

**Journeys in Teacher Professional  
Development**

**Narratives of Four Drama Educators**

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## ABSTRACT

Ongoing teacher professional development is an essential part of the wellbeing of the schooling system and successful outcomes for students. In the past, teacher professional development has been used to describe an often “top-down” method of training to meet systemic needs while taking little account of teacher’s individual needs. This approach often conceptualises the teacher’s life as a dichotomy with the personal and the private separated and unrelated.

In contrast, teacher professional development in this study is conceptualised as a journey that includes encouraging and discouraging turns. The journey is explored through the experiences of two primary and two secondary drama educators using Hargreaves and Fullan’s (1992) organisers: teacher development as knowledge and skill development; teacher development as self understanding and teacher development as ecological change. The study focussed specifically on teachers of drama. Of the four educators two were beginning teachers, one primary and one secondary and two were experienced teachers, one primary and one secondary. The teachers were interviewed over twelve months. Narrative vignettes were developed from the interviews.

As the context for these teacher journeys was pivotal, the influences on the teaching of drama in New South Wales were investigated. This included an exploration of the major issues that have influenced the development of drama education both internationally and in Australia.

The concluding reflections from this study suggest that there is strong interaction between teachers’ personal and professional lives. Teachers’ personal circumstances, family histories and schooling backgrounds all have an important influence on their work as teachers. Significantly, issues related to drama education’s history and current context reflected these teachers’ classroom realities.

The teachers argue that they understand their professional development needs best and should have influence and ownership of their own professional development experiences. They found aspects of their tertiary training and teacher induction unsatisfactory. The two

beginning teachers in this study struggled to survive the difficulties of their first year and both seriously considered leaving teaching.

The teachers describe self understanding through distinct phases of development that are made unique by each teacher's personality and context. The teachers saw subject identity and pedagogy as important to their professional identity. They report that times of crisis often lead to positive changes in their professional development journeys.

The ecology for these teachers was made up of several complex issues that are resistant to change and there were a number of impediments reported by the teachers that arise from their teaching ecologies. Two of the teachers have used a change of context to improve their satisfaction and confidence levels. Two teachers described beneficial experiences with supervisors in the school setting. If beneficial ecological change is to occur, education systems must attend to the needs of teachers and provide opportunities to teach unimpeded by systemic obstacles.

The study calls for changes in professional development and for the recognition of the multilayered nature of the teachers' journey. The study calls for a reconceptualisation of teacher professional development that recognises each teacher's ecology and self understanding. The renewed impetus for arts education will only be successful if the complexity of the teachers' journey is recognised and systemic obstacles are removed.

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## INTRODUCTION

I am moving out of this school on a journey to another place. For a teacher the classroom represents little pieces of their life, like their home. My whole life is in this classroom. Things from my childhood are in here. It is like a microcosm of my life in here and that is why I am so sentimental about leaving because I am taking all these things that have existed for me in this world out and they are going to be stored in the garage. This room has a meaning for me and my kids because it contains pieces of me and pieces of them. It's depressing that everything is so transitory and transient. Emma, a teacher in this study as she leaves her school and follows a new path on her professional development journey.

The Teacher's Professional Journey is a way of describing the teacher's experience of teaching. This metaphor is used in preference to the term professional development as it encompasses more of the teacher's life. The term professional development has often been used to describe a narrow "top-down" method of skills training in any profession. The journey however, encompasses the breadth of teachers' personal and professional lives. It is argued that the teacher's role and effectiveness is influenced by personal and professional factors that may encourage and discourage them during the journey. This study explores some of these encouraging and discouraging influences through the personal experiences of four drama educators. The four teachers two primary, two secondary, two beginning and two experienced teachers, were interviewed over a year and the responses to these interviews were developed into narrative vignettes. Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) tripartite organisers: knowledge and skill development as professional development, self understanding as professional development and ecological change as professional development were used to organise the vignettes.

The first Chapter explores the literature on teacher development and teacher professional development and offers a definition of the teacher development journey. As two of the teachers in this study are beginning teachers, theoretical perspectives on their development are reviewed. The chapter then explores features of the teacher journey using Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) organisers.

As the teachers in this study are drama educators, the history of drama curriculum development is examined in Chapter 2. Dorothy Heathcote has been the major figure in

drama education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Her influence is examined as is the impact of those who preceded her. The Chapter traces drama education's early development by exploring the influences of Harriet Finlay-Johnson and Henry Caldwell Cook to Peter Slade and Brian Way on the evolution of contemporary drama curriculum. The Heathcote structuralists; Cecily O'Neill, Jonathan Neelands, Norah Morgan, Juliana Saxton, John O'Toole and Brad Haseman made Heathcote's approaches accessible for a wider audience of drama teachers. Their structures and strategies have also had an influence on drama teaching in Australia and their contributions are examined with particular reference to New South Wales.

The development of drama education in New South Wales (NSW) is explored in Chapter 3. This Chapter describes the influence of international practice and the local history of curriculum and syllabus implementation in NSW classrooms. The chapter explores pre Heathcote practice in NSW schools and then records the influence of her ideas on the fledgling drama education community. The Chapter discusses the influences that preceded the implementation of the first drama syllabus and the time of consolidation through the 1990s. The Chapter concludes by exploring the current situation including a discussion of the influence of tertiary educators in the development of a drama curriculum continuum K-12.

The justification for the use of qualitative methodology for this study is outlined and discussed in Chapter 4. Issues of subjectivity and the researcher's identity are investigated. The study uses a *bricolage* (multi method approach) including case studies, interviews, research logs and participant logs to collect research materials. The ethical and logistical issues relating to the research are explained. Narrative reconstruction was used to communicate the teachers' stories in this study. The narrative reconstruction process is detailed. Issues of reliability, credibility and validity are also explored here. There is an acknowledgment of the limitations of the study which include the limited perspective of the researcher, the reliance on teacher responses and that the experiences of these four teachers cannot be generalised to all teachers.

The teachers' contexts are crucial to understanding their lives. Chapter 5 introduces Ingrid, Mel, Tom and Emma and explores their family background, their education, their theory of education and their hopes for the future.

Chapter 6 uses the teachers' narratives to discuss their knowledge and skill development in the professional development journey. Preservice training, ongoing professional development, leading professional development and teaching strategies are included within this Chapter. The teachers' narratives explore their experiences of team teaching, boys' education, syllabus and syllabus support documents, drama festivals and senior drama marking opportunities. The teachers see knowledge and skill development as a broad area that is important to their journeys. They also observe that much of this training is poorly designed and implemented without reference to their needs.

Chapter 7 explores the area of self understanding in the teachers' professional development journeys. The personal and the professional are seen here as intimately linked. The teachers' reflections on their beginning years of teaching highlight some concerning issues for them and the schooling systems they work in. All four teachers in this study recalled profound difficulty in their early careers. These difficulties were often attributed to system shortcomings. As the teachers mature they find that their energies move from class management issues to developing more effective pedagogy focussed on improved learning for their students. This change is due to their growing confidence and self understanding. Remarkably all of the teachers endured a crisis during the study. The crisis and the teacher's response to the crisis is discussed in Chapter 7.

The influence of ecological change (the context) is explored in Chapter 8. The teachers describe several interrelated and dynamic ecologies which have an influence on them and their professional development journeys. They identify important issues that discourage them from growth including conservative school cultures, system instability and ongoing industrial disputation. It is argued that many features of each teacher's ecology discourage professional growth and effort is required to overcome these impediments.

The reflections on the study from the teachers involved are included in the final chapter. The teachers reflect on their responses to the research process during the interview phase. Two of the teachers also respond to the narrative vignettes and discuss changes that have occurred to their professional development journeys since the study. Directions for future research are discussed and then some concluding reflections on the teacher journey are made in the light of the narratives and the literature reviewed. These reflections address curriculum history and context, beginning drama teaching, teacher preservice and induction, subject identity and

pedagogy. The concluding chapter also examines the personal and the professional, teachers understanding of their own professional development needs, the effect of crisis, industrial disputation and the effects of reflective research. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the current emphasis on arts education. It is argued that the success of a renewed focus on the arts depends on the support and development of teachers on their professional development journeys.

# Chapter 1

## Literature review: teacher professional development journeys

This chapter explores the literature that addresses what is sometimes called “teacher professional development” and sometimes called “teacher development” to establish themes to contrast with and reflect upon the lives of the four teachers of drama in this study. To have a strong and vital teaching community we must know what it is that encourages or discourages teacher development. This will enable us to develop strategies to provide adequate and appropriate support for teachers throughout their careers.

It is self-evident that the key to educational renewal is the development of a cadre of satisfied, committed, caring, critically intelligent, and dedicated teachers who feel they are part of vital school communities. It is also quite apparent that much that goes on during teacher induction encourages just the opposite set of qualities (Bullough and Knowles, 1992, p. 209).

This chapter reviews the terms “teacher development” and “teacher professional development” and suggest the metaphor of “journey” that avoids some of the difficulties inherent in these definitions. It explores the factors that encourage or discourage beginning teachers and examines the literature on stages of beginning teacher development. Growing from this, it investigates ongoing features of the teacher journey. This study uses the categories that Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 2) use to explore the different factors that influence and impact on teacher journeys. These categories are: knowledge and skill development, development as self understanding and development as ecological change.

The general context of the teacher development journey is explored and some approaches to understanding teachers’ lives are established. As the four teachers in this study teach drama, the influence of the subject area taught on their journey will also be examined. This will be explored through a discussion of the history of drama curriculum development in Chapters 2 and 3.

### Defining the journey

The terms “professional development” and “teacher professional development” are problematic as they imply an advancement or fulfilment of potential. Development implies

that growth and advancement ensue in the course of the teaching career. For example Glatthorn (1994, p. 41) argues that:

Teacher Development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as the result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically.

However, there is evidence that many aspects of teacher journeys are profoundly negative and produce neither advancement nor development. For example Bullough and Knowles (1992, p. 56) illustrate how inappropriate the term ‘development’ is through the story of “Nancy”:

When the school doors finally closed at the end of the academic year, Nancy’s commitment to the school and to teaching was low. She was especially disappointed by her inability to establish engaging relationships with the students. Not only did teaching tire her, but in class she lacked animation. The year had not been easy. She had been severely tested and in her own eyes had not passed the test. ‘Teaching’, she concluded, ‘in traditional classrooms may not be for me.’

This example also indicates the discouragement that can occur during a teacher’s journey. In the literature there is wide support for the concept of exploring the incidents and experiences that “hinder” or “help” professional growth over time (Little, 1990, p. 187). Huberman et al. (1997, p. 12) uses a metaphor to explore the same approach:

The unfolding of a career is, after all, a story of waxing and waning satisfaction, commitment and competence.

Another problem with the terms professional development and teacher professional development are the “Orwellian” (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 12) overtones they carry. Within this interpretation teachers are to be controlled and led in a “patronizing and therapeutic” way that smacks of control. There is an implied deficit that needs to be overcome through training. Hargreaves and Fullan uncover the suggestion of control “professional development” implies:

...teachers here might be regarded as children and Third World nations: people who need help and who are dependent on our superior insight and expertise. This danger of control masquerading, as care is an ever-present one that requires continued vigilance... (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 12).

Teacher professional development is complex and factors that appear at first to be hindrances in the journey may later prove to be experiences that aid in development. In the analysis of these factors I attempt to reflect the complexity of teacher experience.

For this study I use the metaphor of the teacher journey. This metaphor includes the concept of teacher development and professional development without the sense of optimism or continual advancement that development suggests. On the metaphorical journey dead-ends are discovered, new paths are taken and strategies for travel are established. “Development” however suggests positive outcomes arising from positive and negative events. A more realistic view and one that is consistent with the metaphor of the journey comes from Ralph Fessler who argues:

At first glance there is a tendency to view the career cycle as a linear process, with an individual entering at the preservice level and progressing through the various stages...Rather a dynamic ebb and flow is postulated, with teachers moving in and out of stages in response to environmental influences from both the personal and the organizational dimensions (1995, p. 187).

Another important theme for inclusion in the metaphor of the “journey” is the non-compartmentalisation of the teacher’s life. In the literature on teacher development, teachers’ personal and professional lives are not separated. They are viewed as influential and interrelated to each other. Judith Little (1990, p. 187) reflecting on her own study says:

The analysis is informed by a broadened conception of professional development that encompasses the individual’s experience both in and out of the classroom.

Furthermore she is concerned about the lack of typical classrooms in the literature (1990, p. 187). This study has been designed to explore teacher’s experiences in a holistic manner, rather than compartmentalising their experience into the false dichotomy of the “professional” and the “personal”. In the same way teacher’s experiences are explored with an acknowledgement of their unique perspectives, skills and context.

As this analysis seeks to explore a body of literature that deals with a general area (teacher development) and apply the principles to the specific research question of this study, two caveats should be identified. Firstly the journey of each teacher relies on the individual circumstances, experiences and skills of the teacher concerned. Goodson (1992, p.110) argues:

...to understand teacher development and curriculum development, and to tailor it accordingly, we need to know a great deal more about teacher's priorities. We need in short to know about teacher's lives.

Goodson is asserting a truism that teacher researchers should be mindful of: within generalisation on teachers lives there are important and complex individual differences that defy the generalisation. However, in order to explore the particular, the wider context for teacher journeys will be explored.

Secondly as Bullough (1992, p. 1) relates "...surprisingly little is known about how a person becomes a teacher...". In the Australian context there is less known and very little understood about beginning teachers of drama. Again the general reflections drawn from the literature will provide some themes for discussion and comparison with the teachers narratives in this study.

As two of the four teachers in this study are beginning teachers, the next section of the chapter will deal with the literature that relates to beginning teachers and identify major issues in their professional development journeys.

## **Beginning teachers**

There I stood, in comfortable shoes and respectable, somewhat understated clothes, with a box full of "materials" under one arm, a coffee cup in the other hand, and my keys, purple dinosaur key chain and all, tied with a string around my neck! ...Help me I'm becoming a teacher!" Realization number three (Norris , McCammon & Miller, 2000, p. 102).

These reflections suggest a profound change in self-perception that is challenging for many new teachers, the role shift from student to teacher. Ryan (1986, p. 16) describes this as "the shock of the familiar". While beginning teachers know the surroundings from their time as students, they may be completely unsure of their role. Many beginning teachers have a dawning realisation that even though their classroom surroundings are familiar their role is profoundly different. Norris, McCammon and Miller's (2000) casebook provides several narratives that illustrate this change in role.

Bullough (1992, p. 209) states that the dropout rates for teachers in the first year is over thirty per cent and that the most able are those most likely to leave teaching. He identifies the more personal dimension of the problem:

This is not only a horrendous waste of time and energy expended to educate short-term teachers, it is in many respects a sad tale of lost opportunities, of insensitivity to suffering, and of intellectual blindness and institutional rigidity (1992, p. 209).

Gold asserts (1996, p. 549) that 25% of beginning teachers leave in less than 2 years and that nearly 40% leave in their first five years of teaching. NSW figures reflect less dramatic but nevertheless concerning attrition rates. In 1991<sup>1</sup> in NSW government schools 7.25 per cent of teachers left the profession in their first year and 21.14 per cent left teaching in the first five years (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, p. 240).

Attrition is caused by several factors including: media criticism diminishing community respect for the profession, rapid changes in the workplace, lack of career mobility, lack of adequate financial remuneration, lack of parents' interest and support and discipline problems (Gold, 1996, pp. 549-550). She further asserts (1996, p. 550) that beginning teacher survival depends on the following conditions:

1. Meeting teachers unmet needs
2. Amount of preservice education
3. Initial commitment to teaching
4. Adequacy of teacher preparation
5. Professional and social integration into teaching
6. The role of the administrator.

The high attrition rates indicate profound difficulties for beginning teachers. This is of special concern in a time of impending global shortages of teachers (Baird, 2001, p. 5). In order to understand the factors at play it is important to review the theories of beginning teacher journeys and reflect on what leads to the discouragement of these teachers.

Having established that there are significant challenges for beginning teachers a rationale for investigating their journey should be articulated. The survival and welfare of beginning

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<sup>1</sup> These are the last available figures on beginning teacher attrition. The latest figures are not generally available as they are politically sensitive.

teachers is not only an issue for them personally, their survival and growth has important implications for the health of schooling systems generally and students specifically.

The difficulties experienced by beginning teachers have consequences, not for sales quotas, but for children. A first-grader does not learn to read and falls behind. A seventh-grader has trouble with his teachers and begins to give up...Students are primary victims when beginning teachers fail (Ryan, 1986, p. 7).

Ryan's argument does not focus on the immediate concerns of the expenditure of resources and flagging morale. It has much wider implications. He contends that the development of our children and ultimately our communities are at risk. So what is the extent of this risk?

### **Theoretical perspectives on beginning teachers**

It is probably axiomatic to the point of being obvious but "...there are no typical first year teachers" (Bullough, 1997, p. 94). Furthermore Bullough argues for the importance of "personal and contextual" factors in the "idiosyncratic" development of the beginning teacher (1992, p. 2). Of special interest here is the influence subject areas have on the journey. In a French study Huberman (1993) contends that teachers in the 'literary subjects' had profound difficulties adjusting as they had traditionally low participation rates in the process of change (Huberman, 1993, p. 173). Huberman's study demonstrates the importance of including the influence and impact of the subject taught on the teacher. The teacher's context has an undeniably central influence on the beginning teacher, making generalisations only partially useful.

All contexts are different and that is the power of the individual narratives explored in this study. There are, however, several theoretical discussions, in the literature on the lives of teachers and those theories will provide material for comparison with the narratives of the beginning teachers in this study. The two most relevant explorations of the phases of development in the beginning teacher arise from the work of Ryan (1986) and Berliner (1988).

According to Ryan there are three stages: fantasy, survival and mastery. The first phase of the beginning teacher's journey is the fantasy stage where:

...the person starts to think seriously about becoming a teacher...As preservice teachers get closer to entering their own classrooms, the fantasies often change character. Dark fantasies or bad dreams come more often. Frequently preservice teachers will feel anxious about

their future career even though they continue to have pleasant fantasies about their future (Ryan, 1986, p. 11).

Bullough (1992, p. 76) commenting on the same stage, argues that teachers are often “euphoric” as they test their teaching schema and establish “seemingly self-confirming relationships with students”. The euphoria subsides when the role confusion and management issues begin to loom and the “great confrontation” (Ryan, 1986, p. 11) of the survival stage begins. Central to this fantasy stage is the influence of teacher education courses including practicum. Students assume that “direct classroom experience” is the most important part of becoming a teacher (Bullough, 1997, p. 80). In this phase the fantasy is explored and mostly broken as the survival stage takes hold.

Gold (1996, p. 558) identifies a time between fantasy and survival that she calls the “loss of a dream” (1996, pp. 554-558). She argues that beginning teachers approach their placements and first teaching assignment with “a dream” but that this dream may be eroded by class management issues, poor preservice training, poor practicum placement, poor initial teaching placement and poor support from colleagues and school administrators.

The inexperienced and often unconfident beginning teacher seems to be vulnerable in this dream stage and often does not make it through the next and most confronting of stages in Ryan’s estimation, the survival stage. In the survival phase the new teacher is:

...fighting for his or her professional life, and often for a sense of worth and identity as well. For most beginning teachers the survival stage is the biggest challenge of their lives (Ryan, 1986, p. 13).

Many teachers leave because they cannot meet the challenges that schools present. However there is evidence that teachers leave teaching for many other reasons. These reasons often are less about the classroom and more related to the relative status of the profession and the opportunities available elsewhere. Gold (1996, p. 551) cites several studies that reflect teacher anxiety over public criticism that leads in her view to the erosion of beginning teacher self esteem. From my experience this is a situation familiar to teachers in NSW.

Supporting Ryan’s assertion are the studies that show the first years of teaching as a time of “discouragement and disillusionment” (Gold, 1996, p. 554). Again there is a gap between the expectations of teachers and the realities of the teaching situation. Rust relates the story of two teachers (1994, p. 215):

...they were unaware of school politics. Both were surprised by the lack of collegiality among their peers; they learned quickly not to trust anyone, especially not the Principal...they became disillusioned with the system and depressed and insecure about their performance and abilities.

Several studies suggest beginning teachers need to endure a survival stage. It may also be too loose a term to describe the early phases of the beginning teacher's journey. Other practitioners such as Gold provide other reasons for teachers not "surviving". Low wages and poor public perceptions of teaching provide strong motivations to look elsewhere. A concerning proportion of teachers do not "survive" the "great confrontation" (Ryan 1986, p. 14) but the reasons may, as Fessler (1995, p. 187) suggests, defy generalisation, and are caused by the individual's personal and environmental factors. Ryan suggests that having endured the survival stage for about six months the teacher enters the mastery stage (1986, p. 14). In this stage the teacher masters "the step by step" craft of teaching. Bullough says of this stage:

Having generally gained control over discipline and management problems, the beginner focuses, more or less systematically, on the improvement of particular instructional skills and on curriculum issues. At this stage achieving improved student learning replaces achieving good student behaviour as the dominating focus (1997, p. 88).

Ryan's stages are useful for providing a sense of what is happening generally in the development of beginning teachers. His stage theory does not measure what is normal because the lives of beginning teachers are extraordinarily variable from teacher to teacher. The value of a stage theory may be for reflection on or comparison with individual teachers, and indeed that is what Ryan (1986) and Bullough (1992) have done. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 217) make a powerful argument for the exploration of individual teacher's contexts:

...the teaching strategies of kindergarten teachers, evolve differently from those used by teachers of adolescents, because the problems they face are routinely different. In the same way, the teaching strategies of family studies teachers evolve differently from those of mathematics [or drama] teachers...If we want to understand what the teacher does and why, we must therefore also understand the teaching community, the work culture of which that teacher is part.

An attempt to recognise the variability is the more encompassing and consequently less specific evolutionary theory argued by Berliner (1988). Berliner's theory suggests that teachers develop as their pedagogy becomes systematised and expertise evolves. Teachers develop a hierarchical knowledge that improves as their experience grows. At the beginning

of their careers teachers bend their knowledge to the context and move into the “advanced beginner stage” where episodic knowledge is built. The final or competent stage sees teachers developing systematic problem solving strategies where conscious choices guide their actions. Teachers then progress to a ‘proficiency’ stage where their know-how and intuition become prominent before the expert stage where their teaching style features “fluid performance”:

...as we all do when we no longer have to choose our words when speaking or thinking about where to place our feet when walking (Berliner, 1998, p. 5).

The strength of this theory is the suggestion of overlap and interaction between the different stages. However, the movement between steps, like Ryan’s is progressive. There is little discussion of sideways or backward movement. The stories of teachers who leave and return to teaching or the teachers who stall professionally are not clearly represented in Berliner’s approach. As with Ryan’s stages, Berliner provides useful observations that may be explored through contrast with those involved in this study. Again however the variability of teacher experience makes this stage theory difficult to generalise to all teachers.

The case for exploring the circumstances of each individual teacher is strong. Beginning teachers have much in common but there is little to suggest one definitive form of development: rather each journey is idiosyncratic and dependent on each teachers personal and professional context. Bullough (1997, p. 121) concludes with an endorsement of the concept of the journey rather than the rigidity of the stage theory:

The routes are varied to becoming a teacher although many pass by familiar landmarks.

The next section of this chapter will explore the landmarks in the teacher journey by using Hargreaves and Fullan’s terms and exploring each area in detail.

### **Features of the teacher journey**

The ongoing journey of experienced educators obviously has significant overlap with the themes introduced in the journeys of beginning teachers. The following discussion will use the work of Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan to frame a discussion of the ongoing development and the factors that encourage or discourage teachers on their journey.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) argue that to understand development a broader view is required. In their conceptualisation they focus on:

...forms of teacher development and understandings of teacher development that are more humanistic and critical in nature: forms that take account of the person in teacher development as well as the person's behaviour, and which address characteristics of the system as well as the skills of the individual (1992, p. 7).

This approach features an understanding of an individual that the stage theorists were unable to provide. Also it does not compartmentalise the personal and the professional, but acknowledges that there are important interrelationships that influence development. Furthermore it signals the importance of the education system and skills of the individual rather than broad developmental steps passed through by all individuals. In short it focuses on the individual teacher in context and provides a framework for the understanding of that teacher's journey.

In order to develop a systematic understanding of the individual Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 2) have subdivided the study of teacher development into three overlapping areas:

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

Glatthorn (1994, p. 41) has a similar view and sees the factors that influence development as

- 1) teacher as person
- 2) the context in which the teacher works and lives and
- 3) factors involving specific intervention that is variously called in the literature "professional development", "staff development", "training" or "INSET or Inservice Education and Training". I will adopt Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) organisers to frame my review of the literature.

### **Teacher development as knowledge and skill development**

There are of course many other ways to approach the concept of skills development. Judith Little argues that the term "professional development" actually encompasses much of the content that Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 2) describe in their conception of teacher development. She broadens her analysis to include experiences "in and out of the classroom" (Little, 1990, p. 187). She further argues that professional development should be seen in

three dimensions of a teacher's life: as a classroom instructor, as a colleague or member of a faculty and as a participant in a broader occupational community.

Her approach, which predates Hargreaves and Fullan, begins to broaden the definition of professional development and introduces the effect of colleagues and school context. This broadening while helpful for the understanding of how teachers develop is nonetheless moving away from using the term 'professional development' as skills based training (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992 and Clark, 1992) and toward the concept of broader teacher development. As such it may be more expedient to use Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) model to describe and review the teacher journey and review professional development as it has been conventionally defined. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 4) suggest, professional development that equates to skills and knowledge development or training is given priority over other important aspects of the teacher's journey and often devised without consultation with the teachers it is designed to benefit.

...skills based staff development is an important component of the teacher development process. At present, however, it almost certainly consumes too much time, energy and resources... Within this overall emphasis, skills based teacher development is too often imposed on teachers rather than developed with them. It is too often based on the excessive confidence in the supposedly proven wisdom of experts and research.

This assessment of skill development often euphemistically called professional development has important implications for the teacher journey. As Clark (1992, p. 75) points out 'professional development' is often a process put in place by others to remedy some externally perceived "deficit" in the professionalism of the teacher. He states:

Now, as a teacher how eager would you feel about co-operating in a process in which you are presumed to be passive, resistant deficient and one of a faceless homogenous herd? This is hardly an ideal set of conditions for adult learning (Clark, 1992, p. 75).

There is however evidence to suggest that this style of training is alive and well. This training is, as Hargreaves and Fullan describes it, 'top down' and developed with a belief in the absolute reliability of the educational theory it is based on. There is little account taken of teachers individual contexts and their individual needs. This criticism of 'top down' skills based development is made by others including Olroyd and Hall (1997, p. 130) who argue that when schools and systems are assessing the needs of professional development they should be sensitive, democratic, not imposed and must take into account the needs of the

individual. Clark suggests another model that meets the needs of teachers in their unique situations:

...because each teacher is unique in important ways it is impossible to create a single, centrally administered and planned programme of professional development that will meet everyone's needs and desires (Clark, 1992, p. 77).

The preponderance of 'top down' professional development might suggest that its purpose is to suit the needs of the administrators rather than the highly specialised individual needs of the teacher.

Eraut (1995, pp. 245-246) argues that professional development is broader than skills development and that it has ten functions in the development of the professional. It includes:

- continuing development of repertoire
- ongoing learning from experience, reflection for instance on how best to meet the needs of students
- ongoing learning through discussion with colleagues
- continuing development of the capacity to contribute to the professional life of the school
- continuing development of the capacity to interact with clients and stakeholders
- continuing proficiency in up to date subject matter
- ongoing collection of policies and practices about the school
- ongoing access to new educational thinking
- continuing access to information about a changing society.

This differs from Hargreaves and Fullan in its attempt to broaden the conception of professional development to include community interactions and future direction, but it reflects the ideal rather than the reality. Eraut's features of professional development, if implemented would build the teacher as professional, but as Clark (1992, p. 77) argues, access to this kind of development is more often the exception rather than the rule.

Eraut (1995, p. 246) reiterates the concerns that Clark (1992) and Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) make on the current state of professional development:

Finally, there is what politicians and higher-level administrators regard as the primary purpose of professional development: the need to gather intelligence about and later implement the decisions of external policy makers who have jurisdiction over the school.

Eraut acknowledges the strong influence of outside policy makers in the design and implementation of professional development and recognises the conflict that may ensue as the needs of education bureaucracies clash with teachers' professional needs. This approach perhaps recognises the realities of the current situation.

This analysis does not perceive the teacher as controlling his or her professional development to suit individual needs. Eraut's argument recognises the breadth of professional development available but is vague on who should be the instigator and controller of the development. The breadth of conception is welcome but if the teacher has no control over the agenda and the training, the professional development may be meaningless and lead to feelings of powerlessness and eventually cynicism. Others concur and emphasise the need to devise professional development programs that acknowledge and respond to the needs of the participants and not only to the sponsoring educational systems.

...training can further the professional development of teachers, but only if it is compatible with and sensitive to the constructs and knowledge base of the teacher. and only if it is related to the perceived task of the teacher (Tillema and Imants, 1995, p. 136).

The most effective form of skills development may lie between the two camps, providing breadth of content that is relevant to system requirements but is designed by teachers with reference to their particular needs.

In her review of "formal professional development", Little (1990, p. 216) suggests that opportunities in this area are likely to be linked to teaching conditions and that overall "...these conditions seem more likely to erode teachers morale than to bolster it, more likely to constrain than enrich their opportunity to learn" (1990, p. 216). She argues that a meaningful focus for professional development is difficult to determine, and the benefits of professional development are difficult to detect. Her analysis is that teachers' work lives must be integrated more fully with the institutional imperatives that teachers face. She asserts that:

It also demands that research replace what is now largely speculation by establishing more precisely the import of the teaching context on teachers motivations and opportunities...(Little, 1990, p. 218).

Moreover Fullan (1995, p. 253) calls an approach to professional development that is organised, theorised and relevant to teachers' lives:

Professional development for teachers has a bad track record because it lacks a theoretical base and coherent focus. On the one hand...it is treated as a vague panacea...On the other hand, professional development is defined too narrowly and becomes “detached” from real time learning...Professional development becomes reified as episodic events that occur as an appendage outside of the normal workday.

The disconnectedness of specific teaching practice from professional development leads to the conclusion by writers in this area that professional development may sometimes be about the needs of the system rather than the needs of the individual in their own particular context.

Professional development may also have the tendency to be concentrated disproportionately and inequitably (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 6). Firstly, resources are devoted to skill development and not on other, perhaps more pressing aspects of the teacher’s development. Second, resources and time available are distributed by educational systems disproportionately to the trainers and not the participants and thirdly and perhaps most importantly for this study, resources and skills enhancement tends to flow to more high status subjects:

This focus on particular subjects communicates a view that ‘real teaching’ or generic teaching skills are to be found in those subjects. At the same time, skills that may be appropriate for other subjects like drama and art...frequently get overlooked (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 6).

Again the influence of the “top down” model of professional development is liable to disenfranchise teachers who are not in the high status subjects and channel resources to areas that may not be justified. If the commonly held assumption is that “skills-based staff development is an important part of the teacher development process” (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992, p. 6) these weaknesses provide cause for concern. This study explores the assumptions surrounding traditional professional development and examines its usefulness for drama educators.

The literature suggests that skills development is an important part of the teacher journey. It also indicates, however that teachers often become disenfranchised and in some cases leave teaching because they feel the generalised skills and knowledge training available through professional development courses is unsuited to them, their contexts and their particular needs. Furthermore that training has an undue focus on the development of work-skills rather

than personal skills again reinforcing the false dichotomy between the personal and the professional. Several authors suggest that the ‘top down’ approach is driven by bureaucracies and politicians keen on implementing their own agendas. There is some truth in these arguments but they must be seen in the context of real schools and real systems. It is probably unavoidable that bureaucracies and governments will want to influence the training of teachers, and as they are democratically elected they should have some influence. It is also correct to assert that teachers have the right to be “professionally developed” in ways that meet their specific needs in consultation with them. In short, teachers as professionals must have influence over their own development if that development is going to be meaningful, relevant and useful to them.

As Hargreaves and Fullan suggest (1992, p. 6) the development of the teacher’s self understanding is a crucial part of their journey. That self understanding must inform and ultimately drive their own knowledge and skill development. As mentioned earlier there is a false dichotomy between the personal and the professional in many developmental and training models. “Teacher development as self understanding” is an attempt to reconcile and explain the relationship between the personal and the professional.

### **Teacher development as self understanding**

Some argue that self understanding in the form of reflection on one’s personal and practical knowledge of teaching comes before meaningful and substantial changes in teaching behaviour. Others argue that changes in behaviour usually precede changes in beliefs. Whichever is the case, behaviours and beliefs are closely bound together...Acknowledging that teacher development is also a process of personal development is a step forward in our improvement efforts (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 7).

The literature seems strong on the need to link the development of the person as well as the teaching skills inherent in that person. Furthermore Hargreaves and Fullan are suggesting change in the person influences change in the practice. Fessler (1995, p. 181) reinforces this view and develops it by suggesting categories of influence in the personal. He argues that the personal environment, the family, individual dispositions and avocational interests all have an influence on the development of the teacher.

Goodson (1992, p. 111) puts the case slightly differently but with the same intent:

The point I am making is that to understand teacher development and curriculum development, and to tailor it appropriately, we need to know a great deal more about teacher priorities. We need in short to know a lot more about teachers' lives.

To understand what motivates a teacher, or what brings about change in a teacher we must first understand the individual and respond to their personal needs. Goodson (1992, pp. 111-114) tells a story of visiting a formerly inspirational teacher who had changed and become resistant to reform. The teacher had changed because his emphasis was not now on teaching, "...his centre of gravity was elsewhere" (1992, p. 111). Goodson argues to understand the change here he first had to understand the shift in the personal life of the teacher.

Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) extend Goodson's approach by drawing on three case studies to explore the connections between the professional and the personal in teacher development. They argue (1992, p. 152) that the starting point for teacher development is profoundly personal and contend that each teacher has an "amalgam" of experiences that they select as the basis for their own development. Their experiences and their own biographies make up this amalgam.

Thus biography does not only influence the teacher's response to context and opportunities, it can also help to select and guide the search for particular professional development opportunities (1992, p. 152).

The narratives of the teachers in Raymond, Butt and Townsend's (1992) study reveal the importance of individuality and collegiality in the development of teachers. In their conclusion they comment:

Teachers' stories clearly illuminate the way in which teachers' early personal experiences and personal development have a profound influence on who they are and the way they become teachers. Since these personal dispositions shape teachers' encounters with career situations and contexts, the inevitable individuality of professional development is underlined (1992, p. 159).

Their concentration on personal experiences and personal development drawn from teachers' experiences demonstrates the reality of differences in teachers but also provides a basis for discussion of differences in pedagogy. This understanding, says Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992), will help teachers from different contexts begin discussions that will eventually lead to improvements in teaching practice. They also recognise that to fully

understand the teacher's experience the collegial is also of major importance. Collegiality, they argue can be a powerful force for the development of teachers when it is coupled with an understanding of the individual contexts of teachers. The role of collegiality in the teaching journey will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

As much as this approach to understanding the teacher's journey is useful, it also has some important criticisms. The effort needed to gain a personal perspective on every teacher and then apply a fully tailored plan for development requires significant resources and expenditure. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 1) governments and their educational bureaucracies have been cost conscious and control centred and therefore have had little interest in putting in the time and effort that this approach requires. Moreover education bureaucracies and teachers have at times had a less than trusting relationship. For teachers to develop their own professional development, as suggested by Clark (1992) co-operation is required.

Perhaps more serious is the concern that a concentration on the personal downplays the importance of the context. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 13) suggest that the implications of focussing on the personal may be used for more sinister ends by administrators. In their view administrators can shift responsibility for learning from the corporate to the personal. In other words they suggest the reason that students don't learn effectively is because of bad teaching, not inherent problems within the system or the society at large. For instance a government might claim that students are not literate because of the personal shortcomings of teachers rather than relating the problem to the underlying social and systemic causes of low literacy rates that may reflect economic disadvantage and problems with access to education services. Using this argument it becomes politically expedient to blame teachers and to ignore the glaring problems in the educational systems. This, Hargreaves and Fullan argue leads to "implicitly conservative" approaches to teacher development.

Again a balance of the personal and contextual that informs skill-development seems reasonable. For the reality of a teacher's work to be recognised and used as the basis for development, one factor should not have primacy over the other. There should however be a comprehensive view that includes the personal and the contextual in order to meet the needs of the individual. The next section of this chapter will focus on some of these contextual factors.

## Teacher development as “ecological change”

The process and success of teacher development depends very much on the context in which it takes place. The nature of this context can make or break teacher development efforts. Understanding and attending to the *ecology* of teacher development should therefore be an important priority for teachers, administrators and researchers alike (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 13).

The discussion of teacher journeys is not complete until their context is explored, or to use the metaphor, the conditions of the track and the setting are investigated. This factor is as important in many ways as the personal context and obviously an understanding of teachers is only possible when the personal and the contextual are considered as overlapping areas that have a strong inter-relationship. Hargreaves and Fullan calls this the ecology of teaching as it deals with the “relationship between organisms and their environment” (Macquarie Library, 1999, p. 677). The term ecology seems appropriate here as it suggests active interrelationships between people and situation rather than the static sense that context sometimes infers.

Jackson (1992, p. 73) uses a similar approach to understanding of teacher development. He argues that to understand what is going on in the classroom and indeed in thinking processes of a teacher you must understand the context. Indeed Jackson implores his readers not only to recognise the importance of the context but to begin an understanding of teachers lives at that point. He describes one such context and then makes the following remarks:

...I am confident I was moving in the right direction, and so would anyone else be who sought to work within this fourth mode to teacher development. The rule to follow is the one I have just named: one begins by seeking to *articulate the context* (1992, p. 73).

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 13) recognise two ways an ecological perspective is important. The first is the teacher’s working environment that provides conditions in which teacher development initiatives, and sometimes teachers, succeed or fail. The working environment that is similar but not synonymous with the school’s culture provides factors that “help or impede” (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 13) teacher development. For instance the school may have many “pre-retirement” teachers who have little interest in ongoing development. A beginning teacher in this situation may find support for ongoing training difficult. Or perhaps the school is in an area where staff are constantly struggling with class

management issues. Teachers attempting to get subject specific development may find resources allocated to the greater perceived need. Or as mentioned earlier the subject may be deemed as a “non priority area”. These suggested scenarios indicate the importance of context for each teacher. Each teacher’s individual ecology will also have implications for resource distribution and teacher development.

Obviously an important part of the teacher’s immediate context is the relationships teachers form with other teachers. These relationships are the basis of many models that are promoted to improve the process of teacher development (Hargreaves and Fullan et. al, 1996 and Little, 1990). As Little says:

Teachers interviewed about their professional lives consistently granted peers an important role in accounting for their own greater or lesser degree of professional involvement (1990, p. 194).

Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992, p. 154) ascribed the same importance to the role of colleagues. In her study of teacher life-histories 98 per cent of teachers mentioned relations with colleagues of which 80 per cent mentioned negative interactions with peers and 60 per cent mentioned positive interactions. 45 per cent spoke of positive relationships with administrators while 75 per cent had negative interactions. Raymond construes from these figures that:

Intercollegial relations, then, are a significant aspect of work life which have telling impacts on teachers work...While collegiality is clearly problematic, there is evidence to suggest that, given the right conditions, context and processes, they can be very powerful supports for teacher development (1992, p. 154).

The literature suggests that collegial relationships can help or hinder teachers and their development. This depends on each teacher’s personal and ecological circumstances.

Hargreaves and Fullan and Little as well as many others writing in this area place collegial relations at the centre of productive and relevant teacher development.

The second way Hargreaves and Fullan describe ecology is the role of teaching itself. This perspective encompasses the general questions about the state of the occupation, in other words, what is it like in general to work as a teacher today? Their observations about the general ecology for contemporary teachers does not seem conducive to the ideal of democratic and collegially effective workplaces (1992, p. 216).

Apple and Jungck also see the current situation in pessimistic terms:

Teacher development, co-operation and 'empowerment' may be the talk, but centralization, standardization and rationalization may be the strongest tendencies...Among the major effects of these pressures is what is happening to teaching as an occupation and as a set of self-reflective actions. Important transformations are occurring that will have significant impacts on how we do our jobs and on who will decide whether we are successful at carrying them out (1992, p. 20).

Australian researchers reinforce these concerns. Judyth Sachs argues that teachers need to be in control of their own development as professionals.

It is the members of [the] profession who present the moral and intellectual leadership to ensure that student learning is of a high quality and that working conditions for teachers are enhanced (1997, p. 272).

Sachs' concern is that Australian teachers are not trusted by education bureaucracies to run their own agendas when it comes to curriculum and development. This is confirmed in an earlier discussion by Ingvarson and Greenaway that demonstrates this mistrust of teachers and subsequent centralisation of policy and curriculum that has been a hallmark of successive Australian governments.

Ominously, the Federal government guidelines now stipulate that state professional development programs must comply with specific Schools Commission objectives. No longer is this emaciated program one which enables local initiative in in-service policy-making. The Federal government must work hard to avoid the interpretation that such specific objectives and fragmenting the policy-making arenas professional development at the state level means that it does not trust locals to make responsible decisions about in-service education priorities. It would be ironic if the Federal program...became a threat to [teacher] development (1984, p. 63).

An ideal education system would provide an ecology that supports teachers' professionalism and made available opportunities for teachers to develop themselves in ways that Clark (1992) and Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) suggest. The evidence is, however, that the reality does not reflect the ideal. The writers in this area suggest that teachers' development is being centralised and the ecological conditions are not supportive of teachers' personal and contextual realities. Governments appear to be prescribing a simple remedy to a complex problem and in so doing creating the potential for teacher disenchantment.

A further and related concern is the often adversarial relationship between teachers and their employers, through their unions and educational systems. Hargreaves and Fullan et. al. (1996,

p. 1) suggest that the tensions within teaching are the result of an inconsistency and uncertainty about whether teachers should pursue "... 'acceptable professional' ways..." of negotiation or use the collective strategies of union bargaining to defend their interest." Fessler (1995, p. 184) relates the American experience and argues that currently "mutual concern for the professional growth" of teachers has evolved in recent years from an earlier period of "mistrust and confrontation". He says of this relationship:

A positive climate promoting teacher growth and empowerment can lead to feelings of pride and accomplishment, while an atmosphere of mistrust between union and management can lead to negative feelings (1992, p. 184).

In the Australian and in particular the NSW context the choice of collective bargaining has led to long and often acrimonious disputes between teachers and their employers. Mostly these disputes surround wages and conditions but are also often about teachers' roles in their own development and the welfare of their students (Sachs, 1997, p. 265). Sachs argues that disputes about teachers conditions are actually also about conditions for students as the "...conditions of teachers work are the conditions within which students learned." The fracturing of 1997 disintegrated into the internecine wages and conditions struggle of 2000, the year of this study.

The collaborative endeavour between unions and employers for teacher professional development had begun to fracture (1997, p. 266).

Sachs argues that the context of schools generally and particularly teacher professionalism can only be improved if industrial disputation is deferred for other less confrontational methods of agenda setting in education. It seems reasonable to believe that in a time of industrial disputation (such as the time this study was undertaken) that Fessler's assertions are correct. Negativity and mistrust may be at best a distraction and at worst inhibit the development of teachers and perhaps students.

For teachers to be effective they must be able to begin and develop their professionalism in a supportive environment that takes account of their needs as humans, their context and their ongoing needs for skill and knowledge development. The literature reviewed here suggests that beginning teachers are likely to face significant challenges in the first years of teaching. Many leave teaching as a result of these experiences. As teachers continue on their journey they must be recognised and supported through professional development in knowledge and skills that acknowledge personal needs and are controlled by the teacher, not imposed in a "top down" fashion by administrators removed from the school. The journey is also seen in

terms of the personal, where the individual circumstances of teachers are central and have influence over their careers. Finally individual teacher journeys reflect the ecological or contextual factors. This refers mainly to the role of the specific circumstances of the teacher or to the schooling system in general. The combination of these factors provides a strong basis for the exploration of a teacher's journey.

The next two chapters contextualise the situation for the teachers in this study. This is important because an understanding of drama curriculum's evolution on a national and international level, links with the literature review of teacher professional development to provide the necessary context for the teachers' journeys explored through this research.

## Chapter 2

### The setting: the development of drama education

To begin this story I am going to set the scene over the next two chapters. I will track the broad development of drama education from its roots in theatre to its modern day practice in New South Wales. The description and analysis will set a context for the four teachers in this study within the theory and practice of those who have gone before them.

The professional development journey can be best understood if we have the assistance of those who have trod and cut the path and made the journey before. Those who preceded the key figure in this chapter, Dorothy Heathcote provided some important signposts for those who came after them. They also signalled some of the travails that would befall drama educators. Heathcote's role in the journey was to cut a new and sometimes controversial path. These influences provide important context and points of reference to assist in the understanding of the professional development journeys of the teachers in this study.

The history of drama in education revolves around two main tensions that to some extent are still debated today: the polarisation of drama *process* and *product*; and regimentation versus play and exploration. The influence of these debates and their influence on curriculum development in NSW will be major themes in the next two chapters.

As with the other art forms taught in schools, drama addresses a duality in its practice. (students learn *about* the art form itself, but also *through* the art form). On the one hand, like perhaps music, drama is heavily influenced by professional practice in the theatre. So students learn to "act" (Bolton, 1998, p. xvi) and design (NSW Board of Studies (BOS), 1999). On the other hand, students develop ways of knowing through the process of drama learning. Heathcote argues in her 1984 lectures that:

If you want to use drama you're basically looking at social behaviours. You're not looking at the private person in the private moment, you're looking at social behaviours (Heathcote, 1984, p. 4).

Social behaviours are included in the learning outcomes of drama syllabuses that are not necessarily the mainstay of the professional theatre even though the theatre is by its nature

collaborative. This duality reflects the major philosophical positions in drama education. Theatre arts refers to the learning that directly relates to theatre and its functions and apart from those objectives has little to do with social knowing. This approach is espoused strongly by David Hornbrook<sup>2</sup> who argues that there is essentially no difference between what a child does in the classroom and what an actor does on stage (Hornbrook, 1989). He has provided a critical voice through his publications mainly of the drama in education movement pioneered by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. Process drama relies on the processes within drama to teach what it is to be human. It also assists in the development of social skills and promotes empathy. Hornbrook's approach values the traditions of the theatre over what he calls the "mystification and dramatic midwifery" (1998, p. 18) of Heathcote and Bolton's practice. His controversial critique has provided an important other voice in the development of drama in education.

Drama or process drama, has its genesis with practitioners such as Peter Slade, but is most powerfully practiced by Dorothy Heathcote (as shown in her video *Three looms waiting* (BBC, 1976)).

This study therefore begins with a short history of the development of drama education. I have divided this section into three eras; the Pre-Heathcote era, the Heathcote era and the Heathcotian structuralist era. I have used Heathcote as my central figure as she is a major influence on the development of drama education in NSW (Mooney, 1989, p. 6).

### **Pre-Heathcotian pioneers<sup>3</sup>**

Gavin Bolton's work has illuminated most of the important figures in the pre-Heathcote era. His work on the genesis of the movement, found in several publications but most recently in *Acting in Classroom Drama* (Bolton, 1998) provides an articulate analysis of the 'pioneers' of drama education. As he is one of the major scholars in this area and at times the only voice, his work clearly reflects his philosophical and political position. His closeness to the figures he writes about (such as Heathcote) is one of Hornbrook's (1989) major criticisms of

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<sup>2</sup> David Hornbrook was an Arts Inspector for the London Burrough of Camden and Associate Fellow of the Central School of Speech and Drama.

<sup>3</sup> Gavin Bolton (1998) first used this term to describe the earliest drama practitioners and theorists. I use the term here with the realisation that not all of the pioneers necessarily had a constructive influence on drama education.

him. His work on Heathcote should thus be reviewed with this in mind. He has during the course of his career, revised his view on the nature of the 'pioneers' (Bolton, 1998, p. XVIII). His writing in this area is examined here and juxtaposed with available literature that critiques or complements his view.

### **Harriet Finlay-Johnson: collaboration**

From the earliest days of drama education the subject has been inextricably linked with progressive education. Bolton (1998, p. 9) describes what he sees as the genesis of drama education. Harriet Finlay-Johnson's book of 1911 called *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* was promoted by the then Chief Inspector of Schools, Edmund Holmes who was a progressive. The identification of drama education as progressive, even from its early days is significant and may explain some of the struggles for acceptance of the subject in the mainstream curriculum and some of the subject's internal political struggles.

The suspicion of drama education and the privileging of other subjects such as music and visual art seems prevalent in recent syllabus development and is discussed further in Chapter 3. The 'fringe-dwelling' (O'Toole, 1998, pp. 9-10) of drama may be due to the history of the subject's development. Bolton (1998, p. 11) suggests that the principles in Finlay-Johnson's work became central to the work of later practitioners such as Heathcote. Finlay-Johnson valued cooperative learning, reliance on the strength of the imagination, self-paced learning and teachers as facilitators and co-learners. These principles, which are currently widely accepted, may have been more difficult to introduce in the educationally conservative days before World War One. Even those within the progressive education movement were not fully supportive of her views. Some thought that her encouragement of collaborative learning diminished the importance of the development of the individual (Bolton, 1998, p. 11).

Finlay-Johnson introduced some important concepts that influence contemporary practice. She worked with the idea of the construction of a 'virtual world' where students could work through the metaphor of a game. The game analogy is an important part of a drama teacher's language. Finlay-Johnson used the terms 'game' and 'drama' (Bolton, 1998b, p. 22) interchangeably and this seems reasonable given that she was working with younger students. Bolton argues that the game introduces the idea of another schooling culture with different rules. That idea was borne out by Finlay-Johnson's description of her own classroom

environment that included collaborative learning and teacher facilitation rather than the rote learning of the ‘empty vessels’ model that was predominant during the pre-war years.

Although there were several who referred to drama education tangentially, such as James Welton in 1906 and E. M Gilpin in 1920 among others (Bolton 1998, pp. 5-6), Finlay-Johnson was the first to practice and then theorise about drama education. She touched on many themes and tensions in her work that are important issues for drama teachers today including those involved in this study.

### **Henry Caldwell Cook: the importance of play**

Henry Caldwell Cook was a contemporary of Finlay-Johnson and introduced several concepts that continue to resonate in drama education practice today. Again as Bolton (1998, p. 27) suggests the link with progressivism was the key to the development of his concepts of dramatisation. What Caldwell Cook brings to the field however is the discussion and examination of play and its links with drama education. In his book *Play way an essay in educational method* (1917) he provides a discussion of how teachers might guide students through learning by facilitating their use of play and through collaboration. His methods encouraged using ‘free play’ to begin, followed by structured playbuilding that borrowed from the “classical works”. Caldwell Cook counsels:

But the experiment of inventing your own plot is so difficult and attended with so much risk of disaster that it is wiser to follow the example of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and all of our other great poets, and found your story upon the rock of some traditional tale... The boys having borrowed their story, may take what they have need of, and set aside the rest. They may add, divide and multiply. But they must start by borrowing. The creative skill of the stealers and their choice in theft are the test of their Promethean virtue (Caldwell Cook, 1917, p. 272).

His approach to drama education seems similar to that practiced in contemporary classrooms. The differences lie in his reliance on the classics and his understatement of self-devising in his classroom work. Of student devised work he is deeply concerned about the disasters that may ensue (Caldwell Cook, 1917, p. 272). While he prefers the classics as a base he prescribes play as a way to begin work. He describes his classroom:

Some sit at the desks while others stand before them or lean over their shoulders. They [the students] are gathered in working groups, putting their brown heads together for the making of their play; and the room is full of an industrious chatter. A visitor entering suddenly might

fancy that he had come by mistake into a classroom of the old school in the absence of the master; for the noise of allowed play sounds at first just like the noise of disorder. But if you listen you will find it is articulate (Caldwell Cook, 1917, p. 302).

The link between play and drama emerged with the pioneers and endures as a research theme today. Roslyn Arnold (1994, p. 17) for instance states that drama

...reactivates the pleasurable (or difficult) experiences of exploration, mastery and social interaction found in early childhood play.

Caldwell Cook did not have the benefit of the advances in psychoanalytic theory (Macey, 2000, p. 314), yet his work seemingly informs the more contemporary discussion of the link between drama and play.

Perhaps more than Finlay-Johnson, Caldwell Cook was the first to truly embrace process rather than product. Whereas one may infer a priority for process in Finlay-Johnson's work, Caldwell Cook states it clearly:

But the claim here put forward is not for the destination but chiefly for the journey. Any means that becomes in this way an end in itself I call the Play Way" (Caldwell Cook, 1917, p. 6).

He outlines nine advisory notes that describe the process of development. The ideas here value collaboration and process and refer only briefly to product. His last point illustrates the value he places on the product 'with older children there is value in sharing the work with an audience' (Caldwell Cook, 1972, p. 156).

Another important theme Caldwell Cook introduces is the teacher as facilitator. He suggests that the teacher be "...an influence continuously operative, though not constantly asserted". (Caldwell Cook, 1917, p. 31). The 'style' of teaching suggested here values the contribution of the student and guides rather than directs. The concept of collaboration is explicit in his work. He describes the class as 'a body of workers' (Bolton 1998, p. 31) and the notion of a team is never far from his discussions. The concept of the collective identity, the ensemble or the team is central to contemporary drama practice in the classroom and on the stage. While it is possible to see actors perform individually, they more frequently perform in an ensemble. In the classroom students' collaborative skills are valued and assessed. With the possible

exception of physical education<sup>4</sup>, drama relies more heavily on the development of the students' social learning skills than any other curriculum area.

Caldwell Cook also begins in his analysis of his own pedagogy to identify the nature of the learning that takes place in the drama class. He discusses the concept of unintentional learning. His discovery opens up an important examination of the learning in drama. In the discussions with the four teachers in this study, there is still an attempt to understand the nature of learning in drama and how that relates to the way teachers teach in the subject. This differs from other subjects. The collaboration and self directed learning that drama requires by its content and process constructs learning about the 'social'. This often occurs without students being aware that social learning is taking place. For instance, teamwork is demanded in other subjects but in the NSW drama syllabuses a student's skills in building and delivering an ensemble performance are directly assessed internally and externally. The learning here is ostensibly about a dramatic creation, however if students are unable to learn and apply social learning they will be unable to create their dramatic presentation effectively. So, the learning here is unintentional in Caldwell Cook's terms.

Another of Caldwell Cook's concerns was to steer students away from realism. He resisted realism for three reasons according to Bolton (1998, p. 45):

1. Students are unable to act beyond 'impressions and appearances'
2. Realism avoided conventions, characters and dramatic situations and students need to be exposed to all available and;
3. The romantic is ignored.

Another commentator, Hodgson (1972, p. 155) supports Bolton's assessment of Caldwell Cook thus:

The progression he recommends is far from sprawling and limited psychodrama to shaped and polished plays that can be shared with an audience.

Integral to Cook's eschewal of the realistic was his focus on the space and how that was to be used. Cook argues against the use of a proscenium arch style spaces and encourages the use of an 'open' space (1972, p. 155) and at times suggests that students should work in the 'open

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<sup>4</sup> Physical education relies on team sports to build social understandings. These team sports are not however assessed as part of the HSC assessment and examination process. In drama a student's ability to work with a group is assessed at HSC level.

air' (1972, p. 150). These suggestions predate Peter Brook's discussion of the 'empty space' which has influenced modern theatre and modern drama education. Brook's<sup>5</sup> approach while not influenced by Cook was that the actor must charge the space with life. This change in the conception of space paralleled the rise of presentational theatre that avoided verisimilitude and attempted to engage the audience through non-realistic conventions. Brook's approach challenged the theatre as Caldwell-Cook had challenged the orthodoxy of theatre education. Brook understands space in similar ways to Caldwell-Cook:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an actor of theatre to be engaged (Brook, 1968, p. 9).

It was the wealth of these conventions that Cook was attempting to harness by opening up the use of the space.

Hornbrook sees several emerging issues for drama education in Caldwell Cook's practice (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 8). He asserts that:

...by superimposing the morality of English team games onto the free spirit of Romanticism, Caldwell Cook was unwittingly rehearsing the conundrum that continues to haunt drama in education. At what point does our right to do 'those things we have the natural desire to do' give way to the demands of 'right conduct'? In a world where the values of the public school playing field are by no means universally accepted, who is to adjudicate?

Hornbrook's concerns here focus on the tension between, in Freudian terms (Macey, 2000, p.197) the id and the superego. However, drama education has the ability to allow learning in both areas without contradiction. Caldwell Cook's own practice suggests that although play, or 'things we have the natural desire to do', is important, indeed foundational, students should still be exposed to other learning such as Shakespeare and Milton.

