discovery, because it just...when you've got a 40 minute lesson on something, and you want them to write, you know, to look at a book, a picture and go, "Ok, that's that animal, and that's that animal, that's that animal", and then you want them to write information reports on it, because... it's also the parents' impression of what's being learnt too. Because you might have discussed to your wits end how to write an information report, but unless...the parents can actually see the piece of paper that shows the correct setting out of an information report with all the key elements of that genre of writing, they don't think that their child's learnt anything...¹²

Teachers referred to *parental influence* as a constraining factor, but classed this as contextual rather than personal. A consideration of parental influence is discussed further in Section 4.3.1.

Information regarding work *colleagues* was not freely volunteered by the teachers in the study, with none referring to this group in initial comments. When specifically questioned about their influence near the completion of the study, the teachers did not report their support, or lack of, as having any notable influence on pedagogical choice or classroom practice.

¹¹ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹² Amy, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

The key social issue was with the personal reactions of teachers to the support of *school leaders*. Minimal information about support was volunteered by teachers in the initial interviews so specific questioning was incorporated into later semi-structured interviews and conversations.

Support is considered in this section as involving personal interaction with the school leadership and fellow staff members, and does not include other support mechanisms such as resources and professional learning opportunities. It was the school leaders including the principal and deputy principal who were predominantly referred to by teachers when discussing support.

Of the minimal comments regarding support made at the beginning of the study, teachers from the two government schools expressed frustration with the general expectations and pressure placed on them by school leaders. This disgruntlement related to their relationship to the school principal and differing opinions of teaching styles, rather than linking to their choice of teaching drama. While the teachers did not credit a lack of drama use to their frustration, the impact of ‘pressure’ and the belief they were constantly pushed for time, restricted their pedagogical choices. There was a belief that teachers needed to focus predominantly on literacy and numeracy as predicated by their leaders, rather than being ‘allowed’ to teach more creatively.

The teachers in the third school (independent school) differed from the other two as they rarely made reference to their school leaders at all. One teacher was atypical as he made comments in the initial interview about school leaders, but this reflected discontent with a past employer. The criticisms referred to a directive programming style, and perceived restrictions imposed on the teacher’s ability to make effective pedagogical choices.¹³ In this past incident, he found a lack of support and trust from the school leader directly influenced pedagogical choice and classroom practice.

Support, as a factor, emerged as having increasing prominence for the teachers in this third school during their involvement in professional learning.

¹³ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

Confidence and perceived skill level

While the place of school leaders impacted some of the teachers strongly in relation to their pedagogical choices, it is this third category that had most impact.

The warm ‘ethos’ of most classrooms was conducive to student expression. Teachers were generally intent on providing meaningful opportunities rather than just developing ‘technical’ skills. They saw their role as a collaborator and guide, and wished to create a classroom environment that was happy and where learning occurred in a hands-on, enjoyable way suitable for the inclusion of dramatic activities. They aimed to develop classroom relationships that were fair and collaborative and where the teacher did not dominate. Some teachers did, however, acknowledge the place of more structured, quiet time or the ‘quicker’ transmission style teaching. Despite having an appropriate teaching approach and suitable classroom environment, the teaching of drama had not been taking place.

Two factors were revealed that influenced the teaching of drama: confidence with the subject area and a teacher’s self-perceived skill level. The level to which a teacher felt confident and knowledgeable regarding a subject was shown to link to the application of it. The majority of teachers expressed a self-identified lack of confidence and/or skill with the use of drama which they then directly attributed to their minimal use of it in classrooms.

There were mixed levels of confidence among the teachers in relation to the teaching of drama, with some who had a background in different areas of the creative arts also hesitant to include it. Others refused to do so until they knew ‘how to’ properly. There was some frustration by one teacher who was repeatedly called on to teach dance as she had a professional background in that area. She insisted that while someone may be talented enough to perform, that doesn’t automatically make them a good teacher in that style.¹⁴ Some teachers who did try different activities were happy with the results, but were keen to increase their own skills so they could use drama more effectively and feel that activities were less ad hoc.

¹⁴ Kate, School Two, Interview 1 - 05.03.03

In all of the schools, an inadequacy in relation to perceived skill level inhibited the use of drama. The teachers were openly reflexive and clear about their weaknesses in this subject, with all involved in the professional learning, expressing a desire to increase their skill-based knowledge (Section 5.1).

A majority of the teachers were reflexive when discussing their weaknesses in the teaching of drama. In the following excerpt, one teacher was able to identify the aspects of her own personality that inhibited her drama based skill development during teacher training. She recognised the benefits that taking drama at that time may have offered her:

...all those drama type units, I didn't do, whereas I'd go and do all the arty type units. I was half decent at drawing so I thought, oh... and I just didn't have the personality to get up there in front of people and that so I went and did the art type things, and I really didn't...and I should've. I suppose, you look back over these things and say, wouldn't it be wonderful if I'd made myself go and do one of those drama units, because it most probably would've really helped me build up my confidence instead of going to the thing I'm secure and safe in...¹⁵

Another teacher stood out as atypical in that she considered herself confident with drama and personally “*very dramatic*”¹⁶. She identified other personal areas that inhibited her use of drama such as time management and programming skills. These additional inhibitors to drama use are discussed further in the following chapters as they guided the professional learning in the study.

A third assertion by Garcia (1993) states that “...*the use of drama is contingent on the teacher's beliefs in his or her own ability to structure effective drama experiences...*” (p12). Comments by the teachers support this assertion as a lack of belief in their own abilities that resulted in a lack of drama. The teachers recognised the need for increased skills in the use of drama to allow their valuing of it to be translated into practice. Personal factors including teacher belief and valuing of drama, social influence and views about own skills were found to influence pedagogical choice in relation to drama. There was recognition that with increased skills, improved support and a positive valuing, the teaching of drama may be enhanced. When approached positively, these personal factors are considered important in facilitating the use of drama.

¹⁵ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

¹⁶ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

4.3.2 Experience

As with belief, experiences are a well recognised factor guiding pedagogical choice. Experience is divided into three distinct areas influencing the development of teacher beliefs and knowledge (Richardson, 1996):

- personal experience;
- experience with schooling and instruction (teaching and learning); and
- formal education experiences (Richardson, 1996).

Past *personal experiences* were viewed as having a definite influence on a teacher's attitude to the creative arts in the classroom, although this 'attitude' does not necessarily translate into practice. Past *schooling experiences* were also identified as impacting on the valuing of drama by teachers. The influence of *formal education* was not given much priority by these teachers, raising interesting questions regarding teacher education programs and the way in which they guide student teachers in various subject areas. As discussed in Section 8.3, if practising teachers relate more to their own personal and past schooling experiences, should teacher education programs be more hands-on, providing newer experiences for these teachers to draw on?

Personal experience

The eleven teachers in the study come from a diverse melting pot of personal experiences and these shaped the way in which they approached their students, their teaching and the learning environments. Despite some teachers being selected and others volunteering for the study, all held a positive view of using drama in the classroom, even though most did not act on this.

Through conversations with the teachers regarding their personal experiences, it became clear that the way they saw themselves as teachers, and the subsequent choices made in their classrooms, were based on personal experiences. Some of the teachers referred to experiences in drama or other aspects of creative arts, while others referred to general personal experiences that had an impact on them.

Conversations with the teachers in the study strongly supported the assumption that personal experience influences teacher beliefs and therefore the creation of classroom environment. Some of the diversity of experience found within the study included a teacher who felt that her experience as a counsellor shaped her classroom and how she interacted with students:

...I usually have a pretty good rapport with my kids, so... I don't usually have problems with discipline...I want them to enjoy it, I want them to have a laugh every day, I want them to look forward to coming...I don't just skim the surface, if someone just tells me something, I don't take it at face value...whether that's the welfare coming out...all the background, but I always like to investigate and find out why...I think they think of me as fair... I just want them to have fun, and know that they can learn...¹⁷

In this case, despite having had some experience with the arts, it was working with disadvantaged students and recognising the assistance she could give that had most influenced her as a teacher. As a result of her past experiences, the classroom environment she was working to create was open and collaborative and a space in which she hoped the students felt safe.

A number of the teachers believed that their extensive background in various aspects of the creative arts helped guide their use of it in their classrooms:

...I guess 'cause the way I teach is so...dramatic and over the top and...um...the singing songs comes very naturally to me, I not the slightest bit embarrassed by it or inhibited by the drama or the anything like that. And that has to rub off, there's no doubt about that, but what I'd like them to do, is to...um...not only participate, but to do the learning of the elements and...so that, you know, I can use the terminology...which I've never done...very much before in all the different strands. I just...I want them to experience...but, no, I'd have to say it's easy...easy for me...¹⁸

A further example involves a teacher who had personally used drawing to help him process ideas, and who wanted to transfer this personal enjoyment to the students:

...he explained that he [Greg] loves to draw and paint. "...*My greatest relaxation is painting a house*". He feels that he would pass that on to the kids and little skills like colour and the amount of paint to put on a brush. The other thing he finds relaxing is working with wood. He told me how much he loves doing things with his hands and being creative. Also described work he does with the students with wire and how much he enjoys creating shapes with it...¹⁹

¹⁷ Catherine, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

¹⁸ Abbey, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

¹⁹ Notes from Greg, School 1, Interview 1 - 16.03.03

In these diverse cases, the teacher's personal experiences were being described as explicitly influencing classroom choices. In relation to the creative arts examples, these were experiences that were enjoyed.

Confidence and a lack of concrete knowledge in drama were also mentioned when some teachers described their personal experiences. It is interesting to consider the impact that a lack of confidence has on pedagogical choice. As can be seen in the following excerpt, this teacher recognised an aspect of her personality that could be attributed to her minimal use of drama. It was important for her to remember this feeling as she could show empathy to students who may also suffer confidence problems when experiencing drama in the classroom:

...I love art, I love... all of art, but I don't have any background in drama and as a child I was actually quite shy and I didn't particularly enjoy getting up myself, I was very shy about it. So yes...I was in that regard, because as a child I wasn't... I was more inhibited about it, I suppose that's why I haven't... I don't know...why I do it the way I do...²⁰

When a teacher considers the teaching of drama in the classroom, the personal 'baggage' brought to the experience will influence the way the subject is presented to students. A teacher's awareness of his/her own personality, its limitations and/or idiosyncrasies is important to allow safe and effective dramatic learning to occur.

A number of the teachers revealed their personal passion for areas of the arts, including drama that will continue beyond their teaching lives:

... I love reading and I love theatre and going to see plays myself. So, it comes down to that interest. I haven't done any sort of courses as such, but I've read, I've borrowed books on how to teach drama etc so, um...but I mean, when I retire from teaching I'd like to join a dramatic society and maybe, do some myself...²¹

This personal enjoyment is not a condition for drama use in the classroom. It may assist to develop a student's love of a subject area.

Experience with schooling and instruction

Personal theories of teaching and learning are formed through experiences of the schooling process (Richardson, 1996). There was a general perception amongst the

²⁰ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

²¹ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

teachers that supports this assumption. The schooling experiences discussed by the teachers related to the creative arts as well as to general schooling incidents. The experiences were largely positive, apart from one teacher who found his schooling to be an extremely challenging and negative time.

The positive schooling experiences were credited by the teachers as having an impact on future teaching actions. Again, the element of personal enjoyment was raised with the majority considering this important in shaping their perceptions of subject areas. Some of the teachers considered the freedom they enjoyed in their own schooling to explore personal talent and the creative arts, as important for their students today.²²

It is interesting to consider the manner in which the one teacher who had a negative experience of schooling turned his opinion around to result in a positive learning environment for his students. The first excerpt describes his personal negative experiences of schooling, and the second describes the way in which an attempt is made to positively influence his own practice. Both excerpts have been taken from Mark's initial interview:

...Actually school was a really bad experience for me and I'm quite...I'm really amazed that I ended up being a teacher because I hated school with a vengeance. The only time I ever enjoyed school, the only times...were preschool...absolutely loved it... and years 11 and 12. All the years in between were hell, they were really bad...um...because I went to a very militant school...um... and it was during a period of time... I started...I would have been in first class in about 1974 and so during that period of time politically school teachers were being told that every kid is the same and it really...I think it really affected my education, because I was clearly different from a lot of other kids at school and so were a number of other kids different as well, you know, we weren't just...it wasn't just me, but I remember a lot of times being told, you know, well no, you can't go out and have a piano lesson because that's your privilege. You come from a very privileged background and so it's not your right to go out and do that, so no, we're not going to let you do it. And so that was the attitude of the primary school that I went to, and then the attitude of the high school that I went to was a little bit less like that, but it was in the same region and it was a non-selective state school, so the attitudes I think just flowed on naturally because that was where all the students were going. So the student body was brought up with that attitude and it ended up going through to the secondary school, so that was really really disappointing...²³

...It's [student self-assessment] hard, it's a lot of work, but it's something I didn't have...it's the total antithesis of what I had at school, so maybe some people would say I'm reacting against that, but the results that I get in terms of behaviour management and the relationship I have with the kids here by far outweighs any of the problems it causes me in

²² Catherine & Abbey, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

²³ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

terms of paper work or time or anything like that. Clear system of rewards and consequences...²⁴

Mark referred to his own schooling experiences as important in shaping the kind of teacher he wished to become. Understanding and respecting the place of these personal schooling experiences is important for those conducting professional learning in schools. Beliefs based on personal experiences cannot, and should not, be ignored as teachers explicitly credit them with shaping their practice. These experiences of schooling and learning should instead be drawn on reflexively to guide and shape the desired classroom environment. How these experiences are respected in the professional learning in this study is discussed in the following chapters. The reflexivity demonstrated by all of the teachers helped to guide the direction and focus of the professional learning.

Experience with formal education

Formal education or ‘formal instruction’ (Richardson, 1996), is considered to have less impact on a teacher’s practice than the previous two categories of experience. Formal knowledge is viewed as incorporating the necessary understandings previously agreed on by a ‘community of scholars’ (Richardson, 1996). The minimal impact of these experiences was reflected in the comments made by a majority of teachers with few referring to their formal training, even when prompted by the researcher.

When directly questioned about formal training, some of the teachers referred to ineffective prior professional development²⁵ and did not make any other reference to formal education. Minimal mention of teacher education was made, which supports the assumption regarding the power of personal and schooling experiences as an influence (Richardson, 1996).

When formal education was referred to, it was not credited as being a particularly influential force in the choice of using drama in the classroom. One of the teachers was trained in the United Kingdom and it is interesting to note that despite her training in a different country, she still did not feel it had assisted her use of drama:

²⁴ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁵ Catherine, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03 & Kate, School 2, Interview 1 - 05.03.03

...The only training I've had... in the UK we have a really big, it's...to be a uni qualified teacher you get a lot of support and there are a lot of courses available to send you on, I don't know if its so much over here, but it's a real huge support thing and the one that... the burrow of London I was working in had a really good uni qualified program and they had a drama module... cause they send you off on a course every Thursday afternoon and so, one of them was drama, which was good, but...that's all I've had...²⁶

While most teachers considered their 'formal education' to be their university/college education as well as ongoing professional learning, one teacher viewed his formal education as also including practical experience through work-based training. In the following excerpt, it is clear that this teacher respected the place of work-based learning, recognising the importance of gaining and maintaining practical skills in his preferred area of the arts. His perception of formal education differed to that offered by Richardson (1996) as much of what is learnt in the workplace could not easily be agreed upon by a 'community of scholars':

... and so then after that I went to the Conservatorium and studied music, still as a piano major and then started with singing and cello alongside of that and at the same time I was interested in going to a drama school, which I got into and went to for a while. And that led to a few little bits and pieces here and there so from that I became a member of what was then Actor's Equity and just did some really sporadic stuff, different commercials and a few walk on things here and there, nothing really sensational...um... and then had a couple of roles in some semi-professional operas and operettas. And as that was developing I just kept on teaching music privately and then eventually got a job in a school and that's where my focus changed to teaching music as a subject...²⁷

Educating adult learners regarding the various modes through which they can gain formal education may provide one way of guiding them to consider the influence it has had on their practice. Formal education did not appear to have any major influence on the teaching of drama.

Experience, be it personal, with schooling or formal education, does play a role in a teacher's pedagogical choice. The role of these different forms of experience as a factor in facilitating or constraining the use of drama became clear, supporting claims based in the literature. The professional learning detailed in the following chapters reflects the importance of identifying and respecting each teacher's experiences and beliefs.

The impact of personal factors, particularly those of beliefs and values, is always difficult to determine. It is obviously not the intention of this study to isolate and

²⁶ Leanne, Interview 1 - 24.06.03

²⁷ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

manipulate variables relating to belief and value, but to draw attention to their significance in the theoretical literature as factors in shaping teacher behaviours. The data that are reported in relation to prior experience is derived solely from teacher response in individual semi-structured interviews and reflections. I assumed that when I shared my own experiences through frank disclosure, and when a reassuring personal climate that promoted sharing was established, participants would reveal prior experience that they consciously believed had influenced their current thinking and behaviour.

4.4 Contextual factors

In contrast to the personal factors viewed as facilitating the use of drama, contextual factors were identified by these teachers as constraining their teaching. Six key contextual factors were revealed in the data: *syllabus outcomes*, *parental expectation*, *space*, *programming*, *time* and *professional learning*. The importance of acknowledging and respecting these constraining factors in promoting the professional learning of teachers is acknowledged.

Time was referred to by all teachers as the biggest constraining factor in the teaching of drama. Its influence is overarching and it has an implied relationship to the five other identified factors.

4.4.1 Syllabus outcomes/Parental expectation

Syllabus outcomes and parental expectation have been grouped together in this section as they were credited as having the same constraining impact on pedagogical choice. The factor with the greatest influence depended on the specific school context. In the two government schools, the teachers referred to 'syllabus outcomes' as a directive that inhibited 'creative' teaching, while in the independent school, 'parents' were given the credit for constraining classroom choices. It is important to note that outcomes and parental expectation were viewed as general constraining factors for pedagogical choice on a broader scale and were not just related to the use of drama in the classroom.

The outcomes referred to by the teachers in the study are those developed for primary school teachers by the NSW Board of Studies. While not stated explicitly, there was a

reaction among the teachers that this government body directed pedagogical choice through these various syllabus documents²⁸. When questioned directly about who was placing the pressure on them, the teachers were vague in their responses. They discussed the feeling of being torn between what was perceived as a 'traditional' model of teaching, and a model of teaching involving greater student expression.

What became increasingly obvious through ongoing conversations with the teachers was that the real influencing force on pedagogical choice, for those in the two government schools, was the principal. The school principal was credited with having a 'push' for literacy and numeracy in one school. Despite a belief that the use of the arts wouldn't detrimentally affect these Key Learning Areas, the influence of the principal is clear:

...I guess you always have to focus on your literacy and numeracy and ...what can creative arts do for that? This is what we're looking at...but, I mean you still have to assess your creative arts...everything has to be met, all your outcomes you're trying to achieve across all areas, I mean, you don't want to just focus on that and let the others drop off, so...as much as we can use the creative arts to bring everything else up, but still focusing on everything else as well...I mean our principal has a huge push for literacy and numeracy at the moment and I think he's a little worried that, you know, think that might fall, but I don't think so...²⁹

Syllabus outcomes were viewed by teachers in the government schools to be a negative issue that hinders creative teaching and effects programming in the arts. There was a definite feeling by teachers in the first two schools that they have a duty to maintain their teaching standards (traditional) in both literacy and numeracy, with the Basic Skills Test³⁰ being quoted as the reason. This outcomes focus could also be viewed as an explanation of why all the teachers favoured programming and teaching in a subject-based or segmented manner as opposed to favouring a more drama-friendly thematic approach.

The teachers in the independent school did not refer to outcomes as constraining pedagogical choice or their use of drama. Instead, parental expectation frustrated them

²⁸ There are six primary school syllabus documents produced by the NSW Board of Studies: English K-6, Mathematics K-6, Human Society and Its Environment K-6, Science and Technology K-6, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6 and Creative Arts K-6.

²⁹ Kate, School Two, Interview 1 - 05.03.03

³⁰ Basic Skills Test - standardised state testing that takes place in literacy and numeracy for Years 3, 5 and 7 in New South Wales.

and was credited with influencing classroom based pedagogical choices. The following excerpt outlines one teacher's perception of the negative impact of parental expectation on her use of drama in the classroom. While this is one teacher's experience, it reflects the perceived ongoing influence of the parental body described by the majority of teachers in this school:

...I've even had a parent say your doing too much of the Amazon rainforest...um...where they don't say that about Maths. I do Maths everyday for one hour, and we don't get that comment about Maths. We do English everyday for one hour, don't get that comment about English, but as soon as it's a HSIE topic, or a Science topic that predominates the child's conversation when they come home, it's like..."What are you doing with the rest of the day? Where are you learning how to write a proper narrative?"...³¹

In the independent school, the principal was not directly credited with influencing pedagogical choices. While the parents were blamed for creating pressure, at no time did the teachers request a meeting to discuss the problem. The fact that the teachers did not feel comfortable raising these pressure issues with the school leaders, reflects a communication problem in the school. The need for developing a culture of open communication and collaboration at all levels is important for the ongoing development of teachers. An increased openness may reduce the incidence of separation where teachers tell different stories of practice in the safe spaces of their classrooms to the cover stories told in the less safe wider school community (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). The importance of developing a 'collaborative culture' (Hargreaves, 1992) within a school is further discussed in Chapter 8.2.

The placement of an individual's locus of control (external or internal) (Lefcourt, 1976) and the impact this has on practice, comes into question when considering external controlling forces. Could it in fact be the teachers assuming the expectation rather than these external forces imposing it? Is it then the teachers who have the responsibility for addressing this constraint? Through encouraging the teachers to self-identify needs and making them active participants in their own professional learning, they are encouraged to shift the locus of control (Lefcourt, 1976) back to themselves. By doing so, they are supported in taking ownership of constraints, working through problems, and in turn allowing a self-perceived weakness to become a strength. How this personal emphasis is fostered in the professional learning framework is presented in the following chapters.

³¹ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

4.4.2 Space

While not directly referred to by a majority of teachers, space as a factor influencing the use of drama was common across all schools. Availability of space was different in each context and therefore the impact drama activities had on the wider school community, and particularly on colleagues in adjoining classrooms, varied.

The one school that had double classrooms for each teacher did not experience any negative reaction to drama use. Having a readily available and clear space was found to facilitate the early inclusion of drama as the teachers were able to move students easily to the work area whenever needed. The other two schools found space to be a constraining factor for drama use as suitable areas were limited. From time spent in a number of schools, both government and independent, it is this latter example of space in constraining drama use that is most common.

Time was referred to by teachers when discussing space as they had to carefully structure days to fit in with room bookings that allowed them to conduct drama sessions. In turn, teachers felt that they lost valuable time when needing to move between appropriate spaces and then had to settle students into normal routines. In some cases, the teachers felt less inclined to use drama spontaneously, or incidentally, due to the lack of space available and the time required moving desks and belongings. Negative responses from colleagues due to noise levels created during drama activities caused conflict, and further constrained drama use for some teachers³².

Time and space are two universal issues confronting a majority of teachers in classrooms all over New South Wales. The manner in which the space issue in particular is overcome is based with each school. The space constraints placed on the teachers involved in professional learning were addressed on a needs basis. The solutions were collaborative with the changing nature of the school requiring ongoing negotiation with colleagues to ensure maximum drama use.

³² Amy, Conversation - 07.08.03

4.4.3 Programming

The teachers discussed the benefits of teaching thematically, or in an integrated manner, but were a little sceptical about how they could fit all their teaching in their programs. At the outset of the study, programming of teaching and learning activities was approached in a subject-based manner contradicting the overwhelming feeling expressed by the teachers that their style of programming should match the way students learn.

A group session was held during which the teachers discussed their understanding of integration. They initially felt fairly comfortable in providing a definition of this term where programming for integration = thematic programming³³. Confusion arose when the term ‘cross-curricular’ was introduced, with some teachers concerned that if everything is ‘integrated’ that learning would be “...*squashed in...*”³⁴. A final consensus was reached by which ‘integration’ involves programming via themes with the term ‘cross-curricular’ implying the use of learning techniques as a tool in multiple subject areas.

Initially, the teachers believed they would need to approach the process of programming differently when using the creative arts and felt this process would be fun, but difficult. This perception was born of the belief that in a creative area, the strategies used for teaching and learning are more fluid and therefore couldn’t be as regimented. This perception was explored further with those teachers in the professional learning where all requested integration techniques/programming be included as a learning focus (Section 5.1.1). As discussed in the following chapters, a belief in segmented programming, especially for the teaching of drama, changed for the teachers during the study. They began to explore the need for integrating drama as well as respecting the teaching of drama as an art form.

Time was the overarching factor again influencing pedagogical choice. The teachers in the study wished to program in a time-effective manner that could then be translated into their classroom practice. For some, drama was perceived as one tool for assisting with this desired integrated programming and teaching.

³³ Group conversation – 09.10.03

³⁴ Leanne, Group conversation – 09.10.03

A key concern raised by some of the teachers related to the fear of change in their programming and what that would mean for meeting outcomes and for the evaluation processes in the school.³⁵ Other teachers felt that too much detail was being required by their schools and as a result that they were not being treated as professionals:

...they want us to teach, but they want us to have it all written down as well and they're not saying that...they're not giving you the acknowledgement that you're a professional.. I mean, yeah, fair enough, you've got to have some things written down, but you don't have to write absolutely everything...³⁶

There were contradictions evident in conversations with some of the teachers. They were clear in their desire to use drama and recognised the need for a flexible program. At the same time some teachers argued that there are definite concepts that must be taught and that they could do the arts as well as an additional subject. Once again time was considered to be a hindering factor for these teachers:

...I can actually see us leaving out...chunks of things we are supposed to do because there won't be any time. Because next time we'll be doing dance, we'll be doing drama, we'll be doing visual arts, all that, and that seems like a miracle. Then we've still got to do English and Maths...we've got to do that. But the English is in this [integrated program], everything is English based, right? Maths, I can't see how we can tie in Maths at this stage, I still can't see it...My views on that is that we'll keep Maths. I'm still the old school, we teach Maths, we've got to teach concepts...³⁷

The importance of, and desire to program thematically was a focus of all teachers involved in the professional learning in the study. How this was addressed within the professional learning is discussed in the following chapters.

4.4.4 Time

As demonstrated in the previous three sections, time was referred to as a constraining factor for the teaching of drama. In general, teachers felt there is not enough time in a day to cover all the aspects of the curriculum. The language of time was always negative and related to 'being lost' or 'needing more'. The need for having better time management was raised by a majority of teachers, with general school-based factors credited as compounding time loss.

³⁵ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

³⁶ Catherine, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

³⁷ Daniel, School 2, Interview 1 - 25.03.03

In the independent school (Phase Two), time impacting issues were raised including:

- the frequency of specialist lessons;
- the expectation of a written work samples as proof of work completed;
- behaviour management; and
- the pressure placed on teachers due to the breadth of detail required in the twice yearly school report.

There was teacher ambivalence about drawing on *specialist teachers* to take the students for physical education, music and/or drama, choir and computers. They enjoyed the release time for marking and preparation, but resented the time away from their students as time lost for learning. Frustration was also evident in relation to the impractical teaching blocks resulting for some teachers from the timing of specialist lessons. The following excerpt presents one teacher's 'internal' battle, in which the benefit of specialist tuition in certain areas is recognised. Her frustration for losing teaching time is also clear:

With regard to specialist lessons, I find that you constantly having to stop something, and you're in the middle of a great idea because you have to go music, or you have to go to sport, or whatever it might be and Principal has certainly worked very, very hard, particularly for the Primary classes to try and get the specialist lessons out of that morning block. So that you can have your one hour of English/reading and your 1 hour of Maths in there. But still, for a person like me, who dominates everything with your HSIE topic and everything else sprouts out from there, I'm losing that time and that's why I'm trying to incorporate the fact that they're reading a rainforest book, or they're reading newspaper articles about rainforests ...but that for me has always been an issue and its never going to change, because its wonderful that the children can go off and go to the specialist teachers for music, for sport and things like that...³⁸

Student learning can also be impacted by time pressures. In a majority of cases, the teachers wished to create collaborative and exploratory learning environments. This desire was hampered by the teachers' perception that they had no time to present all the traditional concepts to students, and so creative teaching was placed on the backburner, or left as a 'fun' activity on Friday afternoons. The next excerpt presents one teacher's concern about time limiting her ability to help the children learn by discovery. An excursion was cited as a clear example of her frustration:

³⁸ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

...we did a recent excursion to Long Reef, and I just felt all the time like we were being pushed. You know, let's go up there and do these questions, whereas I think children learn by taking everything in, you know, and...going and picking up a piece of seaweed and going "Oh, it's squishy!" and "Oh, this is what it smells like". Rather than going, "That's seaweed in the water there", or going up to the water and there was iron-oxide in the water and actually picking it up in their hands and having a look at it and trying to see if they can get rid of the water and find the actual iron-oxide grains of sand in it. That sort of thing, because I think they just thought that the water had turned brown, not the fact that there was something in the water that had turned it brown. Um...so if we had more time, you know there would be more of a chance for the learning of the children to become more child-centred...³⁹

Time has been referred to by teachers as one of the greatest inhibiting forces in classroom teaching. It is a source of frustration and pressure. Time management skills became a focus for a number of teachers' professional learning.

4.4.5 Professional learning

Few teachers in the study had received regular professional support in relation to drama prior to participation in this study. All of the teachers recognised the need for ongoing professional support to assist them in teaching drama effectively in their classrooms.

The way in which data from the two schools in the initial part of the study influenced the style of professional learning is outlined in this section. As a result, no data from the third school is incorporated at this time.

The teachers from the first two schools were clear in their preferred modes of professional learning. They expressed frustration with current professional learning practices and felt that their prior experience and individual needs were not being met. One teacher in particular described an in-service experience where the teachers had been recommended a technique in English that she, as a teacher of more than twenty years, had used a number of years before:

...And even this 'Count me in too' that they're doing now, I mean, we did that years ago, and its...but they're just bringing it back and we've got to be forced to do something... well, but you don't say it out loud, you think, well I used to do that, I've done it before, but you don't say it because... to them its just all brand new, well... its not to all the old teachers...⁴⁰

³⁹ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

⁴⁰ Catherine, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

In addition, a number of the teachers wished for modelled lessons to occur in their classroom context. When asked what they felt would be the most beneficial professional learning, one teacher stated:

...Artists and people with skills coming in and taking the students... definitely me being there so I can learn and then I can carry those skills on...⁴¹

Other teachers also referred to their desire for classroom based modelling rather than external professional learning sessions:

...Belinda* from the [local] Art Gallery came out for the first time this week. She did a great session on Hill End artists in residence. She brought about 6 paintings with her and showed the kids how to describe line, colour, shape etc in the paintings. They were all abstract pieces. I learnt a lot about appreciation listening to her. Amy [student teacher] will follow this with the unit artworks which will be great...⁴²

...I think the support we're getting where you're coming in modelling for us...um... after watching the dance, I thought... Yes!...I can do any of that...the drama, it's bringing it back...yes, I've done that, I can do that...and um... I think that's basically it. I like the modelling, I like people coming in and showing me...I'm quite happy with that. Because then it's practical too, because we've got so many meetings, so many days off, so many things that we've got to rush to that for me this is great. It's great for us all, the kids as well. I'm really enjoying it...⁴³

*Name changed to protect anonymity

Some teachers recognised the need for a balance between theory and practice:

...I think there needs to be a balance like, I value the chance to hear...like there needs to be a balance between research philosophy and implementation of your teaching program, so those things need to happen. And it's really hard to reflect on your teaching while you're teaching. I mean, you need to take a step back from it and kind of move in and out of it a little bit and that's what we're doing which is really good. The other component is the stuff about becoming more skilled and so that's what today was about for me, just become a bit more aware of this kind of stuff that we're doing...um...particularly in like drama. See for me, music's pretty laid out, it's pretty structured. The kids are really getting into that and that, you know, that's a bit easier to take a hold of. But it also needs to be informed, like um...you know...philosophy is really important too, for me. Like, why do we teach it? Because I'm always on about saying we shouldn't do anything in our school where we don't know why we do it because it's a waste of time and we haven't got time to waste because we're just too busy...⁴⁴

Comments such as these motivated this research to focus on needs-driven, school-based professional learning. As the focus of this research is on enhancing the use of drama in

⁴¹ Greg, School 1, Interview 1 - 16.03.03

⁴² Abbey, School 1, Journal Entry - Week 1, Term 2, 2003

⁴³ Catherine, School 1, Interview 1 - 17.03.03

⁴⁴ Jack, School 2, Interview 1 - 21.03.03

primary school classrooms, professional learning, unlike the other factors could practically influence pedagogy. The teachers involved in the study were clear in their preferred modes of professional learning. They expressed frustration with current professional learning practices and revealed a desire for learning that was context based and respected past experiences and current needs. I was always mindful of other personal and contextual factors and the need to collaboratively develop ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ appropriately. As discussed in Section 5.1, the revisiting of these factors through self-identification of needs formed a central role in focusing the professional learning for those teachers in Phase Two.

The data gathered in the initial part of the study led me to explore theories and approaches to professional learning that respected the needs of the teachers, but were also responsive to changes that may occur. Theories of situated learning (Brown et al., 1989; Lankard, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McLellan, 1996c), action learning (Husby, 2005; McGill & Brockband, 2004), and school-based development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b; Hoban, 2002; Husby, 2005; Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003), together with the action research methodology (Altrichter et al., 1993; McNiff et al., 2003) were influential in guiding the professional learning in the study.

4.4.6 Bringing it together

It is not simple to consider the various contextual and personal factors through identification of clear-cut relationships. It would militate against the context-embedded methodology of this research to do so. However, five general observations regarding the connections between factors can be made.

First, a *positive belief* or *valuing of drama* led in all cases to a view of teaching and learning that promoted creativity and imagination. All teachers who wished to improve their teaching of drama shared a common belief in its benefit for student esteem, creativity, confidence and enjoyment of learning. In addition, a majority of teachers considered drama beneficial for developing social awareness skills.

Second, teachers who felt negatively influenced by *social groups* (*parents, school leaders*) within the school, or *syllabus outcomes*, felt their pedagogical choice was

constrained. In comparison, positive influence by *students* assisted in facilitating the teaching of drama, with teachers citing student response and enjoyment as motivating factors.

Third, a lack of *confidence* and/or *self-perceived lack of skill* were cited by a majority of teachers as constraining their ability to incorporate drama effectively. It was clear, however, that for all teachers identifying such a concern, their belief in the benefits of drama drove them to overcome such personal inhibitions through professional learning. By doing so, the effective teaching of drama was facilitated.

Fourth, despite the diverse melting pot of *personal experience*, this factor was considered highly influential in relation to pedagogical choice, approach to schooling and instruction, and the development of the classroom environment. Personal experiences were seen to have more influence on the teachers' beliefs and approaches than any formal training experiences.

Finally, *time* was considered by all teachers to be the most influential contextual factor constraining the teaching of drama. The other four contextual areas (outcomes/parental expectation, space, programming and professional learning) are related to time's negative influence. *Professional learning* was also referred to in isolation through past ineffective experiences where learning was not linked to prior experiences or individual needs. As previously discussed, it is with professional learning that I believed the teaching of drama could be practically influenced by this research. The style of professional learning supported is discussed in the next section.

4.5 Style of professional learning

As a prerequisite to developing a professional learning program for teachers, I began to explore in more detail my own general understanding of professional learning and what it meant for enhancing the teaching of drama. My initial understanding of effective professional learning was that it was collaborative and occurred in a social context. This basic understanding has not altered.

While the purpose of this study may imply a commitment to professional learning, the specific style and content was not predetermined. Understanding, as drawn from the first research aim, revealed issues with much current professional learning as experienced by the initial six teachers in the study. These data supported my own preference for school-based and needs driven professional learning.

A review of current literature on professional learning also supports a move toward learning that is school-based and self-directed (Section 2.2). Despite increasing encouragement for this style of learning, this ‘move’ is slow to take hold with much professional learning still being external and one-off, and is considered to be less effective when aiming for classroom change (Hoban, 2002).

For effective change in practice to occur, professional learning should address:

1. The teacher’s *purpose*
2. The teacher as a *person*
3. The real work *context* in which teachers work
4. The *culture* of teaching: the working relationship that teachers have with their colleagues inside and outside the school.

(Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p5 emphasis in original)

Effective professional learning that incorporated the above criteria was considered in this study to consequentially address identified personal and contextual factors. The place of a ‘teacher as a person’ is supported by the work of Whitehead (1989) who argues that the ‘living I’ should be placed at the centre of educational enquiries. By doing so, teachers can be encouraged to develop living educational theories to further inform practice. In this study, the individual nature of a teacher’s practice is respected with a focus on the teacher as an individual, located in a specific context, determining the style of learning undertaken.

The second research aim focuses on the professional learning aspect of the study and is the focus of the remainder of this chapter:

2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.

From this point on in the study, data are solely drawn from the five teachers (School Three) involved in Phase Two.

The emphasis in Phase Two was working with teachers and allowing them to collaboratively develop their professional learning through self-identification of needs and preferred learning strategies. The overall aim was to guide the teachers to become self-directed learners by collaboratively planning professional learning activities and to assist in the development of a culture of learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). A strong culture would be able to sustain and support any change in practice.

No single action research model was drawn on when working with teachers, and professional learning with a '*facilitated action research*' process was adopted. The steps aligned with four stages of action research (Altrichter et al., 1993) as well as being informed by a cycle of action-reflection (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Elliott, 1991; Lewin, 1946; Sagor, 1992). A starting plan was developed with an emphasis on '*purpose*', '*person*', '*context*' and '*culture*' (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992) as critical for effective professional learning. The next steps allowed for further clarification of the current situation as specific to the five teachers participating in the professional learning. It also provided information necessary to begin collaborative work with each teacher within the first cycle of action research (Chapter 5).

First, it was necessary to undertake a detailed investigation of the school context (Section 4.6) and then to consider each teacher as a person and his/her purpose (referred to as self-identified needs) (Section 4.7). I recognised the importance of collaboratively developing a record of the learning being undertaken and devised the idea of 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' as a possible method (Section 5.1). By doing so, the teachers had a beginning measure which they could refer to when collecting evidence of, and discussing their progress. A 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' would also assist teachers by providing a clear, focused record of their achievable learning plan.

4.6 Investigation of context

...The process and success of teacher development depends very much on the context in which it takes place...First, the context of teachers' working environment provides

conditions in which teacher development initiatives succeed or fail. Second, the context of teaching can itself be a focus for teacher development...
(Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b p13)

An investigation of context took place in both Phase One and Phase Two. The focus in this section is on the process of conducting such an investigation in Phase Two where the professional learning process was undertaken (School Three). Contextual factors identified in Phase One highlighted the areas of *space, programming, time, syllabus* and *parental expectations* as influencing pedagogical choice. It made sense, therefore, to focus in Phase Two on first understanding the school context as “...*the individual learner and the context of the learning cannot be separated within the situated frame of learning...*” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p222).

Through my previous experiences at the school, I saw an environment in School Three where ‘directives’ were often passed down to staff without adequate consultation, causing problems with teacher motivation. This ‘*outside-in*’ approach to learning can “...*often fail to involve the teacher, and therefore run the risk of not securing their commitment and generating teacher resistance...*” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992b p3). I considered it important for the five teachers to accept that they have power and control over their classroom and school-based actions, as well as with the present and future directions of their own professional learning.

The investigation of context for Phase Two was similar to that in the initial phase and included gathering of information regarding the physical and interpersonal environment and general working conditions experienced. Management structures and reporting mechanisms specific for the work context were considered, resulting in an investigation of the ‘*culture*’ of teaching (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

An increased understanding of personal needs and work context can encourage individuals to take more control over their own learning. This shifting of the ‘locus of control’ (Lefcourt, 1976) can result in empowerment, important for ongoing development. Lefcourt (1976) draws on the work of B. F. Skinner arguing that “...*man must come to be more effective and able to perceive himself as the determiner of his fate if he is to live comfortably with himself...*” (p3). While not adopting his philosophy directly, this study is influenced by the general principle of Lefcourt’s (1976) work.

The following contextual details from School Three were sought once approval for the study was given by the executive officer and principal of the school. Specific details of the following points can be found in Appendix 4.1:

- School population (numbers, student backgrounds e.g. international students, parental influence on the school).
- Class sizes and breakdown (single sex classes).
- Available facilities (including specialist teachers, specialist rooms e.g. computer lab and music room).
- School report and assessment expectations.

Data were collected through discussions with the principal and deputy principal of the school and through conversations with teachers. Having previously worked at the school, my own personal experiences enhanced understanding of the school context.

I had not worked at the school for a number of years. Re-acquainting myself with the current school context allowed me to develop a deeper awareness of the atmosphere at the time of the study. As a consequence the resulting perceived pressures on teachers could also be investigated and considered. This information assisted with the formation of semi-structured interview points allowing appropriate information to be gathered in the next step of the professional learning process.

4.7 Phase Two - Background interview & questionnaire

Empowering an individual to self-identify needs assists them to take ownership of their learning and can increase motivation, encouraging participation in professional learning activities:

...The analysis of needs should both precede the drawing up of a staff development policy and form a continuing part of policy implementation...

(Hewton, 1988 p45)

The second version of the background interview and questionnaire was designed to provide further information on the five teachers (School Three) involved in the professional learning process. The aim was to gather information from the teachers' perspectives regarding their work context, their experiences as teachers, and their personal view of their practice. It also aimed to allow self-identification of needs and preferences for professional learning in drama.

