IN SEARCH OF A PLACE FOR THE ARTS:
A CASE STUDY OF CREATIVE ARTS PEDAGOGY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM

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requirements for the degree of
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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: .................................................................

Date: ......................................................... 6th August 2010
Abstract

This thesis documents the investigation of the implementation and development of a creative arts program, situated within a school environment of both physical and philosophical transformation. In conjunction with an extensive building program, major changes to the school’s physical learning environments were reflected in pedagogical changes which incorporated an adoption of the Quality Teaching framework, as well as those relevant to 21st century educational thought. Observation, individual and focus group interviews were carried out by the creative arts teacher-researcher. The analysis of material culture and documents provided data for this ethnographic case study.

Physical aspects of the learning environment were explored, and found to affect not only students’ learning experiences and engagement, but also their comfort and ownership of the creative arts program. Further investigation into the learning environment considered the creative arts program in relation to the Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching, documenting evidence of each of the elements therein. Varying degrees of student engagement, an important element, were evidenced within the program. Attempts to incorporate features of the insider classroom were hindered by a number of classroom relocations. However, its pertinence to both creative arts and to 21st century education was noted.

Accommodation of the creative arts program within an open learning space resulted in major changes to both content and practice. These changes included the incorporation of higher order thinking skills and the utilisation of technology within the program, as well as significant changes in the role of the teacher.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The New South Wales Creative Arts Syllabus for primary schools (Board of Studies NSW, 2000) incorporates the subjects of music, dance, drama and visual art, and replaces earlier syllabi in Music (1984), Visual Arts (1989) and Craft (1972). The syllabus notes the role of these four artforms in making meaning in people’s lives, in exploring social and cultural values, and in communicating through symbol systems. This current syllabus cites a requirement of the 1990 Education Act (NSW), which states that primary school students must be provided with courses of study in each of six Key Learning Areas (KLAs) each year, and in particular that music and visual art must be included in the Creative Arts KLA, with drama and dance offering the opportunity to broaden students’ experiences (Board of Studies NSW, 2000, p.5). This study investigates the development of a creative arts program in a western Sydney school.

Implementation of the creative arts program began in 2008. The creative arts program replaced a music program which had been in operation for the past 15 years, during which time music played a significant role in the school. Serving to provide release from face-to-face teaching (RFF) for classroom teachers, music was timetabled for one hour per week with all students. This is a significant proportion of the recommended time allocation for Creative Arts, which is approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours per week (Board of Studies, 2007). Children also had the opportunity to participate in a range of extra-curricular music activities, including choir, instrumental groups, concerts and inter-school performances. In late 2007, a decision was made to replace the music program with a multi-arts program. This decision was made in response to a desire to actively engage more children in the arts, as well as to fulfil requirements of the Creative Arts Syllabus within a restricted timeframe.

The creative arts program was developed to include experiences and activities in each of the four arts disciplines. The Creative Arts Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000) states that “some learning experiences can connect the artforms” (p. 19), and recommends that “teachers give consideration to interrelating the objectives in each of the artforms” (p. 8). Similarities were noted between the types of experiences within each of the artforms. For example, all of

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1 Within this study, references to the creative arts program will be denoted by use of lower case, while the Creative Arts KLA will be denoted by use of upper case. Similarly, lower case will be used to delineate the artforms throughout the thesis, with upper case used when reference is to curriculum documents.
the artforms have syllabus outcomes in areas of making and appreciating, and music, dance and drama also have outcomes in performing. The similarities of thought processes used across the arts disciplines are also noted by Wiggins and Wiggins (1997) and Scripp (2000) (See Chapter 2: Literature Review). Activities were therefore integrated where possible, particularly through shared concepts, and were planned to enable all students to participate in experiences from all of the disciplines each term.

During the implementation of the creative arts program, the school at the centre of this study was involved in a major building project that affected both the physical and pedagogical organisation of the community, resulting in major upheaval for staff, students and parents alike. In order to situate the creative arts program within this school environment, it was necessary to continuously modify and reform the program in light of changes within the broader school community. These alterations constituted the basis of an ongoing investigation into several aspects of the program, most notably those surrounding the physical accommodation of the program as pertaining to its underlying philosophical principles.

**Context of the Study**

The school at the centre of this study is located in an outer-western suburb of Sydney, the largest city in New South Wales (NSW). It belongs to the system of Catholic schools under the jurisdiction of Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, which oversees Catholic schooling in western Sydney. It is a primary school, catering for students aged between five and twelve years, who are grouped in seven grades according to their age. The first year of school is called Kindergarten, with each subsequent grade termed Year 1 through to Year 6. Reference is also made to “stages”, a term used throughout NSW schools to denote levels of academic development. While the stages are not entirely correlative to age, they are applied to year groupings. Kindergarten is referred to as Early Stage 1, while Stage 1 corresponds with Years 1 and 2; Stage 2 with Years 3 and 4; and Stage 3 with Years 5 and 6.