Hornbrook's description of Caldwell Cook's practice to an "...idiosyncratic Boys Own Paper..." style that reflects the 'heady progressivism' of the day (Hornbrook, p. 7, 1989) is reductionist and superficial and ignores much of the importance of Caldwell Cook's work. Caldwell Cook's recognition and development of play first suggests the importance of the

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Brook argued that all that is needed for theatre to take place is the actor, the audience and the empty space. He saw costumes, set and scenery as superfluous to the theatrical event (Hartnoll, 1989, p. 261).

relationship between drama education and play. This link is an important theme of the teacher's practice explored in this study.

Between the wars two theorists introduced and consolidated the themes introduced by Caldwell Cook and Finlay-Johnson. Percy Nunn in 1920 promoted make-believe in a structured fashion that anticipated Heathcote's 'Mantle of the Expert'<sup>6</sup> (Bolton, 1998, p. 67). Susan Isaacs in 1930 highlighted the importance of play as a contributor to cognitive development but saw little application for it in the classroom setting (Bolton, 1998, p. 68). Their contribution was however to continue the themes that resonate in drama education today and provided some discussion of the place of play and imagination in the development of the child. This discussion was continued and extended in the work of Peter Slade and Brian Way.

### **Peter Slade and Brian Way: creative play and the 'drama exercise'**

Peter Slade commented in a radio interview in 1948 (cited in Bolton, 1998, p. 120) that 'these days it seems that Drama is almost in the air.' According to Bolton his perception was correct. In the U.K there were conferences, publications and the Ministry of Education commissioned a report into drama education that brought recognition by 1951. It said of drama in the curriculum that '...drama can now be regarded as an established and worthwhile part of school life' (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 10). Peter Slade had involvement in many of these activities.

Peter Slade's approach to drama education as outlined in *Child Drama* (Slade, 1954) sat well within the progressivism of the day. Hornbrook comments that *Child Drama* (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 10) and its follow-up came to inform the practice of a newly created generation of drama teachers. *Child Drama* as a book and as a theory valued the child's drama as an art in itself that needed to be lovingly nurtured. Slade also stressed that the child's work should not be judged by adult standards. His ideas develop the work on play that others, most notably Caldwell Cook espoused. Slade's work however developed and elevated the idea. He saw drama as 'the art of living'. His understanding of drama was all pervasive. Bolton suggests (1998, p. 121) that he never justified his broad usage of drama, but simply pointed to it as a

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<sup>6</sup> Mantle of the expert is sometimes known as enactment of the expert. See Hughes (1992). The term 'mantle of the expert' is used here as I am describing Heathcote's approach to the method.

phenomenon. Slade feels that drama is at the centre of life, education and all the arts. The claims were sure to bring some criticisms. One of the critiques comes from David Hornbrook who writes:

If the teacher's relationship with Child Drama was vitally non-critical then how was it possible to know what educational aims were being realized? (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 10).

This valid concern of Hornbrook's raised two major issues for Slade's concept. Firstly the relationship of the teacher to the student was to be one of 'loving ally'. While that sounds reasonable it causes practical concerns for the teacher. How does the loving ally strive for objectivity in assessment and evaluation? How does the teacher, charged with being non-intrusive handle play that gets out of hand? What happens if students misbehave?

An important part of Slade's contribution was to acknowledge and prioritise the artistic ability of young children. His recognition of child drama as an art form in itself alerted teachers to the potential of the young child's drama making ability and its relationship with play. His work consolidated and strengthened the place of drama in the educational development of the child. The legacy of his work is seen in the existence of successful drama curriculum in Australia and throughout the world for early childhood and primary students. Sladian technique may have been popular in the 1950s and 60s but it has been regarded with some scepticism since . In the current climate of Basic Skills Tests<sup>7</sup> and outcomes based learning, *Child Drama* seems remote, however Slade's philosophies recognised strongly the ability of young children to create their own drama and influenced many that were to come after him.

Brian Way was an associate of Peter Slade. His book, *Development Through Drama* (1967) appears influenced by Slade's ideas about the potential for drama to develop the child. Way however remoulds drama inserting concepts that had hitherto not been included in drama education. Way states his personal development agenda up front, he says "...a basic definition of drama might be 'simply to practice living'" (1967, p. 6). He states plainly early on in his book that:

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<sup>7</sup> The Basic Skills Test measures literacy and numeracy in NSW schools through closed questioning techniques. Students, teachers and schools are "evaluated" on the basis of these tests.

So far as it is humanly possible, this book is concerned with the development of people, not with the development of drama (1967, p. 2).

He sees drama at the centre of the individual's development and as such he argues drama 'should be provided for every child and be the concern of every teacher' (1967, p. 6). This approach may sound similar to Dorothy Heathcote's 'living through drama' methods discussed later in this chapter. Way's *Development Through Drama* however contains several central differences, which made his approach differ from Heathcote. Way was primarily interested in the 'individuality of the individual' (1967, p. 3). Heathcote's approach was rather, to teach her students about what it was to be a social being.

While Heathcote saw the theatre as being an important influence on her work as argued later, Way suggests that theatre has no real place in the development of his work:

...theatre is largely concerned with the *communication* between actors and an audience; drama is largely concerned with the experience by the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience (Way, 1967, p. 3).

Here Way has attempted to completely distance himself from the theatrical by reducing theatre to a transaction and heightening drama to an experiential activity. In doing so he devalues the importance of the 'we' Heathcote speaks of in her work. He also discards many of the factors that were essential to the work of the 'pioneers' such as Caldwell Cook and Finlay-Johnson such as structuring the drama and the importance of continually reshaping student work, pushing it away from verisimilitude.

Bolton conceptualises Way's approach to teaching in terms of a 'physical education' style of teaching (Bolton, 1998, p. 149). Way used exercises, so that the individual could practice the various skills important for development. His book has exercises that concentrate on, 'imagination', 'speaking', 'consciousness of self', 'self control' and so on. Bolton argues that many of these exercises were non-dramatic and rooted more in the personal growth movement than in drama education (1998, p.151). Many of the exercises encouraged relaxation or warm ups that amounted to physical education and had the potential to look nothing like the 'drama classes' of his predecessors. It was possible in Way's drama classes to have no drama, as it was conventionally envisaged. As Bolton's (1998, p. 164) argues 'At a time when his fellow pioneer, Peter Slade was urging a 'playful' release of fantasy, Way

was circumscribing acting behaviour into a prosaic exercise'. The unhappy legacy of these exercises remain in the practice of many teachers who see drama as a series of games or exercises without any links to an ongoing and systematic body of learning (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982, p. 9).

Brian Way's approach to drama was to dissociate his concept from the theatre and prescribe a series of exercises that were designed to develop the individual. This approach appears to remove that which is educationally attractive about drama education. It also removes much of the practice developed by Caldwell Cook. There was little place in Way's classroom for working with others. There was a total disassociation from the audience. The creative play that Slade knew was replaced by ordered, assessed exercises, many of which had little or nothing to do with the theatre. In short Way's personal development approach left drama with personal development and personal growth connotations.

Slade and Way's approaches are significantly different from the work of Dorothy Heathcote. While reflecting some of the elements of her predecessors her approach has done more to influence drama education in NSW and elsewhere than all who came before her. The next section will review Dorothy Heathcote's contribution to drama education.

### **Dorothy Heathcote: transformative pedagogy<sup>8</sup>**

Dorothy Heathcote's influence on drama education is profound and controversial. Many of the techniques she employed and promoted have now become drama education orthodoxy in NSW schools (Mooney, 1989, p. 6). Her work also fostered several others to describe and analyse her work. Betty Jane Wagner (1976), Cecily O'Neill (1979) and Gavin Bolton (1982) described her approach and developed frameworks that drew from her methodology. Even her harshest critic says of her and Gavin Bolton:

It is impossible to embark on an examination of the complex texture of drama-in-education in the 1980s without acknowledging at an early stage the overarching presence of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 16).

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<sup>8</sup> This term coined the drama magazine 2D to describe Heathcote's contribution to drama education (Anon, 1986, p. 81)

Hornbrook rightly links Bolton and Heathcote, as Bolton's body of theoretical and practical work arises from the work of Heathcote. Hornbrook claims that Bolton gave Heathcote's 'highly intuitive methodology respectable intellectual form' (1989, p. 19).

While Hornbrook recognises her contribution he also sees much in her work to criticise. Primarily he argues that Heathcote created a mystical system that encouraged her followers to see her as a guru. However, what Hornbrook fails to recognise are the significant departures both O'Neill and Bolton (perhaps her most prominent adherents) have made from her work in order to develop new approaches (Bolton, 1998, p. 231).

Heathcote, like many of the others within drama education was influenced by the theatre practice around her. She trained as an actor (Hodgson, 1972, p. 156) and would have been exposed to the work of Stanislavski<sup>9</sup> and Brecht<sup>10</sup> as part of her training. At one point she remarks about Brecht's work:

I liked the notion of 'that which will stand for this' – because I play, you know I think that is deep play- that I can see what I'm making it out of. I love that (Davis cited by Hornbrook, 1989, p. 17).

She quotes Brecht generously throughout her work in order to support her arguments, most particularly about 'we feeling' (1984, p. 13).

Heathcote also favoured the idea of practice in action: praxis.

The Greek word for the practice of action is 'praxis'. We seem to have created in our syllabi very heavy stress upon thinking and very little stress on affective thinking. Drama is about affective thinking and cognitive thinking it is not just about behaviour (Heathcote, 1984, p. 31).

In Heathcote's idea of 'living through drama' she encourages teachers and students to *do*. Heathcote sees drama as she claims the Greeks saw drama, 'to live through'. Interestingly, even as early as 1972 (Heathcote, 1972, p. 157) she is articulating her work in terms of its social good, for instance "living through", yet she is also justifying her work in terms of classical theatrical practice. She was attempting to embrace here the theatrical and the social.

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<sup>9</sup> Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) was famous for his work as a theatre director at the Moscow Arts Theatre and his "method" actor training techniques (Hartnoll, p. 238, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a German dramatist and director and co-founded the Berliner Ensemble. In his work he strove to make audiences observe the epic nature of politics and history (Hartnoll, 1985, pp. 224-225).

A barrier has grown up and people have taken sides. The two teams are advocates of the so-called informal dramatics, whose creed is that children shall use their own language always, versus those who consider the so-called formal production is best. One glance at Kenneth Tynan's<sup>11</sup> remarks quoted earlier will show that there is no reason why the two teams should necessarily be opposed (Heathcote, 1972, p. 164).

The recognition of both approaches is an important part of Heathcote's attraction to drama educators. This same pragmatic approach can also be seen in the syllabuses in NSW today. The NSW HSC syllabus favours the 'we' feeling in the group performance, but also recognises the importance of the traditions of the theatre in the content areas (BOS, 1995, pp. 1-19).

This is a departure from much of the work of Slade and Way who sought early on to reject the theatre. Heathcote encourages the active; '... First of all drama does – it does not teach about. We have to learn to make it do. Secondly it manufactures worlds which use all the known created knowledge...'. Heathcote envisages drama as a way of creating worlds that help us understand our own, a dress rehearsal perhaps. Or as Hodgson (1972, p. 156) puts it 'living through' drama is primarily about 'living through situations and the insight to be gained from them'. Bolton describes 'Living through drama' in the following way:

Her focus was always on one 'internal situation' breeding or 'foreshadowing the next 'internal' situation, rather than 'plot', whereas the latter prompts a 'what-happens-next' mental set, the former is more conducive to 'living through' operating at a seeming life rate, a modus vivendi that lent itself to staying with a situation sufficiently long to explore it and understand it more (Bolton, 1998, p. 179).

Like Finlay-Johnson and Caldwell Cook, Heathcote was concerned with a radical change in teaching that had a 'doing' syllabus at its centre rather than knowledge based syllabus. She states:

I'm interested therefore, in making schools places where 'doing' happens, particularly 'public behaviour doing', the exploration of 'celebration doing', the consideration of what life is about doing', bonding and so on (Heathcote, 1984, p. 33).

Heathcote has more on her mind than the 'physical development model' espoused by people such as Way. She is encouraging a use of theatrical elements without a traditional audience to

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Tynan was an influential London Theatre critic in the 1960s and 1970s.

create worlds for students to learn. She is specific about what students will learn as well, not for Heathcote the vague “feel good” factor as shown by:

In drama above all you can't make vague promises...When you say something like, “Drama is good for their language”, get rid of it. It doesn't tell anybody how it does it, because it's too vague. “Drama is good for their personality and all that” – get rid of it because it does a great deal of harm. It doesn't point to what we really have to consider, which is – how does it do it? (Heathcote, 1984, p. 6).

This seems a long way from the ‘mystifying language’ Hornbrook<sup>12</sup> (1989, p. 18) attributes to Heathcote's rise. On the contrary Heathcote is very sure of what she is teaching and how she is teaching through drama. In Heathcote's ‘Man in a Mess’ drama, a term which Bolton uses to describe her early work, Heathcote constructs a world and then invites students to take part in getting the ‘mess’ solved. Heathcote articulates the ‘Man in a Mess’ approach in her early writing (Heathcote, 1972, p. 157):

Kenneth Tynan defines his personal meaning of drama in *Declaration* as ‘Good drama for me is made up of the thoughts, the words and the gestures that are wrung from human beings on their way to, or in, or emerging from a state of desperation’. He further defines a play as being an ordered sequence of events that brings one or more of the people in it to a desperate condition which it must always explain and should, if possible, resolve’. In these two sentences lies the key to the essential nature of drama.

Another important part of Heathcote's work is the concept of authenticity. According to Bolton (1998, p. 244) she means ‘rigorous attention to and respect for what is true, true for the scientist, true for the scholar and for the artist and craftsman.’ The pursuit of authenticity demanded of her students a realistic response to the world in which they found themselves.

In the next few paragraphs I will explore the profound importance of her work and make some observations about her legacy. Heathcote sees the world in terms of social interaction, she focuses on the ‘we’ rather than the ‘I’ or ‘me’ “...all the work of drama is about cultures and communities and about group systems. It is not a private art. It is a public art” (Heathcote, 1984, p. 25). The importance of this approach is that she defines drama unequivocally as an ‘art’ that depends on interaction. She creates worlds that are social, and although virtual, depend on the constructs of reality for their form. So when students examine

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<sup>12</sup> It is true that Heathcote created jargon to explain her techniques such as ‘mantle of the expert’. It might be argued that this had the potential to mystify her followers and others as Hornbrook suggests (1989, p.18).

a historical problem it is not the dates and the facts that they examine in a Heathcote drama, it is the social relationships, the 'why' rather than the 'what'. It is also the construction of society that she is concerned with in the 'we feeling'. "It is not me and it is not you, it is that which together this community makes in the spaces of communication we find between you and me and it is how society makes its social order" (Heathcote, 1984, p. 3). This understanding of the 'we' is drawn from the work of earlier educators, but the influence of Heathcote's theatrical training should not be discounted. She quotes Brecht instructing actors:

Your task, actors, is to be explorers and teachers of the art of dealing with people, knowing their nature and demonstrating it. You teach them to deal with themselves, you teach them the great art of living together (Heathcote, 1984, p. 13).

The 'we' as central, is a departure from the 'find a space on your own' school of drama teaching attributed by Bolton (1998, p. 151) to Brian Way. The focus on the communal, the ensemble is more in line with the work of Peter Slade and the earlier 'pioneers' Caldwell Cook and Finlay-Johnson. The other crucial difference from Brian Way's methodology was away from the 'physical education' style exercise to the creation of new worlds. Teachers trained on Way's *Development Through Drama* method must have been astounded at the innovation in Heathcote's approach. No longer was the approach 'exercises for living individually' but rather 'this is life, how do we fix it together?' As Bolton (1998, p. 186) suggests:

...Heathcote almost always worked with the whole class together in the initial stages of a new piece of work which was more than an organisational preference. Her whole approach is based on a communal perspective, so that the pupils take on their roles primarily as 'we', the people of 'this culture' and not as 'I', an interesting individual interacting with other individualistic characters.

Heathcote is interested in how we make society and how we interact. Her work with such large groups (sometimes 30 or 40) is testament to her commitment. Her ability to maintain and create learning in 'the drama' attests to her skill as a teacher-artist.

The value of the 'collective' in the NSW Drama syllabuses has already been argued. The development of the 'collective' rather than the 'individual' seems to be most reflective of Heathcotian approaches. In a recent support document published by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) (DET, 1999, p. 13) there are suggestions about how primary school students can work in groups:

Working with others to develop drama involves exploring, responding to and using the elements of drama to structure their work and create meaning.

Here the document encourages teachers to develop drama that is explorative' and creates meaning using the building blocks of drama that Heathcote also alluded to:

Theatre understanding is most necessary in classroom practice, but not the elaborate game element of showing which professional theatre must employ (Johnson and O'Neill, 1984, p. 31).

Heathcote then identifies sound, silence, contrast and light. Elements that continue to permeate drama syllabuses today (BOS, 2000).

Teacher-in-role was the second major contribution Heathcote made to modern practice. Bolton suggests that teacher-in-role although probably influenced by her actor training and teaching experience was distinctively 'Heathcotian'. The teacher-in-role experience changed the power transaction between teacher and student by often allowing the student to choose the role and status of the character. Teacher-in-role also depended on the student to provide the content of the drama rather than the teacher controlling the lesson<sup>13</sup>. The approach also introduced a radical learning experience that took the teacher inside the drama.

As Bolton suggests teachers were 'mystified' by teacher-in-role, some went further and thought it 'indulgent and idiosyncratic' (Bolton, 1998, p. 182). Heathcote however worked with this technique to make the worlds she was creating authentic. It is one thing for students to create belief in a situation, but quite another to collaborate with your teacher and perhaps 30 or more students to create the same belief or authenticity.

The teacher-in-role technique was a logical extension of the new teacher to student relationship she urged.

In drama the teacher in a way suffers a reversal of his usual role, which is that of one who knows.... Therefore he [the student] is not asking the teacher for the answer, he is offering the teacher a viewpoint and in return the teacher may offer another one. Neither one will be right or wrong (Heathcote, 1972, p. 160).

This approach saw the power relationship alter. There was an equal understanding and even though the teacher led the group, the students experiences were valued. In 1984 in her New Zealand lectures Dorothy Heathcote decried the loss of power of the child. She argued that

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<sup>13</sup> Some may argue that there is perhaps a more subtle form of control going on in the teacher-in-role strategy.

child labour reforms had an unintended outcome: ‘the disenfranchisement of the power of children to be a productive, positive influence in our society’ (Heathcote, 1984, p. 6).

Heathcote is calling here for a realignment of the relationship between teacher and student. Teacher-in-role was a major part of that approach.

The roles that Heathcote takes are those that give her the greatest manoeuvrability. Her favourite ones are middle-rank positions: the first mate, the foreman in the factory, the police officer who is just following orders, the radio transmitter on a submarine, Caesar’s messenger, the doctor’s assistant. This way she is not the final power, but she is the effect of the power.... she wants ample power, but not the power to make final decisions (Wagner, 1976, p. 129).

This description comes from Betty Jane Wagner who observed Heathcote’s work and wrote sometimes overly florid descriptions of her practice. Hornbrook (1989, p. 18) uses these descriptions to make much of his case about the mysticism of Heathcote’s practice, criticisms that may have been more accurately attributed to the observer (Wagner) rather than the observed (Heathcote).

Nonetheless the above description of Heathcote’s work related something very new in drama education. The concept of the teacher controlling the drama by becoming part of it was new. In this role the teacher created and facilitated a virtual world by becoming part of it. Students were invested with real power to make decisions about the drama. No longer did a spot on the floor or words on the page dictate the drama. The drama education experience was reconfigured. Paradoxically, and perhaps against Heathcote’s wishes many saw the power relationship shifting further to the teacher, who with the added impetus of role could step outside the bounds of teacher behaviour. However *Three Looms Waiting* (BBC, 1976) does show a teacher (Heathcote) demonstrating a very teacher-led classroom. Certainly teacher-in-role introduced a new power relationship but whether it reduced the power of the teacher in favour of empowering students is still an open question. As Bolton says:

This ‘teacher-in-role’ strategy clearly invests the teacher with considerable power. When she starts her role, she is, as it were, ‘holding all the cards’...Clearly if the pupils are anticipating the ‘teacher-in-role game’, it becomes a different order of experience, but if seen as unexpected behaviour of a teacher it increases the teacher’s power potential (Bolton, 1998, p. 183).

Bolton goes on to observe after these remarks that Heathcote’s later work attempted to change this power relationship. As Bolton observes, ‘the role of the teacher is that of

dramatist, a dramatist who is not only supplying the words but the accompanying non-verbal signals, so that the reading required of the pupils is multi-dimensional (Bolton, 1998, p. 184).

In this description we see the unifying force of Heathcote's praxis. She encourages the teacher to engage with the art form personally in order to help her students engage with it. In this one technique she embraces theatre and teaching.

However there are several issues that arise from Heathcote's teacher-in-role method. Initially as Bolton suggests (1998, p. 185) the drama is teacher-led. It does not really become successful until the students make their own 'interpretations'. There is a danger also that teachers could subsume the power and deliver no real benefit except their own ego gratification. These concerns about student power led Heathcote to develop the concept of 'mantle of the expert'. This technique also allows the teacher to work on the drama from the inside but attempts to deliver power to the students. As Bolton (1998, p. 240) puts it:

To understand Heathcote's approach one needs to understand that where the participants themselves are required to take on the role in improvised as opposed to scripted work, she sees no alternative to helping them 'from the inside' by taking on a role herself.

'Mantle of the expert' creates roles for students that cast them as the 'ones who know' (instead of the teacher). For example a student may take on the role of a scientist whose expertise is required to solve a problem in outer space. The expertise role shifts the power from the teacher to the student.

In 'mantle of the expert' Heathcote has designed a teaching technique that invites the teacher to support the learning by making the teacher the insider, supporting the work of the students as the experts. This radical change in the classroom power set-up is designed to give students the status and the responsibility of expertise. Heathcote explains in Bolton (1998, p. 240) why she uses the concept:

I began to realize that the expertise of viewpoint could help teachers with little conscious understanding of theatre to get things started *under* the story line instead of merely replicating narrative. Also because children enjoy playing at 'busy authority' (as younger children enjoy 'playing house'), the work could be launched via short, precise honed-for-the-purpose tasks relevant to the theme.

Heathcote is interested in the ways 'play' can be adapted within the bounds of teacher-in-role. Her commitment to play like that of her predecessors is fundamental. "The ability to play seriously is fundamental. It is the mark of the artist and scientist, the inventor and all innovators" (Heathcote, 1984, p. 25). Her approach to teacher-in-role and mantle of the expert was always based on creating authentic experiences in virtual worlds. Indeed as Carroll argues (1995) drama is the ideal template for students entering the world of virtual technologies as it initiates them into the importance of imagination and the suspension of disbelief. Heathcote's work has provided teachers with these valuable tools.

Unsurprisingly Heathcote had both extremely strong admirers and strong critics. One of her main critics, David Hornbrook, often appears to be more concerned with the manner rather than the method. Here he is speaking about the commentary on Heathcote's work by Bolton and Wagner:

The trouble with this mode of discourse is that it obscures the vital distinction we must always make between the utterance and the utterer if we are to attempt a constructive evaluation of what is being said. The employment of first names, avuncular familiarity, the selective use of critical judgement, make it almost impossible to prise the text from the personality. In a blur of disciplinary defensiveness, Gavin becomes inseparable from Gavin's theories; to challenge the idea is to threaten the person (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 20).

There is some validity in Hornbrook's claim. Obviously Heathcote's work drew followers, as it was new and for some, breathtaking. One needs only to read some of the commentary by Betty Jane Wagner (1976) to observe the rapturous, almost uncritical approach some observers employed. Furthermore the use of first names contributed to the impression by some in theoretical circles that the work lacked rigour. However these criticisms don't go to the heart of the work, they are merely reprimanding Heathcote's lack of respect (Hornbrook says "ability"), for the academic and theoretical world.

His second charge is that drama education cannot be appraised. He argued that to assess work in drama is to measure how compliant students are (1989, p. 26). His criticism is that Heathcote's work demands compliance in students. He takes his example from Lance and Martyn (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 26) who set up a framework for assessment that has some serious problems, not the least of which is their attempt to measure compliance. Others such as Cecily O'Neill (1995), Jonathan Neelands (1990) and John Thompson (1991) in Australia

have devised far more satisfactory approaches. The reality is that Heathcote's approach to drama education required a kind of social cohesion. In order to succeed students needed to work with others and the teacher-in-role. What Hornbrook misses in his criticisms is the nature of assessment when working with interpersonal relationships. Surely Hornbrook would agree that an actor who performs in an ensemble must be able to work with their fellow actors. This skill is also required by the students in Heathcote's classes and as such can be assessed.

How does one sum up the impact of Dorothy Heathcote's work and what influence does she have on modern drama practice? One of her strongest advocates, Gavin Bolton has this to say (1998, p. 244):

Dorothy Heathcote has found a way of bringing the power of make-believe into the classroom so that her pupils can be 'inside the skin of the expert' and enjoy this sense of joyous intellectual adventure' using...an enterprise culture.

Her harshest critic, David Hornbrook says of Heathcote and Bolton (1989, p. 28):

Heathcote and Bolton succeeded in providing far more than a new methodology for the teaching of drama...they offered a wisdom that claimed its origins in deep spiritual truth and a unifying vision of humanity which absolved their followers from further moral or ideological speculation.

There is truth in both of these summaries of her work. She brought the worlds of education and theatre together to create a genuinely new methodology. Her approaches still have a profound impact on teachers (DET, 1999). Teachers use her methods to create authentic experiences for their students to learn about the real world in which they live and create new ones to provide distance and other perspectives on their current reality.

Heathcote's work is made available world-wide by Bolton's descriptions and analysis. His writings described Heathcote's practice and began to explain it for others, as well as providing a theoretical base. The next section will explore Bolton's own contribution to drama education.

### **Gavin Bolton**

Gavin Bolton is closely associated with Heathcote. In *2D* the editor offers the following tribute:

Heathcote once described herself “burrowing along like a mole in the dark” meaning I think that she pursued her own obsessions as a teacher. She contrasted her own inwardness with Gavin Bolton’s capacity to see “a large landscape and the patterns of it”. Well, moles may not see the landscape, but they change it, and the change Heathcote has wrought upon the drama landscape is no less than a transformation... (Anon, 1986, p. 81).

This tribute neatly articulates the standing, relationship and the character of Heathcote and Bolton’s partnership. It communicates the awe with which she was regarded and gives some weight to the ‘guru’ tag that Hornbrook (1989, p. 19) argues her followers gave her. It also recognises Heathcote’s singular talents and her ‘obsessions’. Most importantly however it describes the link between Heathcote and Bolton. While Heathcote reshapes the terrain Bolton soars over it. So the relationship is defined, the practitioner and the theoretician<sup>14</sup>.

Gavin Bolton’s role in shaping the terrain and not just observing it is however far more important than this metaphor might suggest. Bolton’s theories and practice extended Heathcote’s approach and enabled others to apply her work in their own classrooms. His codifying and theorising of Heathcote began a trend that continues in Betty Jane Wagner, Cecily O’Neill, Jonathan Neelands, John O’Toole and Brad Haseman’s writing, to provide ways into Heathcote’s practice and to make it useable and accessible.

Bolton’s view is that Process Drama is the dominant and most important form of classroom drama:

The content of a drama lesson is interdisciplinary....[students of all ages] may have their understandings of the world clarified or modified and secondly they may gain skills in social interaction which include the ability to communicate their understandings and feelings (Bolton, 1980, p. 71).

Here Bolton outlines an approach to drama education that raises process over product. He later in this chapter describes the perfect drama class and states four expectations of the class, the fourth expectation being: ‘They know it is an art form “*in process* not product” (Bolton, 1980, p. 74). Bolton opposes, at this stage in his career the role of acting in classroom drama that leads to product. His approach is to support the Heathcotian notion of ‘living through’ drama and sees the drama as the problem to be solved (Bolton, 1980, p. 72).

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<sup>14</sup> This editorial oversimplifies Bolton’s contribution. The description here is a description of the partnership rather than seeking to ignore Bolton’s significant practical contribution.

One of Bolton's major contributions is his ability to articulate ways for teachers to understand and use Heathcoteian techniques with their classes. Bolton articulates some principles for teaching drama in the classroom being trust, protection, negotiation of meaning and containing emotion (Bolton, 1980, pp. 78-86).

He argues that the first task of the drama teacher is to establish trust. He describes the competing agendas of a demonstration class he led where he needed to negotiate the lesson away from the students games and performance agendas and toward Bolton's interest in process.

From the very start the children at Riverside found themselves in a situation they could not trust, not simply because of the place and the milling throng of adults, but because of the expectations of drama that they brought with them (1980, p. 79).

Having detected a trust problem Bolton addressed the issue by allowing the students to choose the theme of the drama and work within the topic he chose. He progresses the process by developing a protection for students.

So the only way it seems to me is to 'protect' them into a context that does not expose, a context that naturally permits them to indulge an 'introverting' emotion while gradually opening up the topic (1980, p. 81).

Bolton uses protection into role to insulate his students from inauthentic 'acting'. He argues that protection allows students eventually to work with a 'feeling quality' creatively. Later he speaks of protection, not as a way to stop emotion but rather a way to launch into emotions that are useful to the drama:

By protection then we do not mean protection from emotion, but rather a carefully structured projection into emotion so that participants are engaged but not threatened (Bolton, 1986, p. 22).

Negotiation of meaning is the phase in process drama where the 'delicate uncovering process occurs' (Bolton, 1980, p. 81). Here there is a negotiation between teacher and student about what the meaning will be. Bolton describes his work with students exploring 'violence in schools'. He negotiates meaning in this instance by not overlaying student perceptions of the topic with his own. The next phase in negotiating meaning in Bolton's example was to clarify

the meaning. He says of the students, “So they are not really after *violence* as such but some form of *school illegality*” (1980, p. 82).

This negotiation like any teacher to student negotiation has power relationships within it. This raises questions about how negotiated the meaning actually is in this approach, or if it is teacher transmitted. Bolton’s agendas seem pedagogically sound, to reshape the work of the students to create more satisfactory learning outcomes, there is however some doubt over whether these changes were negotiated or imposed.

Bolton’s final stage is containing and harnessing the emotion. Bolton uses this phase as a safeguard against students becoming emotionally vulnerable in the drama and as a way of creating an emotional authenticity. He began by removing the situation from the students’ real class and school to a fictitious class and school.

I insisted that we were in some other school – and with a class with an unfamiliar title. Another safeguard lies in the tightness of teacher structuring (1980, p. 84).

Here Bolton is summing up his contribution to drama education’s theory and practice. He is providing structure for teachers to use and defines emotion at the centre of his work. He has provided new approaches to exploring Heathcote’s work. Rather than imitating her, he creates structures to develop the work further. In summing up his work with Riverside he then speaks about what students learn through his work and he defines it with his structures “...trust; protection; negotiation of meaning and containing”.

He relates the difference he sees between acting and “being” in the drama classroom:

It seems to me that the art of acting is the drawing out of an emotional response in an audience. For the child in the drama, the skill lies in behaving with integrity and spontaneity in a fictitious situation, not acting in the sense just described, but *being*...(1980, p. 86).

The difficulty with Bolton’s assessment of the difference here is that he is discussing only one aspect of acting. In reality there is, as he agrees in his later writing, (Bolton, 1998) acting in process drama and authenticity in the best type of acting. The opposition of: “acting” and “being” created a false dichotomy between the process and the product of classroom drama.

In his introduction to *Acting in Classroom Drama* he says:

It is my intention to both provide an historical perspective and to propose a reformulation of classroom acting behaviour...

This reformulation attempts to make a case for embracing, in the classroom, many different kinds of acting behaviours that go beyond the limits and responsibilities of a stage actor, with nevertheless including both 'stage' acting and that kind of acting behaviour associated with 'teacher-in-role' led drama... (Bolton 1998, p. xvii).

Bolton's change of opinion in this area recognises that theatre and drama education were not natural enemies and that one might support the other.

Bolton also participated in some of the major debates that still occupy the discussions and arguments of drama educators. The process versus product argument, ignited through Slade's *Child Drama*, is renewed through Bolton's exploration of the relationship between drama and theatre. The most interesting characteristic of his work in this area is his ability to shift his view to lead and embrace the changing trends in drama and education.

Because Bolton has documented and analysed Heathcote's work it is true that Bolton has been identified as the theoretician while Heathcote has been cast in the role of the practitioner. This is not, however a fair reflection of the work of Bolton. His work and theories stand for themselves and his theoretical shifts reflect many of the intellectual tensions in drama education. Bolton's work provides structure and links Heathcote's work back to the theatre, but not, in Bolton's thinking, to acting. He also teaches his students about "dramatic process", "dramatic form" and "integrity of feeling". His approaches begin the development of frameworks that endure and introduce a significant attempt to theorise and make accessible the work of Heathcote. The other major contribution is his insistence on process, while simultaneously allowing a discussion of theatrical form. His recognition of the importance of form opens the way for the blending of theatre arts and process drama. This is extraordinary in that at this time he was still rejecting the place of acting in process drama<sup>15</sup>. He sums up his approach to drama education:

The structures that are available to a teacher in carrying out both functions are often that the structures employed by the playwright . A drama teacher is consistently working in Theatre form (1980, p. 87).

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<sup>15</sup> He later reconceptualises this position (Bolton 1998).

## **Heathcotian structuralists**

The analysis and description of form and structure was a preoccupation of several theorists and educators who wrote to respond and clarify the work of Heathcote and Bolton. I am calling them ‘Heathcotian Structuralists’ here as they sought to give structure to the concepts and practices that Heathcote and Bolton introduced and theorised to aid teachers planning drama lessons. There are many theorists who could fall under this category, but I have concentrated on those I consider most influential in NSW syllabus development. Their contribution is important as the structures they created remain in the drama syllabuses and teaching in NSW. In these theorists, we also see the spread of drama education’s major figures from England to the other parts of the world<sup>16</sup>. The discussion of these theorists begins with an examination of the contribution of Gavin Bolton’s student Cecily O’Neill.

### **Cecily O’Neill**

O’Neill was as many others were, deeply influenced by the work of Heathcote and Bolton. Writing in 1995 she calls their “...understanding of the power of drama as a medium for learning as well as an art form was enormously influential...Almost all I know about drama I learned from these two outstanding theorists and practitioners...” (Taylor, 1995, p. 4). O’Neill’s contribution was however to elucidate and extend the work of Heathcote and Bolton and it was an “...attempt to clarify some of what we had learned from Bolton and Heathcote and make it accessible for teachers” (Taylor, 1995, p. 4).

She also attempts in her structures to re-situate Drama in Education, or as she later calls it process drama<sup>17</sup> within a theatrical context. She says:

Drama in education has the capacity to expose the key dramatic structures and characteristics it shares with other kinds of theatre...The students and teachers I work with in so many countries continue to teach me about the power and potential of drama in education, the ephemeral and unpredictable process which is intrinsically dramatic, truly educational and profoundly worthwhile (Taylor, 1995, p. 4).

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<sup>16</sup> This is particularly true of John O’Toole and Brad Haseman whose writing has been very influential in the development of drama education in Australia and particularly in NSW.

<sup>17</sup> The term process drama was introduced by John O’Toole (1992).

O'Neill's conceptualisation of drama in education is that of a structured learning enterprise that helps students explore the world around them. Writing in 1982 with Alan Lambert she defines her view of drama in the following way:

Drama in education is a mode of learning. Through the pupils' active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, they can learn to explore issues, events and relationships. In drama children draw on their knowledge and experience of the real world in order to create a make-believe world (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982, p. 11).

In *Drama Structures* O'Neill and Lambert (1982) extend the work of Bolton and Heathcote by providing fifteen defined structures for the development of drama lessons and programs. Despite the title of the book the structures she creates reflect the development of drama worlds rather than simply providing technical structures to assist with the mechanics of the drama in the way that Neelands has (1990). Her dramas use exercises and stimulus materials to transport teachers and students to worlds outside their own reality such as "The Lost Valley", "Starship" and "Emigrants" (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982, p. 5). The intent of these structures was to give teachers clear and unambiguous ways to develop drama in their own classroom. The very existence of this book in 1982 suggests that those structures were not immediately obvious to teachers in the work of Heathcote and Bolton themselves. In the foreword to *Drama Structures* Bolton praises the book for its ability to be applied easily:

But the greatest achievement of this book is that it sets out to *teach*. The reader is not only able to follow what happened in someone else's teaching, he or she is presented at critical points with a close analysis of the choices open to the teacher concerned (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982, p. 7).

O'Neill's achievement here according to Bolton is the presentation of a resource that does not only depict the teaching methodology like the influential Heathcote BBC videos (BBC, 1976), rather it shows teachers how to analyse and structure their own drama teaching. The book also marked a recognition that drama educators needed to conform to cross-curricular standards and explain their methodology. As Bolton comments:

...the authors recognise that for teaching drama in this decade teachers need to adopt a more trenchant rationale and methodology: they must acquire a much wider range of techniques including teacher-in-role and (so important) teacher not in role; a stronger sense of what is essential to theatre form; a more sophisticated notion of drama for learning and, above all, a new respect for the 'content' or 'themes' for which drama can be the vehicle (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982, p. 7).

Their structures provided drama teachers with models that they could replicate that were consistent with the work of Heathcote and Bolton. The book, as Bolton says, sets out to teach and as such deconstruct the complexity of drama teaching methodology. These structures provided accessible and teachable lessons and programs. These programs went some way in refuting the claims that drama in education was predicated on “mysticism and midwifery” and not accessible to ordinary teachers (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 18). In O’Neill’s structures Heathcote’s approaches are analysed and demonstrated in a simple and straightforward manner for teachers of all abilities and levels of experience to teach. On the other hand, O’Neill’s structures were perhaps too easy to replicate. Teachers could now use her structures, coming as they did with their own cultural and personal orientations, as drama. This may not have been O’Neill’s intent but the scarcity of other accessible material allowed some teachers to swap their own curriculum development in favour of reproducing established lessons developed by O’Neill (Haseman, 2001, p. 1). *Drama Structures* was however an important contribution to making drama more structured and available for ordinary teachers despite the drawbacks associated with its sometimes unsatisfactory implementation.

By 1995 O’Neill’s approach to drama education had evolved further. She says of *Drama Structures* that the satisfying dramatic events that arise from these structures do not necessarily occur because of their relationship to:

...specific or educational purposes. They are most effective when they obey the intrinsic rules of the dramatic event. *Drama Structures* is one of several publications that have helped teachers to moderate the unpredictability of improvisation by structuring and developing the dramatic encounter through a sequence of episodes. My purpose in this book is rather different. I hope to clarify the relationship between what I call process drama and the basic characteristics of the theatre event (O’Neill, 1995, p. xiv).

The other important development in *Drama Worlds* is her description and use of the term process drama.

Process drama is a complex dramatic encounter. Like other theatre events, it evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence... Process drama shares the key features of every theatre event and is articulated through the same kinds of dramatic organization (O’Neill, 1995, p. xii).

In this definition O'Neill includes the traditions of drama in education and its attendant process and the importance of working with the central elements of the theatre, audience, staging, dramatic tension etc. O'Neill's acceptance and promotion of this term avoids the false dichotomy of the process versus product argument explored earlier. In her view, both are important. Rather than rejecting theatrical form, she embraces it as part of process drama.

Process drama is structured and developed in the same way that dramatic worlds occur in the theatre, and participation in the creation of these worlds can be intrinsically satisfying, educationally worthwhile and dramatically significant (O'Neill, 1995, p. xx).

O'Neill here is articulating a form that has aesthetic value and that has educational value. Process drama, in her view, allows students to create their own worlds and present them in a way that has artistic and social value.

Drama education in NSW, though not using the term process drama, uses its techniques widely (Simons, 2002). *The Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus (Drama)* (BOS, 2000), the *School Certificate Drama Syllabus* (Secondary Schools Board, 1985) and the *HSC Drama Syllabus* (BOS, 1995) contain Improvisation and Playbuilding. These syllabus areas borrow heavily from the concept of process drama, beginning with guided improvisation that leads to a playbuilding or devising process. These processes are dependant on the intervention and the structuring of the teacher and the shaping of the elements of drama by the student.

True to her original intent in *Drama Structures* (O'Neill and Lambert, 1985) O'Neill is providing structures that assist teachers to make drama more accessible for their students. In 1993 she coined the term "pre-text" to describe a particular type of stimulus used to begin drama. She describes the concept:

The notion of pre-text is one I have developed in recent years and found extremely useful for clarifying the means by which the drama world is set in motion. Pre-text refers to the source or impulse for the drama process...As well as indicating an excuse – a reason for the work – it also carries the meaning of the text that exists before the event (O'Neill, 1995, p. xv).

Again, she is striving for structure within her dramatic activities. The pre-text provides order for an improvisation and establishes the field within which the drama will take place. Pam Scheurer observed O'Neill's practice and commented on her structuring process.

Observing dramas in which the teachers structure work as they interact with participants may lead to the false assumption that emergent or improvisational work does not require planning beyond locating a

promising pre-text and selecting an appropriate starting point for the drama. It would be a myth to believe that is all there is to it. My observations of O'Neill reveal that she does engage in a complex and dynamic style of planning that requires both intellectual and creative processes (Scheurer, 1998, p. 32).

O'Neill is consistently making structural decisions during her teaching of drama and her practice and publications have provided teachers with the tools to also structure their teaching in this subject. The addition of pretext has given teachers another way to bring structure to the improvisation and the drama education process. Her theory and practice have made drama more accessible and manageable for teachers and consequently her strategies and structures have become commonplace in syllabus and curriculum development.

Like O'Neill Jonathan Neelands has also contributed important structures for drama educators to use in their classrooms.

### **Jonathan Neelands**

Jonathan Neelands is another important Heathcotian structuralist who has influenced classroom drama. In 1984 he described his view of drama in Heathcotian terms as not being about the theatre but rather reflecting through social interactions, human meaning (Neelands, 1984, p. 6). His 1990 book *Structuring Drama Work* provided teachers with strategies they could use with their students to teach conventions of the theatre. This use of the term "theatre" is consistent with O'Neill's use of the term process drama to include the "...developments in contemporary theatre" (O'Neill, 1995, p. xvii). Neelands identifies four types of dramatic action:

1. context building action
2. narrative action,
3. poetic action, and
4. reflective action (Neelands, 1990, p. 6).

He is attempting to define the processes of dramatic action and develop strategies for teachers that will assist them to teach the progression of dramatic action as well as its components. He says of his work:

...this book provides some of the conventions that make up the 'palate' that teachers/leaders and students use in theatre; the application of the palate to create a picture requires those skills of

sensitivity, perception and craft which develop through practical involvement and experimentation in theatre itself (Neelands, 1990, p. 4).

Like O'Neill, Neelands emerges from a Heathcoteian<sup>18</sup> theoretical position but rejects the false dichotomies of process versus product and theatre versus drama (Byron, 1987, p. 19). This more eclectic approach, in his view, 'opens up' the field of drama education. He broadened this even further to include non-English traditions at the second International conference of IDEA<sup>19</sup> in Brisbane in 1995:

...a new trans-cultural paradigm of theatre is needed that will encompass the process drama tradition within a broader field of theatre which acknowledges both the Euro-American performance tradition and other 'rich traditions' as well... (Neelands, 1996, p. 24).

Here he identifies the benefit in exploring the wealth of all traditions and placing process drama within a broader, more intercultural field. His attraction to the use of the theatre is central and clear, in 1997 he said:

Theatre is understood through its conventions which are the indications of the ways in which time, space and presence can interact and be imaginatively shaped to create different kinds of meanings (1998, p. 10).

Neelands puts his emphasis on the importance of theatrical conventions and provides useful assistance by naming many of them and explaining their application for drama education. Like O'Neill he encourages an eclectic approach to what is useful in all types of drama and theatre. Neelands' identification of the conventions of theatre is also present in NSW syllabus documents (BOS, 2000), and his call for an eclectic approach is reflected in the breadth of the theatrical styles, forms and conventions in these curriculum documents. Norah Morgan and Julianna Saxton continue the move towards inclusive curriculum in drama.

### **Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton**

In common with the other Heathcoteian structuralists Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton adhere to the concepts outlined by Heathcote and Bolton (Morgan and Saxton, 1987, p. 2). They take an eclectic approach to drama and theatre as well as process and product (1987, p. 1) while providing strategies for making drama education structures clear and accessible. Their book, *Teaching Drama: A mind of many wonders* (1987) concentrates on clarifying

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<sup>18</sup> I am not suggesting that Heathcote encouraged the emergence of these dichotomies. To suggest that Heathcote was opposed to theatre or product is an oversimplification.

<sup>19</sup> IDEA is the International Drama in Education Association.

Heathcote structures such as teacher-in-role and mantle of the expert among others and making the techniques more transparent (1987, p. 38 and p. 107). One of their main contributions, however, has been in the development of an understanding of the importance of questioning techniques in drama. They identify the drama question as:

- showing genuine curiosity
- occurring in a context that relates to the drama experience
- supporting the students and/or the teacher-in-role
- being supported by the intonation and non-verbal signals of the questioner
- making the pace of the question relate to the situation (Morgan and Saxton, 1987, pp. 70-71).

Their contribution has been to deconstruct and explain the methodology of questioning in Heathcote drama, practiced by Heathcote and others like Cecily O’Neill (Morgan and Saxton, 1987, p. 81) and to make its processes and techniques transparent and useful for the teacher. Furthermore Morgan and Saxton explore the role of questioning within general teaching pedagogy<sup>20</sup>. More importantly, however, like the other structuralists mentioned here they are defining the unique features of drama questions and explaining in detail how questions can be applied to structure, devise, shape and extend work in the drama classroom.

### **John O’Toole and Brad Haseman**

John O’Toole’s contribution has been to define the space for drama education and introduce the elements of dramatic form into the teaching of drama. His approach to drama resembles Heathcote in that, in his words:

...as drama people, we are concerned about human behaviour, social issues and ethical questions – they’re the stuff of drama (O’Toole, 1998, p. 15).

He also provides structures and tools to help drama teachers develop their own work and eschews as others do the “false dichotomies” of process versus product, instead preferring the term, process drama. O’Toole sums up his position:

...to control the elements of drama and manage active participants who are usually quite inexperienced in drama – in order to create a powerful and pleasurable learning experience, especially in a classroom full of desks or a marketplace full of street vendors<sup>21</sup> – is an

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<sup>20</sup> Morgan and Saxton (1991) explore questioning techniques for teachers generally which draws on their practice and theoretical work as drama educators.

<sup>21</sup> He is referring here metaphorically to other subjects that compete for attention in the curriculum.

aesthetic challenge that demands dramatic skills of the highest order...  
(O'Toole, 1998, p. 15).

In his book, *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning* (1992) he articulates the elements of drama and defines what he calls the "territory" (O'Toole, 1992, p. 2) of drama.

One of the main ideas in the book is that drama is not literature, words on a page. That is just a playscript, and the same relationship to drama as a score has to music. Drama itself *happens* and never accidentally; it is a dynamic event which is always part of its context. Since schools form an important part of the context in which this genre usually happens, schooling practices and educational ideas and structures do feature prominently, as a background to the aesthetic (O'Toole, 1992, p. 1).

The clarification, explanation and potential uses of the elements of drama explained by O'Toole articulated much that had been innate in good drama teaching and provided a vocabulary, so teachers could teach and explain the mechanisms at work in the drama. This tool like the structures of O'Neill and Neelands invited teachers to explore the workings of the drama and manipulate the dramatic action. He identifies the elements of drama and says:

They are not just the basis of our body of knowledge. Through them we give the students the tools of the trade. And it is to do with empowerment (O'Toole, 1998, p. 15).

O'Toole's identification of the elements were made available to teachers through his work with Brad Haseman<sup>22</sup> on what is now a drama classroom classic, *Dramawise: An introduction to the elements of drama* (Haseman and O'Toole, 1986).

The influence of *Dramawise* was to explain and outline the elements of drama<sup>23</sup> and explain how they could be taught in the classroom. *The Creative Arts K-6 syllabus* (Drama) (BOS, 2000) uses the elements of drama as one of its major structures. Speaking of the reason for developing *Dramawise* Haseman and O'Toole say:

We identified some elements [of drama] and showed them all working, both in conventional theatre and in process drama. We thought it important to teach young people these elements – this is the basis of our body of knowledge...Our effort was simplistic but I still find our list of the elements useful myself, artistically and as a teacher. I use it as a checklist when I am teaching or rehearsing and if it's not

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<sup>22</sup> Brad Haseman's contribution with and without John O'Toole has been highly significant and he could easily command more discussion if space allowed.

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Heathcote identified these elements initially (Wagner, 1976, p. 147). Haseman and O'Toole organised and clarified their use for the classroom.

going well: what have I overlooked – the dramatic tension? the use of space? careful enough characterisation? is it the timing and the tempo? I can usually identify where I am going wrong (O’Toole, 1998, p. 15).

Haseman and O’Toole’s contribution was to bridge the process and product divide by recognising and valuing both approaches. Their definition, analysis and strategies of application of the elements of drama provided valuable pedagogical constructs that are prevalent in syllabus documents and in the classrooms of drama teachers in NSW (BOS, 2000). Their approach avoids false divisions and delivers to teachers and students tools to understand and manipulate form as well as undertake social learning through drama. Furthermore O’Toole’s<sup>24</sup> work signals the growing international character of theoretical development in drama education. Neelands’ call for an international perspective (Neelands, 1996, p. 24) is alive in the collaboration of Haseman and O’Toole in Queensland and for that matter O’Neill in Ohio<sup>25</sup> and Norah Morgan and Julianna Saxton in Canada. No longer is the discussion of drama education confined to the English context.

The Heathcotian structuralists have contributed clarity and accessibility to the work of the drama in education pioneers and especially Heathcote and Bolton. Their various structures, techniques, strategies and tools have allowed teachers to deconstruct, simplify and explicate Heathcote and Bolton’s work and apply it in their classrooms. Their techniques have contributed strongly to the ongoing development of drama education.

The legacy of the pioneers, Heathcote and Bolton and the Heathcotian structuralists have had a significant impact on the development of curriculum in NSW. These theorists have contributed to a subject area that now has a theoretical base that is accessible and useful for teaching. This journey has seen the pre Heathcotian pioneers introduce concepts that made the way clear for the innovation and excitement of drama in education introduced by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. Their work which was a major turning point was later deconstructed and made accessible by the Heathcotian structuralists allowing teachers to use and modify Heathcote’s original work. Their influence has also seen the diminution of the debates over process and product and drama versus theatre as these practitioners recognise the dangers of false dichotomies and the value of an inclusive approach to drama education.

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<sup>24</sup> John O’Toole was born in England but has lived in Australia since the mid 1970s.

<sup>25</sup> Cecily O’Neil originally studied in London with Gavin Bolton but now divides her time between Ohio and London (O’Neill, 1995).

The influence of those discussed in this chapter on the development of curriculum and syllabus in NSW is substantial and created a theoretical context for the development of drama education in NSW. The next chapter will explore the ways in which these theorists and others have shaped drama practice in NSW schools.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Drama Education in New South Wales**

Chapter 2 examined the contribution of international praxis to the modern drama classroom. This chapter will further develop some of those themes and analyse the national and local influences on drama curriculum and teaching in New South Wales. This is necessary to locate the four teachers within their teaching and curriculum context and provide the background for their narratives. This chapter does not explore in great depth the national perspective except where it intersects and influences drama curriculum development in New South Wales.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the pre-Heathcotian influences on drama education in Australia, then examines the influence of Heathcotian methodology. The chapter then explores the forces that have shaped the modern day drama curriculum context in NSW.

As in the discussion of international drama there are many who will be omitted from this examination due to space constraints. Suffice it to say people such as Roslyn Arnold, Andrea Connell, Bruce Burton, John Carroll, Katraina Donellan, Robyn Ewing, Brad Haseman, John Hughes, Archie Miller, Jennifer Simons, John Thompson, John O'Toole and Phillip Taylor to name only a few, have had a significant influence on the development of drama education on a state and national level. This chapter focuses specifically on NSW and as such will not discuss many of the important contributors in drama education nationally.

Oliver Fiala was one of the most significant figures in the early days of drama education in NSW. His contribution will be explored here by way of introduction to the development of drama curriculum in NSW.

#### **Pre Heathcote**

Writing in 1968 Oliver Fiala who was later to promote Heathcotian principles in NSW schools said the following of drama education in his time:

In Australia and especially in NSW, there is at present considerable uneasiness about the role and organization of the dramatic arts in secondary schools. A re-appraisal of their status is imminent...dramatic arts play a relatively small part in the curriculum and, if considered at all by the general education theorist are given mostly extra-curricular status (1968, pp. iii–iv).

He argued that drama should be a separate subject in the curriculum, not just a part of the English syllabus. He compared the situation of drama curriculum in NSW with the American education system.

In Australia, the present stage of development resembles that of America in the early twenties of this century. The field is not recognised as an academic discipline at the universities<sup>26</sup> and consequently, no provisions exist for adequately trained teachers. This study establishes the fact that unsatisfactory conditions of teaching dramatic arts within the English program are directly related to the inadequate teacher preparation, narrowly conceived content, and insufficient provisions of time and material resources (1968, p. v).

If Fiala's view was accurate, the journey to establish drama as an officially recognised subject must have seemed quite daunting to those in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Slade and Way's influence had seemingly caused ripples of interest (Mooney, 1989, p. 7). It would take the new methodology linked with the access and influence of Fiala, a lecturer at the University of New South Wales, to establish a firm base for the later reasonably strong growth of drama education.

The development of drama education in NSW followed in an almost identical fashion, the movements in the United Kingdom. Caldwell Cook, Slade and Way were all influential in much the same way as they were in Britain. In the early years, NSW was primarily concerned with the formal and skills-based Speech and Drama methodology. This form of classroom drama was mostly extra-curricula, tied to English and not concerned with the individual creative process. This approach favoured the teaching of elocution and the ubiquitous school play. *The School Magazine*, (DE, 1901) published by the Department of Education in NSW supported the use of the play. The School Magazine has published scripts of various forms since 1915 ranging from Shakespeare to short plays commissioned for teachers and students.

As Michaels (1993, p. iii) says:

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<sup>26</sup> There was some drama training in the Teachers Colleges in the 1960s at Bathurst and Wagga Colleges of Advanced Education which were not at that time considered to be universities.

During this period the reading of play scripts was seldom accompanied by improvisation or the rehearsal workshop process... The primacy of the word, and in this case the printed word is evidenced by the importance attached to the learning of lines and the learning of moves that have been predetermined by the director.

*The School Magazine* provided the raw material for students to read scripts around the room and the teacher provided the instructions for lines to be learnt and reproduced. This model seems to predate the work of Caldwell Cook who encouraged the use of the texts but simultaneously encouraged group process and improvised responses to texts. The early NSW drama education classroom probably looked more like an amateur theatre rehearsal than the modern drama classroom.

Mooney (1989, p. 7) contends that it was not until the 1950s that spontaneity became part of the drama classroom through Peter Slade's ideas. Play was embraced at this time as the natural mode of student learning which provided its own difficulties.

The notion of play ensured that there was no need for a separate curriculum place for drama. Drama linked so closely with play could be relegated to last period on a Friday afternoon, and to wet lunchtimes (Michaels, 1993, p. iv).

The early period of drama education in NSW reflected the Anglo-centrism of the times. The changes and advances in drama/theatre education in Britain seemed to be replicated in Australia albeit slightly later. It took the influence of Heathcote to change and establish a viable and organised body of drama educators who could build on methodologies and produce syllabus that used her processes together with much that was useful from the world of theatre and performance.

### **1970s: Heathcotian practice comes to Australia**

While Slade and Way had significant influence on teachers in NSW (Mooney, 1989, p. 7), it was Heathcote and her methodologies that provided the impetus for the eventual growth and development of drama education in NSW. Slade and Way's influence diminished in Australia as it was diminishing in the United Kingdom with the advent of Heathcote's methodologies. Several Departmental officers encouraged schools and teachers to shift their own methodologies from Slade and Way to Heathcote's approach (Mooney, 1989, p. 7).

Debra Griffiths<sup>27</sup> is currently a drama teacher at a government secondary school. She remembers Heathcote's influence:

In the 1970s, I was a student at the University of New South Wales with Oliver Fiala. Dorothy Heathcote was only known about at this stage amongst educational drama people. Fiala discovered Dorothy's methods and her ideas about using drama as a learning methodology and her ideas made a great deal of sense to him. Fiala invited Dorothy to come and at this stage, people were starting to go to her courses at Durham University. There was interest in what she was doing. I was training to be a teacher at that time and I worked with her when she came out. That was how we learnt about educational drama. There were textbooks around by people like Way that we were given to read but when Dorothy came, that all changed. She refused to have anything written down about her. The only way we got any thing out about Dorothy was when Cecily O'Neill who was on her course did the book (Appendix 7).