4.7.1 Questionnaire

As discussed in Section 4.1.1, a questionnaire was completed by all participating teachers prior to their semi-structured background interview. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain background and demographic information as well as data on teacher attitudes and confidence regarding the teaching of drama, dance, visual art and music.

Demographic data from the five teachers taking part in the professional learning (Phase Two) are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 - Breakdown of Questionnaire Data

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	80.0
	Male	20.0
Age	20-30	40.0
	31-40	20.0
	41-50	20.0
	51+	20.0
Years Teaching	0-5 years	20.0
	4-10 years	40.0
	11-15 years	0.0
	16-20 years	20.0
	21+ years	20.0
Current Grade being taught	Kindergarten	20.0
	Year 1	20.0
	Year 2	0.0
	Year 3	20.0
	Year 4	0.0
	Year 5	20.0
	Year 6	0.0
	Specialist	20.0
Areas identified as specialist NB Some teachers included more than one area	Information Technology	20.0
	Visual Art	20.0
	Special Needs	40.0
	Language - German	20.0
	Science and Technology	20.0
	Music	20.0

Previous creative arts professional learning experiences	Visual Art None	40.0 60.0
External creative arts training NB Some teachers included more than one area	Piano Guitar Visual Arts None	40.0 20.0 20.0 40.0
External creative arts activities	Sewing Group Orchestra Musical Theatre production Theatre attendance No	20.0 20.0 20.0 20.0 20.0
<i>Confidence in teaching:</i> Drama	Not at all Not very I get by Somewhat Very	0.0 40.0 20.0 40.0 0.0
Music	Not at all Not very I get by Somewhat Very	20.0 40.0 20.0 0.0 20.0
Visual Art	Not at all Not very I get by Somewhat Very	20.0 0.0 40.0 40.0 0.0
Dance	Not at all Not very I get by Somewhat Very	20.0 0.0 60.0 20.0 0.0

The questionnaire data provided me with background information specific to each teacher. Details gathered assisted with the development of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ occurring within the ‘plan’ stage of the first ‘cycle’ discussed in Section 5.1.

4.7.2 Background interview

Following completion of the questionnaire, a background interview was conducted with each of the five teachers. These were semi-structured interviews that drew on the themes that emerged during interviews in the initial part of the study.

The general areas of investigation were:

- beliefs regarding creative arts and drama;

- beliefs regarding the teaching and learning process;
- personal experiences with drama (school and outside);
- drama they are currently doing/have done in the past (in teaching);
- preferred programming style;
- past experiences with professional learning;
- preferred style/strategies for professional learning; and
- identification of needs to assist in enhancing the use of drama.

The key difference between the interviews conducted with the six teachers in Phase One, and that conducted with the five teachers in Phase Two, was the focus on teachers self-identifying professional learning needs to enhance their teaching of drama. These needs fell into three categories:

- Skill development in drama;
- Integration/programming strategies; and
- Time management skills.

All five teachers requested one or more of these categories. A detailed discussion of the identification and clarification of each is reported in Section 5.1.1.

During the initial interview, a majority of teachers was reflective in relation to why they were not using drama in the manner that they desire. Reflection has been encouraged generally as a way of rethinking problematic situations (Dewey, 1938) with Schön (1983) proposing two ways of considering reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on action is viewed as deliberate reflection after an event while reflection-in action is spontaneous and during an event. The teachers in the study found an increase in the instances of reflection-on-action as described by Schön (1983) through participation in the professional learning. They enjoyed being able to discuss their practice as there had been very few, if any, previous opportunities for them to engage in pedagogical discussion. There were however no reported incidents of reflection-in-action.

I was pleased to discover that during the background interviews the teachers expressed themselves predominantly through story and anecdote. This confirmed my belief that

such a sharing of stories is a positive and necessary inclusion in school-based professional learning. Some such stories cited student responses to drama activities they had attempted, while others shared recollections of personal experiences. These stories were detailed and demonstrated passion for teaching. The following excerpt is one example of an anecdotal story and reflection related in these initial background interviews:

... That was Year 1 last year. And we were able to incorporate...we would pretend we were palaeontologists and we went out and did a...I hid the wooden bones of a dinosaur in the sandpit and they dug them up and they put them back together again and then I gave them a chocolate chip cookie and they had to get out using only a toothpick and a paintbrush, they actually had to get out all the chocolate chips from the chocolate chip cookie as if it were the bones of a dinosaur from the rocks of the earth..... I just don't think, particularly with boys, it may be totally different with girls at the younger level that they don't have the patience to do the type of things we're doing. They can imagine to a certain level, but they can't imagine in the way you want them to imagine and it would be more like me forcing them to think a certain thing...because I don't think they have the general knowledge as it is, whereas these girls have come with a certain amount of general knowledge...⁴⁵

In this excerpt, Amy is describing a drama activity she had tried with a previous class and is reflecting on its limited success. As she was teaching older girls, she compared her work with the younger boys to this new group. In this way, she was able to draw on her understanding of past practice, through reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983) to inform her future teaching of drama. Her comments also raise issues of gender bias further addressed in Section 6.3.2.

Two key areas covered during the initial questionnaire and interviews were of particular importance for this study: *approach to teaching and learning* and *initial understanding of drama*. These two areas are presented in the next section. They informed my initial understanding of each teacher as a person, prior to collaboratively planning professional learning.

4.7.3 Understanding teaching, learning and drama - the beginning

Investigating a teacher's general understanding of teaching and learning, and understanding of drama, is pivotal in guiding professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama. Collated through the questionnaires and background interviews, I first consider the different views of teaching and learning expressed by the teachers. It is

⁴⁵ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

this view that shapes a classroom environment and teacher's approach to learning. I then consider teacher's initial understanding of drama as it influenced the beginning of the professional learning process.

Approach to teaching and learning

All of the teachers in Phase Two began their participation describing a view of teaching and learning that was responsive to student needs. The teachers aimed to develop students who were confident and had ownership of their own learning. The use of themes for guiding teaching was preferred, however all of the teachers still programmed and timetabled via subject areas. This caused concern at this early stage of the study, providing an indication that programming work of some sort might take place during the professional learning.

The teachers were confident in their general teaching abilities. The following excerpt encapsulates the way in which they wished to engage students in learning:

...A good teacher, in my opinion, can that teacher trick that child into working these skills and having them explicit, but to do it in such a way that they are engaged and it's meaningful...⁴⁶

The teachers wished to create learning environments that blended visual and oral learning, and that provided opportunities to develop creativity. Within their initial discussions, inhibiting factors discussed earlier in this chapter were raised including those of assessment, outcomes and parental pressure.

Initial understanding of drama

Each teacher came to the study with varied views of the benefits and style of drama. The explanations shared by the teachers had some commonality, but also clear differences. Both Jenny and Leanne expressed a limited understanding of drama use at the start of the study, and while their instincts drew them to a process approach, their initial explanations related to a performance or product-oriented view of classroom drama. This product focus is not uncommon in education with many teachers adopting a performance perspective rather than a process approach (Ewing & Simons, 2004):

⁴⁶ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

...I suppose I see it as an activity where children perform in front of the other children in a variety of different ways...be it through number rhymes and sound rhymes or role plays in front of the other children, or going up for assembly items...⁴⁷

...But my main thing that I've ever done with drama is...let's make up a play, and your topic is this, and you're going to make up a play and we'll do a script ... or I've used stories and told them to write a script about the story. I've asked them to change a story and write it making it into a script. That's basically it to be honest...it really is a lot to do with time... Because the one thing, you don't get anything written down, so you don't feel like you've actually done anything, which is really bad, and I know that you don't always have to write something down for something to happen, but you've got so many other things that you do have to get written down... the kids love it and it's a lot of fun and everything, but I just don't find the time...⁴⁸

Initial attempts to use drama by these two teachers were constrained by the limited understanding of drama activities available to them and their students.

Sally, Mark and Amy expressed a different understanding of drama that supported a process-oriented approach. Despite their rhetoric, this approach was not always reflected in their practice. Where these three teachers' perspectives differed was the way in which they justified the use of drama through the benefits it offers students. Sally and Amy described them as personal and developmental, while Mark considered them to be educational, cultural and vocational.

Personal benefits such as those outlined by Sally and Amy have been reported on previously in literature and research supporting the use of drama in the classroom (Bamford & Darell, 2004; Fiske, 1999; Garcia, 1993). Mark's description of educational benefits is moderately related to those outlined by the other two teachers, however, his explanation of cultural and vocational benefits has further implications.

The role of classroom drama in assisting student learning about life, and allowing the exploration of social interaction and cultural understanding within a safe environment, has been alluded to in educational drama literature. Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach is one such strategy suggested for allowing students to explore experiences, and for linking learning with real life (Bolton, 1979; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). More recently, Ewing and Simons (2004) consider the social learning implications for educational drama through a process drama approach. Social and

⁴⁷ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

⁴⁸ Leanne, Interview 1 - 24.06.03

cultural development, as fostered by this approach, is important for supporting the holistic development of students, a key aim of current education. Adopting a process method for drama in the classroom encourages students to develop a deeper understanding of the society in which they live (Ewing & Simons, 2004 p4).

From a vocational perspective, the 'Champions of Change' (Fiske, 1999) report, considering the impact of the arts on learning, supports Mark's assumption that it is beneficial to connect students with professional, practising artists. The NSW Board of Studies Creative Arts Syllabus at both primary and high school level also recognises the importance of connecting students with professional artists. While fore fronted in high school drama content, this connection is only alluded to through the 'appreciating' strand of the K-6 syllabus. Mark's comment regarding the influence of the primary years on student's vocational choice needs to be further explored and is discussed in Section 8.6.

When planning professional learning in this study, these varying viewpoints regarding drama needed to be considered from two perspectives. First, finding a common terminology to discuss the use of drama is important to allow effective collaborative work to take place. A session to encourage discussion of 'What is Drama?' was included at the start of the professional learning. Details of this session are discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.

Second, each teacher's individual understanding of drama influenced the way teaching was approached in their classrooms and their beliefs in relation to its benefits. For Leanne and Jenny, encouraging a broader understanding of drama was required to allow for varied activities to be adopted. For Mark, Amy and Sally, extending their understanding to incorporate practical solutions to enhance drama use was a focus.

The way in which initial understanding and self-perceived needs enhanced the teaching of drama, and shaped the development of each teacher's 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', is presented in the following chapter.

The background interviews and questionnaire were helpful in providing a picture of each teacher as a whole person, their classroom and the school context. They were also

helpful in providing information about preferred learning styles and needs in relation to using drama more effectively. As this study focuses on enhancing the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms, each teacher's understanding of drama at the start of the study had to be investigated. How understanding of drama changed over the course of the professional learning is presented in three teacher's stories (Chapter 7).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the first two stages in the action research methodology. The *starting point* for the study was acknowledged, followed by a detailed consideration of the process undertaken to *clarify the situation* as appropriate to the focus of the study, and the teachers to be involved in the professional learning. In this second stage, factors were identified that facilitate or constrain the use of drama, with professional learning selected as a practical way of influencing pedagogical practice. A detailed investigation of the context and teachers participating in the professional learning was conducted, through the use of a background questionnaire and interview.

The next three chapters present the three cycles of action research and stories that were undertaken as part of the next stage in the study, *developing action strategies and putting them into practice* (Altrichter et al., 1993).

Chapter 5 - Professional Learning:

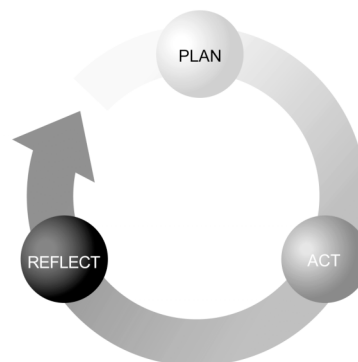
Cycle 1

Introduction

The process of developing and implementing action strategies for this study is presented according to three consecutive action research cycles (Elliott, 1991; Lewin, 1946). The details of the first cycle are described in this section and focus on the professional learning strategies implemented to address teachers' identified needs. The second cycle (Chapter 6), focuses on the re-developed professional learning considering ongoing as well as new emerging issues identified by the teachers. These two cycles span the bulk of the study and occur over a six month period. The third cycle, also reported in Chapter 6, focuses on three of the teachers as they take ownership of planning and implementing their learning when moving into a new school year.

The cycles presented in this section have been influenced by a traditional action research cycle (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Elliott, 1991; Lewin, 1946). As discussed in Section 3.3, the 'observe' and 'reflect' aspects of this original model were undertaken together, resulting in an adapted cycle.

Figure 5.1 - Adapted Cycle of Action-Reflection



The following sections outline the ‘plan’, ‘act’ and ‘reflect’ aspects of the first cycle undertaken by teachers. While the cycles are separated for ease of presentation, they did not occur in clear, distinct steps within the study. As a result, reference to data in different cycles is frequent, allowing for the natural and non-linear process to be acknowledged.

5.1 Cycle 1 - Plan

The collaborative development of a ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ (PPLP) for each teacher is a unique aspect of professional learning in this study. I considered it important to engage with the teachers in four steps so that the development of plans flowed from the teachers’ needs and aligned with the approach to learning. Due to time constraints faced by the teachers in the school, I initially followed these steps forming draft plans and then worked through the same process individually with each teacher. As I already had a draft plan we could work more quickly through each step (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 - Cycle 1: Plan

<i>Cycle 1 - Plan</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarify focus area (needs) 2. Collate appropriate situated learning strategies (for context/individual preference) 3. Develop a ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ outlining appropriate activities to address identified needs 4. Collaboration of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’

5.1.1 Clarify focus area (needs)

The focus area of need for the teachers had to be clarified by reviewing their background interviews (Section 4.7). Once these areas of need were collated, any common areas for development amongst the teachers could be identified. This resulted in plans that connected participants with similar needs and/or complementary strengths.

It became clear when talking with the teachers that a majority had not previously been asked to identify what might help their teaching of drama, and as a result some had

trouble expressing their preferences for professional learning. They responded from either a comprehensive perspective, providing specific details, or were very broad and vague. For example, one teacher asked for specific assistance with drama games believing that “...*teachers don't come with the experience...*”⁴⁹, and that games are good for teachers to start their use of drama. At the other end of the continuum, another teacher requested anything at all possible:

...I'm a definite beginner. I'm really, really open to anything, to learn anything about any of it. So, yeah, I'm happy to learn, you know, because literally I've had that one course. I did a little bit when I was at school. I'm sure I had drama lessons, but I don't really remember any of them. I was never very drama oriented. I was never in any school plays and things like that, so absolutely. I'm interested in developing wherever I can...⁵⁰

Not all teachers focused specifically on drama when identifying needs. Two of the teachers requested assistance in managing time,⁵¹ an area not specific to the teaching of drama, but one that would assist their general classroom management. These teachers believed that overcoming issues with time would allow them freedom to incorporate more drama in their classrooms.

After reviewing the initial interviews, I collated what the teachers stated as their professional learning needs, dividing them into two categories: *general classroom development* and *drama focused development* (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 - Categories of Need

<i>General Classroom Development</i>	<i>Drama Focused Development</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing lesson disruption • creating more teaching time • helping students listen better • managing minor discipline issues • programming manageable lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to professional artists • integration strategies: drama within other Key Learning Areas • drama skill development

All the areas identified within the categories of need, were nominated by teachers in their initial background interview. A majority of teachers were reticent, or unable to clearly express their needs. A general response, as discussed above, was more common than the clear identification of specific needs to enhance the teaching of drama. One

⁴⁹ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

⁵⁰ Leanne, Interview 1 - 24.06.03

⁵¹ Interview 1: Amy - 17.06.03 & Sally - 23.06.03

teacher embedded a discussion of what he considered to be important areas for development for all in a discussion of his own needs:

...I now feel as though I need our discussions and the **up-skilling** that's going to be happening for us because I'm thinking, I've looked at the syllabus. I've only got a few more units of work left in that syllabus then where do I go?...The cross-curricular⁵² thing is, I think, very important...I guess the most important ingredient for that to start with is the willingness on behalf of the teachers to actually do that, and that depends on whether or not the teachers think of a whole experience, or whether they want to compartmentalize things. I just guess that depends on the kind of personality of each different person you're working with...

Other more general examples included:

...Well, to start with...this is probably not relevant, certainly **more teaching time** would be wonderful...and then you wouldn't have to always rush and always leave out the interesting icing on the cake bits...When I notice time slipping away, it's usually because I'm speaking to one or two girls who don't listen very well...I guess that comes back to...**discipline**...it's just one other thing that takes away time...⁵³

...I think **integrating** it, definitely. Instead of treating it as, "ok, we're going to do some drama today". I want it to be part of my speaking and listening activity...Instead of thinking, ok I need to do more drama because it's fun, thinking, ok, how is this going to help my children learn...Because at the end of the day we've all got outcomes we've got to achieve with the kids. How we do that can be lots of fun, or it can be...god, we've got to get through this. I'd rather it be lots of fun because that's what it's all about I think...⁵⁴

As discussed in the following chapters, a reticence, or inability, to articulate a focus for learning caused initial concern. Through the collaborative process however, the teachers began to take increasing ownership and control of the focus and direction of their professional learning.

When the various requests for areas of development in drama were analysed, three key groupings emerged. These groupings encapsulated all the areas these teachers nominated:

- Skill development in drama;
- Integration/programming strategies; and
- Time management skills.

⁵² Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

⁵³ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

⁵⁴ Leanne, Interview 1 - 24.06.03

Table 5.3 shows how the different needs were spread across these key groupings.

Table 5.3 - Key Areas of Need

<i>Skill Development</i>	<i>Integration/Programming</i>	<i>Time Management</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to professional artists • drama skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integration strategies: drama within other Key Learning Areas • programming manageable lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing lesson disruption • creating more teaching time • helping students listen better • managing minor discipline issues

Through re-categorising each teacher's need under these three groupings, I found that all five teachers requested development to assist them integrating drama within other Key Learning Areas. Two directly or indirectly requested time management assistance⁵⁵ and the remaining three requested skill development⁵⁶. The two teachers requesting time management assistance were those who considered themselves most confident in the use of drama and who had been attempting its use in their classrooms. The remaining three teachers, lacking in confidence and experience with drama, were clear in their request for drama specific skills.

It became apparent over the course of the study, that once a teacher gained confidence with teaching drama, their focus shifted to general management areas including behaviour, time management and programming. Amy and Sally were both confident in their abilities to attempt drama at the start of the study, and focused on time management rather than skill development. As is discussed in Cycle 3, Mark and Jenny both lacked confidence at the start of the study, but as their confidence grew with the subject area, they began to focus more directly on general classroom issues, notably programming and behaviour management.

The skills required to *integrate* subjects is not drama-specific, but was recognised by these teachers as assisting them in managing their time and classrooms more effectively. Drama was recognised as a tool for integration when viewed as a *process* or

⁵⁵ Interview 1 Amy - 17.6.03 & Sally - 23.06.03

⁵⁶ Interview 1: Jenny - 26.6.03, Leanne - 24.06.03 & Mark - 30.06.03

‘pedagogy’. This differs to drama as a *product*, or ‘art form’, in which the emphasis falls on developing specific dramatic skills with students.

Valuing drama as pedagogy or art, and the balance that should be reached between these perspectives was debated in an early group reflection session. At this time, concerns about integration were raised including balancing the amount of integration with the learning objective:

...it is important to look at the learning objective as well. Integration is terrific, but sometimes when you do, you try to squash things in when they don't fit.⁵⁷

This opinion of ‘squashing in’ is important when considering pedagogical practice. The teachers appeared torn between managing time successfully in the classroom through integration and with making sure that all ‘basic skills’ were taught effectively. The teachers felt constrained by assessment and experienced noticeable pressure around the time for the NSW Basic Skills Test⁵⁸ and when school reports were due.

While being treated independently through professional learning, the need for *time management* is also considered an overarching influence connecting all three key identified areas of need. The first step in addressing this issue with the teachers was through skill development. Once the specific drama skills were developed, the teachers could begin to focus on managing their learning time more effectively. Enhanced programming skills and the use of integration were two of the ways considered to assist this process. Also included was the need to develop a more focused understanding of ‘wasted time’ and ‘useful time’ through which a feeling of control and manageability could result.

Identification and evaluation of the most appropriate professional learning strategies within this specific school context is discussed in the next section.

⁵⁷ Leanne in group conversation 2 - 09.10.03

⁵⁸ NSW Basic Skills Test is conducted in Years 3, 5 and 7 in all NSW schools testing students’ basic skill level in English and Mathematics.

5.1.2 Collate appropriate situated learning strategies

As demonstrated in Section 2.2.1, the theory of learning supported in this research comes from adult and situated learning theory, drawing on the collaborative nature of action learning. Numerous learning strategies, as appropriate to this blended theory and informed by requests from the teachers were considered for inclusion in the professional learning.

During the background interviews, teachers were asked about their preferred professional learning style. Not all teachers suggested strategies, however the examples that were given supported my belief in a focus on school and classroom based learning. Specifically, examples of preferred strategies were:

- classroom based modelling;
- exposure to professional artists and arts practitioners;
- collaborative discussion;
- examples of programming - sharing; and
- collaborative exploration of the curriculum.

The following strategies, adapted from situated learning theory (McLellan, 1996c), were drawn on as appropriate for professional learning in this study. Each was offered in the collaborative development of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans:

- stories;
- reflection;
- collaboration;
- coaching;
- multiple practice;
- scaffolding/sharing;
- articulation of learning skills;
- technology use;
- modelling/observation;
- small group practice; and
- assistance (co-teaching).

The availability of time and resources were considered when collating strategies for professional learning. The thorough investigation of the school context (Section 4.6) assisted this selection, as in some contexts the inclusion of certain strategies may have been inappropriate.

In an ideal scenario, time and/or budget would be set aside in a school for professional learning, allowing some time during the work day for shared activities to take place. Providing opportunities for professional learning within what is normally considered ‘work time’, demonstrates the increased value given by management to learning. This may in turn further motivate participants. No workday time was allocated by the school in this study and so professional learning had to occur before, during breaks or after the school day.

While time for professional learning was not expected, the lack of it caused me concern as it is known to “...impede teacher development initiatives...” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992a p13). Despite requesting time, the teachers were not given specific release time to assist with their participation in the study. As a result, the extent to which some of the preferred strategies could be implemented was restricted. This lack of practical support by school leaders is discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.

A group session took place within which we explored the various strategies available and appropriate for the professional learning as guided by self-identified needs. The next step was to form ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’. Again due to time constraints, the ‘draft’ plans were developed by me and then negotiated during a conversation in which we collaboratively refined the plans, making sure they had a correct focus and were considered achievable by each teacher. To continue respecting and working with the needs of the teachers, the drafts of these plans, were guided by their self-identified needs and preferred learning styles. The development of these plans, including structure and format is discussed in the next section.

5.1.3 Development of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’

The third step in the process was the development of a ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ (PPLP) for each teacher. I saw these plans as an informal contract holding the teacher and myself accountable for the activities and tasks shaping the learning. I was

concerned at this early stage in the study that the teachers were not taking active ownership of their own professional learning. They regularly deferred to my preferences rather than actively suggesting activities or strategies to help them in their classrooms. Due to the limited number of suggestions made in the initial background interviews and group conversation, I independently collated a 'draft' plan which was then negotiated and altered during our collaborative sessions.

This study recognises the benefits of collaborative learning where “...*learning and development can be, and is, supported by a social context in which learning is shared as a social activity...*” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p12). An aim within this research was to foster the development of a 'community of professionals' (Sagor, 1992), or culture of learning (Hargreaves, 1992), through collaborative work. Through the application of action research, the teachers were collaborators in developing the activities and focus in their professional learning plans. How the collaborative discussions developed is discussed in Section 5.1.4.

I aimed for a balance when developing the draft 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' by which social learning and sharing could take place, but also spaces where the teachers had time for individual reflection and development. It became increasingly clear over the course of the study, that if time constraints could be overcome, the teachers were supportive of frequent opportunities to share and reflect collaboratively on their classrooms and pedagogy. Collaborative work in this study was shaped by the self-directed learning taking place in each teacher's classroom.

Self-directed learning is beneficial in adult learning through its ability to allow learners to choose goals, but in collaboration with a 'teacher' (Husby, 2005) and located within their unique context. It is important to foster this style of learning:

...although learning on one's own is the way most adults go about acquiring new ideas, skills, and attitudes, this context has often been regarded as less important than the learning that takes place in more formal settings...

(Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 p268)

Self-directed learning has four major benefits supported within this study. It is viewed as coming from the learner's needs and preferences, is under their control, is

convenient, and while incorporating a facilitator, is not reliant on this individual (Tough, 1992). In the relationship, self-directed learning “...is based on the idea of learner control, as opposed to the role of instructors as sole decision makers...” (Husby, 2005 p7).

Adopting a self-directed learning perspective as a component of the professional learning in this study encouraged a collaborative relationship. The teachers engaged in an active, rather than passive relationship with me as facilitator, and with the content and style of their own learning. Taking on the role of ‘facilitator’, I assisted and guided the teachers in their learning rather than ‘teaching’ them in traditional transmission style.

The ability of individuals to self-direct their learning is a learned process. It became clear early in the study that a majority of teachers had not developed such skills, possibly due to the lack of professional learning experienced. This study aimed to encourage the teachers to take increasing ownership of their professional learning through fostering self-directed learning. At all stages of the study the teachers were collaborators in their learning, being encouraged to offer suggestions regarding preferred strategies and guiding their individual focus. Over the duration of the three cycles, the teachers did begin to increasingly take control of the content and focus of their learning, demonstrating their increased personal, or self-directed, learning skills.

The development of the draft ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ (PPLP) was specific for each teacher, and grade. To continue to support collaborative development of professional learning, self-identified needs and stated strategy preferences were included in the initial rough draft. A blend of individual and group sessions was included with appropriate timeframes to be negotiated with each teacher. While the draft plans were written by me, it was always made clear that content was open to collaborative negotiation as discussed further in Section 5.1.4.

The initial draft plan compiled for each teacher outlined:

- their identified area of need;
- a key focus for each suggested activity;
- identification of the appropriate situated learning strategies; and
- a description of the professional learning activities proposed.

These plans were designed to clearly present the identified area of need and offer suggestions that clearly drew on the different situated learning strategies and each teacher's circumstance. Figure 5.2 is an example of Jenny's draft 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' as developed at this stage of the process. Jenny worked as a Kindergarten teacher, who while lacking in confidence, showed particular determination to overcome her perceived lack of skills in drama.

Figure 5.2 - Part Example of draft Personal Professional Learning Plan

<i>Identified area of need:</i> Drama Skill Development

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

Session: Drama Up skilling session
Participants: All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
Focus: Part 1: What is drama? + Syllabus, management strategies (general)
 Part 2: drama games, practical examples appropriate to stage of integrated activities

Teachers in Junior School referred to as 'learners'

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Description of Professional Development</i>
Modelling	Examples of strategies and activities provided. The learners would participate as the students in warm-up games and integrated activities
Collaboration	Brainstorm session regarding what drama actually is and how it may be used in classrooms for the particular stage. Construction of a list of possible integrated drama activities based on Term 3 topics in English, Science or HSIE
Stories	Learners to share what they have done/attempted in relation to drama in their classrooms and evaluate these attempts.
Technology	Draw teachers' attention to good websites for drama examples for future reference

5.1.4 Collaboration of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’

Once a draft plan was developed, a process of negotiation took place where I worked with each teacher to collaboratively refine their proposed activities. I viewed this process of negotiation as critical for empowering the teachers in having a key role in planning their own development and encouraging ongoing participation and effort. The teachers are professionals in their field and should be respected as capable of understanding and actively participating in the process of their own professional learning. Clark and Peterson (1986) argue:

...thinking plays an important part in teaching, and that the image of a teacher as reflective professional...is not farfetched. Teachers do plan in a rich variety of ways, and these plans have real consequences in the classroom... Teachers do have theories and belief systems that influence their perceptions, plans and actions...

(Clark & Peterson, 1986 p292)

It was important to demonstrate respect for this knowledge of one’s own practice through the negotiation of professional learning. The teachers in the study clearly appreciated being allocated power to plan their own learning, reflecting at the end of the experience that “...*the individual nature of this programme made it far superior to past professional development...*”.⁵⁹ Ongoing collaboration formed a key role in the action research cycles detailed in this and the next chapter.

During the collaboration sessions to finalise initial ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’, time was the key issue raised by a majority of teachers as hindering the process of professional learning. In addition, teachers clarified and adjusted expectations for various activities, expressed their support for many in which they would be involved, as well as in two cases, requested new activities to be included in their personal plans.

It was pleasing to note that once presented with a draft plan, the teachers began to take more ownership of their learning though suggesting changes, alterations and new activities. This pattern of growing confidence with guiding their own professional learning continued throughout the study, peaking for three teachers when they consulted me about specific assistance for the new year.

⁵⁹ Sally - Six month survey

Time was considered to be the greatest force hindering the professional learning plans of teachers in the study. Three of the teachers explicitly discussed their frustration with time and the impact it was having on their proposed professional learning. The *team teaching* activity where two teachers work together to plan and implement drama sessions with their class was considered a critical part of each plan. However this also was hampered by time as demonstrated in this excerpt from Jenny's PPLP conversation:

...Is it possible?...the time factor, that's all. I don't know how it's going to work? Just finding the extra time to do it...⁶⁰

In this instance, a change was made in Jenny's plan and she worked with her buddy class[#] rather than with another teacher in the study. Time had already been set aside for these buddy experiences so they would not result in extra time being taken during an already crowded week. Similar changes were made to Leanne and Sally's plans involving their decision that one team teaching session only in each term would be manageable.

Time as a pressure on the teachers was also raised during these collaborative sessions. Sally saw the benefit in the suggested time management activities, but was worried about finding the time to work on better time management. While expressing her concern, she also expressed her belief in how the activities would benefit her teaching in the long term, and so wished to keep the strategies in her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'.

Leanne was also feeling the pressure of time in her teaching, however this pressure was coming from external sources, as it was linked to the Basic Skills Test and perceived parental expectations:

...I've got academic pressures with the kids at the moment because of the Basic Skills, but once they're gone...and I know it's silly and they're only Year 3...if they do really badly then the flaming parents will come in...but once that's out of the way...I'm going to be a lot more relaxed...I'm still obviously going to teach them...but I'm not going to have as much pressure to drive them as hard as I have done so far. It's going to be good...give me a bit more leeway, a bit more room to be more creative...⁶¹

⁶⁰ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

[#] Buddy Classes are allocated for each class in the school. Younger grades are 'buddied' with older grades. Jenny's Kindergarten class was matched with Year 6 boys.

⁶¹ Leanne, PPLP Conversation - 27.07.03

Leanne was also concerned that she would not get things done in relation to her professional learning, but recognised that when this pressure was relieved, her teaching time would become freer, and as she described “*more creative*”.

Jenny felt the pressure of time, but in her case, she saw it as restricting the amount of time she could spend on various professional learning strategies, in particular her journal writing:

...Actually I think the journal writing is a really good idea because even though I scribble some notes and all of that, I can give you...I don't mind the actual writing. It's just finding the time...⁶²

Jenny's enthusiasm for her journal continued throughout the study, however the constraints that time placed on her resulted in limited entries.

Clarification of activities included in the ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ occurred in all collaborative sessions. The focus of each discussion varied with some teachers including logistical information such as specific times and content expectations, and others including more general details such as focus areas for the journal.

Two teachers requested new activities to be added to their plans. In both cases, the teachers requested me to work with them in their classrooms through a modelled lesson. This was to be done in addition to any team teaching already planned. At this point I began to realise the ‘expert’ role in which the teachers were placing me. My concerns with role and what this meant for my relationship with the teachers has been discussed in Section 3.5.

Leanne and Mark were both clear about what they wished to add to their professional learning plans. This clarity demonstrated their growing ability and confidence to take ownership of their learning and begin to guide more specifically the activities in which they participated. In the first excerpt, Leanne states her desire for a modelled lesson, as well as demonstrating her explanation of the focus she desired for this session:

⁶² Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

...Definitely you coming in and me seeing somebody else do drama... seeing other people's ideas and what goes on, because you just don't get into other people's classrooms. All you see is yourself apart from when you're on prac years ago...I've got a couple [of students] that have been to drama classes...drama is to them [whole class], as we discussed today - let's get into groups and let's do a play. So maybe something that's not that...⁶³

Mark also suggested a similar activity, and as the following excerpt demonstrates, was even more focused on what he believed he needed for his professional learning:

...Do you think we could do it [modelled lesson]? Term 4 will probably require 2 weeks of drama somewhere - or 3 weeks given any particular unit. Perhaps if we did something where we started off with you taking the initial lesson and then more or less treat it as a prac teaching experiences. We could then discuss what we were going to do in the next lesson and then you could come in and we can then team teach for the second lesson...⁶⁴

In addition to the inclusion of modelled lessons, Mark also requested more literature to be included in his plan later in the year. He was aware of his move to full time Creative Arts teacher in 2004 and wished specifically for a focus on the NSW Board of Studies K-6 Creative Arts Syllabus (2000).

A number of positive comments were made in regard to the activities included in the 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'. The teachers particularly liked the group sessions in which they would have a chance to share their classroom stories. A comment, typical of the whole group was expressed by Jenny, "*... All coming together again - I think that's an excellent idea...*"⁶⁵. A similar feeling was expressed by Sally in regard to the team teaching session:

...I think it would be lovely. I mean, I don't know about the model or whatever, but I think two people working together, you pick up off each other...⁶⁶

More specific comments were made by individual teachers emphasising the perceived benefits of particular activities for their focus areas. One example is Leanne's need for programming assistance:

... The programming...because we're so tight for time here as you know. It's important to get it in the program or otherwise often it just doesn't happen. Often it doesn't happen even when it's in the program, but at least it's in there which is a start...⁶⁷

⁶³ Leanne, PPLP Conversation - 27.07.03

⁶⁴ Mark, PPLP Conversation - 18.09.03

⁶⁵ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

⁶⁶ Sally, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.02

⁶⁷ Leanne, PPLP Conversation - 27.07.03

Jenny also alluded to the benefits of programming, however she saw this as relevant to her planning for the following year stating “...*Even at this stage I could imagine doing other things next year and doing it in a totally different way than I do now...*”⁶⁸

Other positive comments were made in relation to including literature, as it focused the teachers’ thinking and made them consult the books. The inclusion of ongoing trial and error in the plans was also considered as assisting focus and making the teachers more conscious of individual goals.

This pattern of negotiation and collaboration continued through the following two cycles as detailed in Chapter 6. The early resistance to engage in initial planning of professional learning began to ease as has been described for a couple of teachers through the process of collaboration in this cycle. A change in confidence can be seen in the negotiation phases of Cycles 2 and 3 whereby the teachers became more proactive in guiding their learning and expressing expectations and wishes. I had hoped for the level of confidence demonstrated in Cycle 3 at this early stage of the study. The reasons the teachers did not feel confident to take early ownership of their learning is considered important for further research and for the ways in which teachers can be educated as professional learners. This need links to the creation of a culture of learning as discussed in Section 8.2.

Following the collaborative process, the structure of the revised ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ was changed. The teachers did not seem interested in the ‘terminology’ linked to the strategies. They were focused on exploring the specific details of learning in which they would be engaged. In the revised plans to be given to each individual, the situated learning strategies were removed and each activity was expanded to include the negotiated step by step process agreed upon. The revised plans can be found in Appendix 5.1. An example of the altered format for Jenny’s plan is presented in Figure 5.3.

Following the process of development and review, the implementation of professional learning began. This process is detailed within the next part of the action research cycle.

⁶⁸ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

Figure 5.3 - Part Example of revised Personal Professional Learning Plan

<p><i>Identified area of need:</i> Drama Skill Development</p>

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

Session	Drama Up skilling session
Participants	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
Focus	Part 1: What is drama? + Syllabus, management strategies (general) Part 2: drama games, practical examples appropriate to stage of integrated activities
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Construction of list of integrated drama activities for each stage - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples

Session	Team Teaching
Participants	Teacher/P6 (Buddies)
Focus	Develop effective use of drama through team teaching
Outline	Jenny to work with P6 buddies on a joint drama creation activity based on Transition’s theme of ‘Dinosaurs’. Reader’s Theatre based activity where the older children help organise the young ones to act out sections of a story

5.2 Cycle 1 - Act

To act is the second step within the action research cycle in this part of the study. Within the planning stage, each ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’ was developed and the teachers began work on the various activities. This section discusses the implementation process and the individual and collaborative activities undertaken. What these meant for enhancing the teaching of drama, as well as the teachers’ opinions of the various strategies is presented in Section 5.4.

5.2.1 Implementation of professional learning strategies

As expected, I found this to be the most engaging and at the same time challenging step in the process of professional learning.

Leanne and *Jenny* both identified skill development as their professional learning focus, with *Leanne* also requesting assistance with integration strategies. Both teachers began by participating in the group skill development session, which was followed by one-on-one time in their classroom. *Jenny* began quickly to trial and error various drama

activities, particularly in the area of puppetry.⁶⁹ It was these trial and error sessions that formed the basis for her ongoing reflection and subsequent identification later in the learning process of classroom management skills for drama.

Unlike Jenny who began quickly trialling drama, Leanne wished for a team taught lesson where she could collaboratively plan the integration of drama and then support my teaching of her class. Following this positive experience, Leanne then began to attempt drama sessions focusing on the use of games and isolated activities.⁷⁰

Sally had been attempting a limited use of drama in her classroom prior to beginning the professional learning. Her use of drama did not alter early in the study, with drama continuing to occur from a spontaneous and less planned approach.⁷¹ *Sally* began to program more explicitly for drama over the course of her learning, attempting the use of various drama games and role plays specific to her focus areas.

Amy and *Mark* were similar to *Sally* in that both were already using drama to varying degrees: *Mark* through his role as specialist and *Amy* with her mainstream class. *Mark*'s drama was focused, and following the group session, emphasised basic drama skills with students.⁷² *Amy*, recognising the need for a balance with her drama work, began to find time for actual 'drama sessions' rather than the solely integrated approach she had previously adopted.⁷³

While many interesting experiences resulted from the professional learning for all teachers, two key incidents were prominent in shaping the ongoing process of professional learning, and highlighted issues for my role as a facilitator. While these incidents occurred during the professional learning, they are discussed within the following section 'reflect'. As previously highlighted, the teachers were encouraged to reflect in an ongoing manner, and as such their response to the incidents is better presented within the next section.

⁶⁹ Jenny, Conversation - 01.08.03

⁷⁰ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁷¹ Sally, Conversation - 17.09.03

⁷² Mark, Conversation - 18.09.03

⁷³ Amy, Conversation - 07.08.03

The plans developed for each teacher had some shared features, but also highlighted differences based on their varying needs and learning preferences. Group sessions were considered critical due to their social learning benefits. As argued by Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989):

...If...learning is a process of enculturation that is supported in part through social interaction and the circulation of narrative, groups of practitioners are particularly important, for it is only within groups that social interaction and conversation can take place...

(Brown et al., 1989 p40)

The teachers benefited from the inclusion of these formal collaborative sessions with informal conversations and collaborative work taking place in addition to planned activities. A number of teachers commented on the increased ‘corridor conversations’ and general dialogue with colleagues with whom they would never have previously discussed pedagogy and in particular, drama. General changes being witnessed in the school as a result of this initial cycle of professional learning were commented upon:

...And I think talking about it, because sometimes as a staff you get so wrapped up in your own little world that you don't tend to...unless you're very good friends with a colleague...you don't tend to go and ask others for information or advice or whatever. I think this has been really good because it's got people talking. Particularly the small group has really got people talking and listening to others whereas you might tend to not listen to specific people, or those sorts of people might have appeared unapproachable in the past...so I think that's been very beneficial to improve communication skills within the school itself...⁷⁴

Minimal input was provided by the teachers in relation to preferred professional learning activities at the beginning of the study. The following group sessions were developed following my own and the limited teacher suggestions, and were attended by all participating teachers:

- Focus session - ‘What is Drama?’
- Skill development workshop sessions.
- Group reflection regarding trial and error of drama in the classroom - stories.
- Show and tell, ‘sharing’ sessions of integrated programming.

⁷⁴ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

As discussed in Section 4.7, the teachers did not share a common understanding of drama in the classroom. To address the lack of common terminology, a session, ‘What is Drama?’, was planned to encourage the teachers to explore their understanding of what drama could be in their teaching⁷⁵. This was a thorough brainstorming session followed by a detailed discussion regarding the way in which drama could be taught in the classroom. Figure 5.4 presents the words brainstormed by the teachers during this session. They were regularly considered through reflection and as potential activities throughout their professional learning.

Figure 5.4 - Drama Is...

Musical Theatre	Mime
Analysing	Fantasy
Situational Acting	Tableaux
Action	Audience Involvement
Improvisation	Creative form of expression
Interpreting	Imaginative play
Reflecting	Theatre Sports
Stage	Mirror Acting
Technical Theatre	Role Play
Fun	Script Writing
Technique	

I found it positive that while some of the teachers expressed their understanding in limited ways during the background interviews, in this collaborative session a more varied perspective on drama was presented. This was made particularly clear through Leanne’s comments when she engaged with Mark regarding integration strategies for drama. Leanne’s perspective had begun to change as she was one of the teachers who held a purely script-based initial understanding of classroom drama.