According to 2006 census figures, the school is located in an area of relatively slight socio-economic disadvantage compared to other suburbs in the greater Sydney area (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The school’s population is approximately 520 students, 80% of whom belong to the Roman Catholic faith. The student body has a largely Anglo-Australian representation, with just 20 students from non-English speaking backgrounds enrolled in the school. There are, however, a significant number of students of Maltese descent, many of whom reside in surrounding rural areas. The school population tends to fluctuate in size,
particularly in times of economic uncertainty since students are required to pay fees. While the school’s physical environment supports three classes and teachers per grade, during the course of this study declining numbers resulted in the loss of one class, and the introduction of a composite class in Stage Two. There is currently a total of 20 classes in the school, with class numbers varying between 22 and 31.

The past few years have constituted a time of considerable change for the school. A long-planned building project to provide the school with permanent buildings for all classes came to fruition, and included plans for new buildings, as well as the refurbishment of existing classrooms. As part of a greater building and refurbishment program across primary schools in the Diocese, this planning acknowledged the technological revolution of the early 21st century which sees the schools situated within an increasingly diverse, globalised, information-rich and media-saturated world. Striving to stay abreast of the changes in a rapidly moving world, the new buildings depart from traditional classrooms in several ways. Described by the school principal as “open or agile learning spaces” (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009), large rooms holding an entire grade (or three classes) of children with three teachers have replaced traditional classrooms housing one class and one teacher. Traditional classroom furniture has been replaced with a range of furnishings suited to collaborative, project-based learning. Computer stations and interactive whiteboards replace whiteboards and blackboards. Such dramatic changes to the classroom environment have had huge ramifications for staff, students and curriculum in the school.

The Quality Teaching Initiative

During 2008, the school took part in an initiative between Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, and the University of Newcastle titled “Effective Implementation of Pedagogical Reform” which sought to actualise the Quality Teaching framework within Catholic schools. Involvement in this initiative, and the subsequent adoption of Quality Teaching principles and practices, has significantly affected teaching and learning within the school.

The Quality Teaching model developed in NSW as an attempt at system-wide pedagogical reform. Intended to be applicable across all primary and secondary school grades, and across all KLAS, it aims to improve the academic outcomes of all students. The NSW model relies heavily on the research of Newmann and Wehlage (1993), carried out in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. This research centred on the concept of “authentic pedagogy”,
which focuses on students constructing knowledge through disciplined enquiry to produce education that has value beyond school. The Productive Pedagogy model developed in Queensland during the late 1990s was based closely on Newmann’s mode of authentic pedagogy, and sought to describe classroom learning environments and teaching practices that were effective for all students.

Working with researchers from the University of Newcastle, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) developed its own version of Newmann’s pedagogical model, calling it “Quality Teaching”. A document outlining the model, Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools: A Discussion Paper (2003), refers to three pedagogical dimensions: Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance. These dimensions “simultaneously draw teachers’ attention to the depth and quality of ideas being addressed by their students, the extent to which learning environments genuinely support student learning, and the extent to which students see value in what they are learning” (Amosa, Ladwig, Griffiths & Gore, 2007).

Although the DET began implementation of Quality Teaching as early as 2003 in state-funded public primary schools, active realisation of the framework within the Catholic system of schools remains a current enterprise. The framework underlies curriculum planning and implementation in all KLAs across all grades in the focus school. Adherence to the principles proposed in the framework was a key factor in the development of the school’s creative arts program as discussed below.

The diocesan Quality Teaching initiative remains an ongoing process, but the school chose not to continue its involvement beyond the end of 2008. While the ideals of Quality Teaching have been maintained within the school, and some inserviceing of staff has continued, the extreme upheaval within the school caused by the change from classrooms to learning spaces has seen the focus turn to philosophies pertinent to open classrooms and 21st century pedagogy.

The departure from traditional classrooms necessitated a re-evaluation of existing teaching methods and practices, and also the philosophies underlying these practices. As well as becoming part of an initiative to implement Quality Teaching, the school has adopted many practices and ideals pertaining to 21st Century pedagogical thought (see Chapter 2: Literature Review). These adjustments have been driven and supported by changes in leadership within the school, and within the greater Catholic Education system, and have occurred in both
content and implementation of the curriculum. Although these changes have been quite sudden and drastic in many respects, they also impel constant and continuing evaluation of evolving practices.

**Research Questions**

The particular conditions described in the context of the study, together with a survey of related literature, were influential in the development of a number of research questions for investigation within the study.

- How do changes to the physical classroom environment affect children’s learning experiences and engagement?
- How is the Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching evidenced in the creative arts program?
- In what ways can an ‘insider’ culture exist within a specialist creative arts program, and how is this evidenced?
- How are the creative arts accommodated within the 21st century classroom?
- What changes in role are required in the transformation from ‘teacher’ to ‘learning facilitator’?

An ethnographic case study was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for the investigation of these questions, as is discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology.