As in the United Kingdom, Heathcote's approach and presence developed some loyal adherents. Griffiths (Appendix 7), provides a first hand account of what it was like to work with Heathcote in those days.

Dorothy was incredibly powerful, she was tremendously charismatic. Everybody just thought yes, this must happen in our schools. We would have travelled to the end of the earth to hear her. Anything she said felt full of this incredible wisdom and it was amazing She had a rock hard will and a tremendous sense of human endeavour. She had such a sense of a teacher's responsibility that she managed to impart to all of us as students. We really felt we had a special role ahead of us. That was really empowering for drama teachers because it was not just that we were allowed to play together, you could actually shift people's attitudes and really do something about their learning. It was wonderful.

Mooney records her contribution with similar enthusiasm. Mooney refers to her as the guardian of the progressive spirit, whose 1975 tour left "...a lasting impact on the educators of NSW..."(1989, p. 3). Undoubtedly, Heathcote provided an impetus for nascent drama educators that Slade and Way could not. Her methodologies and teaching generated excitement and momentum and led to the establishment of a network of professional associations that remain today. In New South Wales Oliver Fiala, a Heathcote enthusiast was the first president of the Educational Drama Association (Mooney, 1989, p. 5).

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<sup>27</sup> Debra Griffiths was one of the two curriculum consultants for drama education in the 1970s. She had studied with Dorothy Heathcote and was instrumental in drama curriculum development. This interview was undertaken on 17 June 2001 as part of research being undertaken for the NSW Department of Education and Training. It is used with their permission and with Debra Griffiths' permission.

Perhaps Heathcote's influence on drama education in NSW is the strongest testament to the importance of her pioneering role in this subject area. Before her arrival in NSW, there was no significant presence for drama education apart from the regimentation of the school play or classroom skit and the speech and drama courses often taught within English courses. Her influence on Australia was to motivate and direct a movement that now sees a syllabus for almost every grade level in every state of Australia and a strong and thriving national professional association in Drama Australia, which began in 1977 as NADIE<sup>28</sup>. John O'Toole argues that NADIE (now Drama Australia) is "...amongst the strongest, most unified and largest organisations in the world, with little Australia recognized as on of the guns of international drama education" (Donellan, 2001, p. 11).

Other factors were influencing change and growth in drama education. The Australia of the 1960s and 1970s seemed receptive to progressivism (Lovat and Smith, 1995). Australian theatre and Australian education were undergoing significant change.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of ferment and change in Australian education. An Australian society emerged from the grey narrowness and Australian theatre re-emerged (Donellan, 2001, p. 3). The "new wave" in theatre began in the late 1960s and provided a radically new approach (Rees, 1987, p. 5). Playwrights like Alex Buzo and David Williamson were questioning the societal norms of the day and presenting their audiences with confronting theatre that challenged conventional form and style.

In education, curriculum was evolving and changing as well. Lovat and Smith (1995) describe the establishment of bodies such as the Australian Schools Commission (1973) and The Curriculum Development Centre (1975) that oversaw curriculum reform:

These organisations had clear charters to develop educational programs which were oriented towards reforming curriculum and schooling by a massive increase in resource allocation and an emphasis upon access, participation and equity....(Lovat and Smith 1995, p. 227).

Heathcote's ideologies found fertile ground amongst Australian drama educators who were seeking a new approach in response to changes in theatre that drama education reflected.

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<sup>28</sup> NADIE (now Drama Australia) was the National Association for Drama in Education.

Heathcote's approach provided a convenient way for drama to become part of the curriculum. As alluded to earlier, drama was not seen as very serious or rigorous and had been marginalised as activity for wet Friday afternoons. Heathcote's approach provided an acceptable alternative for schools:

Politically it was sensible. No one knew how they were going to get drama into schools. The easy way to do it was to see drama as a way of learning and then you could apply it to any subject. That meant the people who were teacher trainers, could use it as a tool in lots of ways, but no one had been able to put very much structure to it and they really didn't understand many of the processes involved (Appendix 7).

The readiness of teachers and universities to accept drama was not reflected in the NSW Department of Education. Several attempts to gain recognition through reports, conferences and lobbying were thwarted by ongoing Departmental restructure and intransigence (Mooney, 1989, p. 10). The Department's resistance was a theme repeated right up to the introduction of the senior HSC syllabus in 1992 and beyond. It is hard to say whether this resistance was part of a deep-seated suspicion of drama as a subject area or whether ongoing Departmental lack of understanding meant that the subject was just ignored. Whatever the case, drama educators were, and to some extent still are, involved in the fight for recognition.

### **1980s: The struggle for curriculum identity and independence**

If the 1970s had been a time of both growth and frustration, the 1980s provided more of the same. Many of the same themes re-emerged. Mooney (1989, p. 12) identifies the difficulties raised by Fiala twelve years earlier as enduring problems. These difficulties were the inclusion of drama as a compulsory part of the English syllabus and the subsequent confusion and difficulty of establishing drama as a subject in its own right. Fiala was also concerned about the lack of trained teachers available to teach the emerging drama courses. There were also both significant advances and disappointments in terms of syllabus development. A period of consistent and energetic lobbying saw the development of drama consultancies within the Department and the formation of a drama syllabus committee. During this time there were seven curriculum related booklets published (Mooney, 1989, pp. 16-17).

#### **School Certificate Drama Syllabus**

In 1983, the Board of Senior School Studies developed a writing brief and by 1985, the School Certificate Drama course was released for optional implementation. This syllabus is

still in use today and is badly in need of revision. Its sixteen pages provide a very loose plan for classroom drama. It seems by today's standards thin in content and usefulness. However it was developed to suit the needs of the day. Viewed today it seems that a teacher could fit almost any program of drama study into the elastic boundaries of the syllabus. The only stipulation was that: "Any course MUST include some work..." (BOS, 1985, p. 5) from each of the content areas. The syllabus is divided into eight content areas comprising:

1. Improvisation
2. Playbuilding
3. Dramatic Forms
4. The Reading and Writing of Scripts as Texts for Performance
5. Performance Spaces and Conventions of Theatre
6. Technical Aspects of Production
7. Experience of Dramatic Presentations
8. Discussion, Reading and Writing about Drama and Theatre

The syllabus rationale reflects the influence of theorists such as Slade and Way, but most influential is Heathcote's work and there are clear traces of her presence in curriculum formation at this time:

Drama is a form of action in which some aspect of human experience is portrayed: it is an exploration of experiences and situations through enactment. In Drama, students learn about themselves and others by creating characters and situations. Drama provides a powerful means of exploring the way people react and respond to different situations, issues and ideas.

In junior secondary years Drama provides a particularly valuable means of increasing self-confidence and social awareness. Students are involved physically as well as emotionally and intellectually: the students learn through doing. Drama is, moreover, a co-operative process through which students develop their ability to share and communicate (BOS, 1985, p. 2).

Even at this early stage, there was an attempt to balance different approaches to drama education. The emphasis in the first paragraph speaks of the approach Slade and Way had to the understanding of the self. There is however a stronger sense of the discovery that Heathcote speaks about, the development of social understandings or as Bolton calls it the "living through technique" (1998, p. 197). The statement "Drama provides a powerful means of exploring the way people react and respond to different situations, issues and ideas" while

not spoken by Heathcote could very well have been and is consistent with her concept of drama as a learning technique employing social problem solving.

The second half of the rationale neatly folds in the dichotomy that had split drama education in Britain and provided NSW with some difficulties of its own that will be explored later.

Drama has a body of knowledge: facts, conventions, history, skills, and methods of working. The study of Drama is valuable for secondary students because it is an important form of expression and communication in almost every known culture, including those that make up Australian society.

In one way or another, Drama touches every life. It can be a source of learning and entertainment, a point of contact with others, an abiding interest, a career or an outlet for creative energies (BOS, 1985, p. 2).

The syllabus rationale prioritises process but accepts the role of the history and the dramatic conventions of the theatre as well as acknowledging the multicultural nature of the community. The syllabus paid little or no attention to the developing and historical indigenous forms nor the theatre forms and traditions of Asia and beyond.

Significantly the first major syllabus document in NSW did not favour process over product, it embraced both approaches. This syllabus synthesis would be a feature of drama education in NSW and in Australia more generally.

Debra Griffiths argues that it provided the sort of flexibility required for a fledgling subject where teachers had been devising their own curriculum offerings.

Suddenly we had a piece of paper and the teacher could walk up to the Principal and say, “well it’s a syllabus and I want to teach it”. The take-up rate of the syllabus was tremendous I was working in the southwest and I had 45 high schools and 42 of them implemented drama to some degree. The take-up rate was so good because English teachers knew the subject and the kids loved it. There were many new teachers and there was money given to the implementation of the syllabus. People felt supported and so they gave it a go.

We had no trained teachers really, you had teachers who had been having a go for a long time who felt quite threatened by the idea of this drama syllabus. They were now supposed to be doing something, many of them were doing what they actually should have been doing, so the syllabus allowed a great deal of freedom. In hindsight, some more structure would have been nice but we always knew it would have to go through some review process (Appendix 7).

The anticipated revision of the School Certificate Drama syllabus did not occur and consequently many of the weaknesses of the original were not remedied in the expected revision process. Major changes in syllabus development such as outcomes-based-learning were not included in the syllabus until August 2001 when a web version of the syllabus added some outcomes approximately five years later than other subjects (BOS, 2001).

Mooney writing at the end of the 1980s said that the drama curriculum had undergone significant and exciting growth:

Drama at the close of the 1980s is available to more students in the New South Wales School system than at any other time. After a decade and a half of significant gains coupled with a significant set of setbacks, the drama community has achieved a strong growth pattern (1989, p. 1).

Even though there was great enthusiasm among teachers and tertiary institutions the NSW Department of Education moved slowly.

Other documents were also released by the Department in 1985 to assist the growing numbers of drama teachers. An “Other Approved Study” course was released and signed off by the Director General of Education at the time, R.B Winder<sup>29</sup>. This course was not so much a syllabus but a series of one-paragraph ideas that could be applied in the senior classroom. Frank Mc Cone writing in the preface to this course decries the inclusion of drama with poetry and prose (DE, 1985, p. i) and argues for a style of drama education that reaches beyond “reading words on a page”. He describes in strong Heathcotian terms his approach to drama education:

In the educative process, the participation in and learning about the elements of drama are powerful tools for examining ourselves and our social and physical environment. In drama the student makes real, in an artistic sense the features of the self and the environment, often releasing a deeper understanding of the matter at hand than a purely intellectual study could achieve (DE, 1985, p. ii).

McKone later explains “...relatively few students need to perform...” (DE, 1985, p. ii) arguing that performance is not necessary for learning to take place in drama.

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<sup>29</sup> The Director- General’s “sign-off” places his and the Departments imprimatur on a document which is significant for a subject struggling for legitimacy.

This document places itself within the ‘drama as a learning medium’ philosophy. Drama is seen here as a process for social learning and while performance is not discouraged, it is not given equal weight with process. McKone names the theorists of influence, Bolton, Heathcote, Slade and Way (DE, 1985, p. ii) to indicate the dominant philosophy of the document. The difference between the approaches of these two syllabus documents released in the same year and by the same people highlights the tension that split drama education in Britain, the process versus product debate. Even though Australia has largely avoided the difficulty, it has still been a difficult issue to overcome. Michaels articulated the tension of those days:

The decades of the seventies and the eighties were decades of intense debate about the nature of drama. Opposing viewpoints were often pitted together. On the one hand there were those who argued for drama as a learning method devoid of performance production and audience and on the other hand those for whom performance was still a legitimate drama activity. In NSW during this period it was very difficult to hold a median position (1993, p. v).

John Hughes writing earlier in 1991 exhorts the drama community to avoid the division:

Just as we relish the diversity of our cultural backgrounds in Australia so we should take joy in the diversity of drama. The strength of educational drama in Australia lies in its ability to encompass a range of purposes. We must be careful that in the struggle for a consistent understanding of educational drama, the term does not become constricted (Hughes, 1991, p. 11).

The divisions ensured that many in the United Kingdom fought against each other forming separate professional bodies (Donellan, 2001, p. 9) to represent their own position. Debra Griffith’s remembers the divisions in Australia:

There was an immense scramble to find meaning to find application of Dorothy’s ideas – partly because she left a theoretical void and that’s why Cecily O’Neil’s stuff was so important. Everybody was trying to come to grips with the idea of process. There were people amongst us that wanted to know why we were doing what we were doing and why we enjoyed what we were doing. The nature of the group was that we liked the product and that we also liked the performance but we didn’t want performance to be the be all and end all. Our critics said the reason we did not like the product was that we were no good at it. “You’re just wimpy therapists go away and do that.” They were right to some extent. There was a lot of mad fringe stuff going on out there in the name of drama education (Appendix 7).

Somehow, NSW managed to continue developing syllabuses that took account of both positions without disenfranchising sections of the drama education community and creating syllabus schism. Although there was a widespread ability to balance these positions other Australian states have not managed to include both positions in their syllabus documents. Victoria, for instance, has a distinct theatre studies and drama course in the senior years (Burton, 2001, p. viii). That has not been the case in NSW and may be due to those who have striven to create a unified drama education that balances both positions. Speaking about the national situation John O'Toole refers to the importance of the annual national conferences which promote unity (Donellan, 2001, p. 9):

Unlike our original mentors in the UK, there do not have to be different organisations representing different ideologies. They can all be incorporated – you see the opposition at work once a year, take or leave what they are offering, then go back thankfully to your own patch for another year. That's why we've avoided some of the false dichotomies, that demonising of any philosophy or practice different from our own, that have bedevilled and even destroyed drama education in other countries.

Drama was not unified easily or without some tensions. It was only through substantial patience and good grace that we have avoided the divisions that have plagued drama education communities in other countries. Differing views continue to cause tension. The development of a K-6<sup>30</sup> syllabus and a senior syllabus continued to highlight these differences and created a need for inclusive solutions.

In mid 1985, the Board introduced a Drama Studies course for secondary schools. This course, which is still used by a few schools (a small number), was based on a theatre arts approach, rejecting the compromise of the School Certificate Drama course. The course demanded significant resources and did not articulate or even refer to the School Certificate Drama Course. Mooney (1989, p. 26) contends that the course was introduced without appropriate consultation. Perhaps this lack of due process by the Board led to the release of a document that did not reflect the compromise of past syllabuses. These early successful implementation experiences led to a time of consolidation and growth in the 1990s.

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<sup>30</sup> K-6 is often the term used for primary schools. It refers to Kindergarten (age 5) to Year 6 (age 12).

## **1990s: Curriculum consolidation**

### **K-6 drama syllabus**

The development of a primary drama syllabus has been a long, tiring and frustrating battle. The impetus created by Heathcote's visits and the subsequent lobbying that produced the School Certificate Drama syllabus also produced a plan to implement K-6 drama. In 1988, a draft syllabus and support document were released for consultation. Yet in a government report of 1989, drama was not even included in the Creative Arts Key Learning Area (KLA). After a period of lobbying, the Minister of Education agreed to drama's inclusion within the Creative and Practical Arts Key Learning Area with Music and Visual Arts (Mooney, 1989, p. 38).

In retrospect, this may have been the crucial time in the privileging of music and visual arts over dance and drama – a position that provides ongoing inequity for dance and drama. The *Education Act 1990* (NSW) mandates that music and visual arts must be implemented in primary schools but makes no mention of the place of dance or drama in the curriculum. The foreword to the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* (BOS, 2000) reflects the privileging that began in the 1980s.

The *Education Act 1990* (NSW) sets out minimum curriculum requirements for primary schools. It requires that courses of study must be provided in each of the six key learning areas for primary education for each child during each year. In particular, the Act states that 'courses of study in both art and music are to be included in the key learning area of Creative and Practical Arts'. This syllabus enables schools to meet this requirement and to broaden students' learning experiences in Creative Arts through Drama and Dance (BOS, 2000, p. 7).

The result of this legislation has been the systematic and deliberate downgrading of drama and the privileging of the older more established subjects. While music and visual arts "are to be included", dance and drama are merely seen as ways to broaden students' learning experiences. The effect of these decisions and consequent legislation has meant that drama

has suffered in its access to resources and status within the curriculum and therefore schools<sup>31</sup>.

By the end of the 1980s, the Department had and subsequently decided to withdraw the draft K-6 drama syllabus and pursue a Creative Arts syllabus that took ten years to emerge. Mary Mooney articulates much of the disappointment of the drama community at that time:

The Liberal government decision to hold back the implementation of this primary Drama subject until 1992 (if incorporated to the Creative and Practical Arts area) reduces its status as a major curriculum initiative of national significance, New South Wales being the first Australian state to prepare a mandatory primary Drama syllabus (1989, p. 38).

Debra Griffiths who had been working on the syllabus and its implementation remembers it this way:

Dr. Metherell<sup>32</sup> had problems in 1988. When the syllabus had been worked right to its end it was pulped by Mr Metherell. It was terrible. We lost credibility with primary teachers overnight. It was like we had been working with this for so long and now it is gone. The true believers realised how fantastic it was and primary teachers still used a whole lot of the stuff we were suggesting to them anyway<sup>33</sup> (Appendix 7).

The delay in implementation and subsequent pulping of the K-6 syllabus documents was a blow to the drama community. So much had seemingly been gained for primary drama in the promise of a mandatory K-6 drama syllabus. However the marginalisation of drama and the ham fisted and often chaotic attempts at syllabus reform by the Department, the Board and the Government meant that teachers were placed in the absurd position of having a subject included in the primary Key Learning Area of Creative and Practical Arts (Mooney, 1989, p.

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<sup>31</sup> In a recent memo the Department of Education and Training instructs schools to implement the dance and the drama strands of the syllabus by 2006. This however, only applies to Government schools.

<sup>32</sup> Dr Terry Metherell was the NSW Minister for Education at that time.

<sup>33</sup> She is referring here to the book *Drama Anytime* (Charters and Gately, 1986) which was originally intended to be a companion to the withdrawn 1987 *K-6 Drama Syllabus*.

38) without a syllabus. This situation persisted until 2000 when the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* (BOS, 2000) was finally released.

These delays meant that drama continued to be taught by only those with an interest in the area; and the Department provided little assistance or resources. Those teachers who had the withdrawn syllabus continued to teach with the materials published in draft form and some used texts and other resources. Drama was also taught in primary and junior secondary as part of other syllabus areas. The *English K-6* support documents (BOS, 1998b) included a range of drama techniques for use with literacy such as role-play, reader's theatre and hotseating as did the *Human Societies and Its Environment K-6 support document* (BOS, 1998c). This did not, however, equate with a comprehensive drama syllabus and a lack of training meant many teachers did not know how to use these strategies.

The treatment of K-6 drama curriculum highlights many issues for drama. The lack of political influence meant that its advocates were unable to deliver on K-6 curriculum at that time. Even the most vociferous calls by the EDA (Mooney, 1989, p. 38) came to naught. The Education Reform Act resulted in a lower status and lower regard by schooling systems for drama. All of these factors made teaching drama difficult in primary schools, more difficult than it was in high schools at this time. Many of these same issues remain and provide impediments for drama curriculum reform and implementation. Mooney, commenting on the advances for drama education claims the drama community "considering the Department's barriers and the time-delaying tactics throughout the past fifteen years" made "significant achievement". These tactics were to continue into the 1990s and beyond (Mooney, 1989, p. 38).

### **Draft Creative Arts K-6 syllabus**

The effect of the withdrawn, delayed and draft syllabuses was to put drama in a type of "no mans land" where educational systems offered little support and made no mention of the subject. Drama's awkward curriculum position provided difficulties of legitimacy that were compounded by the "divine right" music and visual arts had because of the *Education Reform Act 1990* (NSW).

Jennifer Simons and Robyn Cusworth (now Ewing) who led a group discussion of K-6 drama at the 1996 Educational Drama Association (EDA) annual conference reported:

The delay in the implementation of the syllabus was discussed, particularly the impact it will have on the number of Primary teachers who will use drama. K-6 teachers need support to plan and use Drama confidently, and the Syllabus is one source of such support (Simons and Cusworth, 1996, p. 25).

In an attempt to fill the syllabus void and provide some support for teachers several publications were released. *Beyond the Script* (Cusworth and Simons, 1997) and *Exploring the Worlds of K-6 drama: from Ancient Anna to the Cloth of Dreams* (DET, 1999) were produced to support teachers already using drama in the primary classroom and maintain the momentum for the upcoming syllabus. *Exploring the Worlds of K-6 drama: from Ancient Anna to the Cloth of Dreams* (DET, 1999) was the first major support for teachers in K-6 drama released by the NSW Department since the withdrawal of the draft syllabus in 1987<sup>34</sup>. The foreword of this document explains the documents purpose:

*Exploring the Worlds of K-6 drama: from Ancient Anna to the Cloth of Dreams* provides classroom support for generalist primary school teachers who have little or no experience in drama education and are looking for assistance in planning and programming (DET, 1999, p. 3).

The document also provided a balance between drama as a subject and drama as a learning method. Both approaches had served the drama community well in other curriculum endeavours.

Drama in the K-6 context is a special study with its own teaching and learning content. It can also be used across the curriculum as a dynamic and highly effective teaching method (DET, 1999, p. 6).

The DET resource sought to use the current practice in drama in NSW schools to provide models for programming and planning and to introduce teachers to key concepts of drama education in the hope they would have a legitimate syllabus in the near future. The draft of the Creative Arts K-6 syllabus stood in opposition to that position.

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<sup>34</sup> The Department was responsible for the development of syllabus at that time. The responsibility passed to another statutory educational body, the New South Wales Board of Studies in 1990 with the Education Reform Act.

The *Draft Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* was the first syllabus document for drama since 1986. The syllabus forced four areas (dance, drama, music and visual arts) into the supposed convenience of a KLA document by using similar organising principles; making, presenting and critiquing. These organisers (BOS, 1998, p. 54) forced the complex process of student devised drama and the analysis of drama into arbitrary categories. These categories failed to recognise the fluid and interactive nature of drama process. The term making, more at home in visual arts than drama was particularly irritating to many drama educators. It is difficult to speculate on the reasons for the KLA organisation but presumably, it was to make integration between subjects more convenient and reduce the amount of actual documents teachers are asked to deal with. The logic of the decision is odd as drama has as much in common with most other subjects in the curriculum as it does with the other subjects in the Key Learning Area.

The focus of the drama section of this document was on the “...enactment of real or imagined events through the use of dramatic forms and contexts” (BOS, 1998, p. 7). The only reference to drama as a learning medium is the draft syllabus’s vague reference to drama as “...an important classroom methodology”. Seemingly, to make the art forms fit within common organisers, the draft syllabus imposed similar organisation on the four art forms and in some cases introduced terminology that was completely new and often without meaning to one or more of the art forms in the syllabus.

The *Draft Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* while flawed, provided a useful basis for discussion. The syllabus also contained within its framework aspects important to process drama, such as role, elements of drama and form; these were retained in the later syllabus. Given that there had been a hiatus of twelve years, drama teachers were grateful that the syllabus emerged at all. The main issues with this earlier document were its use of unfamiliar terminology and its swing back to inappropriate topics, unsuited to the demands of the K-6 classroom. Even though the draft syllabus had serious flaws, K-6 teachers now had the basis of a useful document. The extent to which these flaws were overcome and how other difficulties were avoided was to be reflected in the syllabus when it was released in 2000.

## ***Creative Arts K-6 syllabus***

In the syllabus's introduction a breadth of approaches to drama are recognised. The introduction states that the syllabus "...acknowledges that a number of schools include Drama within their English programs as well as a method across the curriculum. The focus in this syllabus is on drama and dance as art forms" (BOS, 2000, p. 5). The introduction acknowledges a diversity of approaches in line with the School Certificate and HSC drama courses and identifies drama as an art form, perhaps in order to discourage a static reading of scripts in the fashion depicted pictorially on its front and back covers (BOS, 2000, cover).

The structure and terminology of the syllabus was also improved, changing vague and inappropriate terms such as "contexts" and "performance elements of theatre" (BOS, 1998, p. 54) to the more familiar and useful terms of "elements of drama, role, dramatic context and drama forms" (BOS, 2000, p. 15). These terms are historically the province of process drama (Haseman and O'Toole, 1986, pp. 1-10). The rest of the syllabus provides useful if not exhaustive approaches to outcomes, programming and teaching strategies. Again, the syllabus falls short of perfection but at last, the drama community has a syllabus that gives a framework for effective teaching.

Many of the old flaws remain. The KLA structure means that unfamiliar language and inappropriate approaches persist. Take for instance the following paragraph:

Various people contribute to how meaning is made in each of the art forms, including artists, performers, composers, designers, dancers, architects, actors, directors, choreographers, and writers. Others are involved as audience members, viewers and consumers of the arts. This syllabus provides opportunities for students to explore how people are involved in making, performing and appreciating, and to think about these roles in their own creative activity in visual arts, music, drama and dance (BOS, 2000, p. 6).

While this approach may be valid and useful for visual arts, it is of marginal value for drama in primary schools. The syllabus itself stresses the importance of the primary students own creativity and case studies directors, performers or designers are if anything, of passing

interest to the main focus of the drama syllabus, "... making, performing and appreciating their drama..." (BOS, 2000, p. 16).

The reductionist KLA model lumps together syllabuses that have little in common apart from their identification as art forms. This has delivered an awkward and sometimes inappropriate syllabus that can be difficult to use. The Board's desire for an integrated curriculum is met through this document but it may deliver for students in the arts and in drama particularly, experiences that fall short of the integrity promised by the 1988 drama syllabus. It is indeed a pity that this syllabus has elevated perceived expediency above the undoubted importance of teaching each of the arts in their own right, within their own content and their own traditions.

The situation is however preferable to the "no mans land" of being included in the KLA without a syllabus to support and grow from. However, if the drama community expected an end to the subject hierarchy within the arts, they were to be disappointed yet again. Another memo from the Director General which this time mentions drama, sets out the following approach for implementation:

Schools should plan for the optional implementation of the visual arts and music components of the syllabus in 2001, before their full implementation during 2002. Schools will have until 2006 to fully implement the syllabus with the inclusion of dance and drama in the curriculum (DET, 2001, p. 1).

Again, drama is relegated to the "tyranny of later". As it was with the 1988 syllabus again drama has been pushed beyond the horizon of syllabus implementation, in which time other "more pressing" curriculum priorities might force it further down the list of curriculum areas to be implemented. As always, teachers interested in teaching drama in the K-6 curriculum are supported by their own enthusiasm and interest in the subject rather than support from schooling systems. The development of the HSC drama syllabuses went more smoothly than primary drama syllabus development.

### **HSC Drama syllabus**

By 1989, the HSC drama syllabus had begun its planning and implementation phase. Mary Mooney writing at the time commented optimistically that:

Victory is ‘around the corner’ for the lobbyists of this crucial subject who have worked throughout this ongoing struggle since the Educational Drama Association’s Curriculum Action Program manifested itself in 1979 (1989, p. 40).

However, it took two more years to ‘turn the corner’ and the HSC drama syllabus was implemented in 1992. The Board of Studies was reluctant to implement the course because of the perceived financial demands of the course and the concerns over the assessment of the subject and particularly the group performance. John Thompson’s Master’s thesis provided the arguments for the innovative assessment procedures that the drama syllabus eventually implemented.

I propose a methodology of disciplined subjectivity or subjective reflection in which criteria are applied in a given situation as being an acceptable objective method of assessing the processes and practices that take place in Drama (Thompson, 1991, p. 77).

With a clearly articulated and rational explanation of how drama assessment might work, the Board approved the implementation of the syllabus in 1992.

The introduction of the long awaited HSC drama syllabus provided the status that drama education had sought. The syllabus was, in the same way as the School Certificate Drama course had been, pitched between drama as process and the drama as product, providing a document that both camps argued about, but most could live with. The course consisted of seven areas, three in the Year 11 Course and four in the Year 12 course. All of these components were examined in the first years of implementation. The examination took the form of a written paper, a submitted project and a performance examination. The 1992 course consisted of:

Preliminary course (Year 11)

1. Improvisation, Playbuilding and Acting
2. Elements of Production
3. Performance.

HSC Course (Year 12)

1. Drama and Theatre from Australian Societies and Cultures
2. Drama and Theatre from Societies and Cultures other than Australian
3. Individual Project

#### 4. Group Presentation.

The syllabus was generally well received. The responses to the 1998 evaluation and the rising student numbers are evidence of the syllabus's popularity and effectiveness (BOS, 1998, pp. 6-33). From 1993 to 2000 the course had grown by 270% (BOS, 2000b). The drama course, for the first time in 2000 had more students than the Music course in NSW. This is testament to the strength of the syllabus and the ability of the students and teachers of NSW. The 1998 evaluation of HSC report profiled the candidature in this way:

Two Unit Drama has a growing candidature and attracts students of diverse academic abilities, with those who achieve in the highest deciles representing candidates of exceptional ability. The candidature for Drama represents the full cohort of abilities in the HSC candidature as a whole, is representative of all educational sectors and includes slightly fewer rural schools than metropolitan. Approximately two-thirds of the candidatures are from government schools and the rest from the non-government sector. There are more female candidates than males, though the number of single sex boys schools offering the subject is increasing each year (BOS, 1998, p. 53).

One of the most impressive innovations of this syllabus was the group presentation, which required students in groups of three to six to devise a piece of original drama, of up to 12 minutes for an examination panel and an audience. The group presentation was the core of this course and relied on the abilities of students to create their own drama in collaboration with others. This approach was and still is unique in Australian drama education. An evaluation of the syllabus in 1998 made this observation:

The course combines the influences of drama in education or process drama and theatre studies and integrates the two rather than setting up a dichotomy. The emphasis on experiential learning, on group-devised drama and on both Australian and World Drama and Theatre provides a broader scope for the study of Drama and Theatre than some other syllabuses (BOS, 1998, p. 34).

Several other Australian states rely on group process but in no other state is it unscripted and without teacher direction. The examination of this approach relied on the "trained subjectivity" (Thompson, 1991, p. 77) and an ability to examine the individual within the group separately to the other students. To assist in this process the training for drama examiners, who are also drama educators includes a three day pilot program where markers can refine their skills in assessment of performance. Again, drama education in NSW had

managed to avoid false dichotomies and delivered a syllabus that was acceptable in the teaching community. Debra Griffiths argues that the syllabus was an effective compromise:

There had been enough input from both sides and people have come to understand the value of each area and the HSC syllabus accommodates quite adequately both positions. Whereas if you look back to the first Other Approved Studies Course, that was an example of a course that is strongly Theatre Arts based. If you implemented that OAS as I did, it was very hard. The document was strongly product and had no Heathcotean influences at all (Appendix 7).

Seemingly, to stake out the middle ground, the syllabus carried the following introduction:

This syllabus, for Years 11-12, makes the study of performance and dramatic art, as collaborative activities, its central concern... The terms 'drama' and 'theatre' are often used interchangeably. In this syllabus the word 'drama' is used to cover a wide-range of performance-related arts and skills. The word 'theatre' applies to spaces and buildings used for drama and to technical skills required to present a performance piece. Drama is a method of learning that explores the world through enactment" (BOS, 1995, p. 1).

The rationale for the revised syllabus, released in 1999 expresses similar sentiments:

Drama is an art form that explores the world through enactment. It is a collaborative art form that involves the creative interaction of individuals using a range of artistic skills. Drama is an important means of understanding, constructing, appreciating and communicating social and cultural values; interpreting, valuing and transmitting the past and traditions; exploring, celebrating and challenging the present and imagining the future (BOS, 1999, p. 6).

The syllabus, like any syllabus document has its weaknesses. The writers provided a course that did not rely on prior student learning in the subject and indeed, 60% of students have not studied drama prior to taking the senior course (BOS, 1999, p. 6). This meant that the course was overcrowded with content and sometimes difficult to teach in the time available. For instance in the preliminary course which consists of three terms, teachers are expected to teach improvisation, playbuilding, acting, theatrical traditions and performance styles and elements of production in performance. This can be difficult given the high ratio of students who have no background in the subject area.

There have also been concerns that the course does not cater adequately for lower ability and higher ability students (BOS, 1998d, p. 48). This is a reasonable charge as the 2-unit drama syllabus is supposed, with one course, to meet the needs of over 4000 candidates. Music, with

fewer candidates has three courses to cater for its candidature (BOS, 2001). The lack of an extension course is an ongoing difficulty for drama education. High ability students are still left to seek their own extension activities because the Board of Studies seems currently disinclined to make an extension course available for students. These are, however, secondary issues in a syllabus that has enjoyed widespread teacher and student support.

The McGaw review of 1996, which examined the scope and organisation of the HSC provided some interesting times for drama teachers. The stated aim of this report was to simplify and strengthen the HSC.

The New South Wales Government was elected on a platform of creating a stronger, simpler and fairer Higher School Certificate. This was to achieve a number of key goals:  
to increase the rigour and quality of the HSC curriculum;  
to ensure HSC marks fairly reflect the standards achieved by students;  
to better equate the method of reporting achievement with concepts understood by the community; and to enhance the chances for more equitable educational outcomes (McGaw, 1996, p. 1).

This impressive and on the face of it, appropriate review held some difficulties for the drama education community. The HSC Drama course, which had become popular by this time, was being attacked on a basis drama educators least expected, its supposed lack of rigour. The course was, in fact, enormously rigorous; some teachers even saw it as too rigorous (BOS, 1996, p.48). The demands of group presentation, individual project and written response appeared lost on those who were framing the reforms. Perhaps the rigour they imagined was different to the rigour drama teachers and students understood only too well.

As revealed in the *Herald*, Professor McGaw has developed a range of options to change the HSC curriculum, including slashing the number of courses and subjects on offer. One option that has drawn intense criticism from teachers would see more than 20 subjects dropped from the exam. Teachers of subjects such as society and culture, drama, classical ballet and economics have been bitterly critical of suggestions their courses should be axed or amalgamated (Scott, 1996, p. 5).

After such a concerted fight to establish curriculum certainty it seemed that drama was under attack for being a “soft option”. The difference this time however, was that the drama community fought back with impressive arguments.

The Educational Drama Association of NSW sees drama as being under particular threat. Its spokesman, Owen Michaels-Hardy, says he fears Carr's wish to return to a core curriculum may lead to drama becoming a unit of the HSC instead of a course in its own right. Even worse, the association fears, the subject could be abolished altogether. HSC student Ben Seton is not impressed. "I definitely think it should be available to students at all schools. If they got rid of it, how would students discover if they had a gift for acting? It'd be just as bad as getting rid of maths."

The senior lecturer at The University of Sydney's Faculty of Education, John Hughes, agrees: "If Carr brings down the curtain on drama it will be a tragedy ... The Business Council of Australia lists communication as a top priority in terms of employee attributes and drama is one of the major communications studies." There is, he says, "a myth that the arts aren't employers. There are 91,000 people employed directly in the Arts in Australia, which is more than mining. But you don't hear people saying that science should be taken out of the HSC".

Virtually every long-established and academically conservative university in NSW has accepted drama as a serious discipline, says Robert Jordan, Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of NSW. "It seems to me utterly grotesque that a secondary school system should find drama academically unacceptable when traditional universities in the State completely accept it as a rigorous academic discipline. (Voumard, 1996, p. 12).

Impressively the drama association, drama academics, drama teachers and drama students joined forces to defend drama's rightful place in a rigorous curriculum. The same solidarity that delivered the syllabus had now come to its defence and won the day. Drama was retained with some minor changes and drama was reformed in the same way as every other subject. It had now become part of the curriculum 'club'. Membership of this club meant that that the subject's right to be reviewed and retained was the same as all the other, longer established subjects. Currently there is a 7-10 syllabus review which has automatically included the drama syllabus. The review of the School Certificate Drama course and the Stage 6 Drama course may never have happened if not for this widespread curriculum reform.

In 2002 the HSC drama course has changed little and the growth in the subject continues. This is predicated on a blending of the best of the process and product. The group performance provided teachers and the NSW education systems with a valid, rigorous way to assess drama process and product, the process marked as internal assessment by the teacher and the product marked externally by itinerant markers. The triumph of this syllabus and ultimately its syllabus writers was to provide a document that was rigorous, inclusive and

useful. The document's acceptance of process and product avoids a false dichotomy and attempts to engage with all pedagogical positions in the NSW drama community.

### **The current situation**

Teachers of drama now have syllabuses that cover all of the secondary years of schooling. The *School Certificate Drama* document borne of the enthusiasm and vigour of the late 1980s allows teachers to fit their current practice to the elastic boundaries of the syllabus. It now provides little guidance and is very much the poor cousin of the Stage 6 syllabus, which has been reviewed at least four times in its life whereas the *School Certificate Drama* syllabus has undergone no official critical evaluation. Hopefully the current round of Year 7-10 reviews will deliver a useful and substantial document to replace its worthy but outdated predecessor.

The Stage 6 syllabus remains largely unchanged with its centrepiece being the innovative group presentation now called the group performance. This syllabus's continued growth is testament to its usefulness and popularity. The drama community must, however take note of the criticisms of the course. The most pressing problem is its unsuiteness both to the lower ability students and to those students who require further extension. Extension courses and vocational education courses that are currently being developed and proposed may go some way to resolving these difficulties.

The K-6 drama syllabus pulped in 1986 and included in the *Draft Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* of 1998 and finally in the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* of 2000 completes the curriculum continuum from K-12. This syllabus was less than was originally envisaged by the curriculum writers of 1988, but is closer to the concepts of process drama than the draft syllabus of 1998. The next major challenge for the drama community is to encourage the implementation of the syllabus and hold the Department to its promise of full implementation in 2006. Holding the Department and the Board of Studies to curriculum commitments has not proved an easy task in the past.

### **Tertiary education**

Mooney (1989, p. 45) calls the tertiary educators the "silent achievers" of the drama education community. Thankfully, their support was not silent but has been voluble and energetic since 1989. Tertiary educators have held key roles on professional associations and

provided impressive courses to train teachers for drama education in NSW. This has been achieved in a climate of unprecedented financial cuts and constant pressure to do more with less resources. The 1996 HSC syllabus evaluation report recognises a growth in drama education in tertiary institutions:

The number of institutions in NSW offering pre-service teacher training in Drama has increased markedly in the past five years. Teachers are training either in Education Faculties or undertaking degrees in Arts and other areas such as Creative Arts and then completing Diploma in Education Courses with Drama teaching method subjects.

Evidence suggests that there is an adequate supply of trained teachers and examiners for the 2 Unit Drama course. The increased number of courses available at tertiary institutions and the growth in students undertaking these courses indicate that the supply will continue to be adequate (BOS, 1996, p. xi).

Mooney (1989, p. 46.) mentions the active interest tertiary drama educators have taken in the drama education community. Presently there are tertiary representatives involved in examination setting and marking, syllabus development and teacher inservicing, quite apart from their own work as preservice educators. This tendency to be engaged with the primary and secondary education community has been an important part of the unity that the drama education community has shared. A particularly strong example of sustained and impressive preservice drama education has been the program run for K-6 teachers at Sydney University. Where other universities have had their arts curriculum offerings slashed, Sydney University has maintained their offering of drama to all students preparing to be primary educators. The course was explained at a state drama conference:

All primary students have a compulsory semester of Drama – 10 weeks of two hours. The course is practical: the lecturers model all of their teaching stopping at crucial points to allow for critical analysis and reflection. Students are encouraged to critique the work, seeing it as an “example” rather than an “exemplar”...Following their compulsory unit, Primary undergraduates can opt for a full year Special course in drama. This year Robyn Cusworth has organised for each student to teach one hour per week of Drama at Curl Curl North, followed by one hours’ lecture/workshop held at the school (Simons and Cusworth, 1996, p. 25).

The tertiary educators in NSW have profoundly influenced several of the teachers in this study. The tertiary sector is still under strain and innovation has become difficult with increasing workloads and smaller budgets. There remains, however a desire to prepare both primary and secondary drama educators to teach practically, a desire that has been present even before a syllabus existed. The contributions of the tertiary sector to the training, equipping and ongoing support of teachers and their enthusiastic participation in the processes of primary and secondary drama have contributed to unity and growth in the subject area.

The teachers in this study have lived through an era of incredible growth in curriculum development and provision in drama. Their careers are predated by a vigorous and successful advocacy of drama curriculum, inspired by Dorothy Heathcote's methodologies. The ongoing development of syllabuses has seen a uniquely Australian approach to avoiding the process versus product dichotomy by incorporating both in the major syllabuses released in NSW. This has led, in the most part, to growth in drama numbers and interest in the subject in spite of the resistance by omission or commission of education bureaucracies. Mary Mooney comments that at the end of the 1990s drama was "...in a position of strength". If anything, drama is in a stronger position to provide significant syllabus support to teachers such as those in this study. Drama faces other significant challenges as it grows into maturity and some of those challenges will be illustrated in the stories of the teachers in this study.

Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology undertaken to examine the professional development journeys of these teachers.

## Chapter 4

### Research methodology

This study has two primary aims. Firstly, it seeks to reflect and analyse the professional development journeys of four drama educators. Secondly, this study compares their experiences expressed as narratives with the research and theory on teacher professional development. I looked for a methodology that could assist in exploring these research questions and facilitate a study that empowered all concerned. Mary Beattie sums up the central goal of her research and mine as well:

My purpose was to empower both researcher and participant to bring about action and to generate knowledge by observing it, reflecting on it, and locating it within the narrative unities of the individuals involved (Beattie, 1995, p. 40).

This study was conceived as a way of exploring teachers' stories about their development and in so doing empowering the research participants and the researcher with the potential of mutual discovery. As Beattie suggests this type of research seeks to explore and locate understanding within the individual contributions of the participants and the researcher involved. Furthermore it is also seen through the researcher's subjectivity which carries with it skills, knowledge and understandings that add to the meaning of the research (Beattie, 1995, p. 39).

#### Choosing qualitative research

Qualitative research has had a 'distinguished place in the human disciplines' since the 1920s and 1930s (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 1). The growth and development of qualitative research paralleled the need for a more powerful and naturalistic research method than positivism (Eisner, 1978, p. 202). Indeed Bruner (1990, p. 130) says that "...neither the empiricist's tested knowledge nor the rationalist's self-evident truths describe the ground on which ordinary people go about making sense of their experiences." Qualitative research allows researchers to delve into the complexity and layers of lived human experience. The research question being explored here requires methodology that allows for the complexity and idiosyncrasies of the possible responses. The depth of analysis possible in qualitative

research is not available in more reductionist methodologies. Furthermore, Grady (1996) argues that to deal with the complexity of human experience, research should be undertaken from an informed position, which allows the researcher to "...choose challenging rhetorical and methodological tools that allow us to focus on the complexities of the practice of theory in practice" (Grady, 1996, p. 70).

In educational research such as the current study there is little usefulness in a reductionist, positivist methodology. As Elliot Eisner points out (1978, p. 201) in exploring the complexities of educational research there is little to be gained in reducing the "...human mind to a single score". Conversely the qualitative method attempts to "...adumbrate its complexities, its potential, and its idiosyncrasies" (1978, p. 201). In essence the research question this study is exploring is too complex to be examined through positivistic methods.

Eisner defines qualitative methodology in the following ways:

By qualitative inquiry I mean that form of inquiry that seeks the creation of qualities that are expressively patterned, that seeks the explication of wholes as the primary aim, that emphasizes the study of configurations rather than isolated entities, that regards expressive narratives and visuals as appropriate vehicles for communication (1978, p. 198).

Eisner's definition identifies several key elements of the current study. His identification of the "creation of qualities that are expressively patterned" (1978, p.198) foreshadows the reflections I seek to make on the teachers' contributions. The contention here is that teacher experience though individual, contains within it patterns that may inform the discussion of teacher professional development. There is little interest in this study in explaining isolated incidents but rather how these incidents contribute to a broader understanding of the lives of teachers. Eisner (1978, p. 198) also observes that expressive narrative in this field is an appropriate vehicle for communication.

Therefore, a qualitative approach is the clear choice of educational researchers exploring teachers' lives as this study seeks to do. Howe and Eisenhart put it more strongly:

Although positivism no doubt still has a powerful influence on social and educational research it can no longer claim to be based on a viable epistemology. For, the core tenet of verificationism has been thoroughly repudiated. In general the picture of empirical science envisioned by positivism, in which observation could be strictly separated and remain untainted by the purposes that animate the conduct and evaluation of scientific investigation, has been replaced

by the notion that all scientific investigation is inherently theory-laden...Thus there is no good reason for educational researchers to attempt to legitimate an alternative paradigm so that it might peacefully coexist with positivism. Indeed there are good reasons for not doing this, inasmuch as it merely serves to encourage the view that positivism is a worthy competitor (Howe and Eisenhart, 1990, p. 3).

They contend here that there is no need for researchers to even countenance positivism as an alternative as it is inappropriate for many questions in educational research.

The choice of methodology is derived from the research question. Many questions can be responded to more appropriately using positivistic methods, for instance if the question mirrored Gold's study (1996)<sup>35</sup> and explored the reasons a number of drama teachers leave teaching in their first year, a positivistic methodology could be justified. That research question looking simply to describe the "what", rather than exploring the "what" and the "why" as this study does could be satisfied with a statistical response in answer to its research question. This study relies on the reflections of teachers and their insights. Employing a qualitative methodology yields a greater depth than would a more positivist approach.

### **Choosing a methodology within qualitative research.**

After selecting a qualitative approach, the next step is to identify specific qualitative methods to respond to the research question. This is an important phase in the development of a research project and one that Howe and Eisenhart suggest presents serious opportunities and challenges.

...research questions should derive data collection techniques and analysis rather than vice versa (1990, p. 6).

There is no doubt that the question must drive the research but as Mary Beattie (1995, p.40) and many other qualitative researchers observe there is no way to stop the research method from having an impact on the research question. They are inseparable and the research findings will be inextricably intertwined with the method. That being the case Howe and Eisenhart might argue, it is essential that the methodology fit the question.

This task is made less onerous by the inherent flexibility of qualitative methodology. Denzin and Lincoln call the qualitative researcher a *Bricoleur*, or one who produces a *bricolage*, that

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<sup>35</sup> Gold (1996) explored general teacher attrition rates and burnout statistics.

is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation (1994, p. 2). As the *Bricoleur* analogy suggests qualitative methodology is ‘multi method in focus’ (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 2). It is now important to explore the research question and then elucidate the *bricolage* which has been constructed to fit the question.

## **The research question**

My initial research question, stated in my research proposal, aims to provide a description of:

... the journey that a teacher of drama takes during a year. The study will specifically focus on factors which lead to the development and regression in professional practice in the course of that year. The study will contrast teacher narrative with current research and theory on teacher professional development.

This description of the study nominates several important demands and parameters of the research question that feed into the methodology. Firstly, the question deals with “a journey”. At the outset, it is clear that the language of the research question is not positivistic but rather relies on metaphor for its base.

## **Subjectivity**

The study is furthermore based on teacher stories or narratives about development and as such is located squarely within a subjective field of the teacher’s personal experience. The issue of subjectivity is at once a strength and a limitation of the research method. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. In this study I am seeking to show how four teachers of drama experience their world. The immediate criticism from an objectivist epistemology would be that their experience does not necessarily reflect the reality of the situation. The response to this argument is that I am not seeking an ‘objective’ reality. Rather, I am interested in the subjective realities of each of these teachers. As such I haven’t asked their students, their colleagues, their families or indeed anyone else about their the realities of their experience, I simply want them to tell their stories about their lives. The patterns that emerge provide material for contrast, comparison and analysis. The researcher’s own analysis, is also unashamedly subjective and is seen from my own political perspective and socio-cultural lenses (Grady, 1996, p. 70). The interpretations made in my reflections are not the only interpretations possible for the data

collected. Indeed others with other perspectives may have markedly different views of the narratives presented.

Given this question the methodological response was reasonably clear. The research question required a methodology or a series of methodologies that would enable teacher voices to be heard and their stories to create expressively patterned qualities (Eisner 1978, p. 198). The research required a methodology that would communicate the life worlds of the teachers in the study and allow the data to be analysed through existing research and theory in teacher professional development. Denzin and Lincoln's five-phase research process model (1994, pp. 12-15) will be used to explain and explore this research as it clarifies the process undertaken for this study.

### **Phase 1: the researcher**

Given that I have now identified the subjective nature of the study, I should now describe my identity and the lenses I use to view the data. Qualitative methodology centrally places the identity and political position of the researcher within the study. As Denzin and Lincoln argue, "...the age of value-free inquiry for the human disciplines is over" (1994, p. 12). Margot Ely says that qualitative researchers should avoid the pretence of objectivity and become "...increasingly more aware of our own 'eyeglasses', our own blinders, so that these do not colour unfairly both what we observe and what we detail in writing" (1991, p. 54).

I am a 32 year-old male drama teacher who at the time of the research project was working for the New South Wales public education system as a creative arts consultant in drama. This role meant that I worked from an office on curriculum support materials and training programs to assist drama teachers. I have a special interest in this study as my work role is primarily concerned with the creation of professional development programs and materials for teachers. I have also been involved in the development of syllabus and curriculum documents in drama since 1997. I taught drama, English and history in high schools and in technical colleges from 1993 to 1996 and have little experience in primary schools.

I decided to undertake this research to inform my practice as a drama consultant and to inform the ongoing design of professional development for drama educators. Grady (1996) approves of this relationship between practice and research:

Ideally, research should be a process symbiotically linked to our practice, thinking, and reflections on both. Sometimes our focus may be on analysis, at other times on practice, but there should always exist a dialectical relationship between theorizing and practice. In this view theory *is* a practice and good practice is theorized (1996, p. 61).

My interest in this study was to explore whether conventional<sup>36</sup> approaches undertaken by my employer (the NSW Department of Education and Training) and at times designed and coordinated by me (my practice) actually assisted drama teachers in their professional development journeys. My experience in drama education gave me an insight to the development of curriculum and professional development. It also gave me a network within drama education that I used in this study<sup>37</sup>. My experience also allowed a familiarity with schools and facilitated access to teachers. Ely says:

It seems that it is increasingly important to study the familiar without the blinders that familiarity often attaches to us (1991, p. 16).

In other words, it is advantageous to describe some of the ‘realities’ of the teacher’s world and more specifically their teaching of drama, but it is important that assumptions and presumptions do not blinker or indeed blind observation for the researcher. For instance most of my experience has been as a secondary educator so I needed to ensure that my familiarity in that context does not limit or ‘blinker’ my response to the elements of my research that relate to primary education.

I chose to explore the professional development journey through drama as I am a drama teacher and consultant and therefore aware of the specific needs of the subject area but also because I suspected that drama teachers may have specific needs that go unacknowledged by traditional professional development programs. For instance drama education, as a subject, is still in its early years (as seen in Chapters 2 and 3). I was interested in whether and how the relative youth of the subject had an impact on the professional development of these teachers. I was also interested to observe how the status of the subject influenced each teacher’s self understanding. Furthermore, I wondered how important drama education was in the teacher’s whole life and whether their identity was formed around identification with the subject or

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<sup>36</sup> By conventional I mean programs where teachers complete modules to gain skills in usually employer specified agenda areas. The TILT program is an example of one such program where the employer wishing to correct a perceived weakness in its workforce implemented a technology-training program.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, I knew Tom and Emma through drama education activities and as such was able to approach them to be part of this study.

whether it was only part of a much more complex whole. Additionally I was interested to see whether both beginning teachers of drama faced other pressures because of their roles as drama educators. I was also interested to know whether the experience of these primary and secondary drama educators was markedly different with regards to the professional development journey.

## **Phase 2: interpretative paradigms**

All research is interpretative, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 13).

With this in mind, the interpretative paradigm at work in this study is articulated below.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivism holds that knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by the mind (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). Reality for constructivists is created when there is consensus, rather than in absolute ways. Indeed “...the final aim [of the constructivist researcher] is to distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any other predecessor constructions (including of course, the construction of the investigator)” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

In this study, I am seeking to tell stories of the experiences of four separate and unacquainted teachers of drama. I am accepting that there is no omniscient seer of truth, otherwise known as the researcher (Carroll, 1996, p. 74) and I am seeking to facilitate with the research participants the discovery of teachers’ life experiences in terms of drama education and professional development. In terms of constructivism, we (the researcher and the participants) are collaboratively developing meaning based on our own knowledge and experiences. As I have chosen to explore the worlds of several teachers, I am also indicating paradigmatically that there is not one version of a teacher journey but rather there are four unique understandings of this dynamic and these experiences are socially constructed. In other words as a constructivist I subscribe to the concept of ontological relativism rather than ontological realism (Lincoln and Guba, 1994, p. 109). This means that the reflections I make to conclude this study will use the narratives to draw out themes that are consistent with or in contrast to the literature on teacher professional development reviewed in Chapter 1. The development and analysis of the narratives is intended to create a consensus construction, drawn from the narratives of the teachers and my analysis. Clearly there are other possible interpretations.

One researcher looking through specific lenses cannot possibly see the wealth of meaning within these narratives that reflect the lives of these teachers. Other interpretations and analyses are part of the ongoing journey that this research may have.

### **Phase 3: strategies of inquiry and interpretative paradigms**

In this phase the research project must articulate a flexible set of guidelines that connects the paradigm, methods of inquiry and methods for collecting data. The design connects the research to specific sites, persons, groups and institutions. “A research design also specifies how the investigator will address the two critical issues of representation and legitimation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 14).

#### **The study: strategies of inquiry and interpretation**

The methodology arose from the research question, which sought to explore the professional development of drama educators. The most straightforward way of gaining this information was to ask teachers about their experience through an interview process. In order to communicate the experiences of the teachers effectively and create empathy for the data (Eisner 1978, p. 202) and make the data live (Carroll, 1996, p. 72) narrative reconstructions have been developed. Following is an extract from the research proposal that outlines the methodology for this study.

Participants will be interviewed twice a term and the interviews transcribed. The questions will focus on teacher development and school culture. Many of the questions will be based on current teacher development literature and the prevailing factors in NSW schools. Teachers will also be asked to record “remarkable events” in journals, which they will also be asked to comment on during the interviews. Narratives will be constructed from this data which will attempt to integrate and contrast the literature on teacher development with the teacher’s narratives.

Some of the study’s important methodological features are highlighted below. The changes to my proposed methodology as the study proceeded are also articulated.

### **Phase 4: methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials**

#### **Establishing contact**

Four teachers of drama were identified and contacted, two primary teachers and two secondary teachers. I chose four teachers as a small number would allow me to explore their

stories in detail and make the research process manageable. Choosing four also allowed the development of rich descriptions in terms of gender, level of experience, schooling context (primary or secondary) and socio-cultural background.

Two of the teachers were to be in their first year of teaching and two were to be more experienced. I chose the mix of beginning and experienced teachers to create contrasts and enable the reality for the new teachers to be paralleled with the memories of the more experienced teachers' beginning years. I was also interested in beginning teachers as I had noticed that they were not attending drama inservice programs that I was coordinating at the Department and I was interested to know why they weren't attending. Furthermore, I was interested to know what they needed specifically in terms of professional development training. The outcome of this research has been the instigation of a beginning drama teachers workshop that is held annually to establish networks and provide support for beginning teachers.

### **Choosing teacher/participants**

I knew the experienced teachers chosen through their participation in activities such as drama camps, teacher inservices and regional drama committees. I approached them for this study because I thought, from my dealings with them in other situations, that they would probably be interested in the nature of this study and likely to be available through the year of the study. I was also interested to have a mix of male and female participants in the study. Apart from these factors there were no other special reasons for choosing them.

The beginning teachers were chosen on the recommendation of my colleagues in NSW universities. I asked them to suggest ex-students of theirs who were currently teaching in their first year in the public schooling system and who would be open to reflective practice and interested in the nature of my research. The recruitment of the beginning teachers to the study was relatively difficult with several teachers who were contacted declining to be involved in the study. I presume they felt that the study would place an extra burden on them in their demanding first year of teaching. I was looking for a beginning teacher in a primary school and a beginning teacher in a secondary school who would be responsive to the reflective practice required by this study. I had no other criteria for their selection. I tried as much as possible to choose participants in different working situations and from different

training institutions. This difference was important to develop narratives from contrasting backgrounds and narratives that would potentially be different in terms of social construction.

### **Ethics**

An ethics application was completed and submitted to the Human Ethics committee of Sydney University. Ethics approval was granted on 22 April 1999 (Appendix 2). There were some ethical considerations involved in this research design that will be discussed here. The Department of Education and Training was contacted to gain approval for this study as their employees were involved. The DET indicated, however that as the teachers were undertaking the research in their own time no ethics approvals were required from the Department.

All participants were given a participant information form and a consent form before the research began. All participants were told in writing and verbally that they had the right to withdraw without penalty from the project at any time. No participant at any time expressed a wish to withdraw from the project. By negotiation, however, the data gathering process was changed to suit the needs of one participant. This change in methodology is discussed later in this chapter.