The importance of balancing the approach to drama in the classroom was raised by the teachers with a three-pronged focus being agreed upon. In this approach, drama would be taught as an art form, an integrated teaching tool, and through incidental activities. The importance of addressing all three approaches within their teaching caused concern for some teachers due to a self-perceived lack of skills, but was still recognised as essential in providing a complete experience of drama.

⁷⁵ Group session, Drama Is... - 23.07.03

The skill-based development sessions took three forms within the professional learning providing: specific drama skills, integration strategies, and programming assistance. A period of trial and error where the teachers worked independently with a colleague or me in their classrooms followed each skill-based learning session. This period of ‘action’ was then followed by a time for group reflection and a sharing of experience as reported in Section 5.3. The blend of individual and shared sessions was a success and commented on by a majority of teachers throughout the study. All provided similar feedback believing that:

...individual attention is inarguably beneficial. Sharing ideas and results from individual sessions helped to broaden group knowledge and to give the group cohesion and camaraderie...⁷⁶

While a majority of learning took place within the school context, two focused external or ‘one-off’ sessions were incorporated into the initial professional learning plans:

- Education launch for the Sydney Opera House; and
- ‘Curtains Up on Drama’ Workshop hosted by the Sydney Theatre Company and NSW Educational Drama Association (Darell & New South Wales Educational Drama Association, 2003).

Both of these opportunities were offered by me and were voluntary for the participants. The Opera House education launch exposed the four attending teachers to arts professionals, performances and workshops suitable for inclusion in their programs for classes of all ages. All of the attending teachers were motivated by the experience as they hadn’t been aware of drama excursions available to them in the past.⁷⁷

The school sponsored two of the teachers participating in the research to attend the full day ‘Curtains Up on Drama’ workshop series (Darell & New South Wales Educational Drama Association, 2003). This experience incorporated hands-on workshops in drama education as well as presentations by curriculum representatives from the NSW Department of Education and Training Creative Arts curriculum area. An overview of the program for the day can be found in Appendix 5.2.

⁷⁶ Mark, 6 Month Survey

⁷⁷ Jenny, Sally, Leanne & Amy, Conversation - 11.11.03

All participants in the external sessions recognised their benefit as they contributed to the learning taking place within their workplace. A negative issue arose for Mark during the ‘Curtains Up on Drama’ workshop session and resulted in changes being made to his teaching of drama in the classroom. Mark’s experience raised issues regarding the creation of a safe environment for students when doing drama as well as the need for awareness of student response to different activities and the way to manage this aspect of drama. The specific circumstances and resulting impact on drama use are presented in detail in the next section and again in Section 7.3. Mark’s experience highlighted issues in relation to the unpredictable nature of external professional learning and the repercussions when teachers re-enter their own school environment.

Amy’s negative experience within the school context (Section 5.3.2) raised issues relating to professional learning, but also highlighted personal issues for me as a facilitator. This related particularly to the multiple roles I was playing within the study (Section 3.5). Both Mark and Amy’s experiences highlighted the potential impact of a negative experience on themselves and other learners and encouraged reflection on what this meant for professional learning and the teaching of drama.

5.3 Cycle 1 - Reflect

...In teachers’ action research, there is no separation between stages of knowledge construction (reflection) and testing (action). Reflection takes place partly *in* action, and even reflection-on-action is not limited to particular research stages...

(Altrichter et al., 1993 p208)

Observation and reflection within the three cycles are discussed together under the heading of ‘reflection’ as the teachers’ actions and reflections were largely inseparable (Altrichter et al., 1993). The teachers reflected at set intervals on their personal observations of drama use in both individual and group formats. These reflections were shared and then drawn on to shape each teacher’s professional learning for the next action research cycle.

For the teachers to engage critically with their work, I considered the provision of time and support for being reflexive as important. The use of reflection is helpful for solving problems (Hatton & Smith, 1995), exploring the connections between theory and practice (Bain et al., 1999), and in helping to solve an issue through a search for

material (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). In the process of professional learning, the teachers engaged in reflection on their learning. They considered any changes and/or additions to their 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' as their needs shifted and their experience with drama grew. These changes as appropriate to Cycles 2 and 3 are discussed in the 'plan' stages in the next chapter.

For reflective teaching to occur, opportunities must be provided for teachers to consider their understanding of the relationship between thoughts and actions (Farrell, 2001). Participation in reflection is also considered to result in new comprehension, changes in beliefs, attitudes and/or values as well as assisting to alter emotional traits or states (Bain et al., 1999).

Reflection took both a written and oral form within this study. Oral reflection was guided by semi-structured interview points for individual and group sessions as well as occurring spontaneously when teachers met in corridors or the staff room. Achieving a particular level of reflection was not a focus during oral reflections which emphasised sharing experiences and learning. The written form of reflection (journal) was more focused, with higher (that is, more analytical) levels of reflection being encouraged. The purpose and focus of the reflective journals was discussed with the teachers, with all but one choosing to attempt this form of reflection from the beginning of the study.

A variety of approaches have been adopted to classify various types or levels of reflective writing. The hierarchy presented by some writers ranges from the technical to deeper critical levels and incorporates social and political issues often based on an adaptation of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, covering the range from description to analysis and synthesis (Bain et al., 1999).

Before delving into a comparative critique of the typologies of reflection offered within the literature, it is important to understand the basic position of the two writers considered to have contributed to this area: Dewey and Schön. The main difference between these two is their area of focus in reflection. Dewey's contributions have been predominantly in the area of understanding reflective thought, while Schön's has been with understanding reflective practice (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Schön suggests that a

professional should identify a problem, when confronted by one, then apply an appropriate technique to solve it (Farrell, 2001).

Valli (1992) adapted Schön’s approach and presented a hierarchy consisting of five levels of reflection: technical reflection, reflection in/on action, deliberative action, personalistic reflection and critical reflection. Hatton and Smith (1995) are critical of this model, based on the belief that reflection-in-action, listed as the third of the five, should be seen as the most complex form of reflection. This criticism formed the basis for Spalding and Wilson (2002) to place equal emphasis on the final four areas of reflection described by Valli (1992) when applying them in their study’s analysis of students’ writing.

The most frequently recurring comment found within the literature is that a majority of individuals have trouble reflecting at a deep level. Attempts fall instead into a descriptive or anecdotal style of writing (Bain et al., 1999; Dacre & Mackey, 1999; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). While this is considered as the lowest level of reflection in some models, most agree that achieving a higher, or more complex level of critical reflection is desired.

Teachers in this study were encouraged to work through a descriptive level of reflection to deeper, or more critical awareness. To assist this process, each teacher was given ‘Focus guidelines for reflection’ (Table 5.4) as well as participating in a discussion regarding different styles of reflection in which they could engage.

Table 5.4 - Focus guidelines for reflection

Focus on Teaching	Focus on Self
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General teaching issues - Specific lesson or incident - Behaviour management - Other (lesson management, content, homework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own skills as a teacher - Own teaching approach - Other (feelings, identity, learning)
Focus on Professional Issues	Focus on students or class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School-based issues - Social/ethical issues - Out-of-class activities - Teaching as a profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student/class behaviour - Student/class characteristics - Relationship with specific students - Teaching of specific students

While not as systematically experienced during this first cycle, ongoing feedback of journal entries continued throughout the study, particularly for Sally in the third cycle. There were mixed responses to the reflective journal at this early stage of the study as is discussed further in Section 5.4.2.

The following sections present two key incidents which emerged during Cycle 1 from the professional learning process. They are both important for highlighting issues regarding the teaching of drama. In addition, they were important for future planning of professional learning. Mark's experience of external professional learning is presented, followed by Amy's problems regarding her approach to performance in the school context.

5.3.1 Key incident: Mark's experience

Mark identified skill development as a focus for enhancing his teaching of drama. Through the planning stage of his process, he expressed a desire to attend an external drama professional learning experience. 'Curtains Up on Drama' (Darell & New South Wales Educational Drama Association, 2003) was a whole day program which incorporated workshops and discussion in relation to the use of drama in the classroom.

One of the sessions in which Mark participated caused problems, however it wasn't the context or ideas that were the issue, but the attitude of the instructor. Mark told me in detail about this experience as well as sharing his thoughts with colleagues. As is demonstrated through the following journal comments, he had already engaged personally in reflection on what this meant for him and his teaching of drama:

...Yesterday I had perhaps the most important lesson in my teaching career to date. It was at the "Curtains Up on Drama" workshop for Primary teachers. Having had some performance experience and drama workshop experience in the past, I felt that I knew how to approach the day. I felt that it would be most beneficial if I were able to shed my inhibitions and constructs of "self" and to throw myself fearlessly into each activity. I did just that.

It worked beautifully. I was participating, learning, observing and having fun! And in one moment, everything changed. Our class was in a session which was focusing on how to link drama with visual arts. We were given a picture which was the basis for three snapshots...each snapshot was to be represented as a tableaux.

I was one of the six people on the stage. The rest of the class were sitting in the theatre as an audience. We broke up into two groups. There was a very domineering person in my group, who clearly took charge from the moment we began the exercise. Knowing we had little time, I was happy to let her direct us thinking that it would be useless to do otherwise.

The problem with this was that her direction was confusing and inconsistent and, when she repeated the same ideas, only louder, I became more confused and felt much less safe.

It was time for my group to show the class our work. I had no idea what we were doing and I was petrified. I could hear my group's 'self appointed director' raising her voice at me and repeating the same thing over and over. She was clearly frustrated with my so obvious confusion. I looked to the session leader - the "TEACHER" for help. I couldn't speak a word. The session leader simply repeated the initial instruction...I was abandoned. I had shed all of my defences and was totally bare - on the stage for all to see. I could hear the repeated instruction from the session leader, I could feel the heat and the glare from the stage lights and I could see every eye focused on me. I was like a rabbit caught in the lights of an oncoming vehicle.

Hastily our group got through the exercise. I dumbly followed the instructions that were condescendingly barked at me by our 'director' and then, at last, I was able to leave the stage - the place of humiliation where before I was having such a fulfilling time. That marked the end of the day for me. I quietly left the theatre and the session that was still in progress...⁷⁸

As professional learning facilitator, I saw Mark's experience as important as it highlighted:

- the unpredictable nature of external professional learning and importance of follow-up; and
- the importance of creating a safe classroom environment when using drama.

Importance of follow-up

Mark's experience caused me concern as I supported the inclusion of external development sessions in balance with the context-based learning in this study. The leader of Mark's group did not demonstrate empathy for the adult learners, a core quality encouraged for any facilitator (McGill & Brockband, 2004).

School-based follow up is important to allow for reflection but also for fostering a process of change:

...Rarely does a one-off workshop promote change, as it does not take into account the existing complexity of a classroom context or have a framework to support teacher learning through the non-linear process of change...

(Hoban, 2002 p2)

While recognising that there was no way that I could have changed his situation, this incident highlighted for me the importance of a follow-up session to allow for such

⁷⁸ Mark, Journal entry -24.08.03

issues to be considered. Due to the limiting nature of the one-off, external course we could not re-plan this experience, but through reflecting with colleagues Mark was able to share his knowledge and lessons learned. He then worked on planning to ensure safety in the classroom. For Mark, this negative experience could be explored within a supportive professional learning session that considered consequences for his immediate teaching of drama. The positive outcome within this study emphasises how problematic it may be if follow-up support is not available. While no other external sessions took place during the study, this finding is important for any future professional learning of this kind.

Importance of creating a safe environment

A positive consequence of this incident was testament to Mark's ability to reflect on his own experiences. He trusted his colleagues and shared his thoughts with them as he viewed the implications for the creation of a safe environment for drama. Mark reported the experience and also wrote of the implications for his teaching of drama within his reflective journal:

...Is this one of the most important lessons of my career? I am 35 years old, independent and have been a well respected teacher for more than ten years. I have performed as an actor, pianist, opera singer and cabaret artist. And yet, I chose not to participate in one of my first loves because I was made to feel unsafe in doing so.

The lesson is quite simple - as teachers, how important is it for us to maintain a safe environment for our students? If I, as a grown man, can be so badly affected by a negative experience, what kind of effect could such an experience have on a child or adolescent?...⁷⁹

A classroom is considered to be a 'safe environment' for teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and this need for 'safety' is also required for students. The creation of the 'space' for drama in a classroom is determined by the style and confidence of a teacher (Heathcote, 1984b). It is this confidence that will assist in maintaining an environment in which the students also feel confident and safe in their use of drama. Through his personal experience, subsequent reflections and group sharing, Mark was able to focus his awareness on this issue. Simultaneously he was able to encourage his colleagues to also be aware of 'safety' and 'confidence' when teaching drama.

⁷⁹ Mark, Journal entry - 24.08.03

5.3.2 Key incident: Amy's experience

...When practitioners begin to question the current and historical contexts of a situation, and perhaps to reveal injustices, they have to make decisions about whether they wish to follow their own value commitments and try to improve the situation according to what they believe in, or whether they will go along with the status quo...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p15)

I had made a deliberate decision when embarking on this study not to focus on the influence of the school leaders within the school, instead drawing solely on the teachers and their experiences of drama. Unfortunately, their influence, and their support or lack of it, could not be ignored as it played a critical role in influencing the actions of all the teachers in the study, particularly Amy. This caused me concern as the actions I witnessed did not match my own values. I had also made a conscious decision not to be involved in the relationships between the teachers and school leaders.

The discussion of what occurred with Amy is not aimed at judging the professionalism or management style of the school leaders. Any comments included are purely my own interpretation, or that of the teachers. No strategies were put into place to attempt any change in the relationship, however, when requested by the teachers in the study, messages were reluctantly passed on to the school leaders. As discussed in Section 8.6, developing the relationship between school leaders and teachers, and the influence of this relationship on school-based professional learning needs to be further investigated.

Amy faced a moment of conflict, or crisis, during her participation. She had already been attempting to use drama prior to joining the study, and based on the positive response of the students had been succeeding. She was participating to help enhance her use of drama through a focus on time management. She felt she was not an effective time manager and was not maximising learning opportunities.

The following excerpt comes from a reflective conversation with Amy and Jenny (a colleague in the study), during which Amy vents her frustration regarding criticism, and lack of support, from the school principal over a recently performed assembly item. It is also important for understanding that Jenny's daughter is in Amy's class and performed in this particular item. All names have been changed to protect anonymity:

A: ...For the staff members, for [the principal]...it was a waste of time, that was about it! ... I did the assembly item, basically I got the girls to direct and choreograph their own items and.... he didn't like it very much...He said it wasn't professional enough.

R: But that's not the point of it though?

J: That's interesting, it's meant to be an assembly item. Remember Rachel... [the deputy principal] had the girls basically do their own dance and organise their own little dance...Well what Amy did was the same.

A: Similar to that, only I've got girls in my class like Louise and Elizabeth who aren't into that sort of thing, and Cory, so I just said you can choose to do singing, dancing, acting...whatever you want...and it went for about half an hour and he was really angry it went for half an hour.

J: I thought it was most probably the length.

A: Wasted all of the assembly time and we still needed to read honour cards. It's stupid, we hardly ever read them anyway...and then basically that it was total crap, it wasn't prepared well enough. Had I even checked what they were doing?

J: But you had discussed it with him?

A: Oh. I discussed it with [deputy principal] and I discussed it with him [principal] before hand....you know, what angered me the most was that he did not even look past ...what he deemed lack of professionalism, to see that the kids put their own ideas and put their own time into it and he gave them no credit for that whatsoever. He got up there and totally ignored them. Even if he thought it was crap you still get up there and say thank you for performing. I tell you what...there have been things in that assembly hall, like music items which I have thought have been pathetic, but you still go up and say thank you very much because the kids try their best. Whether it came across as crap or not is irrelevant.

J: Mrs Smith [class parent] and I were talking after pottery and Kerry is also in the class and she [parent] thought it was great. The fact that Kerry got up there and not just have the same people in the starring roles the whole time. It was all done together...two years ago, Rachel... and you're talking about drama...two years ago, there was no way Sienna [Jenny's daughter] would've ever got up on that stage...she did a little teapot with a song thing, which was quite cute. She would've never done anything like that.

A: They wrote about it afterwards and they all wrote about what a positive thing it was for them...the rehearsal phase...

J: The process by which they went to each other's houses and organised everything and all that sort of thing. The process was really good.

A: Kelly wrote in her entry, she said 'it made me feel like a star for a day, it made me feel important'. If you can give that to kids...she's at that volatile Year 5 age...I think that is...despite the anger, that is what you hold on to. But I know that I did the right thing by them, whether by anyone else, I did the right thing by them...it's just so annoying.

J: I can't understand it because you'd talked to [the principal] about it already, he was aware of what it was going to be like. See I was aware because Sienna had done it at home, there were a couple of little issues about words in songs, but we talked to Amy about it and [the principal] was aware of what was going to go down with it.

J: But I don't think the negative reaction came from any parents. Did you hear from any parents about it? I heard from Mrs Smith, and I was happy with what...I was delighted to see my daughter up there.

A: See he pointed that out. He said he thought parents would have thought it was wonderful because they get to see their kid shine and be on stage and everyone is going to be positive about their own child...and that was positive...possibly the only positive comment that he made.

R: So most of his negative comments were to do with length of time...

J: I thought it was most probably the length of time because it did go for a long time.

A: Lack of preparation, lack of professionalism on my part to allow that type of stuff which he classed as bedroom antics...And when I stood up before the item, I did emphasise that this is what it was, that it was not by any means a professional [performance]....

J: And you qualified it by saying this is the girls' own work, they solely put this together. And the fact is, Amy's already done an assembly and it was more a teacher directed type assembly.

A: And that is what I pointed out to him. I said to him, have you ever seen me put on something that has been directed by me that has not been up to standard. And he said, no, and I said, well...there you go. He said, well that's probably why I'm more angry at this. Why should I have to live up to that standard all the time? You know? I chose this for a reason, I experimented and I lost out...I lost out, the kids didn't lose out. I lost out because I was blasted for something that I don't think needed to be handled in that way, but that's obviously the way he [principal] does handle things...⁸⁰

I viewed this incident as having implications for professional learning from two perspectives. First, I was concerned about the impact it would have on Amy and the other learners in the school in relation to their confidence with using drama. The valuing and support for drama in the school and contradictions between the principal's and the staff's perception of what drama should be became an issue. Second, I had to consider what a scenario such as this meant for me as a professional learning facilitator in relation to my role, and my relationship with the school leaders.

Impact on Amy and the other teachers

This conversation raised issues in five areas, highlighting the influence it had on Amy's perception of drama use and her own teaching practice:

- professionalism;
- influence of parental reaction;
- importance of student response;
- relationship with school leaders (trust, expectation); and
- influence on practice.

⁸⁰ Amy and Jenny, Conversation - 19.08.03

McGill and Brockband (2004) argue that:

...we can fear conflict, but we may also use its benefits to build trust, create intimacy and derive creative solutions. When we deal destructively with conflict we feel controlled by others, we seem to have no choice, we blame and compete with others, and we hark back to the past rather than grappling with the future. So to deal with conflict productively we need the courage and the skill to confront...

(McGill & Brockband, 2004 p200)

I decided to approach the issues that arose through this incident from a positive viewpoint to attempt to find '*creative solutions*' (McGill & Brockband, 2004). To do so, I considered each of the points raised, working out what might be actively addressed in the study. The importance of reflection is highlighted within each cycle in the 'facilitated action research' process. I drew strongly on reflection when working with Amy to address the issues raised.

Amy made multiple references to her perceived *lack of professionalism* in the conversation. She was made to feel as if her knowledge and experience with drama was not trusted or recognised. Clark (1992) argues that a professional teacher is "...*a complex individual doing very complicated work in a sometimes stressful, sometimes rewarding, always uncertain and dynamic variety of settings...*" (p75). While Clark's words reflect accurately the environment in which the teachers in this study worked, Amy as a professional was not being supported by the principal.

Positive support was, however, given to Amy during the conversation in the form of feedback highlighting the reaction of *parents* and the *students* in her class. Some of this feedback came from Jenny, herself a parent of a child in this class, with Amy reflecting personally on the positive student response:

A: Kelly wrote in her entry, she said 'it made me feel like a star for a day, it made me feel important'. If you can give that to kids...she's at that volatile Year 5 age...I think that is...despite the anger, that is what you hold on to. But I know that I did the right thing by them, whether by anyone else, I did the right thing by them...it's just so annoying.

Action learning theory emphasises the importance of critical reflection by which learners are encouraged to "...*reflect critically on how the reality of the social world, including the construction of the self, is socially produced and therefore open to transformation...*" (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992 p435). Amy's ability to reflexively

consider the key stakeholders in education, view her own experience and what this meant for her future learning is important for the nature of professional learning in this study.

Students, parents, colleagues and the *school leaders* were all considered to be social influences on a teacher's actions in their classroom (Section 4.3.1). From my perspective as facilitator, I did not expect to mediate or manage the relationship with these various stakeholders, but found myself as a confidant for both the teachers and school leaders. Exploration of my role was undertaken throughout the study and is addressed in Section 3.5.

Amy has a passion for drama and as a result, this incident did not deter her from continuing its use. She recognised the benefits to her students, and that was enough to support its ongoing use. What Amy did see from this incident was a reaction to her 'experimentation'. She confided in me after the taped conversation that she would not try anything like that outside the classroom again. She would in future adhere purely to the more traditional 'scripted' items. While being concerned with these comments, it was not possible to 'mend' problems with this relationship. It would only have been through addressing a conflict of opinions about drama that would assist. I was concerned, however, about the implications her experience might have for the teaching of drama by the 'less confident' teachers in the study.

Only Jenny (who also participated in the conversation) and Mark were made aware of this negative scenario. Interestingly it was Mark, in his role as incoming drama specialist, who was approached by the principal for advice and opinion regarding Amy's class performance. Mark felt the principal put him in a difficult position as he saw the value in what Amy was doing with the students, but it was made very clear that the principal did not approve⁸¹. Mark tried to 'take a middle line' with the principal by supporting him on certain points, such as the length of the performance (and Amy knew that). He explained that she was most likely trying to allow the students some freedom in what was done. This suggestion was not apparently well received by the principal.⁸²

⁸¹ Mark, Conversation - 17.09.03

⁸² Mark, Conversation - 17.09.03

Further focused conversations with the principal after this incident supported Mark and Amy's belief that the script-based or 'product/art form' as opposed to a 'process/pedagogy' approach to drama was advocated. The following excerpt from my reflective journal describes a conversation with the principal and deputy in the month after Amy's incident:

...[The principal] hoped for a class play/performance night during the year for each grade. He emphasized the idea of having a 'scripted play' based on an already developed existing script. I raised my concern with this and tried to discuss the other forms of drama that can provide a polished performance. He wasn't very good at listening to other ideas, clearly having his own in his head...⁸³

My focus for the professional learning was the teachers. I had consciously not incorporated the leaders directly in the learning process, but had engaged in conversations with them in which they supported the study and classroom drama. This incident made it clear that while the teachers reflected and developed a common approach for drama use in the school, collaboration with the school leaders was required to develop a shared understanding. Unfortunately due to time constraints a focus session to begin this process could not take place.

Roles

Being present for Amy's discussion of her experience highlighted issues in relation to the roles I was playing in the study, and more importantly the way in which the teachers perceived my role. Questions influencing my personal reflections included:

- Would Amy have shown such honest and personal emotions regarding this experience if she had not had a prior collegial relationship with me?
- While allowing the session to be taped, was I acting as more of a confidant than researcher? If so, what does that mean for drawing on that specific data in the research?
- What does the information shared by Amy mean for the broader professional learning in the study and how can I ensure that it does not have negative repercussions?
- What does the enhanced exploration of my roles mean for the research as a whole and the professional learning in the school?

⁸³ School leaders, Conversation - 24.10.03

While following an action research methodology, this study differs from much action research in that it is not focusing directly on my own learning, but that of the teachers with whom I am working. While personal reflections on these questions were undertaken, no further investigation of my own role could be undertaken.

The two incidents drawn on in this first cycle reinforced my existing belief in the need for ongoing negotiation of each teacher's 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'. New issues were being raised and these needed to be addressed in the ongoing learning process. The importance of facilitating ongoing reflection for me and the teachers was enhanced. As previously stated, action learning theory emphasises the connection between reflection and action (McGill & Brockband, 2004), further supporting the need for the following two simultaneous steps in the process of professional learning.

As a result of undertaking reflection, a number of teachers requested that changes be made to their plans. These changes involved the removal of an aspect of their plan or the need for more time to achieve a task. The changes requested during this cycle are reflected in plans for Cycle 2 (Section 6.1).

5.4 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' evaluated

...The activity in which knowledge is developed and deployed, it is now argued, is not separable from or ancillary to learning and cognition. Nor is it neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of what is learned...

(Brown et al., 1989 p32)

This section considers comments made by the teachers at the end of the first cycle of action research when evaluating the specific activities included in their 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'. This research advocates the inclusion of situated learning strategies as an important way forward in professional learning. Learning and doing can not be separated with their connection being important for meaningful learning to take place. This section begins with a consideration of which strategies were utilised in the professional learning, and some general comments regarding the professional learning and teacher response at the end of the first cycle. An in-depth evaluation by the teachers of five strategies drawn on for the first cycle in the study follows. These five strategies are team teaching, reflection, sharing, print material and one-off (external) sessions.

Of all strategies offered for professional learning, all but one were applied in the ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’. As demonstrated in Table 5.5, *stories*, *reflection* and *collaboration* were the most favoured strategies, while no teachers engaged in *small group practice*. Not being provided with release time from their own workloads, teachers were unable to spend time in groups practising skills. This ‘practice’ was evident more in the use of team teaching sessions which drew on *assistance* and *collaboration* strategies.

Table 5.5 - Instances of strategy use

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Usage</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Usage</i>
Stories	29	Articulation of learning skills	7
Reflection	23	Technology	5
Collaboration	20	Modelling/Observation	12
Coaching	7	Small group practice	0
Scaffolding/Sharing	10	Assistance (co-teaching)	2
Multiple Practice	10		

At the end of each cycle, teachers were asked to evaluate both the different tasks and the situated learning strategies involved in their professional learning. These evaluations are presented with the challenges or issues that arose. The evaluation is presented through the terms given by the teachers and not always through the literature-termed situated strategy.

Not all situated learning strategies with which the teachers engaged were referred to in their evaluations. While being provided with a list of strategies in the draft plans, their removal and replacement with step by step tasks and generic titles for the second version of the ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ may have impacted on their ability to use explicit terminology during evaluation.

The ongoing nature of the professional learning was reassuring to the teachers, with Mark believing it to be *essential* for effective learning.⁸⁴ The issue of ‘pressure’ arose early with the teachers not feeling concerned with their participation in the study, and some worrying that they were not doing enough.

⁸⁴ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

A number of teachers made explicit reference to this feeling of pressure. For example, Leanne stated that she did not feel pressured, but conceded that if any more time was expected of her, “...it might have been just a bit too much, because as you know, this school is crazy...”⁸⁵ Mark felt that the pressure he was feeling with taking on specialist drama in the new year was being alleviated by his participation in the professional learning:

...Pressure would exist if we had had some session and you had said, “alright, now can you create a lesson for me”, which happens...to all teachers on prac. You go in and there’s someone who’s been teaching for a hundred years and they couldn’t tell you anymore how they would write a lesson plan because they’re just automatic...this is assistance and therefore I feel no pressure. I’m learning something...⁸⁶

Mark was still lacking in confidence and had not yet acknowledged that his own contribution to designing his professional learning would have contributed to the focus and lack of pressure. The learning was meaningful and therefore did not appear an imposition on his time.

The blend of individual and group activities was also considered a positive inclusion in the ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’. The teachers acknowledged the different skills with which they began their learning, considering individualising as crucial to assisting their development:

...I can see there’s a huge gap between myself and [other teachers in the study] in our skills, so it’s really good to have that individual thing, because it’s like the kids. You can’t aim everything at the same level because not everybody’s the same. I like that we have this [individual time] so we can work out what I need personally...⁸⁷

The professional learning in this study aimed to respect past experiences and cater for individual needs. The acknowledgement by the teachers of the capacity of the professional learning in this study to achieve this aim further supports the need for a move from external professional learning to that which is located in, and guided by the school context.

⁸⁵ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁸⁶ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

⁸⁷ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.11.03

The following sub-sections consider comments by the teachers in relation to five of the situated learning strategies incorporated in 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'. Data are drawn from interviews at the end of the first term's participation.

5.4.1 Team teaching

The teachers who nominated team teaching in their 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' were excited about its inclusion. Jenny was able to complete her activity within this cycle, however due to time constraints, Leanne and Sally could not.⁸⁸

While not considering her team teaching session to be a complete success, Jenny reflected clearly on new issues of classroom management that arose through the experience to inform future teaching of drama:

...I realised a couple of things, like a bigger space and setting clear ground rules at the beginning...I still think I need a bit of work...on that area [management]. The littlees loved it, but I don't know how much the big buddies actually got out of it. I think they looked upon it a little bit like, "we've been told to do this, so we've got to do it"...⁸⁹

She enjoyed the joint process of preparation and planning required for team teaching, believing this to be a nice change from the solitary nature of teaching usually experienced.

5.4.2 Reflection

...If...learning is a process of enculturation that is supported in part through social interaction and the circulation of narrative, groups of practitioners are particularly important, for it is only within groups that social interaction and conversation can take place...

(Brown et al., 1989 p40)

The teachers in the study were encouraged to be reflexive through the use of a journal as well as through planned individual and group reflection (sharing) sessions. I recognised through conversations early in the study that not all of the teachers would reflect in the same way, and wished to provide opportunities for them to do so in whichever style they preferred. The teachers also recognised the benefits of reflection and saw the work of the study beginning to weave its way into the culture of the school:

⁸⁸ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁸⁹ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

...With regard to what you're actually doing, you've inspired a lot of people to rethink about drama. Maybe not necessarily do a lot of drama games, but at least think about it a lot more and that's what you want to do...I think also having you in with these, particularly the one on one interviews, you begin to reflect a lot more and you think about how you can change things and I've found that really, really beneficial. I think it's been really, really good...⁹⁰

I found the teachers demonstrated varied reactions to the journal. I had entered the study with an assumption that reflecting through a journal would not only be a positive way for the teachers to record their experiences, but that it would also be a tool for self-reflection (Altrichter et al., 1993). A journal, or research diary, is suggested as a positive inclusion in action research as it allows for data to be entwined with reflection and analysis (Altrichter et al., 1993). I believed that the journals would provide me with insight into the teacher's decision making and emotions.

Despite my belief in the benefits of journal writing, I had decided, as with all aspects of the study, to make this a negotiable activity. As a result, not all teachers elected to use the written journal. Only Jenny and Sally continued its use throughout their entire professional learning journey. The other two who attempted its use, found that while the process of reflection was beneficial and necessary, the time required to keep a written record could be better spent on other tasks. Amy stated that she did not wish to include written reflection in her plan believing that 'a chat' would be more helpful.⁹¹

The varying opinions regarding the benefit of journal use surprised me. Mark attempted writing in his journal, and through reflections on his negative external professional learning experience, was able to reflect critically through this medium. Despite his ability, he did not continue its use through the study, arguing that he can reflect without needing to record these thoughts:

...Different people need different things and if some people need to write things down and they need to go back and...see the words written down in front of them...I reflect all the time I never stop thinking about what I've done or what's going to happen...and if it's not about school it's about the house that I'm renovating...If someone were to say with me, oh where are the plans for what you're doing in the garden. What do you mean plans? But I can take them over every square inch of it, I can tell them exactly what's going to happen and what's been happening...I don't need to go and put it on paper. I'll do that if I want to create a picture and I've got nothing to do. But I definitely do not need to ratify or reinforce what I've taught by making it a black and white thing...⁹²

⁹⁰ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁹¹ Amy, Conversation 2 - 23.07.03

⁹² Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

Mark's opinion raises an interesting question about the reflexive ability of teachers. Much of a teacher's ability to reflect is measured through the ability to record these reflections. It may be that teachers engage consistently in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983), putting changes into place seamlessly and intuitively, so that they are not consciously aware of having done so.

Mark's experience differed to that of Sally and Jenny, who both enjoyed recording their thoughts as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

...Certainly a good idea, though I wonder if I've written enough...I would like to hear others' journals if they don't mind. I wouldn't mind reading mine out at a group session...⁹³

...I think the journal book was a very good idea. I think out of everything that was a very good idea. That just keeps it in the back of your mind, whereas if I don't think I'd had the journal I think I could have just, sort of, it would have just wafted a bit...just having that there, that is really crucial, I think, to the whole thing. Well, for me it has been...⁹⁴

Leanne's experience with the journal differed again as she was initially enthusiastic about its inclusion. She discussed early in the study that she likes to write reflexively, but in reality did not record her thoughts very often. In the following excerpt, she considers her lack of reflection at this point in the professional learning:

...As far as the journal is concerned. It's not a problem, it's just remembering to sit and do it, you know, I think oh god, I've got to write. It's not that I feel pressured...it's just another thing to do that has got to be done. It's not that I'm feeling really pressured or thinking, 'oh god I've got to write that', it's just finding the five minutes...or remembering to do it as well. I don't think it's a pressure as such, the journal, just a small extra thing really. For everything we're actually gaining from it, I think it's a small thing to have to do, to be honest...⁹⁵

Time once again became a negative force influencing the level of participation some teachers were able to give to learning activities.

5.4.3 Sharing

The group reflection/sharing sessions were enjoyed by all teachers in the study. They considered them to be inspirational for sharing their past experiences, trials of drama and future plans. They also began to develop a culture of communication and learning

⁹³ Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁹⁴ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁹⁵ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

within the school. This was something clearly valued, but not experienced frequently, as revealed through Amy's comments:

...It is interesting getting the feedback on what my drama activities are and how they could be changed or improved, or modified ...To be able to talk and bounce ideas of people within that sort of a situation has probably been the most beneficial thing for me. I don't think I would have normally...with certain staff members, yes, but not with others...⁹⁶

Amy continued considering the wider influence of professional learning on other staff members. She saw the staff as talking more, being less solitary and sharing ideas more frequently:

...And I think talking about it, because sometimes as a staff you get so wrapped up in your own little world that...unless you're very good friends with a colleague...you don't tend to go and ask others for information or advice...I think this has been really good because it's got people talking and particularly the small group has really got people talking and listening to others whereas you might tend to not listen to specific people, or those sorts of people might have appeared unapproachable in the past...so I think that's been very beneficial to improve communication skills within the school itself...⁹⁷

Other teachers also reflected on the benefits of the group sessions for opening up their thinking:

...You do tend to get stuck, I think, in a bit of a rut. And that's not to say it's not a bad thing if you feel comfortable doing that style of programming, but I actually thought today was really interesting just to open up a few things and see what else is out there...⁹⁸

Jenny's reflection reinforces a fear that teachers who are working too much in isolation can encounter the risk of becoming stale with their practice. The importance of fostering a vibrant community, or culture of learning within a school is further supported through these comments and discussed in Section 8.2.

The use of *modelling* is a shared activity that took place to a limited extent within the professional learning. At this stage of the study, Mark and Leanne considered the inclusion of modelled lessons as critical to assisting the development of their teaching of drama:

⁹⁶ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁹⁷ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

⁹⁸ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

...It's also that connection. Teachers like taking the actual lesson that they see and doing it again with their own class. We're Bower Birds and we love to be able to see something in action and take it and do it. That's fine, but we've seen it in action, we've taken it and done it, but I don't know if we're actually sure about what we've done...⁹⁹

I enjoyed Mark's comparison of teachers and Bower Birds. Teachers are renowned for collecting knowledge (and resources). Witnessing a modelled lesson is one more resource teachers can collect and draw on in their practice. As alluded to in Mark's comments, modelling in isolation would be ineffective. The ability to discuss and reflect following any modelled lesson is important to allow meaningful learning to result. As is discussed in Section 7.3, the modelled lessons with Mark did in fact incorporate such reflection.

5.4.4 Print material

As is acknowledged at the beginning of the next cycle, the teachers were keen to receive print material, but time restricted the amount with which they could engage. Books that listed practical ideas, rather than theory, were the best received, with a number of teachers connecting to certain texts. Jenny recognised herself in a text discussing confidence issues as hindering the teaching of drama. Sally engaged more generally with various texts as she saw them encapsulating the way in which she wished to use drama:

...you suddenly have that ah ha! experience. That's actually what I should be doing more, it's just below the surface, but it's not quite happening...so that will give me more confidence...¹⁰⁰

5.4.5 One-Off (External)

Despite Mark's negative experience (Section 5.3.1) in an external development workshop, the teachers viewed having some external input as beneficial. They saw the external activities as a positive addition to school-based learning. The need for follow-up of any external development was clearly emphasised by Mark's experience.

The teachers were candid in expressing what they considered to be the place of external development, discussing ineffective external development as a way of explaining the benefit of the school-based learning taking place:

⁹⁹ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

¹⁰⁰ Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

...In comparison to that [external PD] I've found this very useful. One day things, you sort of listen on the day, but then it gets put away and you forget about it. And even things where they might come in every week, one day a week, it's an hour and a half and you get tired by the end of the day, whereas this, it's shorter and it's just tailored to the needs of the specific teachers...¹⁰¹

...When you take a long-term study, you do get everybody in. Or at least the people who are part of that process...end up knowing more whether they want to or not...¹⁰²

The belief that notes from external professional learning were taken, filed and only occasionally referred to was a common theme among the teachers. In comparison, they recognised the professional learning in this study as directly relevant and influencing their ongoing classroom teaching.

5.5 Progress so far

The teachers did not explicitly comment on the process of action research in which they were engaged. They recognised through the established pattern of reporting and reflection that the end of a cycle had occurred. Despite not using action research terminology, they were also aware that a new 'cycle' was beginning as they began work in the following term.

As opposed to discussing specific learning or shifts in pedagogy, the teachers acknowledged initial changes in their confidence and practice at this early stage of the study. All felt they had made progress in their identified focus areas, although progress related predominantly to increased awareness and understanding as opposed to larger pedagogical shifts. The teachers were enthusiastic to continue their professional learning, however the key emotion reported was a feeling of increased awareness as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

...I think I'm just a little bit more aware and thinking about the enjoyment...seeing the enjoyment they're getting out of it is making me more aware that I should be doing more of it [drama]...¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁰² Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

¹⁰³ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

...Skills-wise, I've got a lot more ideas...Just the little things that you can do that just take a few minutes...Those little ideas have just been ideal and so in turn that has given me more confidence to do more...So definitely awareness and my skills and confidence have definitely improved...¹⁰⁴

...I'm definitely more time focused, time aware...¹⁰⁵

Amy and Norman were making noticeable changes to their practice by the end of this cycle. Amy was initially confident with attempting drama, but wanted to enhance her practice through addressing time management issues. She believed that the biggest changes to her practice at this point of the study related to her making time for more “...*formal drama oriented activities*...”:

...I have been sitting down and doing things like drama games, like the train, mirror imaging, statues, all those sorts of things. I've actually made a concerted effort to do that a little bit more with the focus on the drama element itself...You can do drama and the kids don't realise that they're doing drama, they're just having fun which is what we want them to have, but also doing drama for drama itself and learning it as a dramatic skill. I have done that a lot more than just sort of bits and pieces of integrated drama all over the place...¹⁰⁶

As her comments clearly indicate, Amy was making conscious decisions about changing her practice of drama as a result of participation in the professional learning. Reflections on the role of drama in the classroom had challenged her previous approach, leading her to attempt more focused drama based activities.

Mark was also making explicit attempts to incorporate drama in his teaching. Working as a specialist teacher, he did not suffer Amy's need to manage other subject areas. Instead, he needed to overcome issues with confidence and classroom management. He had to find ways to begin using drama in his music lessons as his specialist drama time had not yet begun:

...I started out thinking, I can't do that because that is not what I'm meant to be doing and then I thought, bugger it! If it seems appropriate at the time, if I want to get Year 2 to do a tableaux, or if I want them to do a game of 'What are you doing?', or a process that is going to get them working in a group way that I can't do in music, then I'll do it. So I did. The few things that I've done in this way were really enjoyable for them and they came back saying, "oh, can we do more of that?"...¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁰⁵ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁰⁶ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁰⁷ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

Mark was encouraged to continue including drama in his teaching as a result of positive student response. No teacher commented that students disliked the drama activities. There was an overwhelming feeling that all attempts were met with excitement, despite the level of success judged by the teacher.

Further consideration of changes in practice can be found in Chapter 7 which focuses on Jenny, Sally and Mark's stories. Changes are also considered in the 'observe and reflect' stages of the following two cycles of action research outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 - Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Introduction

This chapter outlines the second and third cycles of action research. Ongoing collaboration involving the ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ allowed for changing needs of the teachers to be met quickly and efficiently. The flexibility in learning promoted through these ongoing negotiations and reflections is one way in which this professional learning differs to pre-determined, prescribed sessions. This study recognises that while not yet commonplace, an increasing number of schools are beginning to promote professional learning that is needs-oriented. The ‘Quality Teaching Program’ (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003) is one current framework being encouraged in New South Wales government schools to assist professional learning in becoming more self-directed. This research lends one more voice to support this shifting emphasis.