**Rationale for the Study**

Although the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) began implementation of Quality Teaching as early as 2003, the pedagogical framework has only recently been adopted by Catholic Education, Diocese Parramatta. While significant research has already been carried out in the NSW public school system, much of it centres on disadvantaged schools, and many of the students involved in these studies are considered ‘at risk’. Research carried out in primary schools has investigated Quality Teaching in the general, rather than specialist, classroom.

The school at the centre of this study not only differs systemically from those schools involved in previous studies, but also differs in student clientele, in the recency of its
implementation of the Quality Teaching framework, and in the investigation of a specialist classroom situation. In relation to Quality Teaching, the study’s focus is the Quality Learning Environment dimension, which has previously received very little research attention. Its exploration is therefore warranted. Similarly, the ‘insider classroom’, a concept developed through the Quality Teaching research of the Fair Go Project (Fair Go Team, 2006) warrants further investigation to supplement a small body of existing research.

In these early years of the 21st century, a burgeoning field of research provides both rationalisation and recommendations for pedagogy appropriate to a rapidly-changing world. Promoting both innovation and revolution in current schooling practices, the adoption of such ideals can lead to quite draconian change, as has been witnessed in both physical settings and pedagogical practice within the school at the centre of this study. As these ideals are actualised within schools, a need exists for research that will describe and evaluate such practices.

Fundamental to research into 21st century pedagogy is the evolutionary state of arts education, which has existed at the fringe of primary school curriculum for many years. As the value of artistic practices is noted in relation to 21st century pedagogical thought, the possibility exists for creative arts to play a more central role in the early years of schooling. With a Diocesan-wide building program changing the physical face of Catholic schooling in Sydney’s west, an investigation into the place of the arts is both timely and pertinent.

Outline of the Study

The following chapter provides a survey of literature related to several areas of the study. These include a rationale for the teaching of multi-arts; the Quality Teaching framework with particular reference to the Quality Learning Environment and engagement; the insider classroom; classroom environments; and 21st century pedagogy, with particular reference to the relevance of the arts in the 21st century classroom. An outline of the methodology utilised in the study is provided in Chapter 3, together with descriptions of sampling, data collection and analysis.

The results of the study are detailed in Chapters 4 to 8. Chapter 4 begins with a description of the classroom environments that accommodated the creative arts program during the course of the study, and outlines several ways in which classroom environments affected student learning. Chapter 5 further develops the theme of the classroom environment through a
description of the elements of a Quality Learning Environment as evidenced in the creative arts program. A detailed discussion of one of these elements, engagement, constitutes Chapter 6. The physical and pedagogical features of insider classrooms as realised in the creative arts program are presented in Chapter 7, and Chapter 8 describes aspects of the creative arts program as it was housed in an open or agile learning space. The thesis culminates in Chapter 9 with a summary of findings and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the research questions, literature from several areas has been studied. Literature pertinent to multi-arts education, including pedagogical philosophies and current practice in New South Wales, aids in the justification of the adoption of a multi-arts program. A growing body of research into aspects of Quality Teaching is discussed, together with literature pertaining to the elements of the Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching. Integral to several aspects of the study, types and levels of engagement are considered through the examination of texts by prominent authors in this area. Features of physical classroom environments affecting teaching and learning are acknowledged, and characteristics of the ‘Insider’ classroom are identified through literature related to these domains. Current literature delineates the features of 21st century pedagogical thought and practice, and helps to determine the relevance of arts education in the 21st century classroom.

Rationale for the Teaching of Multi-Arts

The Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies, 2000) provides a rationale for the inclusion of four disciplines in the NSW primary school Creative Arts KLA. The syllabus states that these artforms - music, dance, drama and visual arts - are part of the everyday lives of Australian people, and that they offer opportunities for “personal expression, enjoyment, creative action, imagination, emotional response, aesthetic pleasure and the creation of shared meanings” (p. 6). Through participation in these artforms, students can develop expression and understanding of personal and cultural views, beliefs and practices. The symbol systems and language of each artform provide students with skills and opportunities for communication (Board of Studies, 2000).

Learning in the arts is underpinned by the belief that all students are able to gain knowledge, skills and understanding through experiences in these areas. Learning can assist students to participate in and contribute to cultural experiences, in their lifelong learning in the arts, and in becoming informed consumers of the arts. In supporting these views, Bloomfield (2000) adds that an integrated approach to the arts also complements and enriches children’s learning in all other KLAs.

The National Statement on Education and the Arts created by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2005) states that “the arts
foster imagination, risk-taking and curiosity”, which are important aspects of creativity, and which can be nurtured through “a balanced and dynamic education rich in arts and cultural experiences” (p.4). The statement proposes that the arts “enrich our lives by building mutual respect and understanding”, helping to increase awareness and understanding of diverse cultures both in Australia and across the wider global context. The statement also notes that valuing and developing creative capacities will help to position Australia as a “vibrant nation in the global context”. The ideas proposed in both the Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000), and the National Statement on Education and the Arts (MCEETYA, 2005) are discussed in depth by Jeanneret (2009), who offers a sound rationale for inclusion of the arts in the school curriculum.