### **Recording process**

A video camera was used as a recording tool only. The video was set to record the participant-interviewer conversation and not as a documentary-making tool. That meant the video recorded while cleaners walked through the room and planes flew noisily overhead, the video was not stopped, as it was to be a simple recording of the interview interaction.

The use of video in this study was particularly useful for two reasons, one methodological and one practical. Video is methodologically advantageous as it provides verbal and non-verbal information as part of the recording process. As Fontana and Frey, (1994, p. 371) suggest:

...non-verbal communication both informs and sets the tone for the interview. Looks, body postures, long silences the way one dresses – all are significant in the interactional interview situation.

A straight audio recording or note-taking would not capture this valuable interaction and could lessen the material available for the creation of the narratives. Other researchers have found video to be similarly useful in their methodologies:

Videotapes show context, people in verbal interaction and such non-verbal elements as the sounds of voices, gestures, facial expressions, light, colour, activity and relative bustle or quiet. In addition both audiotapes and videotapes allow for analysis through repeated studying as well as checking against log notes and transcripts about the same events (Ely, 1991, p. 82).

Participants were asked throughout the course of the interview phase whether they felt comfortable with the process. No objections were voiced about the process. Participants seemed to grow more relaxed with the camera as the study continued and toward the middle of the study the camera provided no more intrusion than a tape recorder or a note taking process.

One practical reason for the use of video is the length of the tape. Videotapes have a longer recording capability than audiotapes and thus allow the interview to proceed without interruptions caused by the changing of tapes.

### **Tape description process**

The tapes were viewed and key sections described and compiled with notes from the interviews in preparation for the construction of narratives. The only person to see the video was the researcher and the videos will be destroyed within five years of the submission of the thesis. This time will allow verification of the work undertaken if required.

The sections to be described were chosen based on their relevance to Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) three categories of teacher professional development: skills and knowledge, self understanding and ecological change as discussed in Chapter 1. After sections had been described, the descriptions were arranged into themes based on the major issues that emerged from the research (Appendix 6 shows a sample of this process). Narratives reconstructions were written for each teacher under each one of the sub themes that emerged. Not all teachers had narratives under all sub themes. At times, a sub theme has a narrative from only one teacher. For instance Tom's experiences with boys' education, while not shared by the other teachers illuminates his context and raises some important issues in his professional development journey which were salient to the research question.

### **Anonymity and confidentiality**

I chose to offer and maintain the anonymity of the participants as seems conventional in this type of study. As Punch points out:

In general, there is strong feeling among most fieldworkers that settings and respondents should not be identifiable in print and that they should not suffer harm or embarrassment as a consequence of research (1994, p. 93).

Other researchers such as Shulman (1990, p. 11) take a very different view claiming that teacher's voices should be recognised. Her experience is in a study similar to this one and she claims that teachers are very keen to be heard. However, she also points to the consequences and implications of revealing teacher identities that may single out teachers for ridicule and oppression. As she points out "...teachers rarely leave the scene [of the research]. They must bear the burden of their written words, for they remain participants long after they complete their roles..."(Shulman, 1990, p. 14).

I discussed the anonymity issues with the participants who decided to remain anonymous due to the potentially sensitive nature of the data. I decided that in order to elicit unimpeded responses and to protect potentially vulnerable participants anonymity was preferable. Anonymity often empowers research participants to speak out about their colleagues or their supervisors in ways that would be impossible if they were identified publicly (Shulman, 1990, p. 11). Pseudonyms are used for the participants, participant's schools and any other person who could be used to identify the teachers. Broad geographical areas have been identified to contextualise the workplaces of the teachers. As part of the validation process, two of the teachers asked for part of the narratives to be removed as they were concerned the information would identify them. The material was removed from the narratives.

### **Case studies**

As mentioned before qualitative research is a *bricolage* of research strategies that meet the research question. In order to give a perspective that covered the stories of several teachers with differing experience of professional development I decided to use the collective case study method. Stake (1994, p. 237) explains:

They [the research participants] may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having voice. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to a better understanding perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger set of cases.

The participants in this study are specific and unique ‘cases’ who have their own constructed realities. Having several ‘cases’ affords this study the opportunity of making comparisons and contrasts that may lead to a better understanding of the wider world of teachers of drama and professional development. The information drawn for comment from these cases will obviously reflect the research question or as Stake argues: “My choice would be to take from the case from which we feel we can learn the most” (1994, p. 243). Consequently the material chosen from the transcripts developed into narratives is most appropriate to the themes and sub themes of the research.

### **Interviews**

The aim of these interviews was to give prominence to these teachers’ voices and experiences (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 373). Nevertheless, the interview has been and remains a problematic research method. The problem mostly arises from the traditional hierarchical position of the interviewer as the objective supposed omnipotent presence who is value free (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 373). This style of interviewing, quite apart from its inherent flaws is inappropriate in research that seeks to focus on the voices of teachers and identifies them as partners in the research process. Fortunately forms of interviewing have evolved which recognise these inherent flaws and make available methodologies that suit the qualitative responses.

The aim of the interviews here is to engage in a conversation that creates mutually constructed meaning. The participant and the researcher both have input into the process. Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 373) argue this type of interview is more honest, morally sound and reliable, as it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings and therefore presents a more “realistic” picture than can be uncovered using traditional methods.

In this project, the interviews were arranged with the participant at a place that was convenient for them. Mostly this was their school that had the added benefit of providing a context for the interview. Occasionally the participants would walk across their teaching space to illustrate a student’s work or to demonstrate where something occurred in the teaching space that was of special significance.

One of the participants found it more convenient to do the interviews at my workplace which had more space available and facilitated the process more successfully than he thought his workplace would. At all times I carried out the interviews where the participant requested to minimise inconvenience to the teachers. When an interview was taking place on school grounds the Principal was consulted and my presence was registered with the school. There were no significant gatekeeper issues in any of the schools. There were 21 interviews carried out from 30/5/99 to 8/8/00; (the dates for each interview appear in Appendix 5) seven with Emma and Tom, five with Mel and three with Ingrid. Ingrid and Mel had fewer interviews as they were frequently unavailable and sometimes difficult to contact.

The interviews were unstructured (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 365) in that they followed the format of a discussion around general themes rather than closed questioning techniques. This allowed me to build rapport with the participants and break down the formality of the traditional interview. My understanding and experience of some features of school life assisted me in framing questions and generally discussing the teacher's experiences. I also had an existing rapport with two of the participants as I had worked with them on other projects. The advantage in having pre-established rapport was clear in this instance and there was far less trust building required with the two participants I knew, than with the two I didn't know. My aim in the interview was similar to Fontana and Frey's approach:

Forgetting the rules [of traditional interviewing]...allows research subjects to express themselves more freely, and thus to have greater voice both in research process and in the research report (1994, p. 368).

Forgetting the rules in this process required the construction of new rules to manage the process, rules that empowered the interviewee and the interviewer alike and attempted to remove the hierarchical conventions of traditional interviewing techniques. The interviews began with a discussion about the process that encouraged the teachers to negotiate the interview as it progressed. The teachers had the right not to answer the questions, ask questions of me and add their own observations of the process. At any stage they could terminate the interview and on some occasions that occurred (see a change in plans below). The interviews were videotaped openly with the full knowledge of the teachers. As stated previously video was used to record the interviews and the non-verbal constituents of the interview (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 371).

There are still problems with this more informal style of interviewing. This approach supports the idea of a discussion although the interviewer's first task is to listen. As Ely comments (1991, p. 67) "LISTEN, LISTEN and LISTEN MORE". Even though there is a collaborative element, the first priority is to listen to the teacher's story. To do otherwise is to reinstate the hierarchy of the researcher espousing wisdom and the "researched" responding. As an interviewer I had to resist the temptation to add my own commentary on the situation each teacher was facing. The conversational style of this interaction facilitates this kind of response. The research methodology, however is attempting to reflect the teacher's experiences and not the interventions of the researcher.

The confessional nature of the interview created issues that I had not expected. All participants were moved to tears at times and they sometimes told me things that they may not have conveyed through another data gathering method. One of the participants (Ingrid) found the approach so confronting that by negotiation we changed the methodology. After the change of methodology her responses were infrequent and were more difficult to obtain.

Another participant, Emma was shocked at how the narratives portrayed her:

I was amazed at how repetitive, vehement and intense I sound. Transcripts of what is essentially a "stream of consciousness" are full of non-sequiters and read awfully! I just opened my mouth and let it all pour forth, uncensored! Ah well... I sound like a poor, pathetic creature but I'm not!<sup>38</sup>

The interview process provides for the researcher the potential to collect regular and candid reflections of teachers. This process made the participants set apart a time to reflect and ensured in most cases that the data was collected regularly. Using other methods such as the journal relied on the teacher making time to reflect which does not always happen in the course of a teacher's hectic routine. There are benefits for teachers as well. Emma commented on the process

The research has been beneficial in that it has allowed me to be reflective and observe patterns in my own behaviours and actions as an educator. I can draw on this knowledge to assist in planning and improving my teaching in the future.<sup>39</sup>

Tom also felt there were beneficial outcomes from the interview process:

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<sup>38</sup> Excerpt from Emma's response verifying the narratives. See Chapter 9 for the full response.

<sup>39</sup> Excerpt from Emma's response verifying the narratives. See Chapter 9 for the full response.

The interviews gave me a chance to talk to someone who made no comments or judgments and allowed me time to vent my feelings. It was a perfect scenario. The interviews also made me redefine the way I taught Drama – teaching strategies, programming and classroom management. I believe through the interviews and contact with Michael I have become a better educator. I am an educator with a better sense of worth and understanding of the constraints of teaching, having a family and juggling a career.<sup>40</sup>

There are also issues regarding gender and the interview (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 369). The response to this reality is difficult but recognising the gendered nature of the interview is vital. An understanding and acknowledgment of these realities in the interview will alert the reader to the gender implications of this process.

### **Research logs**

As other qualitative researchers have discovered (Ely et al, 1991, pp. 70-73) the research log is an effective way of recording observations and reflections that are part of the research process. A sample of these reflections is included in Appendix 3. As part of the research and after every interview I logged information about the interview. These reflections recorded my feelings and observations on the interview and provided guidelines for the following interviews. These observations were used in the development of the narratives. I observed the nature of the interview situations, the interruptions that occurred during the visit, the comments from others in the school and the general demeanour and attitudes of the teachers in the interview situation. These factors assisted in building the world of the narratives and developing a picture for the reader as well as explaining some of the sub textual elements present in the interview situation.

### **Participant logs**

The use of logs for participant reflection has long been an effective tool for the qualitative researcher (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. 421). In this study the journal was used for the teachers to record incidents of interest that occurred between the interviews. These reflections assisted the teachers to remember significant incidents and formed the basis of some of the discussion when the interviews took place. Participants were asked as part of the project to reflect in a log about the processes and any significant incidents or ideas that they had that would contribute to the interviews and the wider study. They were also asked to include in

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<sup>40</sup> Excerpt from Tom's response verifying the narratives. See Chapter 9 for the full response.

the logs copies of programs reports or other materials that they felt might be useful. These logs were completed with limited success.

One participant (Tom) used the log to record ideas, concerns and incidents and as a reflective tool. The other three participants did not use the log or used it spasmodically and expressed guilt when asked about it. They said that a lack of time was the reason for the difficulty in using a reflective log. This problem seemed particularly acute for the beginning teachers. There was however some useful information in two or three of the logs that contributed to the narratives.

### **A change in plans**

As Ely (1991, pp. 113-119) suggests, flexibility is an essential part of research design and implementation. This is due to the nature of the research and the essentially emotional aspects of the research and in this case the interview process. The beginning primary school teacher (Ingrid) found the process of the unstructured interpersonal interview very confronting and became distressed during the two attempts at interviewing her. Her distress was obviously the result of incidents that had taken place within the school. She was not in control during this process and I terminated the interviews in negotiation with her to save her further distress or embarrassment. This provided an ethical and a methodological dilemma.

I wondered should I attempt to intervene in this situation and deal with the problem within this school, that I after all was getting only one perspective on, or should I remain the hands off observer? As discussed earlier nothing should be done to cause ongoing embarrassment or harm to the participant. With this in mind and in consultation with my supervisor I took the decision not to intervene.

The second ethical issue was whether the process of interviewing and reflection was actually causing her harm and distress. I decided the best way to find out was to discuss this directly with her in an attempt to empower her in the situation. In response to the question: Have you found this study useful or difficult? She said:

Whilst sharing my most difficult times this year has been a hard process, being forced to reflect and evaluate this year has been useful. I think it is always important for a teacher to remember their educational goals, future directions and how they can improve. This

study has reminded me of what I have set out to achieve and that I am not alone. Thank you.<sup>41</sup>

Although she found the process difficult, she also acknowledged the use of the study for her professional development. On this basis I decided to continue the research by letter with a series of questions for her to respond to. Again she was encouraged to ignore questions or make statements that fell outside the questions raised. Ingrid responded to only one of these letters. Although there were two other letters sent I received no further response from her. I assumed that she was ignoring the study as she had now become embarrassed. I have not been able to verify the narratives with her. I chose to include her narratives in the study as she has not at any time signalled her intention to withdraw. Furthermore, the narratives arising from the interviews were sent to her for validation and she has not responded to request changes to them<sup>42</sup>.

Although this difference is apparent in the study, Ingrid's responses are still valuable. As stated earlier this research field is fluid and the qualitative researcher should be dynamic in the methodology selected to suit the needs of the research participants and the research question as the study progresses and changes.

## **Phase 5: the art of interpretation**

### **Narrative reconstruction**

Narrative methodology allows multiple interpretations from the same narrative (Goodfellow, 1997, p. 62). For this reason narrative is transparent in its methodology and powerful in its ability to reflect the unique circumstances of teacher's lives. In studying teachers it seems appropriate to search for a way of representing them that has synergy with their experiences as teachers. As Taylor (1990, p. 2) argues:

In drama we 'story' most if not all of the time. Indeed, there often would be no class if the group did not agree to create and maintain stories.

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<sup>41</sup> In a survey from Ingrid Term 4, 1999.

<sup>42</sup> The written responses are quoted directly and as such do not require the same level of validation as the narratives that arose from the interviews.

Drama teaching and teaching more generally, is about experience and story. The clear choice here was to continue this tradition by constructing narratives from the interviews with the participants. These narratives represented and interpreted their experience.

Clandinin and Connelly present a useful conceptualisation of the use of narrative for this research:

...narrative inquiry in this study is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study... Thus we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience (1994, p. 416).

There is a growing body of research that uses narrative to explore teachers' lives (for instance Beattie, 1995 and Neilsen, 1999) as its basis. Goodfellow describes her approach to narrative reconstruction:

As a researcher I interpreted each supervising teacher's accounts as I pulled together the central themes from a number of conversations which I held with each of the teachers. From this I wrote an interpretative account – a themed story or synthesis of experience-over-time which I called a narrative reconstruction (Goodfellow, 1997, p. 66).

In common with my approach to narrative reconstruction Goodfellow has used conversational interviews which she synthesised into narrative accounts. My approach was to use Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) organisers and develop sub themes within those larger themes based on the issues that emerged from the interviews. I also included materials from logbooks to develop the narratives for this study. Narrative allows the data to speak in all its complexity and through all its layers. Goodfellow says of narrative that "...it is a form of natural discourse in which the narrator conveys the nature of what has been experienced through the sequential telling of that experience" (Goodfellow, 1997, p. 61).

### **Writing narratives**

The narratives in this study were constructed in the following way. The interviews were described, the responses then reorganised and categorised under Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) tripartite organisers. These organisers were used to arrange the data but also maintain its relevance to the research question. Those who have worked closely with this methodology warn against being distracted from the research question but being open to important issues that arise as part of the process:

Constant attention to the why of the work goes beyond the simple matter of keeping the researcher's eye on matters of relevance. At least as important is the almost inevitable redefinition of purpose that occurs in experiential studies as new, unexpected and interesting events and stories are revealed (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. 416).

My experience in this study was that issues and ideas emerged that forced me to reconsider the boundaries and relevance of the research question. This constant reassessment acknowledges that the lives of teachers defy categorisation within the confines of a research question. However in order to make the research manageable some issues that are interesting but not relevant to the research question were not included. In essence, the research question defines the boundaries of the research, sometimes however issues arise that are of such importance that they demand inclusion within the study.

When the transcripts had been organised I wrote the narratives using first person voice. I did this by removing my questions from the transcript and using the teacher's responses from the interviews and the logbooks. I only changed responses when the meaning became unclear as I wanted the teacher's distinctive voice to be clear to the reader. Often I would group together the teacher's reflections from different interviews to create a narrative around a theme. These narrative vignettes act as "slices of life" rather than a linear story. The vignettes are used to make a point about the theme, and the smaller narratives makes comparison and reflection more manageable. Sometimes for the sake of clarity I have put in a phrase such as "later that year" to indicate the passing of time. At times I have also set the scene for the reader by writing contextual notes based on the research log. Writing narrative vignettes allows the narratives to be grouped thematically for ease of comparison and analysis. The limitation of this kind of presentation is that views expressed possibly a year apart are sometimes placed under the same theme. The vignettes have a tendency to focus on themes rather than on linear stories. This approach supported my research as it assists in the discussion of specific aspects of the teacher professional development journey by allowing comparison and analysis under each theme.

I chose to present narrative in the first person because it conveys the immediacy of the teacher's experience. I have not sought to place my own observations in the narrative apart from sometimes describing salient factors that relate to the narratives. I have chosen this approach to allow the reader to make their own reflections before I put my lens across the narratives. This is not to suggest these narratives are value free, the construction of the

narratives are obviously devised with the researcher's subjectivity deciding relevance and clarifying the words of the teachers.

The limitation of the representation and analysis of these narratives is that I only represent one subjective view. As Bruner (1996) and Goodfellow (1997, p. 62) suggest, each story has many interpretations. My approach in this study has been to contrast the narratives with theory in teacher professional development to present some reflections of the life of drama educators in order to understand what factors encourage them and discourage them on their professional journey. Other readings and interpretations of these narratives are possible and welcome.

Some of this subjectivity may be balanced out by the validation process that asked the teachers to verify the narratives as their experience, but again their view of their own experience is naturally also subjective. Rather than this being a cause for concern, it is a positive feature of the transparency of this methodology where the participants use their experience to inform the research and the researcher uses his (in my case) experience and knowledge to interpret the narratives.

The method of re-presentation is important as it allows the reader not to merely read the observances of the research but to actually connect with the humanness of the experience of the participants (Goodfellow, 1997, p. 64). Furthermore, if the contention that "humans are storytelling organisms" is true (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) then the narrative presentation of stories in the form of research findings will provide an accessible way to report on the research.

### **Introducing the teacher's contexts**

To begin the interviews, case studies and narratives I concentrated on the biographical details of the teachers. Kathy Carter talks about the importance of "...ranging beyond the immediately technical issues of curriculum and classroom lessons to encompass teacher's biographies. Thus teacher's experiences are framed within a context of a teacher's life history" (1993, p. 7). Based on a constructivist epistemology all that precedes a teacher's teaching constructs their identity as a teacher and these factors play a crucial role in understanding and communicating their lives. Mary Beattie illustrates her own constructions

as a teacher in the first chapter of her book, *Constructing Professional Knowledge* (1995).

Describing her own experience and how it relates to other experiences of teachers, she says:

Their knowledge of teaching is multifaceted, embodied and embedded in the narrative history of their lives, and this knowledge is practical, experiential and shaped by the teacher's purposes and values (1995, p. 7).

The literature seems to support the use of teacher biographies as a starting point, as they set a context and provide some explanation of the construction of teacher knowledge. Chapter 5, introducing the teachers, provides biographical narratives of the teachers that introduce them, their contexts, backgrounds and beliefs. The themes explored in this chapter are family background, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, teaching, the future and theory of education.

From this point the narratives followed the issues that arose from the study. This 'groundedness' (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273) allows the study to follow the participants and their concerns within the general framework of the research question. This flexibility allows emergent themes to grow and evolve and not be thrown away because they do not meet the presumed needs of the research area.

### **Seeking validity**

In order to validate or crystallise (see below) the vignettes I sent the narratives to the participants to review (Appendix 4). As my methodology had sought to remove the traditional researcher and researched status I was keen to continue the partnership by ensuring the teachers felt that the narratives were accurate and reflected the way they felt at the time of the research. Three of the four participants responded and provided me with details of changes they wanted made to the narratives. Even though I sometimes disagreed with their sentiments I respected their right to be represented in ways that they felt were valid. When details have been removed from the narratives I have noted their removal and explained the circumstances. The participants also provided extra material to clarify the narratives which I feel has strengthened them.

### **Reliability and credibility**

"Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 7). Rather than mimic an inappropriate

epistemology we should seek research methodologies that provide reliability and credibility but do not rely on positivistic notions of success. Connelly and Clandinin suggest that ‘transferability’ (1990, p. 7) is a more useful concept in the development of qualitative research design. The extent to which the study resonates and is transferable to others is a good measure but these measures should go further. Goodfellow supports these arguments:

...I have argued that, in narrative inquiry, richness and resonance found within shared stories ensures the study’s credibility. Such resonance is represented through the emotionality and expressiveness of narratively connected images portrayed through stories (1997, p. 73).

Therefore, the credibility of the research lies in the authenticity and clarity of the teachers voices and their transferability, creating knowledge that leads to a deeper understanding of the research question. There are some useful measures of credibility here, but as Connelly and Clandinin suggest the language and criteria for this area is still evolving (1990, p. 7).

### **Crystallisation**

Crystallisation and Triangulation, along with the authenticity of teacher voice in this research is an important part of the developing reliability of qualitative research. Triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources in a study (Janesick, 1994, p. 214). It is a useful term but does suggest limitation. The crystallisation method is preferred because of it suggests greater scope. Laurel Richardson (1994) says of this approach:

I propose that the central image for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two dimensional object. Rather, the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow change, alter but are not amorphous (1994, p. 522).

I have used the term crystallisation instead of triangulation (Janesick, 1994, p. 214), as crystallisation seems more able to describe several approaches to validating the narratives. The process also reflects the possibility of several reflections from the same source, in other words several interpretations from the one narrative. My interpretations are only one of many possible. In this study I have used several methods of validation for the narratives I have constructed. Firstly, three of the teachers in this study validated the work<sup>43</sup>. The teachers were asked to read the narratives and then respond by indicating whether the narratives reflected

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<sup>43</sup> As mentioned earlier Ingrid did not respond to this part of the study.

their experience. They were asked to review their narratives, in the same spirit as the interviews were held, and were able to negotiate changes and make additions to the text. This important step assisted to ensure that my style or voice does not overwhelm their voices.

Secondly, the narratives have been read by my co-researchers and supervisors for them to investigate and to suggest changes that clarified the meaning and strengthened the voices of the teachers in this study.

### **Limitations of the study**

Every study has its limitations. I have described the major limitations of this study under the following headings: limited perspective, reliant on teacher responses and not generalisable.

#### **Limited perspective**

This study has set out to describe the personal experience of the four teachers. As such, there is no discussion of other perspectives on the professional development journey. There would for instance be interest in how supervisors perceive the professional development journeys of these teachers, or how family members are affected by teachers' professional development journeys.

This also raises the question of reality. How can this study reflect reality if it is only the view of the teachers involved? The study was looking to the reality for the four teachers in this study. Furthermore as Clandinin and Connelly point out: "What is taken to be experience is a function of the observer's interest" (1994, p. 416). There is also limitation in that the study only sought to relate experience that organised with Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) tripartite schema. There are perhaps many interesting and instructive areas of these four teachers experience that this study does not address. Furthermore, it is likely that there are many issues in the narratives that seen through other lenses would create different conclusions.

This study also relied on a limited "sample". Obviously there are as many stories as there are teachers and this study does not pretend to be applicable to them all. There are however significant insights to be gained from a small number of teachers using this methodology. Furthermore, this study looks at the curriculum background and context for drama educators. All the teachers in this study taught at least another two subjects and for the primary educators there were far more subjects taught. As my interest was mainly in drama education

these other teaching duties were of peripheral interest although they do feature in this research where they are relevant to the research question.

### **Reliant on teacher responses**

The responses to the interviews were also reliant on teacher responses. On a couple of occasions I arrived at the school to undertake the interview and the teacher had forgotten, or was in a state not particularly conducive to an interview due to a school based issue. This had the effect of delaying the interview or having a very distracted interviewee. Ingrid for instance felt very uncomfortable with the interview process and became very distressed which reduced the depth of her responses. Other methodologies that do not depend on interview may avoid this difficulty.

As this methodology recognised the rights of the participants to validate their responses I felt that there was an attempt by at least one teacher to distort the narratives. This while understandable limited the power of some of the narratives. Other teachers while dismayed by the content of some of the narratives were more inclined to accept that being portrayed positively and negatively was part of the research process.

### **Not generalisable**

Unlike the sometimes dubious claims of positivistic methodologies it is not possible to generalise this study to all teachers or indeed all drama teachers. Instead the research question sought to understand the experience of four unique teachers, to record and analyse that experience through narrative. As mentioned earlier the resonances that this study has with other teachers and its ability to create an understanding of the professional development journey is an important indicator of the success of the research.

### **Conclusion**

The role of the methodology in this study is to flexibly and cogently collect and then represent the experiences and stories of teachers and compare their experience with the research and theory in teacher professional development. The use of interview, case study and the construction of teacher narratives fits the process of *bricolage* that the qualitative researcher must use to meet the needs of the research question. In this study I have endeavoured to ensure that the methodology support the voices of the teachers in a study that

also acknowledges and celebrates the collaboration with the researcher and doesn't try and hide the researcher's presence behind the myth of objectivity. My hope for this methodology and the resultant study is the same as Dianne Brunner's:

Together our stories may begin a process of unearthing assumptions that lead to rediscovering truths about ourselves and that lead to making culture, particularly in schools, that is relevant to our lives (1994, p. 31).

Chapter 5 introduces the teachers and their contexts through narratives that present their background, relate their approaches to education and present their hopes for the future.

## Chapter 5

### Introducing the teachers

The first part of this thesis (Chapters 1- 4) has concentrated on the establishment of theoretical positions, methodological issues and design and the history of curriculum development in drama education internationally and locally. These chapters provided a theoretical and contextual background for the teachers' stories that form the second part of this thesis.

The teachers and their stories have been organised into four chapters. There are overlaps and points of connection across chapters. Any effort to describe human experience through categorisation is obviously problematic. However, the study presents the narratives based on their ability to provide patterns of meaning (Eisner, 1978, p. 198) and follows the conventions of those who have explored teacher development in the past (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1982).

As mentioned in Chapter 4 the teacher's knowledge of teaching is "... multifaceted, embodied, and embedded in the narrative histories of their lives..." (Beattie, 1995, pp. 6-7). To study and explore the teachers in their present context it is first useful to understand their biographies which will assist in understanding their motivations, expectations and perceptions of their professional development journeys.

Chapter 5 introduces the teachers through their memories of schooling and their views on the place of education, drama education and the nature and importance of professional development. Teachers' narratives are divided in this chapter into subheadings for each teacher including family, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and views on teaching. These profiles describe the journey from each teacher's unique perspective.

Chapters 5 to 8 follow Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) nomenclature of teacher development. Chapter 6 examines the role of knowledge and skill development in teacher development. Chapter 7 explores self understanding and Chapter 8 explores the concept of the teacher's

environment using Hargreaves and Fullan's term: ecological change. In these chapters I will provide reflections after each section of the narratives to draw out some of the major points and contrast and compare them with the literature reviewed. At times there will be no comment on the issues raised in the narratives as the point is already made by the teachers themselves and needs no further elaboration.

### **Presentation of the narratives**

Different coloured fonts have been used for each teacher's voice to differentiate their narratives. The order of the narratives has been arranged to group the beginning teachers Ingrid and Mel together and the more experienced teachers Tom and Emma together. This order allows clear comparison between the narratives.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 the narratives are presented as vignettes. They are presented in this way to assist in comparison between the teachers' experiences. In this chapter the narratives are presented following a biographical sequence to introduce the teachers and their backgrounds.

This chapter uses the following themes that emerged from the interviews to introduce the teachers:

- Family background
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Tertiary education
- Teaching
- Theory of education
- The future.

### **Ingrid**

Ingrid was in her first year of teaching at a primary school in Sydney's eastern suburbs at the time of the study.

#### **Family background**

I am the youngest of seven children. My parents have previous marriages. On my mother's side, there is a strong tradition of teachers. My grandmother was a piano teacher and my mum

was a special education teacher and Principal on the North Coast of NSW. My older sister is working in a primary school providing specialist music lessons. My other older sister did a diploma of teaching in music but never carried through with it. I am the youngest child and obviously, I have gone into teaching as well.

My father migrated from England in the 1950s and spent most of his time in the army in East Africa and in England. I never saw my mother as a teacher but my parents had a strong belief that school was a very important thing ever since I was very little. My mother modelled how to teach me through the mother relationship. I learnt patience from my family and they allowed me to achieve by being able to make discoveries for myself.

As a child, I had a whole lot of artistic influences on me. My mother is an author and an artist but I never really did any of that, but we were exposed to music from a very young age. I suppose in the arts I was drawn mostly towards music.

### **Primary education**

I went to school at a demonstration school in Sydney, which was a centre for training for student teachers. Some teachers were good and there were some teachers everyone disliked. My fifth and my fourth grade teacher were quite different in their personalities but they both did a lot for me. My fourth grade teacher was very into the creative arts and drama. My fifth grade teacher was very strict but within those boundaries, he made everyone feel that they were contributing and part of it. One of the teachers at the school was very keen on teaching drama in the primary school. I enjoyed working with him, not so much for the performances but for the processes we went through. The teacher I didn't think was so good was very interested in herself and would talk about her pink car and her holidays in London for most of the day and teach us how to get lipstick off our teeth. Even at that young age, I had a problem with that.

I can remember being quite affected by the student teachers that we had at school and being aware that they had come from Sydney University. I think I began thinking I would like to go to university and teach based on my memories of them.

### **Secondary education**

I went to high school at a girls' school in Sydney's north. That was very different from my primary schooling because it was very rigid and the staff had been there for a long time. I really enjoyed society and culture but that was the only subject that really engaged me. I was not a very dedicated student until Year 12 when I started thinking about where I wanted to go and how I was going to get there. High school was a stepping-stone for me.

I wanted to go into teaching because of my family background and because I cared about issues like social justice and equity. So when I was thinking about where I wanted to go I was thinking social worker, youth worker and I thought education is really where I can address those ideals. A sense of equity and social justice were the driving forces behind me entering teaching.

I went to Sydney Uni because I had the experience of Sydney Uni students at primary school and I thought it was the best place to go to train as a teacher.

### **Tertiary education**

We had an induction course for all the new teachers in our district and I was the only person there from Sydney Uni. They are sitting in this course saying "what is an outcome and what is an indicator?" Clearly, other courses are not as thorough and after four years I feel completely prepared. The transition has not been a big shock for me.

### **Teaching**

I suppose I will be used more to the schooling thing in 2-3 years. My class is typical for Year 3. There are 25 students. We have an army base close to here and we have many people coming and going. I am losing four kids through the army at the end of this year because they are changing the base and moving other people into the area. I have five students that are still working toward Stage One outcomes. I have one special needs student on integration and I have some support for him. These kids need quite a bit of care and attention and that is difficult even with help. At uni, we did a lot with students with learning difficulties and we tutored a child for 2 hours a week for 10 weeks. That kid was in the same situation as some of my kids, so this is not completely new to me.

As far as teaching drama is concerned I have not done very much. I try to fit it in where I can but we have VERY structured expectations of what we can teach and what we can't teach. I try to fit drama in where we can. I have used drama in the shared reading and in The Rock Eisteddfod.

I think if you do not do it regularly and it is not something that is a natural part of your weekly program, it is difficult for the students to appreciate drama. The more you do it, the better the class is at doing it and I think doing it on isolated occasions isn't as good. I have not done it as much as I would have liked. I have not been able to use it as much as I could have I suppose.

## **Mel**

Mel was in her first year of teaching during this study. She has a partner who is not a teacher. When the study began, she was at a comprehensive high school in Sydney's west. During the year, the school changed and is now only accepting Year 7-10 students. A number of schools in NSW have been grouped as Year 7-10 only. These schools feed a senior college. During the study, Mel moved to the senior college to teach.

## **Family background**

My mum and dad are teachers. My dad's now a Deputy Principal at a Sydney high school. My dad has been very musically involved all of his life and my mum has been very supportive. I have a young sister, who is now studying at university so it is an average household.

I was nurtured by my parents into teaching because of the way they taught me. I grew up in a household of teachers and good ones, very good ones. My father in particular is a brilliant teacher. My parents both enjoy teaching but it was not as if they influenced me to go to teaching at all. When I started university, I did not intend to go into teaching. I did a three-year Bachelor of Arts theatre degree looking towards a performance-based career. As I grew with that, I thought about my options a little more carefully and I decided there were not many jobs out there for performers, so many, many many more bodies want jobs than there are jobs. So I figured I would give myself a back-up plan and go into teaching.

## Primary education

My earliest memory of primary school is that I was an outcast. I did not have very many friends because I was so different to many of the other kids because I had musical interests and I could sing. I did not have the same sort of inhibitions that many kids had like what do my friends think. My parents did not allow me to go out from a young age, which was another reason I was different.

In Year 2, I had a scary teacher. Some of the time I was a real favourite with her and other times you wouldn't want to do anything wrong. She was very inconsistent but I still for some reason had a fondness for her. If she didn't like something in your workbook, she'd take your book and rip it up or throw it across the room and you'd have to go and pick it up all red-faced and have it all done again. She was a tyrant. If you did something really well, she would give you a stamp, or give you a merit certificate. You always knew you had to do the right thing or else you were going to be severely embarrassed in front of the rest of your classmates.

I remember another teacher at primary school she was great, Mrs Barton. She would get us to do little plays and skits and things and that was great. Apart from that, we did not actually do very much drama in primary school. Mrs Barton would help us out making up performances in front of the assembly and we would have little skits. Once I brought in a tape and a book of *Thumbelina* and she decided that we were all going to do it. We had to have these little scripts and we acted out to the music on the tape. I do not think we ever got into costumes or performed *Thumbelina* even though she promised me three times that we would.

We never did much movement at all in early primary school. In later primary school, we had a little bit of that sort of thing, but everybody started to get their little inhibitions by that stage. I do not know if that still happens at school or whether it is always encouraged that kids should be free to express themselves.

In primary school there was a lot of peer pressure going on, I do not think even the teachers realised how heavy it was on some people. That made the second half of my primary school very lonely indeed. I used to sit in the clover patch, pick six and seven leaf clovers all lunchtime, and sing to myself.

## Secondary education

I went through very rough teenage years at high school and had a lot of problems which were probably my fault. I had problems with substance abuse for some time at high school and I found it difficult to relate to other kids. You name it I had it. I think a lot of the problems related to my childhood. When I was a child, I was involved in some serious situations. This was not because of my family, or anything to do with my family but those incidents caused difficulties for me later on.

The experiences that I had then, the heartache, and the torment that I put myself through led me to drama to start with. I came to drama because it helped me to express myself and not be afraid of what others would think. That in itself was a big thing for me, coming across drama and finding it could help me with my own personal issues.

That is why I understand the ratbags, the rogues a lot better than the other students do, and I think a lot better than the other teachers do as well. I do not really want to get close to any of these students or become a counsellor at all, it is not my job, I am not trained in that area. I do have the capacity to sit down and listen if somebody has a problem and refer him or her on. I do understand kids who do the wrong thing and I know what to say to that child to make them start behaving, particularly in my classroom.

My dad was teaching at the high school when I went there from Year 7 to 9 and then my mum came in from Years 9 to 12 so it was like a big family event. I have quite positive memories of high school, even though it was a really rough time for me. I surrounded myself with many friends to begin with and then I culled them massively. I was scary, people were scared of me, and I think that that was one of my own defence mechanisms for the way I treated kids at primary school. Allowing people to be scared of me was the way that I dealt with the social issues there. I had one friend that went with me into Year 11, then she left, and then after that it was, I just started being friends with everybody.

Every year, my major event was the musical and I would work hard to be there. I loved the performance and the process of putting it together too. I did not learn my scripts very well and teachers got on my back about that but apart from the script thing, I just loved being there. I played Nancy in *Oliver* and what I loved about the musical is that I tended to develop

many different friends that I would not normally speak to. I enjoyed singing and I enjoyed performing, it was immense. I loved it, I loved being up there, I loved the vibe of everything.

I had a good science teacher to start with. He let me down later on, which put a bad taste in my mouth. He was good because he was excited about science as opposed to it being just something you write on a blackboard. He thought science was great and he would relate it all back to your individual existence. We would be talking about genetics and he would say, “The reason you have blue eyes is because your parents had this gene”. We did not actually write that many notes with him, which was a good thing too. I had a great English teacher as well. She would sit there and pull apart a poem on the overhead projector and then she would get a pen and write over the top of it. Then she would ask, what do think this really means? What do you think the poet was trying to say? Nothing was exactly wrong as long as you had some evidence to back it up. I used to really enjoy that and it is something I have tried to bring with me to my teaching.

## **Teaching**

I fell into teaching to start with but it was a career I knew I would enjoy. I have always thought, ever since I was a kid that teaching was something that I would like to do. I was always the person who would sit with my friends with a little teaching kit, a little blackboard and chalk. It was only a matter of whether I was thinking about teaching primary school or high school. I decided to teach high school because I could teach drama exclusively and work with the music department to put on musicals. I am an incredibly practical teacher and I know I have learnt from other people. I prefer to be in there and practical. I watch the other teacher who says do this and then show me but I get in there with them. Throughout my schooling, I was most interested in the musical. I had an absolute ball in the musicals at school and I wanted to provide the same opportunities for the kids in this school.

I’m supposed to have 43 50-minute periods every two week cycle but I’ve got 40 with load levellers which means that I am dumped with classes when teachers go away on their excursions or whatever. There are some days like, like week B out of the cycle when I’ve got a 6-period day, and I’ve got lunch time rehearsals for the musical and we’ve got an after school rehearsal for the musical and a meeting in the morning before school. It is very tiring and in those few weeks, I had a few naps in the afternoon after I got home. I was exhausted and I never thought teaching such short hours would wear me out so much.

I think, drama education is a way of, of opening up children, students, opening them up, waking them up, making them aware of, of issues, things that they might think or feel. So that could be personal, that may be related to something that is happening in the media or in their immediate surroundings. Drama education is also a way of exposing kids to something that they have not been exposed to before. Getting students to try something just a little bit new, a little bit different and getting them active with people around them, encouraging their own personal development.

I am still learning, but I just have no time to be involved in any professional productions right now. I think this year will be difficult and maybe I should lay off the singing and get into it after I am a bit more organised with some units of work I can pull out. I have found that, even units of work that I wrote last year I don't want to use because I have got different classes, different atmospheres and different things I want them to learn. It is good though to have units of work there so you can look back and say that did not work with that class but it worked really well with that class and I like to reflect on what worked and what I can change.

I think that that reflection is incredibly important to your development, as a beginning teacher. I might change my view but I doubt it, I will see what happens. If you do not reflect you can never look forward, and I do not think you can ever progress anywhere. If you don't look back and think, that was a really crap lesson and I was really badly prepared and next time I'll do it better or that one didn't work so well, I want to try it with another class and see if it's just the class.

Drama is more rigorous than English in a lot of ways because I am more energetic and more in tune with what's going on in the drama lesson and I focus a lot more on little things because I know my stuff in drama. It is more when you put it in a practical situation I teach the kids to pull things a apart and figure out where they can make their improvements and where they can look at things.

I think the kids have more energy in drama, even those that did not choose it in the beginning. They find at the end of it that it is a very draining and satisfying subject, but at the end they say, "I did it", which is very satisfying for them. I love watching kids develop in drama because it is just so obvious when you see them at the start and they're so embarrassed and

then they are like I can do that miss. The theory is food because they get to put it into practice and the practice is fun.

### **The future**

I do not know if I will be a teacher forever because there are so many options out there, I want to try a bit of everything, and I am a bit ambitious. I am really enjoying teaching now but I have so much more passion for drama and for performing. I wrote that in my book, I love drama and I am getting a little bit tired of teaching English because I don't like the formal "you sit down in your chairs and you open your books, you do some of this."

### **Tom**

Tom had been teaching for around ten years when the study began. He is married with two children. Both children were born during this study. Tom was teaching at a boy's high school in Sydney where he has been for more than five years.

### **Family background**

Most of my childhood was happy. I grew up in a non-English speaking background with Italian parents. Mum still speaks that Australian/Italian English. I had an older brother who was about 8 years older. It was a strong Catholic upbringing without me understanding what was going on around me most of the time. I was just growing up and there was just protestant Aussies everywhere, so that seemed normal and strange at the same time.

We moved from the Italian community in Leichhardt out to Bass Hill where there were no Italians so most of my upbringing has been really an Aussie upbringing more than an Italian upbringing. For most of my life, I have spent most of my time with carers more so than parents because my Mum and Dad were working. Up until high school when I was about old enough to look after myself, I was sort of left to my own devices, which was fine.

I accepted that Mum and Dad had to work and I do not have any problems with that. I don't feel that I've missed out on what other kids had with having two parents because probably in the long run I've probably ended up having four or five mothers and three or four fathers who sort of took me on board and kept me going. There are still strong connections between my "stepmothers" and "stepfathers".

### **Primary education**

I spent three and a half months in Italy and when I returned I could not speak a word of English, so I spent the next 3 months trying to work out what everyone was saying. There was no support then for non-English speakers. I forgot how to spell and I forgot how to write. I did not have anyone to talk with in English even by the time I was talking to Mum on the phone I was talking to her in Italian rather than English because I just did not know anyone who could speak English. I had this Non English Speaking Background (NESB) moment without even meaning to and really paid for it for a long time. My development was really slowed by this time. It probably took me until fifth grade to really get a handle on my English literacy skills.

The other memory is that my name changed which was probably a big thing for me. It went from being Italian as Guissepe to Tom and I picked that up midway through third grade and that stayed with me until today.

### **Secondary education**

It gave me a solid base to move on. I thought by the time I left Year 12 I'd accomplished a lot of things such as leadership roles. I was confident enough to go out in public and I knew I could sell myself at any time to get anything I wanted. I knew that academically I could have been better but that wasn't too much of a problem at first because I thought I would have had the marks to do what I wanted to do. I thought that when I left high school I was taking with me a good foundation to go on and do whatever I wanted to do.

The HSC was a bit of a problem I did not get the marks I really wanted. I missed out on what I wanted to do, physical education teaching by a mark. I was always going to be a teacher, there was no debate about that, and I had already made that decision. I wanted to be a teacher because I thought it was a solid profession and I thought that I would be good at it because of my leadership qualities. I had a passion for history and the skills in PE so I knew I was going to go one way or the other. At that time, you could do PE with another subject so I was going to do either PE/drama or PE/history.

### **Tertiary education**

I started out at all over the place. I started at University of Western Sydney at Bankstown doing an Arts Degree in Theatre, Literature and History. At the same time, I combined an Ancient History minor at Macquarie, which was just like a transfer of credit points. Finished that and went across to Wollongong to do an Honours Degree in History and eventually came up to Sydney to do a Dip. Ed.

At uni, I was single and drunk like everyone else. I was very drunk in the second year and they were my best results. I developed in that time my interest in Australian literature, but developed a further passion in history and theatre. I found the theatre interesting and challenging, there were people there who had been doing drama outside, that was good for me to see. For two and a half years, we were a group that went through electing the same sort of units and doing the same things and there was a community spirit between us all and a support network that worked really well.

We put on performances. I can remember *Trumpets and Raspberries* and the amazing thing was the script actually was not difficult to put on because of the way we interpreted it. I became the window, someone else became a bit of a flowerpot man and all the different roles of the washing machine all came to life. They were abstract and I enjoyed that. I was also in Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*. I played an inspector in one of them. In another one, I was doing the lighting and I was an Assistant Director.

I enjoyed the idea of working behind the scenes and actually seeing the creative process happening right throughout. For instance using a prop book and just developing your skills in how to manage people and how to direct people. That stayed with me for a long time.

My big disadvantage in teaching drama is that I did not get much of a theoretical base. Most of my fear was practical. There were movement classes, voice classes there were short plays, community theatre, and there were major plays. A lot of the learning had a practical base. I liked that but I was interested in the context of the drama and sitting back and working out what the history of theatre was all about.

## **Teaching**

I struggled, when I went first taught Year 11 and 12 because even though I was reading the theory it was difficult to put it into practice. It is hard to experiment when you do not have

faith in the class you are working with. I would like to go back, do some more, get more involved in the theory, and observe the process. I have started to become a person who would like to watch the process and that is where I get my ideas.

After my difficult first years of teaching I moved to a boys' high school in suburban Sydney and I teach drama and history mostly. The other drama teacher, Reba has been here for three years. We share the senior load. Reba has a Masters in Creative Arts and she has a lot of theory background in areas such as puppetry and Australian women's theatre and the like. She went to the University of New South Wales so she has a lot of theory behind her. She does things differently to me perhaps because of that background.

My teaching style varies from subject to subject. In geography, I'm chalk and talk for the simple reason that I hate it, I can't stand it, so I have to chalk and talk because it's the only way that I remember what I'm doing. Teaching history and drama tends to be different – I go from chalk and talk and introduce a variety of teaching strategies. Drama is usually sustained group work.

The way I develop is by watching others and making discoveries from there. Many people think it is strange but that is how I learn. I suppose people think it is strange because they think drama is about doing rather than watching, and that is what I say in class and it is true.

As a teacher and someone who has to identify some of the things that you need to teach, I'd prefer to watch because at the same time while I'm watching I can see how I can adapt the teaching strategy to work with boys. I find I learn a lot more watching people do things rather than becoming a participant. I have stepped back a lot since I have started teaching and become like a director rather than being totally committed and involved in the acting process. I like to sit back and control and feel like a puppeteer. I prefer to sit back and say "move there, move there, do it this way, that way, try it this way, do it that way". So I suppose I am an experimental director, I like to experiment with different things until I have seen that it works well.

The level of control I need is different from class to class but I do work hard to maintain control and I can usually do that. It works because it's not passion coming out of my mouth, it's just anger, sheer, sheer anger and frustration and sometimes it can be hatred because I just

think that it's not fair that I'm here, it shouldn't be me with them, it should be someone else, or they should be somewhere else. I feel this mainly in drama.

I accept that kids have to be in history and English and geography and that I have to teach them and I can accept that. When it comes to drama, it is a privilege to be there and if you do not want to be there get out. As a student, you do not have to do it and I think you go to the subject with something to achieve, with a goal. Whereas many kids come to it because they think, it is a bludge. I have spent the first five weeks this year just drilling a drama class. I have never taught that way before, it is frustrating, and it is frightening because I am just thinking I hope it does not become a pattern. It is a real battle between me, it is us versus them, me versus them really and that is how I have set it up in the classroom. I say to them "you listen to me and nobody else". I tried all the fun things like trust exercises and all that but that did not work so I thought well if they cannot trust each other I am in trouble here.

I have about half a load of drama and I take a Year 8 ensemble that would be a delight to have as a real class because they are brilliant. It is one of those classes where you walk in clap your hands and say, "do this, do that, stand on your head, spin around, jump up and down", and they do it.

My major challenge this year is to conquer Year 9 and to get my little Year 8 group to the Drama Festival. We are doing something that could be a bit heavy for them but if I simplify it with just rituals, movements, symbols, and things like that, I think they can pull it off.

I think I keep teaching drama because I am OK at it. For instance, I put a piece in State Festival a few years ago called SPOTS and it was a big hit. After I had seen it on stage I realised I have got it, I have the skill to actually produce something like that, or assist in producing it. That gave me more confidence and then last year when I put a full length play on I thought even though I often feel like I am struggling I've still got it when I really need it, it comes back to me.

It's the vision to create, create something which you know deep down yourself is good and then when you actually see it on stage you can say, it was that vision that I wanted, it was the vision that you originally thought was the good vision and that gets me going. I have that same feeling about this Year 8 group this year, because they are young and I expect them to

do quite well. If these guys can sustain their skills and motivation, it is going to give me that satisfaction, again.

## **Emma**

Emma is a primary school teacher. She has taught mostly junior primary and recently she was teaching drama and music throughout the school. During this study she left the school she had been teaching at for more than six years and taught drama at two primary schools part-time. She was expecting her first child toward the end of this study.

### **Family background**

I come from a very long line of teachers. Mum is now a consultant in multicultural education, and has always been a teacher. She has taught all over the world. My father is a lecturer, my brother is a primary teacher. All of my mother's sisters are teachers or lecturers, my grandparents were teachers, it is sort of in the family, so I did not break the mould.

I have always had an interest in English and drama. My father would walk around reciting Dickens and read books to us, we never had a TV we had to read books from my early childhood, sitting around the piano. I guess it was there in the family but once I got to school I was just inspired because the stuff we were doing was so much fun.

### **Primary education**

I had positive experiences at school and it has shaped the way I am. I mean ever since I was a little girl I have always wanted to be a teacher. I still remember being five and asking for a chalkboard and a bell for Christmas. I spent hours and hours saying, "Craig Hamilton you sit over there and don't be a naughty boy".

I can remember a lot about my primary schooling but I have no recollection of any sort of process drama at all. I remember Kindergarten because I was very young and I had absolutely no idea what was going on and I still remember feeling completely lost and not understanding what it was about at all. Then my family went overseas and we travelled in England. I did second class in Cambridge, I had lots of reading problems, and I went into a remedial reading program. The remedial program used the Letterland program that taught things like sound combinations through a series of dramatic characters.

All of a sudden, it opened a completely new world to me and I learnt to read and became an incredibly avid reader. I am left-handed and at that time, I had reversal problems as well as memory difficulties, and suddenly when it was dramatised it made sense.

Years later I did a course with these Letterland characters, which had become very unfashionable in the 70s when creative writing was in and phonics was out, they were suddenly reintroduced. I now use it in dramatic form with the classes I teach now.

We moved from Sydney's south to Sydney's north and I had a terrible time after we moved. I was an incredibly shy and quiet child and I found it hard to make friends. After we moved I really didn't have a very good time I felt left out, I felt I wasn't on top of things and all I thought I could do well was sing so I joined the choir.

I still remember Mr Whitcombe who used to use that power of positive touch and smiled all the time. He was very relaxed in his teaching but very structured in his approach and always very fair. He did not play favourites and I still remember the day he said to me "you're a really good singer", and I remember thinking that is something I can do and do well. I also liked Mrs Wiltshire because she smiled a lot and I always thought she was nice and I always smile a lot now because I remember how important it is to smile with children.

She was also quite a physical teacher, she would give you a tap on the back or a touch on the arm. I use this with students and despite all the child protection policies for me that is a very important positive reinforcement in the classroom. It is one of the most powerful teaching strategies and I still have sensory memories of that from my childhood and the value of that and so that's my recollection of why I liked her. I think quite often with a child that is why they like teachers because they feel the teacher likes them.

I think those skills are incredibly important particularly with children that have low self esteem which I had at that time, when children can't read they develop lots of defence mechanisms for coping in the classroom and I think one very powerful way of breaking through to them is using touch. These memories have absolutely shaped the way I teach.

I learnt from my childhood recognising individual children's merits and being empathetic. I learnt to recognise the experience children are going through and to discuss things that have gone on in the playground and understand it from a child's perspective.

### **Secondary education**

I went to high school at a girl's high school in Sydney's north. There was an emphasis on drama and music so I was able to be involved in those areas. In drama we did not do a great deal of improvisation or mask or mime, it was often scripted stuff and it was quite prescriptive. That is something that shaped my approach too, to allow children the space to play, imagine, and ensure that their creativity is not completely stifled.

Most of my drama learning in high school took place at a theatre I was attending. I was sent along because my mother sensed I had a low self-esteem and she thought drama would help with that. I still work there now and at that time I was doing shows as a student, so I was spending the holidays performing which was great fun but exhausting. Drama was and is such an escape from yourself. Especially when you are a 13-year-old awkward funny little creature. Going to drama I could escape my changing body and I could escape my horrible feelings about others and myself.

### **Tertiary education**

I felt that education at Uni prepared me for very little. I do not think the practicums we had for teaching were long enough. When I came to this school I was given a Kindergarten class and I had one year experience or less. I had never done a prac on Kindergarten and I had only my memories of my own Kindergarten years to help me. As this school is not structured to help, I had no mentoring or assistance. I had not one single idea and the only thing I had to fall back on was that I was good with children and that I understood children. I could use my guitar and piano playing and singing and all those skills. That is what got me through and a couple of courses on reading and lots of work on my part. That is how I survived that first year. I blame that on my uni preparation but mostly on the poor approach of my school to beginning teachers.

I relied on friends and I did not have a proper supervisor and my programs were not done properly, they are still not done "properly" even though they are set out meticulously and

follow the syllabus rigorously. I now do my own thing, I am very organised, and I have learned a lot.

### **Theory of education**

Educators are responsible for the “whole child’ and need to consider their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development equally. To facilitate learning and to instil a love for learning are central, as is assisting students in developing self-discipline, self-esteem and the capacity to take responsibility for their actions. Drama is integral to this philosophy, as I believe it covers all these aspects and allows students to express themselves freely and creatively in an environment of co-operation.

The school has to meet the needs of the community so my training and everything revolves around that in certain ways. So for example, the school has wanted performing arts so I have been able to develop that. Now had I been in a school where that was not a priority I would not have had the same opportunities as I have had here.

I have always loved performance but now I sing a lot and do lots of gigs and I thought I would be a performer but I’m not cut out to be a performer, I’m cut out to be a teacher because I am not good enough as a performer, I am naturally a singer but not an actor. I like structuring my life and I like balance. I like to feel good about myself and I do not think in theatre that would happen for me. I cannot take rejection very well. I prefer to work with children and teach the skills for other people to use.

I do believe in work that is civic minded I would hate to be doing work for McDonalds for instance. I want to do work like education where I am directly affecting the lives of other people. Any work I chose to do would be that kind of work.

I believe in a very structured education, not rigid but children need structure within their learning environment. At the same time, you must cater for different learning styles within the classroom so I believe in things like group work. I am a people person and I like working in teams. I think you need to actively teach the skills of working together and I believe in sharing ideas, working with others, recognising the skills of the staff, and utilising those skills.

There is so much to get through in a primary class. You are so responsible for that bunch of kids and initiatives are coming into schools all the time. I think it is incredibly important to find time for drama for all kids. I do feel with the limitations and constraints placed on teachers I can understand why they are not prepared to teach drama. It's not always time related though, teachers avoid drama for fear of being exposed and losing control in the class. They also fear themselves having to step into a role for example. They fear that by teaching drama, the class is going to get too noisy and everyone is going to say, "that's a noisy class". They also fear the class actually getting out of control and not being able to manage.

My theory of education is that you absolutely have to integrate and relate your drama to what you are doing. I am doing a unit on *Possum Magic* so I am doing lots of drama. Today for instance, we did a day in the life of a possum in the bush. We turned out the lights, we made a soundscape of all the possums and the kookaburras, we were rustling leaves, and we used percussion. We did a story of getting up at night and I used that to go into a writing activity. I think if you can use that and integrate that anything is possible, even in your maths you can do map related skills. If you try to teach every individual subject, you cannot do it. If you see it as a separate thing, which you should you will run into trouble because people think I have to do drama as well.

Drama is important because it is a way to explore other worlds. Drama helps kids to develop imagination, visual skills, writing skills, and it is a great way of getting them to work together in terms of cooperation skills. I think all children should be exposed to improvisation, mime, and movement and unscripted work, puppetry is fantastic and I think that's a great way of ordinary teachers getting into drama.

### **The future**

We will be having a family soon so that is influencing my feelings and my plans. I am feeling creative because of motherhood, it is a very creative time of life and I am tailoring everything that I am doing towards going there. I am also thinking I can look after my kids and do other things.

Having introduced the teachers in this chapter, Chapter 6 explores their views of knowledge and skill development in the professional development journey.

## Chapter 6

### Knowledge and skill development

Most discussions of teacher professional development focus almost exclusively knowledge and skill development. As Hargreaves and Fullan suggests (1992, p. 2) it is only one third of a teacher's professional development journey. Schooling systems focus, however, on teacher development mostly through the knowledge and skill development prism. Gregor Ramsey writing in a review of New South Wales teacher education in November 2000, said this of professional development that focussed on knowledge and skill development:

The focus in most professional development is on the priorities of the employers, not the individual teachers. Teachers accept that they have to participate in employer-determined professional development. They believe that the employers' priorities need to be addressed. They also believe however, that too much of what they undertake does not meet their own professional needs (2000, p. 13).

Ramsey's view is echoed by the teachers in this study who through preservice, induction and inservice training have felt disengaged from their own knowledge and skill development.