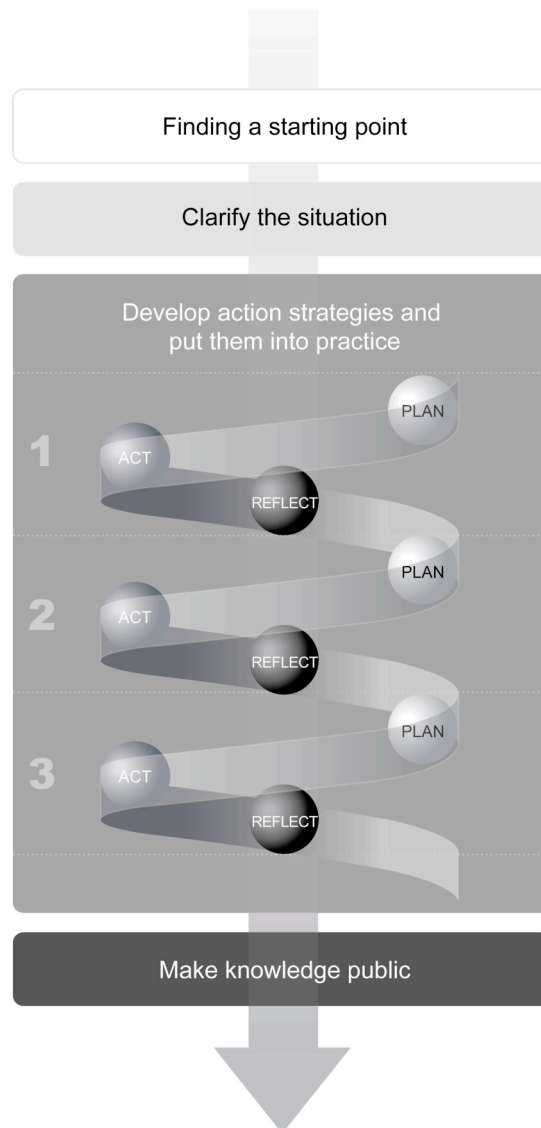
The style of professional learning supported in this study aimed to “...enable the participants to take responsibility for their learning, their actions and to develop and/or enhance their autonomy...” (McGill & Brockband, 2004 p189). Through encouraging the teachers to revise their ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’, they began to increasingly take more responsibility for their own learning. Some of the teachers began to embrace the freedom to plan their own learning and increasingly displayed the characteristics of self-directed learners. I was concerned that not all teachers had yet gained the confidence to clearly state their changing needs, but recognised the importance of allowing the change process to take its natural course for it to be sustainable (Hoban, 2002).

6.1 Cycle 2 - Plan

The transition from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 of the action research process was not explicitly planned or discussed with the teachers. They were aware of the need for reporting and reflecting on progress in a formal capacity at the conclusion of each school term and this shaped the transition between each cycle. As a result, Cycle 1 took place over Term

3, 2003 with Cycle 4 occurred during Term 4. Cycle 3, discussed later in this chapter, began at the conclusion of Term 4, 2003 and extended through Term 1 of the following school year. Figure 6.1 presents a diagrammatic overview of the process of how these two cycles fit in the ‘facilitated action research’ structure discussed in Section 3.3.

Figure 6.1 - ‘Facilitated Action Research’ process



As for Cycle 1, the need for planning is the first stage in the action research cycle. The planning for the second cycle differed as the broader focus area, collation of appropriate strategies and initial development of plans, had already taken place. The planning in this cycle was shaped by a clarification of ongoing issues, renegotiation of activities existing

in the original plans, and the identification and planning of any new issues arising through participation in the professional learning.

6.1.1 Clarify ongoing issues

For a majority of teachers, the main focus of Cycle 2 was to continue working through original 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'. As not all activities were completed during the initial term's participation, they were to continue with ongoing reflection and a trial and error approach to teaching drama.

Time was the largest contributing factor identified by the teachers in hindering their completion of tasks in the original plans. While maintaining the same overall focus, some teachers made changes. Sally, for example, enjoyed engaging with literature, but believed that she would not have the time during Term Four to do so. This resulted in that activity being temporarily removed from her plan. Similarly, the team teaching session scheduled with Leanne was also postponed from Cycle 1. However both teachers believed they would find the time to prepare and conduct this lesson during this cycle. The teachers had decided on their focus, but hadn't developed a time frame.¹⁰⁸

The teachers particularly enjoyed the shared sessions, and requested these as an ongoing part of the professional learning including new focused group sessions. The early assumption in this study of the benefits of shared, collaborative learning was supported through the teachers' reactions.

6.1.2 Identify and plan for new areas for development

Requests for new areas of development arising at the beginning of this second cycle took a variety of forms. The following inclusions and exclusions were implemented in the second cycle at the request of the teachers.

- Due to end of year time pressures (end of year events and reports), the planned discussions reviewing print materials given to the teachers were removed from all plans at the teachers' request.
- A planning session was included for Mark who had been given the task of developing a drama programme for the following year.

¹⁰⁸ Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

- Mark also requested a couple of modelled lessons in which I would take his students and he would watch and assist with the lessons.
- Jenny requested a planning session to revise her current program making changes to be implemented in the following year.
- A couple of teachers asked for a group session that re-acquainted them with the forms and elements of drama within the NSW Board of Studies K-6 Creative Arts Syllabus (2000).
- Following some behavioural issues, a session considering classroom management for drama was requested.
- Sally requested some individual time to work on her class performance for the Christmas concert.

Sally requested a group reflection session in which the teachers shared reflections from their journals. She believed this would help them understand their practice and classroom based issues more effectively. However, due to time pressures, this could not be included in the professional learning.

The teachers were excited about having the responsibility to identify and take action from personal changing needs within their current professional learning. As reported in Section 6.3.4, this responsiveness was considered a strength of the professional learning. The need for receptiveness and flexibility is a key component within the action research methodology.

6.2 Cycle 2 - Act

The second cycle of action saw the teachers increasingly frustrated by the intrusion of the daily school pressures on their ability to continue their professional learning. All teachers felt they did not work as effectively on their teaching of drama throughout this cycle, but expressed their desire to program drama specifically for inclusion in their teaching for the following year. The following section presents the key points discussed with the teachers about action taken during Cycle 2. Issues arising within this cycle are considered, and an evaluation of the professional learning is undertaken (Section 6.3).

6.2.1 Implementation of professional learning strategies

As outlined in the planning stage of this cycle, many of the activities were ongoing from Cycle 1. This section focuses on new activities included in teacher plans.

Mark included two additional sessions in his ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’, a programming session developing a scope and sequence for drama for the following year, and two team teaching experiences. Both of these sessions were positive, but also raised issues for Mark to consider in his teaching of drama.

Mark appeared a little torn when planning for drama, as he began to view his teaching from a broader cross-arts perspective. He believed he would be a resource for teachers in the following year, a role that filled him with trepidation, but also excitement for the changes he could influence within the school¹⁰⁹. The team teaching sessions assisted in developing his confidence, and the success and reaction of the students was a motivating factor:

...That was amazing. Music just doesn't work for everyone. Drama provides an arena for them to work like *that*. Nothing else does...¹¹⁰

Following the sessions, we discussed the importance of reflection and discussion with the students. Mark believed that they would respond brilliantly to the weekly inclusion of drama.

Jenny's programming session was also positive and provided a one-on-one opportunity for her to further discuss classroom management concerns previously addressed in a group session. Jenny was nervous about enacting pedagogical change, but was also keen to do so. Positive student reaction to the drama already attempted was cited as her key motivating factor (see Jenny's story in Chapter 7).

The programming session with Jenny raised issues about the inclusion of imaginative play as a programmed session for her Kindergarten students. One of the texts considered, suggested a format for these ‘imaginative play’ sessions that involved the

¹⁰⁹ Mark, Conversation - 24.11.03

¹¹⁰ Mark, Conversation - 25.11.03

students in planning and incorporating reflection after the play time. Jenny planned to reflect on the text and consider how she might adapt her teaching time in the new year to include such changes.¹¹¹

The group sessions that focused on ‘forms and elements’ and ‘classroom management’ were successful. It became increasingly clear over the course of the study that the teachers were starved for professional discussion and as a result found these sessions to be a stimulating and informative experience.

More discussion of activities undertaken during this cycle is embedded within the observation and reflection in the next section of this action research cycle.

6.3 Cycle 2 - Reflect

The teachers were positive about their progress and professional learning at the end of the second cycle. The observation and reflection in this cycle focused on three areas: *changed understanding of drama*, bias regarding *student gender and age* and *reflection on the professional learning process*.

As with Cycle 1, reflection was ongoing and took both an oral and a written form. Oral reflection was guided by semi-structured interview points with the written form being a written evaluative survey (Section 3.4.4). Only two of the teachers had continued using their journals through to the end of Cycle 2. Leanne and Mark had withdrawn this strategy for reflection from their plans, preferring reflective conversations on specific incidents when required. Further details of the approach to reflection undertaken can be found in Section 5.4.2. The teachers were able to clearly reflect on their own progress, as well as the process of professional learning in which they participated. Through this focused reflection, three teachers were able to discuss explicitly their wishes for ongoing learning for the following year to enhance their teaching of drama.

I found the teachers to be more articulate when reflecting on their practice and in raising new issues that had begun to arise. Oral and written reflection demonstrated that understanding of drama use had deepened over the course of the study and more

¹¹¹ Jenny, Conversation - 11.12.03

importantly, that the confidence of teachers to discuss and use drama had been enhanced.

Section 6.3.1 discusses the process of change in the enhancement of teacher understanding of drama in the first two cycles.

While not a direct focus in this research, the influence of student gender and age as it arose during Cycles 1 and 2 is discussed in Section 6.3.2. It was at the end of the second cycle that this new issue constraining the teaching of drama emerged. Further analysis of data revealed that there had been issues with student gender and age throughout the study.

6.3.1 Understanding of drama - changes

When considering any change in practice, it became clear that the teachers were moving through three clear steps in relation to their understanding and teaching of drama:

- awareness;
- focused drama attempts; and
- explicit inclusion of drama.

This process developed over a six month period (Cycles 1 and 2), and reinforced the importance of allowing time for teachers to extend their understanding and experience. The positive results of this school-based professional learning supports a move away from one-off sessions during which teachers are trained over a short, intensive period and are not provided time for reflection or classroom practice.

Step 1 - Awareness.

While attempting drama in the classroom, the first clear change in understanding acknowledged by the teachers was a shift in their awareness of drama. Confidence with engaging in new techniques experienced during the professional learning also increased:

...I'm definitely, definitely more aware of drama. I think of it a lot more... I do a lot more pieces like that... my programming I'm definitely going to be able to do a lot more in that. When it is in my program it tends to get done, if it's not in my program often it just doesn't happen...And drama's a thing that you can slot in a lot with lots of different things...So definitely awareness and my skills and confidence have definitely improved...¹¹²

...I think I'm just a little bit more aware and thinking the enjoyment...seeing the enjoyment that they're getting out of it is making me more aware that I should be doing more of it...¹¹³

The growing awareness of drama use developed over the course of the first cycle of the study (ten weeks) continuing into Cycle 2. This was not a fast process, but one that saw positive changes in understanding rather than demonstrable changes to practice.

Step 2 - Focused drama attempts.

As a result of the increased awareness, more focused attempts to use drama were made as Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 progressed. While still not yet embedded as a subject area in programs, all teachers were explicit about the times they integrated drama, with some beginning to plan such experiences:

...I have been sitting down and doing things like drama games, like the train, mirror imaging, statues, and I've actually made a concerted effort to do that a little bit more with the focus on the drama element itself...you can do drama and the kids don't realize that they're doing drama, they think they're just having fun... but [I've been] also doing drama for drama itself...I have done that a lot more than just sort of bits and pieces of integrated drama all over the place...¹¹⁴

...I just feel like with the program I've got at the moment, that's [including drama] not a problem. With English I can put in some things, like with Mrs Wishy Washy, acting that out or whatever. That wasn't a problem with HSIE and Science, putting in drama incidentally, rather than we are now doing drama. And that's where the problem is...¹¹⁵

The increased confidence and inclusion of a programming session at the end of the first cycle encouraged the teachers to begin integrating drama explicitly in their themes for the following term (Cycle 2). The process of deliberate planning for drama highlighted new issues for a number of teachers (classroom management, focus on the elements of drama, programming for specific purposes) resulting in extra sessions being requested for their 'Personal Professional Learning Plans'.

¹¹² Leanne, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹¹³ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹¹⁴ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹¹⁵ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

Step 3 - Explicit inclusion of drama resulting in a change in practice.

By the end of the second cycle, three of the four mainstream teachers began to explicitly program drama for the following year. The skills they had gained with drama, as well as an increased focus on programming, had assisted them in achieving more ‘trial and error’ teaching of drama. Positive student response further motivated these teachers:

...Also being able to program in...has worked really well. Having drama more in my head when I’m programming...has made a difference...The kids love it and they learn a lot when they do it because they remember it...¹¹⁶

Mark had developed his scope and sequence for specialist drama in the following year and had begun programming specific learning experiences.

A positive change in understanding had occurred for a majority of teachers:

... at this stage in the term you start thinking I won’t get through all of this other work, and you kind of just do things quick and easily rather than thinking well that’s a great idea...all it needs is a bit of planning, prior planning and thought and hey presto, you’re ready to go with something exciting...¹¹⁷

As demonstrated in the excerpt, the importance of programming for drama was recognised. The benefits of doing so for classroom management and maximising student learning experiences were also acknowledged.

The teachers were provided with opportunities for individual and group reflection during Cycles 1 and 2, with these sessions encouraging articulation of their changing understanding of drama. This positive change, involving a change in practice for a majority of teachers, also resulted in a specific challenge for the professional learning. The teachers developed skills in relation to drama in the classroom, but also developed skills to assist them becoming self-directed learners (Husby, 2005), or independent learners (Jackson, 1992). Through this shift, the teachers gained confidence in identifying needs and the ongoing learning they believed would help them further enhance the teaching of drama.

¹¹⁶ Leanne, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

¹¹⁷ Sally, Conversation - 04.03.04

As the teachers' learning became more self-directed, they became more confident in articulating the ongoing guidance desired for the following year (Cycle 3). Professional learning as facilitated by an outsider will have time constraints and a limited life-span. This causes concern when faced with a time-bounded scenario. While the teachers were beginning to take ownership of their learning, this was a slow process, with official support needing to cease before a strong culture of learning could be established. Once a strong collaborative culture of learning grows within a school, the gradual withdrawal of external support for professional learning should then occur. To a limited extent in this study, the withdrawal of support too early within school-based professional learning, resulted in positive changes not being fully realised in practice.

Understanding of drama emerged as a theme to be addressed when attempting to enhance the teaching of drama through professional learning. The importance of gaining detailed information regarding teacher beliefs at the start of any learning experience (Section 4.7) is supported through the varied perspectives and level of understanding with which teachers began their participation in the study. The influence of a changing understanding of drama on practice was clear. Ongoing reflection to encourage confident articulation of the changing understanding of drama is also highlighted in these cycles.

6.3.2 Student gender and age

The volume of conscious, or unconscious, reference to student gender and age within the study was astounding. This theme wove its way through a majority of conversations clearly linking with teacher motivation and classroom use of drama. While it is not the subject of this thesis to explore the literature on gender, the following comments are offered, based on observations throughout the research and discussions with participants.

The pervasiveness of stereotypes in relation to student gender and age only became obvious toward the end of the second cycle. I have asked myself many times why the obvious place of gender and age was not clear from the start, as it is obvious on a detailed, focused re-read of the initial interviews. One explanation may link to my own personal experiences at the school, where there is a natural gender division.

The school has a ‘twin school’ structure in which girls and boys are located on the same campus, but taught in single sex classes. They combine for various activities and at the discretion of their teachers who may group students for some Mathematics and English experiences by ability, rather than gender. The natural division resulting from the school structure may well create stylised and specific notions of the capabilities of the respective genders.

The following tables present the way in which the teachers’ references to gender and age changed as their own understanding of drama increased. Data are collated from all teachers and are drawn from conversations and interviews throughout all three cycles. While not all comments related to the use of drama, they all linked to classroom choices and perceptions of the teaching and learning process.

Table 6.1 - Changes in Gender reference

	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
<i>Beginning of the study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack patience • lack imagination • lack of general knowledge • don’t understand limits • can’t translate ideas • need more time on discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are mature • are sensible (most of the time) • come with general knowledge • display less behaviour problems [than boys] • want to emulate success • are sensitive • need boosting • lack confidence
<i>During the study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can get silly • need clear ground rules [for drama] • need structure • need to keep in control • takes more work (for teachers) • possess short concentration span • are purpose oriented • want to finish activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are more manageable • work quietly • learn lines quickly • enjoy make believe activities • possess confidence • explore options • put thought into their work

As is demonstrated in Table 6.1, gender references did not change dramatically over the course of the study. What was noted in classroom practice, however, was the increased confidence of the teachers to use drama with their students, despite continuing to demonstrate an awareness of gender difference in their conversations. The gender stereotypes evident did not reflect on teacher use of drama over the three action research cycles but were used by some teachers to account for previous practice.

The following excerpt is taken from an interview during the reflection phase at the end of Cycle 1. Jenny is recognising gender problems with the use of drama, but not yet offering ways of managing her concerns:

...It was a fabulous lesson, but it was really interesting to watch how the boys coped with it. And even though she'd [co-teacher] had it really well planned and everything, the boys...nup! The girls were fine, but the boys could not cope with a room full of balloons (laughs) And it was just constantly bringing them back, it was hard, it was a hard lesson in just the control keeping bringing those boys back, and it was a bit like that with the buddies. I felt the same way with the big buddies it was like constantly bringing them back. Let's go to the next group or whatever...¹¹⁸

Despite comments such as this, Jenny did not decrease the teaching of drama. She increased her teaching of drama during Cycle 2 and 3.

Amy was another teacher who made frequent gender references. Unlike Jenny, she was able to reflect and offer reasons behind the gender issues arising in her teaching of drama:

...Girls and boys together doing drama wasn't that good, but they enjoyed it...we did things like Steve's getting them into groups, saying like '5' and they have to get into groups of 5...and then they had to form the number 5 using all five bodies. That worked a lot better than my theory of Nemo and Bruce and the Sahara Desert...The boys tended to get a little bit silly and the girls consequently got silly with the boys...I don't think I laid the groundwork down very well. I mean, I gave the whole spiel about... drama is a fun activity, but we need to be sensible and we need to listen and when I say freeze, you freeze and...we did a lot of things like act like a tree, act like a this...but with the boys, they particularly needed the emphasis, you don't move out of our spot when we're doing these actions and we don't integrate with another person to be a tree that whacks over another tree...¹¹⁹

In Amy's example, classroom management was emphasised as a reason for the problems faced when teaching drama. The following demonstrates further her consideration of gender and its influence on classroom choices. Amy was the only teacher to make such explicit connections between her knowledge of student gender and the teaching of drama:

...The quality of my chapel plays and assembly plays have never changed whether I've had a girls' class or a boys' class. I mean obviously with the younger ones they've had to be rehearsed a lot more and I think the kids have got as much out of the plays as they have. I just think with the boys it takes a little bit more work... I've certainly found with the boys that they can't concentrate on for great lengths of time...¹²⁰

¹¹⁸Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹¹⁹ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹²⁰ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

Over the course of the study, the frequency of reference to gender decreased dramatically. It appeared to become less of a factor influencing drama use.

Reference to student age as a factor influencing the use of drama also decreased. What became clear, as seen in Table 6.2, was the increase in more specific, drama-related comments. Enhanced awareness and increased skills with teaching drama resulted in its improved use, highlighting management issues.

Table 6.2 - Changes in Age reference

	<i>Younger</i>	<i>Older</i>
<i>Beginning of the study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus should be on basics (reading, writing, maths) and parents want this • lack experience • could learn from older students • need less technical drama (incidental preferred) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possess more learning experience • display more positive behaviours with this not an issue • see bigger picture in activities • could mentor younger students • able to handle technical learning
<i>During the study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoy drama immensely • find working with older students intimidating • need more rehearsal for plays • respond to increased teacher confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of drama is draining - control an issue • need for activities to be appropriately pitched • able to learn lines faster

Also of interest in Table 6.2, is the change in perception of older students. At the beginning of the study, teacher comments favoured the older age group. The following comment is typical:

...But it's probably to do more with the fact that these girls are older...they have that knowledge with them that they can work with it better. And maybe too because there is less of a behaviour problem...¹²¹

Jenny was atypical in that she favoured the use of drama with younger students, stating that she saw "...the value down here in particular, I don't know about the older grades. I just see down here, the incidental drama type things..."¹²² The following excerpt from

¹²¹ Amy, Interview 1 - 17.06.03

¹²² Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

Cycle 1 reports Jenny reflecting on the influence of student age on her lack of drama use in the past:

...That went quite well [buddies drama session]. It was a bit draining. I know why I don't do it with the older ones. I know why we tend to do craft or reading or writing or things like that because just the control more than anything...¹²³

The influence of student gender and age were identified as an emergent theme, and not addressed as an issue in the professional learning. It is acknowledged that gender and age is a concern in many schools, including that in this study. As this area could not be addressed directly during the professional learning, it is recognised as an important area for further research (Section 8.6).

6.3.3 Management

The theme of management, as it emerged within the professional learning took three forms.

- Time management
- Programming
- Classroom management

A combination of each emerged for all teachers in the study, however the focus for each differed. The first two of these factors identified in the initial part of the study were reported in Chapter 4. The re-emergence of these factors further supports the relevance of the initial data, and highlights the importance of taking time to 'clarify the situation' prior to professional learning. The inclusion of classroom management as an area to be addressed reflects the shifting needs of teachers as drama use increased.

All teachers in the study found management issues to be problematic for a variety of reasons. Jenny's emphasis, as outlined in Section 7.1, related to classroom management and the behaviour of her students. Sally also found this to be an issue, however, her focus stemmed from the need to manage time more effectively. Mark sought guidance in relation to programming, but through personal experience also focused on classroom

¹²³ Jenny, Cycle 1 Conversation - 17.09.03

management for creating a safe environment. Amy and Leanne also experienced management concerns, Amy with time, and Leanne with integrated programming.

A number of personal and contextual factors have been identified in this study as constraining the use of drama (Chapter 4). It is a combination of personal and contextual factors that resulted in the identified management concerns. Teachers experienced personal concern regarding belief in their ability to teach drama, as well as concern with the contextual factors of meeting school-based and parental expectations.

Time management

Time management is an ever present concern in many modern classrooms. Self-help books and general literature address this issue (Cangelosi, 1988; Cummings, 2000; Haynes, 1994; McGraw, 1995; Turnery, Hatton, Laws, Sinclair, & Smith, 1992). A number of factors were outlined by the teachers as contributing to time wastage including school-based interruptions and curriculum constraints. Amy and Sally directly acknowledged these two factors as causing frustration and influencing their daily time management ability. Time, as a factor constraining the use of drama, was also identified by Flynn (1997) in her study focusing on the development of curriculum based materials for drama.

The wide variety of ways in which time could be managed can not be addressed in detail in this study. However, the importance of recognising the relationship of time and a teacher's ability to structure the day and program effectively, is highlighted. Sally's experience exemplifies a relationship between various management areas demonstrating her increased ability to develop a daily plan for better time management.

Programming

A common thread was with a lack of confidence with programming effectively. The teachers were unanimous in attributing confidence problems to a lack of effective school structure for student learning experiences. In addition, the teachers had received limited professional learning or leadership guidance to assist in exploring programming styles that may have assisted in enhancing pedagogical practice. In response to a lack of past guidance in this area, the teachers provided a simple, subject-oriented program.

The ability to self-reflect on practice allowed identification of programming as a focus within the professional learning. As all of the teachers in the study identified programming as a need to assist the use of drama, a specific group session and follow-up individual sessions were planned during Cycles 1 and 2. Even despite increased support, some teachers were still hesitant to make changes:

Jenny – moved the conversation back to programming style saying that having different proformas will be good, but what would work within their school environment.

Jenny/Sally – both stated that they liked structure and each week presented.

Jenny – wasn't sure what the Principal's view on programming was and seemed to be cautious in wanting to do anything different. She was frustrated that expectations had not been given by the school leaders in this area and that they were all just guessing.¹²⁴

Encouragingly, a number of teachers continued to pursue a focus on programming during Cycles 2 and 3. This group, including Jenny, saw the benefit of making changes to programming as they prepared for the new year (Cycle 3).

While exploring various formats for programming, the teachers recognised as important their ability to identify the way drama as an integrated strategy (pedagogy), or an art form, could be embedded in their general themes. Each teacher began to explore individual ways to present programs, no longer feeling confined by what they had believed were predetermined models. This freedom was enjoyed by the teachers, motivating them to develop enriched programs, including drama, for the year following the study.

The teachers recognised that there was no right or wrong way to program drama to effectively engage students. Through sharing personal experiences, they were able to recognise different ways in which drama could be used and begin to select what was most appropriate for their classroom themes, purpose and most importantly, student needs. Support given during the group session toward the end of Cycle 1, demonstrated the willingness of teachers to share their personal approach to the teaching of drama. The following excerpt reveals Jenny's focus for Term 4:

¹²⁴ Researcher notes from group programming session (Cycle 1) - 09.10.03

Jenny – Topic: Christmas

Jenny explained that the main part of this was the end of year performance, and that her biggest issue was with putting the students on stage easily

Sally – Offered a suggestion of an activity for classroom rehearsal. She told Jenny to tell the students that you want the person across the corridor to hear them speak. She said it was important to give a visual distance to focus on.

Amy – Believes that movement on stage is most important for the little ones. She described an activity to encourage the students to move as a group and to help orient them on the stage. She suggested marking sections/spots on the stage (Jenny already does this and finds it useful). Amy suggested they talk about lighting and have some exposure to it early so they don't react when it appears at the Dress Rehearsal. She also mentioned the importance of having props out as early as possible

Generous support such as this was given to all teachers to assist their teaching of drama during Cycle 2. Programming took a more individual focus for Cycle 3 based on specific requests by Mark and Jenny (Section 6.4).

Classroom management

Issues with classroom management emerged following an increased teaching of drama. It is important to question whether engagement in a subject area with which the teachers and students were less familiar highlighted issues that were already present, but unacknowledged. The increased awareness of drama experienced by the teachers led them to become gradually more conscious of the implications for the management of drama in the classroom. Personal experiences, such as Mark's negative experience of external professional learning, further highlighted management issues and the creation of a safe environment. It was clear, however, that a majority of management issues were related to issues of student gender and age.

Despite most being considered experienced, basic management skills caused problems for the teachers in this study. Teachers were able to recognise and reflect on this area as demonstrated in the following excerpt. Jenny's comments raise similar classroom management issues:

...And it was quite chaotic...they enjoyed it, had a lot of fun, but they were very excitable. I actually got into the staffroom at recess and Leanne was sitting next to me and I said now I know why I don't do much drama as far as I normally do. The girls are fine but the boys...were just so hyped. So there were a few strategies there. We're most probably going to do it again. This room is too small so we're most probably going to go into the media room – a little bit firmer guidelines – it was a little bit too loose – but they did enjoy it...So it was good but I must admit I wrote now [in her journal] – its probably horrible – but particularly because it's the boys its maybe why I don't do as much drama as I do. Lessons need to be more directed. Very flighty, and they were very flighty afterwards Rachel...they

were just all over the place. So it took them until the afternoon to calm down... I needed to be firmer with the guidelines there...¹²⁵

Classroom management issues did not stop the teachers continuing their teaching of drama. Their increased awareness of issues including clear guidelines, boundaries, and the selection of appropriate space, were highlighted and reinforced in a classroom management group session in Cycle 2.

This study argues that focusing on a subject area with which the teachers were less knowledgeable, allowed for other problem areas within their practice to be highlighted. Removing teachers from their comfort zone is challenging for them as people and as professionals. Regular professional learning, in a workplace offering a safe and established culture of learning, might allow teachers to challenge their own understanding and preconceptions of the way they teach. Positive changes in practice through increased skills and self-reflection might result.

6.3.4 Evaluation of the professional learning process

...Professional Development as a term is a noun, but the core of development is 'to develop' being a verb. The implication is of doing or involving a process. This appears to be forgotten in larger scale, external professional learning practices. This learning has that 'doing' and 'process' feel, the importance of which is reflected in the positive teacher comments...¹²⁶

At the end of the second cycle, the teachers were also asked to reflect on the process of professional learning. Evaluative data were collected through a third semi-structured interview and written survey. Additional issues arising in relation to the individualised and responsive nature of the learning were also discussed. The key focus of these reflections was shaped by the following five areas.

- strengths and weaknesses;
- session frequency;
- inclusion of 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' (including preferred and least preferred strategies);
- blend of individual & group sessions; and
- ability to tailor to specific school context.

¹²⁵ Jenny, Cycle 1 Conversation - 01.08.03

¹²⁶ Researcher Reflection - November 2003

Following the focus on my role as embedded in the professional learning process, my own reflections are entwined with those of teachers. My reflections are presented in italics to separate them from the teacher comments.

Strengths and weaknesses

When questioned about the overall strengths and weaknesses of the professional learning, no weaknesses were explicitly identified by the teachers. I have therefore interpreted any weakness to be the least preferred elements in a discussion of ‘strengths’.

The strengths of the learning were viewed by the teachers through what the professional learning was able to achieve. Comments have been grouped into three key areas:

- linking to specific teacher *needs*;
- tailoring to *specific contexts*; and
- providing a *motivating* effect on all staff.

The aim of the professional learning in this study was to identify and address the *needs* of teachers. The positive benefits of doing so were revealed in Cycle 1 and are further supported through the teacher comments in Cycle 2. My own reflections further support a belief in the positive way in which teacher needs were being met:

...That [whole school drama skill session] was so terrific. I took so much from it. It was wonderful how you made us feel like masters and set it for our needs.”- comment by Deputy Principal. This was a terrific experience and reinforced the style of learning that gains a positive response from the teachers...¹²⁷

The needs-oriented aspect of the learning was considered successful for a number of reasons. First, the success was due to its perceived ‘difference’ to that of external professional learning sessions and for the way in which it was tailored to each classroom. Secondly, directly addressing classroom based needs allowed learning to take place within the ‘*in-classroom*’ or ‘*safe space*’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). It is in these spaces where teachers feel most comfortable. As argued by Clandinin and Connelly (1996):

¹²⁷ Researcher Reflection following whole school drama skill session - 06.08.03

...Classrooms are, for the most part, safe places, generally free from scrutiny, where teachers are free to live stories of practice...

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1996 p25)

The bulk of the professional learning in the study was directed toward classroom-based learning. Interviews, conversations and professional learning sessions took place in these safe spaces. The 'safeness' was presented as a strength of the professional learning by reference to its small group focus and intimate nature:

...The interaction enables participants' specific needs to be addressed and all the variables (eg approach of teacher, size and range of personalities in the class, teaching programmes) to be considered. The small size of the group discussion encourages everyone to contribute. It was useful to hear of other teachers' experiences. Brainstorming for programme ideas was helpful...¹²⁸

A more thorough consideration of the way in which the process was *tailored* to the *school context* is provided later in this section.

From a facilitator's perspective, witnessing the engagement with professional learning *motivates* ongoing development and provides guidelines for the style of learning preferred:

...I've always involved drama in everything and it's interesting seeing people who don't necessarily involve drama get so excited about it...What I think for me has been a really good thing is the opportunity to discuss things with them whereas I might necessarily not have spoken to that person...¹²⁹

As stated by Amy, positive experiences throughout the development and negotiation of the professional learning assisted to reinforce the style of learning preferred by those participating in the study. This resulted in a fine-tuning effect where positive experiences were highlighted and less preferred activities were altered and/or omitted. Details of such changes can be found in the 'plan' stages of each cycle.

The teachers felt further motivated by the regular, consistent support they were receiving¹³⁰. There was a shift away from isolated learning to a community in which

¹²⁸ Sally, Six Month Survey

¹²⁹ Amy, Interview 2 - 09.11.003

¹³⁰ Leanne, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

they felt support and encouragement. The importance of developing a strong collaborative culture of learning is further discussed in Section 8.2.

Session frequency

...It was reassuring that some of the teachers involved really enjoy that kind [group] of session. The evaluative comments were all positive and the biggest thing I felt has come out of them is that the teachers aren't feeling pressured, they feel that they maybe aren't doing enough...¹³¹

The volume and frequency of sessions was a negotiated aspect of the professional learning. I was conscious of not overburdening the teachers with a large volume of 'extra' activities, and encouraged them during plan formation to focus on professional learning that could take place during their existing daily routines. Evaluation revealed that this aim was achieved in two ways.

First, the session frequency was seen to be "...*Well suited to the demands of the school i.e. Frequent enough, but not so that they interfered with other school deadlines and duties...*"¹³² Teachers reflected on the impact that the sessions were having on their time, with the general feeling that the right balance had been achieved. The 'craziness' of the school context was nominated as a potentially inhibiting factor that was managed well during this professional learning experience. No teachers believed they were overburdened with too many sessions, and in fact one teacher requested more frequent group sessions in any future programming.¹³³

Second, the ongoing school-based support provided, as opposed to a one-off or external experience, was considered a positive and necessary aspect of the learning. The need for school-based follow-up and receptiveness to changing needs was discussed during the reflection in Cycle 1, with comments at the conclusion of Cycle 2 mirroring earlier thoughts.

'Personal Professional Learning Plans'

All responses by teachers to the 'Personal Professional Learning Plans' were positive, however the extent to which they were considered important to the overall learning

¹³¹ Researcher Reflection - 12.10.03

¹³² Mark, Six Month Survey

¹³³ Sally, Six Month Survey

varied. Responses ranged on a continuum from the plans being considered “...*helpful, but not necessary*...”¹³⁴ through to “...*crucial to the whole framework*...”¹³⁵

The plans were proposed to assist the teachers in focusing on their goals and identified areas of need. Having the tasks written down was helpful for some¹³⁶ with one teacher stating that, “...*simply identifying the issue gave me the impetus to reflect and change*...”¹³⁷ The ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’ were also viewed as providing a framework for the teachers’ learning:

...It [PPLP] has provided a definite framework through which to work. If it had been the case of, well ok, we’re going to make this situation better, or make this situation workable and left it at that and just met, then I think it would have lacked direction...so having a plan of what we wanted to get out of it I think has worked really very well...Also in terms of the school as well...¹³⁸

...it was good that we talked about it and wrote things down because at least having written it down you’re more likely to push to get it done...all the same I didn’t get everything that I wanted to get done. But it was great just having to think and talking about it...¹³⁹

As a professional learning facilitator, the absence of input by the school leaders assisted in encouraging teacher autonomy by enabling them to identify their own needs. They enjoyed having power to plan their own learning, and their confidence to do so increased over the three cycles.

Individual and/or group sessions

All of the teachers believed that the balance of individual and group sessions in the professional learning worked well. Each commented individually on the value of the one-on-one time, but also found great benefit in the group reflective and collaborative sessions:

...Very good. Individual attention is inarguably beneficial. Sharing ideas and results from individual sessions helped to broaden group knowledge and to give the group cohesion and camaraderie...¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Leanne, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

¹³⁵ Mark, Six Month Survey

¹³⁶ Interview 3: Jenny - 11.12.03 & Leanne - 08.12.03

¹³⁷ Sally, Six Month Survey

¹³⁸ Mark, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

¹³⁹ Sally, Interview 3 - 16.12.03

¹⁴⁰ Mark, Six Month Survey

As this excerpt demonstrates, there was a mutually reinforcing relationship between the individual and group sessions. One teacher requested more group sessions, however, as release time was not available by the school, these additional sessions could not take place.

Group sessions were considered beneficial because they allowed teachers to share their stories of practice. Varied perspectives on pedagogy and the use of drama could be shared. In the same way, teachers found having a blend of external professional learning also beneficial:

...She [Leanne] loves the mix of group and individual sessions, and felt the workshop she went to was also incredibly valuable. It may be that an important part of using situated strategies for PL [professional learning] may be a blend of these styles. This could become its strength. Having the blend allows for more individual differences to be met...¹⁴¹

The individualised nature of the learning was viewed by some teachers as mimicking the way in which students learned in the classroom. The plans were considered to assist this individual tailoring of learning. As discussed in my reflection above, professional learning should involve the need for a blend of strategies respecting the different ways individuals learn.

Tailoring to the school context

...Again, excellent and crucial to the whole concept of professional development...¹⁴²

Individuals are motivated to participate in professional learning for a variety of personal and professional reasons. The individualisation of learning and its tailoring to the context of the school succeeded in overcoming potential barriers:

...I have a huge interest in it because it's part of my brief next year and a very big part of it. It's the means of my job becoming full-time. If that were not the case, I probably wouldn't be so dedicated to it. If I had a family I would be thinking, ok, we've got to meet again this afternoon, we've got this to go through, I'll try and cut it as short as possible and we'll get the bare bones of it done and then I can put it away. So when you've got those different attitudes which I know happens on staff development days. We go in, some of us think, oh we're going to do program differentiation today, fantastic! And someone else will say, I've learnt how to program differentiate, my program is so old that the pages are turning yellow, why do I need to go in there and have another day on it. That sort of in-servicing I think is useless because it doesn't ensure that everyone gets something out of it...

¹⁴¹ Researcher Reflection - 12.10.03

¹⁴² Mark, Six Month Survey

The benefit of tailoring the professional learning to the school context was recognised as important in the process of teacher learning and applicable to each teacher's work contexts. The positive result of this tailoring supports the argument that "*...efforts for teacher learning...need to take into account the unique context of school and the difficulties of changing classroom practice...*" (Hoban, 2002 p41).

Another challenge for context-based learning relates to the role of the school leaders. In this school context, the teachers are referred to as 'professionals' with all experiencing pressures of performance. Yet no extra time was given in support of developing their 'professionalism'. As one teacher commented, this lack of respect can disengage development rather than motivate participation.

Despite a concern regarding lack of support, the teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of tailoring professional learning to their classrooms and school. It is this feature that sets this particular process apart from one-off, external development sessions.

6.4 Cycle 3 - Plan

Due to time constraints, Cycle 3 was not structured as formally as the previous two cycles. Only minimal data were collected as it was not initially to be a part of the formal study recorded in the dissertation. Three teachers focused on their professional learning needs for the new year, requesting specific assistance. The demonstrated need for ongoing support, and their increased confidence in taking ownership of planning their learning experiences, restricted my ability to begin my planned withdrawal at the end of Cycle 2. Cycle 3 therefore began at the conclusion of Term 4, 2003 and continued through Term 1, 2004. As with the previous two cycles, planning for activities in the third cycle occurred prior to any action taking place.

Cycle 3 is different to the previous two through the shift in ownership of the professional learning process. All three teachers stated clearly what they needed for Term 1, 2004 and suggested activities and time-frames (Section 6.4.1). The move away from me as facilitator was an aim of the study and demonstrated the positive shift toward a collaborative culture of learning.

Only three teachers took part in the third cycle: Jenny, Mark and Sally. Leanne was not able to continue with the study as she changed schools in 2004. While support was offered in her new context, her subsequent move interstate resulted in a loss of contact. Ongoing conversations occurred informally with Amy but she did not participate in any direct planning for future learning.

New issues and requests for support were made by Jenny, Mark and Sally to further enhance their teaching of drama. Their new issues and focus for professional learning is discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

6.4.1 Clarify ongoing issues & identify and plan new areas for development

The original focus for learning had been superseded by new issues for Jenny and Mark as we entered into Cycle 3, with both considering the importance of management issues (classroom and programming). Sally was the only teacher to maintain her original focus on time management. All three teachers were explicit in their professional learning plans regarding my role and the nature of their future learning. This section reports these wishes as the teachers took increasing ownership of their professional learning. While no formalised group sessions took place, the three teachers met frequently to discuss their progress and support each other's teaching of drama.

Sally recognised a need for ongoing support with her original focus of time management. She acknowledged the small improvements being made and felt that her increased awareness would help her to not 'lose time' with her class in the following year:

...I think even the brief discussion we had about organisation was helpful, it got me thinking...even just writing in your day book, 1,2,3,4. Just trying to really get into the most important things...I tend to be disorganised...just being more aware that I've got to hone in and more organised is helpful...¹⁴³

Sally requested time to meet with me in Term 1, 2004, requesting these sessions to involve ongoing reflection on her time management procedures and teaching of drama.

¹⁴³ Sally, Interview 3 - 16.12.03

As a follow up to the work done in her Cycle 2 programming session, *Jenny* asked me to team teach with her on three occasions. These experiences were written into her Term 1 program and included time for a reflective conversation at the conclusion of each session.

...I suppose just to guide me in activities...to do, as I said, within my English program and my Science and Tech program...that can be based around drama as well. They love it, they really do love it and it really brings them in...¹⁴⁴

As demonstrated in the excerpt, *Jenny* wished for guidance regarding her teaching of drama. She also requested ongoing support managing student behaviour. As can be seen in Section 6.5, witnessing the way in which I managed students when working through a drama activity, provided *Jenny* with clearer guidelines than any conversation or literature had previously done.

It was pleasing to see *Jenny* proactively planning professional learning for the following year. The most marked change was witnessed with her increased confidence to self-direct her own learning. *Jenny*'s story of professional learning was filled with challenges, self-doubt, but ultimately success (Section 7.1).

Mark also demonstrated increased confidence in planning his future professional learning. He asked for the bulk of Term 1 to settle into the program developed during Cycle 2 and into the rhythm of full-time teaching in music and drama. Rather than do more modelled lessons as previously discussed, he asked that I observe his teaching and give feedback on how he was managing students and activities.

All requests for assistance were met during the first term of 2004.

6.5 Cycle 3 - Act & Reflect

The 'act' and 'reflect' stages of this cycle are presented together due to the less formal structure of this cycle and the embedded nature of action and reflection. Formal 'reflection' times occurred simultaneously with 'action' for each teacher.