However, despite the claims made in these documents, the nominal time allocation for arts in NSW primary schools is only 1.5-2.5 hours per week (Board of Studies NSW, 2007). Only visual arts and music are compulsory components. The Board of Studies NSW suggests that linking experiences across the artforms might be a way to offer opportunities in all the arts within such a limited timeframe.

Fowler describes the arts as a “universe of separate but related areas of human insight” (1996, p. 4). Comparing the arts to the areas of biology, chemistry and physics which make up the greater discipline of science, Fowler writes that none of the arts can escape their relationship with the others. This relationship is identified by O’Toole (2009) as “everything embedded in the word aesthetic” (p. xxv). In his introduction to the book, Living Powers: The Arts in Education, Abbs writes that the individual arts “must be conceived as forming a single community in the curriculum” (1987, p. 3). He explains that they should be understood as serving a unified aesthetic purpose and process, but not necessarily be integrated in their timing. Although somewhat dated, the text is robust in its justification of arts integration.

Bresler (2007) describes a development ‘quietly’ taking place over the past forty years whereby the positioning of the individual artforms and their respective disciplines have begun to be grouped together under a larger umbrella, namely “the arts”. She notes the political and intellectual ramifications of the housing together of the arts, describing the generation of a productive tension which serves to create interest in existing practices, and to promote research into the ways in which the arts can cross-fertilise each other. Bresler believes that this cross-fertilisation characterises much artistic and intellectual thought in the 21st century, and is seen in the ‘softening of boundaries’ between concepts and domains.
Scripp (2000) draws parallels between learning experiences in the arts disciplines, noting that authentic musical training involving knowledge of repertoire, musical and notation skills can be transferred to the other disciplines. These thoughts are echoed by Wiggins and Wiggins (1997), who propose that the most logical way to make connections between fields of knowledge is not via the fields themselves, but rather through the ways in which we come to understand them. Therefore, learning processes rather than content should be connected. They compare music activities such as performing, creating and listening with visual arts activities such as seeing, analysing and creating, and with language arts activities such as reading, writing, and listening. As the musical activities lead to musical understanding and skills in musical literacy, activities in the visual and language arts have similar outcomes in their own fields. Even though the fields of knowledge are all distinct, in each case the mind engages in similar processes.

A “blurring of boundaries . . . and deliberate fusion of disparate arts” is described in a recent Australian text of particular significance to this study (Sinclair, Jeanneret, Swainston, and Watkins, 2009, p. 198). The authors view the ready availability of material and images through the internet, DVD, CD-Rom, cable and free-to-air television, together with access to technological devices, as a key factor in the emergence of hybrid forms of art. These art forms combine materials, media, and genres to produce art works that are eclectic in both content and form, and the authors suggest that it is both possible and probable that primary school students would naturally gravitate toward these art forms within their own practice.

Glover and Young (1999) suggest that music shares common ground with dance, words, and drama. This allows the development of musical skills and understanding to be shared across the context of each art form. Such learning then feeds back into an understanding and practice of music in its own right. These connections see the various artforms readily translated across the boundaries of disciplines, and are illustrated through a thorough discussion of the ways in which the arts may be interrelated in the classroom, providing a valuable multi-arts approach to music learning.

Existing literature therefore supports the decision to plan and implement a multi-arts program. Underlying the development of this program were principles guided by the school’s adoption of the Quality Teaching framework, as well as those pertinent to the arts within the realm of 21st century pedagogical thought.
The Quality Teaching Framework

Quality Teaching is a model of pedagogy developed in New South Wales in the early years of the 21st century as an attempt at system-wide reform. The framework evolved from the work on authentic pedagogies of Newmann (1995) and his associates in the USA, and more directly from the Productive Pedagogies model of Queensland. Ladwig (2004) provides a most thorough discussion of the limitations of the American model and the ensuing developments in Queensland, including findings of the School Reform Longitudinal Study (SRLS).

The SRLS was conducted in Queensland from 1998 – 2000, and resulted in the emergence of the Productive Pedagogy model. A crucial finding of the study, as identified by Zygier (2003) was the requirement of quality classroom teaching and assessment practices, and curricula relevant to students’ futures, for improvement of student outcomes. Productive Pedagogies, a Queensland model emerging through the results of the study, focuses on achieving both intellectual and social justice outcomes through addressing four aspects of learning. These dimensions, named intellectual quality, relevance, social support, and recognition of difference, describe classroom learning environments and teaching practices effective for all students (Hayes, Lingard & Mills, 2000). They also pre-empt the dimensions of the NSW model, which became known as Quality Teaching.

Working with researchers from the University of Newcastle, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) developed its own version of Newmann’s pedagogical model, which is proposed in the paper Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). In this outline of the model, pedagogy is defined as the art and science of teaching, which can be evidenced by classroom activities, and by the nature and the quality of the tasks set by teachers to guide and develop student learning. Pedagogy focuses attention on the processes through which knowledge is constructed, produced and critiqued. It critically incorporates how people teach, what is taught, what and how learning is assessed, and how students learn. Although reference is made to influential research, it is not specified or cited in the paper.