This chapter will focus on the effectiveness of knowledge and skill development seen through the reflections of the teachers in this study. The themes explored here emerged as major issues during the interviews. As mentioned previously the teacher reflections are arranged as narrative vignettes reflecting each teacher's experience of the themes. The narratives have been arranged this way for ease of comparison. Each teacher's narrative is identified through a different coloured font. After each of the sections I will make some reflections based on the teachers' narratives and the literature reviewed.

This chapter uses the following themes that emerged from the interviews to explore knowledge and skill development:

- Preservice
- Ongoing professional development: inservice courses
- Leading professional development as knowledge and skill development
- Teaching strategies
- Team teaching
- Boys' education
- Syllabus and syllabus support

- Drama festivals
- Drama marking and OnStage

## **Preservice**

### **Ingrid (beginning primary teacher)**

The Arts education at Sydney was not really the best except for drama. Music was not good. I come from a musical background and I still do not know how to teach music well. The drama interested me because of its potential as a tool for learning especially using drama for teaching literacy and that turned out to be my main interest. I am interested in the ways it can be used to teach critical literacy. I initially went in to teaching for social justice and equity and using drama as a tool for learning in those areas as well.

I chose the optional fourth year special course majoring in drama and literacy because I was interested in those areas and the other options were not the best. I was particularly impressed with Rose who is an outstanding educator because she knows her stuff and she is still studying and developing. She was doing a doctorate while she was still at Uni. She was very committed and very devoted to education in general.

I think in the final year course at Uni I had, we were teaching drama one hour a week for the whole year so operating a drama class hasn't been too scary. A lot of teachers think, "drama, oh the kids are too out of control, they're too hard to teach", but I think a year of teaching drama every week to very difficult groups of children has helped me to organise things with my own class.

A friend of mine was saying a common thing was that they do all theory and nothing in practice. At Sydney, we did not start the practicums until third year mostly. I think that the theory provides a very solid grounding. Without philosophy, you cannot achieve your goals or goals for the students.

### **Mel (beginning secondary teacher)**

My preparation at Uni in the Diploma of Education was a bit patchy. I had some good training in English but the drama part was not very practical and I do not think we learned as much as we could have. I really learnt the most from English and from the pracs.

I think at Uni, we needed more pracs. They try to make you afraid, instead of giving you confidence, they said, “don’t do this”, instead of saying “this is the way to handle this situation”. There is a lot within the job that you do have to be careful of particularly relating to child protection and I think they wanted to make me afraid of things like that. I know they were trying to make me aware but at the same time, they were making me afraid.

I think I would have learnt a lot more if I had a lot more time in prac and a lot less time sitting there and studying the syllabus. I mean the syllabus was something that I had only just done, at high school.

Week after week after week of just sitting there and reading the same syllabus over again and the drama education lecturer telling us “you need to teach this”. It would be better to see it all in action and do some more teaching, do some more practical work on it. Even if it was just in the uni, teaching our class a little more often. We did that once we had to teach our class for an assessment. That taught me more than I had learned that whole semester by just teaching the class. Even then, you are dealing with a bunch of uni students that want to be there and that are more serious and more mature than your average kid.

You do not know what has hit you until you are out there on prac, going shit, I have to do something here and I have to learn to cope with this and that and not be embarrassed. When I first came into schools, I found that I was almost afraid of the children. I was withdrawn because I was so used to being in that comfort zone at uni. I think you need to be taken out of your comfort zone enough times, so you have the authority to tell these kids to sit down and do the right thing so that you are in a position to teach these kids something.

I could not understand what my drama education lecturer was trying to say. She would bring in a book, as if she had done no preparation at all. She would sit it down in front of you and say, “OK, now today we’re going to have a look at HSC drama.” I thought, well, what do we need to know? There were ten people in the class. Some of them had never done drama before, ever, this was their first experience of drama. And they are saying, “we don’t know what to do, we’re going into a prac and we don’t know what to do. What do we teach? How do we teach it?” They were teaming it up with dance. They are teaming it up with music. They were saying, “what do you mean you just get the kids to warm up? What’s a warm-up?” None of this was explained to them.

I felt worse for them than I did for myself because I could wing it. If I had a problem there I could quite easily change my tune and go with something else. Even if I had written out a full lesson plan, it was easy for me because I knew my drama and because I had done the last three years in theatre. It was easy for me just to change my tune and take a different approach. These guys came straight out of three years of dance are sitting there wondering what do you mean get up and do a warm-up? What do you mean improvisation? They did not understand.

Even if we liked the drama lecturer, her teaching was very poor. We did not get enough backing or support from her at all, even when we told her straight to her face. There were a lot of us that just said to her, “why can’t we do something that is active? Why can’t we actively learn? Why can’t we do this practically?” She would just put on an overhead, or sit there with a book and point to it. So it became very dry, very bland and we did not learn very much at all. Nobody reacted to that teaching style very well at all and when we had to write out the feedback forms at the end of the semester everybody was very dissatisfied, very dissatisfied.

She would tell us in the first lesson and we’d spend three hours on that, come back next day, next week, whenever, another three hours on the same topic, it was the same topic over and over. In the Dip Ed. in Drama, we did maybe three warm-ups in the whole year and the only way that we ever actually did any projects to do with drama was our own research, and our own units. We were not taught very much at all. Our drama lessons were a big waste of time.

What we needed was what our English lecturer did for us. She put us through the lessons ourselves. She would get up in front of everybody and say, “this is what I want you guys to do today”, and we had heaps of fun with it. Then she would say you can use this technique in your classroom and she would tell us how to organise it and it would make sense to us. Sometimes she would teach the lesson that she was trying to talk about, or would talk about lessons that you could do. The English lecturer would give you specific examples of how you could go about things. It was very active and interesting.

The university provided no preparation for me. The Diploma of Education was OK because we had the practicums, and the prac teachers that I had for drama were fantastic. I suppose it

was the way that they ran the practicums. They said watch a few of these lessons, have a look at how the lessons are going and observe, and then do it yourself. Also being at two completely different schools, that was great too. The prac saved me, big time, big time.

When I was out in Western Sydney with Yvonne, she would write a report, one of those reports that they give you at the end. She would write a report for every lesson, give it to you, and talk to you about it at the end of every lesson. She would sit there, watch it and then you would talk about it. She would say things like, “well you spent too long getting people organised, you did this round the wrong way and you should have done this instead”.

I learnt a lot from this because she’s sitting there and talking to you about it. It was not like other supervising teachers who said things like, “I’m going to watch you and at the end of the next two weeks, I’m going to write a report on you.” She was very actively involved with your development.

I was left to do whatever I had to do in English. It was a good experience, just being up there and out there. I didn’t have people saying to me, you’re doing this wrong and that wrong, and I didn’t like the way you did that, they just said, “oh, we think you’re great”. They watched just a few lessons. But I thought I was doing OK and I was comfortable with it.

The drama and English teaching environments are completely different. Sitting down in a classroom, as opposed to being up and active. I think I desperately needed the practice in the drama but the English was good because of the preparation we had at university.

So from all that pre-teaching experience I think I have the ability to work from reflexes and be flexible. When I sense in a classroom and I’m sure everybody, no matter how experienced, or inexperienced they are, can feel when something’s not quite working and the kids go, “what?” I feel I am able to notice that and say, OK, we will put it away, let’s do something else.

When the kids get bored, I mean you cannot control the whole class if they are all bored. The old system of writing on the blackboard and getting the kids to copy it down or putting up an overhead and sitting down and doing your marking hasn’t worked for me, so I couldn’t do it anyway.

It does not feel right. It does not sit on my shoulders well and I like to be active and up and about. I see many teachers around in different schools who are able to stand at the door and have the class working quietly. I don't feel that I can work like that because I enjoy being up and I like being able to say to the class this is what I want you to do, and this is why, and now give me feedback, and then actively interact with everybody in the group.

**Tom (experienced secondary teacher)**

The areas that I feared the most were the practical areas where I had to be involved as an actor. We did so much in that Bachelor of Arts course. There were movement classes, voice classes, short plays, community theatre and major plays. A lot of the course had a practical base, which is what interested me. I struggled, when I first taught Year 11 and 12 because even though I am reading the theory and I would like to put a lot of it into practice, it is hard to do that when you do not have a class that you can try things out with to see if they work. I would like to go back and do some more theory.

My Diploma of Education was a waste of time and I did not learn anything. The only drama part I had to do was an elective that was part of the English curriculum. I enjoyed it and, I thought it was easy. We did things like developing sculptures and photographs and making photographs move from one frame to another and I thought I've done this before and I really enjoyed that, but apart from that it was only really English and history that I was doing. Apart from that, the Dip Ed. was a waste of time.

The lack of theory in the Dip Ed. we did was probably the big disadvantage of the course and it still affects my teaching. We did bits and pieces, probably at Year 11 level, we got bits and pieces that we put it in our folder and forgot about.

The practicums were good. I ended up at the high school I went to as a student so I already knew what I was in for. It was a good experience and I think probably that prac gave me the foundation to cope with some of the difficult schools I eventually taught at. I think I could have been more prepared for teaching if I had more time for reflection based on my observations and keeping them in a log. It also would have helped if I had not been thrown straight in at the deep end. The practicum was very sudden and intense to begin with. There was very little chance to reflect on what we were involved in or what we were about to do. I

was on a five-week block, I had two days of observation and the third day I was expected to teach and that to me was not enough time to prepare for effective teaching. My Dip Ed did not prepare me for anything. You had to work hard to prepare yourself for the practicums. I was not prepared enough to cope with classroom strategies. Often you do not know what will work until you are in the classroom.

My main supervisor at on my first prac was brilliant. She was what I imagined teachers were like. She taught effectively and intelligently and provided good feedback for me. She was dedicated and spent a lot of time at school, making sure she was well prepared.

I did my drama method by correspondence after I had begun teaching and that was great because at that stage I was working a regional drama ensemble after school so I took the stuff I was doing through the drama method course and used it with the kids. It was useful because it introduced me to the idea of preparing a lesson properly for drama itself, and being able to use drama topics and history topics as well. I planned my first community theatre unit based in this course and I have kept that with me and rehashed that occasionally when I am doing Year 11. I think doing it all by correspondence was effective because I had the entire practical in the classroom as I was learning the theory by distance.

### **Emma (experienced primary teacher)**

My BA in ancient history equipped me with many skills; in particular to argue issues effectively, to write well and to think flexibly, creatively and intelligently. I developed through this a passion for learning, and went on to do an Honours year, achieving first class honours.

By contrast, the Dip. Ed part of my tertiary studies stifled higher order thinking. In my opinion education courses were generally fairly prescriptive and required no engagement in argument or debate. In fact, to propose alternate views was often regarded as “time wasting” and “incorrect”. The teacher education sessions were often long and repetitive, and I sometimes felt as if we were treated like five-year-olds. The most valuable learning was gained in the classroom, but the pracs were not long enough to really get a “feel” for an age group, for the learning content appropriate for the grade and for methods of managing whole classes and groups within a class.

Theory meant so little to me before I was in the classroom. I could hardly remember any of it. It does not mean anything to you until you enter the classroom and you work with a supervising teacher. Beginning teachers should spend a period of time everyday, it has to be everyday in the classroom with their supervising teacher to get into a rhythm and routine. Eventually, the master teacher withdraws little by little and gives the student teacher more responsibility.

## **Reflections**

While the teachers in this study had very different experiences they all had preservice training/preparation in common. I was amazed that there was such a uniformly unenthusiastic memory of teacher education. Significantly Emma, Tom and Mel who took the one year Diploma of Education courses spoke more highly of their other Bachelor of Arts subjects' ability to engage them and remembered the Education subjects as less useful. Evidently Tom and Emma, who also both completed honours degrees, were not challenged or engaged by their preservice education training.

Their memory of this area become even more startling as these teachers' experience spans eight years between the time when Tom and Emma were in their preservice training to the time Ingrid and Mel were in their preservice phase. Clearly little had changed in preservice teacher education in almost a decade. Ingrid's memory is perhaps the most positive, commenting that her drama course prepared her adequately for the teaching that lay ahead and that there was enough theory to lay a solid foundation for her teaching.

Ingrid's experience also highlights potential differences between the one year diploma of education courses undertaken by Mel, Tom and Emma and the integrated Bachelor of Education course undertaken by Ingrid. Her higher satisfaction level mirrors the research that suggests the more expansive courses can be more effective in terms of teacher preparation (Ewing, 2002). Certainly this was one factor instrumental in the development of longer post graduate degrees to replace diplomas in Australia. The Master of Teaching at the University of Sydney provides one example.

The theory versus practice balance provided some interesting contrasts in this study. Ingrid applauds her university's focus on theory and seems satisfied with the length and content of her practicum. Tom also calls for content that is more theoretical in preservice education. While Ingrid seems satisfied and understands the balance of practice and theory, Mel, Tom and Emma call for a more wide ranging practicum program that builds on a more effective theoretical basis.

Ramsey (2000, p. 10) agrees with these sentiments

The present practicum model in teacher education courses is failing to prepare effectively future teachers for the challenges they will face. Individual classroom experiences, divorced from the larger context of the school and sometimes with only limited supervision, cannot be considered as offering high quality workplace learning.

The lack of effective practicum placement and practicum experience is furthermore identified by Gold (1996, pp. 554-558) as one of the important factors in the "loss of the dream" where the beginning teacher's fantasy turns into reality and leads to many teachers leaving the profession. A successful practicum is a vital part of effective teacher preservice education. Tom, Mel and Emma remember their practicums as highly effective and for Tom and Emma their practicum proved more effective than their teacher induction experiences.

All the teachers in this study identified teacher preservice education as problematic. This reflects the reality that Ramsey (2000) identifies with practicums being badly structured, too short and poorly organised. If the teaching profession is to ensure that teachers survive the loss of the dream in the sometimes harsh realities of classrooms and schools, preservice education will have to be improved. It must provide a solid theoretical basis and be underpinned by substantial professional practice placements in varied schools. If we fail to engage with this problem as we have in the past, teacher preparation will continue to suffer the irrelevance and ineffectiveness that pervaded the preservice experiences of these teachers.

It must be said also that teacher preparation is working in some respects. Ingrid and Tom mention positive drama education preparation and Tom and Mel reflect on other non-education tertiary courses that provided good preparation for teaching. There are causes for optimism, however there is much work to do to make teacher preservice education more

effective and relevant to the needs of beginning teachers and the schools they will eventually teach in.

## **Ongoing professional development: inservice courses**

### **Tom**

I see any training and development as providing ideas, which I may already be using. Often they show the same ideas in a different light that I can actually take back and use in the classroom be they related to practical or theoretical work. They provide scaffolding for me that I can use and adapt for my own classroom.

Some of the conferences that are coming out are looking to the needs of everybody rather than just those who enjoy the heavily practical approach. There has been a style in drama inservices where everyone works in small groups to devise a short performance and then presents it to the rest of the group. That style of workshop does not work very well for me and there seems to be different styles of workshops becoming available. I feel a bit better going to drama inservices knowing that I will not be stuck in a group that will end up with an impromptu performance. So there is a little bit of confidence in getting more involved in drama workshops again.

I have never been to training and development where I have actually been allowed to observe. I have always had to actually be a part of the process. I can find solutions for problems while I am outside the process rather than if I am part of the process. I am too involved in the process to even contemplate how we are going to resolve this. It is too hard for me. I find training and development difficult. I can see the value in others who get involved. I have seen teachers work really well with that. In drama, especially, people assume that you learn by being in the middle of it and I just shy away from them. Rolling around on the ground or being part of practical activities is not that useful for me as a teaching strategy. I am sure others find those sorts of workshops useful. Some people love it and would take the ideas and use them. I tend to pick up things from when I am on panels, or auditions and think, that was interesting, how they have used that concept, or interpreted that text and use that for my own development.

The problem is that these workshops are usually on the weekend. I do not see my family as it is and they are only tiny now so there are sacrifices that I will not make. The youngest is nine months old. If they were five or six I would not mind going to weekend workshops, but they are so small, there are two of them, and I think people understand. The state conference is something I would like to try to get to. It looks and sounds good but finding the time to spend a whole weekend will be difficult.

I think professional development should happen in school time because even in public enterprise and private enterprise you are not sent away for the weekend you are actually in-serviced on the job. I can see why people think we should train in our own time. Apparently, we work from nine to three and go home with twelve weeks holiday a year. I do not think drama teachers are nine to three people. It is really frustrating and irritating that I have to give up all weekend and then I have to go back on Monday and start teaching when people in other positions do training as part of their normal job.

In 1999 the only inservice I did was a Federation inservice. There were plenty of inservice courses but my boss would not allow me to go to them. Also there was another issue. You cannot afford 250 dollars a week to go off to inservices all the time.

My dream inservice would be to sit through sessions run by experts in drama in the fields of video, scriptwriting where I actually see, physically, the process evolve from beginning to end. It would be with a talented group of kids from a performing arts high school or even a talented group of teachers who, who are quite good at performing, so I could actually observe it and take out what I need for the boys I teach. One thing I haven't got and I find it difficult to teach "how to write a drama essay" which to me is something I flirt around the edge and hopefully someone will get the right kind of style and method and I will be able to teach it effectively.

I thought the HSC training was useful because it often confirms the ideas you already have. When I attend inservices, I think about how I would adapt the strategies for my own situation. Sometimes I realise that I am already using the strategies with my own classes and that is reassuring. You think, good, I am on track. I am not off with the fairies and floating around the edges of the syllabus. I thought about ways to use that strategy and apply it to texts that my kids could use. For instance, in that inservice we did an exercise reading script scenes

with and without the stage directions. I had never thought of it that way. That you read scripts differently depending on the stage directions. You do modify scripts when you are actually working with them in class but not to the extent that I saw that day. I mean it might not work as well with David Williamson or Alex Buzo's plays because there are so few stage directions but I think the method is quite useful for the classroom.

It is good to network with other teachers as well. Even though there was a lot of primary drama content, I will be able to adapt a lot of it. A few strategies other people mentioned will work well with Year 7-12 boys. I have picked up some teaching ideas that I will use with my kids.

Professional development does not happen in the workshops it happens when you come back and experiment with the kids. It is a case of trial and error and especially with boys. I sometimes see an idea that I think I can adapt, but you never know until you try it with them. I use the same process in other subjects. I use a lot of experimental approaches for instance, I will often go into history and set up an oral task that falls on its face but if you do not try, you will never know.

We had our staff development day at school recently. All state schools take the same day off and kids extend their holiday while teachers are meant to take part in training. I think they are a waste of time because they are designed to satisfy the Department of Education's needs and not the school's needs. They never ask us what we want, they tell you what you want. If they are addressing the school needs, they're not really, they're just skimming the surface. Every school has got something on the same day so you're not getting the experts because the demand is too high from other places. For instance, we started looking at boys' education and boys' management. We had problems with the Koreans and the Armenian boys so we got a Korean expert to talk to us. He told us a lot about Korean culture but he did not actually tell us how to deal with the problem at school, and the same with the Armenian father. He gave us the history of why the Armenians are so rebellious and we knew all that but we could have been sitting down writing a drama program not being told what we already knew.

You have to fight hard for any subject-based time for example in history we have a history computer room that was set up. Part of the professional development program was to go in there and try to start working on the CD-ROMs and develop teaching programs. That never

got going because the computer room has not started running. At the last staff development day, we only had one and a half hours for our faculty, which was a real waste. You cannot do anything in an hour and a half.

There is a training and development committee that organises training and development but mostly it is literacy and everyone has been literacied to death. It is getting to a stage where most people are expecting a big focus and then for it to die down. Like the profile reporting came to us all at one hit and then was forgotten about and disappeared and now they are bringing it back in different ways. The cycle keeps repeating itself and there is still no time for the important stuff.

It is better if professional development is owned by the people who it is being run for so we can get some control over what we are doing. We can make choices based on where we are at and where the teachers we are working with are at. So for instance, I have no marking experience so I team up with a local teacher and we mark together. The only person who is going to know I need that sort of development is me. It seems crazy to me that often someone who has never met me and knows nothing about my needs is in control of my development. Surely, I would have a better idea than they would.

### **Emma**

Good professional development is talking with other teachers and sharing anecdotal information. Professional development includes learning from other teachers, being in team teaching situations, Friday night at the pub, it is very broad.

We need really good inservicing with quality teachers. People do not get to go on courses they just do not and there is less and less opportunity. That would be the most useful thing. You learn the process skills by going to workshops and watching other people work and through experience. You learn by watching how they develop a piece, how they shape and block a piece, even using the words. You just need to do the courses and I want to do a lot more.

Talking to people, you pick up things. I think you learn to teach drama in different ways than you learn to teach other things. You learn it through the people, you learn it through inservicing and people around you. It is just with drama I have learnt a bit from the

profession. I have done quite a lot of good professional development and it was far better than the uni stuff I did because it was in a context. I remember a fantastic network workshop we did. It was very practical, it gave me many good ideas, and was able to network, meet people and share ideas. I think one of the hardest things is if they are after school when people are tired, summoning the energy to learn after teaching all day is hard.

I think you need support documents but the schooling systems must support their implementation through practical workshops. Teachers learn by doing practical work with good people and they can be very defensive if you do not have people running inservices with current classroom experience. If you have current people in the classroom saying, “I do this and it works”, people warm to the presenter and they respond. A good leader does not talk down to teachers and you need to be very careful what you do because in any room, you will always have some defensive people. I find the best way to do inservices is to simply show what you do in your classroom and share ideas.

If I were planning what I need for professional development, I would do a behaviour management course. I have been to a few courses but you do not always take everything in. After I became more experienced in the classroom the training in behaviour management takes on different meanings. You can acknowledge those ideas and take them on board because you understand how a classroom works. I have not had that training for ages but I would love to see someone come into a classroom and work with particularly difficult children and learn from their strategies.

I would like more training in identifying students with learning difficulties. I think further knowledge would make me a better teacher. I have done a few courses on this already but you can always learn more about reading because it is a huge subject.

Also conflict management with parents, I managed a situation I faced recently quite well but I would like to know how to debrief and what the procedures and the legal ramifications are. I do not know that there is anything like that around.

Teachers are cynical about people who are out of the classroom a long time or people who are not actively teaching giving professional development courses. It is all talk and I wonder how they would really react in a classroom situation. Good professional development involves support and follows up where the presenters are prepared to come into the classroom

and help you with your specific problems. I have done this sort of development and it is great.

Recently I did a course that was supposed to help teachers understand technology. It was my idea of hell. The course was after school so the poor teachers were so tired and they all want to go home to bed. I used to fall asleep it was so boring. The presenters were all inspired with all this knowledge to impart and everyone there could barely focus. The presenter at the course was boring, did not know what was happening and did not have control over the knowledge she was supposed to be imparting. It was poorly and hastily organised. I did try hard but I did not get anything from it. I think a good presenter who speaks well and empathises with teachers can lead to an effective course. The technology training was poor because it ignored teachers' situations and needs.

I think that good inservices will bridge the gap between the syllabus and the teachers practice. It must be simple and practical and not talk down to teachers. A good presenter needs to be aware and recognise the constraints that teachers have in the classroom and have that sense of sympathy for people. Teachers often feel resentful when they are bombarded with a whole load of stuff. I think how can I do this in the classroom? Good presenters really make a difference by showing the practical application.

In the last inservice I led I went through a whole lot of things and I chose learning activities that can be adapted for any of the grades. I absolutely loved leading the course because I was able to talk about the syllabus, its philosophical approach and how teachers can use it in the classroom. The language of the syllabus becomes more meaningful in that context. I was working on two aspects, the overview of the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* and how it fits and integrates with other areas and how to use it on a daily basis in the classroom. Most generalist teachers still do not know much about drama and this was a great opportunity to show them the philosophy of it and its practical application.

Another way I am developing my skills is in my current teaching role. As Creative Arts release from face to face (rff) teacher I am getting experience with the whole K-6 range and the great thing is you can see the development of children and how they progress as they go up a grade. I liaise with teachers and make sure they are aware of my program and I try to fit in with things they are doing in the classroom. I make them aware that what I am doing in

drama is important and I try to make it clear that what I am doing in drama links with what they are doing. The challenge is that some teachers are not that interested in what you are doing. They do not see it as an integral part of the curriculum. Some teachers do drama and there is a lot of cooperative learning and it makes a difference because the classes are used to working together and having that group feel. Because I have done performances teachers can see what you can get out of kids.

People have different areas of expertise and in any school it's not right to think every teacher should be able to do everything really successfully. Schools should be looking at the balance of the people they have so there is someone good at drama and computers and then that person becomes a leader in that area. Otherwise, there is so much pressure on key people.

When I am inservicing another staff my main aim is to show them how much fun drama can be and how, in a busy classroom, you can use drama. I show them how to use role-play and how to use teacher-in-role without losing focus and how a drama room does not have to be a very noisy room. A whole unit on mime is fantastic if you have a difficult class. I also showed them how you can really structure your drama well so you are always in control and that feeling of being out of control is not true at all if you have structured your drama properly.

## **Reflections**

Emma and Tom, who have both been involved in professional development throughout their careers provide a picture of inservice professional development that is often top down and irrelevant to their needs. Their experience of professional development agrees with the views of Hargreaves and Fullan, (1992, p. 4) and Ramsey (2000, p. 13) that professional development does not take sufficient account of the individual needs of teachers. To that end, Emma is forced to sit through a use of technology course that is irrelevant and Tom is made to attend staff development days that are a "waste of time". Added to the lack of relevance is the issue of time and money. Most inservice courses in NSW remove teachers from their classrooms and now cost the schools dearly. The financial impost of the average inservice on a school is significant. This means that Principals are often unenthusiastic about professional development and prevent teachers such as Tom from being involved.

A more concerning issue is the concern that Tom raises about inservice teacher development in drama that is narrowly focussed around the same teacher learning style. In my experience, it has been the view of many in the drama education community that the only type of drama inservice is an active inservice and to allow observation is likely to lead to ineffective inservice training. Tom's preferred learning style seems to rely more on observation and analysis rather than the usual fare of drama education inservices. While there is widespread recognition of preferred learning styles when teaching students it seems that it has not permeated the types of inservices Tom attends, perhaps due to the tradition of active involvement that has been the norm in drama inservices over the last few decades in NSW.

These teachers did identify important benefits of inservice training in terms of its confirmation of practice and its ability to instil confidence. Tom mentions an inservice where he picked up new approaches and felt reassured about his own practice. Emma identified good professional development as talking with other teachers and sharing ideas.

As with preservice education there are still difficulties with the models employed for teacher inservicing. The "top down" model that is expensive for schools and often useless to teachers needs serious reassessment. This reassessment is foreshadowed by Ramsey (2000, p. 13) but will take commitment from teachers, systems and governments to deliver. To reach a more relevant form of inservicing, the system must move from this imposed system to a model of inservicing that recognises the individual as well as the system needs.

The model of professional development that Tom and Emma favour acknowledges the skills and understanding of the teacher. During the course of this study both of these teachers created their own professional development opportunities by leading in order to extend themselves. One wonders how others with less initiative or opportunity are able to access effective inservice professional development. The fear is that they do not.

Perhaps the most striking observation comes from Tom's experience of professional development. He says, "Professional development does not happen in the workshops it happens when you come back and experiment with the kids." While this may seem obvious to some it escapes the notice of many inservice trainers. An example is the technology courses that Emma attended. Professional development actually occurs when the learning is applied. Those developing teacher inservices may do well to design their courses with that

realisation. If the learning cannot be applied, or is not applied, the inservice training is futile. That should make those designing and organising inservices even more focussed on the individual contexts of teachers.

## **Leading professional development as knowledge and skill development**

### **Tom**

Delivering professional development can be useful for your own development. Recently I went to another school to help them with their programs. While I was going through the programs, I began revising mentally my own programs. I was thinking as I was discussing their programs, I would not do that there now, or I would change that, or I have noticed a problem that we have at our school.

One of the major things that came out of it for me was that I noticed that we get our kids to do all this theory but in the end we expect them to write a script, or develop scripts for group presentations. The problem is in the whole process from Year 9, 10 and then in 11, they have never actually read a play. They have never worked on the idea of how the play developed and worked at understanding how the dialogue is formed and how the stage directions are used. I have decided to change our programs so the boys read an Australian play a term. I think that will give them a better understanding of the skills involved and by the time they get to Year 11, they will have the skills to develop a script. That was a major thing for me and I was pleased to get something out of the process of inservicing others.

Later that year...

I did a presentation of study skills for the staff and that went quite well. It was interesting because I was told the day before and the boss told me what to do and I said I am not doing anything you say because if they had any inkling that you had a hand in it they will ignore it. The staff were good, usually you see them talking or dropping down in their seats but I picked the eyes out of it and I threw them the things they would disagree with to gain their attention.

The study skills inservice got me some great recognition. Strangely enough the boss got an idea that I needed some encouragement and rather than call me down and give me a cuddle

which infuriates me he sent me this letter saying we appreciate your wonderful work it is never unnoticed down here. It is good, that, to be noticed.

### **Emma**

Leading inservices are important because they make you reflect on your own teaching practices. You then have to select things and put them into easily understandable form. It is a good way of making sense of what you do. It also forces you to articulate things well and that is a form of learning in itself. I really love running inservices because they are good fun for me and I am happy to do them.

I learn from leading the courses. It is a great opportunity to try out your teaching skills on adults and extend your knowledge. They say that tutoring your peers is the best kind of learning. That is what I am doing and at the same time, consolidating my own knowledge and the process makes me look a bit closer at resources. It also makes me generate more knowledge and interesting information. It is always a positive experience but if people do not get a lot out of it, I feel a bit down. For me it is generally a very positive experience.

Here I inservice people by saying how much I would love to do an inservice and then I work it into a staff meeting. The other teachers have learnt a lot by seeing what I produce with playbuilding and so on, people are using some of my teaching techniques with their own classes and that is very gratifying.

I ran a staff development day here and it was for three or four hours and it was fantastic. I was introducing the Department's syllabus support document, *Ancient Anna*. I had all my overheads and then I did a whole lot of improvisation and showed them ways into drama. We had a wonderful second session that was practical where they had a good task. I made sure it was completely non-threatening and they did not feel that they were performing outside their limits. They had to create a presentation and create some interesting work with fairytales. I said, "do what you like with it. You can use the video and the digital camera and be as creative as you like."

They went away and came up with the most fantastic things and they really felt like they got something out of it. They are not performers, some got at it through using technology and you can do that with kids too. They did all this in 20 minutes. They learnt something from that and they said, “yeah we can go into our classrooms and do some of this”, and I said “you can do some of this as quick games and activities, but you are doing drama as you go”. They got the idea and that is the sort of thing that people need.

## **Reflection**

Tom and Mel’s stated ideal inservice courses involve teachers who are in the classroom providing relevant information for other teachers to apply in their own situations. For them this is not only an ideal, it is a professional development approach that they actuate within their own school settings and with other schools as required. For Tom leading professional development provided confidence and recognition. Emma saw the satisfaction of fostering renewed energy and creativity in her colleagues as well as herself. The impressive feature of this model is that as teachers build their own skills and pass them to others. In other words they are involved in other virtuous cycles as they discuss their practice with others and gain feedback from that. This model provides very attractive benefits for all concerned. Those who lead the inservice learn from their experience and deliver classroom relevant training that is not removed from the realities of school life.

## **Teaching strategies**

### **Mel**

Classroom management is a big issue for me. It has become pretty much the basis for day-to-day existence. I am sleeping and I am dreaming it in my head. My approach is working a majority of the time. I have to try different tactics because, even though I did not believe teachers who told me before I started teaching, every child is different and every class is different. I didn’t realise how vastly different things could be and I thought when I go into the game one discipline approach is going to work for everybody, and it doesn’t. If you do not manage to get in and find the way to deal with them like some students, you have to get in there and reason with them. Some students you have to come down hard on them and some students you have to give them a gentle nudge. There is no foolproof method, you have try to figure out how they are thinking and what they are thinking and work out how to deal with it.

Classroom management and discipline in particular are big issues for me.

There needs to be a wall there to separate students and teachers. I have a lot in common with the people I am teaching next year at the senior high as I am not much older than them. I am going to have to build more of a wall and a shell, which is a shame because I think I could get a lot more across to students if I opened up a bit of myself.

It took me a week to understand I had to be incredibly organised and it took me a month and a half to be organised. I have been trying to keep kids active and I have been working on the kids' motivation. I have learnt a lot about motivation and a lot about management within a classroom. Particularly in Year 11 and 12, it is good to give the kids responsibility and encourage critical thinking.

I have learnt about the psychology of the students, I did not realise that you had to judge the kids and the way that they think very quickly and if you do not they will eat you alive. I first noticed it in the first six or seven weeks. I had been having a lot of trouble in the first few weeks with Tony. He and I had been constantly at blows with each other and then I figured out he wants to do some work but he does not want to do the work the rest of the class is doing. I built a good rapport but I still did not get the message across that I needed him to help settle the other people in the class because other people were reacting off him and his behaviour. He used to get up, wander around, and do whatever he wanted. It didn't matter he could look out the window, walk outside and talk to somebody and no amount of me saying "get in, sit down, shut up", was working for him. I did not know any other way to deal with it until in the end I just thought well I am going to have to try something else.

I thought is it more productive for me to sit there and argue with him about it or is it more productive for me to say OK, you can do something different as long as it is English related. So, if the kids are reading he wants to write, OK write, fine get something done. Then he kept misbehaving for a while after that initial "I've got my own way" wore off and I thought instead of him just yelling and constantly getting angry I pulled him aside and said, "I realise you have a lot of influence over a lot of people in this class. I need you to help me". I put it back on him as opposed to saying "you are doing the wrong thing". Saying "I need you" helped him understand if she needs me, then I will be happy to help. He always did the right

thing after that. He was transferred out of my class soon after that anyway so it was a waste of time.

I have learnt about problem solving in terms of negotiation with students and problem solving in terms of preparation for classes. When I am put in the situation of being in a classroom, I need little backup plans for everything. You need this because things can fall through. For instance when you are standing in front of a class and a student asks you a question and they say “I don’t want to do this, this isn’t working”, you need to come up with something to do quickly. You need to be flexible, particularly in drama. In drama it is easy because I know my drama so well, I know it inside out so I can say this isn’t working, you guys aren’t learning anything from this. I am not able to teach you effectively with this exercise or let us do this instead. It is a lot more difficult work this way in English.

I learnt I could do that on prac but it had developed from the start of the year, when I was on prac I just had to wing it because kids were not doing the right thing and sometimes it really works with a group and sometimes it does not. Different exercises work with different people and different students do things in different ways. It is easier in drama because my interest is a lot higher. I did not ever think I would be teaching English because I had always gone into uni with the intention of doing my drama degree, so I have not been as prepared for this area.

When I started, I was always yelling. I have watched the other staff and I have learnt not to yell. I learnt by just watching the staff, seeing how effective the yelling was or was not, and who ended up in the worst situation in the end. The teacher is tearing her hair out and completely stressed and the kid walks away saying “that teacher is a bitch”. A little more silence and a little more influence I guess over the kids as opposed to spending time screaming my head off because in the end you are the only one who is worked up. The kids just get frightened and still walk out and say “what a bitch”.

I think the kids learn a lot more from practical experience although I give a large component of theory classes but I find the practical classes work better. When you can stand up and demonstrate instead of just giving them theory it seems to get through to them better.

The things dragging me down are the discipline issues. There’s a lot of kids in this school that think, “my dad knocks me about a little bit at home, and I do whatever I want at school

because you can't touch me, you can't do anything". That can be quite painful and disruptive. There are many students with identified behavioural problems or disorders and there are many kids with learning problems as well. There are kids in my classes that have dyslexia. There are kids in my classes that need help and assistance constantly. There are kids in my classes that need somebody to say to them, "get your book out, get your pen out, open your book, write down this title, now write this, now write that, now write this". Some of those kids are not getting as much assistance as they need and that is not any fault of the support unit that we have here. There is simply not enough funding, so, in other words, funding is dragging the school and me down.

The next year...

At the senior high, we had an excursion to the Pan Pacific games at the olympic site and I was constantly disciplining them like kids. I realised they are adults and they should be able to cope. After I left them alone it was just so much easier and I realised I was creating work for myself. I had to get myself out of junior high school and into senior high school mode, which was a good experience for me because I realised that these guys were more responsible, and I should give them credit where credit is due. I am guiding them through rather than disciplining them. Ultimately it is up to them to do their HSC and I am helping them.

### **Tom**

SPOTS was a really successful piece that I put on for the State Festival. Everyone raved about it and it gave me the sense that I could direct and produce really high quality work. The kids focus was the best you could ever have. The experience gave me the feeling that I could achieve something once again. Not since SPOTS have I felt like I could really direct kids successfully.

The piece I am doing now will not be like SPOTS because they were Year 11 students that you could go beyond and extend. To some extent the skills were beyond the what you could expect of a Year 8 group.

I have an idea about a piece I will do in the future. I have always liked the idea of using a choir on stage to use their voices and their bodies as a massed human sculpture. I got the idea just sitting at home doing some marking and I will probably hold onto the idea until I have

the right mix of people. My wife was watching Princess Di's funeral. I was struck by the eerie sound of the choir and I thought I could do that really well one-day. I will keep this in the back of my head and when the time and the kids are right I will try using the idea.

Through the experiences with Year 9 and 11, I think I have learnt a lot about patience and trial and error, I think the idea of continually reassessing what you are doing is really useful. I don't do that enough. It's reflection but it's more basic than that. You start off with the unit of work and when you are two or three lessons into it you come back and say OK I need to take it that direction and go that way. I make changes based on the mood of the class, the tension, the mood, the atmosphere from week to week.

### **Emma**

It is your job to intervene and give feedback. It is like a maths test, you do the test and they get it all wrong, what do you do? It is your job to deal with the problem. There is a feeling in drama that you just let it all happen and it is OK if it's all crap. That is not right. You must strive for those kids to improve and encourage them all the time. You have to be critical and remind kids what they can do better. We talk about what worked with the kids all the time. Naturally I do not talk in those terms with Kindergarten, but I do still get them to appreciate drama in other ways. The criticism must be age appropriate. You scale up the discipline and the rigour depending on the kids' ages and abilities.

I have changed to suit my kids and that has happened because I am working concurrently in two different schools. The schools are different in terms of parental expectations, in terms of the amount of structure children need, how independent the children are, how much prior knowledge they have of drama. I have to design activities that are appropriate for those differences. For instance in an area like this I would not be choosing to do something on witches because it is a bible belt area and there are people that might not like that. At my other school, they loved anything fantasy-based. So you are selecting stuff that is appropriate for your group and tailoring it for the needs of the community in some ways as well.

I think children connect with games and so drama can be taught that way. It is not that you are making it into a game or you are saying it is a game, you're still framing it in drama-specific ways. There are interactions of a certain sort that are similar, there's a lot of verbal stuff in a game, there is group work obviously, so in some ways drama is a lot like a game.

Theatresports is a game, it has rules, it is specific and it is structured. However, I do not want children thinking drama is a game because it is not. You have to make sure they understand the difference. I call it an exercise. I make it clear why we are doing it and then you build on that. By the time, they are in Year 6, I would never call it a game.

## **Reflection**

Classroom management is identified by many theorists (see Chapter 1) as an important aspect of survival in the first stages of teaching. Bullough's (1997, p. 88) analysis of the beginner struggling with discipline and management issues reflects Mel's experience. In Mel's words "...a little more silence and a little more influence..." helps her to develop a workable teacher student relationship in a difficult school with some very difficult students. Her experience of developing "a wall" around her to create a distance between her and the students resonates with many teachers. Ryan (1986, p. 16) calls this realisation "the shock of the familiar". Mel knew what a school looked like from the other side of the desk but the realisation she would be teaching students only slightly younger than herself provided several significant challenges for her. Another interesting part of developing classroom management skills is Mel's realisation that students need to be approached in different ways.

Even though classroom management is still important to Emma and Tom the focus has changed to improving student outcomes through more effective teaching strategies. According to Bullough (1997, p. 88) "...improved student learning replaces achieving good student behaviour as the dominating focus." The development here is from the struggle of classroom control to the objective of improving student learning. For both of these teachers the way to achieve this is to change their approach to meet the prevailing needs of the students they teach. Flexibility is an important skill in the journey to maturation of these teachers.

For Tom, teaching strategies developed as he watched the world around him. This is very consistent with Tom's assertion that he learns through observation rather than participation and is also an indication of the kind of creativity required to continue providing challenging learning experiences for students in drama.

Emma's reflections are instructive as well. She recognises the importance of intervention in the drama teaching process and refutes the laissez faire approach to drama education where

students are left to create on their own (Slade, 1954). Her readiness to critically analyse student work is consistent with other subject areas where to “leave well alone” is to invite disaster. She sees no reason why drama is any different to any subject in this regard and her argument is persuasive.

Her discussion of the use of the “game metaphor” also suggests that there has been progress since the game-based exercises of Way were present in the classroom (Bolton, 1998, p. 151). She also highlights the importance of sequential learning programs for drama. Her insistence that “drama is not a game” and her idea of drama being about sequential development, “...you build on that” highlights the concerns that many have about primary drama education being little more than a series of unrelated exercises. Emma’s intent here is to differentiate the game and the process of drama which she sees as coordinated, sequential and deliberate unlike the implication of randomness that the term “game” suggests.

## **Team teaching**

### **Emma**

Team teaching is sometimes hard because you have to meet all the time and decide and agree upon things and if you do not share the same philosophies, you have to work that out. Fortunately, Erin and I work well together and I believe you have to choose the right person. I believe we complement each other. You have to be good at team teaching, you have to be good at compromising. It can be difficult, Erin will get worked up and I will be cool and I tend to feed off the way she is feeling and am sucked into the energy, but you have to expect that. We have to learn to work in a team structure and share information and develop a style that suits both of us and learn to compromise.

The team teaching has been good, although my teaching partner has been off the air this term. It has been hard because her father has just died and she has been away for the last two weeks. The actual team teaching has worked well, we have worked extremely well together, given we are very different personalities. At the beginning of the year, the kids were at a shocking level and just in the last two weeks all that stuff we have been hammering into them is working. They have got it and it is really exciting and their reading, all their reading has improved and we have been working really closely with our learning difficulties teacher, so

the three of us have been working very hard to improve their reading and even the student I was having the most difficulty with has really improved.

The split role has been great. Being at a small school, you only have one class per grade, but you do not have that sharing of resources. In a larger school there is not much sharing of skills and resources by other teachers. I have never had that sharing and I have always felt a little bit alone. In the team teaching situation it is two adults putting their brains together and coming up with something for kids. What I love about what I am doing now is I am working with another adult. There are two brains working together with the same class. You can boost one another and give each other ideas and suggestions. The difficulty is that you have two sometimes conflicting teaching styles.

My style is very different from Erin's. She is straight down the line, more inflexible. You might say I am a "mother earth" type teacher if you had to characterise me. I recognise that students respond to different styles in different ways and some kids respond to Erin better than they respond to me at times and vice versa. So from the kids perspective and the parents agree, this approach provides different skills and strengths. All the feedback from the Principal and the parents has been positive.

## **Reflections**

Emma says "...Professional development includes learning from other teachers, being in team teaching situations...". Her situation in the year of the study provided her with the opportunity to assess this form of professional development. In some ways team teaching in the primary school can create a two-way mentoring process that provides different skills to the teachers involved if the participants are matched well. The difficulty is, as Emma puts it, conflicting teaching styles and personalities that can create tensions.

This team teaching arrangement seemed to deliver a positive professional development outcome even though there were understandable tensions. This approach should be encouraged and applied to other areas as a viable way to improve knowledge and skill development, providing care is taken in the choice of teachers to participate in team teaching.

## Boys' education

### Tom

Boys' education is a constant and ongoing issue for me. I am always looking for strategies to deal with boys and drama, to motivate and engage them. Boys run away from drama and resent the introduction of rigour. It takes a lot of time for them to understand that drama is more than just putting on a play or pantomimes and that is what they think drama is initially.

In Years 11 and 12, the kids throw tantrums and display a lot of self-indulgent behaviour. If you have the same lot of kids from Year 9 and you move it through that might be easier. We're picking up a lot of our Year 11's who haven't taken drama so they're still very self-conscious about who they are, their position, their form, their personal make up and that macho stuff that seems to be important for boys. As boys get older, they are more aware of what others think about them. Boys are also very self-conscious about touch. My Year 11 class spent most of the time creating scenes that related to sex or bending anything that I do with them into sexual content of some sort. They do it for a laugh, I think. They laugh at each other and that is good. I do not mind them doing that, at least they are doing something rather than sitting around and saying, "I don't want to do any of this".

I'm almost teaching the same thing when I'm teaching Year 9, with Year 11, because that's where they're at and even though the Year 11 course demands more, I physically can't do the course with these boys. You probably could do it with a co-ed school and I sometimes wish I was at a co-ed school, I think you need to be less intense. Boys need to know that you are honest and trustworthy. The hardest thing for a male drama teacher is female teachers can be quite emotional in class as teachers and therefore the boys are attracted to that because they respond to the maternal approach. It is harder for male teachers because we cannot go that far in becoming paternal. We cannot give them a cuddle and say to them, "what's wrong with you today? Talk to me about your problems". It is a lot harder to break that barrier down when you are a bloke.

Recently I did some work with another boys' high school. Working with the other boys' school's Year 7 I found it tough because I did not know their names and I realised that the Year 9s are as bad as I thought they were. Also working with a group of Year 7's who

thought they were going to watch a drama performance and then unfortunately became involved in one, so they had no intention of taking it seriously. I could see it on their faces. It was like there is no way I am doing this and then looking at me, and I thought we will just try it. Probably about 25 out of the 30 who were good kids, they took it all on board and went with it. There were about five of them who were just standing there as if to say, “there’s no way you’re going to get me to do any of this”. Eventually they did it because the rest of them did it and I set up strict controls. I went away and reflected on where I could have done better in that lesson and what the problems with that lesson were. It was rushed but that was the idea. I was trying to show them little exercises and show them the potential for building up a piece very quickly.

The two staff members actually got a lot out of it because I kept saying to the kids “we are working with space and focus and concentration. Usually this takes two years but we’re doing it here in 10 minutes and you’re doing really well”. That positive reinforcement really worked. The teachers were really impressed but I said “well that’s part of drama and we don’t tend to have that problem of saying no we are more likely to say, “oh, you’re doing well or that looks good”. I found from a teaching and classroom management perspective in relation to directing boys I walked away from that Year 7 class thinking I have things to work on, and other things that I can go back and use.

## **Reflections**

Given Tom’s teaching context, it is logical that he would be seeking to improve his knowledge and skills in boys’ drama education. His attempt to improve his knowledge and skills is heightened by his own readiness to initiate professional development in this area. This highlights the importance of professional development being tailored to the needs of the individual teacher. His experience of working with other schools in the same area highlights the positive effects for others that can grow from this sort of personalised teacher development.

## **Syllabus and syllabus support documents**

### **Ingrid**

It is good to see something in terms of the syllabus. For me as a teacher the outcomes, objectives and stages are good in the syllabus documents.

We had a short inservice from the local consultant. She gave us an inservice in all the music and all the art and then said drama is not compulsory so we will not worry about that section of the syllabus. That was all she said about drama and that was all she told the staff. They put the video developed to support the syllabus into the resource room and it was never seen again. It was shocking to me that the District Creative Arts Consultant could say “do not worry about drama it is not compulsory”. It will not help the push for drama in schools. Dance and drama are grouped together, another teacher was put in charge, and she is in charge of drama too. She would not have done anything so I do not think anyone’s looked at it.

Recently we took some kids to *The Hobbit* and I opened up the syllabus support document developed by the Department for drama teachers, *Ancient Anna*. I said to the teachers who were with me, “there is a whole unit on using *the Hobbit*”, and they said “oh, where did you get that from?” We’ve never seen that before and I thought, oh well, it was in the book that we were all given a couple of months ago. It was funny because they asked for copies of it and they did not know where to go about finding it but they probably still didn’t do it.

*Ancient Anna* was very useful in terms of drama programming and what steps to go from here to there and how to construct a drama session.

### **Emma**

Teachers will use the support document if they can and if they cannot they will try to get specialists to do it. It has always been that way, you get your specialist teacher to do your music for example. The same thing may happen to drama, I would hate it to, but I think it will.

It was the year before last that I was involved in the syllabus writing. The Board of Studies asked me to work on the syllabus support document. We did a few planning days but I did not really agree with everything that was happening at that time. So, I did my own little thing. I think everything at that time in the syllabus was going to be pure skills. Even though I thought I could do that, I did not feel the average classroom teacher would want to do that. I wanted my unit to be integrated but in the end, I had to write a skills-based mime unit. I did

all of this work for the syllabus and no one thanked me. No one got back to me when my unit went in and I had done so much work on it. I felt unhappy even though it was a good learning experience. I just wanted an acknowledgement.

The draft syllabus is complex, too wordy and there is too much jargon. I think if someone less experienced in drama is trying to use it, they will find it a bit tricky. On the other hand, it is certainly a useful document and I like working with the jargon. I have been trying to use the organisers for the syllabus: making, performing and appreciating in my lessons, but I have not found it exciting or useful. Maybe it is because I am doing something I already know.

The syllabus support documents are good and I think it is a good document to have in schools. I still think *Ancient Anna* is better. I have just done some work with another school with *Anna* using the structures of the syllabus and it was great, they loved it.

People here really value drama and so the syllabus will be supported. Other schools will not support it as strongly as here if they support it at all. If the boss and the senior executive value the syllabus, it will be implemented in the school. Of course, for teachers, it is just another thing for them that will take up their time.

I think the support documents like *Anna* are more useful because they relate to something specific and tangible that they already know. If they just look at the syllabus, the terminology, it might turn them off a bit.

## **Reflections**

The difficulty of the syllabus “no mans land” that NSW has faced is exemplified in the training and development experienced by Ingrid and Emma. In Ingrid’s case Departmental officers with responsibilities in the creative arts advised her not to “worry about drama”. At a school level the syllabus and the support documents are either shelved or used sparingly. Even before the worth of the syllabus can be assessed drama education must overcome systemic resistance. As Emma comments, it is often the will of the executive that controls the implementation of the syllabus.

Both Ingrid and Emma comment on the usefulness of the syllabus support documents. Emma claims that the support documents are more important than the syllabus, as teachers will avoid the syllabus and go straight for the application. Ingrid and Emma's reflections highlight the importance of syllabus support documents. Given their influence, their ongoing development should receive the same effort and support that is accorded to syllabus documents in recognition of their influence on classroom practice.

## **Drama festivals**

Drama festivals provide an opportunity for teachers and students to perform work generated in their drama classes. This performance opportunity happens in most regions of New South Wales where festivals are seen as a performance showcase for students. Regional festivals are used as one of the methods of selection for the State Festival. Panels visit schools to see the performances and these panels make recommendations for the State Festival.

### **Tom**

I have had great access to opportunities like being on selection panels and working on the festival because I have always been involved with regional and state festivals. I have been able to jump in and out and do all those sorts of things. For an ordinary teacher I think it might be more difficult. I have learnt a lot from having to control the kids in that process and what to expect of them when they are on stage. I have learnt a lot by watching teachers' handling of their performances and their kids.

With the selection panels, you get to see the kids from year to year, I mean you get to see them in Year 9 and then if you are back on the panel again you get to see them in Year 10. One school that impresses me all the time is near Orange. I have been there twice for the State Festival and each time it is the same class, and each time I have seen them progress. I said to them last time, two years ago "you're pretty average", but last time they had developed. It is things like that, that make me think, if they can do it, I can do it and I can try some of the ideas they are trying. I would like to see their process in action because you can see just from the product that there have been some major developments and transformations. It would be good to observe or document what they are doing there.

I think the country schools get a better understanding of what's going on than in the city schools from the audition panels. For instance, when I am at country schools I am talking to the teachers and I have nothing to hide. I show them the adjudication sheets so they have a guide to what the State Festival is looking for. At the same time, you might say to them, "you could possibly have tried that", or "that worked really well" or "they're doing really well". The positive reinforcement provides support for the country schools in the process. In the city, the process seems faster and there is less time or interest in your opinion.

I think you've got to be backstage and watch at the same time, because you get that opportunity to see how different teachers actually control their kids backstage. You see the process of going from a dressing room, to a green room or holding room, to back stage, to on stage. I think that process is important. I think students need to learn those skills, and if you begin that teaching discipline early, drama students will learn those skills. I think that from there you develop respect and understanding. From there, you can do a lot more things with them. I mean that idea of before they go on they talk through the whole performance. It is about discipline, personal discipline.

I am a believer in strict discipline, you go to perform, you get on stage, you walk off stage, you change and off you go. The same with the audience, students are seeing different patterns, different forms, and different ideas even if it is teacher developed or group devised. Some that work and some that do not, but you can still take the idea away from it. I am lucky here because we have a strong regional festival that gives us something to work towards, whereas I think other regions probably do not have that strength.

The next year...

The State Festival panel this year was probably the worst experience I have had. The performances were poor across the board. Teachers were not experimenting and staying with the same sorts of habits and themes. I expected something different. Time constraints and programming may be impinging on what they can do.

The exceptions were the primary performances. I was impressed with the concept of devising performance based on what you are doing in the classroom. They were class pieces. The class pieces were obviously classroom driven and the kids seemed to enjoy it more because they owned it. In contrast the school lunchtime pieces did not have a structure. They were more

teacher directed and the kids did not have control of the process. One thing I took away is that I need to take more risks myself with certain things and it is hard to imagine without being inspired but I feel as a region we need to be encouraged to take risks rather than just trot out the same old approaches.

I do not desperately want to get into the State Festival but the other drama teacher here does. The only way I can mollify her is to create three or four pieces for the festival. We have brought one piece together and we are actually going to skim off the best of our Years 9, 10 and 11 classes, combine them and adapt a classic text and put it into a circus situation and see how it works. Using a script and adapting that script would be far better from a teaching perspective for our kids than to see seven or eight playbuilt pieces which have almost the same techniques, methods and content.

I put a piece in the festival about the war. At first, I thought it was a bit dodgy but I made it a big production. I threw that out and went back to the basic production. The concept was a little difficult to comprehend but I worked on that as I was going through the rehearsal period, going through the basic skills of ensemble work, chorus work, focus and movement, timing and it came out really well.

### **Emma**

Festivals are an important part of my teaching and the kids love them. They really help me fine-tune my teaching skills. I can fine-tune my ideas and practices in my drama teaching so they are incredibly important and they are a wonderful opportunity to get up there and perform and feel good about my teaching and to have a bit of a voice.

Festivals are great because it gives me something to work towards and it gives kids a wonderful performance opportunity. It is a great professional experience. This year was great because I had the opportunity to see other performances. It is essential for my own development that I am able to share and have a look at other people's work, and see how they do things. You see how your kids are reacting in that structured environment and you see at a festival how everything works together. It is great for the kids because it motivates and inspires them to work and the parents all love it. It is useful because you see other performances and get ideas.

It gave me a general sense of how I would approach things and also going to the evening performances, I saw many good things. I am taking the kids to State Festival because the process is good for the whole school community especially the parents who love the fact that kids are going to a festival. They love the performance and the fact that the kids get a certificate so it becomes part of the whole idea of achievement.

Festivals are not about being the winner. So many kids say, “did we win?” when you have told them all year that is not about winning. For the same reason, to perform in something and get a certificate is great. Even for me, you feel like you have done something important for the school and you feel the achievement as well. I do not see festival in a competitive way because I think that is a waste of energy. It is more a reflection of the kids and the community rather than on me so much. Professionally it is great fun but that is all there is.

The kids loved the State Drama Festival and they said they all wanted to be in it next year. They loved all the plays and what was interesting was seeing what they liked. They thought for instance that *The Park* was good but they really liked things that were not as good in my professional opinion like the one about bushrangers. *The Park* contained all this lovely movement and it was beautifully directed. The Bushranger piece was just a real cops and robbers affair, but kids see things differently I suppose. We were all laughing because they were saying such peculiar things. They liked the pieces with big props and colourful costumes, the quality of the drama did not come into it. Children’s appreciation of drama is very different to adults and it is important to remember that when you are teaching them.

This year I was on the selection panel for the State Drama Festival, so I met a few other people and I like the connection with secondary teachers. It was good to talk to other people about what we were doing. Local networks are good but I just do not have time to go. The courses are good, but I am not on the committee because I do not have time.

## **Reflections**

Traditionally drama festivals have been seen as an opportunity for students to perform. Both Tom and Emma value that purpose but they also recognise an implication of drama festivals for teacher knowledge and skill development. In the same way that Tom draws inspiration for his work from the world around him, he and Emma also use festivals as an opportunity to

develop their own ideas and become aware of the standard of work throughout the state. They also provide an opportunity for teachers to present and then develop their pieces to performance level.