¹⁴⁴ *Jenny*, Interview 3 - 111203

6.5.1 Implementation and reflection on strategies

Sally had requested time to reflect on management issues in her new classroom. The classroom context she faced in 2004 posed new challenges due to small class size (9 students). The lack of ‘personalities’ to drive various activities frustrated her, however, she believed her ability to manage time had improved dramatically. While accepting the ease of managing a smaller number of students, *Sally* had adopted a number of effective strategies for time management developed in her professional learning:

...Well, I think the main fact is that I've got such a small number of girls and suddenly time management is very easy. So just doing things like writing on the board what I want to do - which lesson - and just making sure I focus and don't get sidetracked. So at the end of the day I've ticked off everything I put down...That seems to be working - you need to focus on it and you can achieve it...¹⁴⁵

Sally's ongoing focus on incidental drama had also begun to change as she was able to manage time more effectively. She had written a focused drama program for 2004 and was slowly working her way through planned activities. She acknowledged the use of drama as incidental in other subject areas, but recognised her increased ability to focus on drama as an art form.

The group session which took place in Cycle 2 focusing on forms and elements impacted on *Sally*'s programming of drama for 2004. She regularly referred to ‘manipulating the elements of drama’, demonstrating increased skill based learning even though this was not a focus of her original ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’.

The use of the reflective journal was important for maintaining *Sally*'s focus on her learning. She recognised the benefit of sharing her thoughts in a group session, believing that future writing would be more focused as a result:

...Well, I mean it just keeps you more conscious if you will meet and share it...sort of suddenly you think, ‘Oh, I haven't written in it for a while’ ...¹⁴⁶

Sally planned to approach *Jenny* and *Mark* to organise a group conversation about their ongoing use of drama. While not reported in this study, it is my understanding that such a meeting occurred informally during Terms 1 and 2. We also agreed on my providing

¹⁴⁵ *Sally*, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

¹⁴⁶ *Sally*, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

regular written feedback on her focused journal entries. This communication continued throughout Term 1, but due to school pressures was scaled back in Term 2.

Jenny also faced new challenges with her class in 2004. She worked hard to program drama within her previous framework, exploring new ways of including drama within previously taught themes and subjects. *Jenny* expressed how helpful our joint planning session had been within Cycle 2 for focusing changes in her program for 2004.

The drama sessions that were team taught/modelled were highly successful for the guidance they gave *Jenny* in relation to classroom management for drama. She commented that witnessing my managing her students was more helpful than any print material or conversation regarding strategies that had previously taken place. The importance of locating learning with the school context is further supported by her experience.

Jenny's confidence with the teaching of drama had been enhanced over the course of the study. Her story is presented in detail in Section 7.1 and includes changes in her understanding of drama, its programming, and management in the classroom.

Mark was comfortable with taking on his role as drama and music teacher for 2004 and was excited about putting the framework developed during Cycle 2 into practice. He requested a number of sessions for me to witness his teaching and provide feedback. During our conversation following one such lesson he reflected on a number of issues/incidents that had taken place over the previous two cycles and what they were meaning for his current teaching. In particular, he reflected on the need for creating a safe environment when using drama, an issue first raised through a negative personal experience with external professional learning discussed in Cycle 1 (Section 5.3.1):

...That's really scary...because at times I think I should be feeling really sick here because there's a kid that needs my help and to give it is going to draw attention to the problem, but not to give it is going to leave that same child at sea. So there have been a few curly incidents where I've just had to divert attention away from someone who is potentially embarrassing themselves or being embarrassed by someone else. But I think that's good because it means I'm watching out for it...¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Mark, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

Mark believed that his increased awareness resulting from his personal experience provided him with empathy, as well as practical tools to deal with similar situations in his own classroom. He was open with his students, telling the older ones about this negative incident. He found doing so to be a positive step by which students also began to show empathy.

It was at this point that the broader school context began to impact once again on Mark's teaching of drama. The school was required to develop detailed programs for inclusion in a formal registration process. Mark recognised the way in which he could make the need for these programs 'work for him' by developing useful documents that allowed his teaching of drama to continue unimpeded. He did however acknowledge that due to the pressure felt by staff in relation to the registration, they were not working with him to connect his 'specialist' drama in their classrooms as desired:

...If you've been talking to anyone at school about it [getting registered], it has been a very disjunct process...that has put a lot of people ill at ease and so everyone has needed to get all of those programs in black and white. I think if I were to go and say, 'have you got room in your program for making puppets?' even if it were a great exercise...I think they'd just want to kill me!...¹⁴⁸

As previously discussed, despite an early investigation of context, the initial picture developed barely touched the surface of the current issues playing out in the school. Cover stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) were being shared, which painted a picture of a school, that while acknowledging problems, did not address them adequately, and thereby limited the potential of professional learning.

Conversely, through focusing professional learning within the school, the teachers were encouraged to question their practice and develop ways of managing learning. The initial in-depth focus on the school also allowed underlying issues to emerge. The place of context within professional learning has been previously acknowledged (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ Mark, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

6.6 Making knowledge public

Making knowledge public (Altrichter et al., 1993) is the final stage within the broad framework of facilitated action research. The importance of sharing the learning and knowledge gained, sets action research apart from participating in effective self-reflective practice. Through making knowledge public, evidence of learning and ‘claims to know’ are provided (McNiff, 2002a). By doing so, lived experiences can be shared within a broader educational community.

The knowledge from this research was shared by the participating teachers and the researcher through the methods discussed below.

6.6.1 Teachers

As the teachers were not participating in formal action research, they were not aware of this requirement in the methodology. Reporting did however occur within their school context through conversations on their progress with the broader school community, and through changes to their written programs.

Mark experienced a more focused approach to making his knowledge public as a result of working toward his new full-time position for 2004. He reported regularly to the school leaders on his progress, presenting to them, and the wider school community, the outline for drama developed within the professional learning. Mark has also begun work on a collaborative journal article with me, outlining his experience of professional learning and drama.

6.6.2 Researcher

More formal means were adopted by me when planning to make knowledge from this research public. Some of these examples took place during the course of the data collection; others occurred at regular intervals over the duration of the doctoral research.

- *School presentation.* This was a whole school presentation in which I reported on the progress of the study and the use of drama within the Junior school.
- *Reporting to school leaders at various levels.* Regular conversations occurred with the executive head of the school and the school leaders at Junior school

level. These conversations occurred at regular intervals in the study, focusing on progress and initial data analysis.

- A number of *conference papers* were presented over the course of the study reporting on progress and preliminary data analysis. These presentations took place within Australia and internationally (Darell, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b).
- Beginning work has taken place on a *collaborative journal article* to be co-written by Mark discussing his experiences of drama and professional learning.
- While not yet considered in detail, further *journal articles* resulting from the findings in this dissertation will be planned following submission of the dissertation.

As this thesis is a further means of making the knowledge from the research public, emerging ‘knowledge claims’ can be found in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

Chapters 4-6 have focused on the first two research aims for this study:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.
2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.

A process of ‘*facilitated action research*’ was applied when working with teachers to enhance their use of drama. These chapters presented the process of professional learning undertaken, drawing on the process of action research.

The initial investigation and three cycles were discussed. Reflection, embedded in the action in the study, was reported highlighting initial issues of *skill development*, *programming* and *time management*. As the study progressed, and understanding of drama and professional learning increased, new issues emerged to challenge the teachers. The most notable were *classroom/behaviour management* and *gender and student age*.

What the professional learning revealed in relation to developing a sustainable 'collaborative culture' (Hargreaves, 1992) is discussed in Section 8.2 and highlights the need for further research.

Chapter 7 focuses on three teacher stories and the ongoing challenges and issues faced with teaching drama in the classroom. The focus is on 'change' with the unique experiences of Jenny, Mark and Sally being presented to allow the voices and personal face of the learning to be viewed from a contextually embedded and holistic perspective.

Chapter 7 - Stories of Change

Introduction

...Situations do not change themselves. People change, and they change their situations. Change begins in people's minds, so that when people decide to do something about their work, they set up a process of personal change (individual learning) that can transform into a process of social change (collective learning)...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p15)

This chapter explores the third research aim for this study:

3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

The chapter presents *teachers' stories of change*. Jenny, Sally and Mark's stories are selected for a dual purpose. First, they each shed light on the initial factors identified (Chapter 4) as well as highlighting issues that emerged through the cycles of plan-act-reflect, including the place of student gender and age as well as the need for improved classroom management. Second, they provide a personal, holistic view of the professional learning experience and resulting pedagogical change. The nature of each experience highlighted the importance of providing needs-oriented and school-based professional learning.

Gaining an in-depth, holistic understanding of the teachers as 'real people', and 'professional teachers' was important. I viewed the participants as 'actors' (Stake, 1995 p1) with whom I entered a scene "...with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits...and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn..." (Stake, 1995 p1). I wished to encourage the 'actors' in my production of professional learning to share their stories, allowing a glimpse of their day to day classrooms.

Each of the three stories considers the experiences of these teachers and incorporates personal and contextual factors. The inclusion of experience in research is supported with a belief that:

...As social actors, we are all involved in retelling our experiences and lives. In doing so, we chronicle our lives in terms of a series of events, happenings, influences, and decisions...

(Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p68)

The stories also include two additional factors that emerged through the analysis of data: the place of student gender and age and the need for improved general classroom management.

These stories come from simultaneous experiences from a professional learning perspective. Each story is unique, with its own challenges and outcomes, although all teachers participated in the same process of professional learning in the same school context. That each teacher could have such a different experience through following the same process, highlights the importance of respecting the individual nature of each teacher's 'in-classroom' space (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999 p2), past experiences (Richardson, 1996) and personal needs (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

The three experiences of practice and professional learning are presented through a blend of researcher interpretation and the words of the teachers. As argued by Polkinghorne (1997), "...by changing their voice to storyteller, researchers will also change the way in which the voices of their "subjects" or participants can be heard..." (p3). I was conscious when considering the teacher's experiences according to personal and contextual factors, that nothing is interpretation-free (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). As a result, my own 'interpretation' of their experiences was being presented through the process of selection. Data were collected through journal entries, an initial questionnaire and survey, ongoing conversations and semi-structured interviews.

The risk of data loss is a valid concern when interpreting qualitative data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 p46-7). Viewing the data on each teacher as a complete experience assisted in reducing this data loss, as their experiences were bounded by a narrative. This provided a useful "...sequence of events that has significance for the narrator and his or her audience..." (Denzin, 1989 p37).

Teacher stories - in brief

Jenny is an experienced Kindergarten teacher, currently teaching boys. She faced personal challenges in relation to drama, stemming from *confidence* problems when a student herself. *Jenny's* growing determination, an increase in confidence, and the

influence of an increased understanding of drama use were personal highlights of her story. In relation to contextual factors, the need for effective *programming* changes and mastery of *classroom management* for drama is revealed. The unacknowledged influence of *student gender and age* on her practice is also addressed and her changing understanding of drama that assisted her identification of ongoing professional learning.

Sally is an experienced Year 1 teacher, who while attempting drama use in her classroom and being passionate about its inclusion, was not doing so to the extent she desired. Sally is currently teaching a single sex girls' class. While addressing some personal factors, her story focuses on contextual factors as well as addressing *student gender and age*. Sally's focus on *time management* as well as general classroom issues demonstrates the importance of these more generic skills and the way in which they embed themselves in a teacher's practice. The importance of student response and its influence on classroom choice is presented as a personal issue. The conclusion of her story highlights the importance of student response and presents a story written by Sally. She relates a 'good drama day' through her own eyes, and those of her students.

Mark is the only male and is a specialist music teacher in the school. He had a brief to incorporate drama into his teaching program and was to be given a full-time position the following year to do so. Mark teaches boys and girls at all grade levels and was very enthusiastic about being involved in the professional learning process. His quest for professional learning and drama was challenging, but also provided success for him and his students. Mark's experience addressed personal and contextual factors. The place of *experience*, old and new as an influence on classroom choice is a focus as is the contextual factor of *programming*.

7.1 Jenny

Jenny has been working in the education industry as a teacher since completing her training in 1986. At college she specialised in visual arts and in working with children with special needs. Having developed a good relationship with Jenny during my time at the school, I was pleased when she approached me to participate in the study. She said

that she thought the project sounded interesting, but didn't feel she could help me as she wasn't very good at using drama.¹⁴⁹

Jenny's comments caused me some concern as it was the principal who 'sold' the project to the staff during a meeting, handing out my letter of explanation only on request. When I had asked to address the staff directly, he had cited time issues as to why I could not do so. I was concerned that he would not clearly or accurately explain my study, and Jenny's reaction confirmed my fears. After reassuring her that drama use was definitely not a pre-requisite and that I was hoping to work on enhancing its use, she confirmed her participation.

7.1.1 Confidence

While I knew of Jenny as a well-respected and experienced teacher, her lack of confidence during the initial interview, especially in relation to drama use, surprised me. When questioning her in relation to what drama was and how it may be used in the classroom, she repeatedly requested confirmation that what she was saying was accurate, or relevant for the research. Throughout the first part of Jenny's participation, this desire to please was evident; however, the frequency of these comments declined as her own confidence with drama and professional learning increased.

I was curious about Jenny's lack of confidence about drama, particularly when she appeared at ease in front of students. Throughout the initial interview¹⁵⁰ she referred to her lack of confidence twice, attributing it to her personality as a child, and then later explained how this lack of confidence extended to choices during teacher training:

...I love art...but I don't have any background in drama and as a child I was actually quite shy and I didn't particularly enjoy getting up myself, I was very shy about it...I was more inhibited...

...all those drama type units [at teacher's college] I didn't do, whereas I'd go and do all the arty type units. I was half decent at drawing...and I just didn't have the personality to get up there in front of people...so I did the art type things...

¹⁴⁹ Jenny, Conversation 1 - 16.05.03

¹⁵⁰ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

Many times during the study Jenny demonstrated her ability to reflect on experiences and her practice. This ability was a personal strength that allowed her to challenge current teaching practices and make appropriate changes.

The following excerpt demonstrates Jenny's ability to reflect on her self-created lack of experience with drama. She considered the influence different choices made in the past, and what they have meant for her teaching in the present:

...you look back over these things [teacher's college] and say, wouldn't it be wonderful if I'd made myself go and do one of those drama units, because it most probably would've really helped me build up my confidence instead of going to the thing I'm secure and safe in...

Jenny referred to the similarity between her experience and student behaviour involving an avoidance of activities, or experiences in which they feel 'unsafe'. Students also gravitate toward those experiences with which they are confident.

The understanding a teacher has of safe environments and the creation of boundaries for students is important for ensuring effective drama use. Mark's story (Section 7.3) emphasises the importance of this safe environment, detailing an external professional learning experience in which he was made to feel embarrassed and alienated. Mark's confidence as an adult was affected and led him to consider the impact such an experience could have on his students.

While Jenny's confidence had begun to increase, the collaborative programming session added to her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' near the end of Term Four, demonstrated how fragile that increase had become. While the session went well, she felt that her increased awareness was a 'two-edged sword', and she appeared to be feeling mixed emotions about the use of drama. Jenny was excited about her drama teaching, but at the same time realised how much more could be done for her students.

The discussion in her collaborative programming session focused on the use of 'imaginative play'. Previously Jenny had only drawn on this early childhood technique for student observation in regard to social interaction and had not considered it with a learning focus. Suggestions were made about this technique in the early childhood

literature I presented to Jenny, and these involved the students in planning imaginative play themes and identifying roles. While initially a little defensive, Jenny recognised the benefits of expanding this activity and altering her ‘normal’ routine. She planned to work on possible changes.

7.1.2 Initial understanding of drama

Jenny’s initial understanding of drama took two forms. Her first explanation provided a ‘stereotypical’ approach to the use of drama in education that is more theatre or product oriented than process oriented:

...I suppose I see it as an activity where children perform in front of the other children in a variety of different ways...be it through number rhymes and sound rhymes or role plays in front of the other children, or going up for assembly items...¹⁵¹

This approach to drama involving ‘performing’ or ‘acting’ (art form) rather than a process (pedagogy) approach is common (Ewing & Simons, 2004).

The second approach outlined by Jenny involved the ways drama might be used with the younger age group with which she worked:

...we also have guided play sessions where we have the shop...it’s just wonderful as you sit and listen to them in their imaginative play...and I suppose that’s a part of drama as well, when I look at it. But they’re not performing to an audience?...but I see that as drama as well...

This viewpoint is more consistent with the current thinking about educational drama for young students (Bolton, 1979; Cusworth & Simons, 1997; Ewing & Simons, 2004; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Despite recognising the benefit of a process (pedagogy) approach, Jenny’s words implied that ‘performance’ was a requirement of drama, and this caused her obvious confusion.

Throughout our initial interview, Jenny began to reflect on her own understanding of drama. The ‘some of them’ below referred to students she considered to be the more expressive and theatrical in her class:

¹⁵¹ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

...They just love it in number, and that's a good start in number and they love acting out. And I suppose even news time is a form of drama isn't it? For some of them...¹⁵²

Continuous reflection and the shifting awareness of drama occurred throughout Jenny's participation in the professional learning. She recognised her journal as being an important way of assisting this reflection and maintaining her focus on drama use, stating that "*...if I don't think I'd had the journal it would have just wafted a bit, just having it there, that is really crucial, I think, to the whole thing...*"¹⁵³.

7.1.3 Programming

Jenny initially described her programming style as subject-oriented, with reference to dramatic activities linked to English and Mathematics through rhymes or to a particular event such as the Mother's Day concert. Jenny acknowledged that while she would program specifically for visual arts, and endorsed the teaching of music by a specialist teacher, she did not write drama into her program:

...to be honest, they're [drama activities] more incidental...they're [students] not inhibited at this age, they really love getting up and doing those sorts of things. Often its just things I think of on the spot to be honest...

When asked about the kind of 'things' she was incidentally doing, Jenny referred frequently to number and reading rhymes involving students in acting out a known rhyme for their peers.

It is not uncommon to find drama conducted incidentally in classrooms. All but one of the teachers confirmed their use of incidental drama with none specifically programming for this subject. As this was clearly an issue for the teachers in the study, a specific group session focusing on programming styles for drama was planned. Jenny's growing awareness of her own drama use led her to focus on programming as an important tool for supporting the teaching of drama.

Jenny recognised the importance of refreshing a program, believing that "*...you do tend to get stuck, I think, in a bit of rut...*"¹⁵⁴. She liked the group session focusing on

¹⁵² Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

¹⁵³ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁵⁴ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

programming styles as she was able to see how other people were working and to reconsider the way in which she organises her days.

The structure of the session encouraged the teachers to reassess their understanding of drama being an art form and/or an integrated or cross-curricular tool. The teachers engaged in a good discussion of these terms, coming to the collective definition that integration equals thematic, and cross-curricular equals learning tool. It was important that the teachers found common ground to discuss their use of drama. A discussion such as this, with the initial exploration of ‘What is drama?’ assisted in this process.

It was interesting to witness the conversation about programming as these teachers had clearly never discussed it before. The engagement in this collaborative, social learning environment emphasised the importance of incorporating this style of interaction in any school-based professional learning. The teachers reflected on their current programming practices as well as discussing experiences from past schools in which they had worked. Various styles of programming were shared by the teachers, although the common thread between them was the day to day adaptation of their programming. The adaptation was based on changing circumstances with their classes, and most influentially, daily changes within the school as a whole. Discussion about the programming session within the professional learning can be found in Section 6.3.3.

The teachers expressed frustration about the lack of assistance given by the school in relation to programming. Being an independent school, there was at the time of this study, no clear scope and sequence for many different subjects, with teachers drawing on the NSW Board of Studies K-6 syllabi (Board of Studies NSW, 2000). They requested subject-specific outcomes for each grade to be developed believing that programming would then be much easier as expectations for student learning would be clear. The communication issues with the school leadership were highlighted during this discussion. The teachers did not feel confident or willing to go to the school leaders with this request, but were happy for me to pass on their feedback.

The ongoing lack of communication between the teachers and school leaders, particularly the principal, continued to cause me concern from both a facilitator’s and researcher’s perspective. I was happy to pass on requests, however, I recognised that the

issue was being compounded by my doing so. I felt constrained by the bounds of the study that could not effectively address these broader management and communication problems. Further research in this area is important for supporting professional learning (Section 8.6).

In the semi-structured interview following the group session, Jenny acknowledged her lack of confidence with programming for drama. The increased awareness of drama as an art form caused problems, rather than the use of drama through incidental or integrated strategies:

...I still feel very vague in the programming side and drama, how to put it into the program... I just feel the program I've got at the moment, that's not a problem. Like with English, I can put in some things, acting that out or whatever. That wasn't a problem with HSIE and Science, putting in drama incidentally, rather than 'we are now doing drama'. That is where the problem is...¹⁵⁵

To address her lack of confidence, Jenny requested an individual session to work on her program for the following year. It was pleasing to see Jenny taking the initiative in recognising the learning that would benefit her as a teacher.

7.1.4 Changed understanding of drama and professional learning

Jenny was vague when asked in the initial interview what she believed would assist her using drama more effectively in the classroom. Her general focus was on *skill development*, and she hoped to be provided with ideas for drama use for students at the Early Stage 1 level¹⁵⁶. I was conscious of Jenny's lack of personal confidence when collaboratively developing her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'. During the initial interview, she had described a previous in-service experience she had enjoyed, referring to the 'modelling' and practical suggestions given. With this learning style and Jenny's focus in mind, we decided to include the following activities in her initial plan:

- Drama skill development session (all teachers);
- Team teaching/modelling session;

¹⁵⁵ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁵⁶ Jenny, Interview 1 - 26.06.03

- Group reflection;
- Literature discussion;
- Group ‘show and tell’ of drama attempts; and
- Ongoing trial and error and reflection of drama use.

Collaboration of ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’

During our conversation to develop her ‘Personal Professional Learning Plan’, Jenny confirmed her key focus area of skill development as well as her enthusiasm for a number of suggested professional learning activities. She believed the *ongoing trial and error* of drama use was “...*really important...*”¹⁵⁷ as was the *group reflection* session.

Jenny was supportive of the inclusion of *print materials* in her learning plan, stating that, “...*that’s actually making me go and look up a book, which is really good...*”¹⁵⁸. She shared with me her recollection of a book I had given her that referred to the lack of control teachers feel when using drama. It talked about the fear of losing control as inhibiting the desire to include drama. She ‘connected’ with this book, as this was how she was feeling. She did admit that books giving useful ideas were the most helpful, explaining that she first flicks through a book to see what classroom activities were being suggested. It is only after that, and if time permits, that she will engage with any theoretical discussion.

The *team teaching* aspect of her plan caused some concern for Jenny and once again highlighted her personal lack of confidence. Team teaching was a style of learning that she wished could occur, but was worried about finding the time to organise an effective session. Initially, I had hoped that Jenny would work with Amy, another teacher in the study who had previous experience with drama. The modelling between the more and less experienced teachers would have been beneficial for both, and reflected the style of learning Jenny preferred. Unfortunately, she did not feel that it would be possible to coordinate a session with Amy due to time pressures.

¹⁵⁷ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

¹⁵⁸ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

Jenny suggested working with her ‘buddies’ class (Year Six boys) as time was already programmed, but still expressed some reservation:

...Is it possible? The time factor, that’s all. I don’t know how it’s going to work? Just finding the extra time to do it...I don’t know whether prep six would be able to handle it...¹⁵⁹

Jenny and I discussed different options for the team teaching session for her dinosaur theme. It became clear during this conversation that Jenny’s lack of experience and minimal exposure to classroom drama restricted what she felt were possible activities.

The suggestion of a specific drama technique, reader’s theatre, received a positive response from Jenny, as she remembered an example of another teacher using this technique successfully. She focused on the possibilities of doing reader’s theatre with the buddies class stating, “...*she [Year Six teacher] might even have a story book that we could all act out together, which I think would be lovely...*”¹⁶⁰

While not an ideal scenario, due to the other teacher also having minimal drama experience, the ‘team teaching’ aspect of planning and teaching cooperatively with the Year Six teacher was still a positive professional learning experience for Jenny. Her concluding comment demonstrated her changed, and more positive, attitude to this task:

...I think that’s a lovely idea. And it will be interesting to see how our little ones react to doing it with the big ones...¹⁶¹

The importance of gradually incorporating strategies such as team teaching within school-based professional learning was clear. In Jenny’s example, we had not yet engaged in much skill development for drama as we were in the planning stages of the professional learning. I see this scenario as presenting a frustrating spiral by which increased skills would have reassured Jenny by assisting her planning. However to gain the skills, participation in a strategy such as this is helpful.

¹⁵⁹ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

¹⁶⁰ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

¹⁶¹ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

Individual focus/Social learning

All teachers recognised the importance of having an individualised or personal focus with professional learning. A blend of individual and group sessions was consciously planned for inclusion in the professional learning as the importance of social and independent work was recognised.

The significance of linking professional learning and practice is highlighted within the literature on school-based learning and in the theory and practice of action learning. This literature, focusing on individuals, their needs and learning styles, is important for effective staff development (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hewton, 1988). Action learning adds more to this approach by interpreting the experiences of each participant as part of the resource to be drawn on in any professional learning (McGill & Brockband, 2004).

Comments made by Jenny early in the study supported the decision to include a mixture of individual and social learning in the professional learning process. Jenny's comments mirrored those of the other teachers who also referred to the benefit of having a mixture of individual and group sessions:

...I think that it's great to have this personal guidance...Most probably if I hadn't had this meeting I would just still have kept having my diary, jotting down things as I go, but then I would have most probably slackened off...so it's good...¹⁶²

An increase in Jenny's confidence with drama was evident during the planned group reflection session that took place toward the end of the first term (Cycle 1). The aim of this session was to allow a social space for the teachers to share their thoughts and feelings about the drama they had been attempting and any issues arising. There was a positive reaction among the five teachers about drama use, with challenges and successes being discussed.

The successes focused on the use of integration techniques, the ongoing incidental use of drama, and positive student reactions. Challenges were encountered in four key areas:

¹⁶² Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

- classroom management;
- the creation of safe environments;
- assessment; and
- student gender and age issues.

Of these four challenges, the teachers self-identified the first three. The language used by the teachers, emphasised their perception of the influence of student gender and age on the use of drama. The influence of gender on Jenny's teaching is discussed in Section 7.1.6.

As a facilitator, my role in the teachers' conversation was minimal, as they supported each other, particularly in relation to challenges faced. The control they took during this group reflection highlighted the developing culture of learning, with all teachers positively engaging in the reflective interactions.

This group reflection session demonstrated the increased security and confidence Jenny felt with her co-teachers. She was not afraid to discuss her successes and failures, volunteering her own experiences with drama to begin the session. She was also happy to comment and engage with the other teachers on issues they were facing.

7.1.5 Changed understanding of drama & classroom management

As the study continued into Term Four (Cycle 2), the time constraints of end of year reports, concerts and assessments began to frustrate the teachers, and Jenny was no exception:

...It's so hard to get to, because it's such a busy term...Last term was a really good term because we did dinosaurs, it did lend itself to doing activities around that [drama]. The boys absolutely loved anything to do with it...the little play, the big buddies play...I feel a little guilty at times...only because I felt the boys just love it so much. I thought, well maybe I should have been doing more of this. That's where I felt a little bit guilty because they just couldn't wait. Like the plays we put on for Transition B, we finally got that done toward the end of the term, but it was like they were just so excited. They just loved it all...¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

Jenny's reflexive ability continued to demonstrate her growing understanding of drama and classroom management. She began to acknowledge the increased awareness she had developed of drama already being done. Jenny felt that the main changes in the classroom related to this enhanced awareness, but even more so to her increased understanding of organisational skills (management) required for the use of drama.

Jenny explained that her awareness of the classroom management issues was one of the reasons she hadn't done much drama in the past. She felt this was a present challenge for her, explaining "*...it was hard work...not the little buddies, but it was the bigger boys and I still think, well maybe I'm not crash hot at it...*"¹⁶⁴ Her reflection on a witnessed drama lesson demonstrated her changing understanding and awareness of these management issues:

...she took them in to do a dinosaur thing...one of her lessons was actually taking them into the media room. She had these balloons that were meant to be dinosaur eggs and that was actually really interesting. It was a fabulous lesson, but it was really interesting to watch how the boys coped with it. And even though she had it really well planned and everything, the boys...nup! The girls were fine, but the boys could not cope with a room full of balloons (*laughs*). It was constantly bringing them back, it was hard, it was a hard lesson in just the control. It was bit like that with the buddies [drama session Jenny had tried]. I felt the same way with the big buddies. It was like constantly bringing them back.¹⁶⁵

Jenny's ability to learn from this experience, reflecting on her own practice, was positive and demonstrated her increased understanding of classroom drama.

The style of professional learning was, by nature, responsive to the ongoing and changing needs of the teachers. Jenny's concern regarding classroom management strategies was discussed, and a small group session was planned for Term Four (Cycle 2). While enthusiastic about the benefit of this future session, Jenny was still positive about her growing ability to manage drama, stating that "*...I'm picking them [strategies] up. I feel, to be quite honest, you just pick them up as you do it... I just think any tips that people can give you helps...*"¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁶⁵ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁶⁶ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

7.1.6 Student gender and classroom management

During our meeting to negotiate her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', Jenny was keen to discuss her various attempts at using drama:

...it was the extra effort going and doing the drama that helped them...they had no problem at all joining the picture to go with the sentence and filling in the closed activity at all. And they were very confident about it. I think it's probably a combination of doing the drama as well...¹⁶⁷

In this excerpt, Jenny was referring to her dinosaur unit in which she explored the use of puppets. She recognised the benefits of this drama session in regard to the students' increased engagement in follow-up activities.

While recognising the benefit of this activity for her students, Jenny's following comment to her colleague regarding the same lesson caused concern:

...it was quite chaotic and they enjoyed it, had a lot of fun, but they were very excitable. I actually got into the staffroom as recess and Leanne was sitting next to me and I said, now I know why I don't do much drama...the girls are fine, but the boys were just so hyped...it took them until the afternoon to calm down...¹⁶⁸

Jenny's comments were problematic for two reasons. The first, because of their implications for *classroom management* and drama, and the second due to the *gender stereotyping* revealed.

Jenny's continuing ability to engage in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983) about such an experience was a positive aspect of her ongoing professional learning. She discussed doing the activity again with her students, but addressing classroom management concerns by changing three key aspects of her practice:

- Jenny decided to use a bigger space, believing that her classroom was too small.
- She decided to include the 'big book' of the story to help give the activity shape that didn't rely alone on the students' memories.

¹⁶⁷ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

¹⁶⁸ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

- She saw the need for ‘firmer guidelines’¹⁶⁹, recognising that her instructions during the previous attempt were too ‘loose’.

During the clarification of her focus for Cycle 2 (Section 6.1.1), Jenny requested allocation of time to continue focusing more on classroom management and drama for students at a younger age.

Unlike the classroom management issues, the gender stereotyping revealed in Jenny’s comment was not directly acknowledged. Due to numbers in the Kindergarten class and her position as a teacher of boys, Jenny regularly interacts with both genders, unlike other teachers in the school who teach single sex classes. Comments regarding gender and age were made during discussions of classroom-based and pedagogical choices, but were never explicitly attributed to the choices made:

...It even came out with the buddies. Like it was hard work, constantly bringing them back to what we were doing. Not the little buddies, but it was the bigger boys...¹⁷⁰

Similar references to gender and student age were the subjects of general discussion between teachers.

The following dialogue, from the group reflection session, reveals a ‘gendered’ discussion between Jenny, Amy and Leanne in relation to student responses to a science and drama activity. The teachers were reflecting on both the nature of the activity and being open regarding their own perception of student behaviour:

Amy: ...we saw it particularly on Science Day because we had, in Year 4 and 5, the girls and boys working together in small groups and it was always the girls that took over.

Jenny: That is really interesting. I’m amazed at that.

Amy: We might have had one girl and three boys, but it was still the girl that took over.

Leanne: They’re very confident our girls though, I think. Very sure of themselves.

Jenny: I’m still surprised. I’d still think for Science that the boys would’ve taken over.

Amy: Because it was a more creative thing, Jenny.

Jenny: Oh, ok.¹⁷¹

Reference to gender was made many times in the group reflection sessions, and as revealed during data analysis, emerged prominently in a majority of interviews and

¹⁶⁹ Jenny, PPLP Conversation - 01.08.03

¹⁷⁰ Jenny, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁷¹ Group Reflection, Amy, Jenny, Leanne, Sally & Mark - 17.09.03

conversations. It is acknowledged that more research is required on gender influence in drama as the scope of this study could not fully engage with gender and student age issues.

7.1.7 Jenny's future - drama and professional learning

Jenny's final semi-structured interview took place at the start of the Christmas school holidays. She acknowledged that the changes in her own understanding of drama were positive. She was however frustrated that time constraints during the previous term made that term a less drama-oriented one than the one before:

...a little bit more confident in how to handle the situation when doing drama and a little bit more knowledgeable on the techniques and things like that. I even found doing the Christmas concert this time, I was a bit more knowledgeable on the more technical things...I feel Term 3 concentrated more on it...I don't feel I got as much out of it [this term] even though we were doing the Christmas concert...because it was just one item that we were rehearsing over and over again which didn't really free me up to do anything else... I just didn't have the time...¹⁷²

The most noticeable change in Jenny's understanding of drama can be seen in the shift from emphasising performance as drama, to her frustration at performance being the *primary* focus in the school one term later. Her wishes for drama by the end of the study were much more process, or pedagogy-oriented, and integrated with her classroom themes. Jenny did not acknowledge this shift in focus herself, but clearly reflected on the possibilities for programming drama for the new year. She expected bigger changes in her classroom practice to occur.

Jenny demonstrated herself to be a reflexive teacher, enjoying the use of the journal to focus her tasks. She also recognised the benefits of having a 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' to guide her learning:

...I think the plan's a good idea. I need to go back and look at it and reflect on it a little bit more. I like the idea of having those goals set out, definitely...¹⁷³

Jenny requested support into the following year and was able to clearly articulate her particular needs. Three goals assisted her ongoing use of drama:

¹⁷² Jenny, Interview 3 - 11.12.03

¹⁷³ Jenny, Interview 3 - 11.12.03

- Create boundaries with the students for any drama activity;
- Consider how the elements of drama can be manipulated within classroom-based activities; and
- Experiment with variations on ‘imaginative play’ time in the classroom.¹⁷⁴

Jenny’s ability to clearly identify personal goals and needs for professional learning demonstrated a shift from the beginning of the study. At that time Jenny was vague and unspecific about the content and style of learning from which she would benefit, while now she was clear and detailed. The increase in confidence required to guide learning was evident for a majority of teachers. This positive result of the professional learning demonstrated a move toward the development of a culture of learning within the school.

Jenny’s story is that of change and growing understanding. She experienced learning in relation to classroom management as well as gaining drama skills for the classroom. Personally, Jenny grew in confidence and awareness with her ability to reflect being an ongoing benefit for her own learning and the use of drama.

7.2 Sally

Sally’s story paints the picture of an experienced teacher who was enthusiastic about the value and use of drama, but did not believe she had the management skills to apply it effectively. Sally self-identified the focus area of *time management*, however, this focus extended throughout the professional learning to also consider programming and general classroom procedures. It is in relation to classroom management and the influence of student behaviour that Sally’s story raises issues relevant to an understanding of *student gender and age*.

Sally’s story highlights an important dissonance between belief and practice in relation to the use of drama. Her actions and words provide a contradiction between her *understanding of drama* and the way in which she applied it. She believed in the social and emotional benefits of drama as a process (pedagogy) and yet focused her activities on structured, performance oriented activities.

¹⁷⁴ Conversation notes, Jenny Programming Session - 11.12.03

From a personal perspective, Sally's story is important primarily for what her experiences demonstrate in relation to the influence of student response in influencing practice. To illustrate this focus, Sally's perception of a 'good drama day' from her own and her student's perspectives is presented at the end of her story.

Sally completed her initial teacher training just over forty years ago and has a history of teaching at high school and primary level. She completed post-graduate training in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education, and over her career worked as a specialist teacher in both these areas as well as in mainstream primary classrooms. Sally volunteered to participate in the study, explaining she was interested for a number of reasons, but particularly because she wanted to use drama and didn't effectively do so in her classroom. Sally also referred to the benefit that professional learning in this area would have on her classroom and the school's drama club.¹⁷⁵

7.2.1 Initial understanding of drama

Sally's understanding of drama was broad, viewing it as, "...activities which portray the 'human condition or problems' through means of spoken language, song, dance, visual props..."¹⁷⁶ This explanation offered a wider view of drama than that located purely in a classroom. This definition was consistent with Sally's conversations regarding the benefits of drama, but was at odds with the way in which she applied it.

Sally was articulate when referring to the many benefits of drama, although the line between drama, focused on performance, and that for development, was blurred. Sally's personal love and enthusiasm for attempting drama in the classroom was clear:

...well there's so many wonderful advantages of drama...it **enhances the spirit**... I'm just thinking of some of the plays I've seen and how it really relates to you and how you just gain some understanding of the human dimensions of life... that can go right down to child level...It just gives them that **empathy** with situations that are happening across not only this country, but other countries and different sort of groups and so it makes them more **tolerant** in that respect. So...that's one aspect that sort of develops feeling and personal development...the aspect of each child being in a play and each child getting a chance, even if it's just to say one line, they feel important, and...it raises their **self-esteem**, just doing it to the best of their ability...it improves their use of **language**...the warm-up games sort of thing...So it is...increasing their ability to **think on their feet**...in doing plays, you are studying a play, a script, and so once again, dialogue is different to other forms of

¹⁷⁵ Sally, Conversation - 16.05.03

¹⁷⁶ Sally, Initial Questionnaire

writing, and they're seeing how this works which **improves their writing**...¹⁷⁷ (Emphasis added)

This excerpt demonstrates that Sally recognised the personal and general developmental benefits offered by drama.

From a *personal* perspective, she viewed drama as positive for students, because it could:

- enhance the spirit;
- develop empathy;
- encourage tolerance;
- build student confidence; and
- raise self-esteem.

From a *developmental* perspective, Sally saw drama as helping develop students' language abilities, helping them to think on their feet, and being able to indirectly improve their writing.

The dissonance between Sally's understanding of drama and how it played out in her practice was of interest. This dissonance, or separation between belief and action is considered a complex relationship within teaching practice (Richardson, 1996). Focusing a teacher's understanding on this dissonance within a collaborative environment is considered a positive move toward helping address the separation (Richardson, 1996 p104). The reflective focus and collaborative style of professional learning undertaken is supported by this view and assisted the positive changes in Sally's practice.

Sally explained that for her class (Year 1 girls) the use of drama should focus on problems relevant to the students' lives. What she described as being done in her classroom however, derived from incidental or spontaneous activities from a book or topic being studied.

¹⁷⁷ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

When directly addressing this dissonance between her understanding of drama and her practice of it, Sally reflected on her inability to allow the students more ‘creative space’ in the classroom. She viewed time constraints, and the volume of work to be completed, as the largest negative influences:

...I guess the more creative things take longer to do...to give children time to think and express themselves. Sometime toward the end of term you realise you haven’t covered all these things and boom, boom, boom, do them in the shortest way...¹⁷⁸

A more detailed consideration of time and its overarching role in Sally’s professional learning is discussed in more detail in Section 7.2.3.

Based on her understanding of drama and its benefits, the activities Sally wished to use with her class can be viewed as falling into two categories:

- those being completed; and
- those planned, but not completed.

At the start of the study the examples given for those activities *completed* referred to those that were more performance oriented, as in Jenny’s story. Examples included role plays, enactment of story books and reader’s theatre. While including a limited number of more spontaneous activities, Sally did not generally work with her class in a process (pedagogy) oriented style.

Sally discussed a number of educational drama activities that were less focused on performance outcomes that she had *planned* to use with her class, *but had not completed*. It became clear that her inability to apply less performance oriented activities frustrated Sally. She recognised that it is the process focused activities that would have addressed the students’ individual needs and that were more consistent with what she saw as the key benefits of drama. Sally planned on working to change her practice during the professional learning, with her success focusing predominantly on increased awareness rather than any practical change.

¹⁷⁸ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

Sally reflected on her own experiences as well as those of her students when explaining her understanding of drama. What became increasingly obvious throughout her story is that while she may acknowledge its importance, Sally found it very difficult to initially change her daily classroom practices to incorporate drama. She recognised that the general issues of time management and general classroom management had to be addressed first.

7.2.2 Programming

At the beginning of the study, Sally used drama spontaneously in her classroom, without incorporating it in her term or daily program:

...I can think of things and often drama is something you think of on the spur of the moment because something comes up that they are all interested in...I was just thinking of ways to make it more interesting or do new topics and present them in a different way...¹⁷⁹

This lack of programming specifically for drama was true for a majority of teachers. The inclusion of a session focusing on programming styles and the way in which drama could be incorporated, aimed to address this issue.

Sally was a strong advocate of working in a cross-curricular or integrated manner, and saw drama as an integral part of this style of programming. It became obvious, however, that once again she was viewing the use of drama from a performance perspective:

...I was just thinking of ways to make it more interesting or do new topics and present them in a different way...I was thinking for this Science day, to talk about the environment and trees and why they are so important. So I was thinking to have two groups...a logger and protesters...and get them to think of the issues, but they'd present it as a little play...¹⁸⁰

The dissonance between Sally's beliefs and practice created an ongoing tension in her story. Sally had the knowledge of drama, but appeared inhibited in the classroom environment, and bound by the ways she had done things in the past.