The paper refers to three pedagogical dimensions which form an integral feature of Quality Teaching: Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance (see Appendix B). Together, these dimensions represent a comprehensive conceptualisation of teaching that is concerned simultaneously with the quality of ideas addressed and the work that is produced, the
quality of the classroom environment and relationships among participants, and the significance of the learning for the specific group of students with whom a teacher is working (Gore, 2007).

There is a growing body of research into the effects of implementing the Quality Teaching framework across public schools throughout New South Wales. Ongoing collaborative research carried out between DET and researchers from the University of Newcastle, titled *Systematic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement in NSW Public Schools* (SIPA), has provided large amounts of data for various analyses and descriptions of Quality Teaching.

A study into equity gaps by Amosa, Ladwig, Griffiths and Gore (2007) concluded that the rigour of intellectual demands significantly enhances performance, and has the capacity to close the achievement gap between poor and wealthy students. It also surmises that expectations of high quality student work have a positive and significant effect on student authentic achievement. Evidence from the study suggests that it is imperative for all students – especially those who are traditionally disadvantaged by schooling – to be exposed to quality assessment tasks which encourage high levels of authentic achievement. Further equity issues were investigated by Griffiths, Amosa, Ladwig, and Gore (2007), whose study identified some correlation between pedagogy, the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the average SES within the school.

Drawing on approximately 350 interviews and 1800 surveys from across NSW, another study by Griffiths, Gore and Ladwig, (2006) found improved student outcomes resulted when teachers changed their goals of practice to fall in line with Quality Teaching. The improved outcomes were also linked to the teachers’ deep understanding of Quality Teaching, their fundamental commitment to their students’ learning, and their belief that their teaching makes a difference. Ladwig, Gore, Amosa, Griffiths and Smith, (2007) provided a quantitative analysis of the efficacy of the Quality Teaching model for predicting student outcomes. They analysed the relationship between pedagogy and student outcomes, when measured in terms of the Quality Teaching model and in-class student performance respectively.

Analysis of the SIPA data through numerous and varied studies has been extensive and intensive, yet remains incomplete and ongoing. It provides continuing direction for research into the effects of Quality Teaching, and invites ongoing research in schools and with clientele differing from those already at the centre of Quality Teaching studies. It is also noted
that the surveyed literature tends to consider Quality Teaching across its three dimensions, rather than to focus on any one dimension, as is the case with this study.

Quality Learning Environment

Three dimensions of pedagogy, Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance, form the basis of the Quality Teaching framework. As previously mentioned, a clear and concise explanation of these dimensions is presented through both narrative and tabulated information in the DET’s Quality Teaching discussion paper (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). Crucial to the Quality Teaching framework, the tabulated information is of particular relevance and significance, and its clarity makes it valuable as a tool for curriculum development, implementation, assessment and evaluation. While each of the dimensions is considered critical to the implementation of Quality Teaching, for the purposes of this study, the second dimension – Quality Learning Environment – is of particular significance.

The Quality Learning Environment refers to the interactions between students and teachers within the classroom, as well as the physical space. It is founded on the premise that a classroom providing high levels of support for learning will improve student outcomes. Killen (2005) identifies several conditions necessary to the creation of an environment supportive of students reaching their full potential. The relationships between the teachers and students, and among students, should encourage respect, safety, and participation. The students need to be immersed in learning experiences that are interesting and challenging, and must have the opportunity to work collaboratively on open-ended tasks. Opportunity should be provided for using and discussing the methods of the discipline being studied. Students’ efforts should be valued and they should have some say in what, when and how they learn. Students should be expected to work hard to achieve high standards, and they should be responsible for their behaviour and their learning (p.20). These conditions are embodied within the elements of this dimension: explicit quality criteria, engagement, high expectations, social support, students’ self-regulation, and student direction. Because engagement is a key centralising factor in the successful implementation of classroom pedagogy, and is the specific focus of a research question, it will be discussed separately.
Explicit Quality Criteria

Explicit quality criteria are frequent, detailed and precise statements regarding what the students are required to do, and to achieve. Very limited literature exists which deals specifically with this element of Quality Teaching. However, Allen and Tanner (2006) recommend the use of rubrics for this purpose, suggesting that “rubrics not only can be designed to formulate standards for levels of accomplishment and used to guide and improve performance but also they can be used to make these standards clear and explicit to students” (p. 197). A rubric is defined by Andrade (2000) as a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing criteria required to achieve various levels of quality, and describing those levels from excellent to poor. She notes that the two features shared by all rubrics are a list of criteria, or “what counts” in a project or assignment; and gradations of quality, with descriptions of strong, middling, and problematic student work. Providing explicit criteria is considered one valuable aspect of using rubrics.

Andrade and Du (2005) cite several studies which investigate student use of rubrics (Andrade, 2001; Hafner & Hafner, 2003; and Schafer, Swanson, Bene & Newberry, 2001). Results would indicate that the use of rubrics help students to focus on the task at hand, produce work of higher quality, receive higher grades, and feel less anxious about an assignment. The studies involving rubrics are particularly relevant since rubrics are used consistently across all KLA’s within the school at the centre of the study.