A more concentrated form of this development has been experienced by Emma and Tom through the State Festival audition panel. As Emma suggests these panels provide opportunities for professional development by allowing teachers on the panel to network, share ideas and critique the work of others. State Festivals are obviously an important performance opportunity for the students of NSW. Festivals also have an important role to play in these teachers' professional development journey. They establish a standard for teachers to measure their students' work against, provide inspiration for ongoing class work and allow teachers to discuss ideas.

### **Drama marking**

In NSW Drama is examined by itinerant markers who move from school to school assessing individual and group performances. The examination also includes a written paper and submitted projects that are marked externally. Teachers have the opportunity to apply and mark these areas and are inserviced in the process over a three day training period.

Exemplary performances and projects become part of a public performance and exhibition called OnStage.

### **Tom**

Essentially, I mark for the money. I was actually telling someone the other day who did not want to mark, I said, "what you do is draw dollar signs on the desk, so you see dollar signs and say I want to keep going. That is one method that gets me through it". It is to some extent a good professional development exercise because you get to see different styles of how to write a drama essay and you clarify in your mind what is a good drama essay.

This time I went into marking with the specific task of examining how to write an essay. I took some notes, looked at some good scripts and I walked away thinking about it. This process was confusing as well as instructive for me.

Itinerant marking is important for the experience. Even though I have not been through the process, I do not think there is the same tendency to bump kids up. If a kid is 30 out of 30, they stay there. You are seeing the same thing at the same time. I would like to spend the time absorbing what groups actually do and what individual kids can do. I feel cynical about that process in terms of OnStage. In terms of the process, because the good kids stand out and the average kids are average and the bad kids will not turn up or last for 30 seconds and then walk out it is reasonably easy to tell the excellent from the not so excellent.

The hardest thing for me is when others give an essay 20 and I think I cannot see it really. Next year I will have Year 9 and it will give me a chance to actually sit down and think about things properly and do something constructive. I think it is important to take time off senior classes. I impression mark but I also impression mark by criteria and they do not have a criteria as such in drama. I find that really frustrating because sometimes I say something and I think its good and you give it 12 or 13 but does it do this or does it do that I feel more confident giving it a 15 or 16.

The fear I have is that I am marking across seven or eight different areas and I am not an expert in all of them, not an expert in the majority of them because I only teach two or three. I wondered through the whole process last year how many markers who were doing the section actually were qualified enough to be an expert in marking each of the sections. It has some benefits but it still has not given me the answer of how to write a proper drama essay. The examination booklet this year is a lot better and it has given me more ammunition. After this session of marking, I will be able to say I finally have what I am looking for.

## **Reflections**

The marking process is not seen by Tom as particularly useful for professional development. Apart from raising questions here, he seems unimpressed with the approach and processes of marking and has difficulty identifying the professional development benefits of this process. In my experience, most teachers do not share his view. Most teachers find the experience of marking useful to internalise a standard and hone their own assessment skills.

## **Concluding reflections**

The teachers in this study see knowledge and skill development as broad and inclusive of processes not ordinarily identified in this category. They variously identify team-teaching, drama festivals, discussions with colleagues, leading professional development courses along with the more traditional inservice and preservice training as important parts of knowledge and skill development. There is also a clear message from these teacher narratives and the literature that the traditional “top down” method of teacher professional development has become antiquated and irrelevant, motivated by the needs of the system rather than the needs of individual teachers.

In any organisation, there must be a balance between the needs of the system and the needs of the individual if knowledge and skill development is to be successful and accepted by teachers. Changes in preservice education to provide increased and more effective practicums, reinforce theoretical learning and make courses more relevant will begin the process of improvement. Once in schools, teachers should be provided with knowledge and skill development that recognises the worth of a variety of experiences and seeks to balance the needs of the teacher and the system, ensuring that teachers don't become disenfranchised by the very professional development programs that are designed to “improve” them. There is however more to the professional development journey than knowledge and skills development. The next chapter focuses on the complex area of self understanding and its influence on these teachers' professional development journeys.

## Chapter 7

### Self understanding

This group of teachers chosen at random each had experiences that caused them stress and anxiety. The year of the study included experiences that dramatically influenced their view of themselves and their own development. The following chapter presents narrative vignettes that explore the relationships between the personal and the professional.

As described in Chapter 1 self understanding is the reflection on the teachers' "...personal and practical knowledge" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 7). The experiences of these teachers have shown that practical and personal knowledge are inextricably intertwined. The change in Tom's family brings a change in his priorities that have an influence on his professional life. Mel's situation demonstrates the impact on her personal life with her relationships with her partner becoming strained because of the pressures associated with being a beginning teacher. These factors, though unique to each teacher make the general and strong point that the personal and the professional overlap and interact significantly. The professional cannot be separated from the personal and to do so will lead to ineffective teacher professional development (Goodson, 1992, pp. 111-114).

This complements the suggestion arising from Chapter 5, Knowledge and Skill Development, that professional development needs to be tailored to the unique needs of the individual. Often as Raymond et al. point out those unique needs will be a product of teacher's personal lives and teachers' histories (1992, p. 159). For instance, in Mel's case, in her beginning teaching phase she lacked confidence and skills in classroom management. An ideal knowledge and skills development program for her would have developed her skills in that particular area. For teachers to develop, issues of self understanding must be acknowledged in the design and delivery of professional development.

As Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 7) argue, "...teacher development is also a case of personal development". The phases of this development are typically seen through their growing professional and personal maturity. The perception of this growth and the reflection on these stages of growth have been an important part of understanding these teachers'

professional journeys. This chapter uses the following themes that emerged from the interviews to explore self understanding:

- Self understanding: the professional and the personal
- Beginning and self understanding
- Developing as a teacher
- Crisis
- Teaching futures.

## **Self understanding: the professional and the personal**

### **Ingrid (beginning primary teacher)**

I make an effort not to feel exhausted at the end of each day. I just drop things or change things to make sure I am not too tired. I have a friend at another school and she says in the holidays she is at school 9 days out of the 10. She is there in the morning at the school at nine and leaves at 5.30 and she makes things very difficult for herself. I have to learn not to work myself too hard. Just let go.

### **Mel (beginning secondary teacher)**

No matter what everyone says, you cannot dump your day in the bin as you walk out the door. You do think about it and you cannot stop it. This year I have not been able to separate work and home. I wonder if I might learn to do it as time goes on, but this year it has been such an intense learning experience. It has just been so full on all year. I dream about it and I think about it all day and all night.

I am exhausted. I have taken on too much in my first year because of the musical and everything. I am run off my feet. It is not that I am not enjoying it, but it is wearing me out. I am dreaming about school, everything is school, school, and more school. I am not feeling so good about dreaming about school because I feel like I have not walked out at the end of the day or left everything behind. I am taking it home and I am dreaming about it, I am thinking about it and I wake up in the middle of the night and I have another idea for another class. I just cannot get back to sleep until I figure it out or write it down. I am still feeling good about everything else except for the motivation of the students. I have been feeling a little let down but I feel it is probably just this school, this area and probably also this time of year.

I have made many lifestyle changes. I was getting into a routine partying all weekend. I do not do that anymore. I feel my wellbeing this year is helping my relationships and my personal life, particularly my parents, because they understand what I am going through.

Relationships at home have been tense and very difficult because I feel the stress here and go home and drag my stress out there. The school situation has been very stressful. I found myself for the first couple of terms treating my partner as if he was a student, which caused a lot of stress and many arguments. If my partner does not do something the first time I say, “can you do the washing up” I get into teacher mode. That has been stressful because I cannot talk to him about work. He does not understand the situation for teachers with what the government is trying to make us accept with the new award or other situations I have to face. I have developed a better relationship with my mother because I have been able to talk to her about school because she has been a teacher for so many years.

When I go out on the weekend I still find myself talking about school all the time. Not only to try and get something off my chest and work something out for myself about school but also I try to understand other people’s perception of school life and what they think of school and teachers. It surprises a lot of people that I am a teacher at all because I am young and I spend a lot of time having a life whereas they thought that their teachers never had lives, so I set them straight on that.

**In the next year...**

Now I have moved to the senior high school, the good school environment has affected my life and my personal relationships. I have changed because I was always very tired. Last year things were so intense and I took everything home. I do take things home sometimes but I do not take the emotions home. My partner does not understand and it was difficult talking to him last year. This year I do not feel I need to talk to him about things. I do not need to talk to anyone.

**Tom (experienced secondary teacher)**

I have found that my personal life and my school life now affect each other. The time restrictions affect me and it takes a toll. I would prefer to spend time with my sons. I do not know what the impact is on them yet but I know I have missed a lot in terms of their

development and the relationship with my wife. I am having problems concentrating. Your home life does affect your teaching, when I am tired and I have not slept because the kids are not sleeping at home, I often just lose track of time and sometimes I will look up and it will be 4.00 pm and I wonder where the day went. It affects my personal life and my work. It has had an impact.

As year adviser, my responsibility is to look after all the kids in Year 11. I had a form of 205 students and someone said to me, if you try to carry everyone's baggage you are the one who will drop dead and they will keep going. That was the best piece of advice I got. I have helped some kids into jobs and that is satisfying, but it can also be very stressful. In my year there are some serious problems. My biggest concern now is a boy who is and has been suicidal.

With the suicidal kid, I can't shake that sort of thing off at the end of the day. About 6 months ago, was the worst time. He actually made the real threat and we took it seriously and said all the right things, all the alarm bells were going. That was hard because I was trying to sleep, teach and mark during the afternoon. Always fearing that phone ringing during the night or if the phone rang during marking it would be the call for me to go and that played on my mind.

I said at marking I do not know how long I can be here because I did not know what he was going to do. The weekends were the toughest because it was an extended period. I hate mobile phones but I had this thing on all the time and I was thinking, I hope no one rings. That played on my mind. You get to a stage after five years being a year adviser, you take it on and you drop it off at work. Sometimes I discuss things with my wife, but most of the time I try to drop the problems off at the gate.

**Emma (experienced primary teacher)**

I do not think teachers can go home at the end of the day and separate themselves. I find it hard because I do not just define myself as a teacher. Your role in a classroom does not allow you to say "I am not at work anymore". Because of its emotional impact it is the kind of job you cannot escape no matter what you do. Even when you go on holidays there is always a kid that says, "hello miss". I think when you have that collegial support your personal life gets drawn into that as well including general conversations impinging on your life within the school. The professional and the private intersect very much.

In the next year...

Your feelings collide with what is happening in your life. I am getting married next year, I am living somewhere else, I am thinking about children, all those personal feelings impinge upon your feelings about your work life as well and I don't want to be stressed. I do not want that level of stress and if I am earning less money this year I can make up for it in other ways. I was thinking myself into a black hole I was thinking I need to stay here for another year and do this and then I thought I can do whatever I want to do and I need a change.

Last term I was sick all the time and when you are teaching you have to be in a positive frame of mind and I was feeling awful all of the time and running to the loo and having a chuck which was really unpleasant. Poor health particularly in teaching makes things really hard, especially in drama when it's not "sit at your desk and do this". I found it exhausting and I found that difficult whereas this term I feel much more alive and energetic.

I think experience helps me develop. For many people, not me personally, having children is a huge thing that helps them develop. When I have children, I am sure I will be buggered all the time and I will not want to teach at all. However, I think having a child makes you understand how children work.

## **Reflections**

The evidence from the teachers in this study is that the personal and the private are inseparable. As Mel says, "No matter what everyone says, you cannot dump your day in the bin as you walk out the door". To envisage a private life and a teaching life creates a false dichotomy. On the one hand, Emma's morning sickness reduced her enthusiasm for work and Tom's demanding work schedule disrupted and interrupted his relationship with his young family. This of course is true of any of the professions, but its impact seems magnified because of the intensity of personal contact that teachers face. In any one day teachers may teach 8 classes with 30 students in each, which means managing relationships and monitoring 240 people, all in one day.

The implications of this are that many asystemic factors may influence teacher professional development and conversely many systemic factors may influence the personal life. Through professional development, effective schooling systems are able to recognise this reality and

acknowledge this in the planning of a teacher's duties and professional development. It might mean for instance providing workplace flexibility to allow teachers to spend more time with their young families. Or it may mean providing more effective support for teachers facing critical school-based issues such as Tom's suicidal student. It may mean improving current practices so that beginning teacher supervision is not piled on to the other responsibilities of already overworked executive teachers. Somehow the system and perhaps teachers themselves must find time to value professional development and accommodate the needs of the professional and the personal.

The experience of these teachers suggests that separating work and personal lives is not possible. Teacher employers should recognise this reality and develop systems that do not create a false dichotomy between the professional and the personal in teachers' lives. Jackson (1992) agrees that schooling systems have a responsibility to teachers in this regard:

A third way of helping teachers is relieving them of psychological discomfort of one kind or another and in general, by helping them come to terms with the demands of their work. I call this *the way of role accommodation*. It involves giving teachers encouragement, support, sympathy, respect and in the extreme case, some form of therapy. Its goal is to help teachers handle the psychological stresses of their work (1992, p. 65).

While this may seem a daunting task, the risk is that we maintain a system that is not focussed on the realities of teachers' lives. Potentially the system is unable to support them in their professional development leading to less effective schools that are not sympathetic or responsive to the realities of teachers' lives.

## **Beginning and self understanding**

Ingrid was consistently unable to talk about her beginning teacher experience. She became distressed and could not proceed with the interviews. She did however respond to one written survey and said the following about her experience as a beginning teacher.

### **Ingrid**

My beginning teaching year was difficult as I had the interference of a supervisor who was insecure about her own teaching abilities, did not want to acknowledge change or difference of opinion and this greatly affected my development as a teacher in my first year. I began my

year with a strong sense of what I wanted to achieve from my students and myself. After a year of being told that all that I had learnt at university was wrong, I find I have become apathetic to achieving my imagined ideal classroom.

## **Mel**

The kids change their attitude toward you as you continue. I asked them why they were such pains and they said “we were such pains because we were trying you out miss, new teacher and all, we wanted to see if you were the right sort of teacher and whether you were good or not”. I asked them if I made the grade and they said, “you did all right miss”. Now I walk down the hall and they say, “how are you going, what are you doing?”, and most of them, even those who did not want to do drama are saying, “I am thinking about doing drama next year”. So I think it is a lot of development with them coming out of their shells, and rapport because I encouraged that.

My classroom management skills improved through persistence. I had to give these kids freedom. Kids at this school reject authority like the plague. So, I had to encourage them for the things they did right and punish them consistently for the things that they did wrong. If I was not consistent, they would pick me up on that. Obviously, you are not going to hang out with the kids but they have to trust you, you have to trust them and everyone has to work on this trust basis.

I think part of the success was I came up with fun ways to punish them. For instance, I said, “OK now you are doing the cockroach”. Of course, the cockroach is where you lay on your back and shake your arms and legs until you are so sore that you cannot think anymore. It works in drama because it is such a creative, trust-related subject. In a way you can make things fun and you can make the punishments more of a game and it does not mean that they are going to do it again because they do not want to miss out.

They know I have a good sense of humour and how far they can push me before I say, “right that’s it”. I have developed such a rapport. The first couple of terms I was constantly saying “you are doing the wrong thing” and going off my head and yelling all the time. I forced and forced and forced and after I relaxed everything was OK. I had reasonable rapport but

nothing like I had when I relaxed and said “You’re here because you want to do the subject and I am here because I want to teach drama so let’s just work together and get this over with”, as opposed to stopping kids chatting all the time.

I never expected so much gratitude from the kids. You push them and you push them. They do not work and you push them harder and you drag your expectations up to the sky. You say “do this” and you think they do not give a damn and then at the end of it all, they say thank you so much and you get all this gratitude, which is so satisfying, when you get the thanks and you see the results.

It is all go during the week, but at weekends, I do sit back and think about the week. There are times when I could kill myself and I say to myself, “how dare you do that, that was the stupidest thing you have ever done”. There are also times when I think that worked well or if I look at a unit of work I have done and I think, I would do that a different way next time. I am starting to accumulate units of work, which is another good thing

### **Tom**

On my way to my first day of teaching I spent the whole trip that was probably about 20 minutes in the car trying to convince myself I was a teacher. I remember thinking this is going to be interesting. I walked into the school and thought, no I am not a teacher.

The first few months were horrendous, horrific, terrifying to the extent where I only went for the money. It took me two months to get some sort of rapport with the kids. If that had continued, I probably would not be teaching today.

The only way I survived, I think was to get them to respect me. Respect possibly or recognition for putting up with whatever they threw at me. Not so much being one of the boys but not being probably a teacher that got stuck into them. It was not mutual respect, I would never respect them for what they put me through. It was just a nightmare, trouble all the time, kids sort of throwing things at you. Typically Lebanese kids talking in their own language across the room and you are sitting in the classroom thinking well I am the only ethnic here that does not speak Lebanese. I never knew what was going on and there was a lot of fear.

Every day if I did not cry, when I got home I would turn up the next day wondering what was next. I was replacing a teacher who was on leave, she was the Head Teacher and I was covering her classes, plus I was doing the extras of the relieving Head Teacher. So he decided that he did not want his rubbish classes so I was getting the same kids right through. After two months, the kids realised that I was going to be there for a long time.

I left because I was in the playground and a group of Year 11's and 12's surrounded me because I had a go at one of their cousins in Year 8 or 9. It was not intimidation as in spoken intimidation, it was just that group mentality, they just circled me because I was smaller than they were and then they just walked away and I walked up to the office and said I am gone. That was the end. I was at that school five days a week for three months. The day I walked out, I was not going back.

From there, I went to a school in Sydney's western suburbs, which was probably my best experience, and I was there for three months too. It was tough but it was fun. The kids were Anglos and most of them gave me a hard time, but that was fine. I was still able to relate to them because coming from the western suburbs I could understand them. They accepted me because I was not going to be a tyrant and they knew I was only going to be there for three months. It was sort of an idea of mutual respect, you know, I'm here to teach you, you're here to listen to me, let's get on with it.

There was a small population of Aboriginal students there and the first piece of advice I was given by the Head Teacher was if they stand up and walk out do not worry about them because they will return. That was what happened in my first lesson. They turned up and an Aboriginal girl stood up and walked out. The class just held their breath because they were waiting for the reaction. I just ignored it and from then, it was really comfortable.

I moved to a boys' high school in Sydney and I teach drama and history mostly. The other drama teacher, Reba has been here for three years. We share the senior load. She went to the University of New South Wales so she has a lot of theory behind her. She does things differently to me perhaps because of that background.

**Emma**

I was the top graduate in my year and had excellent prac reports. Yet, during my first teaching year, I felt completely hopeless, unskilled and useless. The contrast could not have been more extreme. This highlights the lack of mentoring and support I received. It was not as if I was a borderline student and yet within a short space of time I had been reduced to feeling worthless in a career, which I had felt “born” to pursue.

For the first year, here I had an appalling group of combined Year 1 and 2’s. I had no support. I had no desks, no readers, and no books. I had nothing. I had one incredibly emotionally disturbed child and it affected me so much that it took me at least another year to get over it. I had such a bad experience, children swearing at me every day attacking me, biting me, threatening to jump out the window. A child’s father committed suicide, another child was being abused outside school, it was this freak class. I had a couple of Aboriginal children with big learning problems. There was this one boy in particular who in the end the Department sent to a school for the emotionally disturbed. They did not send him until term 4, so I had a whole year of a child in a class of 33. It was ludicrous and I felt so ill-prepared because I just did not know what I was doing. I did not know how to ask for help especially for what I really needed in terms of resources.

I think of my first year of teaching as if it was a different person. I developed all sorts of illnesses, Irritable Bowel Syndrome and terrible things because of that. I think stress on teachers is just enormous and if you have a difficult class I don’t think people realise you take your work mentally and emotionally home with you and it can have incredibly traumatic effects on people and nobody realises how difficult it is unless they are having that experience or they have been through it themselves.

My class in the first year of teaching was terrible and I still feel so angry about it. I am almost over it, but now I am burning up just thinking about them. I used to go home and cry every single day. I was so upset and it brought back all my childhood memories of feeling afraid, hopeless, and useless. It was just the most shocking year I have ever had it was like having a breakdown. I could not be myself I could not behave in my own way, I had to bellow at kids all the time. Every other teacher who has had that group of kids has almost had a nervous breakdown. They have already been in trouble with the police and there are five boys in particular who have now left Year 6. You have no idea how relieved I was. When they left I was jumping up and down and saying they are gone, “yay”.

If I was teaching these students now I would feel so much better because I know my subject matter more. I have much better management skills and although at uni they do give you management training, they tell you things to do, but unless you are using it with children often in a practical sense it is difficult to implement, you can't learn these things in isolation from the kids. Con was in that class and he was the worst kid I ever taught. He was finally expelled from the school. He is in Year 8 now and he was by far the worst student I have ever taught. He had been sexually abused and his behaviour was unbelievable. That was the class, it was my first year of teaching, and anyone that has had him has almost had a breakdown over him. I still have nightmares about him. He was a shocker. He really was a difficult child and he was so emotionally disturbed and if you are a bit vulnerable you can be sensitive to them and notice them, which you cannot do, but it is easy to do.

This year I have had to contend with Brett who is very similar to Con. It was the same thing, he was not as bad as Con because Con had huge drug problems in the family, as well as the sexual thing and the violence, whereas with Brett it is not so extreme.

When I say I did not feel prepared from my university experience to teach, it has been clouded by my experiences of school, which was one of very little support. It was not deliberate it was just people not recognising the need and me not feeling like I could ask too much within the first year. There were no structures in place within the school. I thought if I asked questions people would think that I was hopeless. I always thought I was quite good and all of sudden I thought maybe I am bad at this.

The primary training does teach management skills well and understanding children, they did go through well the way you can reinforce positively and negatively and that was a good aspect of my training. Now of course I know so much more about managing the K-2 age group, how long to do an activity, age appropriate activities, how to use the syllabus. I have put many routines in place and I now know how structures can work effectively within the classroom, being much more familiar with resources in the library. I am far more confident finding and using resources.

With Brett, I feel a lot better because he has improved because he likes me, which is terrible to feel better about a student because they like you. It is just that a teacher can be a bit like a

child. Ever since I was a little girl, I have always wanted people to like me and if they do not like me, I cannot understand why. All the kids like me because I want them to like me and I do things that they will respect me for. When Brett did not like me, it was like: why not? I do all this stuff for you, I help you, I follow all the rules and you are not responding appropriately. It is different from a kid being naughty. You know they still like you and they get on with you. With Brett, his behaviour was so hard, but it was not to do with me at all. Still there was some impulses about rejection that probably went back to my childhood that concerned me.

Funnily enough last year I had a dolphin music tape that I was going to play to my lovely primary class. Anyway here are these lovely kids, they are all lying down and I was playing what I thought was some relaxing music and when the tape came on I suddenly realised what it was. We had a behaviour specialist who came to work with the class, but it did not really work because they attacked her. She would tape the children and play it back to them so they could know how awful they were and how loud they were. I taped the children and it was like “shut up you, I hate your guts”, and all this sort of stuff and carrying on. There I was playing dolphin music and there were all these voices saying, “shut up, I hate your guts”, and all the kids were laughing and trying to work out what was on the tape.

In some ways, you have to remember you are playing a role. As a teacher, you cannot let that affect you personally. For the same reason a good teacher does let it affect how they relate to that student. That is what makes them a good teacher and if you do not take anything on board maybe you are not the best teacher, but perhaps you are maintaining your self-preservation. You have to balance it out.

My experience of being a beginning teacher has made me support others. Last year we had a new graduate on the K-1 and I saw her every day, I made sure that I gave her all my resources, I said come and debrief every day. I used my experience to help others. She has one difficult kid, but it doesn't matter how easy the class is, it is a very steep learning curve and she really appreciated it and I felt that helped her get through.

I do not believe, however, that all schools are so poor at managing new teachers. I think it would be rash to generalise. Friends who began teaching when I did had far more positive experiences, even if it was still tough for them. The problem is perhaps that there is not a

more effective and organised system that operates at a state level for mentoring beginning teachers.

## Reflections

In Chapter 6, the teachers in this study expressed their dissatisfaction with some aspects of their preservice education. The induction phase is the next critical point in a teacher's self understanding. As Ramsey (2000b, p. 64) comments:

The quality of induction following the appointment to a teaching position is one of the most important determiners of the self-perceptions which beginning teachers will hold as professional practitioners. What happens in induction is critical to shaping the quality of the teacher's future performance.

Unfortunately, the induction phase of teacher development seems to exacerbate the difficulties encountered in preservice teacher training. Again, over the course of a decade there has been little change with teachers enduring a lack of support, poor and sometimes adversarial supervision, verbal abuse, poor school placements and difficult classes. The experiences of the teachers in this study raise serious questions about teacher induction and its impact on the self understanding of these teachers.

Emma's induction experience revived painful childhood memories of inadequacy and poor confidence and induced stress related illnesses and memories that persist eight years later when she faced similar difficulties. The conditions for beginning teachers almost a decade later are no better, with Ingrid enduring poor and at times oppressive supervision and Mel being so stressed that she dreams constantly about classroom management. Perhaps these experiences go some way to explaining attrition rates of beginning teachers reaching more than 21.14<sup>44</sup> per cent in Australian schools (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1998, p. 240).

The experiences of these teachers are consistent with those in the literature. Bullough (1992, p. 209) identifies this attrition rate and its antecedents as "...a horrendous waste of time" and decries the impact of poor teacher induction experiences. Gold calls this stage the "loss of a dream" (Gold, 1996, p. 558) and Ryan calls this a time of "survival" that is for many the

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<sup>44</sup> This figure reflects those leaving within the first five years nationally. 7.25 % leave in the first year of teaching nationally.

biggest challenge of their lives (1996, p. 13). The stage theorists seem to have accurately described the main issues involved in beginning teaching, when their theories are compared to the reality of these teachers' experiences.

The beginning phase of any profession is bound to have its difficulties. The situation in teaching, however, is rather different. The experience of these teachers spanning almost a decade reflects consistent inadequacies and failure by schools, educational systems and universities to train and induct beginning teachers for this dynamic and difficult profession. The inadequate state of teacher preservice preparation and school induction programs is best summed up by Ramsey (2000b, p. 26):

Almost unwittingly, responsibility for change was placed in the hands of traditional systems, both of schools and teacher education. These had become so focussed on perpetuating themselves that they proved unequal to the task. They had become so divorced from teachers and teaching that they were incapable of creating the conditions in which the required changes could flourish.

While there are some more positive indications about teacher preservice education, particularly in drama, the weight of evidence here concurs with the claim of inadequacy and irrelevance levelled by Ramsey.

As the literature indicates, there are certain dynamics at work in the experiences of beginning teachers that are unavoidable, but the system and schools can, and in some cases according to Emma, do provide adequate induction programs. Ramsey reports that:

Amongst teachers, there is not the strong culture of responsibility for induction evident in many other professions. There is little clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of universities and schools for the preparation and induction of teachers...As a consequence the quality of induction programs varies greatly. (Ramsey, 2000, p. 12).

Ramsey's observations are perhaps understating the inadequacy of teacher induction. While teacher induction will not and should not be free of challenges, the sort of physical and psychological harm experienced by these teachers in their beginning years is not acceptable. If we are to have well equipped, confident and enthusiastic teachers, universities, schools and education systems must strive to create programs that value the beginning teacher and provide support through the challenges of the survival stage. They can do this by developing integrated programs, as some are doing that take account of the specific needs of beginning

teachers. If the education systems fail in this, the attrition rates of 21% (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1998, p. 240) of teachers will become commonplace and may worsen, not to mention the harm done to beginning teachers' senses of self worth and the possibility of lasting damage to their confidence.

## **Developing as teacher**

### **Mel**

My colleagues are supportive. They are always willing to give me a hand or help me out. I certainly have not been left in the lurch. There have been times when my Head Teacher has come into the class and looked at some of the work I am doing. He has been quite positive about what I have been doing with the class. The feedback that I get from him is invaluable. His support through my first year has been a big help.

I can feel myself developing professionally although I did not develop so much in the first couple of terms. This term I have had to knuckle down and spend time on my teaching. I have had to be on the ball all the time. That has really increased the way that I work and it has become so much better. I am more efficient now and I know what to say when a kid asks me a question. There have been times when kids put you on the spot with a question and you do not really know the answer. Before I used to say, "I'll get back to you on that one". Now I am confident, if something escapes me or I cannot remember what I was planning to say I can handle it better. I have learnt to prepare completely before I think about going into the room. That is something I did not realise I could do until the pressure was on.

I had a different class than I did last semester. The last group I had was absolutely treacherous. For the first term I had kids hanging off the curtains, running around, they were not cooperating. I had kids yelling and screaming and I had several kids with attention deficit disorder in there. They were very difficult to motivate. They did not want to perform in front of each other, so I do not know why they chose drama in the first place. They probably chose it because they thought it was a bludge subject. Some were dumped in here because they had not made their subject selections early enough. Drama has not really been built up here, which I am working at.

Those kids were painful for the first term and half of the second term and after that they did things right and I congratulated them and said that they were fantastic. I said, “look how much work you have put in”. After they got that encouragement and they knew exactly what I wanted to see from them and I wanted to see them acting up there and performing and not being embarrassed in front of each other and trying really hard, then they put in more effort and it became more of a competition.

Building a competitive spirit in the lower classes is useful. The higher classes tend to reject that and they prefer to work as a team. The Year 9 and 10 classes are different again. If you started to build a competitive nature in there, they would not be happy. They would be very uncomfortable and that would start big rivalries. In the younger classes they want to be better than the person next to them, even their best friends.

Report writing has been a massive development for me as well being able to sit down, write comments about students, be professional about it, and use the correct terminology. I fell into it quickly and it did not take too much effort. It might be because I have read so many reports in my time and because my parents write reports all the time.

Time management has been difficult, not within classes, but overall. The free periods just disappear, the time that I have just disappears. I think this occurs because of the musical. I am also helping a few kids by singing for them in their HSC exams so I have to rehearse for them as well. All the rehearsal time means that I do not have any time at the end of the day to think.

Trying to motivate kids has also been a huge challenge, particularly with the musical. It is very difficult to get kids along to rehearsals and get them to learn their lines. The other teachers have said they almost called it off years ago and they say that is why they decided not to do it again. Getting kids to do things and making them realise that they have responsibilities is very hard. Getting support from the parents is difficult as well. Five or six parents in the whole musical are incredibly involved and see it as a great opportunity for their kids. They are usually the parents of kids with minor roles. I have not heard very much at all from the parents of kids with major roles. The musical taught me to coordinate a large group, to control my temper and satisfaction at the end of it all. I had to coordinate everything with a bit of help.

I think the fact now that we can count down and say to the kids, “we only have four daytime rehearsals now you know that don’t you?” They just freak out and they start to learn their lines and I have found now that a lot of kids are being far more supportive and some kids are teaching other kids the songs but there are only a few of those.

It has been a tough year because there has been so much learning going on constantly. I have learnt a lot about psychology. I have learnt a lot about different ways to deal with problems. I have learnt about organisation that goes into productions. I think I am much more than just twice the teacher I was. I think in the first two terms it was acclimatising and becoming used to everything and getting over the nerves. In the last two terms, it has been full on discipline and learning to discipline myself and discipline the kids. I have never been an organised person and now I have to be, otherwise I am not going anywhere. I have learnt about classes and planning and just how tiring it can all be even though the days are shorter. The days are shorter than I have ever worked in my entire life so far and every afternoon I am getting home and feeling tired. I get up in the morning and after the first few hours I am tired again.

**In the next year...**

I cannot figure out one thing. This year I have been exhausted but by the end of the day I am ready to get back into it whereas last year I couldn’t even drag myself out of bed and this is an earlier start here. I think I am just enjoying myself more and I do not have the musical to tire me out.

I have learnt I never want to go to a Year 7-10 school ever, because I do not want to work with kids who do not want to be there and who constantly distance themselves from the teaching. There is no Year 12 to give you a break. I do not want to battle every single lesson.

I think I have developed more. I figured I was confident before I started teaching but now I cannot be embarrassed. I have developed a lot of confidence and I have learnt more about different ways of getting the message across. When I was on prac, I did not know how to express the subject I was teaching properly in a number of different ways. I had to find a way to express the ideas in ways that would appeal to the students. I just thought I am going to get them into some prac work but I learnt that it is also about revising and saying what have we

learnt from this and what can we use and where can we use this and I think that is the most important thing that I have learnt.

Everything changes in a year. At the beginning of my teaching, I think I took on too much. At the time, I was very excited and I still am. I am very enthusiastic still. I was a lot more paranoid about the things that were going on around me and I still have a bit of that. You never really know what the future holds. Overall, I am a lot more conscientious about what I am doing and I am getting better at tracking my progress.

When you first start, you are afraid of disciplining kids and you do not realise that you have that power to do that and you are timid in everything you do. I am not afraid anymore to do that and I can say “hey what are you doing, you are not doing the right thing”, as opposed to sitting back and trying to ignore it.

I am a lot better than I used to be, I am more efficient. It took me a while to get used to the student to teacher dynamic. It took me a while to stop stressing out and to realise I was creating work for myself and that all the students did not have to like me. That takes you a month to realise, you spend a month trying to get on everyone’s good side and then you realise, what is the point? There is no point to that and then you realise after a while that you actually are on everyone’s good side as long as you are fair with everything you do and you are reasonable it is OK. You can expect a lot but you give a lot in return. As long as you can realise all these things, and it does take you a while to realise them, you do not have to go out of your way to get people on your good side.

What has helped me grow as a teacher is seeing kids succeed and drawing confidence from working with kids in the classroom. I feel satisfied when I see the kids who were tossed into drama because it was the only vacant spot now succeeding and enjoying themselves. I am encouraged when kids appreciate what I have done for them. Even up to the point that they are telling teachers they missed me after I had changed schools.

The other encouraging factor is actually seeing how I can put things together and teach good lessons in the classroom, whether they be drama or English and that everyone is interested by the end of the lesson. Other staff here are supportive and very gifted and listening to them and watching them encourages me to keep pushing on.

I do not get as excited by a good essay as I do by a good performance. When I am marking English I am glad when they succeed but it's nowhere near as magic as seeing a kid really enjoying themselves and really coming out and doing something different in drama. I do not get the same sort of satisfaction out of English as I do out of drama. English is not my main subject area. I am more enthusiastic about drama. For instance, I would not start the literature club at the school whereas I would like to start a drama group. I have started to work on that already and I would like to do full time drama. I am a drama teacher who also teaches English. If I could have, I would have done drama and music as my teaching subjects but the university said it was not academic enough.

There are so many facets to teaching. I find it difficult to express how I feel about the way society values teachers. I think the community underestimates teachers because teachers find it difficult to express all the things that they do. Kids are as happy to criticise as support. My view of teaching is a lot more complex than it was at the start of the year.

### **Tom**

I learn more through thinking as the 'director' rather than being 'the participant' and you always notice that some teachers are the performers and others sit back and do the thinking. I teach differently in each subject. I know I am different in front of a history class compared to a drama class, just in terms of style. It probably relates to classroom management. In drama, you are able to manoeuvre masses without thinking. Trying to manoeuvre 30 kids in a traditional classroom is chaotic whereas in drama it is second nature.

Group work is not well implemented at our school. The ethos of our school is I am the teacher as one grouping and you are the students as the other grouping and that is group work. It is ticked off every year as if we have done that. So there are not many teachers that attempt to use group-based learning because it is a style traditional conservative teachers cannot handle, they do not do it because of their expectation of chaos.

I use groups in history because I can cope with the noise and I have always had it. When I was using drama at another school I used to use it all the time. It is something you learn in

your Dip Ed<sup>45</sup> and something you trial in your prac teaching. It is something you think, if it works with one group you can use it as a skill or a strategy throughout your teaching. There are some groups where you do not do it, you make sure they are glued to their seats.

I do not use a lot of crossover skills I am very chalk and talk in history whereas in drama it is very much experimental and often improvised.

I tend to direct more than anything else in my drama teaching. For instance with improvisation I may give them an example how to do it, or what to do but I do not physically become involved. I am not a teacher who becomes involved in the situation like teacher-in-role. I tend to stay away from those sorts of things because working with boys I do not think they cope when I change. They expect you to be who you are at all times. So, I tend to direct more and provide examples of what I am looking for. On the other hand, I might go through the process and then pick a kid and say, "that's what I was looking for, something like that, can you see how he's doing that".

I like to see where I am going when I am teaching and I think I can go towards a vision and a goal. I stand outside the process, pick out certain things, and highlight the process. It is an analytical approach that is practical. The process is most important to me. You can refine a product as much as you like, but if you do not have the skills in the first place the product will fall apart. I can see that from standing outside. We do mark the final product but you cannot get there if you do not have the process.

I was offered Head Teacher history for all of next term and all of first term next year. The boss who wants me to be year adviser instead of an acting Head Teacher knocked that on the head. After it was knocked back, I found out that two other teachers in my faculty were quite upset by the fact that I was going to be acting Head Teacher while they had been there for years. They thought they should have first preference. I threw all that in anyway before he had a chance to knock it on the head. I was not going to be involved in any fight. I think I have served my time there. There are only five of us in the history faculty, the other two have had their turns and I thought it would be natural that it would be my turn.

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<sup>45</sup> The Dip. Ed (Diploma of Education) is a one-year course of study that is usually undertaken after another degree. It is studied to allow students with arts or science degrees to teach. This diploma is being replaced in many Australian universities by two-year Masters courses.

Later that year...

I become Head Teacher history next week for three weeks. In terms of professional development becoming acting Head Teacher will not do a great deal for me this time, apart from it will be on my Curriculum Vitae that I have been able to do it. The boss will be able to say that I have been a Head Teacher. The boss picked up in the last couple of weeks that I was going for a job as a student welfare officer, he told me not to go for it, he told me it would be a waste of time. I would not do the Head Teacher thing again for him but I probably would do it again for someone else. I did enjoy the money. The money was great. It was good professional development because of little things like organisation for instance getting people to go on playground duty.

Later still that year...

I was acting Head Teacher and that was terrible, I felt like I was dropped off the cliff and I had to swim or I would drown. I was caught in a bind where I was the pretend acting Head Teacher while my Head Teacher was at home pulling all the strings and I could not make decisions. He called me disloyal, it was not a pleasant experience.

It made me realise that being so young in an older faculty is going to be something that I am going to have to get used to or learn to work around. I like the political things about the position. I like going to executive meetings and thinking about decisions as whole-school based initiatives even though as a history Head Teacher, I was also thinking as drama teacher too, so I had two caps on. I like the idea of bringing whole school initiatives into faculty if you can. I do not want to destroy all the other subjects around us. I want to work with them.

### **Emma**

I am more relaxed this year. I am working four days and on Fridays I am writing a play and I don't have as many commitments in the school, so I am able to focus just on the teaching. Now I see my role as supporting classroom teachers and the staff really appreciate the work I do at lunch time for instance.

I have been doing the drama release from face to face (rff) teaching in completely different schools and with completely different clients, kids and parents. It has been good because it has been constant. I am developing some good drama ideas. Some kids require more structure than others, so I am able to structure the lessons to suit the groups I am working with.

I like teaching maths because I can see where kids are having problems and I can break the skills down into little component parts and find a way of explaining it. That helps the kids and they relate to the way I explain things. If you have struggled with something as a child yourself, it can help you in some ways. I found that to be the case with maths because I am not very good at it, but I love teaching it.

I have had a lot of trouble with one of my students, Brett and his father. Brett has got a lot better although he was suspended again. He began to masturbate in class, it became an issue, and in the end, he was suspended because of complaints from parents. He had a five-day suspension. It emerged that there is an older retarded boy who is abusing him. Brett is not just a concern because of his masturbating in class. He is aggressive both verbally and physically to others (eg: hitting, poking pencils, swearing, saying nasty things about another child's appearance). He was also openly defiant, refusing to follow simple instructions and actively encouraging others to do the same. He has a very "short fuse" and he gets easily frustrated. This is partly due to his learning problems that included difficulties with reading and maths, and very poor fine motor skills. He is, however, a bright child, with an excellent memory for particular subjects that capture his interest. He can also be very warm and caring and I like him a great deal.

When he gets distressed at school he starts to masturbate. We had an itinerant support teacher and I said we have to work out a system in our school where there is consistency through the school for what we expect. I have been implementing this with the acting Executive Teacher. It is very similar to other behavioural management techniques but this one works particularly well with kids like Brett who need to be constantly reminded that there are rules in the room that you need to follow them. It has nothing to do with being naughty or bad. It is just about following rules. It works with picture cues with "frownies" or "smilies". When Brett hits someone, you refer him to the rule, it is working really well, and you reinforce the kids through it. He responds very well to positive reinforcement and you forget he is an 8 year old. Increasingly we put pressure on kids to achieve things, our expectations are a lot higher than they were when I went to school. This system means that one child is not a teacher's problem. The difficult child needs to be shared by a school. You must have systems in place to support each teacher and that has always been my big issue. You must have systems that

cater for everybody so that a child is not depending on their relationship with one teacher to behave.

Later that year...

Brett is feeling better about himself and now he responds to the rule. It is amazing what a difference it makes. The home situation has improved and he has stopped masturbating. It was terrible when he was doing it. We had the counselling unit in and we had several meetings and to discuss strategies. Again it is the whole thing of having a support network that works and it has to be there and you need to know what you need to do to access it. Otherwise, you do not feel supported and it is you alone in a classroom with a bunch of kids.

I feel very confident now as a teacher and I am very confident in this school because the parents like me, I get on well with the staff and I am positive. My self-esteem is fine and I feel great. For me I am happy that I have overcome the issues that I had to confront in my first years of teaching. I think I have developed more.

## **Reflections**

In Ryan's terms (1986, p. 24) the next stage after the survival stage is the mastery stage where the beginning teacher moves from a focus on classroom management issues to achieving improved student learning. This approach seems generally consistent with the experience of the teachers in this study.

Mel for instance struggles with classroom management and confidence until at the end of the study she assesses herself to be "...much more than just twice the teacher I was". This growth demonstrates the enormous change at work in the beginning teacher and the transition for Mel from classroom management and survival to other issues. Her concentration moves to problem solving and understanding approaches for individual students. This transition is consistent with her progression to the mastery stage. Her self exhortation to "discipline others" and discipline herself shows the self understanding of a maturing teacher.

Gold's (1996, p. 558) assertion that poor community perception affects beginning teachers is also borne out in Mel's narrative. She reports a growing realisation of the complexity of teaching and disenchantment with the community's views of teaching. (While this may have been due in part to the industrial disputation that was part of the landscape in her early career,

she reported it as a discouraging and frustrating factor. The role of community perceptions is explored in more depth in Chapter 8, ecological change).

Mel also identifies a realisation that she overcommitted herself in her beginning year. Ramsey (2000, p. 67) raises this over commitment by teachers as a major problem as well saying that “Beginning teachers need to have the space to deal with, reflect on and acquire knowledge about the range of complex issues that confront [them]...”. Perhaps being a beginning drama teacher carries with it extra expectation. However, a school or system that allows a beginning teacher to undertake the role of the musical director on top of all the other roles largely unsupported seems to be inviting problems. As Ramsey rightly asserts, (2000, p. 67) beginning teachers if they are to mature must have time to pause throughout their beginning years in order to grow. This plea is especially pertinent for beginning teachers in subjects that have extra workload expectations such as drama. To do otherwise may encourage burnout for these developing teachers.

Mel’s narratives demonstrate the dawning realisation of the complexity of teaching. They also demonstrate the flexibility required to respond to varied problems which is consistent with a growing maturity. In Mel’s case, the loss of the dream seems to be changing into an acceptance of the reality of schools and a focus on teaching effectively. These concerns are also present in Tom and Emma’s experience but other factors that are not necessarily classroom-based begin to become important in their maturation process.

Tom’s experience as the acting Head Teacher highlights the role of non-classroom-based issues within the school. Indeed Tom’s role as Year Adviser consumed much of his attention throughout the course of this year. Part of his professional growth this year involved the “sink or swim” experience of being Head Teacher and coping with the stress that the position involves. His realisation that “...being so young in an older faculty is going to be something that I am going to have to get used to or learn to work around” reveals a growing understanding of the role of colleagues and their role in self understanding. Tom’s continuing development is related to factors as complex as Mel’s. They just have different antecedents and resolutions. Therefore, for the maturing teacher the problems do not seem to become less complex, just more varied.

In Emma's case, the problems are still classroom-based. The difference however, between the survival phase of the beginning teacher and Emma's concerns are that the emphasis has shifted from the teacher's survival. Emma, as a more experienced teacher, confident in her own survival is now focussed on improved outcomes for the student (Brett) and his overall wellbeing. Furthermore, with greater experience and more influence Emma is able to actually change the system to deal with the problem at hand. This level of access to systemic change seems unavailable to beginning teachers such as Mel who are still negotiating their own place with the schooling system, let alone attempting to change aspects of it. Mel and Tom's experience point to an evolution in their self understanding as individuals who not only participate in the system but have the confidence and skills within their own self understanding to take leadership roles and make changes in the schooling systems around them. Having resolved many of the issues associated with survival and teaching skills, they have matured into dealing with the complex issues of system change and improvement.

These problems become more challenging when viewed in the context of the crises each of the teachers in this study endured in the course of the teaching year.

## **Crisis**

### **Mel**

The following narrative was considerably longer with greater detail but at the request of this teacher, it has been shortened. Her concern was that the original was "too personal", so in accordance with the research methodology this narrative has been abbreviated and made less detailed.

It is sometimes difficult to build relationships with kids. There was a situation here where a kid misunderstood the student teacher relationship. Around that time, I got different sorts of advice and I took their advice and I still was criticised. I was only taking their advice because I had not been in that situation before. It was all very distressing for me because being in my first year that is the last thing I needed.

Looking back, I do not know how I got through some of the things I did because of the way people dealt with the situation. I have learnt now about a huge "wall" that everyone has been

talking about. The wall is develop rapport, develop a relationship but keep your distance. It is something they tell you at uni but I do not think anything can prepare you for it.

## **Tom**

I have to get out of teaching altogether or out of this school. It has been an interesting couple of weeks. It is worse than it has ever been and there is nothing left, I am just a zombie, walking around without an agenda, I get halfway through lessons and think I have got nothing else to do, I am not even prepared for them. Today was a classic example, I started doing things with Year 9, they started to get a bit daring and I thought I had better stop here because they started to get into things I wanted to do next term. I could not even think of any games to do with them. It has all ground to a halt. I have no energy and the time constraint for Year 11 has really bamboozled me, I did not get through the topics properly on top of the their HSC projects and group performances. We only really have 18 weeks with them. I got to a stage when I thought maybe I would do lots of work. Year 12 is a major concern with time constraints. I am feeling creatively burnt out because I have performances going and I have run out of ideas. Everything needs to be done this term and I do not have the energy or the creative flair.

I sat back and thought I will give myself 18 months and midway through next year I will reassess. I have been looking at doing training and development for private companies. There is the option there with better money and a car. I would stay if I could get a promotion but those jobs are not around, possibly a transfer up the coast would be good and I have broadened my transfer options.

You can see the factors with me not being able to get over the top of Year 8, the Year 11 group not gelling and this year I have come back with lots of energy and after the first two weeks I didn't want to be here anymore. Strangely enough, Year 10 has come around in the last couple of weeks. Their process was good and they tried to develop a good piece.

The Year Advising is good now but this is a terrible week, we have just had that suicidal kid committed, which he agreed to and there is another kid who has taken out an apprehended violence order on his father. Sometimes I wonder how I get satisfaction out of this job, perhaps it is seeing good kids grow and mature or knowing when some of these kids leave they will be better off outside the constraints of this environment. In terms of the suicidal kid,

you were always waiting for the phone to ring. There have been times when we all sat back and waited but it questions your ability to work and you think have I failed this kid, is it my fault?

Usually I am quite good at putting pieces together but recently I have been sitting here saying, "let's just create it on the spot". Most times, I am getting away with it but I am coming out of the lesson and thinking I should not be doing this. The kids are OK, but I tell them that this is a group process and you have to help me, but I know it should be me but I don't have the energy or the enthusiasm to create and put it all together. I think I am doing too much

I feel I am stuck, I cannot see a light at the end of this school. I cannot see a Head Teacher's job although I am probably considered too young bracket just to go for it or get it. I cannot see myself being transferred because there is not a lot of movement. Now I am just plodding along like a 45 or 50 year old teacher just waiting for retirement.

Last time we had the interview and I hit that brick wall it was just a combination of recognising that and thinking how can I get out of that and at the same time doing a lot of work with Year 12 kids that don't care. What I thought has become reality, my premonitions about what is going to happen is becoming reality in front of my eyes each week as we go by. I think this is not right, this is real and I cannot get out of it. I am in one of those vicious cycles.

The premonitions were Year 12 will eventually do something and Year 9 thinking we had better do something rather than have me spoon-feed them through the whole process. I am not a spoon feeder and the reality is coming back now that Year 12 don't care and Year 11 are saying are you going to spoon feed us and I am saying no and Year 9 to some extent are looking for that too. So, it is all sorts of things coming through. I suppose you go through the process when you go for some jobs and I think I might get to interview there, I've got to get to the interview for the next one, I get into that vicious circle, that unemployed circle where you think how many jobs am I going to go for before I get lucky.

When I have a cooperative class the creative urge is there and I feel better about the work that I am doing. When I am up against a brick wall, it is difficult. When you are creating new

pieces you try to use new methods so the drama night does not become stale. I have no idea really, what I am doing from lesson to lesson, it does not matter if I have a daybook. I seem to be going into lessons semi-prepared but because I left work when I was away, kids are going all over the place and walking into classes going “who are you?” With year 7’s I have forgotten their names again. I think this has happened because of the break and having all the time off.

Later that year...

You do lose interest in what you are doing, together with all the frustration with what’s going on there, you don’t worry too much about what the kids are doing if they are achieving or not. It will probably take until next week or after until the brain clicks in again. Some periods I am there mentally but some days I am somewhere else, thinking I do not want to be here, I hate this class.

I have changed my style with Year 9 and I have begun to positively reinforce them for little things they were doing. Reinforce the positives. I was too critical in the past and I talked to them about taking risks, they are meeting challenges. I said to them, I am the director and I will take your ideas on board. I have learnt that it does take time to get kids to work together. With the positive attitude my whole body language and persona has changed and I gather that they have picked that up and we are producing something as a class and it has given me something to work towards. I am now giving them clear goals and reinforcing the positives about the activities. I was looking for something complex to deal with the issue but when I simplified the whole thing, it became easier.

I think about the seven year slump and I make sure I don’t do too much creative stuff, every time I take the risk, it’s a new avenue I have to explore and I think that leads to burnout. Drama teachers burnout at some time. The Asian piece was my experiment for the year. I will not do anything else like that. Some days I think, should I opt out, go back to history and come back in a couple years time? That is a thought that crosses my mind once a week. I feel like I am climbing up a mountain that has no peak.

Life at home is great, it keeps me going, and I used to think I do not want to go home because I had too much work to do and now I do not want to go to school because there is nothing there for me. People said that, but I always thought I would be a dedicated teacher. That is

part of the problem and maybe that is because everybody is like me. The boss and my Head Teacher are always looking for new things for me to do. They can see it.

With the negatives, I think of brick walls. My teaching has not improved and I am constantly battling things that I never had to deal with before. The problem is in middle class areas you are expected to do much more and the clientele is better but you tend to get the riff raff and the expectation also. I hate to say it, but if I was somewhere else, I would not have the expectation and I would go with the flow.

In the next year...

Looking back, it was the beginning of last year. I did not see the “brick wall” coming until I sat back and thought it is here I have hit a brick wall. When I went through the log I thought over the last two and half terms, I have increasingly built this wall in front of me. The frustration is not being able to see beyond that wall and now in my teaching career I cannot see one. Even though people say there is one you just have to be patient and wait I cannot see it evolving

### **Emma**

I had a bad time last term. I would go home and cry and I have not cried like that for ages. I was so upset about this child, Brett. The experience and what it was doing to me upset me. I am over it now but it dragged up all these issues about feeling like a failure and not feeling I have achieved anything. I felt the same way in my first year of teaching when I was unsupported.

There was an incident a while ago where Brett’s Dad came over here, entered my classroom and was physically and verbally abusive. I was very upset about it because I felt threatened, insulted and invaded. I could not believe that parents think they have a right to come into your classroom and do that and not to go through the Principal and discuss the issue. It makes you realise how vulnerable and open to abuse you are.

I was able to speak to other teachers about it and you have to because that is why teachers talk all the time. That is why Friday drinks are so important. No one else wants to hear their boring old stories and they do not want to go home to their partners and bore them senseless. So I was able to debrief and I was able to see it was not my problem but I was also pleased

we did not back down and we were very calm. Brett expected that his father would come up, tell us what to do and we would do it, but that is not how it works. This is why my leaving will be cathartic even though I have made a good name for myself and there are some great things happening at this school. I am not leaving because of Brett. He is a symptom of the problem that was always there. There is a time when you think you need to move on. As an individual, I need other experiences and I need to develop myself in other ways. I need to experience other types of school communities. At this school, I have had the experience of a creative community with supportive parents. I need to go into other communities and experience other school communities.

I think I should be looking at options outside the classroom but then I get drawn into the realisation that I am a good teacher and what a waste. You need people with good skills in schools, you do not need duds in the classroom. I could be doing corporate training but that would be at the expense of some kid's education and that is what keeps me here. It is a matter of pride for me. I come from a whole history of people who think that and leaving teaching would imply that I do not really value it and I do. It is people generally who do not value education and that pisses me off.

I have always been a very positive person and I found myself getting negative. I was ready to go and that is why I decided to take leave without pay. I have decided to take leave and casual teach. I will do some drama work, maybe set up some drama work at a school, do something different and have freedom from responsibility for a while. I have been here for seven years and I have had enough. I realise I need change. I have had enough of the school, even though I have some great colleagues and the kids are great. I have been taken for granted too long and I have been here too long. I have not got stale because I am always learning and enthusiastic and this is a fantastic school in many ways, we have amazing resources and great kids. My main problem is it could be so much better if it were well run. It could be a leading school, an absolutely brilliant school. So I think I have got sick of the school not meeting its potential.

## **Reflection**

These crises demonstrate the profound uniqueness of each teacher's professional journey as well as some of the familiar landmarks. The experiences of these teachers suggest that crises

are not infrequent in the professional development journey but they do have lasting and transformational effects on a teacher's self understanding.

The crises are often symptomatic of the general realities in teachers' working lives but are manifest in unique ways. For instance, Mel's "misunderstanding" with a student, while by no means commonplace for beginning teachers is strongly related to the common experience of growth in understanding and skills of the teacher to student relationship.

Similarly, Tom's lethargy and apathy are unique manifestations of the burnout that Gold identifies as commonplace that she calls "attritions elusive partner" (Gold, 1996, p. 556). Tom's particular circumstances, a demanding family life and a frustrating school situation compound his feelings of hopelessness. Guskey and Huberman (1995) has identified a career phase that has similar attributes to Tom's experience. Speaking of the "Stock -Taking" and Interrogations at Mid-career stage Guskey and Huberman say:

Symptoms can vary from a nagging feeling of routine to a full-fledged crisis over the wisdom of having become a teacher and, once locked in, trying to break out. One teacher in my study wondered if she was doomed to die in front of the blackboard with a piece of chalk in her hand (1995, p. 199).

While Tom's experience does not match this example exactly there are clear manifestation of stocktaking of his career in order to make, perhaps radical decisions about his future.

Emma's crisis, while also unique, points to the emergence of a concerning trend in schools of violence against teachers. Her crisis points to the pressure now on schools to deal with problematic social situations and many schools seeming inability to intervene to support teachers in physical danger and distress.

The narratives of these teachers reflect the profound impact of crisis on self understanding. Mel is forced to seriously rethink her approach to students, Tom seriously considers leaving teaching and Emma revisits childhood feelings of inadequacy and leaves the school where the crisis occurred.

These times of crisis are not necessarily counterproductive. For some of these teachers, as revealed in their final reflections on this study, the crisis has led to changes that have

improved their professional and personal lives. The responsibility of systems and schools, however, may be to provide more tangible and helpful support for teachers in these times of crisis to ensure that their professional growth is not halted and their self understanding is not damaged beyond repair. Jackson (1992, p. 65) calls for role accommodation that would look to the self understanding related needs of teachers and provide targeted strategies for teachers to meet those needs. He argues that teachers in time of need should be given “...encouragement, support, sympathy, respect, and in the extreme case some form of therapy. Its goal is to help teachers handle the psychological stresses of their work” (1992, p. 65). While there is some support in the NSW system, it has proved largely ineffective or unattainable for the teachers in this study. The constructive and positive responses to these crises seem to be driven mainly by the teachers themselves.