The inhibiting influence of the classroom environment became even more evident when Sally described the activities she did with the school's drama group:

¹⁷⁹ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁸⁰ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

...I found with drama club everyone always loves doing improvisation because it's their own...so it teaches them to think outside the square and make it interesting for an audience...¹⁸¹

While there was reference to performance as an end product in this excerpt, the inclusion of improvisation demonstrated her attempts to reduce this focus for this non-classroom based group. Sally appeared to find it easier to manage time and behaviour, as this group was focusing solely on drama and she as a teacher was not distracted by interruptions or classroom-based pressures.

Like Jenny, Sally's minimal skills for implementing drama in her classroom may have limited her selection of activities. To address this issue, skill development was included in her professional learning plan, and her requested area of time management.

Sally recognised the importance of linking drama activities to other skills in the classroom, citing an example from the drama club:

...Thinking of text types...a narrative has to have a crisis and a resolution, so this is how it becomes interesting. Remembering back to drama club last week, one little girl said, "No-one could understand what she was doing, the point of it" and she said "Oh, I like doing things that don't make sense". We talked about it, what's the point of writing, to address a reader, a play, to address an audience so they can follow it...¹⁸²

While describing a linking activity for drama, her focus remained on its use in the drama club rather than her classroom. Time management was once again raised by Sally as an inhibiting influence on her practice.

The linking of drama as relevant to other subject areas was one of Sally's strengths. This skill was acknowledged and drawn on during the group reflection and programming sessions. Sally's modelling of a possible unit including drama in the classroom during the programming session, inspired the other teachers. Throughout this session, she offered many suggestions in relation to their plans for the following term. This assistance was clearly appreciated.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁸² Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁸³ Group conversation, Amy, Sally, Leanne, Jenny & Mark - 09.10.03

Over the course of study, Sally's awareness of drama as a learning process (pedagogy) continued to increase, however the use of drama in her classroom continued sporadically. This dissonance between belief and action continued to cause concern and encouraged an ongoing focus on the other factors influencing her practice including classroom and time management.

7.2.3 Time management

Sally identified time management as her primary focus for professional learning. She felt that if she had more time she would not "...*have to always rush and leave out the interesting icing on the cake bits...*"¹⁸⁴ The overarching influence of time has been referred to previously and is undeniably an ongoing and ever present issue for all classroom teachers. The teachers in this study are no exception. Sally was not the only teacher to identify time management as a focus for professional learning, however, her story provides details common to Amy's experience.

During the course of her initial semi-structured interview, four factors emerged as impacting on Sally's use of drama:

- general interruptions;
- assessment expectations (school reporting);
- parental expectations; and
- managing behaviour problems.

Sally was frustrated by time issues feeling that she didn't know how to address her dilemma. She presented many ideas for including drama in her classroom, but felt that time was always restricting what she could realistically achieve.

The first of the factors was based on Sally's concerns about **general interruptions** in the teaching day. The need to adapt teaching to accommodate these interruptions as well as meet expectations in the school caused frustration:

¹⁸⁴ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

...I guess it comes back to just trying to get through so much else and so many interruptions and you've got to drop everything and concentrate on another thing that arises...¹⁸⁵

The need to 'drop everything' as described by Sally, was also referred to by a majority of teachers. They felt that the school culture did not allow them the freedom to plan the way they might like.

Pressure and general interruptions was a pervasive issue throughout this study, with all teachers commenting on the negative impact it had on their teaching. This study considers the creation of a collaborative culture of learning involving open communication as important for the ongoing professional learning of teachers. This desired 'culture' has been identified as an area for further research (Section 8.6).

Sally saw the style of the **school report**, as well as the pressure placed on the teachers to complete it, as a second factor impacting on teaching time. She believed that "*...there is so much to report on in the school report, that you've got to do all those subjects...*" There was an implication that including enough 'evidence' on the report restricted classroom time for creative teaching.

This feeling of pressure to complete curriculum requirements is not unusual in schools. It is considered to be a contributing influence when working with teachers to change their practice and also increasing time required to plan and teach in a 'less traditional' manner (Hoban, 2002). Sally's ability to consider programming in a cross-curricular or integrated manner, assisted in the process of addressing this issue, despite it not yet being applied in her mainstream class.

Pressure to complete adequate assessment for school reports was a very real problem for the teachers. This pressure was seen as coming primarily from the school leaders, however **parental expectation** also contributed:

...They [parents] want to see books and they want to see information in books. So you've got to also keep some information in their [students] books as well as doing the things where there's nothing written down...¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁸⁶ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

Sally desired to implement activities for which ‘nothing was written’ as she regarded more physical and spontaneous activities as valuable for further developing students’ skills and knowledge.

Concern with parental expectation was evident for a majority of teachers. As this study played out in a private school, the question must be asked, would parental influence have been as important a factor for influencing teachers’ practice in another school context? Investigating the influence of school leaders and parents as factors that influence practice is considered an important area for further research stemming from this study (Section 8.6).

Behaviour was the fourth factor revealed in Sally’s story that influenced her use of drama. Her discussion of behaviour management is related to another of the emergent themes, *student gender and age* and is discussed in the next section.

7.2.4 Time management and student gender and age

Like Jenny, Sally did not explicitly refer to student gender as influencing her use of drama. Stereotypes were implied in her conversation and actions rather than deliberately demonstrated. An example of this unacknowledged bias occurred in her initial interview where she stated, “...*I find it so easy in a girls’ class, because there’s usually a few stars...*”¹⁸⁷ The issue of gender did, however, emerge more clearly during conversations when we discussed the impact of behaviour on time management.

Sally referred to teachers of boys as needing to focus a majority of their teaching time on discipline, implying that boys were less well behaved than girls:

...I imagine much more so the boys class where you have to spend more time on discipline to get everyone listening at the same time...When I notice time slipping away, it’s usually because I’m speaking to one or two girls who don’t listen very well. I’m always having to stop and direct their attention...¹⁸⁸

As with the gender stereotyping revealed in Jenny’s story, Sally’s perception of the differences between boys’ and girls’ behaviour is concerning. She has taught both boys and girls, but still delineated between them. To highlight the unacknowledged gender

¹⁸⁷ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁸⁸ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

stereotyping even further, Sally limited participation in the school's 'drama club' to girls only. When asked why she had done so, Sally explained that a single sex club would be easier to manage and provide a safer environment for the students. She did not believe that boys would want to participate in the group.

Sally's ability to reflect on her own practice was evident in the previous excerpt, where she recognised that even in her class of only girls she was having problems managing behaviour. Sally had a small class, and blending the students' personalities with her preferred style of behaviour management caused problems.

Sally saw herself as a motivator, a person who organises student learning and gets resources ready. She wanted to develop students who could articulate their thoughts and have a viewpoint. To foster this environment, Sally had a desire to be student-directed in regard to classroom discipline. She wished to:

...set up a situation where they develop their own discipline...not calling out, putting your hands up, the smallest things...developing that sense of pride in their own work...¹⁸⁹

Behaviour management became an important aspect of Sally's professional learning; however, it was time that was accredited with causing these discipline problems.

7.2.5 Changed awareness of time management and professional learning

Throughout the study, Sally's awareness of her personal limitations and ability to address time management changed. During the collaborative development of her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', she reflected on the inclusion of time management as her key focus:

...I don't know with the time management thing...I mean maybe the thing is that I'm just doing too much anyway...¹⁹⁰

Sally was enthusiastic about the activities in her plan, but concerned about managing time to complete them all. She was particularly interested in the team teaching opportunity, believing that she and her students would enjoy the experience.

¹⁸⁹ Sally, Interview 1 - 23.06.03

¹⁹⁰ Sally, PPLP Conversation - 07.08.03

The inclusion of the 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' was positive for Sally who considered that "...having it written down, you're more likely to push to get things done..."¹⁹¹ Despite this plan, she recognised that by the end of Cycle 1 not all tasks were completed. Time constraints were again blamed.

It became obvious as the study progressed that working on general classroom and time management within the context of this school was difficult. A large number of extra events and expectations were included in every school term and often unexpectedly reduced teaching time:

...I feel that I have managed time better this term, but that extra time has gone to science week and getting all that ready so it hasn't necessarily benefited drama yet...¹⁹²

While Sally was eventually able to free up some teaching time through her work on time management, time was also eroded by general school expectations and couldn't be given to what she would have prioritised.

One task worked well for Sally's time management that involved her prioritising activities during her day:

...That came in useful, that concept of which really is the most important thing. Get focused and get concentrating and don't let other things distract you. Get that done and move on to the other things, but include a balanced approach so you are still doing some teaching...¹⁹³

From the perspective of a professional learning facilitator, I was surprised that a teacher with as much experience as Sally, was finding what might be considered as simple time management tasks, so difficult. The fact that Sally completed her training forty years ago and had not participated in much professional learning in recent years, may have contributed to her reduced awareness of basic management techniques.

The importance of obtaining details about each teacher's background, as emphasised in this study, is supported by Sally's story. Recognising her time away from professional learning as well as identifying what she considered to be her weaknesses, allowed for

¹⁹¹ Sally, Interview 3 - 16.12.03

¹⁹² Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁹³ Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

time management to be addressed. Without managing time more effectively, Sally's increased skills in drama use could not be applied in her classroom. This understanding has implications for school-based learning and each teacher's distinctive experience.

The collaborative development of Sally's plan was positive with changes being made as a result of time pressures felt during Term Four (Cycle 2). Jenny felt the same pressure and also needed to alter aspects of her 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' at the same stage of the study. The changes to Sally's plan took the form of a reduced need to consider literature in relation to time management skills. She did not believe that she would have the time to read it thoroughly enough during the term.

The style of professional learning emphasised flexibility and receptiveness to the needs and contexts of the teachers. The ability to re-clarify her plan during the study (end of Cycle 1 and 2) to meet her needs pleased Sally, and she later referred to this as a strength of the professional learning process.¹⁹⁴

...in comparison to that [external professional development], I've found this very useful. One day things, you sort of listen on the day, but then it gets put away and you forget about it. Even things where they might come in every week...it's an hour and a half or something and you get tired by the end of the day. Whereas this, it's shorter and it's just tailored to the needs of the specific teachers...¹⁹⁵

7.2.6 Sally's future - drama and professional learning

Sally's inability to alter her classroom practice in relation to drama caused concern early in the study. She regularly articulated her desire to implement process-oriented drama, but when describing activities, they remained script and performance focused:

...we're doing scripts focusing on them [narratives] and short creative writing, so what I'd like them to do is act out some of their stories...parents take the reading groups and I've put "if time act this out"...so I'm putting things in, but it always seems to come back to time really...¹⁹⁶

As demonstrated in the excerpt, time was an influencing factor restricting Sally's use of drama. Perceived time constraints also impacted on her ability to initially work on the diagnostic activities designed to help manage her classroom more effectively.

¹⁹⁴ Sally, Six Month Survey

¹⁹⁵ Sally, Interview 2 - 09.10.03

¹⁹⁶ Sally, Conversation - 01.08.03

Throughout the professional learning, Sally did begin to manage time more effectively by focusing on prioritising, and managing the classroom environment.

Once Sally began to feel more control in relation to time management, a change occurred in relation to her understanding of drama. While her belief in the benefits of drama for students did not change, there was a shift in her understanding of drama:

...I guess I've been doing drama club for quite a while and I've got those sort of skills...but I guess the deepening awareness of fitting it into the actual context...putting that structure, integrating it...making sure I do that through programming was good...¹⁹⁷

A positive change in understanding had occurred where for the first time, Sally differentiated between her classroom context for drama and that of the drama club. This new awareness allowed her to reflect more about other classes and the way in which drama could be positively applied to address issues:

...I gather there's one little girl that doesn't really fit in and is a lot less mature than the others. Maybe using drama as a way to create greater cohesion in the class might be good...¹⁹⁸

The girl in question was to be in Sally's class for the following year. Her acknowledgement of forward planning in relation to drama use in the classroom demonstrated a shift in focus. Sally wished to program for drama in advance as opposed to relying on it as a spontaneous activity. Her time management success had resulted from prioritising programmed activities and recognising the importance of officially planning drama to allow it to be a priority in her classroom.

When spending time with Sally during Cycle 3 (Term 1, 2004), it was pleasing to witness the changes she had made in drama use. Sally was now programming explicitly for drama, and while only succeeding in completing these activities to a limited extent, felt more confident in doing so.

While working on changing her practice throughout the course of the study, Sally experienced only modest success. In the survey completed at the end of Cycle 2, Sally

¹⁹⁷ Sally, Interview 3 - 16.12.03

¹⁹⁸ Sally, Interview 3 - 16.12.03

reflected on her progress, with her comments mirroring my interpretation of her development:

...The programme has got me started on the road to change, though not in any dramatic way. I was already familiar with aspects of drama and enthusiastic about its inclusion - so it's a longer term approach to changing my teaching practices...I think I've made progress in addressing time management. I feel motivated to look more closely at programming to include drama activities in KLA topics - but this will be a gradual trial and error process...¹⁹⁹

7.2.7 A 'good drama day'

The following excerpt is taken from Sally's end of Cycle 2 survey. When writing her story, she decided to include what she believed to be the feelings of her students in relation to the use of drama. Sally placed much importance on student responses and acknowledged them as influencing her practice:

I'm going to try and peep into the heads of a group of student involve in drama. Here might be some of their thoughts, not necessarily articulated - mostly un-stated, but still felt.
This is so much fun. Who wants to keep your head down and write all day (only 'right' answers acceptable - someone else's idea of right!)
I love using my imagination - Now let's see what I can do to become a rabbit. Mmm...I'll try twitching my nose and hopping. This is weird! So this must be like rabbits feel. Fancy that!
I love watching that girl miming 'The Hungry Chicken'. She looks so funny, clucking and pecking. I was feeling kind of bored before, now I feel a bit more alive.
I think I understand now what the teacher was saying about bullying. I had to be in a play where I was the one who was picked on. It felt awful. I'm going to speak out when I see it happening to someone else.

While the student comments are written from a teacher's perspective, it is important as a teacher to consider how the students are responding to the experiences being provided in the classroom. As demonstrated in the follow excerpt, from Sally's own story, her thoughts on a 'good drama day' were guided by her perception of student reaction to drama:

And the teacher's thoughts?

On a good day, when all is going well, they might be.... This is relaxing, it's fun!
The girls have really picked up all the information that I'd programmed for our HSIE topic - they learn so much more from each other.
I love seeing their interest and enthusiasm.
The shy ones are blossoming.
The bossy ones are learning a bit of give and take.

¹⁹⁹ Sally, Six Month Survey

The group planning part gets a bit noisy, everyone is talking - just shows how keen they are. It's 'themselves' they are putting into it. I'm impressed by their observations and creativity. It's heart-warming stuff!

7.3 Mark

Mark's story is different to the previous two as he came to the process of professional learning from a specialist teacher's perspective as opposed to that of a mainstream classroom teacher. The focus of his story is on the place of personal experience as an influence on his teaching practice. Mark's ability to reflect on his practice and personal circumstances was a strength that allowed him to grow and develop his understanding of drama throughout the course of the professional learning.

Mark's story addresses personal and contextual themes in the study including *understanding of drama* and *management (classroom/programming)*. Coming from a music background, he had some personal experience with drama, but very little from a teaching perspective. Mark's understanding developed during the course of the study, and his story highlights the positive influence this had on his practice as a specialist teacher of music and his initial attempts at drama.

The place of *personal experience* is forefronted in his story as there were implications for Mark's classroom based choices in relation to the use of drama. A negative experience of bad group management during an external professional learning session, led him to identify an important safety issue when teaching drama. He recognised that such an incident, and his own personal schooling experiences, shaped both the kind of teacher he wished to be, and his current classroom practices.

Mark worked as a specialist music teacher in the school and while always having had an interest in drama, had attempted its use in only limited ways. Only working part-time when the study began, he had been approached by the school to take on a full-time position contingent on his teaching drama the other two days each week. While excited about this prospect because he dreamed of working as a performing arts coordinator in a school, he was also anxious due to his inexperience with classroom drama:

...I said [to the principal], I'm not a trained drama teacher, but I do have some experience. I can interpret a syllabus and I know when to put my hand up if I don't know what I'm doing. So, if you're happy with that I will endeavour to do the drama...²⁰⁰

Mark was excited when hearing of my study, believing that participation in this form of professional learning may help him with these new challenges.

As he was not working as a mainstream teacher, I believed that Mark's inclusion in the study would assist in breaking down barriers between the mainstream teachers and specialists in the school. The division existing had resulted in learning rarely connecting between the two contexts, and in teachers feeling frustrated with the time taken away from their classrooms for disconnected specialist lessons. Mark aimed to work with the classroom teachers to ensure that the drama lessons were relevant to themes and topics the students were studying.

7.3.1 Experiences (personal, teaching and learning)

Mark's story supports the view that personal experience of schooling is considered to be one of the strongest influences on a teacher's practice (Hoban, 2002; Richardson, 1996). Through reflection, Mark identified two key factors that directly contributed to his negative experience of schooling:

- school environment; and
- teacher attitude.

Respecting and understanding the influence of the work context is important for professional learning experiences. Mark's perception of the **school environment**, at both a primary and high school level, influenced his whole schooling experience. He described the school he attended as 'militant' and founded on the belief that all children are the same, and should be educated on the basis of this 'sameness'. For a student who described himself as 'different', fitting into this mould was difficult.

For Mark, the **attitude of the teachers**, in this type of environment was an issue:

²⁰⁰ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

...I was clearly different from a lot of other kids at school...it wasn't just me. I remember a lot of times being told, 'no, you can't go out [of class] and have a piano lesson because that's your privilege. You come from a very privileged background and it's not your right to go and do that...' ²⁰¹

Mark identified himself as 'different' in that he was creative and musically talented. He believed that this obvious ability was not viewed favourably within the school. While much money and effort is being put into anti-bullying programs in schools today, it is not unusual to see students who are recognised as 'different', being isolated from their peers.

Mark's story highlights an important issue for all teachers in regard to the impact they can have on a student's schooling. Mark identified all of his schooling apart from Year 11 and 12 as negative, stating that he "...*hated school with a vengeance...*" ²⁰²

The positive change in these final years was due to the understanding of one teacher:

...It had gone from a situation that was really bad to an absolute dream. She'd say, 'I don't want to see you at a swimming carnival because we know you swim like a stone, here's a key to the hall. I want you to be practising your HSC program...' ²⁰³

The recognition and supporting of Mark's strengths, positively motivated him and was the factor that he attributes to helping him complete his studies.

Mark viewed his schooling experiences as influencing his current teaching in a variety of ways. He surprised himself when becoming a teacher because of his negative memories. Mark explained that the underlying emotion influencing the way he teaches was affected by his own experiences. His schooling experiences also influenced his practice in relation to the kind of teacher he did not want to become:

...if I ever see myself or hear myself at all being reminiscent of what happened at my primary school...I just don't let it happen. I can't afford to do that because I know how damaging that would be on my children here... ²⁰⁴

The awareness of how his own practice could damage students remained with Mark throughout his story. He was conscious of respecting their opinions and regularly

²⁰¹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁰² Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁰³ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁰⁴ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

seeking these through anonymous questionnaires throughout the schooling year. The need for these feedback questionnaires was driven by Mark's desire to respect the voices of his students:

...each time I give that to the students for the first time, they are the times when they really are sitting still and they really are hanging on every word. They are believing, some of them I fear for the first time in their lives, that their opinion is valid...²⁰⁵

The four questions included in his questionnaire focused on the student's learning as well as on Mark's teaching. The anonymity of the questionnaires assisted in the establishment of trust. Mark believes that the feedback from the students "...changes my approach all the time..."²⁰⁶ He also recognised that giving voice to students can result in better communication and trust.

7.3.2 Confidence

Mark was a confident teacher who found it easy to reflect and articulate his practice. Despite this ability to reflect, his confidence with his ability to teach drama two days a week began to diminish half way through the study. Through ongoing discussion throughout the following term, it became clear that Mark's confidence problems stemmed from three key areas:

- planning of drama for the following year;
- classroom management; and
- self-efficacy.

The responsive nature of the professional learning approach in this study allowed for Mark's concerns with **planning** to be immediately addressed. A session was added to his 'Personal Professional Learning Plan' that allowed for a scope and sequence for drama in the school to be collaboratively developed. This structure enabled Mark to program specific drama sessions for his students.

Concerns with **classroom management** for drama were felt by a number of teachers in the study. To address the collective management concerns, a small group session to

²⁰⁵ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁰⁶ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

discuss strategies was planned in Term Four (Cycle 2). The session considered the importance of establishing boundaries for the drama space, setting up routines with the students in relation to drama work, and establishing expectations for classroom conduct.

Issues with **self-efficacy**, or in Mark's case a perception that he was not qualified enough to teach drama, are common within human existence (Bandura, 1997). Mark's self-perceived lack of ability to "...secure desired outcomes and to prevent undesired ones..." (Bandura, 1997 p2) created issues in relation to the use of drama. Mark wasn't concerned with the practice of teaching the subject, believing that as he knows how to teach he should be capable of drawing on basic techniques. His concern was with troubleshooting in the classroom and the impact his lack of experience with drama teaching may have on student learning:

...With drama, there is experience in doing it, not so much in teaching it...but I'm in that what if stage. What if this goes wrong, what if that goes wrong? What if I do this in a bad way? What if I actually make it worse for the students instead of better?...²⁰⁷

While not a direct threat in Mark's story, the link between a lack of self-efficacy and non action is clear. As argued by Bandura (1997), "...Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act..." (p2-3). Mark's participation in the study and his innate belief in the value of drama assisted in countering a lack of incentive and motivated the teaching of drama.

7.3.3 Initial understanding of drama

Due to Mark's work as a specialist music teacher, much of his initial understanding of drama was derived from a specialist context as well as from a general arts perspective. Mark's extensive personal experience in different areas of the creative arts, particularly music and drama assisted in his focused approach to drama. During his own schooling, he played the piano, studied three unit music for his Higher School Certificate[#] and completed a Bachelor of Music at the New South Wales Conservatorium. During his tertiary years Mark also studied singing and cello, eventually taking lessons at a drama school to refine his performance skills.

²⁰⁷ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

[#] Higher School Certificate is a state-wide examination completed by students in New South Wales at the end of Year Twelve (students approximately 17-18 years of age).

Mark expressed his understanding of drama through the benefits he believed it would have for student learning. The explanation he provided during his initial interview (Cycle 1) focused on three key areas:

- educational benefits;
- cultural benefits; and
- vocational benefits.

From an **educational** perspective, Mark's understanding connected with a process-oriented approach to drama as opposed to one focused on performance. Mark also saw drama as a vehicle by which students would be assisted in the learning process:

...[drama is] a vehicle to bring something that is imagined into reality. It connects what you can create abstractly and turn it into something that's real and tangible...it's going to be something that's going to broaden their experience, help them be more tolerant. Help them learn about things that differ from their own experience...²⁰⁸

Mark's work as a specialist music teacher, as opposed to a mainstream teacher required to teach all curriculum areas, may have contributed to this orientation.

He emphasised the importance of focusing on the building blocks of music believing them to be central to any 'performance'. This approach was applied to his understanding of drama use in the classroom. Mark's process (pedagogy) orientation differed to that of the two mainstream teachers who, at the start of the study, appeared to feel limited in their opportunities to use drama and applied it predominantly as performance focused.

Mark viewed drama as addressing **cultural** issues in the classroom. He believed it connected the experiences of students from all over the world as it is "*...so closely linked with every culture on the planet.*"²⁰⁹ He felt that all students would have experienced the creative arts before in some way and therefore that it was something to which students could easily relate. More specifically, Mark saw drama as a way of reaching those individual students who may be isolated in a class or school environment due to some form of cultural difference:

²⁰⁸ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²⁰⁹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

...if you've got a child who feels isolated because they've just come from another country of they're from a different religion, or a different kind of background from everybody else you can connect with them through the culture of where they've come from. It [creative arts] teaches kids in the dominant culture of what other cultures can be like...²¹⁰

Mark was acting on this personal belief of cultural benefit for the arts generally within his music classes. He described activities where students participated in Israeli dancing and listened to Jewish music.

The third key area, **vocational** benefit, was referred to by Mark in relation to the importance of early schooling years as influencing a student's career decisions later in life. He reflected on the link between the exposure students received to various subject areas in junior years as assisting them in making informed decisions regarding their future as they moved through the latter years of schooling.

Mark acknowledged the importance of a specialist teacher being recognised as a professional:

...I'm still involved publicly; I think that's really important. If you're going to teach something that's creative I believe it's really important to stay creative yourself. So I'm still learning how to sing and putting together a recital with my singing teacher...I keep involved in performing because that's a really big part of what I want to bring alive in the classroom...²¹¹

Working publicly in the creative arts allowed the students to see Mark as skilled in his field. He was also able to model for them career possibilities in relation to his personal skill area of music. The provision of such a role model is important for students.

7.3.4 Changed understanding of drama

Throughout the study, Mark's basic understanding of educational drama did not change, although a growing awareness expanded his perception of what could be achieved. Mark's schooling experiences with drama were once again drawn on with many of the professional learning activities triggering memories of previous learning:

²¹⁰ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²¹¹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

...a lot of what I did at drama school myself has been coming back. Even down to the point where I was thinking, in first year we didn't do one script...Just some of the exercise routines...creating a space to start with...all is exactly the same as what used to happen there...²¹²

The importance of respecting past experiences is supported through Mark's story. This excerpt reports on the way past learning was highlighted and used to further develop current learning experiences.

Mark's attempts to use drama prior to his participation in the study drew on the K-6 Creative Arts Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000), adapting the units offered as appropriate to each class. He believed he had learned through this process, but was concerned about where to go next in planning student learning:

...I've only got a few more units of work left in that syllabus, then where do I go? If it were a case of being left in that situation, then yes, I could take the general idea of what's in there and apply them to different scenarios, but I'm really grateful it hasn't worked out that way...²¹³

When discussing his forward planning, Mark did not consider professional learning as available and was planning to move forward alone. Pleasure at being offered help with classroom teaching practices was also expressed by the other teachers. While some changes were beginning to occur within the school context, it was clear that little professional learning had been offered to these teachers in the past and that any assistance was appreciated.

Mark recognised that personal knowledge of a subject area remaining implicit, rather than being explicitly acknowledged, to be a 'danger' for teachers attempting drama. Due to his background with music, he referred to his personal experiences when illustrating this point:

...Music, I didn't know anything about music and I remember having to learn for the first time what a note looked like on a page. In teaching music it's really frustrating and very challenging because what which is second nature to me I no longer even realise...I think that causes a danger for every teacher, because we expect our children to know things that we don't even realise that we know..²¹⁴

²¹² Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²¹³ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²¹⁴ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

As we develop, knowledge becomes embedded in who we are as a person. Each experience assists in constructing this knowledge which in turn may shed light on new experiences. Students come to each classroom with a body of knowledge that is then challenged and extended. Mark recognised the importance of a teacher being able to ‘unpack’ their personal knowledge to better understand the building blocks that should be given to students.

The feeling of ‘success’ is an important motivator for encouraging teachers when working toward a change in practice. Despite Mark’s pre-existing belief in the benefit of drama, he was relieved at the positive student reaction stating that, “...*it made me feel as though it [drama activities] worked...*”²¹⁵ Student response to these drama activities was an obvious motivating factor in supporting Mark’s belief in the value of classroom-based drama.

His ability to engage in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), assisted his growing awareness of drama use in the classroom. He was able to recognise the benefits and pitfalls of different strategies utilised, and identify ways of improving future attempts:

...that [video drama activity] worked well, but there were some very big pitfalls. Those students hadn’t ever done anything like that before so there was a lot of preparation, we couldn’t get straight into it...²¹⁶

Mark explained some of his ideas for improving this video activity. He planned to try the activity again with students during their visit to Canberra later in the year, asking them to put together a documentary. Mark believed “...*that could be a way to get them used to the medium without it being formal...*”²¹⁷

The reaction to the reflective journal varied among the teachers in the study. Jenny considered it to be crucial to her ongoing focus on professional learning. Sally also found reflection helpful in guiding her thinking on aspects of her practice. Mark, despite approaching conversations from a highly reflective viewpoint did not value the use of the journal in understanding the use of drama:

²¹⁵ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²¹⁶ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²¹⁷ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

...In terms of ideas for the classroom, they stay in my head. I don't need to write them down...they're developing all the time...Different people need different things. Some people need to write things down and need to go back and look...I reflect all the time. I never stop thinking about what I've done or what's going to happen...²¹⁸

Adapting to teacher learning preferences is an important aspect of the approach to professional learning adopted. This respect allowed for the journal to be removed from Mark's 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', with 'reflective conversations' organised as a replacement.

7.3.5 Classroom management and programming

Mark was able to describe the nature of classroom environment he wished to foster, perceiving it as having an 'essence' as opposed to a specific look. For him, it incorporated three elements: *collaboration*, *clear system of reward and consequence* and *self reporting of progress*.

He emphasised the importance of the classroom being an environment "...where everybody collaborates in order to establish the core traditions..."²¹⁹ The **collaboration** was shaped by the feedback he requested from students and allowed for a **clear system of reward and consequence** to be established. The shared information gained, influenced Mark's pedagogical style and encouraged the students to take greater ownership of their learning process. Belief in the benefit of social learning extended to his preferences for professional learning and was incorporated when collaboratively developing his 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'.

The importance of asking the students to **self report on their progress** stemmed from Mark's desire to support the less confident students. He recognised the need to provide his students with a different experience to that of his own schooling. Through asking them to comment on their progress, he was able to identify those with less confidence and address their concerns directly. Mark believed that the benefits of his rapport with students, classroom and behaviour management far outweighed the work required to maintain this level of collaborative interaction:

²¹⁸ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²¹⁹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

...it given them a feeling that someone is looking out for them as an individual human being...it's the total antithesis of what I had at school, so maybe some people would say I'm reacting against that...²²⁰

Mark's ability to reflect on the influence his personal schooling experiences had on his practice was an important aspect of his story. The ability to focus on self beliefs in relation to practice is considered to play a central role in changing pedagogical practices (Richardson, 1996).

Past experiences with programming made Mark aware of his preferred style, and critical of an outcomes approach as imposed by a previous school. Mark shared some of his old programs where he was required to present lessons using direct instruction. They were to be structured like a script by which teacher comments and expected student responses were recorded. A number of problems with this style were identified by Mark:

...there were problems with discipline, problems with meeting any outcomes that I wanted to meet. There were problems with development...it was just diabolical...²²¹

Due to his confusion and self-perceived lack of skill with programming, a focus on this aspect of drama was incorporated into his 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'.

Mark also expressed his frustration with the previous school's emphasis on outcomes-based reporting, viewed by him as counterproductive. He was required to tick boxes, but saw outcomes as linked and not separate entities to be marked off:

...I find that confusion all the time when I'm doing my outcomes...that's music Stage 1, 2...but it's also listening and performing and this and that. You just can't really separate it...²²²

Reporting pressures of a different kind to his previous school were experienced by the teachers in this study and have been discussed in Sally's story. Mark was conscious of accountability issues for teachers, believing it important for detailed records to be kept on students. Through these records he was able to respond to parental concerns with accurate details rather than with purely anecdotal, memory-based comments.

²²⁰ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

²²¹ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²²² Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

Mark had an innate ability to reflect on his own teaching as well as reflect more theoretically on the aspects of drama discussed in the study. He was particularly interested in the way teachers could approach the use of drama in a classroom:

...There are two very clear opinions about how to teach. There was Amy who was doing the complete experience...we're being Buttress roots, so because of that we're learning HSIE and we're learning drama...and then there's Leanne saying, "Well I'm not really sure when my Maths lesson finishes and my drama lesson begins"...²²³

Mark was beginning to recognise that there were different ways of approaching drama through the examples given by his teaching colleagues in the study. He first recognised drama as an integrated tool through its application in Amy's classroom, but also alluded to the use of drama as a separate subject, or art form. He acknowledged a key issue for the use of integrating drama, namely the extent to which it can be done effectively across different subject areas.

Establishing a balance between drama as a tool for integration (pedagogy) and drama as an art form was referred to during the study. Initially considered during the first group session considering 'What is drama?', the debate was again raised through a consideration of programming styles for drama:

...when you have all intertwined experience and the students start to unpack, they probably won't be able to...it's like I've just got this experience like a big ball of rubber bands...and it just all means what I did at school this week. If they don't have some focus on what they've learned then that's what it would remain. But if they don't have some integration then one thing is we've been negligent...because we haven't related the different subject areas to each other...²²⁴

Mark was clear in his reflection on this issue, considering both viewpoints to be important. He was concerned about the influence each would have on student understanding of drama.

7.3.6 Programming

Mark had a clear perception of the style of professional learning he felt would most benefit him and other teachers in the school. Despite this, he was vague regarding a personal focus area to help him use drama more effectively. School-based collaborative

²²³ Mark, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

²²⁴ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

learning was suggested by Mark. This strategy is consistent with the style of professional learning that guided this study:

...if would be in the form of, as opposed to up skilling where you get a specialist in ...if there was some way to keep within the school. If everybody intermittently said let's remember as a team that what we're doing is both across the board and also compartmentalised...²²⁵

Mark believed that the professional learning should address individual styles of teaching.

Programming was identified as the focus for Mark's 'Personal Professional Learning Plan'. To connect with his preferred style of learning, a number of sessions were suggested that involved working collaboratively with me as well as other teachers.

When developing his 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', Mark was clear in expressing possibilities for collaborative work, and was interested in the inclusion of *team teaching*:

...perhaps if we did something where we started off with you taking the initial lesson and then more or less treat it as a prac teaching experience. We would then discuss what we were going to do in the next lesson and then you could come in and we can team teach from the second lesson...²²⁶

His suggestion for a process of modelled lessons and team teaching, was incorporated in a series of drama lessons based on the structure he outlined.

Throughout the study, Mark referred to the importance of *modelled lessons* as a tool for professional learning:

...It's also that connection, teachers like taking the actual lesson that they see and doing it again with their own class. We're Bower Birds and we love to be able to see something in action and take it and do it...²²⁷

²²⁵ Mark, Interview 1 - 30.07.03

²²⁶ Mark, Conversation - 18.09.03

²²⁷ Mark, Interview 2 - 21.11.03

He recognised the importance of reflecting on any lessons witnessed. Applying knowledge gained through the process of watching and discussing the modelled lessons guided the planning of future drama sessions.

Mark expressed his anxiety about the role he may be required to play the following year when drama was to be a permanent part of his teaching. It was realistic of Mark to expect that he would be drawn on as a resource within the school:

...I fell a bit of a fraud because I know how important it is to be qualified to teach music and yet here I am in a position where I will be a resources that is labelled 'drama'...I'm sure that people at the school don't expect me to know everything...so that's where I would be very keen to have extra work, whether it be reading, going to more workshops, or undertaking some kind of study...²²⁸

The shift in his perception of access to professional learning was an important step for Mark. In contrast to his view at the beginning of the study, when he did not recognise the possibility for further development, Mark openly considered different ways in which his knowledge of drama could be further enhanced. He had begun to take ownership of his own professional learning, a desired outcome of the planned professional learning.

The importance of connecting professional learning to experience was highlighted through the success of the collaborative programming session. The aim was to develop a scope and sequence for drama within the school and use the document style based on that for his music program. Mark's familiarity with this format allowed for easy adaptation of drama, and increased his confidence with using this program during the following year.

As this programming session took place later in the study, the influence of increased skills and knowledge about drama became clear. Mark regularly commented on different drama strategies within the program. He recognised links to other areas of the arts as well as to integrated techniques involving working with other teachers in the school. As a result of his increased skills, Mark's confidence in his ability had developed and he felt positive about being a drama resource within the school. He was excited about presenting the drama outline to the collective staff²²⁹.

²²⁸ Mark, Conversation - 18.09.03

²²⁹ Mark, Conversation - 24.11.03

Mark experienced further success with drama during the *team teaching* sessions:

...That was amazing. Music just doesn't work for everyone. Drama provides an arena for them to work like **that**. Nothing else does...²³⁰

The enthusiasm for drama demonstrated by Mark following this session reflected his confidence when working with the students. He appeared comfortable with the style of drama he was attempting and was motivated by his success and that of the students.

7.3.7 Relationship with school leaders

Mark's role as a specialist teacher caused problems for him in the school. He was viewed by the principal as a confidant, and at times made privy to information regarding other teachers with which he was not comfortable. This was particularly relevant to an incident experienced by Amy as discussed in Section 5.3.2. Amy had put together an assembly performance in which the students collaborated to develop their individual presentations. Despite acknowledging this process at the start of the assembly, Amy was criticised by the principal who allegedly described the work as 'unprofessional'.

Mark was concerned with the product-oriented approach evident through the criticism of Amy's work, and the general vision for drama in the school. He was disconcerted about being drawn into discussions about staff members, believing this to be inappropriate:

...if the only criticism of what happened is it went over time then why involve me? Why involve a lot of staff over it, and why make a big deal of it. All you need to do is say, that was great...let's shave it down by another five minutes and it will be even better still...²³¹

It was clear through Mark's comments that the full extent of the principal's concern with Amy's assembly item was not revealed, and that the length of the performance was the key criticism.

²³⁰ Mark, Conversation - 25.11.03

²³¹ Mark, Conversation - 18.09.03

7.3.8 Experience (formal education)

Mark's negative experience during an external professional learning workshop in Cycle 1 influenced his practice as a teacher. Mark participated in a drama workshop as part of an external professional learning experience, and due to the actions of another workshop participant and the workshop leader, his confidence was severely shaken. This experience was discussed previously in Section 5.3.1 focusing on how it contributed to the development of a safe environment and to the professional learning process.

This incident is important for two reasons. First, the interwoven nature of the incident as part of his story of professional learning must be acknowledged. Second, it is important to consider the implications of this kind of experience for how it influenced Mark's classroom practice.

Mark's reaction to the negative experience resulted in enhanced understanding both of drama and the impact drama activities can have on student learning and emotion. Mark recognised the importance of sharing this experience with his colleagues, and discussed it during a group reflection session:

...The lesson is quite simple - as teachers, how important is it for us to maintain a safe environment for our students? If I, as a grown man can be so badly affected by a negative experience, what kind of effect could such an experience have on a child or adolescent?...²³²

The positive learning resulting from the group discussion focused on different ways in which the teachers could guide students safely through drama. They agreed that increased awareness and moving slowly through activities were crucial in supporting students, and were positive ways of addressing the issue of safety. As a group, the teachers felt that drama helps to create a safe space to allow controversial issues to be addressed, but only when a trusting environment has been established.²³³

Mark's ability to reflect was a positive tool in assisting him to develop his personal understanding of this negative experience. The importance of engaging in critical reflection within a group is supported by McGill (2004), who argues:

²³² Mark, Journal entry - 24.08.03

²³³ Group Reflection, Mark, Amy, Leanne, Sally, Jenny - 17.09.03

...Reflection-on-action with another(s) in dialogue which encourages reflection about the actions a person has undertaken will be more likely to be effective in promoting critical reflective learning...

(McGill & Brockband, 2004 p101)

Mark's desire to engage with experiences, thus constructing new understanding, is central to a change in practice (Richardson, 1996). He raised the issue of safety in subsequent conversations, the survey at the end of Cycle 2, and reflected on its impact in his journal.

Mark's insistence on sharing his experience with colleagues is significant when considering the place of 'cultures of teaching' (Hargreaves, 1992) in the school. As argued, collaborative interaction is critical for teacher learning as "...they [teachers] learn most, perhaps, from other teachers, particularly from colleagues in their own work place, their own school..." (Hargreaves, 1992 p216). While Mark was working alone, it is the creation of a 'collaborative culture' (Hargreaves, 1992) in the school that will contribute most effectively toward any change in practice.

Mark's negative experience continued to influence his practice even into Cycle 3 (Term 1, 2004):

...there have been a few curly incidents where I've just had to divert attention away from someone who is potentially embarrassing themselves, or being embarrassed by someone else...I think it's good because I'm watching out for it...if I hadn't noticed it...then that would mean that I'd learned nothing from that experience...²³⁴

Mark's ability to recognise the importance of safety with drama, based on his own personal experience, allowed him to empathise with the students. Forefronting the way they are feeling and responding within a drama session saw Mark encouraging the students to reflect on their reactions just as he did in the external professional learning session.

7.3.9 Mark's future - drama and professional learning

Mark was clear in his ability to articulate changes in his confidence and understanding of drama resulting from participation in the professional learning:

²³⁴ Mark, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

...I think I've got a better understanding of the skills I already had...It's highlighted areas where I think I need to go and do some more research, or get some more exposure, but at least I think that there's been a point where I've started to realise I do have more to offer than perhaps I thought at first...²³⁵

He believed that the framework provided by his 'Personal Professional Learning Plan', was a positive aspect of the professional learning that enabled his story to take shape. Mark was excited about having drama in his full-time position in 2004 for two key reasons. Firstly, it provided variety as he did not like being 'classified' as just the music person²³⁶.

Secondly, Mark was excited about the implications of this new workload in relation to the role he was beginning to play for the staff. When reflecting on these changes at the end of Cycle 2, Mark acknowledged his shifting role:

...I would expect that I'll be becoming much more of a resource to other staff members...I think this will be much more of a team effort. Let's share ideas, what do you think and it'll entrench much more relationships I hope between myself and the general class teachers...²³⁷

Mark's desire to work collaboratively with staff embedded itself in all aspects of his professional learning. His plan to develop relationships supports the aim of the professional learning to develop a 'culture of learning' within a school in which the teacher's needs could be addressed and student learning enhanced.