High Expectations

Closely linked to Explicit Quality Criteria, is the element of High Expectations. A teacher’s expectations are high when they communicate that all members of a class should be involved in challenging work, and learning important knowledge and skills to an appropriate standard. Killen (2005) notes that teachers who have high expectations set challenging tasks, and also try to accommodate a broad range of learning styles which value the unique strengths and intelligences of each student. These principles are congruent with an outcomes-based learning model of education, as outlined by Brandt (1992), who defines an outcome as “a culminating demonstration of learning . . . what the kids will actually do . . . It’s a matter of what the kids can do when they exit the system” (p. 66). The Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus is based upon this model, and specifies that syllabus outcomes are “specific statements of the results intended by the syllabus”, and “are achieved as students engage with the content of the syllabus” (Board of Studies NSW, 2000, p. 29).
A meta-analysis of 35 years of empirical research on teacher’s expectations by Jussim and Harber (2005) notes that although exploration of the concept has been substantial, a survey of studies “may appear to be a mess of complex findings, inconsistent replications, and heated controversies” (p. 151). However, they did conclude that “abundant naturalistic and experimental evidence shows that teacher expectations clearly do influence students—at least sometimes” (p. 131). The significance of these ideas for Quality Teaching is that a teacher’s high expectations will see higher student achievement result. A study evidencing this relationship was carried out by Amosa, Ladwig, Griffiths and Gore (2007), who witnessed significant improvement in students’ achievement with raised teacher expectation. Pertinent to a study about arts education, Douglas and Jaquith (2009) view high expectations as a feature of choice-based artmaking experiences, proposing that children work toward greater mastery due to the high investment involved in pursuing one’s own ideas.

Social Support

An important aspect in creating a quality learning environment is social support, which might be defined as “the existence and availability of people on whom one can rely for assistance, support, and caring” (Johnson, Johnson, Buckman & Richards, 1985, p. 405). They consider social support to be instrumental in developing persistence on challenging tasks, resilience in stressful situations, self-reliance and autonomy, a coherent and integrated self-identity, and psychological health.

Newmann and Wehlage (1993) describe ways in which social support can be implemented in the classroom. They suggest that social support from the teacher involves conveying high expectations for all students, and encouraging students to take risks with challenging academic work. Furthermore, they recommend that the teacher convey that all members of the class can learn important knowledge and skills. Mutual respect is encouraged, whereby students with less skill or proficiency in a subject are treated in ways that encourage their efforts and value their contributions.

Students’ Self-Regulation

Self-regulation refers to “strategies that learners use to direct their behaviour and their attempts to learn” (Killen, 2005, p.23). The term “self-regulated learning” (SRL) became popular in the 1980s because it “emphasised the emerging autonomy and responsibility of students to take charge of their own learning” (Paris & Winograd, n.d). Zimmerman (1990)
attempted to clarify the meaning of SRL by describing self-regulated students as “metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning” (p.4), while Boekaerts (1997) maintains that self-regulatory skills cannot only be taught, but also help students to obtain better grades. Within the Quality Teaching framework, SRL is evident when students demonstrate initiative by accepting responsibility for their learning and for the consequences of their behaviours, with minimal teacher attention to the disciplining and regulation of student behaviour.

In discussing both concepts and methodologies related to research in the area of SRL, Butler (2002) suggests that qualitative approaches and methods allow researchers “fine-grained analyses of instances of SRL as they play out in context” (p. 60). This view is supported by Patrick and Middleton (2002), who recommend the use of observations, interviews and self-report surveys in SRL research. They suggest that these methods lend themselves to the collection of “rich, contextualised description” (p. 27), and discuss the results of research into student engagement in a middle school science class in relation to their claims.

**Student Direction**

Tasks with high student direction allow students to exercise control over one or more significant aspects of a task. This might be a choice of activities to be included in the task; the time spent on a task; the pace at which the task is undertaken; and the criteria by which the task will be assessed (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2004, p.32). Each student has unique needs, abilities, and learning preferences, and the opportunity for student direction allows the learning to suit the student.

Abdullah (2001) describes self-directed learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process who integrate self-management with self-monitoring. They set goals independently, and choose their own approach to their learning, often working collaboratively with teachers or peers. They create links between theoretical concepts and the real world. Emphasising self-direction in the classroom means teaching students specific strategies that offer them opportunities for decision-making and problem-solving, and which encourage them to set their own goals. According to Hom and Murphy (1983), self-directed students are more motivated and efficient and achieve more, when working on goals they set themselves, while Douglas and Jaquith (2009) state that these students “build understandings through inquiry and problem-solving”(p.11).
Types of Engagement

An element of the Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching, engagement appears to hold particular significance as an indicator of quality learning. According to Black (2007), engagement is an important schooling outcome in its own right. Students who are engaged feel that they belong at school. They take part in activities, and they value education and their own achievements beyond merely staying on task and complying with teacher instructions (McFadden & Munns, 2002). While engagement is affected by factors such as social background and geographic location, it is also shaped by pedagogy and curriculum.