Each of these responses reflects the constant processes of change that the self understanding of teachers is undergoing. The development is not linear. It reaches in Emma’s case back to childhood memories and in Tom’s case forward to a better imagined future. The development of self understanding in these teachers displays internal psychological complexities of emotion, memory, perception and confidence that makes this area of professional development the most difficult to understand and respond to with support.

## **Teaching futures**

### **Mel**

If I get shifted back to a junior school I don’t know what I will do, I am obviously interested in moving interstate eventually, whether that will just speed up the process for me and whether I will do something like a private drama school or something else. I don’t know yet.

I really like teaching but I cannot stand the politics, at the moment. I think I have come in at the wrong time and I am stuck in the middle of all this turmoil. I wish it would all settle down and all blow over but I am sick of the strikes and all the staff are sick of the strikes. Who can afford it anymore? I would like to keep teaching because I like it but I would like a little more stability. I am hopeful that the stability will come. I am positively thinking that perhaps one day I will be able to teach only drama.

### **Tom**

I really enjoy year advising and I am wondering what I will do after that especially if I am stuck at this school. The school does not have anything for anyone to do. The Deputy Principal takes up all the good things or it just does not happen.

My fear is, do I want to go to a difficult school and cop all the problems again? In some ways it would be great, it is a different kind of pressure. Do you stay here and “enjoy” the good life that so many teachers die for and just become one of those mid 40’s. No one is looking at getting out, most of them are talking about when they retire and I think “oh nooo”. Most of the people at my age feel the same way. The Head Teacher of physical education is starting to feel like me. He is starting to feel like he is stuck and he says at least I am not out west.

### **Emma**

I will tutor at a local theatre company because the money is good and I have worked there before and then I might go around to school and set up a drama program after school. You are taken for granted but you need to start something again to think yeah this is good. I did this because people were saying don’t give it up...don’t leave your security. I didn’t feel that way because I’m not that old and I knew that this was the time when people are saying “it would be good to have drama in the primary school”.

I am happier in myself because I have Fridays off and because I am just focussing on the drama and I do not have to be in five places at once. I can do what I am doing well. I have had that chance to recharge I feel much more positive. I would like to get to a position where I was just teaching part time so I could just concentrate on the teaching and not any of the other stuff which people find stressful. Ever since schools became decentralised, they became stressful for people. As a classroom teacher, you take responsibility for kids and that is an emotional burden, I do not have that emotional burden this year because I am focussing on the drama.

### **Reflections**

The crises explored previously seem to influence these teachers’ aspirations. Mel wants to concentrate on her teaching in a stable environment, Tom is thinking of changing jobs to alleviate his professional inertia and Emma has actually achieved her imagined catharsis, leaving the stress of school management to others. An important component of these

teachers' self understanding are their aspirations. For Tom and Emma especially, their long-term goals are identified through what they want to avoid and the sort of challenges they now want to pursue. Mel's aspirations, in line with her experience, fit the profile of a young teacher overcoming a difficult first year, who is concentrating on "mastering" (Ryan, 1986, p. 11) her teaching in a stable environment. Interestingly, change has come about because of crisis leading, for Emma at least, to a more satisfying teaching experience.

### **Concluding reflections**

As mentioned earlier the area of self understanding is perhaps the most difficult area of the professional development journey to understand and for systems to respond to. The teachers, here bear out the truth of the contention that the personal and the professional cannot be separated. They also describe in their narratives distinct phases of development that are made unique by their own personalities and contexts. What is most remarkable however is the extent to which self understanding directly changes approaches to teaching and behaviours in these teachers. A time of career apathy causes Tom to consider leaving, Emma faces a crisis which galvanises her desire to change and Mel develops strategies to make her relationships with students more appropriate and effective.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 7) argue that in order for professional development to occur, behaviours must change and teachers themselves must change. The experience of these teachers suggests that constant change is taking place in teachers' workplaces and in their lives. These changes are in reaction to the complex and dynamic problems borne of the modern realities of school education and in some cases in response to perceived needs in their own professional and personal lives. The next chapter will explore the role of the context or as Hargreaves and Fullan describe it, the role of "ecological change" (1992, p. 13) in the professional development journeys of these teachers.

## Chapter 8

### Ecological change

In the years 1999 and 2000, when this study was undertaken there was a significant amount of change occurring in schools. In secondary schools, the Higher School Certificate was being reformed and reworked. In the primary schools the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus*, which is of particular interest to this study was being trialled and was released at the end of 2000. In the midst of all the curriculum change, a protracted and particularly aggressive industrial dispute was being fought between the government employers and the teachers' union. This industrial action saw several strikes and work bans before it was resolved, more than a year after it started, exacting a toll on the whole education community.

In Jackson's terms (1992, p. 73) we must articulate each teacher's specific and unique context before we have a complete understanding of professional development. As discussed in Chapter 1, the term ecological change refers the interactions of the various active contexts within the teacher's experience, the classroom, the staffroom, the schooling system and the community in general.

The context for schooling seems to be one of permanent change. Curriculum reform, workplace reform, policy reform and other types of change seem constantly to be on the agenda of schools and the broader schooling systems. Ramsey argues that fundamental change is taking place because of new societal demands:

In teacher education and teaching, as in society more generally, many of the old certainties are being challenged on the grounds of relevance and appropriateness (2000, p. 25).

Teachers are on the front lines of the changes in societal expectations and systemic change. In that light the ecology of schools, schooling systems and the community play a very influential role in the professional development journeys of teachers. Perhaps, in some ways the rising expectations and demands on teachers make professional development much more important yet at the same time more difficult.

This chapter uses the following themes that emerged from the interviews to explore ecological change:

- Classroom
- School
- System
- Industrial action and community perceptions.

## **Classroom**

### **Ingrid (beginning primary teacher)**

Four years ago, the school only had 10 classes and now it is up to 21 so it has grown rapidly. In my class, they have all been good kids, I have integration students and I have not really had any behavioural problems. There are quite a few learning difficulties in the class but you manage with them the best way you can. I have several special needs children who are being integrated with the other kids in my class. I write reports on them every term and that helps me consider their needs. If they were not identified as having special needs, I probably would not take any more notice of them than the other kids in the class. I had four hours teacher support a week and that was about all, I did not really know what to do with them at first. I will probably use them differently next year than I did this year. It was thrown at me: I did not even know I had the integration children and then they said, “your teachers’ aide is arriving tomorrow”. I did not even know I had children with difficulties at that stage and then I had to work out what to do with the aide in the classroom for an hour.

### **Tom (experienced secondary teacher)**

In order to make a classroom we put curtains up and threw out the chairs. That meant that other classes could not be timetabled in there. We also put up the curtains so it gave the kids a sense of “this is something we own”. The response from the kids has been amazing. It’s given the subject a bounce it is something special and the kids respect the fact that they have something special, like art or science they have their own little space now. There is a direct link between your own space and respect for the subject. I really think that the room will change the feeling for the subject. When I walk in to the room I feel like I have achieved something. I feel like my drama kids have their own little space where they can feel at home and feel special. If you have a drama space, apart from kids wanting to go in it all the time it gives the subject some status. It makes it something special. We started out this year by

getting our own shirts, black drama shirts with our school name on them and with some masks. It has really worked well to the extent where music is jumping on the bandwagon, now we are working on a vest to make it look smarter. It is slowly getting there and getting better.

Later that year...

If I had to express what I do as a teacher as a percentage I would say I would be doing 50% year advising, 20% drama, and the rest pretend teaching, which is pretend because I don't prepare. I do not have any time because of the other rubbish. I sit there and do not make any effort. They say they have a right to be educated. My comeback line is I have the right to teach and you do not give me that. I say to them "this is independent learning" and there has been no discussion since then. This has been going on for a week and a half and I do not think it will resolve itself. It has been going on for a couple of weeks and I do not know how it will end. The students have started to turn on each other.

### **Emma (experienced primary teacher)**

With my teaching and with the classes I have now I think touch is incredibly important. Particularly with children that have low self esteem which I had at one time. When children cannot read they develop several defence mechanisms for coping in the classroom and I think one very powerful way of teaching is to use touch to reinforce children. At my last school I team-taught which I loved. Some people hate that, they do not want anyone to see their resources but for me that is what it is all about. It is about chatting to other people or sharing with others and seeing how their approach differs to yours and how you might be able to improve what you do by noticing how they are teaching. In this new school, I have been able to work with other teachers developing programs for the kids. I have been able to work collaboratively with a teacher who is into music and we are helping each other out. There was not much teamwork and collaboration at the other school so I ended up doing everything. Whereas at my new school people work together and I find that really encouraging. For instance, we had our open day last week and everybody did a job. That kind of team spirit is important and I had many teachers helping me out as well. I think it is so important to be valued so I made sure I thanked them.

## Reflections

Ingrid's experience reveals the reality of primary classrooms throughout NSW and provides evidence of the demands on teachers. In her first school, Ingrid is dealing with the complexities of students with learning difficulties. While this is not unusual it typifies the challenges that face teachers on a daily basis and illustrates the dimensions of the system's expectations of teachers.

Tom's approach to his classroom is to create an environment where students feel ownership. Tom is actively changing the ecology around him to suit his teaching style and the needs of his students. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 13) identify the different contexts as places for professional development. Tom's discovery that changing the student learning environment changes student perceptions and behaviours serves to encourage his own professional development. As he comments in Chapter 6: "professional development does not happen in the workshops it happens when you come back and experiment with the kids." By modifying his teaching space, he is marking out territory for his subject, signalling to students the uniqueness of the learning in this area, and developing status for the subject and his teaching.

Tom's year advising responsibilities impact heavily on the amount of time, he can devote to his teaching. In his words, he is devoting 50% of his time to year advising. Again, the impact of the school's growing responsibility for welfare is changing the emphasis of Tom's workload from teaching to caring for his year group. In his case this has meant that he is only "pretend teaching" because of the other demands the school is putting on him.

Emma's observations also indicate her engagement with specific teaching strategies, such as touch to create order and a sense of care in her classroom. Again, Emma sees her role as building self-esteem in line with her teaching philosophy of developing the whole child. This view is consistent with the changing role demands of teachers described earlier. Emma's reflections also indicate the importance of recognition of teachers' classroom work and their wider role within the school. Consistent with Tom's observation about the importance of recognition, Emma is also concerned about "being taken for granted". Significantly, at her new school she feels supported in a team and those concerns have abated. Her change in

circumstances demonstrates the effect of working on a teaching staff where all members share the responsibility for the learning of students. This approach has the potential to reduce the pressure on individual members of staff to be responsible for the “performing arts”. In Emma’s case her journey was made easier by a new school with a shared approach to responsibility.

Schools are complex ecologies where the teacher’s role exceeds that of a classroom “instructor”. The experiences of these teachers demonstrate that while the role of teaching has not lessened, there are other roles that demand teachers’ attention and sometimes, as in Tom’s case, take priority over teaching in the school context. There is also evidence here that teachers need recognition and development of their whole role, not just their teaching function. As teachers’ roles become more complex so do their support and recognition needs.

## **School**

### **Ingrid**

My main problem with this school is that it is very old fashioned and it is hard to effect change. My development here has been stopped because there is so little scope for trying new things or putting my knowledge into practice. This school, the school I was placed in for my first appointment had several teachers who were in the “twilight” of their careers. While there are two other members of staff under 30 (in a staff of 25) in the Infants Department there are few that have any recollection of their first years of teaching. The majority of the staff has been at the school for a long period. Another teacher said to me that it was dreadful that I had chosen teaching. I think most of the staff is just going through the motions until retirement. For instance, there is one teacher who has been on the same grade for 17 years.

The static nature of the staff means that change is not welcome. If you question you are told that it is like that because it has always been that way. I think that is why the school program has become so structured in order to stem and control change rather than embrace it. My supervisor and the other staff really did not understand the support I required.

There are no functioning committees in the school but we have these rigid plans. The plans come from individuals who make decisions for the whole staff. I looked for opportunities to have input into these practices but I have not been able to get any access. No wonder the staff

are so apathetic. There are some significant pressures from the parents at this school. Most of the parents are thinking about where their kids will go to high school in Year 4 and some are thinking that their kids should go into the gifted and talented classes in Year 6. That puts a lot of pressure on the kids and me. A young teacher starting at a school with an older staff population was difficult. Parents saw the majority of teachers teaching the same things in the same way they were taught. To see a young teacher create a less structured classroom environment made parents nervous. I want to be perceived by the parents as a 'good' teacher and so I altered my pedagogy to suit the beliefs of the parents. For example, if you had asked me about my views on homework when I began I would have said that it should be directly linked to the content of the day. Now, so parents think I am giving students a rigorous challenging grade four, I set them a structured repetitive homework program. I was aware of how parents talked about teachers and their perceptions of what a good education involved and I gave in to them at a time when I was losing confidence in my teaching abilities.

I have made a point of being involved in as much as I can. I was talked into joining the primary Rock Eisteddfod because I have this interest in "the drama thing". That took up a lot of time and I came away very exhausted but it was good to do. The Rock Eisteddfod tended to be more dance-based. We ended up with 100 children in the performance up in lights and on the stage. The reactions of the parents were so strong and they said "is it going to happen next year? This is so fantastic why don't you do more?" So, the parents may be influencing the Principal to say we should do this more and we should be organising it for different age groups. The Rock Eisteddfod was good for getting to know the staff and for them to see where I was coming from maybe. So, I am probably glad I was pushed into doing it.

The Creative Arts (apart from extra-curricular music) has a low priority within the school. Visual Arts is taught at a very low level. There are several variations of a lesson where the kids have a look at Van Gogh's picture and paint a picture like it. There is a big literacy push and they have a different 5/6 program that has a big priority. They are trying to make it like middle schooling, trying to give kids different teachers and different subjects and teach across the different classes.

Music has only just come in 2 or 3 years ago and it is being pushed by the executive and by the boss. The Principal has a special interest in music, not that he is musical, but I think he likes the praise and everything that comes from seeing the band in the local shopping centre,

so he has been pushing a lot of music. I have a string instrument background and that is probably why I got the job here because he wanted someone with an instrumental background to support the band, the choir and music generally.

## **Mel**

I feel comfortable here because mum and dad have always been at a school so it is not foreign. I am quite comfortable I feel like I have been here for ages already. I have to do a few things to make myself more at home like putting some posters on the walls and making things a little more homely but I am quite comfortable.

When I heard about my appointment, I did not know about the school at all. I know there are a lot worse schools, and some people might tell you this is a difficult school. I do not think there are many discipline problems here but that is more to do with the culture that the kids have grown up with and the sorts of families they come from. When I accepted the appointment, I did not know that it was going from a Year 7 to 12 school to a junior high school. When I got here, I was surprised to find that there was only a Year 12, no Year 11, and that Year 12 would be gone by the end of the year.

I am in two minds about this structure. I am happy that I am able to deal with the junior years before I tackle the HSC course, to get some more experience. I was unhappy that I would not have the experience straight away of teaching the HSC course because I really enjoyed HSC drama as a student and I love teaching Year 11 and 12 students.

Twenty-five people transferred out of here in the last year and the majority of them went to the senior high school. A few people went to other places so the school has had a massive change. There were people acting in all sorts of positions – there were people acting this, and acting that, all over the school, acting Deputy and acting Head Teacher. It was very confusing for a newcomer trying to work out who's who around the place and then all of a sudden it reverts again. I was constantly wondering about who I was supposed to see for different things. It was very confusing in the first term and it was very messy, but it is starting to get a bit better now as they employ more people for different roles. People will still be transferring out of here though, I do not think they will ever stop people transferring out of here. People are not leaving because it is a bad school but because they will not have the experience of Years 11 and 12 anymore.

Later that year...

I am happy here now, very happy I do not know if it is a good thing for new teachers to be constantly coming into the school. I think that might be a good thing. I would like to see teachers stick it out for a full cycle of Years 7-10 and I am hoping to do that.

I thought at first the school was disorganised but then I guess I thought that if you have 25 people transfer out of here at the end of last year, it is not something the school can deal with quickly and I know that there will be a lot of empty spaces here for a little while.

I have to be a little bit more organised as I go to and from class though, because I have three spaces, English room, drama room, staffroom, and they are a long way apart. The music rooms are right up the very back of the school so if I'm up there for any reason, particularly if it's the musical or something extra curricula like that, when the bell goes I have to be organised. I have to have everything planned, I have to get all the way back down here and get all my stuff together and then get to class and that makes me a bit late sometimes. So, I have to get my organisation and pre-planning skills worked out.

The rest of the staff here are fantastic. I do not know too much about the other staffrooms around the place but the English staffroom that I am in is fantastic. I am the only drama teacher at this school. I am the only trained drama teacher although there are a couple of the teachers in the staff room that have taught it before. They have been very helpful and supportive. If I have a query, they are happy to support me and help me out. The staff in the school has been incredibly helpful. I had the Principal and one of the Deputies drop in to one of my drama classes today and say, "Oh, how are you going" and we had a friendly chat. They were interested in seeing the kids perform. I did not find that threatening at all. In some schools I would be worried if the Deputy or the boss came in, but here they say to me "drop in whenever you've got a free moment whenever you feel like it drop in and say hello."

My Head Teacher is very knowledgeable and he is very good with discipline and classroom management. At the moment, we have had a couple of meetings about ways that I might be able to improve my teaching because he is doing a report on me because this is my probationary year. He said to me, "look we're going to have a look at a few ways that we can improve just a couple of things. I'm not saying that you're doing anything wrong, right now, but here are a couple of things that you might like to try and I'll drop into your room and see

how you're going and we'll work out a timetable." Just today, when I arranged to speak to him second period we sat down and had a conversation. We are going to meet every Monday afternoon to have a chat about how I am going. He said to me, "I want you to get through this, I want you to do well at this. I want you to come out of it feeling good".

Later that year...

The Head Teacher can be a bit moody sometimes. I think he gets a bit bogged down and when you have something to say, he gets impatient. For instance, I was going to write a referral on this student and I asked him what he thought. He said, "Oh, you've got another problem, have you?" He can be a bit sharp and jagged like that. The other teachers have had the same experience. I spoke to a couple of the other teachers about it and said I felt a bit let down and that I did not know how to handle the situation. They said "he is just like that" and since then, he has been very helpful. So it is only every now and again that I do not feel supported when somebody is getting a bit bogged down in their own work that they cannot give me a hand. I cannot expect everybody to be dropping everything all the time just to help me.

There are teachers involved with the musical that have not pulled their weight. So, it has been just myself and another male teacher that have done all the work. These other teachers say, "that's fantastic, that's great", but they never do anything. They do not do anything but they think they are doing everything and that bugs me. They are dead set certain that they are doing all the work and that the other guy and me are just doing all the little bits for them. We were there for four days during the holidays and working hard after school and at night times and at meetings and in our free periods. These people trying to take all the credit have really annoyed me. The musical got a lot of attention for drama from the kids. I would do it again. The kids learnt about teamwork. There was a girl in particular who had been nothing but trouble all year and when she decided finally to work really hard she was able to create this fantastic team that were so helpful and productive. She realised by the end she had skills as a leader and could be successful at something on this scale. She was my most satisfying project this year.

Later that year...

My supervising Head Teacher has been too busy lately. He is a valuable source of information but he is a stress head and he is a strong unionist. He has been far too busy to

have time for anything and I feel sorry for him because he likes to have time for people, but now he does not have any time for anyone. During the musical, he gave me a lot of support. He gave me a lot of support in getting some furniture, when the boss was not giving me support. The boss said the money was available for textbooks only, not furniture. I told the boss that we did not need textbooks but we did need some furniture and my Head Teacher was supportive on that one.

The rest of the staff is mixed. Different people have encouraged me in different ways but then sometimes you get that feeling that someone has been having a go at you behind your back. I am not the kind of person who takes kindly to people talking behind my back. I would prefer it if they came up to me and told me they have a problem. Sometimes you get that niggly, horrible, quiet feeling that something is happening and you are not aware of it. The feeling passes but it is not very pleasant.

People do not have respect for me they think I am just a first year out, what would I know? I am not inexperienced in life. I can still have an opinion and I think I have a right to that opinion. If those people listened more closely and took a few things from my experience on board they might learn something themselves. Some of these people think I should be sitting around and shutting up and not doing anything that is slightly innovative. Maybe they think I have to be sitting there running my class like it is some sort of army training camp as opposed to getting to know the kids. I am so close to their age and I have a lot in common with them. They think it is all my fault that a kid has developed a crush on me and it is not my fault. I did not do anything to encourage it. Perhaps I could have handled it better but that is only because I have taken everyone else's advice.

Later that year...

I am excited that I am moving to the senior high school. It will give me the chance to teach senior kids and not spend all my time controlling kids. It is a good school and I have heard nothing but positive reports from the staff down there. They are all in one huge staffroom and there will be a lot more people there next year.

All the staff are very happy at the senior high school there and they think the boss is the best Principal in the world. Everybody seems very enthusiastic and happy. The staff does not feel

threatened by the boss. The only thing the staff is being threatened by is the staffing uncertainties, everything else is smooth.

**In the next year...**

Now I am at the senior high school, I have complete freedom and it is so much more flexible as long as the kids are doing all right. I have not even thought of fighting back because I have not had anything to fight against. At this school my Head Teacher is great and I am very comfortable with her. Last year my Head Teacher was always trying to slash me down. He used to say “you shouldn’t do that”, whack! “You shouldn’t have that”, whack! I can stand up for what I believe in this year because I have the experience behind me and I do not need to be as tentative anymore. People can be very accepting and I know where I stand. The staff all have lunch together in the one common room and it is nice to get to know people outside your own faculty. I have even started going out with some of the teachers here on social activities. I have less time and I am a lot busier but I am more interested in being involved with people. There is another drama teacher here and she is very busy. She does a lot for me and gives me information when she has it and she appreciates it when I do things for her.

I love working with older kids who for the most part want to be here. There are no discipline problems. The kids sit there and listen which really surprised me and you have to be so well prepared because you don’t spend that extra 25 minutes saying “be quiet, sit down don’t touch that”. It is still a challenge to motivate the kids. They are a lot more interested but they are still very hard to motivate. I am happy here at the senior high because of the environment as well as not being a first year out anymore. I am very pleased with the current situation but I would have preferred a Year 7-12 school. I have built up such a good relationship with the kids at the other school in Years 7-10 but I still need that extra experience.

One of the Principal’s philosophies is that a good leader serves. He spends all of his time making sure the staff and the kids are being looked after. There seems to be quite a lot of good humour here. It could not be a better staff to work on, everyone is nice, everyone is really approachable and supportive, and people do things for each other. It is not a matter of “that’s not my job” it’s more “how can I help you do your job better” and I love that. It is good to know that there are people around that you can talk to even about personal issues. There are a few staff members that are closer to my age group, and there are a few that are

older. It is good to have a mixture of people you can call on. It is good everybody really supports each other, which is different to my old school.

If I was to put on a show here, I think it would be a lot more successful because the staff and the Principal would be more supportive. The boss is not concerned about how much time you are taking off class but rather how we can better accommodate something he believes is valuable for the school. If he does not believe it is valuable, he will tell you. He is completely honest at all times, he is not one of those “backdoor politicians” who runs behind your back and does something to sabotage you. I thought I was dealing with a lot of that last year.

### **Tom**

Our history department is content driven unfortunately so it does not allow me to work collaboratively with my colleagues. There is a lot of prescription, “you must do this topic by this day”. So, when I have the opportunity I always try to work with my colleagues. I am driven by the content the Head Teacher wants me to get through whereas in drama we are not driven by any sort of content. If we get through improvisation or playbuilding that is fine and if it runs into Term 2 or 3 that is fine as well, so there is no need to worry.

I was happy to be appointed permanently to this school because I had worked in childcare for six and a half years at night and I was happy to give that away so that I did not have to work two jobs to survive during my holidays. I was apprehensive as I had heard it was a good school and I had spent most of my last year at another school teaching boys so I suppose I was ready for them. I went there thinking it might be OK. When I started, there was no drama at the school and I knew that it would be a lot of hard work establishing and growing the subject. They were only offering it to Year 11 and 12 students. The first thing the Head Teacher said was “you’ll have to teach 11 or 12”, and I said “I’m not doing that it defeats the purpose of me coming here. If you are going to teach drama in Year 11 and 12 as an elective, the kids are already two years behind and you are going to expect miracles. Sorry I don’t produce miracles overnight”.

Our Head Teacher died so we have moved from English to Creative Arts. Her death had an impact in the first year but she was like a number who just went out the door. For us it has been a blessing. Our new Head Teacher is strong and can work with the boss whereas the

other Head Teacher could not. She is willing to fight for our professional development. Her main concern is the results.

The other drama teacher here gets on very well with the boss. The other day she said we need \$500 to finish the drama room and he hesitated, but she said, “we need it, you are not supporting the arts, you only support music” and he caved in. She gets the money so the boss can have a quiet life. I think she is a good teacher because she gets right into it. She overcommits to what is going on. She gets involved in her classes, she really wants to do well, and she wants the kids to do really well to her detriment physically and mentally.

This year she had two pieces in State Festival that drove her insane. I said to her, “don’t do it”. Eventually I got out of her that she had to do it because she has to be seen to be doing it by the school community. It is not competitive for me but it might be for her. She knows that I know many people from outside the school. She thinks that it is important for her to have that same reputation and she constantly drops names. If I speak to people, I speak to people. It does not bother me who knows me and who doesn’t know me because in reality I am really a nobody. She has this self-conscious approach to drama.

The other staff treat drama like a joke. They think all the dropkicks go to drama because they have nothing else to do which is fine by me, I mean apart from the fact some of it is true! It is the same thing you say to a home economics teacher: “all you do is cook and sew”. We do have the rejects in drama, who do not do history because they do not want to write.

In order to build up drama in the school I spent a lot of time outside school involved in drama festivals, drama camps and sitting on audition panels. They were useful for drama’s profile and they helped me with my development. Those things bring me back to what the reality is in the classroom and what you can honestly produce. They reminded me of what I can expect to produce at a classroom level, sometimes. At the same time, I question my teaching all the time. I often wonder how bad is it or how good it is? I go out there on these panels and I think well, at least my work is not as bad as that person’s. I am starting to get a sense of what the expectations are at each level, K to 6, right up to 7 to 12 and I know I have a really good idea of the standard. That generated my profile at school because kids knew that I was doing certain things. In addition, once SPOTS got into the State Festival that was the impetus of drama starting up. That group was instrumental in performing everywhere and anywhere.

The group I did SPOTS with had another teacher and she was not coping well with the personalities. I told her that she was going to have problems, which she eventually did. I saw that at my previous school. When you have a strong group of kids in the class eventually, something has to give and usually it the teacher who breaks. I had the poem SPOTS and I was looking to use the poem in some way. I had an idea without the right kids to create it. The only possibility was my Year 9 English class. I had 9E7, with one Anglo and probably about two ethnics and the rest Asians so I knew that it was an uphill battle straight away.

SPOTS was too complicated for them and then I sat down with the other teacher and started talking to her what she could do with the poem. From there, we both worked on the idea and related it to *MacBeth*. We could not think of an opening scene and eventually we came up with the idea of SPOTS. She rehearsed a lot of it but at the same time, came to me for support because she could not cope with the personalities in there. It was a class of personalities that clashed with her sort of personality and her teaching style. Her teaching style is chalk and talk and very directed and prescriptive. Whereas the class was not like that, they needed to be persuaded rather than ordered. SPOTS provided credibility and momentum for the continuing development of drama at this school.

I have learnt from the development of SPOTS to be aware of the personalities. I learnt that very quickly. I learnt that the boys were out of control, to some extent you have to give them the glory, and as a teacher you step back from it. After all, you are the teacher and they are the kids doing all the work. That is something, which I have been able to do and I do not think the other teacher was able to do. She found that frustrating. She wanted to receive the kudos from everyone. She struggled with the fact that it is the boys' show and the teacher has to step back and let them take all the accolades. I am happy to disappear into the back room and do what I have to do. So I think that has had a big effect on the way I look at things.

### **Emma**

I love teaching the older grades as well, it is a different sort of challenge. Years 2 and 3 really appeal to me now. I really do think people are cut out to teach certain age groups. I do think it is important to get a range of experience and not be typecast because you can be lumped somewhere, where you do not want to be. I have been on Kindergarten for four years, I loved

it, and I think I was good at it, but I really needed a change. I am really enjoying that now I am on Year 2. I want to get experience with all the age groups.

When I am teaching drama across classes I talk to the teachers and they talk to me about what they are doing with the class in other subjects. I can then work that into my program because I have that kind of experience. I think teaching drama across the school is good because if a teacher is not going to teach the subject well, it is better that the kids are taught by someone who wants to teach drama and is good at it.

Teaching has a very strong welfare role because you have them every day for a year and you take on a parental role. I take on more of a welfare role than some teachers would.

I think your role is more than imparting knowledge, especially in the primary school you are responsible for the whole child. You are responsible for their emotional and social development and you need to equip students with skills for living. They need to understand how to be flexible so teachers need to be reasonably flexible in their approach.

We have one teacher at the school who is not a good teacher. She has only been here a couple of years and it has caused divisions in the staff where there never have been divisions before. We have three or four staff members who are incredibly professional and incredibly good. They are women in their 40's and they have all done very well themselves in other fields and have come into teaching later because they wanted to explore that option. I see many women of that generation who are fantastic teachers and fantastic people. They are bright, enthusiastic and educated people. I have learnt a lot from them and I think we respect each other as professionals. You have to maintain a sense of being very professional at school. I think that is important and it is important to show that to parents. I develop through positive feedback and from students, parents and the community and from other teachers as well. I think what helps you develop is a deliberate system or network of support that you have control over.

The next year...

I have been discouraged by the lack of resources in schools. This is a middle class area and I have to work in an awful space that is open to the elements and very grotty. At the other school, I work in a room where there is not enough space for drama. The kids manage but it is not fair. Drama needs a lot of space and these rooms are completely unworkable. The

syllabus says to use your space effectively but that presupposes you have space. I thought I could go to a school that has wonderful facilities and I would have the space to teach drama properly. I constantly imagine how much better my program would be if I had resources. I could ask for things but there is no money. At least at my last school we had the money that came from other sources so I had money to attend inservices and buy resources but I was unhappy there for lots of other reasons.

Another thing that can be discouraging about this school is the amount of paperwork with student report portfolios and the like. I know I had this at my other school and it is exactly the same here. Teachers are finding the amount of work they have to do is overwhelming and people get snappy and cranky in the middle of assessment time because it is so stressful. There is so much to do. I think that there is too much demanded of teachers in terms of committee meetings and other administrative tasks. On the other hand, I appreciate that type of organisation because there was so little structure at my last school. There is always a balance between organisation and over-controlling. Here it tends toward the over-controlling. Many teachers here are constantly going from meeting to meeting that are not as relevant as they should be.

I am very careful with the way I approach a new school. Since changing jobs I am more relaxed, I am not trying to run too many things at once. If you overdo it or come in as the big know-it-all you are always going to face resistance. I always underplay everything I am doing. The main thing is the kids absolutely love drama and the demand is so great that I now have to run two classes at lunchtime.

That was lacking at my last school, because of poor organisation, not because of good feeling and goodwill just because proper structures had not been put into place. When the executive changes people become unclear about their role. So there has to be a lot of organisation and structure to help you to develop. I have had to put all the systems in place for my own development and the development of others in the school myself and that has been very hard. I have been trying to change organisational structures in the school and I do not have enough time to do it. I am supposed to be inservicing staff on the new English syllabus but I have no time and there is nothing planned across the school. You end up doing the work on your weekends or at some other time and if I do not do it no one else will. Nobody said to me, “here’s a program to model on, why don’t you do this?” I have always been the one helping

new people myself. I have always ended up in the K-2 area being one of the more experienced people that has helped everyone else without ever being helped myself, and I have found that hard. I think the most important thing in schools is good mentoring and that just is not happening and it never happened for me.

There was so little direction at my last school and I found that very frustrating. The school had grown enormously, too quickly and the structures were not in place for the organisation the school needed for that kind of growth. The lack of organisation was very difficult for staff. I was running around all the time doing everything. I was acting Executive Teacher for a term and I was doing nothing that I was not doing before I took on the role. I do not mind doing something new as long as it is structured and organised. The Deputy Principal here is actually inservicing the staff on the syllabus. Some teachers do not like that but it is important we are trained and inserviced. When new syllabuses come out schools do feel they have to implement them and that is stressful for classroom teachers because they have to absorb new information and that increases their already heavy load.

## **Reflections**

The role of the teaching environment or school culture provides substantial encouragement and discouragement for many teachers in their professional development journeys. As Ramsey (2000, p. 90) says:

Nothing is served by having high quality teacher education programs if the environments, settings and structures in which they teach are not strongly oriented toward practice at the highest possible professional standards.

Ingrid's experience seems far from the ideal that Ramsey urges. Her experience is of a school environment that is unsupportive and sometimes obstructive to her development. Her experience was of a school community that was intent on changing her to fit the school culture around her and not to introduce new, perhaps more effective pedagogy. Ingrid's experience is an example of problems that face the NSW system in general. Ramsey reports that the average age of teachers is approximately 43 years of age (2000, p. 190). This aging teaching population is especially entrenched at schools like Ingrid's where, because of the transfer system, the teachers at that school are significantly older. The NSW system allows points to be accrued each year that contribute toward transfers to other schools. Ingrid's school is sought after by many teachers and as such, the teachers with the highest points have

better access to schools that are more desirable. This situation of course has its opportunities if the school is able to recognise the experience of older teachers and match it with the energy and innovation that younger teachers often bring to a school community. For Ingrid, the school culture seems unable to respond to her skills and has left her “unconfident”. In her words the ageing school culture strives “...to stem and control change rather than embrace it.”

As mentioned earlier the roles and responsibilities of teachers and consequently schools is changing rapidly. Another manifestation of this changing role is the extraordinary pressure exerted by parents on beginning teachers. Ingrid’s change in approach to homework is motivated by parental expectations rather than the learning outcomes of students. Similarly, her involvement in the Rock Eisteddfod is encouraged by parents and provides some professional encouragement in an otherwise bleak year for professional recognition and development.

Ingrid’s experience reflects the difficulties for young teachers in an ageing system. Obviously, this study only reflects Ingrid’s points of view and as discussed earlier young teachers often modify their expectations and teaching approaches to meet the needs and realities of the school. These changes, however, do not seem to be positive, rather they seem to attack the confidence and energy of young teachers. In Ingrid’s situation, there are clear examples of how the school can cause profound discouragement on the professional development journey.

Mel’s experience of the school culture has much in common with the difficulties experienced by Ingrid. By contrast Mel’s reflections highlight the difficulty associated with rapid ecological change and its attendant impact on teachers and their professional development. In 1998, the Department of Education and Training reformed a number of schools to create collegiates, where a series of junior secondary colleges feed into a centralised senior college. The departures Mel witnessed from her initial school were a product of this reorganisation. This change makes the process of beginning teacher induction difficult. Mel’s relationship with her Head Teacher demonstrates the impact of this change on all parties. This situation also demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining consistent quality supervision for beginning teachers when Head Teachers have so many other demands on their time. Conversely, her early experiences at the new school demonstrate the change in role from beginning to career consolidation where the beginning teacher does not feel under such intense scrutiny. The

more positive relationships at the new school may also indicate a change in Mel's ability to cope with the schooling situation.

Mel's experience provides an illustration of the effects of the school environment on the development of the teacher. In her first year and her first school, she saw the influence of the school as largely negative. A change in school with a more effective Principal and more supportive staff has led to a more satisfied teacher and a more positive and hopeful approach providing evidence for the important influence of the environment, and the change in environment on the development and the growth of teachers.

Tom's experience shows the importance of working to create an environment within the school to attract students to his subject. His narrative also demonstrates the use of different staff member's skills to improve the standing of and support for the subject area. His own professional development initiatives indicate the strategy of assessing and understanding other school cultures in order to build and consolidate his own teaching within the school. His reflections also point to the significance of the specific characteristics of each context. For example, his discussion of the needs of boys, as discussed earlier, creates a very different context from that of the other teachers. Tom recognises the constraints of the context and works with other teachers to develop his own teaching and his own subject. Tom's reflections show the importance of navigating and improvising responses to the prevailing context. His approach, expressed here and in other narratives, is to develop approaches that complement the prevailing context, choosing to avoid some contextual difficulties, accept some and confront others.

Emma's narrative confirms many of the points raised by the other teachers. Emma's most concerning reflection relates to the lack of organisation and support for professional development in her school. Perhaps through lack of organisation or lack of interest, she is charged with organising professional development for the whole school. This seems an unfair imposition on a classroom teacher. Her narrative also illustrates the changing role of the teacher moving from teaching to student welfare:

Teaching has a very strong welfare role because you have them every day for a year and you take on a parental role. I take on more of a welfare role than some teachers would.

She also describes the added imposition of paperwork on the growing welfare roles that teachers are expected to fulfil. The expectation is that these roles will be undertaken in facilities that do not allow for adequate teaching and learning with resources that make the task more difficult.

In contrast to Ingrid's situation Emma demonstrates the positive influence of older teachers on the school community. She sees their influence on the school and her as welcome and positive. Emma's experience with these teachers shows the value of teachers who enter the profession after having other careers. Their influence on Emma's professional development also indicates the positive influence older teachers can have for change on the school ecology. Emma's narrative demonstrates the role of change in context for professional development. While she was able to assess the obstacles to her development and satisfaction in her old school, change and hindsight allow her to focus on setting new professional development goals and priorities in her new situation

The significance of the school context cannot be underestimated in an assessment of the teacher's professional development journey. These narratives demonstrate the negative and positive impact the school can have on teacher development and the importance of change in context in changing the teacher's actual development. These narratives also demonstrate the impact of change in schools for the development of teachers. It provides vivid illustrations of the negative effect the moribund school can have on the development of teachers and the confusion and disorganisation rapid change brings to the development of the beginning teacher. Overall, these narratives bear out Ramsey's (2000, p. 90) contention that professional development programs and structures will be futile in the face of intransigent and regressive school cultures that discourage teacher professional development through neglect or inadequate resourcing.

## **System**

Mel's narrative has been changed at her request to protect her anonymity. At the time of the study, the schools she was in were undergoing reorganisation that meant that the tenure of the staff was uncertain. This meant that teachers could not be secure in the positions they currently held. The details of this situation have been removed to ensure Mel's school is not identifiable.

**Mel**

The instability here means that the staff is very bitter and very negative, because many people are saying perhaps this is something that the teachers union has not done well. Some people are saying they will leave teaching. I guess it is another morale issue. I am at that stage where my job is on the line and I have one year to prove myself. The Principal does not agree with it here, I do not know how the Principals at the other schools feel, none of the staff agrees with it.

It is a lot of pressure but we have so much to do here now that we are wondering how we are going to tackle issues like this. I know the Parents and Citizens Association President was talking to the Minister for Education saying there was unhappiness with the situation. Under this system, where are you going to get stability? I do not know what his reaction was but I know the issue was raised with him and he realises the situation.

**Tom**

I am worried about the pressure the new HSC will put on teachers. The pressure will be abundant. There are no textbooks for many subjects and for English there have been massive changes. Teachers are already concerned about the performance of their students but this makes student achievement even more difficult. The ends of the spectrum are catered for, the low achievers can do the vocational courses and the high achievers can do the more rigorous HSC subjects. What will happen to the kids in the middle who used to do the general courses? They will be washed away. For instance, my HSC drama group is typical of the problems that the new HSC will bring, they are mediocre. I have accepted where these kids are going to achieve and I have accepted where they will slot in and I will teach to that slot rather than try to go beyond it because if I try to go beyond, that is when I get stressed.

There are a few teachers in my age group and some of them feel stuck as well, in this school. The Head Teacher physical education feels frustrated and we look at each other and say there must be a better place somewhere. He says, "it's better than the other schools we've taught at" and I suppose I agree. The computer teacher is realising that there is more money in computing, so he is starting to look elsewhere. There is very little reason or incentive to stay.

**Emma**

I know some other staff are leaving teaching and there is a general feeling like that in the teaching community because the current conditions are not good. For example, all our support-teaching funds are being cut and we have no support teacher now. I think the immediate environment affects you but I also think things like government policies and the media presentation of teachers is damaging. I really do think that effects staff morale.

## **Reflections**

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992, p. 4) place the onus on the system to provide teachers with opportunities to teach. As the role of the teacher becomes increasingly complex, the system must respond by improving support to teachers and giving them contexts that support opportunities for quality teaching. The evidence here is that the system is often preventing that opportunity. Mel's situation causes instability and makes it hard for her to concentrate on the long-term wellbeing of her students, not to mention her career. In Emma's case the lack of resource provision (mentioned earlier) and the cutting of existing support mean that her opportunities to teach and her own feelings of satisfaction are compromised.

Tom sees his opportunity to teach limited by changes in curriculum. He is most concerned about the changes to the Higher School Certificate. In his view, the curriculum has narrowed resulting in middle ability students being disenfranchised. Tom sees these students as being "washed away" by curriculum reforms. Tom also feels the impact of the lack of change. Gold cites a lack of career mobility (1996, p. 549) as a major factor in teacher attrition. Tom's lack of career mobility suggests that this is also a problem in the NSW context. His repeated efforts to find new career options had come to nothing during the course of this research and he feels, to put in his terms, "stuck". Tom's reflections reveal that system action (on curriculum reform) and inaction (not providing a career change) can both affect the teacher and their perceptions of their opportunity to teach. Therefore, for the professional development journey, system change can be a discourager and an encourager depending on the circumstances.

## **Industrial action and community perceptions**

**Mel**

The industrial action over the new award<sup>46</sup> this year has been very disheartening. I thought that teachers were looked on by the community a bit more professionally than they are. For me the strikes are an indication of how we are valued by the community. It is distressing to know that the people who employ you and pay you do not value you. I feel like I am not valued for my skills and expertise. The same goes for people who have been teaching for 30 years. Why are they having their value questioned?

It is very distressing particularly when you first come in to teaching, suddenly to have this bad feeling thrust upon you. Within the first two weeks of last year, it started and it has been going on the whole of my career so far. I cannot stand the fact that I am not valued. It makes me feel like just putting in the work that is required and doing nothing more. I am thinking, is teaching all about this? Is it all about fighting? Spending your time fighting to prove you are worth something. It is not acceptable. I have thought about leaving teaching already because of this. I have thought about other professions I want to get into and it is mainly because of this garbage. Everyone is feeling bad about it.

The stop work meeting has put a bit of pressure on the government for a resolution. I really enjoyed the first strike for the experience. It was great to see people out there and fighting but the industrial action has been full on at this school. I agree with everything we are striking for but I cannot afford to strike, so I had to go out but I will be tightening my belt over Christmas because I am on a low wage.

In the next year...

The mood during the campaign at my last school was horrendous. There was enormous pressure on people and an enormous amount of backstabbing went on. I went on strike last time because I believed in the cause but I am getting sick of it, I do not have the money. There was really no option but to strike and that cuts into a first year out wage. At the senior high where I am now things are different, if you cannot afford to strike you do not have to.

### **Tom**

The industrial dispute has caused a lot of tension. I cannot afford to take any time off financially. If I take time off of any sort, I cannot repay the loan or feed my kids, one or the

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<sup>46</sup> In NSW wage agreements with employers are sometimes called awards.

other so I am stuck. I am in a militant faculty that are so full on into the whole process. I say, “Take your 16% settlement and run because you’re not going to get any better”. My views have caused some minor tensions in the staffroom. Our staffroom is very negative. They follow the Federation line and will not budge. There are some faculties similar to that and some who are slowly starting to divide because they are running out of steam as well. They are just getting tired of the whole process.

We have a number of non-union members and a whole lot of people who refuse to strike at any time. I have a philosophical problem with the strikes, I pay union fees and I expect them to do something. All you see on the media is the Federation walking out on meetings, you do not see the government walking out. I was always taught that if you were negotiating, you sit at the table and let the other group walk out and take the upper hand. You never pack up and say we are going. That is the impression I am getting. We are not getting any progress in the dispute because each time they hit a stalemate the union president decides she can’t cope any more and packs up with all her cronies and walks out. It is probably not true but that is what I am seeing.

Many people are saying we cannot strike anymore, we need the money to survive on. Many of our teachers have their kids in private schools and a lot of women work as teachers to put their kids through the private system. Any loss of pay is creeping into their school fees or jeopardising sending little Johnnie out to Speech and Drama lessons. It is up and down for me, I have become very blinkered I turn up do what I have to do and go home, no more.

I am sick of strikes. I am starting to sound like a parent saying, “OK it’s been going on long enough and my kids are suffering”. My Year 12’s are definitely suffering. I should not care, but every day we have off is less time we have to work on their HSC. They will be affected in the end. Many of the other teachers know where I stand and financially I cannot do much about it. Teachers will eventually get something out of it but the kids are losing time after time.

### **Emma**

The industrial action is in response to the attack on public education and the attempt to privatise it. The media just think it is a pay issue and do not understand that all this undermining is at the hands of a Labor government. This flows on to community attitudes

and that impacts on your social life. I go out and people say, “you are just a teacher”. Most of my friends would not say that to me but other people make a joke and I just laugh it off. There is no point fighting it because they have no idea. I do think that has an impact on your self worth and your feeling as a professional. It hurts when people are saying “you don’t work hard, you don’t do very much, you are only teaching little kids so it must be easy, you are not doing hard things”. There is a real lack of understanding, that tends to pull you back and that often makes me angry. People just do not understand and I feel like getting them into my classroom and getting them to try to do it and see how they feel at the end of the day. They would be absolutely stuffed. I find this side of teaching very discouraging.

I get very disillusioned and I wonder whether I am having any effect at all. I am dedicated, I am making a difference and so I keep going which is what the government rely on. Industrial disputes affect the morale of the school, which affects you as an individual, which in turn affects your teaching. You do not feel valued. I have been marching and standing out the front with fliers saying, “this is what they are doing. It is a teacher, parents and community versus the government issue. If we do not stand up we are going to lose and there will be huge disparities between schools. Schools in wealthy areas will put money in while poorer areas will not have any funding and we will not have any quality graduates. We need your support”.

I tell them the marks for entrance into teacher training are too low and primary education is undervalued. I feel angry about all this and I feel fed up that all my qualifications are being undervalued. I like being in the classroom and I believe in teaching but how many people have got to leave the classroom before governments realise what is happening? I was talking to people who were well qualified as teachers and not one of them is a teacher. They have all gone into other things. What does that say about how society values teaching? Many people think if they have been to school, they know what it is all about. They think you are with a bunch of kids you muck around and go home and it is easy.

I have trained my friends well so they know not to start up about “lazy teachers”. If someone does say something, I make a comment or a joke about it. There is no point in being confrontational because people do not understand and their lack of imagination is their problem. I understand that people have jobs that keep them there for very long hours. My

husband works very hard and does very long hours. I would not want to be in his position and I prefer the hours in teaching so there are upsides.

The staff had developed negativity due to the dissatisfaction felt throughout the profession because of negative media reports. Everyone was getting very down. The strikes and media do have an effect. If someone continually says you are useless all the time and you get bad feedback and stupid photos in the paper, you start feeling like and becoming what they say you are. You can turn into a whinger and there is nothing worse than whingeing teacher. I have made a habit of just being positive. You can affect the whole environment of the school like that. People really like that.

Later that year...

Generally, people feel more positive about the settlement because the industrial situation is not being talked about all the time. Now changes have been made and the government is finally going to give us back pay I feel more positive about it all. When it was a current issue, and there were strikes, it was never far from people's minds and now we can put it aside because there has been an agreement and they are getting on with things now. It isn't the topic of conversation every recess and every lunch so it keeps morale up. It makes a change having it settled. I realised you get on with the job if you value it. You make choices, you say, "well if this is not what I want I can choose something else". People can get themselves down and get into whingey patterns. That is unbearable because you are not helping anything by whingeing. You may as well do something positive or proactive if that is what you think or just get out of teaching altogether.

People found the strikes very hard but when things actually started to happen, people realised that things only happen because of strikes. I went on strike every time because I believed in it and I thought that if others were losing their pay then I would lose mine too because it's all or nothing. There is no point in anyone doing it if you are not all going to do it, even if you do not agree with it. I would strike every time even with all the negative media stuff, you do read it and it does affect you. It should not, you just have to keep on going with what you are doing but it is disheartening because it is undermining your profession.

## Reflection

Poor public perceptions of teachers and the ongoing and highly divisive industrial disputes have emerged as concerns for the teachers in this study. In the period of this study, the government and the Teachers' Federation (teachers' union) were involved in a year long struggle over the improvement of wages and conditions for teachers. This led to vilification from both sides, strikes and general community dissatisfaction. Emma sees the dispute as a direct attack on public education that is simplified by the media. The end result being the deterioration of respect for teachers.

Tom's reflections highlight the divisions within teaching about the role the teachers' union plays in these negotiations. He sees strikes as reducing opportunities for his students to achieve and is concerned that his students are being affected. The other issue for Tom lies in the financial burden industrial action places on him and his young family. Mel also sees this as an issue but feels compelled by others within the school to strike. The industrial dispute, which had covered almost Mel's entire career made her rethink her decision to become a teacher.

The teachers here demonstrate the damage that the seemingly biennial rounds of industrial disputes in NSW have on the development of morale and self respect within the teaching community. These conflicts reduce teachers' ability to teach and diminish their standing in the community. Protracted industrial disputes provide little benefit for teachers, schools, students or the government. The only outcomes seemingly being the vilification of teachers and a drop in regard for the public education system. The reflections of these teachers provide ample evidence that a new and more constructive method of industrial negotiation is required.

The teachers here see a definite link between the industrial dispute and the deterioration of respect for teachers. Perhaps Mel puts it best when she says:

The industrial action this year has been very disheartening and the new award. I thought that teachers were looked on by the community a bit more professionally than they are.

Mel's sentiments provide the link between the industrial dispute and the decline in public perception of teachers. Gold, detailing the North American experience makes the following comments:

...criticism has a way of wearing individuals down so that their morale and self-esteem are greatly damaged. In fact, teachers are affected in a number of ways. Many feel forced to do low quality teaching as a result of the pressures. Added stress often affects them physically (illness etc). Other teachers choose to try and keep high standards in their teaching, which often leads to physical and psychological distress that has an effect on them and also on their families. For some teachers the choice is to leave the profession (1996, p. 550).

Gold's findings resonate with the teachers in this study. The effect of community perceptions on Tom is to do the bare minimum, Mel considers leaving and Emma strives to maintain a standard while non-teachers devalue her professionalism. Locally the antecedents of this deterioration and their effects are little different. Ramsey reports:

At a time of rising expectations it is ironic that two trends are clearly discernable. First the status of teaching in NSW and nationally has declined, a view widely expressed in submissions and discussions as part of the review process (2000, p. 32).

Ramsey also identifies the second trend as being parents' beliefs that the most appropriate ways to improve standards is to return to the methods used in their schooling. An approach that Ramsey identifies as "...dealing with the current uncertainty by embracing the familiar. Astute teachers and educational leaders, in all phases of schooling...know such a response to be basically flawed" (2000, p. 32).

The long and intense industrial disputes and the resultant deterioration of respect for teachers have taken a toll on these teachers. They variously feel discouraged, put in the bare minimum or consider leaving teaching. Of all the ecological factors, this appears the most simple to resolve. If teachers and governments were to work together, as in other professions, instead of taking part in antiquated industrial warfare the reward would be a more valued and satisfied teaching force with greater public confidence – a far cry from the current experience of the teachers in this study.

## **Concluding reflections**

The teacher's ecology, environment or context is naturally one of the most important factors in the professional development journey. "The nature of this context can make or break teacher development efforts" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 13). On the positive side, Emma and Mel have used a change of context to improve their satisfaction and confidence

levels. They also have had encouraging experiences with Head Teachers and school executives. There are, however very few positive experiences related to context reported by these teachers.

For the teachers in this study there are some significant problems with their teaching contexts. In the classroom, they often find that poor resourcing and lack of support discourages effective teaching. In the school as a whole, there is either little support for change or too much change that they have no control over. On a system level, the change sometimes disenfranchises students and often takes little account of the teachers integral to the change. The system of industrial negotiation also leads to protracted and acrimonious disputes where there seem to be no winners. These disputes contribute to the continued deterioration in community perceptions of teachers.

These teachers' experiences are in line with other reports (Ramsey, 2000 and Gold, 1996). Clearly, the context is crucial to the making or breaking of the teacher's professional development journey. Unfortunately, these teachers report that their contexts provide several significant and complex contextual issues that are resistant to change. If ecological change is to occur, educational systems must pay attention to the needs of teachers. Systems must work to provide opportunities to teach unimpeded by contextual obstacles that can be avoided with planning that recognises the role and needs of teachers as central to successful ecological change.

Chapter 9 presents the reflections of the teachers on the research journey. The chapter also provides some reflections on the patterns of meaning that have emerged from this research.

## Chapter 9

### **Patterns of meaning: concluding reflections on the teacher journey**

This chapter includes the reflections of both the teachers and the researcher about the research journey. The teachers' reflections were recorded as part of the verification process where they were asked a series of questions about their responses. This was desirable in Margot Ely's terms to "prove trustworthiness" (1991, p. 156). The reflections of the participants are divided into two sections: an exploration of the teacher's reactions to the research and a response to the narratives constructed after the interviews. The next section of this chapter discusses suggested areas for further investigation that arise from this study and the major themes to emerge from the research are also identified. The major themes follow the general sequence of the chapters in this thesis including; curriculum history, knowledge and skill development as professional development, self understanding as professional development and ecological change as professional development. The concluding reflections address curriculum history and context, beginning drama teaching, teacher preservice training and teacher induction. Also included are concluding reflections on subject identity and pedagogy, the personal and the professional, teachers understanding of their own professional development needs, the effects of crisis, ecological change: industrial disputes, teachers and ecological change. Finally the chapter will explore the effect of reflective research on the professional development journey.

#### **Teacher's reflections on the research journey: during the process**

To monitor the research process questions were asked in the interview to gauge the participants' satisfaction with the process. The following responses reflect the teacher's views of the process during the interview phase.

##### **Ingrid (beginning primary teacher)**

Whilst sharing my most difficult times this year has been a hard process, being forced to reflect and evaluate this year has been useful. I think it is always important for a teacher to

remember their educational goals, future directions and how they can improve. This study has reminded me of what I have set out to achieve and that I am not alone.

**Mel (beginning secondary teacher)**

I think the interview process is worthwhile because it helps me to voice some things which might be a little muddled in my head with all the other things that go on around me. It also means I get a bit off my chest sometimes and with someone who understands my situation. I do not find the video distracting, I do not even know it is there. I actually find this good. It is actually therapeutic to talk out all the things you have got running through your head. I can run through and say this is what is happening and I feel uncertain about this, uncertain about that, good about this, and positive about that. It is good to get that out because then you can say there are quite a few positive things and you have to work with the negatives and so it has been quite a good experience.

Some of the things that I have scrawled down in the book have helped and I have used it here and there and I mentally note things more than I have time to write them down. I mentally go that was really bad or that was really good and the majority of the time last year I was coming home feeling like crying and I have noticed the difference between then and now. I have not written this year at all, I tend to write more negative than positive and I will not think about the positive. This year I have been noting the positive things more.

I have not thought about your role. I do not know how I view you. I know that you are doing research but I have not thought of you as just a researcher. The whole process has been very beneficial and very eye opening. Sometimes I do not even realise things are an issue until I hear myself saying them. I do not have anyone to speak through everything with who is going to understand. When it comes to drama your background is helpful.

**Tom (experienced secondary teacher)**

This research process has come at a good time because I do not think I would have noticed what was going on if I hadn't been talking with you. I would not have noticed the frustrations, I would have just done the day-to-day routine to get over it.

It has made me think about going back and trying again. There are other ways around my situation. I was also conscious that there were other people in this study and their responses must have been interesting in contrast to mine. It is like a *7up*<sup>47</sup> kind of program. It made me think about where I would be in 7 years time, where will I be and what will I be doing. There have not really been any negative impacts of this study it has all been positive.

### **Emma (experienced primary teacher)**

I have enjoyed this because I like being reflective anyway, you do not always get the chance to think about things. I mean you ask questions and often I have not framed my life in those terms. I realise what is happening or what I actually do think or just come to a different perspective on things through a different framework. It has not been an imposition at all it has been fun. The video does not bother me at all because it is not imposing on the process. I do not think it will affect my responses. I feel fine about it.

Because it has been over a year, it has been good. For instance, me saying I want to do some courses makes it a reality, it is like talking to a friend or something, you talk about something and then it becomes real. Talking it through first is important.

Your role with the Department does not mean anything really and it has not inhibited my responses, I just tell you everything anyway because of your personality and because you are very relaxed. It is comfortable for me because you are relaxed and you do not set it up in a formal way, it is a very informal style of interview. For instance when we spoke last time it felt like a huge release I felt I have got it all off my shoulders but because of the discussion/interview setting I felt like I got it out there and said it and it was gone so it was a really good thing for me.