As with both Jenny and Sally, it was pleasing to work with Mark during Cycle 3 when he began work as the full-time drama and music teacher. He was positive about the activities planned and the response of the students. He described this change of increased focus and control as a result of participating in drama activities:

...the understanding of drama as a life skill is becoming clear...comments since I've done it [counting/breathing exercise] with every class was, 'my class has really calmed down after drama', or 'my class has been really focused after drama'. They always come out with an air of being together, of just being OK and under control...they've brought everything back down to earth and they're focused again...²³⁸

²³⁵ Mark, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

²³⁶ Mark, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

²³⁷ Mark, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

²³⁸ Mark, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

Mark believed that the teachers' witnessing the positive changes in the students would allow them to recognise the benefits of integrating basic drama tools in their classrooms. His initial understanding of drama as benefiting students from an educational and cultural perspective was supported and provided further motivation for his approach.

Mark expressed some disappointment about the lack of communication with the other teachers in the school. His growing awareness allowed him to recognise the limited way in which the general staff community was viewing the use of drama. Their focus on performance was highlighted when Mark became the drama teacher and staff asked him to organise their assembly items and chapel plays. His attempts to communicate a process approach were met with mixed reactions, and led him to believe that whole school education was required.²³⁹

The isolation Mark felt during his own schooling experiences undeniably influenced his approach to teaching and learning. Throughout the professional learning, Mark drew on personal experience to allow critical reflection. This process assisted in increased awareness and enhanced his teaching of drama.

At the conclusion of Cycle 2, Mark wrote a reflective story to encapsulate his experience of professional learning. This story concludes the thesis as a fitting summation.

7.4 Making meaning of change

In addition to providing a holistic, personal picture of the professional learning process, this chapter explores the third research aim:

3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

Not all factors facilitating or constraining the use of drama as identified in Phase One were revealed in the three teacher stories. The highlighted personal and contextual factors are discussed below, outlining the way in which they were addressed through the professional learning process.

²³⁹ Mark, Interview 4 - 04.03.04

As outlined in Chapter 4, the emerging *personal factors* from the initial part of the study included:

- the place of teacher beliefs (students, classroom and academic material) as influenced by general beliefs (familial, religious, societal) and the valuing of drama;
- beliefs about the social factors that influence pedagogical choice;
- the place of confidence and perceived skill level; and
- the place of experience (personal, with schooling and instruction and with formal education).

Emerging *contextual factors* included:

- syllabus outcomes and parental influences;
- space;
- programming;
- time pressures; and
- professional learning.

In addition to those previously identified, three additional factors emerged during the process of professional learning. From a personal perspective, a teacher's *understanding of drama* in the classroom, as opposed to belief in its value, became prominent, as did the influence of beliefs regarding *student gender and age*. The need for improved skills in *classroom management* was also identified once the frequency of drama use increased.

7.4.1 Personal factors and change

The *place of confidence* and the *place of experience* were the two most prominent personal factors revealed in these teacher stories. Each is discussed in terms of their commonalities and differences as well as their influence on pedagogical change. A consideration of the added areas of *student gender and age* and *understanding of drama* are also considered.

- **Place of confidence**

Shifts in confidence levels clearly influenced pedagogical choice as demonstrated most clearly through Jenny's story. For all teachers, their belief in the subject area motivated initial participation in professional learning, however it was confidence that guided the extent to which drama was taught.

Jenny acknowledged the influence of shifting confidence levels which saw the frequency of her drama attempts vary. It became clear through all stories that as skill levels increased over the three cycles of plan-act-reflect, confidence also grew. Participation in the professional learning had provided more tools for teaching drama that the teachers could use to plan their classroom experiences. The flexibility of the professional learning allowed the focus to shift to newer issues of classroom management to assist in maintaining the increased confidence levels.

- **The place of experience**

The place of experience was particularly relevant in Jenny and Mark's stories. While not having been exposed to negative experiences in her own *schooling*, Jenny's lack of confidence led her to exclude herself from drama experiences throughout her schooling years and during *formal education*.

The impact of Mark's personal *schooling* experience on his teaching practice was undeniable. He differed to Jenny in that rather than retreat as a result of these experiences, Mark actively engaged in furthering his teaching skills for positive pedagogical change.

Prior professional learning also impacted on Mark's classroom practice. Lessons learned in relation to the creation of a safe environment when teaching drama were emphasised through a negative external professional learning experience (Cycle 1). Mark's belief in the influence of such an experience as guiding practice, resulted in the sharing of his thoughts with all participating teachers. He changed his practice as a result of reflecting on this negative experience. This further supports the influence of personal experience on teaching practice.

- **Understanding of drama**

The valuing of drama was recognised in the initial part of the study as a contributing factor influencing its teaching. There were no issues with this factor as all teachers participating in the study volunteered because they placed high value on the teaching of drama. What did emerge within the major part of the study was the importance of clearly establishing a common and thorough understanding of drama.

Considering teachers' understanding of drama was embedded in the professional learning discussed in Cycle 2. The need for a common understanding was emphasised, with three stages outlining the changing understanding:

- awareness;
- focused drama attempts; and
- explicit inclusion of drama.

The move through these stages was evident in all three teacher stories. For Mark and Jenny, pedagogical change as an expression of their changed understanding was apparent through their classroom teaching in Cycle 2 (Term 4, 2003). The change in Jenny was a result of a shift in focus from drama as a product (art form) to drama as a process (pedagogy).

Alternatively, Mark began the study supporting drama as a process (pedagogy), but was lacking the skills to enact this approach in his teaching. His progression through the stages expanded his understanding of the way in which drama can be applied in the classroom. This understanding was accompanied by a focus on management and programming.

Sally's story was more reflective than Mark's because she began the study with a belief in a process approach to drama. Where her story differs is that while her understanding of drama broadened, pedagogical change in relation to the style of drama only shifted to reflect this changed understanding late in the study (Cycle 3 - Term 1, 2004). Prior to this time, Sally's practice leaned toward a product-oriented approach predominantly incorporating incidental drama.

- **Student gender and age**

As addressed in Section 6.3.2, the influential place of student gender and age became clear late in Cycle 2. The significance of student gender and age appeared to be embedded in the beliefs of the teachers. Stereotyping as influencing pedagogical choice was clear in Jenny and Sally's stories, but not evident with Mark. That he works with both genders and all grades as opposed to being located with a particular grade and gender may explain this distinction. The place of gender and age was not a focus and could not be addressed within the scope of the study, but is considered important for further research (Section 8.6).

7.4.2 Contextual factors and change

Three contextual factors identified in the initial stage of the study were relevant to the teacher stories: *programming*, *time pressures* and *professional learning*. The fourth contextual factor, *classroom management*, added as a result of the professional learning was important for all teachers. These four areas are discussed below as they influenced pedagogical change and the teaching of drama.

- **Programming**

Programming was an influential factor within all three stories, however, the focus shifted slightly for each. For Jenny her programming focus was on explicitly incorporating drama to further enhance student learning and enjoyment. While interested in programming throughout the duration of the study, this area only became a focus toward the end of Cycle 2 (Term 4, 2003). The need to plan for the following year was the impetus.

Mark's focus was similar to Jenny's in that he was conscious of the need for development in programming. He was required to establish a teaching plan when taking on a full-time position as music and drama teacher. Mark had clear ideas about the structure he wished to follow in his programming based on past professional experience, but was lacking the skill-based knowledge to 'fill in the gaps'.

Programming as an issue in Sally's story was linked to her managing time more effectively, and caused ongoing frustration. As opposed to Mark and Jenny, she had begun to include drama in her program early in her professional learning, but until

Cycle 3 (Term 1, 2004) had experienced limited success. She attributed her eventual inclusion of drama to an increased understanding and management of a daily plan.

- **Time pressures**

Time pressures were particularly relevant in Sally's story as the focus of her professional learning was on time management. She worked to overcome this problem over the duration of the professional learning, achieving success as revealed in her story. Jenny and Mark also experienced time pressures, but these were related more directly to the general school environment and did not feature in either story.

- **Professional learning**

All stories included a change in understanding and confidence with professional learning. The initial part of the study identified ineffective professional learning that neglected to respect individual needs or past experiences. As discussed in the previous chapters, the teachers in the major part of the study had difficulty in guiding their professional learning due to limited past experiences and a lack of confidence. The changes witnessed in all three stories in relation to the ability of each teacher to identify ongoing needs and guide the direction and style of learning was clear. By the conclusion of the study, Jenny, Mark and Sally had all begun to demonstrate strong characteristics of self-directed learners and requested a continuation of professional learning into 2004.

- **Classroom management**

Classroom management was a common issue across all three teacher stories. This factor was not initially identified, and only became evident during professional learning when the frequency of drama use increased. Each teacher experienced issues with classroom management resulting in a group session on this topic taking place during Cycle 2 (Term 4, 2003). Positive changes occurred for all three teachers following focused consideration and reflection of classroom management for drama. Jenny and Mark requested an ongoing focus during professional learning in Cycle 3 (Term 1, 2004).

It did not appear that issues with classroom management impacted negatively on the frequency of drama use. It did however cause teachers concern, with Jenny, for example, reflecting on management issues as having restricted the prior use of drama. By the time this factor became prominent, Mark, Jenny and Sally's confidence with

drama had increased to a level where they incorporated this new issue as a challenge to be addressed rather than a constraint.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented three teacher stories outlining the influential personal and contextual factors. Jenny, Mark and Sally all demonstrated both a change in pedagogy through their participation in the professional learning, and an increase in ability and confidence in incorporating drama.

The next chapter concludes the thesis by identifying the ‘knowledge claims’ (McNiff et al., 2003), recommendations, and implications for further research.

Chapter 8 - Conclusions

Introduction - Assessing the contribution of the thesis

This thesis has examined how the teaching of drama can be enhanced through needs-driven, school-based professional learning.

The research aims guided the focus of the study:

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.
2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.
3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

In this concluding chapter, a summary of the ‘claims to knowledge’ (McNiff et al., 2003) are presented, with a discussion of their significance and implications for classroom teaching in drama. The chapter also synthesises claims characterising the style and focus of professional learning beneficial in enhancing the teaching of drama.

Embedded within the discussion of knowledge claims are recommendations. The final sections of the chapter identify areas for future research. The importance of ‘making knowledge public’ is acknowledged as the final stage in the ‘*facilitated action research*’ process.

8.1 Making knowledge public through ‘claims to knowledge’

...Making a claim to knowledge means saying that something is known now that was not known before...Placing the action within a research framework has added something that makes the claim different from what it would have been had the claim been regarded simply as the outcomes of good professional practice...

(McNiff et al., 2003 p29)

Making knowledge public (Altrichter et al., 1993) is the final stage within the adopted '*facilitated action research*' process (Section 3.3). Action research has a responsibility to contribute to a theory of education, and making this knowledge accessible to other teachers is crucial (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The importance of sharing the learning, and knowledge gained, sets action research apart from participation in effective self-reflective practice. Through making knowledge public, evidence of learning and 'claims to knowledge' are provided (McNiff, 2002a). By doing so, lived experiences can be shared within a broader educational community. Specific detail of the way knowledge was made public by the stakeholders in this research is reported in Section 6.6.

The claims to knowledge, and associated recommendations, have been divided into two areas:

- effective professional learning for enhancing the teaching of drama; and
- identification, and influence on pedagogical choice, of personal and contextual factors facilitating or constraining the teaching of drama.

The first of these stem from investigation of the second research aim and is considered to incorporate the key knowledge claim from this research. The second area relates to a consideration of the first and third research aims. A number of specific knowledge claims are discussed for each area. No knowledge claims were drawn directly from the third research aim, however considering teacher learning through stories allowed a deeper understanding of existing issues.

8.2 Effective professional learning for enhancing the teaching of drama

The key knowledge claim from this research emerged from the second research aim.

2. To identify and evaluate an effective professional learning process for enhancing the teaching of drama.

In this section, I first present the overarching knowledge claim emphasising the importance of needs-driven, school-based professional learning, then focus the discussion on characteristics of effective professional learning for enhancing the teaching of drama.

The ‘facilitated action research’ process allowed for professional learning that was located with teachers, was needs driven, school-based, and respected teacher experiences. It is the provision of such a process, allowing professional learning to take place that encapsulates the key knowledge claim from this research:

Knowledge Claim - Locating professional learning with teachers, in their schools, based on their needs and past experiences, fosters positive pedagogical change.

It is the responsive and situated nature of the process specific to these teachers that allowed learning, designed to enhance the teaching of drama, to be effective.

Advocating the use of continuous cycles of plan-act-reflect is not new within education, schooling and action research. It is the capacity to break from the traditional cycle due to changing teacher and contextual needs that added to the positive outcome of the process. Locating this responsiveness within a ‘facilitated action research’ process further emphasised the unique approach in this research.

The ‘facilitated action research’ process (Figure 8.1), was adapted from various traditions of action research. Linking to the conceptual framework for the study, this approach allowed contextual detail to be embedded in a process that situated learning in an authentic work context. The process was developed through collaborative work with this particular group of teachers, based on their needs and located in their context. It was successful in enhancing the teaching of drama for this reason.

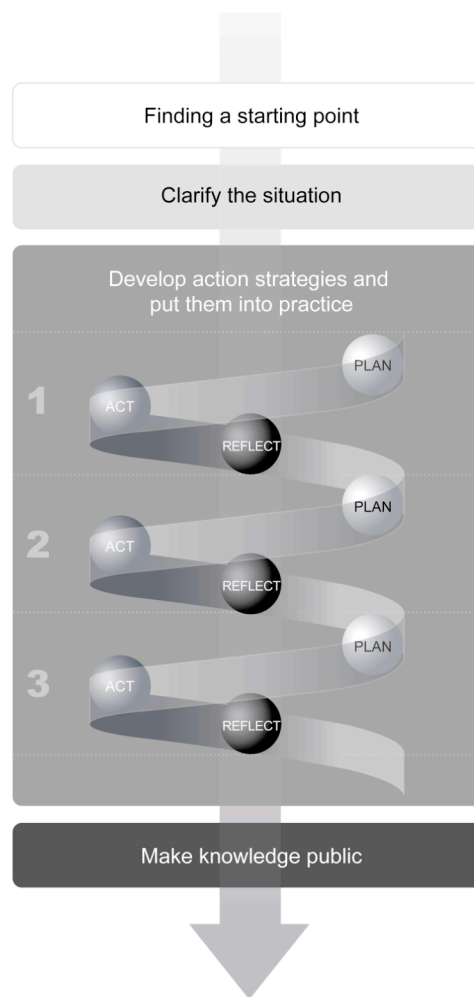
While I am not advocating replication of the complete process, characteristics of the professional learning process could be drawn on to inform learning processes in other contexts and for other subject areas. The following section outlines what I consider to be the characteristics for fostering effective professional learning.

Recommendations:

1. *It is recommended that teacher needs and experiences should be directly incorporated in the planning and implementation of any school-based professional learning.*

2. *It is recommended that the design for effective professional learning is responsive to changing needs, expectations, and events within any school context.*

Figure 8.1 - 'Facilitated Action Research' process



Considering characteristics is helpful in establishing what constitutes effective professional learning. The following seven areas are presented as knowledge claims. While not claiming generalisability, it is the implementation of these principles, rather than the specific cycles of action-reflection, that would assist in fostering effective professional learning in other school environments and with other subject areas.

- Providing time for school-based reflection or follow-up', after an external professional learning experience, is important for reinforcing concepts and ensuring any issues are immediately addressed.
- Developing a clear and common understanding of drama, consistent within the school environment, is important to allow the teaching of drama to be implemented from a 'shared' perspective.
- Establishing a collaborative culture of learning in a school will assist in fostering ongoing, sustainable professional learning.
- Increased awareness and skill in teaching drama, result in new challenges for learning which emphasise general classroom management.
- Understanding the role of the 'facilitator' within professional learning has implications for school relationships.
- Support for professional learning within a school has a strong influence on motivation, pedagogical change, and the establishment of a culture of learning.
- Respect for past experiences, the creation of a 'safe space' for learning, and tailoring professional learning to the school context, motivated teachers, and were recognised as the key strengths of the professional learning process.

Each of these knowledge claims and their influence on the teaching of drama and the professional learning process is discussed below.

Knowledge Claim - Providing time for school-based reflection or follow-up', after an external professional learning experience, is important for reinforcing concepts and ensuring any issues are immediately addressed.

The nature of the professional learning, as guided by the 'facilitated action research process', encouraged the inclusion of reflection. This focus allowed for regular follow-up to professional learning activities taking place within the school context, as well as following the limited external sessions.

As described in Section 5.3, two teachers were involved in negative experiences, one within the school context and one during an external session. The positive results following immediate reflection and discussion of their negative experiences, and

resulting issues, emphasised how problematic it could be if reflection/follow-up opportunities were not provided.

This study supports the need for regular time for reflection and discussion to be embedded in any professional learning process. This inclusion is particularly relevant following external learning sessions.

Recommendation:

3. It is recommended that regular time for reflection is provided by school leaders following any external professional learning experience.

Knowledge Claim - Developing a clear and common understanding of drama, consistent within the school environment, is important to allow the teaching of drama to be implemented from a ‘shared’ perspective.

A variety of perspectives of what constituted drama existed at the beginning of the study. As shown in Figure 8.2, drama was considered to incorporate a wide variety of elements.

Figure 8.2 - Drama Is...

Musical Theatre	Mime
Analysing	Fantasy
Situational Acting	Tableaux
Action	Audience Involvement
Improvisation	Creative form of expression
Interpreting	Imaginative play
Reflecting	Theatre Sports
Stage	Mirror Acting
Technical Theatre	Role Play
Fun	Script Writing
Technique	

Developing a common understanding of drama, through reflecting on the varied uses and approaches in the classroom, allowed teachers to work more effectively together. In addition, it allowed them to ‘talk’ from a shared perspective, thereby facilitating subsequent reflection and evaluation sessions.

This area became problematic in the influence of the school leaders and the differing opinions regarding the aim and purpose of classroom drama. The dissonance in understanding within the school was evident through the comments and experiences of two teachers (Section 5.3). In both cases a lack of common understanding resulted in negative experiences and these impacted on the teaching of drama. Due to their personal belief in the value and benefit of drama in the classroom, they both continued drama use, however the approach, and the way in which its use was made public, shifted.

This study demonstrated the need for teachers and school leaders to approach the use of drama from a shared perspective. A common language and focus is required to allow confrontations and programming issues to be avoided. Communication problems appeared to be the strongest inhibiting factor between the two distinct groups evident in the school, and resulted in no common understanding of drama being developed.

As the scope of this study was unable to adequately address these issues, exploration of fostering shared understanding and communication in a school is considered important for further research (Section 8.6).

Recommendation:

4. It is recommended that a common understanding of drama be fostered by adult educators and professional learning experts early within the process of effective professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama.

Knowledge Claim - Establishing a collaborative culture of learning in a school will assist in fostering ongoing, sustainable professional learning.

...The culture of the school influences the experiences of the pupils and teachers who work in it in unplanned ways...

(Stenhouse, 1975 p40)

I recognised that for the teaching of drama to be enhanced, and any change in practice to be sustainable, a supportive culture of learning was needed in the school. My aim was to encourage the teachers involved in the professional learning to take a more active role in identifying ongoing needs for their own, and the school's, development. To do so, a supportive culture was required.

The difficulty of fostering such a culture is recognised in the following disturbing view:

...Collaborative work cultures that actively promote ongoing teacher development are very much in the minority, and are held together only by the extraordinary efforts of a few...
(Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p6)

The need for 'the few' to be replaced by 'the many' in a school supporting ongoing professional learning is critical for ensuring a sustainable culture of learning.

The existence of two separate 'cultural groups' contributed in hindering the development of a culture of learning in School Three. These groups were:

- the teachers and their classrooms; and
- the school leaders and broader culture of the school.

It was the narrower, teacher-focused culture that was being developed though the professional learning. The study revealed a dissonance occurring between these two cultural groups.

What has been referred to as the *content* (Hargreaves, 1992) of each of these cultures was causing dissonance: the "...attitudes, values, beliefs, habits, assumptions and ways of doing things..." (Hargreaves, 1992 p219). The values and beliefs, linked to general teaching as well as subject areas, shaped the investigation of the first research aim. It is with content that the greatest diversity is typically apparent, and as demonstrated in this study, it is with content that critical work should be done to support professional learning (Hargreaves, 1992).

Relationships within a 'culture', or school context, were highlighted as problematic. These relationships can be referred to as *forms* within a culture where "...patterns of relationship..." (Hargreaves, 1992 p219) are investigated. The nature of the broader school culture resulted in certain expectations existing within the relationship between teachers and school leaders. The way in which these cultures emerged in this school, resulted in a 'balkanised' teacher culture (Hargreaves, 1992). Groups had formed in the school as a result of poor communication and were characterised by indifference:

...Collaborative cultures...foster and build upon qualities of openness, trust and support between teachers and their colleagues. They capitalize on the collective expertise and endeavours of the teaching community. They acknowledge the wider dimensions of teachers' lives outside the classroom and the school...the interweaving of the personal and the professional in collaborative cultures, and the qualities of trust and sharing within those cultures, provide the most collegially supportive environment for change...

(Hargreaves, 1992 p233)

Hargreaves (1992) argues that to secure effective change in content, working with the forms needs to first take place (p220). It is only when this change occurs that an effective 'collaborative culture' can exist.

The professional learning process worked with *content*, addressing it from a narrower perspective of fostering teacher understanding of drama. It did not consider it from a broader school perspective which resulted in a lack of common understanding being developed. In addition, the *forms* or relationships were also not directly considered.

Despite the teachers achieving success in relation to classroom teaching of drama, the desire to develop a 'collaborative culture' (Hargreaves, 1992) was hindered by the inability of this study to address the forms and content of the existing culture. Detailed investigation of school cultures did not fall within the scope of this study. As a crucial area in fostering sustainable, school-based learning, this area is considered important for further research (Section 8.6).

Recommendation:

5. It is recommended that adult educators, professional learning experts and school leaders work together to foster a culture of learning in a school to allow sustainable professional learning to take place.

Knowledge Claim - Increased awareness and skill in teaching drama, result in new challenges for learning, which emphasise general classroom management and programming issues.

By the end of Cycle 1 (Term 3, 2003), attempts had been made by all teachers to incorporate drama in their classrooms. As discussed in Section 6.3.1, three clear steps were evident throughout the course of the professional learning:

- awareness;
- focused drama attempts; and
- explicit inclusion of drama.

Occurring as a direct consequence of increased skill levels, these steps demonstrate the process by which teachers increased the frequency and focus of drama in their classrooms. The three steps were important as they revealed steady progress resulting in an enhanced teaching of drama over six month's participation in school-based professional learning.

While the frequency of these attempts was limited for some teachers, the increased awareness reported, as a result of increased skill levels, was significant as a first step in enhancing the teaching of drama. New challenges, and therefore professional learning needs, were identified as a result of this increased awareness. These new focus areas included classroom management techniques and a renewed emphasis on programming and managing time effectively.

Recommendation:

6. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts be appraised of the nature of new needs and issues that may arise as a result of the change process.

Knowledge Claim - Understanding the role of the 'facilitator' within professional learning has implications for school relationships.

It became clear that due to my own increased awareness and understanding of professional learning, my role as facilitator shifted over the course of the professional learning process. My initial beliefs were that effective professional learning was collaborative and took place in a social context. This basic understanding did not alter throughout the course of the research, however, my naïve desire to avoid the complex relationships within the school became an increasingly problematic issue.

I reflected on the ‘place’ of a professional learning facilitator in relation to guiding existing school relationships. The following excerpt comes from my own journal reflection where I consider a problematic scenario in which the school leaders and the focus of the teachers may differ:

... What happens when the teacher needs and the school needs are different, or when school leaders want certain needs addressed whether they come from the teachers or not? While this didn't happen in this professional learning experience, this may be a problem in other contexts. The professional learning emphasises need identification, but the influences and ‘whose’ are addressed would be hard to control...

(Researcher Reflection - December 2003)

I began to question where the dividing line exists between working with teachers to enhance their practice and needing to address broader, more confronting school-based contextual issues. This dilemma caused me concern, as to encourage effective and sustainable classroom change, the ‘culture’ of the school needed to be addressed. Apart from fostering a culture among the small group of teachers through the ‘facilitated action research’ process, this could not be further addressed in the broader school community.

Recommendation:

7. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts acknowledge their multiple roles within a school, and work to clarify these issues to allow for a process of effective professional learning.

Knowledge Claim - Support for professional learning within a school has a strong influence on motivation, pedagogical change, and the establishment of a culture of learning.

It became clear from my past history with School Three, and from observing the current culture created by the new principal, that the teachers were lacking support and worked predominantly in a vacuum consisting of their own classrooms, and with the teachers they trusted. There was a feeling of restraint, and a lack of openness and trust, both in the school and with the school leaders that had some influence on classroom practice and the culture of the school.

Important questions regarding the culture of support in the school are raised when longer serving teachers have few expectations of support and become indifferent. This is more noticeable when those teachers who were not yet inculcated fully into the culture of the school had higher expectations. The conversations that took place during staff meetings represented what is referred to as ‘cover stories’ in which they portray themselves as “...*characters whose teacher stories fit within the acceptable range of the story of the school being lived...*” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999 p3).

The use of these ‘cover stories’ was disturbing for two reasons. First it encouraged reflections on my own teaching at the school, highlighting issues that existed for me. I began to reflect on my own time at the school and realised the various cover stories I had been living during my time in the classroom that resulted in further classroom-based isolation. When teaching at this school, I was lucky as I had two particularly supportive colleagues who were allowed into my ‘safe space’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Through this feeling of safety, we were able to converse as professionals, sharing frustration and classroom concerns. While being required to share information with the principal at the time, this was always done reluctantly. At no time did I feel comfortable with sitting down and confiding my feelings about my own practice, and about the students in my class. While the school leadership had changed by the start of the study, it became clear through my reflections that this problematic ‘culture’ was in existence long before the new principal began.

Second, the cover stories led me to realise the systemic cultural problems, and the negative implications of this for any school-based professional learning. The disquieting belief that an ongoing cultural problem existed was further sustained by the level of support reported by the teachers in the study. The discrepancy between the two newer teachers’ perceptions of support caused me particular concern for what it meant for their ongoing professional learning. While both continued to use drama in their classrooms, it became clear that the teacher receiving the least support felt less motivated about her practice:

...We haven't really discussed anything with them [school leaders] at all. There haven't been any kind of meeting...I don't really feel like they've been included in it. Whether that's good or bad I don't know, but they haven't been really involved I don't think. I think it would have been really good if we could have got some release time to have our meetings because they've always been at the end of the day...²⁴⁰

The desire for 'obvious' support through release time from the school was not set up as an expectation in the study. It would, however, have demonstrated one way in which the school leaders valued participation in this form of professional learning. Visible support by school leaders is regarded as necessary to maintain a teacher's belief in, and use of classroom drama (Garcia, 1993). While not impacting on belief about the benefits of drama to students, belief in the value of support influenced this teacher's perception of how drama is valued in the school.

Recommendation:

8. It is recommended that school leaders provide visible, open support for professional learning within their school context to encourage sustainable, effective learning.

Knowledge Claim - Respect for past experiences, the creation of a 'safe space' for learning, and tailoring professional learning to the school context, motivated teachers, and were recognised as the key strengths of the professional learning process.

The key characteristics identified as strengths of the professional learning process fell into three key areas:

- respect for past experiences;
- creation and fostering of a 'safe space' for learning; and
- tailoring to the school context provided a *motivating* effect on all staff.

No weaknesses were identified by the teachers, with the benefits of the professional learning process supporting teacher learning and considered effective in enhancing the teaching of drama.

²⁴⁰ Leanne, Interview 3 - 08.12.03

The respect for **past experiences**, and willingness to learn from them, was cited as one key reason this professional learning process was preferred. While not all past learning was located external to the school, even that taking place within the context had not respected needs, experiences or specific school contexts. As a result, the teachers found these past sessions to be meaningless and unconnected with their daily teaching. The combination of encouraging the teachers to self-identify needs and locating this learning within their school and classrooms motivated ongoing participation. They were encouraged to be self-directed learners taking increasing ownership of the style and content of their professional learning.

That the learning took place within the **safe space** of each teacher's classroom and school was a further strength of the 'facilitated action research' process. The small group and intimate nature encouraged a trusting environment fostering open reflection on classroom issues and the teaching of drama. The fostering of such a safe environment for learning could not have taken place through participation in one-off or external professional learning.

While resulting in some challenges regarding the establishment of a culture of learning, the positive results of **tailoring** the learning to the school context supports the argument that, "...efforts for teacher learning...need to take into account the unique context of school and the difficulties of changing classroom practice..." (Hoban, 2002 p41). That the teachers were able to follow a supported process of step-by-step trial and error within their own classrooms, allowed their learning to be meaningful. Positive progress further motivated participation in professional learning and encouraged the ongoing teaching of drama.

Recommendations:

9. It is recommended that any professional learning connects directly with the past learning experiences of teachers.

10. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts provide time for reflection, and assist in the creation of a 'safe space' for learning, within any professional learning process.

11. *It is recommended that effective professional learning be tailored to the school context and be school-based.*

8.3 Identification and influence of personal and contextual factors

1. To explore the factors that facilitate or constrain the teaching of drama in primary school classrooms.

A number of personal and contextual factors were identified during investigation of the first research aim as facilitating or constraining the teaching of drama. While not directly contributing to the enhancement of drama use in the classroom, the investigation of facilitating and constraining factors highlighted the importance of:

- 1 The teacher's *purpose*
- 2 The teacher as a *person*
- 3 The real world *context* in which teachers work
- 4 The *culture* of teaching: the working relationship that teachers have with their colleagues inside and outside the school.

(Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992 p5)

Considered 'claims to knowledge', each factor is briefly addressed for what it contributed to the classroom teaching of drama and to increasing understanding of professional learning for drama.

Four claims to knowledge emerged from the identified *personal* factors:

- Curriculum choice is influenced by the valuing of drama and the place of teacher beliefs.
- Pedagogical choice is influenced by four 'social' groups within a school (students, parents, colleagues and school leaders).
- Self-perceived levels of confidence and subject-based skills directly influence classroom practice.
- Pedagogical choice is influenced by experience (personal, schooling and instruction, formal education), with personal and past schooling experiences having the most impact on classroom practice.

As Phase Two ‘matured’, two further personal factors emerged: the influence of *student gender and age* and the importance of establishing a clear and common *understanding of drama*. Due to the scope of the study, gender and age issues could not be directly addressed and are important areas for further research (Section 8.6).

Three further claims to knowledge emerged from the five identified *contextual factors* constraining the teaching of drama:

- Pressures of meeting syllabus outcomes or parental expectations, and the availability of space, directly influence the inclusion of drama in the classroom.
- Time pressures negatively influenced programming decisions, classroom choice and the teaching of drama.
- Pedagogical choice, and the teaching of drama, was constrained by a lack of effective, needs-oriented, professional learning, which respected past experiences.

The additional contextual issue of *classroom management* also emerged as a result of professional learning as was discussed in a consideration of the second research aim.

The four *personal factors* and related knowledge claims are discussed below followed by the three *contextual factors*. As in the previous section, recommendations are listed at the conclusion of each knowledge claim.

Knowledge Claim - Curriculum choice is influenced by the valuing of drama and the place of teacher beliefs.

The place of teacher beliefs was referred to when considering curriculum choice and was prevalent through a discussion of general teaching practices rather than a specific discussion of drama. Consideration of the ‘value of drama’ underpinned the focus, with all teachers valuing the teaching of drama highly despite its less than frequent use in their classrooms.

The teachers provided a number of reasons supporting their belief in the benefit and value of drama in the classroom:

- encourages creativity and imagination;
- enables the expression of appreciation;
- promotes hands-on, meaningful experiences;
- engages a variety of skills;
- allows students to express what they may be unable to in words (difficult topics or troubled pasts);
- helps develop self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment; and
- develops cultural and social awareness as well as life skills.

The importance of valuing drama is important in encouraging a conscious use of drama in the classroom (Garcia, 1993).

Recommendation:

12. It is recommended that teachers acknowledge and engage with their individual beliefs regarding the valuing of drama as a basis for curriculum choice.

Knowledge Claim - Pedagogical choice is influenced by four ‘social’ groups within a school (students, parents, colleagues and school leaders).

Four areas of social influence were identified as influencing pedagogical choice: *students, parents, colleagues and school leaders*. The influence of **students** was evident for all teachers with a positive student response considered a motivating factor for pedagogical choice. **Parents** and their influence were discussed as inhibiting classroom choices and are included in the discussion of contextual factors below.

The influence of **colleagues** was not freely volunteered, leading me to question the ‘culture of teaching and learning’ (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992) in the school. An in-depth discussion of the importance of fostering such a culture has been discussed in previous knowledge claims.

Minimal information was volunteered in regard to the influence of **school leaders** during the initial part of the study. Comments presented this social influence as a constraining factor, with teachers expressing frustration about the perceived ‘pressure’ being placed on them by the school leaders.

Maintaining an awareness of the perceived place of each social influence within a school context was included to a limited extent within the professional learning process (Section 4.6). A more in-depth consideration of each of these areas and what they contribute to the culture of teaching and learning is considered important for any future professional learning of this kind.

Recommendation:

13. It is recommended that teachers acknowledge and work with the potentially conflicting views of stakeholders within their school community (students, parents, colleagues and school leaders) to provide a transparent process of pedagogical choice in their classrooms.

Knowledge Claim - Self-perceived levels of confidence, and subject-based skills, directly influence classroom practice.

The level to which a teacher felt confident and knowledgeable regarding a subject area was shown to directly link to classroom practice. The majority of teachers expressed a self-identified lack of confidence and/or skill with the use of drama which they then directly attributed to their minimal application of it in classrooms.

Being aware of confidence as a constraining factor for drama, is consistent with a focus on the ‘*teacher as a person*’ (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), and was crucial in allowing for a responsive and empathetic process of professional learning. Over the course of the study, these two areas, an increase in skill, and increased confidence, proved mutually reinforcing.

Recommendation:

14. It is recommended that effective professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama provides time for subject-based knowledge development, as well as fostering general classroom management and programming skills.

Knowledge Claim - Pedagogical choice is influenced by experience (personal, schooling and instruction, formal education), with personal and past schooling experiences having the most impact on classroom practice.

Past *personal experiences* were viewed as having a definite influence on a teacher's attitude to the creative arts in the classroom, although this 'attitude' did not necessarily translate into practice. All teachers who had experienced drama in their personal lives were positive about drama despite only two having made any attempts to incorporate it into their daily teaching. Issues with confidence and perceived skill levels, as discussed above, were two factors constraining its use.

Past *schooling experiences* were identified as influencing pedagogical choice more than influencing the teaching of drama per se. Teachers' approaches to teaching and learning were heavily influenced by their own schooling experiences. All the teachers placed value on fostering a collaborative classroom environment conducive to drama activities. The influence of *formal education* was not given much priority by these teachers, raising interesting questions regarding teacher education programs and the way in which they guide student teachers in various subject areas. While not within the scope of this study, the influence of teacher education as directly constraining or facilitating the teaching of drama, is considered important for further research (Section 8.6).

Recommendation:

15. It is recommended that teachers be made aware that pedagogical choice is influenced by past experiences and that reflection on these experiences assists in making the process of pedagogical choice explicit and transparent.

Knowledge Claim - Pressures of meeting syllabus outcomes or parental expectations, and the availability of space, directly influenced the inclusion of drama in the classroom.

Pressures of meeting syllabus outcomes, or parental expectations, were identified as having the same influence on constraining pedagogical choice. The difference between them related to the different school contexts. In the two government schools, the teachers referred to 'syllabus outcomes' as a directive that inhibited 'creative' teaching, while in the independent school, 'parents' were given the credit for constraining classroom choices.

The importance of considering where teachers place their 'locus of control' (Lefcourt, 1976) was highlighted through the identification of these contextual factors. Taking personal responsibility for classroom choice, as opposed to feeling constrained by external factors, was recognised as an important focus for effective professional learning.

The influence of 'space' was not as explicitly referred to, but was evident through anecdotal observations as constraining the teaching of drama. There was limited space in two of the three schools with the bulk of drama sessions needing to take place in classrooms. For those teachers who had attempted drama, this caused some tension with neighbouring teachers particularly when there was a potential for creative noise.

Recommendation:

16. It is recommended that teachers be made aware of contextual pressures (outcomes, parental expectations, space constraints) and work to internalise their 'locus of control' to increase control of classroom and pedagogical choices.

Knowledge Claim - Time pressures negatively influenced programming decisions, classroom choice and the teaching of drama.

Time was credited as the overarching factor constraining pedagogical choice. All teachers referred to time being 'lost', or of feeling the need for 'more time' to be available. Specific details of time constraints varied between the schools including, but not limited to specialist lessons, behaviour management issues and reporting and assessment expectations.

Time constraints, as well as a fear of change, were acknowledged as the two key factors constraining any shift in programming style suitable for encouraging the teaching of drama. The benefits of teaching thematically, or in an integrated manner, were discussed, however teachers were sceptical about how they could fit in all their teaching.

At the outset of the study, programming of teaching and learning activities was approached by all teachers in a subject-based manner. This trend contradicted the

overwhelming feeling expressed by the teachers that their style of programming should be integrated and match the way students learn. Over the course of the study, this tradition began to shift with explicit programming of drama being embedded into written programs by the beginning of Cycle 3 (Term 1, 2004).

Recommendation:

17. It is recommended that professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama address the constraining influence of time management on pedagogical choice and programming.

Knowledge Claim - Pedagogical choice, and the teaching of drama, was constrained by a lack of effective, needs-oriented, professional learning, which respected past experiences.

A lack of effective professional learning respecting needs and past experiences was identified as constraining pedagogical choice and the teaching of drama (Section 4.4.5). I considered a process of professional learning addressing these identified deficiencies necessary as one means of enhancing the teaching of drama.

The following key points were drawn from data in relation to the preferred style and location for professional learning. These points support current literature focusing on school-based and self-directed professional learning and add further weight to a shift away from external forms of development:

- modelled lessons should be used as a strategy for learning;
- professional learning should be predominantly located in the school and classroom context;
- a balanced approach to theory and practice should be evident in professional learning; and
- learning should show respect for past experiences and current needs of teachers.

The personal and contextual factors identified were significant not for what they contributed to directly enhancing the teaching of drama, but for the influence they had on the focus, style and direction of professional learning. Knowledge gained during the

research supported my belief in regard to locating professional learning within the school context and the necessity of having the teacher's self-identified needs and preferred learning styles guide the direction of their learning.

No recommendation is made for this knowledge claim due to its direct relationship to the first recommendation.

8.4 Third research aim

No new knowledge claims or recommendations emerged for the third research aim.

3. To explore the factors that influenced pedagogical change as expressed through teacher stories.

Teacher stories provided confirmation of the personal and contextual factors identified in answering the first research aim as well as emphasising noted 'change' in practice. Collectively, the stories provided a rich, holistic picture of the teachers' experiences with professional learning and drama.

The three stories were important in exemplifying personal and contextual factors that were addressed through the process of professional learning. The personal factors previously identified were:

- the place of confidence and perceived skill level; and
- the place of experience (personal, with schooling and instruction and with formal education).

The contextual factors were:

- programming;
- time pressures; and
- professional learning.

New factors emerging during professional learning were:

- classroom management;
- student gender and age; and
- establishment of a clear and common understanding of drama.

The teacher stories revealed that when lacking in confidence with a subject area such as drama, teachers focused initially on increasing their subject-based skills. They worked on developing specific techniques for drama and in ‘stockpiling’ games and activities relevant to their classrooms. Once this was achieved, the focus of preferred professional learning shifted to general classroom based issues including those of time management, programming and classroom management.

The place of student gender and age was embedded within the teachers’ daily practice. The school context may have contributed to the frequency of reference as well as a basic gender stereotyping existing in society. The place of gender and student age as an influencing factor on the teaching of drama could not be addressed in the scope of this study and has been listed as an important area for further research (Section 8.6).

8.5 List of recommendations

The following is a summary of all recommendations presented throughout the knowledge claims:

Effective professional learning for enhancing the teaching of drama

1. It is recommended that teacher needs and experiences should be directly incorporated in the planning and implementation of any school-based professional learning;
2. It is recommended that the design for effective professional learning is responsive to changing needs, expectations and events within a school context.
3. It is recommended that regular time for reflection is provided by school leaders following any external professional learning experience.
4. It is recommended that a common understanding of drama be fostered by adult educators and professional learning experts early within the process of effective professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama.

5. It is recommended that adult educators, professional learning experts and school leaders work together to foster a culture of learning in a school to allow sustainable professional learning to take place.
6. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts be appraised of the nature of new needs and issues that may arise as a result of the change process.
7. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts acknowledge their multiple roles within a school, and work to clarify these issues to allow for a process of effective professional learning.
8. It is recommended that school leaders provide visible, open support for professional learning within their school context to encourage sustainable, effective learning.
9. It is recommended that any professional learning connects directly with the past learning experiences of teachers.
10. It is recommended that adult educators and professional learning experts provide time for reflection, and assist in the creation of a 'safe space' for learning, within any professional learning process.
11. It is recommended that effective professional learning be tailored to the school context and be school-based.