VandeWeghe (2009) quotes the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of engagement, “to cause to be held fast; to involve; to entangle” (p.6), and proposes that engagement may be cognitive, emotional, physical or even spiritual “when it seems to transcend time and space”, or when it causes identification with something beyond ourselves. He views engagement as “flow”, a term introduced by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) to describe those moments of “optimal experience” when we feel “a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished”, and which usually occur when the “body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile” (p. 3). It is the sense “that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of losing track of time and of being unaware of fatigue and of everything else but the activity itself” (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, Whalen & Wong, 1993). Several characterisitics of this optimal experience are noted by Csikszentmihalyi: “a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing” (1990, p. 71); concentration is intense; self-consciousness disappears; sense of time is lost or distorted; and the experience is so gratifying that it is carried out for its own sake.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow and engaged learning go hand in hand: “The flow experience acts as a magnet for learning – that is, for developing new levels of challenges and skills” (1997, p. 33). With his colleagues, Csikszentmihalyi identifies factors influencing engagement in the classroom as relevance of content, perceived control by the students, and positive emotions within the classroom, together with the subject and its instructional format (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). They propose that asking students
questions in order to establish their concentration, interest and enjoyment is a means of measuring engagement.

Pertinent to this study, research into flow has emphasised the phenomenology of interactions between the person and his or her environment, emphasising the dynamic systems composed therein (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Csikszentmihalyi, the environment must provide opportunity for engagement, and helps to shape the direction of the engagement. This feature is important when considering the effects of classroom environments on student engagement.

According to Finn (1989), student engagement is characterised by behaviours such as complying with school and class rules, arriving at school and class on time, listening to the teacher, and responding to teacher-initiated directions and questions. Higher levels of engagement might be shown through behaviours such as taking initiative, seeking help, and participating in extra-curricular areas of school life. The student also identifies with belonging in the school setting, and valuing school. On the other hand, noncompliant behaviour, such as inattentiveness, causing disruption, and refusing to complete assigned work, would indicate disengagement. Zygier (2008) considers Finn’s work to be widely accepted in Australia, and characterised by the correlation between lack of engagement and poor academic performance.

Cairns and Dyson (2005) note that much research around the issue of engagement tends to focus on how to re-engage the disengaged. This is particularly true of studies concerned with 21st century learning, where student disengagement is seen as a significant issue (Brown, 2006; Pletka, 2007; Prensky, 2001; Shute, Dennen, Kim, Donmez & Wang, n.d.). Newmann (1992) suggests that obviously disengaged students are easily identifiable since they are disruptive, they do not attend class, and they do not complete tasks. However, he notes that typically disengaged students are often well-behaved, and attend class and complete work, yet show little indication of excitement, commitment, or pride in mastery of the curriculum (p.1).

Research into the engagement aspect of Quality Teaching was the principal aim of the Fair Go Project. Consisting of several action research studies conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Western Sydney and the Priority Schools Programs (Fair Go Team, 2006), the Fair Go Project involved teachers and researchers implementing and evaluating change in classrooms in schools within Sydney’s south-west. Of particular relevance through its focus on the arts, the research carried out by Hertzberg, Foord, & Manga, (2006) as part of the Fair Go Project sought to determine whether a drama methodology called ‘educational drama’
might improve the engagement of children who avoided risk-taking in their learning, and who were reluctant to take part in sustained dialogue. The teachers planned high cognitive, affective and operative learning experiences. They collected data through teacher observation and discussion, student written work samples, video, photography, field notes and semi-structured interviews with both staff and students. Acknowledging insufficient longitudinal data for any real conclusions, the study did provide evidence of improvements in the students’ engagement and risk-taking.

Another Fair Go Project study into engagement is of particular significance to this study through its relevance to 21st century learning and issues. A case study carried out by Nanlohy, Munns and Craven (2006) sought to investigate the ways in which students’ construction of hypermedia texts deepens their engagement in learning tasks and their understanding of the content knowledge they are representing in that text. The researchers analysed contextual data, teacher and researcher observations, and student work samples for evidence of student engagement, and to evaluate students’ procedural and content knowledge and the use of interactivity in the hypertexts they authored. Findings included that “students’ use of information and communication technologies within appropriate learning sequences will increase their engagement in learning tasks in ways that go beyond the teacher, time and place of classroom learning” (p.1).

A compelling finding of the Fair Go Project is its identification of two levels of engagement: the first, signified by a small ‘e’, is characterised by students being in-task. The second level, signified by a big ‘E’, is more concerned with enduring engagement with learning and education, and is characterised by students wanting to be at school (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 10). Such distinction between levels of engagement was also investigated by Finn and Voelkl (1993). They defined engagement as having a “behavioural component, termed participation, and an emotional component, termed identification” (p.249). Participation denotes the student taking part in activities, and responding appropriately to directions, tasks, and questions. Identification occurs when students feel that they belong in a school, and is usually preceded by participation. Finn and Voelkl also sought to identify aspects of the school environment which promote engagement among at-risk students.