### **Teacher's reflections on the research journey: responding to the narratives**

As part of the crystallisation process the narratives were reviewed by my supervisors and the participants themselves to make them accessible, clear and accurate. A central part of the crystallisation process was the opportunity for the teachers to review validate and reflect on their own narratives. The teachers were asked to read the narratives and then respond by

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<sup>47</sup> *7up* is an English documentary series following the development of individuals from the age of 7 and then every 7 years.

indicating whether the narratives reflected their experience at the time and to make reflections in hindsight on their responses. Emma and Tom responded in writing and Mel advised of changes she wanted by phone<sup>48</sup>. Their responses to that survey appear here:

### **Tom**

I think the narratives are a pretty fair reflection of the way I felt around the study. I believe that I have come a long way emotionally since the interviews.

My teaching load has changed which has made a dramatic difference to my life. I no longer teach the two awful classes I had back then and I now teach Years 7 and 8 art. I am more focused on improving my teaching strategies and classroom management and positioning myself for a Head Teachers job in, Creative Arts, Welfare, Teaching and Learning or Administration. I still have this phobia about actively participating in workshops. However, you will be proud to know that I did participate in two workshops while I was at a drama camp recently.

This experience reinforced my own theory that I still gain more by watching rather than participating. Although I enjoyed participating in the workshops, I gain more by watching the other workshops and performances. Since the interviews, I have been given the opportunity to conduct more inservices. Although at times I feel a little intimidated by my peers, after I start, I seem to gain in confidence and of course most of my peers tend not to be too critical to my face.

I marked HSC drama practical for the first time this year. Strangely enough, although it was a great experience. I did not come away from the process overwhelmed with enthusiasm. I think in hindsight I have been spoilt by participating in a number of audition panels and I felt that the process was very similar, however; this time I was marking rather than selecting. At times I was frustrated by my supervisors and the wide ranging standard. I know that it was the first year under the new system and there are a few problems to iron out. I am sure next year will be better. My other concern is that I marked at one of my supervisor's school and I was horrified that even the basics were not taught for instance: blackout between scenes and performances that were overly 'didactic'.

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<sup>48</sup> As mentioned earlier Ingrid did not respond to this part of the study.

My marking partner was a bit overbearing. She always wanted to be seen as the more experienced one. After about the third day I realised we were both getting the same amount of money and I should just let her do it. I really did not complete a great deal of paper work, as she would do it all. I suppose it is not the right attitude but being my first year I just watched, observed, worked out the connections and in the 'in crowd' and played the game.

Several factors are helping me develop now. I have a very supportive Creative Arts Head Teacher. She is fantastic. In every way, she supports my career. She worked hard to refine my focus and look toward the future. I have moved staffrooms. I now live in the Creative Arts faculty and I am having a ball. I really think this move has saved my teaching career and changed my whole attitude and outlook towards teaching at this school.

My kids are a lot older now which has made life easier to cope with and this year I finally finished my year advising which really took a load off me. Next year I have been invited to take a leadership role with a state drama program. This has reinforced to me that I actually am a good drama teacher and people out there have a great deal of faith in me. Now the challenge – to prove them right.

I still feel discouraged by a few things. I still have a Principal who frustrates the hell out of me. He constantly tells me that I am a teacher first, and my professional development is a second priority. This annoys me no end. The most discouraging factor at the moment is that I am still at the school I was at during the study and not closer to where I live. I am also frustrated by the lack of opportunities for promoting the creative arts in my school.

The research and interviews came at a time when I was down and really questioning my worth as a teacher. The two drama classes I had frustrated me and I had two very young children. The interviews gave me a chance to talk to someone who made no comments or judgments and allowed me time to vent my feelings. It was a perfect scenario. The interviews also made me redefine the way I taught drama – teaching strategies, programming and classroom management. I believe through the interviews and contact with Michael I have become a better educator. I am an educator with a better sense of worth and understanding of the constraints of teaching, having a family and juggling a career. I also now use a logbook in

each drama class because of the interviews. It helps me to reflect on my teaching. The only problems are that I wish I could spend more time writing in it.

Reading the narratives just reinforced many important points to me. I believe that I finally have overcome the 'brick wall' mentally and have moved on. I am more positive with myself and I have become more aware of the influences I exert over my students and my peers. I have goals, which I did not have before or did not feel I would ever reach but now I know I can achieve them. I would like to become a supervising marker one day in drama, a Head Teacher or consultant in the arts. I want to enjoy life, drink plenty of Bundaberg rums and spend as much time with my family as possible who after all are the most important thing in my life.

### **Emma**

I was amazed at how repetitive, vehement and intense I sound. Reflections of what is essentially a "stream of consciousness" are full of non-sequiters and read awfully! I just opened my mouth and let it all pour forth, uncensored! Ah well..... I sound like a poor, pathetic creature but I'm not!

Although I am currently on maternity leave, I have run a few drama workshops as well as presenting at two school staff development days. This has enabled me to continue develop and consolidate my drama curriculum knowledge as well as keeping my hand in as a teacher and facilitator. I have also been attending drama classes at a theatre and developing my own performance skills.

The most important factor in my development however, is becoming a parent. To see the amazing amount of learning that takes place in the early years is a marvel. I said that my philosophy of education focussed on the "whole child". To be a parent enables you to understand a child and their life within a family unit and to see that there is a world beyond the classroom that moulds and shapes them. I have much more empathy for parents and will never, ever set loads of homework again. These children, no matter how difficult, are someone's "baby" and you must respect their uniqueness and individuality. School reports will be carefully worded (even more so now). How terrible to get a report stating that your 'little baby' is BAD! I think something like "responds well to firm limits" is much better.

Next year I will be teaching rff (release from face to face) drama K-6 one day a week. I hope that I will be able to “keep my hand in” this way, but satisfy the demands of family life as well. I think I may want to work only one day a week for some time, while I am caring for my family. It may be difficult to keep this work regular and if I use my leave, I may have to resign and reapply for full time work a few years down the track. In this case, I may get a bit out of touch and not develop very much professionally.

I have enjoyed the interviews and will be very interested to read the findings, particularly since the focus is on drama education. I feel that tracing teacher development over a long period of time, as this research has done, provides a fuller picture of each individual and a more accurate indication of change generally. The research has been beneficial in that it has allowed me to be reflective and observe patterns in my own behaviours and actions as an educator. I can draw on this knowledge to assist in planning and improving my teaching in the future.

## **Reflections**

The teacher’s reflections during the interview process were necessary to ensure that they were satisfied with their role in the research and felt empowered by it. It also provided a way to explore the impact of the research on their lives. Even Ingrid who did not respond later in the study regarded her participation as useful. Mel felt that the familiarity with her situation assisted her participation in a process that she calls “therapeutic” and “worthwhile” and Emma valued the chance to have a time to reflect and look forward.

The responses to these narratives by Tom and Emma highlight some important changes in the ongoing professional development journey. The responses allowed the teachers to respond to the way their reflections were portrayed in the narratives and discuss how they have developed since the study. In Tom’s case the much anticipated HSC marking professional development proved disappointing. He was “...not overwhelmed with enthusiasm” for the marking process which he presumed would be beneficial to his professional development journey. Sometimes anticipated professional development opportunities are not as positive as envisaged. On the other hand the conclusion of the year advising responsibilities and the growth of his own children have “made his life easier”.

Tom recognises the importance of the research and reflection process on his professional development journey. He says of the research process:

The research and interviews came at a time when I was down and really questioning my worth as a teacher... The interviews gave me a chance to talk to someone who made no comments or judgments and allowed me time to vent my feelings. It was a perfect scenario. The interviews also made me redefine the way I taught drama – teaching strategies, programming and classroom management. I believe through the interviews and contact with Michael I have become a better educator.

Tom felt that the research process was beneficial. The process gave him space to reflect in the course of a hectic school year and he seems grateful for the opportunity. Emma's experience of the narratives are similarly positive although her concerns over "how vehement and intense" she sounds perhaps arise from an understandable self consciousness.

Most significant, however is her reflection on the importance of becoming a parent to her professional development. Her reflection that "...parenthood helps you to understand a child and their life within a family unit and to see that there is a world beyond the classroom that moulds and shapes them" is further evidence of the importance of self understanding in the professional development journey. Moreover Emma's experience suggests that personal experiences not ordinarily conceptualised as professional development experiences can have profound impacts on individual teacher's professional development journeys.

### **Directions for future research**

Predictably, this study has raised several questions for further research, some of which have been explored previously. Perhaps the most intriguing is the role in the professional development journey of the subject taught. For instance Tom sees history very differently from drama. Further studies might explore for example, if there are any differences in the experiences of drama educators to maths educators? Are there differences in the ways teachers of other subjects experience the professional development journey? Does Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) tripartite schema knowledge and skill development, self understanding and ecological change apply effectively to teachers of other subjects?

Furthermore, there are important questions that relate to the development of beginning teachers. This study has raised critical questions about the way the education systems train and induct teachers. Further research could establish if the traumatic experiences of the

beginning teachers in this study are more widespread and perhaps suggest more effective models of professional induction. Other research might explore the frequency and implications of crises on teacher's lives.

Another important question raised are the role expectations of drama educators and performing arts teachers in general, for instance directing the school musical and the rock eisteddfod. There is a suggestion here that the extra responsibilities that these teachers face create extra pressures for them. A future study might explore whether the workloads of these teachers exceed those of other teachers or perhaps investigate the different kinds of pressures experienced by teachers with other key learning area responsibilities.

There are also several questions surrounding the differences of experience for primary and secondary teachers. Future studies might explore how important subject identification is for primary school teachers or perhaps how the workloads differ for primary and secondary teachers of drama.

## **Concluding reflections on the teacher journey**

### **Defining the journey**

Chapter 1 of this thesis explored the theoretical perspectives that surround Teacher Professional Development Journeys. The metaphor of the journey was used to avoid the optimism that development implies. The teachers' reflections in this study suggest that their experiences are inherently unique and varied and this justifies the use of the journey metaphor. This metaphor has the flexibility to support their individual experiences, responses and reflections. The theoretical underpinning provided by theorists such as Ryan (1986), Berliner (1998) and Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) on Teacher Development and Teacher Professional Development did however offer important points of comparison for the reflections of the teachers in this study.

Professional development and teacher development stage theories such as Ryan (1986), Bullough (1997) and Berliner (1988) while useful as background, have the effect of reducing the uniqueness of each journey and sustain a false dichotomy between the personal and professional in teacher's lives. While stage theorists and quantitative researchers such as Gold (1996) do provide an important general picture of teacher experience, the narrative vignettes constructed through this research represent more articulately each teacher's

individual experiences and dilemmas. For instance, Gold's (1996) research on attrition rates and Ryan's (1986) stages of beginning teacher development provided vital general background for the examinations of these teachers' experiences. However, the most useful observations on teacher development arose from the narrative research methodologies employed by researchers such as Ely (1991), Beattie (1995) and, in drama education, Norris, Miller and McCammon (1998). These observations, while tapping the unique, resonate most effectively with the narrative vignettes in this study.

Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) organisers did however, provide a very useful way to organise and present the reflections of these teachers. Their recognition of the personal and the professional interacting and overlapping, resonated with drama education's prominent theorist Dorothy Heathcote (1984) and her insistence that teachers should be understood in terms of their teaching contexts. Using Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) organisers did present some difficulties. For instance some vignettes could have fitted under more than one of the organisers and some didn't fit any of them particularly well. On the whole, however, any categorisation of personal experience is likely to defy organisational structures because of the uniqueness of each teacher's experience.

### **Beginning teachers**

As Ramsey has recently found, teaching asks more of its beginners than any other profession (2000, p. 67). The memories of Emma and Tom on their beginning teacher experiences and the experiences of Ingrid and Mel during the study demonstrate the profound difficulties of the beginning years of teaching. The strains and indeed crises that Emma, Ingrid and Mel survived in their beginning years of teaching are a stark reminder that the professional development journey for beginning teachers features several difficult and sometimes immovable obstacles. Indeed Ryan's (1986) contention that these teachers are enduring a survival stage is borne out by the experiences of these participants. If the experience of Tom, Emma, Mel and Ingrid are typical of the experiences of beginning teachers more generally, it is surprising that the attrition figures for beginning teachers are not significantly higher than the rates discussed in this study.

### **The Professional Development Journey and Drama Education**

While these teachers all have a strong sense of their curriculum context, they do not have a dogmatic attachment to the theorists that have pervaded drama education, mentioned in

Chapters 2 and 3. The teachers in this study did not mention the drama education theorists such as Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton even though the processes these teachers used drew heavily from their practice. For instance, Tom and Emma reflect on the importance of process and a holistic drama education but do not necessarily identify with the theorists such as John O’Toole. This may be a kind of praxis where the theory is so integrated with the practice that the original theorist is perhaps superfluous or forgotten. This may also be because the theories implicit in drama classroom practice are not necessarily identified or referenced in the NSW drama syllabuses.

For these four drama teachers the professional development journey encompasses encouraging and discouraging turns. The status of drama education as a still emergent, although maturing curriculum area directly affects the life and work of these teachers. Ingrid, for instance, feels a sense of frustration because her desire to teach drama is suppressed by the school and those within the education system itself who undermine the legitimacy of the subject. For Emma and Tom, their professional development journeys are often frustrated by systemic obstacles. When they are encouraged in their professional development journey it is usually because of proactivity on their own behalf through the creation of their own professional development opportunities. Mel has become frustrated by other issues in her own professional development that do not necessarily relate to her role as a drama educator. There is however added pressure due to the musical in her beginning year that has the tendency to exacerbate other issues in her journey.

In my experience these teachers reflect the realities of drama teachers’ professional journeys. Drama teachers in NSW still suffer from the systemic disadvantage described in Chapter 2. School-based indifference toward drama education is still evident. Drama teachers such as Tom and Emma have developed in this climate of minimal support for drama education. In the face of systemic indifference they have created their own opportunities. This approach, while possible for Tom and Emma was more difficult for Ingrid and Mel as they in their survival phase seem unable to access systemic knowledge that empowers them to change their own situations.

The NSW public education system is beginning to recognise drama education. The eventual mandatory status for primary drama in 2006 (Department of Education and Training, 2001) and the promotion of a curriculum continuum provides some progress, although it may take

generations for this recognition to be reflected in the attitudes of administrators and school executives. There are also more opportunities for training for drama teachers K-12. While this is growing, it does not match the support offered to subject areas such as numeracy and literacy. In the meantime teachers such as Tom and Emma will need to continue to work proactively to gain the professional development support that they need. Beginning drama teachers such as Ingrid and Mel may well continue to struggle.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 this study is limited and cannot be generalised to all teachers or indeed all other drama teachers. Rather, it focuses on the reflections of four teachers to reveal the issues involved in their professional development journeys. Furthermore the study does not present my own interpretations only: it relies on the teachers' responses and validation. Concluding reflections should be understood in the light of these limitations.

The original question of this research explored what encouraged and discouraged teachers in the course of their professional development journeys. The metaphor of the journey has proved apt to describe the factors that encourage or discourage progress toward being a more effective drama educator. The teachers here identify a variety of factors that influence that journey, some of which are recognised by schooling systems but many that are not. Following are a series of major reflections drawn from the narratives about the teacher development journeys of the four drama educators in this study.

### **Curriculum history and context**

Drama education has had a tumultuous journey of its own as a curriculum area. From the early experimentation of the pre-war years to the “transformative pedagogy” of Dorothy Heathcote and those that followed her, drama has grown and evolved as a subject area that still struggles for recognition. The main tensions that arose during the post Heathcotian era have concerned the process versus product debate and the tension between drama as a social process and drama as a performing art. These tensions remain with the subject to this day. For instance, Tom says:

The process is most important to me. You can refine a product as much as you like, but if you do not have the skills in the first place the product will fall apart. I can see that from standing outside. We do mark the final product but you cannot get there if you do not have the process.

Emma takes the concept further with her argument for drama to be used as a process for learning across the curriculum:

Drama helps them develop imagination, visual skills, writing skills, and it is a great way of getting kids to work together in terms of cooperation skills. I think all children should be exposed to improvisation, mime, and movement and unscripted work and I think puppetry is fantastic and I think that's a great way of ordinary teachers getting into drama.

In NSW drama has faced a long and sometimes difficult struggle for recognition. The subject has often been overlooked by schooling systems despite its popularity in schools. The introduction of the Stage 6 syllabus in 1992 and the release of the *Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus* (drama) in 2000 signalled growing recognition of the subject area. The curriculum context is important for the professional journeys of these teachers. The status of the drama within schools has been related to support within individual schools and the systems level of approval of the subject area. For example, Ingrid's experience of consultants telling her "not to worry about drama because it wasn't compulsory" reveals the ongoing struggle faced by many teachers to gain support for the teaching of subjects not seen as being 'core' curriculum. Indeed Ingrid's personal experience of being restricted to 'approved curriculum' mirrors the broader struggle that drama has had in being accepted as a legitimate part of schooling life.

In other schools where drama's merits are recognised, such as in Emma's school, the area is well resourced and supported. However, as O'Toole argues (1998, pp. 9-10) drama sits on the fringe and faces a continuing struggle for support and recognition. Within the same schooling system drama is regarded in very different ways by different schools. This variability of recognition and support seems to be related in these cases to individual schools level of commitment to the subject. This struggle often discouraged the professional development journeys of the teachers in this study.

Drama has gained more recognition because of the development and implementation of syllabus and syllabus support documents from the late 1970s onwards. The clear indication here however is that teachers of drama struggle for recognition and respect and often have to fight for resources and a place within the curriculum. For the beginning teachers there were several other difficult factors in their professional development journeys.

## **Beginning drama teaching**

As Ryan suggests (1986, p. 14) beginning teaching is a time of survival. The high beginning teacher attrition rates nationally and internationally confirm that many teachers do not survive the beginning phase of their teaching career. Indeed all of the teachers in this study remembered, with obvious distress, times of near crisis in their beginning teaching experiences. The two beginning teachers in this study seriously considered leaving teaching in their first year. The experience of these teachers is consistent with the literature in this area. Bullough et al. (1992, p. 209), Gold (1996, p. 549) and Australian figures (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, p. 240) suggest a high dropout rate for beginning teachers. With pressures such as those seen by the beginning teachers in this study that attrition rate is understandable.

Ramsey's contention (2000, p. 67) that teaching asks more of its beginners than any other profession is demonstrated by Mel and Ingrid's experiences. Mel's crisis and Ingrid's change of approach due to the pressure exerted by the parents of her students regarding homework indicate the significant difficulties faced by beginning teachers. There seem, however, to be special pressures on beginning teachers of drama. There is the added pressure of public performance expectations. For Ingrid the Rock Eisteddfod was her only chance to participate in arts education although she would have preferred more freedom to teach curriculum based programs in school hours. In Mel's case her crisis provided a source of great tension that at times exhausted her. Her schedule, difficult even for an experienced teacher was further crowded by the demands of the musical:

There are some days like, like week B out of the cycle when I've got a 6-period day, and I've got lunch time rehearsals for the musical and we've got an after school rehearsal for the musical and a meeting in the morning before school. It is very tiring and in those few weeks, I had a few naps in the afternoon after I got home. I am exhausted and I never thought teaching such short hours would wear me out so much.

Concerns (Ramsey, 2000, p. 67) about the overloading of beginning teachers surely apply doubly here. How do these teachers have "...space to deal with, reflect on and acquire knowledge about the range of complex issues that confront any beginning teacher" (2000, p. 67) when their time is consumed with performing arts activities? Perhaps more consideration could be given to the expectations of beginning drama teachers and beginning teachers generally. Unfortunately according to the reflections of the participants in this study, teacher training and induction does not always prepare teachers adequately for the difficulties they

are to face in schools, compounding the difficulties inherent in the beginning years of their career. Some of the issues for beginning teachers can be further exacerbated by deficits in teacher preservice and induction programs.

### **Teacher preservice training and teacher induction**

The teachers in this research had mixed experiences in teacher training and the teacher induction process. Tom, Emma and Mel discussed difficulties with the relevance and clarity of the programs and Ingrid suggested that while there were some problematic aspects to her preservice training the drama education component was inspiring and relevant.

Tom's preservice experience provided some positive reflections on teacher preservice education with his descriptions of valuable mentoring from excellent teachers. This reflection was an exception and there were several troubling issues raised concerning teacher preparation. This is especially critical given that teacher training and induction is usually the teacher's first contact with formal professional development. There are also differences in the perception of the role of preservice education with Emma, Tom and Ingrid arguing for a strengthening of theory based learning and Mel arguing for more classroom-based experiences.

Regarding preservice training Mel's experience is instructive. Her descriptions of drama method training that was repetitive and not related to the drama classroom are concerning. Tom's memories of his Dip Ed were similar. He describes his preservice training as "a waste of time" and Emma says that her Dip Ed "stifled higher order thinking." Ingrid, Tom and Emma spoke favourably of their practicum experiences. Tom says of his practicum experience:

My main supervisor on my first prac was brilliant. She was what I imagined teachers were like. She taught effectively and intelligently and provided good feedback for me. She was dedicated and spent a lot of time there, making sure she was well prepared.

The teachers here are supportive of the practicums as a form of teacher preparation. Emma and Mel actually suggest they be expanded and extended. Emma, Tom and Ingrid also argue for a strengthening and expansion of the theoretical aspects of teacher training.

Teacher preparation is obviously a vital part of the teacher's professional development journey and is vital to the ongoing development of the teacher. While there are some encouraging signs such as useful practicum experiences and areas of effective tertiary training there are still sufficient problems to raise concerns over the relevance and effectiveness of teacher tertiary preparation.

Linked closely to tertiary preparation is the issue of teacher induction. As mentioned earlier the beginning years of teaching are focussed on survival. A strongly focused and considered teacher induction program is vital to supporting teachers through this difficult time (Ramsey 2000b, p. 64). The experience of these teachers reflects induction programs that do more to hinder the professional development journey than provide guidance and support. Ingrid's experience is perhaps the most alarming being assigned a mentor who was a major discouragement for her:

... I had the interference of a supervisor who was insecure about her own teaching abilities, did not want to acknowledge change or difference of opinion and this greatly affected my development as a teacher in my first year. I began my year with a strong sense of what I wanted to achieve from my students and myself. After a year of being told that all that I had learnt at university was wrong, I find I have become apathetic to achieving my imagined ideal classroom.

Similarly, Mel has a supervisor who is responsive and supportive to begin with but who grows less effective due to other time pressures. Perhaps just as concerning is Emma's experience of having no supervision at all:

I was the top graduate in my year and got excellent prac reports. Yet, during my first teaching year I felt completely hopeless, unskilled and useless. The contrast could not have been more extreme. This highlights the lack of mentoring and support I received.

The experience of these teachers reflects disturbing shortcomings in teacher preparation and induction that often make beginning teachers feel unsupported.

The responses to these problems and their solutions are complex. However, the common theme in the issues of teacher preparation and induction seems to be a lack of attention to the needs of beginning teachers. In the experience of these teachers preservice training was often not focussed on their needs and was not relevant to the classes they saw on their practicums. When they arrived at schools to teach in their first years they found either no mentoring,

mentors whose workload precluded an effective supportive relationship or mentors who were obstructive.

A concerted effort is needed by universities and schooling systems to make teacher preservice training and induction effective. This no doubt will mean that systems must commit resources and tertiary institutions and schooling systems may need to negotiate arrangements that allow complementary training and induction programs. If this issue is allowed to continue to deteriorate teachers will continue to leave teaching or be left to struggle through their first, formative years of teaching unsupported. This is likely to have alarming ramifications for beginning teachers and the students in their care.

### **Subject identity and pedagogy**

Teaching drama is very important to these teachers. Ingrid feels frustrated partly because her supervisor allows her to teach very little drama in her classroom. She does however integrate drama learning with other areas such as literacy. Emma's situation is more flexible and she has been able to integrate drama within her teaching philosophy. She sees drama as integrated with her teaching across the curriculum and uses drama in every way she can. For instance she says:

To facilitate learning and to instil a love for learning are central, as is assisting students in developing self-discipline, self-esteem and the capacity to take responsibility for their actions. Drama is integral to this philosophy, as I believe it covers all these aspects and allows students to express themselves freely and creatively in an environment of co-operation.

By contrast, the secondary teachers see themselves relating more to a subject area taught rather than the more holistic approach of teaching drama across the curriculum that Emma espouses. Mel looks forward to a time when she can teach drama exclusively and says of her drama teaching:

Drama is more rigorous than English in a lot of ways because I am more energetic and more in tune with what's going on in the drama lesson and I focus a lot more on little things because I know my stuff in drama. It is more when you put it in a practical situation I teach the kids to pull things apart and figure out where they can make their improvements and where they can look at things.

Mel identifies with the energy and rigour required for the drama and was drawn to teaching through her experiences of the "musical" in her own secondary education. While Ingrid and

Emma see drama as a tool across the curriculum, the secondary educators tend, perhaps because of the nature of high schools, to compartmentalise their drama teaching. Tom says of his attitude to teaching drama:

I accept that kids have to be in history and English and geography and that I have to teach them....When it comes to drama, it is a privilege to be there and if you do not want to be there get out. As a student, you do not have to do it and I think you go to the subject with something to achieve, with a goal.

The teachers in this study see drama teaching as an important part of their identity and an important part of developing their students' identity. The difference is that the primary teachers and Emma in particular see drama as an important tool across the curriculum and the secondary educators see drama as different to other subjects, offering something unique to their students.

### **The personal and the professional**

The experience of the four teachers in this study is that the personal and the professional in their lives are inseparable. The approach that tries to divorce the work world from the private world is unnatural and unrealistic. Tom's experience of becoming a new father, with all the challenges and joys that entails affects his teaching life. For instance, he says:

I would prefer to spend time with my sons. I do not know what the impact is on them yet but I know I have missed a lot in terms of their development and the relationship with my wife. I am having problems concentrating.

Tom's experience is that his home life is having an impact on his effectiveness at school. Mel suffers from the reverse of Tom's situation. The stresses of school life have an impact on her personal relationships:

I found myself for the first couple of terms treating my partner as if he was a student, which caused a lot of stress and many arguments. If my partner does not do something the first time I say, "can you do the washing up" I get into teacher mode. That has been stressful because I cannot talk to him about work.

The reality for these teachers is that professional issues permeate the personal and the personal permeates the professional. A personal issue will affect professional motivation levels and a professional issue like the possible suicide of a student, in Tom's case will have an effect on the personal. The response from schooling systems should recognise that the

personal and the professional interact and explore ways to support teachers during times of need to improve their effectiveness. Conversely schooling systems should take responsibility for some of the impact they have on teachers' personal lives and provide support that acknowledges that reality.

### **Teachers understanding of their own professional development needs**

The teachers in this study had mixed responses to the knowledge and skills development training that they had been offered as professional development. Ingrid's experience of being told not to worry about drama and Emma's experience of training that was boring and irrelevant demonstrates the importance of including teacher's views on their own development needs. While this sounds obvious, there is evidence of inservice professional development that is poorly organised and implemented with the needs of the teachers secondary to the needs of the system. These reflections supports Eraut's (1995, p. 246) argument that knowledge and skill development often has more to do with system needs rather than each individual teacher's needs.

Despite the system's shortcomings, teachers in this study were able to understand their own needs and seek ways to develop themselves. Tom extends his understanding of the HSC marking process through becoming a marker. Emma is able to improve her practice by being involved in a team teaching situation. Both Emma and Tom have initiated and led professional development in order to facilitate their own development. Emma often detects a need in herself or in the school and then works toward creating professional development to respond to those needs, often led by her. She responds to a crisis situation involving conflict in her classroom by seeking out training in that area:

I would like more training in identifying students with learning difficulties. I think further knowledge would make me a better teacher. I have done a few courses on this already but you can always learn more about reading because it is a huge subject. Also conflict management with parents, I managed it quite well but how to debrief and what are the procedures and the legal ramifications and I do not know that there is anything like that around.

Tom makes the argument most strongly:

It is better if professional development is owned by the people who it is being run for so we can get some control over what we are doing. We can make choices based on where we are at and where the teachers we are working with are at. The only person who is going to know I

need that sort of development is me. It seems crazy to me that often someone who has never met me and knows nothing about my needs is in control of my development. Surely, I would have a better idea than they would.

One of the characteristics of a professional is their ability to understand their own needs (Ramsey 2000b, p. 64). The experience of these teachers suggests that teachers are sometimes excluded from the decisions related to their own professional development. If this is allowed to continue there is potential for teachers to be deskilled and disempowered through inappropriate professional development.

The effect of badly planned and implemented professional development is seen in Emma's narratives where she expresses her frustration at the computer literacy course that was badly presented and poorly targeted. Perhaps planning for professional development should begin with the views of teachers about their own professional development needs. Obviously there remains a role for training that meets the needs of the system or the employer. There is however, a strong argument drawn from these teachers' experience to suggest that a balance between teachers' needs and system needs is warranted to assist each educator on their unique professional development journey.

### **The effects of crisis**

The teachers in this study faced crises of one form or another during this study. Tom had reached a career turning point, Emma had a violent confrontation with a parent, Ingrid faced a crisis of confidence and Mel faced a difficult situation with a student. These incidents made the teachers in this study reassess their approach to teaching and their life. These crises while obviously stressful often brought about change that improved their situations. Emma's change was typical of the way these teachers used negative situations to create positive change. Emma dealt with her crisis by leaving her school so she could remove herself from a context she felt she had outgrown. Her response shows the positive influences a crisis can have. Indeed, in Emma's case she calls her crisis a "symptom of the problem that was already there." Emma's crisis acted as a catalyst for her to take a different direction in her professional development journey. Mel's situation is similar in that the crisis creates the impetus for her to seek a change in context.

The crises and the changes in self understanding these teachers experienced indicate the sorts of pressures teachers are under in schools. Remarkably the teachers created beneficial outcomes to these manifestly negative situations and incidents. These teachers sought to change their circumstances and reassess their priorities in response to crisis situations. While these crises are often due to systemic shortcomings, the teachers' constructive and proactive response to them demonstrates their resilience, intelligence, adaptability and courage when confronted with difficult situations.

### **Ecological change: industrial disputation**

The teacher's context provides significant encouragement and discouragement in the teacher's professional development journey. For all of the teachers the protracted and divisive industrial dispute became discouraging. Perhaps Mel<sup>49</sup> puts this most poignantly:

The industrial action over the new award this year has been very disheartening. I thought that teachers were looked on by the community a bit more professionally than they are. For me the strikes are an indication of how we are valued by the community. It is distressing to know that the people who employ you and pay you do not value you. I feel like I am not valued for my skills and expertise. The same goes for people who have been teaching for 30 years. Why are they having their value questioned?

Mel encapsulates the concerns that all four teachers expressed about the discouraging effect of the government's refusal to settle the drawn out dispute. The industrial dispute, which dragged on throughout this study made Mel, Tom and Emma doubt the way they are valued by their employers and the community generally. The teachers expressed variously that they felt discouraged, not respected and unsupported. This type of prolonged industrial disputation presents an avoidable impediment to the professional development journey. While other obstacles create positive change, the industrial action only had the effect of discouraging the teachers and made them feel less valued by the teacher employers and the community generally. Alleviation of this kind of destructive disputation would remove a significant impediment in the teacher professional development journey.

### **The teachers and ecological change**

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<sup>49</sup> Mel began her teaching when the industrial dispute had begun. The industrial action continued throughout this study. Mel's whole professional experience was shadowed by this industrial disputation. The government settled the dispute in June 2000 after 30 months of industrial unrest.

For these teachers the school's ecology is also very important to their professional development journey. The difference between the beginning and the more experienced teachers approach to ecological change is quite marked. Perhaps one of the skills of the maturing teacher is learning how to understand the school ecology and then working to change it. Ingrid feels hamstrung by the entrenched conservatism of her school while the rapid change in Mel's situation has left her without support. Tom and Emma work to change their ecology which perhaps reflects their experience and maturity as teachers. Emma develops and leads professional development programs and Tom changes his classroom ecology to make it more welcoming for his students.

The effect of Tom and Emma on their ecology is to confront issues within their situations and work to change them. These teachers demonstrate a proactivity that is built on their experience of their ecology and their understanding of how to negotiate the schooling environment. Ingrid and Mel's more reactive approach is understandable as they are mostly attempting to interpret and survive their ecology rather than change it. The stories of these teachers suggests that the more experience they have of a specific ecology the more able they were to change it to suit the needs of the school and their professional development journey.

### **Reflective research and the professional development journey**

The teachers' reflections during the research process and the narratives suggest that there is clear benefit in being involved in reflective research. Tom, Emma and Mel commented that the research assisted them to reflect and provided an 'outlet' for them and assisted them on their professional development journey. Emma found the interview phase "cathartic" and Tom said that the research process was a "perfect scenario" that made him "a better educator". Mel says of the influence of the research:

The whole process has been very beneficial and very eye opening. Sometimes I do not even realise things are an issue until I hear myself saying them. I do not have anyone to speak through everything with someone who is going to understand.

These three teachers were able to clarify discuss and reflect on issues that directly effected them. Emma reflects that talking about future directions made them real and Mel suggests that speaking about issues made her realise they existed. The research was less beneficial for Ingrid. The issues she attempted to discuss were a cause of distress for her. Ingrid's responses to letters and phone calls became limited and eventually there was no response. In her last

response she did however indicate that her involvement in the research had positive outcomes.

As stated in Chapter 4 the intent of this study was to empower both the researcher and the participants in this study. There are strong arguments for this approach but perhaps the strongest is to assist teachers in reflection on their own journey and not create impediments to it. As Beattie argues:

Change and growth takes place as practitioners and researchers continue to work together, voicing understandings, entering into the understandings of others, and engaging with the mutual adaptation and continual reconstruction of self in relation to both self and community (1995, p. 146).

Emma, Tom, Mel and to a lesser extent Ingrid have been able to reflect and develop as an outcome of this collaborative research. Qualitative research of this kind can support and develop teachers in their professional development journeys. The collaborative nature of this research methodology means that there are benefits for the researcher and the participants allowing the teachers to create meaning in collaboration with the researcher and empowering the participants and researcher in the process of shared meaning.

The generally beneficial influence of this research on these teachers suggests that there may be some benefit in providing opportunities for teachers to reflect as part of their professional development journey. The teachers in this study were able to gain new perspectives and clarify existing ideas when given the chance through the interviews and in response to their narratives. If systems provide space for reflection in teachers' lives free of judgement, teachers may find, as they did in this study, that it helps them interpret their experiences and clarify their future actions potentially making them more effective educators.

### **Concluding reflections**

The professional development journeys these teachers have undertaken during the course of this research has been profoundly revealing of the realities of the lives of the four drama educators in this study. They are able to develop when they are given the opportunity to provide input into their own knowledge and skill development, receive effective mentoring, survive and change in response to crises and make changes to their ecologies to suit their needs and the needs of their students.

The systems that employ these teachers provide support that is flawed because teacher's views are rarely sought. Employers concentrate on the knowledge and skill development aspects of the professional development journey while overlooking the importance of self understanding and ecological change in the multifaceted lives of these teachers. If our community is to provide more effective outcomes for students, the education system should recognise the complexities of the teacher development journey and work to remove impediments to it.

This study suggests that the struggle for recognition of drama education will continue. There are however hopeful signs in the recent syllabus changes and most importantly in the dedication of the lives of these teachers, whose commitment, skill and readiness to reflect augurs well for the ongoing development of drama education.

The value of the arts in children's education is currently the subject of much discussion. The American report, *Champions of Change* (Arts Education Partnership, 1999) made several findings that support the centrality of the arts in an effective education for all young people. The report found that the arts reach students who are not otherwise reached, the arts transform the environment for learning and provide challenges for those students already considered successful. Furthermore, the British report, *All our futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* argued that:

If we are to prepare successfully for the twenty-first century we will have to do more than just improve literacy and numeracy skills. We need a broad, flexible and motivating education that recognises the different talents of all children and delivers excellence for everyone... This report argues that a national strategy for creative and cultural arts is essential to that purpose (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999, p. 5).

In the Australian context Dr. Terry Cutler, the new head of Australia's arts funding and advocacy body, the Australia Council, has said this about arts education:

The most important programme, in my mind, to come out of the Council's Promoting the Value of the Arts exercise has been the new action focus on education and the arts. This has been for far too long a neglected area. In fact we have failed for 25 years. Way back in 1974 the Council bemoaned the lack of progress.

Many people in the Council feel that the key to long-term success in its objectives lies with education. So far, no systematic research or planning in this area has been possible.

We now have the opportunity to redress 25 years of underachievement, and really try to make some things happen in this pivotal arena. This is an especially important mission at the start of the 21st century within the context of a knowledge economy where creative people are at a premium in all walks of life, and where the interface between creativity and industrial innovation is becoming ever more prominent (Cutler, 2001, p. 2).

There is currently some momentum for the recognition of the value of the arts in the educational programs of young people. These reports strongly argue that the emerging community demands the skills that the arts can offer. This will come as no surprise to arts educators as they have been making these arguments for years.

This energy however will not be successful unless the educational systems train and induct beginning teachers effectively and support the ongoing development of each experienced teacher's professional development journey. These four teachers provide some hopeful and alarming signals for the renewed arts agenda. The teachers in this study demonstrated a readiness to reflect, courage in the face of crisis and an ability to create their own professional development journeys in response to their own needs. In short these teachers, though not faultless, provide encouraging examples of the skills and professionalism of drama educators.

There are, however, several concerning issues that arise for the health of drama education and perhaps arts education in general. The schools and systems these teachers worked within provided little assistance for them in their professional development journey. Sometimes the recognition of drama was poor and the teaching of it was discouraged consistent with the subject's long struggle for acknowledgement. Professional development is still seen by the education system as the narrow enhancement of (usually system driven) knowledge and skills. The teachers in this study found that the system took little account of their needs or requests. Professional development programs were often inappropriate and sometimes obstructive. For the most part the professional development opportunities that were effective were led by the teachers themselves.

As Ryan (p. 7, 1986) suggests, when teachers fail, students are at risk. The teachers in this study confronted the myriad challenges presented to them by reflecting, changing course and occasionally taking different paths around obstacles.

If our community ignores or reduces the importance of the professional development journeys of these teachers, the grand plans for promoting the value of the arts through a reinvigorated approach in schools will be lost and young people in schools will be denied the opportunities that arts education and in particular drama education offers them. If we ignore the needs of our teachers our community will be much the poorer for the lost opportunity to enrich and extend our young people through offering them a dynamic and effective education.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Participant Information Letter**



## **The University of Sydney**

### **Faculty of Education**

#### **Research project: Drama teacher development in four drama educators.**

Dear participant,

Following are some details of the research project I have asked you to be involved in. As you know participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time from the project.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics and Biosafety Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811.

#### **Aims**

The central concern of this proposal is the journey undertaken by a teacher of drama during a year. The study will specifically focus on factors which lead to the development and regression of professional practice in the course of that year.

Research will be undertaken through interviews and log books. These interviews and reflections will be developed into narratives and findings will be presented in a PhD thesis.

#### **The research project**

You will be interviewed twice a term and the interviews transcribed. The interviews will be videotaped to assist with transcription. The questions will focus on teacher development and school culture.

Many of the questions will be based on current teacher development literature and the prevailing factors in NSW schools. You will also be asked to record “remarkable events” in journals which you will also be asked to comment on during the interviews.

Narratives will be constructed from this data which will attempt to integrate and contrast the literature on teacher development with the teacher narratives.

### **Potential significance**

This study will inform the planning and delivery of curriculum and teacher support for drama educators. The study will ascertain what is unique for teachers of drama and attempt to further investigate the difference between K-6 and Year 7-12 teachers. Furthermore the study will explore the development of drama educators in their first year of teaching.

### **Researcher contact details:**

Michael Anderson

3a Smalls Rd

Ryde 2112

Email: Michael.Anderson@det.nsw.edu.au

Ph: 02 9886 7512

Fax: 02 9886 7655

## **Appendix 2**

### **Human Ethics Committee Approval**



**HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**The University of Sydney  
Room L4.14 Main Quad A14  
Sydney 2006**

**Tel: (02) 9351.4474 Fax: (02) 9351.6706 E-mail:human.ethics@reschols.usyd.edu.au**

Dr R Ewing  
School of Social, Policy and Curriculum Studies  
A35

22 April 1999

Dear Dr Ewing

**Title:** *The drama education journey: the professional development of four drama educators*

**Ref No:** 99/04/14

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Ethics Committee at its meeting on 19 April 1999 approved your protocol on the above study. Please note that the approved protocol is in accordance with the original protocol submission.

In order to comply with the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines, and in line with the Human Ethics Committee requirements the Chief Investigator's responsibility is to ensure that:

- (1) The individual researcher's protocol complies with the final and Committee approved protocol.
- (2) Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing.
- (3) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.
- (4) All research subjects are provided with a Subject Information Sheet and Consent Form.
- (5) The Subject Information Sheet and Consent Form be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers.
- (6) The following statement appears on the Subject Information Sheet:  
*Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics and Biosafety Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.*

- (7) The standard University policy concerning storage of data should be followed. While temporary storage of audio-tapes at the researcher's home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of five years.
- (8) A progress report is provided by the end of each year. Failure to do so will lead to withdrawal of the approval of the research protocol and re-application to the Committee must occur before recommencing.
- (9) A report and a copy of the published material is provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely



**M. Professor Barry Baker**  
**Chairman**  
**Human Ethics Committee**

cc. Ms J Simons, School of Professional Studies, Faculty of Education, A35

## **Appendix 3**

### **Extracts from research log**

Interview with

2:00pm

venue: Ryde state office

arrived on time &

presented as relaxed  
& slightly exhausted.

In our informal conversation  
we discussed each others jobs  
and he told me that his wife was  
pregnant

he seemed a little shocked by. <sup>Something</sup>  
Although the shock ~~was~~ was  
more of confused delight than  
dismay.

He said informally that  
he was happy to be "expecting"  
but that it would interfere with.

\*OSD  
wrong  
-----  
reset

his career - HSE marketing etc.

- During the interview he spoke freely and seemed relaxed.
- At one stage when describing the events at School Emotion was not far from the surface - a mix of anger and sadness, <sup>High</sup>
- At another time he asked permission to name <sup>in the</sup> discussion, I encouraged him to do so.

---

has always struck me as a slightly angry (perhaps due to youth) slightly negative teacher, who nonetheless is keen to embrace new ideas.

- \* His reflections about his teaching style & approach to school as a community were strong responses
- His discussion of the feminisation of the syllabus was unselfconsciously provocative.

- surprised me when he told me about the extent of his study.  
Note: preconceptions should be avoided.

### Interviewing

→ I struggled to avoid turning the i/v into a confessional/counselling session. The compulsion to intrude on the ideas should be avoided no matter how difficult.

→ Hard to retain concentration toward the end. Shorter is probably better

→ Sound quality is O.K but they need to be closer.

→ Lighting O.K / OSD wrong

→ Questions ~~for~~ need to be

focused  
read signed & dated  
form.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Letter to participants for validation of research**

Michael Anderson  
42 Railway Avenue  
Stanmore 2048

29 October 2001

### **VALIDATION OF RESEARCH**

Dear research participant,

I mentioned during the research interviews that I would be returning the narratives constructed from the interviews for your review. As you can see, most of the narratives are in your own words but I have extended some of your thoughts and removed some detail to avoid repetition. If you feel that I have misunderstood you or misrepresented your views, please let me know. If you feel that your anonymity is jeopardised by any of the materials, please let me know as well. I will complete the chapters when you have had a chance to review them and I will add my own analysis and reflections. I would be happy to give you a copy of the thesis when I have finished it if you are interested.

The other purpose of this review is for you to reflect on the ideas you expressed in the interviews and to make any comments. I understand that you may have changed your view on many topics and perhaps you have other reflections to offer in hindsight. I am very keen to hear your thoughts at this time. I have included some questions that may assist you in responding that I have attached to this letter.

I am working to a tight schedule at the moment as I am hoping to submit the thesis by early January. I would be grateful if you could return your responses by email ([michael.anderson@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:michael.anderson@det.nsw.edu.au)) by no later than MONDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2001. If you have other smaller notations please mark them on the drafts I have given you and return them to me by mail. I will make the changes from those copies. If the technology or the timeframe is a problem please feel free to contact me about it on 9590 7969 or 0413 179 396.

Again thank you for being part of this research project. I look forward to your responses.

Regards

Michael Anderson

## **Teacher Development**

1. Is there anything in the narratives that you feel does not reflect your views at the time the research was undertaken?
2. Is there anything in the narratives that you feel may compromise your anonymity?
3. Looking back on the narratives are there any reflections you would like to make?  
Please refer (if you can) to specific parts of the narratives.
4. What are the factors now that are assisting in your development?
5. What are the factors that are discouraging your development?
6. How do you feel about the interviews and the research as a whole? Has it been beneficial to your development?
7. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

## **Appendix 5**

### **Interview dates**

## Interview dates

	Ingrid	Mel	Tom	Emma
Interview 1	30/5/99	30/5/99	3/6/99	30/5/99
Interview 2	16/12/99	6/8/99	15/6/99	15/6/99
Interview 3	6/12/99 <sup>50</sup>	15/12/99	22/6/99	22/9/99
Interview 4		6/4/00	3/11/99	8/12/99
Interview 5		23/5/00	15/12/99	30/3/00
Interview 6			14/03/00	23/5/00
Interview 7			19/5/00	8/8/00

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<sup>50</sup> This response was received through a survey posted to the participant.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Sample of tape description**

## TAPE DESCRIPTIONS

Participant name	Tom
Tape number	
Date recorded	14/03/00
Date summarised	6/05/00

<b>Time code</b>	<b>Knowledge and skill development</b>	<b>Self understanding</b>	<b>Ecological change</b>	<b>Other</b>
2		I have to get out of teaching al together or out of E. It has been an interesting couple of weeks. It is worse than it has ever been and there is nothing left, I am just a zombie, walking around without an agenda, I get halfway through lessons and think I have got nothing else to do, I am not even prepared for them. Today was a classic example I started doing things with Year 9 they started to get a bit daring and I thought I better stop here		

		because they started to get into things I wanted to do next terms. I couldn't even think of any games to do with them. It has all grind to a halt.		
16		I have got no energy and the time constraint for Year 11 has really bamboozled me, I didn't get through the topics properly on top of the GP's and the IP's. We only really have 18 weeks with them. I got to a stage when I thought maybe I'll do lots of work. Year 12 is a major concern with time constraints.		
35				Discussion about Year 12 and the problems of that group.
43				Discussion of Year 9 and how they have been going. They are still keen,

				probably too keen.
52		I am feeling creatively burnt out because I have performances going and I have run out of ideas. Everything needs to be done this term and I don't have the energy or the creative flair.		
63				Been teaching 8 years
67		You can see the factors with me not being able to get over the top of Year 8, Year 11 group not gelling and this year I have come back with lots of energy and after the first two weeks I didn't want to be here anymore. Strangely enough Year 10 has come around in the last couple of weeks. Their process was good and they tried to develop a good piece. The process		

		was really good.		
86		I sat back and thought I will give myself 18 months and midway through next year I will reassess. I have been looking at doing training and development for private companies. There is the option there with better money and a car.		
97		I would stay if I could get a promotion but those jobs aren't around, possibly a transfer up the coast would be good and I have broadened my options.		
115				Discussion of career prospects
121		The Year advising is good at the moment but this is a terrible week, we have just had that suicidal kid committed, which he agreed to and		

		<p>there is another kid who has taken out an AVO on his father. The rewarding thing is to see them grow. Whether it is seeing good kids grow and mature or knowing when some of these kids leave they will be better off outside the constraints of this environment.</p>		
136		<p>In terms of the suicidal kid, you were always waiting for the phone to ring. There have been times when we all sat back and waited but it questions your ability to work and you think have I failed this kid, is it my fault.</p>		
152			<p>Our Head Teacher dies so we have moved from English to Creative Arts. Her death had an</p>	

			<p>impact in the first year but she was like a number who has just gone out the door. For us it has been a blessing our new Head Teacher is strong and can work with the boss whereas Sue couldn't and is willing to fight for our professional development. Her main concern is the results.</p>	
173				<p>Discussion of last years group and the discussion of the kids who come in at Year 11.</p>
182				<p>Discussion of the other classes and their ability to excel.</p>
189	<p>I have seen the work that I is doing and I have asked them to work "outside the square".</p>			
199		<p>I like to see where I</p>		

		<p>am going when I am teaching and I think I can go towards a vision and a goal. If I stand outside the process and pick out certain things and highlight the process and that is the way I have taught, it is an analytical approach that is practical. We were always directed in what we were doing.</p>		
220		<p>The process is most important to me. You can refine a product as much as you like but if you don't have the skills in the first place the product will fall apart. I can see that from standing outside. We do mark the final product but you can't get there if you don't have the process.</p>		
240				Discussion of

				drama being about teams. We teach social skills or living skills not that teachers should get on with each other.
257				As boys get older they are more aware of what others think about them. It is probably different for boys. Boys are very self conscious about touch.
290				Discussion of facilitation versus direction. I try to remove myself in Year 11 and 12 and I let them fend for themselves.
323				Group work or individual work. The group work is the most important thing and it links in with what drama means to me and that is to work with a team to achieve whatever you can

				through the process.
344				Social learning in the drama classroom. Tolerance, racial awareness. Anti-bullying etc.
368				Development of kids to function effectively in society, not necessarily for the theatre, not actors or technicians.
392				I tend to encourage kids to work in non realistic modes. Realism becomes Home and Away and there is nothing in it. I try and get them to be non realistic like getting them to script the life of a piece of toast. Getting them to think outside the middle class sensibility is difficult.
436				Don't use improvisation

				much more. It works if you have trained them and they are competent.
460				Boys like the physical theatre thing especially walking up the wall.
480	<p>You get over the current block I will have to get these pieces.</p> <p>I feel like I am climbing up a mountain with no peak, maybe itinerant marking will give me something to do.</p>			<p>Discussion of Year 9, going well.</p> <p>Year 10 OK and Year 11 and 12 aren't going well.</p>
535	<p>Life at home is great and it keeps me going and I used to think I don't want to go home because I had too much work to do and now I don't want to go to school because there is nothing there for me. People always</p>			

	<p>said that but I always thought I would be a dedicated teacher and that is part of the problem and maybe that's because everybody is like me. The boss and my Head Teacher are always looking for new things for me to do. They can see it</p>			
581				<p>I don't even notice the video is there, I'd prefer this to a tape recorder.</p>

## **Appendix 7**

### **Interview with Debra Griffiths**

## **Interview with Debra Griffiths**

*How was Heathcote introduced to Australia?*

In the 1970s, I was a student at the University of New South Wales with Oliver Fiala. Dorothy Heathcote was only known about at this stage amongst educational drama people. Fiala discovered Dorothy's methods and her ideas about using drama as a learning methodology and her ideas made a great deal of sense to him. Fiala invited Dorothy to come and at this stage, people were starting to go to her courses at Durham University. There was interest in what she was doing. I was training to be a teacher at that time and I worked with her when she came out. That was how we learnt about educational drama. There were textbooks around by people like Way that we were given to read but when Dorothy came, that all changed. She refused to have anything written down about her. The only way we got any thing out about Dorothy was when Cecily O'Neill who was on her course did the book.

*So when did Oliver Fiala come onto the scene?*

He was actually a train driver originally, he was actually a refugee. He came to Australia from Yugoslavia and he became interested in theatre and actually worked with Hayes Gordon at the Ensemble school and built up a big interest in working with students and kids and wrote that book *Action on Stage* and worked at the University of NSW in educational drama and then he discovered Dorothy and made discoveries about using drama for learning.

*When was Fiala at New South Wales?*

In the 60s it was pretty early on.

*So was drama pushed as a learning method at the time?*

Well politically it was a bit sensible, no one knew how they were going to get drama into schools and the easy way to do it was to see drama as a way of learning that could apply to any subject. It started to mean that people who were teacher trainers could use it as a tool that was already used in lots of ways, but no one had been able to put very much structure to it, and hadn't put all the right names to it and really didn't understand many of the processes involved.

*Was there are theatre arts vs. drama education argument like there was in the UK?*

Yes yes

*Who were the main players?*

A lot of them were academics from Newcastle University. I can't remember who fought, oh yes I can, that dreadful man at Armidale. The students that came out of Armidale were great, a number of those people spring to mind, the work they did with kids was fantastic it was very much theatre based but their lecturer just didn't see anything that Dorothy had to offer was at all drama. He just saw it is teaching method. He used to sabotage conferences and used to stand up and everybody would wait for the moment when he would say "this is all a sham, this is the conference about nothing" and storm out.

*Can you explain Dorothy's influence?*

Dorothy was incredibly powerful, she was tremendously charismatic. Everybody just thought yes, this must happen in our schools. We would have travelled to the end of the earth to hear her. Anything she said felt full of this incredible wisdom and it was amazing. She had a rock hard will and a tremendous sense of human endeavour. She had such a sense of a teacher's responsibility that she managed to impart to all of us as students. We really felt we had a special role ahead of us. That was really empowering for drama teachers because it was not just that we were allowed to play together, you could actually shift people's attitudes and really do something about their learning. It was wonderful.

*What was the role of the EDA?*

It provided a legitimate voice for a political campaign with the New South Wales Education Department. There was no professional association and no suggestion that anyone was interested in teaching drama. When Oliver Fiala called the inaugural meeting at the University of New South Wales, Dorothy was a centrepiece of that.

*What was the impact of the introduction of the syllabus?*

Suddenly we had a piece of paper and the teacher could walk up to the Principal and say, "well it's a syllabus and I want to teach it". The take-up rate of the syllabus was tremendous I was working in the southwest and I had 45 high schools and 42 of them implemented drama to some degree. The take-up rate was so good because English teachers knew the subject and the kids loved it. There were many new teachers and there was money given to the implementation of the syllabus. People felt supported and so they gave it a go.

*So Sydney Uni were running a drama method course without drama in schools?*

Well yes I had done my drama content at the University of New South Wales and went to Sydney University to do my drama method, nobody from the Department even said what are you going to teach?

*So was the decision to introduce drama as a teaching method motivated by politics or belief?*

Well I think initially it was both in that you had absolutely no choice and there was a critical moment when a Chief Education Officer who was a bit of a toe cutter had been brought in to make this primary syllabus work because people were complaining it was too much there was handwriting there was bike education, there was religious education, drama, visual arts and mass media. There was something like 42 different policies being developed and primary schools were just dying under all this. There were just so many that was a really exciting time but the system was coming apart and he came to us and basically said: you may as well give up, if you can't tell me drama is not good enough in its own right you may as well start packing your desk now. We don't need another teaching method. We had to think seriously about that, there was a lot invested in having drama right across the curriculum. His argument was if the subject is good enough people want to teach it. So we had to change that around. At the same time for the Year 7-10 syllabus had finished and so we were in the process of inservicing teachers on that.

*How did teachers react to this syllabus?*

We had no trained teachers really, you had teachers who had been having a go for a long time who felt quite threatened by the idea of this drama syllabus. They were now supposed to be doing something, many of them were doing what they actually should have been doing, so the syllabus allowed a great deal of freedom. In hindsight, some more structure would have been nice but we always knew it would have to go through some review process.

*What happened to the draft K-6 syllabus?*

Dr. Metherell had problems in 1988. When the syllabus had been worked right to its end it was pulped by Mr Metherell. It was terrible. We lost credibility with primary teachers overnight. It was like we had been working with this for so long and now it is gone. The true

believers realised how fantastic it was and primary teachers still used a whole lot of the stuff we were suggesting to them anyway<sup>51</sup>

*How was the Higher School Certificate syllabus created?*

There had been enough input from both sides and people have come to understand the value of each area and the HSC syllabus accommodates quite adequately both positions. Whereas if you look back to the first Other Approved Studies Course, that was an example of a course that is strongly Theatre Arts based. If you implemented that OAS as I did, it was very hard. The document was strongly product and had no Heathcotian influences at all.

*Any other reflections?*

I think drama is the most exciting subject to teach and I've been around long enough to see every educational theory and every curriculum development. Every time I see something "new" I think we already do that in drama we do everything and I love what we do and I think it will only grow even more. But it is of some concern that we have lost some of the collegiate that we had in drama and that will only be to the detriment of the subject. We have lost some of the quality control and that's the sense I am getting at the moment. That we are not quite sure of who is keeping the finger on the pulse, who is our current guru, who should we really be thinking about now, because someone like Dorothy was so critical for so many years we have lost our guru. We need to know how do we check on the practice as a subject, how do we ensure that people are supported, people are doing what they are meant to be doing, once it starts being done badly you'll never get it back.

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<sup>51</sup> She is referring here to the book *Drama Anytime* (Charters and Gately, 1986) which was originally intended to be a companion to the withdrawn 1987 *K-6 Drama Syllabus*.