Identification and influence of personal and contextual factors

12. It is recommended that teachers acknowledge and engage with their individual beliefs regarding the valuing of drama as a basis for curriculum choice.
13. It is recommended that teachers acknowledge and work with the potentially conflicting views of stakeholders within their school community (students, parents, colleagues and school leaders) to provide a transparent process of pedagogical choice in their classrooms.
14. It is recommended that effective professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama provides time for subject-based knowledge development, as well as fostering general classroom management and programming skills.
15. It is recommended that teachers be made aware that pedagogical choice is influenced by past experiences and that reflection on these experiences assists in making the process of pedagogical choice explicit and transparent.

16. It is recommended that teachers be made aware of contextual pressures (outcomes, parental expectations, space constraints) and work to internalise their ‘locus of control’ to increase control of classroom and pedagogical choices.
17. It is recommended that professional learning to enhance the teaching of drama address the constraining influence of time management on pedagogical choice and programming.

8.6 Implications for further research

Seven key areas were identified as significant for further research. Four of these directly relate to the culture within the school and the place and support of the school leaders. A further two areas are considered directly relevant to the teaching of drama in the classroom with two linking to the professional learning process.

Further research relating to the **culture within a school** and the **place of support** by the school leaders is suggested in the following areas:

- *A consideration of management and organisational structures and the influence they have on the creation of a culture of learning in schools.*

Further research needs to take place to continue investigating the way in which a ‘collaborative culture’ could be developed within schools. While the beginning of such a culture was witnessed amongst the small group of teachers in this study, work is needed to shift this collaborative emphasis to the wider school community.

- *An investigation of the influence of school leaders and parents as factors that influence pedagogical choice.*

A various times during the research, teachers cited pressure from school leaders and/or parents as influencing pedagogical choice. Further research is needed to investigate this phenomenon, considering the influence of these stakeholders.

- *An investigation of the role of support within schools and its influence on the practice of teachers.*

Further research is important in relation to ‘support’ and its influence on professional learning and pedagogical change. The role of support and development of a sustainable culture of learning should also be examined.

- *A consideration of the influence of school leaders on teacher participation in professional learning.*

A number of factors emerged in this study to motivate, or de-motivate, participation in professional learning. Further research is required to assess the influence of the school leaders as a motivational factor on participation in professional learning.

Research directly linked to further **enhancing the teaching of drama** is suggested in the following areas:

- *An investigation of the influence of gender & age bias on the teaching of drama.*

As discussed throughout the research, the influence of gender and age bias was evident for a majority of teachers. How these areas influence the teaching of drama is important for further research.

- *An investigation of the influence of primary year schooling on vocational choices in the arts.*

Further research is important for considering the influence of drama experiences during primary school years on future student vocational choices in the arts. It is anticipated that such a study would focus on the recall of such learning as engaging or disengaging student interest in the subject area.

Research linking to the **professional learning process** is suggested in the following areas:

- *An investigation of the inability of some teachers to function as self-directed learners.*

The need for further research in this area stems from concern with the inability of some teachers to self-direct, or take ownership, of the process of their learning. Future studies should consider the influence of confidence levels, past professional learning experiences and the existing culture of learning within a school.

- *An investigation of the relationship between teacher education programs and classroom teaching of drama.*

Particularly relevant within a higher education culture of budget cuts, further research is important for investigating the relationship between learning in teacher education programmes and subsequent classroom teaching of drama. A key focus in future research should consider the recognisable influence of personal schooling experience in comparison with the minimal influence of formal education.

Conclusion

This study investigated how the teaching of drama could be enhanced in primary school classrooms. While raising important issues, including the need for a collaborative culture of teaching and learning to foster sustainable change, this study involved the enhancement of drama in the classroom for all teachers. The extent and focus of drama use varied, but in all cases a positive change and growth in understanding was witnessed through participation in the professional learning.

Professional learning was identified as an effective means of encouraging pedagogical change and was implemented through a process of '*facilitated action research*'. Effective learning was found to be characterised by responsiveness, tailored to the school context and working from the needs and experiences of teachers. The style of

learning was informed by evolving teacher preference as well as through theories of action learning and situated learning.

The key outcome of this research is the professional learning process, its cycles of planning, acting and reflecting; and its responsiveness to evolving teacher needs. At the start of the study, the teachers lacked confidence in planning their own learning, however, through the collaborative process this confidence and their ability to self-direct, grew. Their increased ability and confidence is significant and will encourage ongoing commitment and motivation for professional learning.

Mark's story

I conclude this research with 'Mark's story'. During evaluation at the end of Cycle 2 (Term 4, 2003), all teachers were asked to write their own story encapsulating their experience of professional learning. Mark's story has been presented unedited and in full as a fitting conclusion to this research.

My story began as a part-time music teacher who also had a small degree of previous stage and film experience. A **really** [emphasis in original] small degree of experience...

Part time suited me extremely well. Three consecutive days per week provided me with a four-day weekend, which allowed me to pursue my studies in secondary education. With the latter nearing completion, I needed a return to full-time work.

I knew that if I proved myself at school, there may be an opportunity to take on the supervision of a creative and performing arts department within the junior schools. This was the job that I had dreamed of and, since I was happy at the school, the job was perfect.

There was just one question. Could I actually do the job? Yes. Would I have benefited from staff training before taking it on? Even bigger, more emphatic, "yes!"

How perfectly time life events can sometimes be. With the prospect of taking on a new role came the opportunity to undertake staff development in the subject area in question. How lucky I felt to be offered this opportunity. How much I hoped that it would work!

Fortunately for me, it did work, and in such a way that it surpassed my own expectations. I experienced the most effective staff training ever - a tailor made programme that began and ended with my own needs, my colleagues' needs, the school's needs and the students' needs. I felt like I was really being trained for something.

...And, it worked. I am now in the role that was dangled as the proverbial carrot and I am loving it. Why? I feel that I have been given concrete resources and experiences from which to draw and feel that, should I need to find more resources or more support, I know exactly where to find them.

This story is unlike other stories, as there is no end to it. I will continue to learn more about what I'm teaching and how I do it and, I trust, I will adjust my teaching according to what I learn. One day, my teaching at [current school] will end, but I foresee that the story of creative and performing arts as this school will continue far, far into the future.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Mark, 6 Month Survey

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Appendix 3.2 - Teacher details - Schools One and Two

Teachers - School One

Three teachers took part from School One, two females and one male. All three were teaching Stage 3 classes (Year 5, Year 5/6 composite and Year 6). The male teacher in the school was also the Deputy Principal.

All three had extensive teaching experience, having been working in schools for an average of 10 years.

All three teachers were participating in a parallel study and as while voluntarily participating in this research, had been pre-selected for the larger study.

Only one of the three had any significant experience with the creative arts. Abbey had a strong background in music and was instrumental in running the choir in the school. Greg and Catherine had a personal interest in the arts, but were not extending this interest into their classrooms.

Teachers - School Two

Three teachers took part from School Two, one female and two males. As with School One, all were teaching Stage 3 classes (Year 5, 5/6 composite and Year 6). Daniel was also working as the Deputy Principal in the school.

The three teachers from School Two were also participating in the larger, parallel study, but voluntarily consented to be part of this research.

The teachers from School Two had less experience than from School One. One teacher having only taught for one year prior to participation in the research.

Kate was the only teacher with any significant background in the creative arts, with her speciality area being dance. She regularly performed in this discipline outside of the school environment. Daniel was a competent guitar player, however until participation in the study kept this skill hidden from his students.

Appendix 3.3 - Transcripts of classroom descriptions by teachers

LEANNE

“...I think definitely it’s not just a classroom; it’s a learning environment. I definitely see it as that. I try and make displays things that they can learn from...I like to work in groups, differentiated groups. Even though I’ve only got a small class. I used to teach 35, so that was quite a big group so I’m used to having to work in groups and kids being independent and the girls are learning that now. They’re not used to being independent at all, but they’re getting much better...everybody gets an equal share of my time, otherwise I’ve found...and I think this is more from experience of having a big class, but you always give all your time to the weaker ones, always, and it’s not really fair on the bright ones, and the middle ones don’t get stretched, and the bright ones don’t get stretched...I try and be very, very positive with the kids, even when their work’s not their best or whatever, especially with the girls, I mean girls are very sensitive and you have to be really careful about what you say and try and give them a lot of a boost and they lack confidence a lot, I think with the girls. What else? I like to try and incorporate IT [information technology], but it’s not very easy here because we don’t really have the resources... I like to see myself as a role model for the kids and...I like to think that they see me as a role model. You know, I want to be like her because she works hard...probably role model’s the wrong word, maybe motivator...motivator, yeah. I like them to like that I’m happy that they’re doing this, or trying their best or working it out...”

Leanne Interview 1 - 24.06.03

JENNY

“...I suppose my role is just there to provide props or things that they need rather than obviously not being in there guiding them. Whereas if we’re doing role plays in the classroom here where it’s more a HSIE type unit and it might be on, I don’t know, safety or something like that, or rules in their family where they have to act out what rules they have in their family and things like that would be obviously more teacher guided. In that respect too, where they’re putting on a play...oh not always, sometimes they’ll get into a group and organize their own little play with a play-mate and themselves and bring all this with company, and other times it’s more teacher directed...”

Jenny, Interview 1 – 26.06.03

AMY

“...I try to make it as unstructured as possible, so they can learn and remember from it, because if it’s coming from them then they will remember it more than if it’s coming from me... sometimes they go down a path that you hadn’t even thought of that opens up this whole new area, so you’ve got to deal with that as well. Because they’ve got huge interests and if their ideas are taking them that way, then you have to...you can’t just say, “Ok, well I hadn’t really thought about that, so let’s go back to what I said”. You’ve got to deal with that area first, because otherwise they’ll go away from the lesson going, “Well, what about my idea?” So you have to try and talk and discuss through that idea first... “

Amy, Interview 1 – 17.06.03

MARK

“...I think it’s an area where everybody collaborates in order to establish the ground rules... I had every class from Year 3 up decide what it was that was going to be really important to them when they came into the music room. So we’ve got a set of things there that say, “In the music room, we always...”... and we always do whatever it is that’s there...so that the students actually have ownership of how the coordination of this room came about to be the way it is. The other thing that happens from a housekeeping point of view...I mean, I obviously make decisions on where everything goes and all of that sort of that, simply because that’s just logistics, but I give the students...twice a year I give them a questionnaire that just has four questions. It has, what is it about the music room that makes it easy for you to learn? What is it about the music room that makes it hard for you to learn? They don’t write their name on it because if they want to be critical they don’t need to have the fear of being held accountable for what they’ve written. And the second two questions are, what is it about me as a teacher that makes it easy for you to learn? And what is it about me as a teacher that makes it hard for you to learn ...”

Mark, Interview 1 – 30.07.03

SALLY

“...my role is to sort of, organize and that sort of comes into programs and getting resources ready and facilitate learning and to create motivation and especially with reading, I think it’s the motivation and the writing, so we do lots of reading out of their stories, they get, I guess feedback on how they’ve done and with reading, girls...I find it so easy in a girl’s class, because there’s usually a few stars and once they start reading some books that are a bit above the others, the others always want to read and try to emulate them, so there’s never any problem with homework or anything...in general terms...a happy classroom...get a good balance of what they’re learning, not just to specialize in things that you like, but to balance everything. So I guess handwriting always comes last laughs... to make them articulate and able to say what they want so they can make sense, and arouse their curiosity so they feel they can have a viewpoint and say it and it’s appreciated by people...to set up a situation where they develop their own discipline...I mean, not calling up, putting your hands up, the smallest thing, developing that sense of pride in their own work..”

Sally, Interview 1 – 23.06.03

Appendix 3.4 - Phase One semi-structured interview points

Subject Area: Interview 1 Notes (Phase One)

<i>Field Notes</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<p><i>Ask teachers questions in these areas:</i></p> <p>How they are going with work on the EAPI project</p> <p>Beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative Arts• Drama• Teaching and Learning <p>Experiences (creative arts)</p> <p>Drama they are currently doing/done in past (in teaching)</p> <p>Programming style preferred</p> <p>Past experiences with professional learning</p> <p>GIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent letter• Questionnaire• Reflective Journal	

Appendix 3.5 - Phase Two semi-structured interview points

Subject Area: Interview 1 Notes (Phase Two)

<i>Field Notes</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<p>Ask teachers questions in these areas</p> <p>Beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Arts • Drama • Teaching and Learning <p>Experiences with drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal • schooling • formal education <p>Drama they are currently doing/done in past (in teaching)</p> <p>Programming style preferred</p> <p>Past experiences with professional learning</p> <p>Style of professional development they think would be most effective to help them use drama better (and what they feel they may personally need)</p> <p>GIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent letter • Questionnaire • Reflective Journal 	

Appendix 3.6 - Example of conversation notes

C32 Amy - Coded 7/8/03

1 *Sat down with Amy in her classroom after school and had a chat regarding*
2 *some of the drama she had been doing and how she was feeling.*
3
4 Amy explained some of the drama games she had been doing with her class
5 • Puppets
6 • Clapping
7 • Trust games
8 • Train
9 She said that they all went really well and that the girls loved them
10
11 She explained she was having a bit of a problem with the teacher next door
12 to her. The wall between their classrooms is quite thin and many of the
13 drama games that Amy was doing and wants to do were noisy. As a result
14 the other teacher was getting upset. She felt that these outside issues were
15 restricting her use of drama. In addition, moving the students into an
16 unfamiliar environment – another room, would also create issues.
17
18 Amy told me she had been doing lots of role plays and that the girls really
19 loved these as well.
20
21 She described an interesting experience when the students were mixed cross-
22 grade and she did drama. She felt that when the students were working
23 boy/girl that they were less responsive than when they worked with same
24 sex friends, but were ok. She believes that same sex groupings flow better
25 with the drama. She discussed one student from India and commented that
26 this student was not responding in the drama. She wondered if this was a
27 cultural thing or a personality thing. We discussed this issue a little in
28 relation to the impact it was having on other students. She didn't believe it
29 was. She also did feel that this Indian student was still enjoying the drama
30 sessions, just not participating.
31
32 *Amy was very vibrant during out reflective conversation. She shared lots of*
33 *stories of her current experiences and was expressive about past experiences*
34 *with drama and her students responses*

Games

Staff tolerance

Location

Role Play
Enjoyment

Gender

Cultural
Personality

Enjoyment

Appendix 3.7 - Questionnaire

Working with Teachers: beliefs, experiences and drama

Thank you for participating in this project. This questionnaire should not take you longer than 10-15 minutes to complete and will provide some general information. The first part asks you to provide some basic information about your training and teaching background. Part 2 asks you to discuss any prior professional development experiences you may have had, and Part 3 asks some preliminary questions on your beliefs and thoughts about the creative arts and drama.

Part 1 – Background Information

Name.....Sex M F Age (optional).....

Qualifications.....
.....

Institution and date of completion of teacher training

Current school and grade being taught.....

Previous grades taught and regions

What are the areas in which you would identify yourself as a specialist?
.....

Have you ever worked as a specialist teacher? Yes No If yes, in what area?

Part 2 – Professional Development

Please describe any activities that have worked well for you in any professional development programmes you have attended. If there are activities or techniques you found less productive, please identify these also.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Please describe any creative arts professional development in which you have participated?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(please write on reverse if more space is required)

Part 3 – The creative arts

Have you had any training in an area of the creative arts outside of the school environment? E.g. dance lessons, piano lessons

.....
.....

Do you currently participate in any creative arts based activities outside of the school environment? If so, in which areas?

.....
.....

How would you rank your confidence level in teaching the various areas of the creative arts?

Drama Not at all - - - - Not very - - - - I get by - - - - Somewhat - - - - Very

Music Not at all - - - - Not very - - - - I get by - - - - Somewhat - - - - Very

Visual Art Not at all - - - - Not very - - - - I get by - - - - Somewhat - - - - Very

Dance Not at all - - - - Not very - - - - I get by - - - - Somewhat - - - - Very

Please provide a brief description of the following terms and how they may be used in primary school classrooms

Drama

.....
.....
.....
.....

Music

.....
.....
.....
.....

Visual Art

.....
.....
.....
.....

Dance

.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix 3.8 - Six month written survey

NB When given to participants, room was left for responses.

Six Month Survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. With reference to the process of professional learning undertaken, please comment on the following points. If you need more space, please turn over or attach a separate page.

The Professional Learning Process

Please comment on:

- Strengths of the process
- Weaknesses of the process
- Preferred/beneficial activities within the process
- Least preferred/least beneficial activities within the process
- Frequency of sessions
- ‘Personal Professional Development Plan’: its inclusion and negotiation
- Inclusion of reflective journals
- Blend of individual and group sessions
- Tailoring to specific school context

Personal – Impact of Professional Learning

Please comment on:

- Changes in practice
(Has your participation influenced your teaching practice? If so, how and is this significant? Will it influence your future practice?)
- Result of professional learning process
(Please describe any progress, or lack of progress, you feel you have made. Consider this professional learning process as opposed to past professional learning experiences)
- Expectations
(Did the professional learning process so far meet your expectations? What are your expectations for professional learning in the next twelve months?)

Story

As discussed in our interview, please attach your story of this professional learning experience so far. This need be no more than 1-2 pages, covering your thoughts about this journey.

Thank once again for being part of my study and I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Appendix 3.9 - Coding of data (excerpt from spreadsheet)

T & L (Gen)	Volume	Subject-based	Child-centered	Discovery	Student Interests	Integration	Parents	Visual/Oral	Gender
	18:107-109	18:351-353	18:552-563	18:568-579, 636	18:107-208	18:518-522, 600-612 C45:10-30, 23-27 (M), 44-45	18:575-583, 587-612, 623-632	18:626-629	C34:193-197, 202-219
		112:236-255					C45:89-93 C27:169-177		110:46-51 19:124-128, 193
							111:79, 99-103 112:236-255		
T & L (Gen) cont	Personal Skill	Classroom Env	Resources	BST	Creativity	Tact Knowledge	Meaningful	Relationship	Behaviour
	11:173, 59-63	110:23-28	110:52-68	C27:169-177	C27:169-177	112:321-355	112:372-374	112:507-514	112:559-561
	18:82-84	112:451-463, 515-525, 529-534		112:440-447	112:404-410 19:224-225				
		19:120-135							
T & L (Style)	Presentation	Teacher Directed	Guide/Facilitator	Flexibility	Observer	Groupwork	Positive	Role Model	Motivator
	18:58-60	18:60	18:166-176, 186-190, 208-209	18:195-197	11:68-87	110:29-46	110:45-51	110:72-79	110:76-79 19:120-123
		17:34	18:82						
			19:120-122						
T & L (Drama)	Guidance	Integration	Visual Aid	Dissatisfaction	Structure	Confidence	Student Age	Parent Expect	Gender
	18:48-50	18:68-81 (S), 97 (H), 104-106 (E), 113-115, 124-125 (M), 328, 621-623 (M)	18:82	18:106-115	18:173-176, 176-181, 383-386	112:316	18:332-335, 379-381, 396-399, 444-453	18:334-335, 587-612, 617-621	18:353-368, 381-386, 396-399, 448-451
		C34:25-26 (A), 45-48 (H)			111:94-96	189:38	C25:18-21		C32:22-26 147-159, 180-194
		C45:169-171, 179-180					C34:10-15		
		114:35-42					C48:16-19		114:52-88
		C27:133-135					114:64-68, 70-72		C36:147-148 C23:6-9
		C49:16-20					112:77-79		
		C36:34-36					13:37-44		
		C55:25-33					19:99-107		
		138:115-154					138:143-152, 159-164		
T & L (Drama) cont	Class Mgmt	Incidental	Support	Safe Environment	Performance	Valuing	Cultural	Teacher Exp	Syllabus
175	C34:35-39	C34:35-39	C34:104-123	133	C48:21-25	111:277-279	C32:28-31	112:178-183	383-385

Appendix 3.10 - Transcribed interview example

110 Coded - Leanne Interview 1 24/6/03

99
100 L: Maths and English.
101
102 R: So your HSIE and Science and stuff is just programmed activity based,
103 or not really?
104
105 L: I'm not really happy with my...yeah...that's something that I need to
106 develop more my Science and HSIE. It's not much of a focus in the school,
107 it's just that we haven't got the scope and sequence, it's all a bit wishy-
108 washy. That's changing now, I think, they're starting to change it a bit now,
109 but because it's all a bit wishy-washy, it's difficult when you haven't got
110 this to work from, you've got nothing to work from, it's kind of like, you do
111 what you kind of need, well you know...
112
113 R: I know what you mean. Sometimes I wish I could interview myself. So,
114 Creative Arts, I mean, obviously you've got a great love of Visual Arts...
115
116 L: I love doing Visual Art.
117
118 R: So, do you program for that explicitly.
119
120 L: Yes.
121
122 R: So, for Visual Arts you do.
123
124 L: Yes, I do. But it's not how it really should be. It should be more of a
125 skill. It's more of a... my program is more, kind of, this links in with what
126 we're doing, or this is going to be fun, or... it should be more, I know it
127 should be more skill based so we should focus on an artist and we should do
128 this, I know how I should do it, but because I'm able to do what I like, it's
129 kind of a bit tempting to do all the fun things with the kids, but I should
130 really be... you know, a bit more structured than my art.
131
132 R: Now, Drama. Have you programmed for drama at all?
133
134 L: No.
135
136 *Asked Leanne to talk about her personal experiences with drama and the*
137 *creative arts*
138
139 L: No, not at all... The only training I've had... in the UK we have a really
140 big, it's... to be a uni qualified teacher you get a lot of support and there a
141 lot of courses available to send you on, I don't know if its so much over
142 here, but it's a real huge support thing and the one that... the burrow of
143 London I was working in had a really good uni qualified program and they
144 had a drama module... cause they send you off on a course every Thursday
145 afternoon and so, one of them was drama, which was good, but... that's all
146 I've had.
147

Subject-based

Problems

Visual Art

Subject-based

Integration

Drama

Drama

Appendix 3.11 - Collated data example

Professional Learning - General

Context Based

Beginning

But probably in terms of how teach staff, is teaching them various drama games that they can actually play with their class according to the class that they have because the games that you might play in year 6 will be totally different to the games that you would play in Transition B. Getting, I think, trying to, as you say, somebody who can look at a science topic, a HSIE topic from a dramatic point of view...um...some people look at it as facts and analysis and data collection, and when you've got the pinnacle there with Heather and myself. Heather sees it as scientific research, whereas I see it as an opportunity to become explorers in the rainforest. (I8:413-421)

During

So when you've got those different attitudes which I know happens on staff development days. We go in, some of us think, oh we're going to do program differentiation today, fantastic! And someone else will say, I've learnt how to program differentiate, my program is so old that the pages are turning yellow, why do I need to go in there and have another day on it. That sort of in-servicing I think is useless because it doesn't ensure that everyone gets something out of it. Longitudinal study does because people have to whether they want to or not they've got to address what they've done and they've got to at least discuss it. (I17:168-177)

Required Performance

Beginning

I particularly like the fact that we have to do assembly items, that we have to do Chapel Plays, because it does force teachers to think dramatically. We all know that they're annoying at times, because they do take time... (I8:26-429)

Quality

During

"...You go into a drama exercise and unless you strip everything away, you don't get anything out of it. So, I thought, this is fun, I haven't done this for a long time. I'll go in and I'll be whatever they want me to be and go right into it. That was working really well up until we had a lesson in the afternoon with not very an inspiring lecturer who was obviously not well prepared and that was fine, we could all cope with that as it was, but what had happened was she was talking about experiences that you could give children in order to integrate drama with art..." Teacher 4 went on to say that the ideas were terrific, but that it was in the presentation. Skills were mentioned, but that it was very unpractical. The leader made the suggestion that they could do some of the ideas, but that they were running out of time. (C34:67-79)

Appendix 4.1 - Details of school contextual details

- *School population (numbers, student backgrounds e.g. international students, parental influence on the school)*

School Three has a student population of approximately 300 students. Students are predominantly Anglo-Saxon, however an increase in Korean and Japanese students has occurred in recent years. There is a small mix of students from other nationalities including Brazilian and German.

Parents have a notable influence on the school environment and are encouraged to regularly communicate with teachers through student diaries and interviews. The interview process is formalised at key points in the school year including the start of Term 1, and following the presentation of reports early Term 2.

- *Class sizes and breakdown (single sex classes)*

Students are divided into single sex classes, despite sharing the same school campus. Boy's classes are generally larger than girls averaging approximately 24 boys per class. Girl's class sizes range from approximately 9 students to 26 depending on the grade. There is a notable intake of students in Year 3, where some class sizes can increase by up to 10 students.

- *Available facilities (including specialist teachers, specialist rooms e.g. computer lab and music room)*

Specialist teachers are used widely in the school for subjects including: music, computer studies, physical education and a specialty language (depending on the year). The students have access to a dedicated computer room, comprising 30 Macintosh computers and two printers. They attend classes in this room, but also can access computers at dedicated lunch time sessions.

The school also provides a specialist music room and hall for indoor sports activities. At the time of the research had an additional 'media room' which could be utilised by teachers for various activities requiring more space than available in their classrooms.

- *School report and assessment expectations*

Teachers are required to conduct regular reporting of student learning through both anecdotal and formal assessment. They are provided with a pre-determined report format within which to present this cumulative assessment to parents. Minimal room for comments is provided with the reporting being predominantly grade-based.

In addition to the school-based reporting, students in Years 3 and 5 also participate in the NSW Basic Skills Test and are encouraged to participate in external testing such as the NSW Mathematics Competition.

Appendix 5.1 - Revised ‘Personal Professional Learning Plans’

Personal Professional Development Plan (Revised)

Jenny

Identified area of need:
Drama Up skilling

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

Session	Drama Up skilling session
Participants	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
Focus	Part 1: What is drama? + Syllabus, management strategies (general) Part 2: drama games, practical examples appropriate to stage of integrated activities
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Construction of list of integrated drama activities for each stage - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples

Session	Team Teaching
Participants	Jenny/P6 (Buddies)
Focus	Develop effective use of drama through team teaching
Outline	Jenny to work with P6 buddies on a joint drama creation activity based on Transition’s theme of ‘Dinosaurs’. Reader’s Theatre based activity where the older children help organise the young ones to act out sections of a story

Session	Ongoing – Trial and Error
Participants	Jenny
Focus	Practice of strategies being modelled and ongoing reflection
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try out strategies from up skilling sessions - Reflect on these attempts - Chat with RD regarding drama attempts in the classroom

Session	Group Reflection
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Share stories and examples of has been tried plus share frustrations and successes
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share stories of drama attempts in classroom for ‘lessons learned’ and ‘good examples for future reference’ - Discuss frustrations and successes - Discuss impact on teaching practice, students, classroom environment (any changes?) - Opportunity for teachers to articulate what they have learned and the knowledge gained in relation to the use of drama

Session	Literature discussion
Participants	Jenny/RD
Focus	Discuss ideas and issues raised in the literature regarding drama in the early years including discussion of applicability of games and ideas
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss various pieces of literature and reflect on how these relate to current practice. - Consider how this ‘new knowledge’ may or may not help in future teaching

Plan Suggestions – Integration Strategies

Session	Group ‘Show and Tell’
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Developing integration strategies for the use of drama
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to share ways they have or believe they could have integrated drama into daily teaching - Group brainstorm of integration strategies for one topic area for each teacher - Example given of Amazon integrated drama work by Alison Taylor - Further programming style examples given by RD

Session	Ongoing
Participants	Jenny
Focus	Reflection on success of the integrated use of drama in her classroom
Outline	<p>Due to the teaching level drama is most often ‘integrated’ at this level not used as an art form – this could be considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attempts to integrate drama into daily teaching topic areas - Reflection encouraged in regard to these attempts (positive and negative) - Regular chats with RD regarding what has been happening in the classroom

Personal Professional Development Plan (Revised)

Amy

Identified area of need:
Time Management

Plan Suggestions – Time Management

<i>Session</i>	Preliminary Time Management Exercises
<i>Participants</i>	Amy
<i>Focus</i>	To consider current time management to allow further planning of appropriate time management sessions
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss current purposeful time management strategies - Keep a daily time log as modelled on Haynes (1994) - Consider the questions on the time analyser

<i>Session</i>	Session 1 of Time Management (literature)
<i>Participants</i>	Amy
<i>Focus</i>	To discuss based on literature the areas to focus on for more effective time management
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RD to provide some literature to discuss with Amy - emphasis of the literature to be based on programming and daily planning strategies as well as points/issues revealed from the completion of the daily time log - formulation of some practical changes that could be made in the J5 classroom to assist better time management practices

<i>Session</i>	Session 2 of Time Management (practical)
<i>Participants</i>	Amy
<i>Focus</i>	To consider the impact of changes that had been attempted in the J5 classroom
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RD and Amy to discuss what time management strategies had been attempted in the J5 classroom - Verbal reflection of the benefits/problems/issues associated with these attempts

Once the Professional Development reaches this point, the remainder of the path should be clearer in regard to the focus of future sessions

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

<i>Session</i>	Ongoing – Trial and Error
<i>Participants</i>	Amy
<i>Focus</i>	Further use of drama strategies and ongoing reflection
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try out any new strategies from up skilling sessions - Reflect on these attempts (verbally with RD and in written form) - Chat with RD regarding drama attempts in the classroom

<i>Session</i>	Drama Up skilling session
<i>Participants</i>	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
<i>Focus</i>	Taking part as co-presenter for the stage-based section of the workshop. Focus therefore the dissemination of ideas and experiences in the use of classroom drama

Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work through examples of the Stage 3 syllabus with teachers - Present stories of her own experience with drama in her classroom as examples for the teachers <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Construction of list of integrated drama activities for each stage - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples
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Session	Group Reflection
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Share stories and examples of has been tried plus share frustrations and successes
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share stories of drama attempts in classroom for ‘lessons learned’ and ‘good examples for future reference’ - Discuss frustrations and successes - Discuss impact on teaching practice, students, classroom environment (any changes?) - Opportunity for teachers to articulate what they have learned and the knowledge gained in relation to the use of drama

Plan Suggestions – Integration Strategies

Session	Group ‘Show and Tell’
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Developing integration strategies for the use of drama
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to share ways they have or believe they could have integrated drama into daily teaching - Group brainstorm of integration strategies for one topic area for each teacher - Example given of Amazon integrated drama work by Amy - Further programming style examples given by RD

Session	Ongoing
Participants	Amy
Focus	Reflection on success of the integrated use of drama in her classroom
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attempts to integrate new drama into daily teaching topic areas - Reflection encouraged in regard to these attempts (positive and negative) - Regular chats with RD regarding what has been happening in the classroom

Personal Professional Development Plan (Revised) Leanne

Identified area of need:
Drama Up skilling
Integration Strategies

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

<i>Session</i>	Drama Up skilling session
<i>Participants</i>	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
<i>Focus</i>	Part 1: What is drama? + Syllabus, management strategies (general) Part 2: drama games, practical examples appropriate to stage of integrated activities
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Construction of list of integrated drama activities for each stage - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples

<i>Session</i>	Ongoing – Trial and Error
<i>Participants</i>	Leanne
<i>Focus</i>	Practice of strategies being modelled and ongoing reflection
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try out strategies from up skilling sessions - Reflect on these attempts - Chat with RD regarding drama attempts in the classroom

<i>Session</i>	Team Teaching
<i>Participants</i>	Leanne/Sally
<i>Focus</i>	Develop effective use of drama through team teaching
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modelling of activities, games and management techniques for drama in the classroom - Collaborative preparation of drama session <p><i>This will be the plan, but time is a factor that needs to be considered</i></p>

<i>Session</i>	Group Reflection
<i>Participants</i>	All project participants
<i>Focus</i>	Share stories and examples of has been tried plus share frustrations and successes
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share stories of drama attempts in classroom for ‘lessons learned’ and ‘good examples for future reference’ - Discuss frustrations and successes - Discuss impact on teaching practice, students, classroom environment (any changes?) - Opportunity for teachers to articulate what they have learned and the knowledge gained in relation to the use of drama

Session	Drama Workshop
Participants	Leanne/Mark
Focus	EDA Primary Teachers Drama Day
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drama Up skilling sessions - Drama and literacy presentation - Drama and assessment presentation - Cross-Arts and Cross-Curricular Workshop

BI	Modelled lesson
Participants	Leanne/RD
Focus	Team teach/observe a drama session being conducted with J3
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RD to provide outline of the session prior to the day - RD to lead drama session with Leanne assisting and observing - RD and Leanne to have verbal reflection session following - Leanne to reflect in journal on session

Plan Suggestions – Integration Strategies

Session	Group ‘Show and Tell’
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Developing integration strategies for the use of drama
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to share ways they have or believe they could have integrated drama into daily teaching - Group brainstorm of integration strategies for one topic area for each teacher - Example given of Amazon integrated drama work by Amy - Further programming style examples given by RD

Session	Ongoing
Participants	Leanne
Focus	Reflection on success of the integrated use of drama in her classroom
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attempts to integrate drama into daily teaching topic areas - Reflection encouraged in regard to these attempts (positive and negative) - Regular chats with RD regarding what has been happening in the classroom

Personal Professional Development Plan (Revised) Mark

Identified area of need:
Drama Up skilling
Drama programming/specialist
subject

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

Session	Drama Up skilling session
Participants	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
Focus	Part 1: What is drama? + Syllabus, management strategies (general) Part 2: drama games, practical examples appropriate to stage of integrated activities
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Construction of list of integrated drama activities for each stage - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples

Session	Ongoing – Trial and Error
Participants	Mark
Focus	Practice of strategies being modelled and ongoing reflection
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try out strategies from up skilling sessions during scheduled drama in specialist music lessons - Reflect on these attempts - Chat with RD regarding drama attempts in the classroom

Session	Group Reflection
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Share stories and examples of has been tried plus share frustrations and successes
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share stories of drama attempts in classroom for ‘lessons learned’ and ‘good examples for future reference’ - Discuss frustrations and successes - Discuss impact on teaching practice, students, classroom environment (any changes?) - Opportunity for teachers to articulate what they have learned and the knowledge gained in relation to the use of drama

Session	Drama Workshop
Participants	Leanne/Mark
Focus	EDA Primary Teachers Drama Day
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drama Up skilling sessions - Drama and literacy presentation - Drama and assessment presentation - Cross-Arts and Cross-Curricular Workshop

Session	Modelled lesson
Participants	Mark/RD
Focus	Team teach/observe a drama session being conducted with a Junior School class
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark & RD to discuss and jointly plan session - RD to lead drama session with Mark assisting and observing - RD and Mark to have verbal reflection session following - Mark to reflect in journal on session

Plan Suggestions – Integration Strategies

Session	Group ‘Show and Tell’
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Developing integration strategies for the use of drama
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to share ways they have or believe they could have integrated drama into daily teaching - Group brainstorm of integration strategies for one topic area for each teacher - Example given of Amazon integrated drama work by Amy - Further programming style examples given by all teachers including example programming extremes by Mark

Session	Ongoing
Participants	Mark
Focus	Reflection on the integrated use of drama with music in his classroom
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection and discussion on the possibility of integrating drama into daily teaching topic areas (positive and negative) - Reflection on the curricular issues arising in specialist lessons integrating in the arts - Regular chats with RD regarding any attempts to do so in the classroom

Plan Suggestions – Drama Programming/Specialist Subject

Session	Discussion – Syllabus re drama as specialist subject
Participants	Mark/RD
Focus	Issues consideration for beginning ongoing drama program
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflective discussion regarding the place of drama as a specialist subject within TPHS school context - Reflective discussion on issues to be aware of when introducing drama including impact on other staff members - Discussion and setting of overall aims and perceived starting points for students - Further detailed discussion of syllabus expectations regarding forms and elements of drama

Session	Programming
Participants	Mark/RD
Focus	Plan and establish drama program
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go through examples of drama units and exercises (pre-printed) - RD to present examples of units used by her - Work together to develop program outline for 2004 drama specialist subject

<i>Session</i>	Modelled lesson (2004)
<i>Participants</i>	Mark/RD
<i>Focus</i>	Team teach/observe a drama session being conducted with Junior School class
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jointly plan session based on program developed- RD to model session with Mark team teaching- Reflective discussion to follow session

Personal Professional Development Plan (Revised) Sally

Identified area of need:
Management Strategies
Integration Strategies

Plan Suggestions – Time Management

<i>Session</i>	Preliminary Time Management Exercises
<i>Participants</i>	Ally
<i>Focus</i>	To consider current time management to allow further planning of appropriate time management sessions
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss current purposeful time management strategies - Keep a daily time log as modelled on Haynes (1994) - Consider the reflection questions regarding daily log

<i>Session</i>	Session 1 of Time Management (literature)
<i>Participants</i>	Sally
<i>Focus</i>	To discuss based on literature the areas to focus on for more effective time management
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RD to provide some literature to discuss with Sally - emphasis of the literature to be based on programming and daily planning strategies as well as points/issues revealed from the completion of the daily time log - formulation of some practical changes that could be made in the J1 classroom to assist management practices

<i>Session</i>	Session 2 of Time Management (practical)
<i>Participants</i>	Sally
<i>Focus</i>	To consider the impact of changes that had been attempted in the J1 classroom
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RD and Sally to discuss what time management strategies had been attempted in the J1 classroom - Verbal and written reflection of the benefits/problems/issues associated with these attempts

<i>Session</i>	Literature discussion
<i>Participants</i>	Sally/RD
<i>Focus</i>	Discuss ideas and issues raised in the literature regarding management strategies in the classroom
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss various pieces of literature and reflect on how these relate to current practice. - Consider how this ‘new knowledge’ may or may not help in future teaching

Plan Suggestions – Drama Up skilling

Session	Ongoing – Trial and Error
Participants	Sally
Focus	Further use of drama strategies and ongoing reflection
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try out any new strategies from up skilling sessions - Reflect on these attempts - Chat with RD regarding ongoing drama use in the classroom

Session	Drama Up skilling session
Participants	All Junior School staff, split into stages for practical session
Focus	Reinforcement of strategies for drama use in the classroom (some known and some perhaps new)
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of games and activities to be modelled + management strategies - Brainstorm session regarding what drama is and its place in the classroom - Stage based discussion of syllabus and appropriate drama strategies - Teachers to share stories and experiences of past drama use - Consideration of good websites with practical examples

Session	Team Teaching
Participants	Leanne/Sally
Focus	Develop effective use of drama through team teaching + be a model/coach for Leanne in regard to practical application of drama
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modelling of activities, games and management techniques for drama in the classroom - Collaborative preparation of drama session <p><i>This will be the plan, but time is a factor that needs to be considered</i></p>

Session	Group Reflection
Participants	All project participants
Focus	Share stories and examples of has been tried plus share frustrations and successes
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share stories of drama attempts in classroom for ‘lessons learned’ and ‘good examples for future reference’ - Discuss frustrations and successes - Discuss impact on teaching practice, students, classroom environment (any changes?) - Opportunity for teachers to articulate what they have learned and the knowledge gained in relation to the use of drama

Plan Suggestions – Integration Strategies

<i>Session</i>	Group ‘Show and Tell’
<i>Participants</i>	All project participants
<i>Focus</i>	Developing integration strategies for the use of drama
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers to share ways they have or believe they could have integrated drama into daily teaching - Group brainstorm of integration strategies for one topic area for each teacher - Examples given of Amazon integrated drama work by Amy + any other work by different teachers - Further programming style examples given by RD

<i>Session</i>	Ongoing
<i>Participants</i>	Sally
<i>Focus</i>	Reflection on success of the integrated use of drama in her classroom
<i>Outline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attempts to integrate new drama into daily teaching topic areas - Reflection encouraged in regard to these attempts (positive and negative) - Regular chats with RD regarding what has been happening in the classroom

Appendix 5.2 - 'Curtains Up on Drama' program



Curtains Up on Drama K-6

Program 2003

(Educational Drama Association of NSW
In association with
Sydney Theatre Company)

9.00-9.30am	<i>Registration</i>	
9.30-10.10am	Welcome - Elizabeth Surbey (EDA), Emma Harris (STC) Keynote Address – Mary Mooney (University of Western Sydney), Merrilyn Jenkins (Principal),	
10.10-11.10am	Up skilling 1 <i>Demystifying Drama vocab</i> <i>Drama warm-ups, games</i> <i>Playbuilding</i> Alana Hicks (Yarrawarra P.S.)	Up skilling 2 <i>Manipulating the Elements of Drama</i> Barbara Poston-Anderson (University of Technology, Sydney)
11.10-11.25am	<i>Morning Tea Break</i>	
11.25-11.45pm 11.45-12.45	What's the Meaning of This? <i>The Creative Arts Syllabus</i> <i>Creative Arts Literacies</i> <i>Approaches to Assessment</i>	Reg Newitt (DET – CEO Creative Arts), Sally Hogan (DET Consultant), Michael Genners (DET Consultant)
12.45-1.30pm	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
1.30-2.30pm	Cross Arts Workshop <i>Extending your skills in teaching Visual Arts, Dance and Drama</i> Cate Cunningham (EDA)	Cross Curriculum Workshop <i>Ways into using Drama across the Key Learning Areas</i> Sally Hogan (DET Consultant)
2.30-3.30pm	Up skilling 2 Manipulating the Elements of Drama Barbara Poston-Anderson (University of Technology, Sydney)	Up skilling 1 Demystifying Drama vocab Drama warm-ups, games Playbuilding Alana Hicks (Yarrawarra P.S.)
3.30-3.45pm	<i>Wrap Up and Evaluation</i>	