In their paper investigating the relationship between student self-assessment and engagement, Woodward and Munns (2003) speculate that the most important questions for teachers working toward engagement are “How do you get it?”, and “How do you know when you’ve
They suggest that this “getting” and “knowing” is a complementary process, with student self-assessment as the pivotal axis. It will be achieved in classrooms where the students think and talk and share about learning.

They make the distinction between procedural and substantive forms of engagement, a distinction also noted by Munns (2007) and Nystrand and Gamoran (1989). Procedural engagement sees the student on-task and compliant with teacher instructions. Substantive engagement is a sense of satisfaction with, and psychological investment in, the classroom work being undertaken. Citing Bernstein (1996), Woodward and Munns (2003) note that engagement is an internal feeling and an educational identity. They also recognise that engagement operates on cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and operative (doing) planes. They suggest that engagement is when the cognitive, affective and operational are occurring at high levels: “at high levels of student engagement the cognitive and operative become the affective: Students get a ‘buzz’ about the success they are experiencing in intellectually demanding tasks” (p. 3).

This distinction is also made in a widely-cited meta-analysis of engagement literature by Fredericks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004), who denote three types of engagement as cognitive, emotional and behavioural. The authors argue that engagement should be considered as a multidimensional construct that unites these three aspects. They suggest that such a fusion may provide a richer characterisation of engaged students, since they are, in fact, dynamically interrelated within the individual (p. 61). The paper also reviews definitions, measures, precursors and outcomes of student engagement.

Fredericks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) also suggest that qualitative research is needed to approach the phenomenology of engagement. They recommend the use of multi-method, observational and ethnographic studies for future research, inferring that such research could illustrate the development and interaction of the various types of engagement. Accordingly, McFadden and Munns (2002) note that “it is the students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether education is working for them” (p. 364).

**The Insider Classroom**

Arising from the Fair Go Project research, the concept of the insider classroom describes the ideal environment for provision of Quality Teaching. Sinclair and Johnson (2006) investigated the ‘insider classroom’ as part of this project. Data were gathered across a
number of school sites through interviews, observation, and document analysis in order to identify key elements in classroom and school organisation which enabled students to see themselves as ‘insiders’.

In the insider classroom, the relationship between the students and teachers exhibits a shared ownership of the learning space, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding. There is an interaction and interdependence amongst the students . . . (they) regulate their own behaviour, negotiate conditions for learning and, with their teachers, set the standards for measuring the quality of their work. (p. 74)

This study provides thorough descriptions of the characteristics of an insider classroom for students, teachers, and the greater school community.

The research of Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006) sought to investigate if and how the insider classroom framework could be implemented in different stages of a school, utilising different methods of data collection with each age group. Photographs and field notes were used to record affective, cognitive and operative responses of Early Stage 1 children. Since little research in this field has been carried out with younger groups of students, the descriptions of activities and experiences of Early Stage 1 and Stage 1 classes are significant. Excerpts of interview transcripts with Stage 3 students illustrate notable theoretical and practical features of the ‘insider classroom’, highlighting the importance of classroom processes and learning conversations in engaging students.

Two studies by Woodward and Munns (2003, 2006) offer further discussion and analysis of insider classrooms, suggesting that insider classrooms are those “where students think and talk and share about learning” (2003, p.4). They stress the necessity for classroom processes which encourage enhanced reflective processes across the learning community, as well as the importance of listening to the students’ individual and collective voices.

**Classroom Environments**

Any investigation into learning environments must also take into account features of the physical learning environment, notably the classroom. A relative paucity of research regarding learning environments is noted by Higgins, Hall, Wall, Woolner and McCaughey(2005) and Macgregor (2004), which the latter considers surprising since “the physical environment of a school necessarily affects the teaching and learning within it” (p. 2). She does, however, note an increasing interest in the significance of the learning environment among researchers, which is also commented upon by Uline and Tschannen-
Moran (2008), and Weinstein (1979). Weinstein considers this growing interest as reflecting both a developing concern for personal-environmental relations, and the controversy created by open classrooms and open schooling (p. 577).

Several authors stress the significance of the places in which children learn. In his book, *Classroom Environments*, Fraser (1986) proposes that “the classroom environment is such a potent determinant of student outcomes that it should not be ignored by those wishing to improve the effectiveness of schools” (p. 1). Edwards, Gandini and Forman (1998) term the school buildings, landscape, spaces and places, furnishings and features the “third teacher”, while Araca (1986) suggests that the “places and spaces in our classrooms are not mere shells filled with objects”, but rather an integral part of the total teaching process (p. 13). Tanner (2000) proposes that educational reform will only take full effect if “expressed in organisational and architectural terms”, and that changes in the curriculum and methods of teaching should be “reflected in the layout of buildings and arrangement of classes” (p. 311).

Of relevance to this study through its specificity with the arts, Abdul-Hafeez (2005) states that “the physical environment should be considered one of the most important factors affecting the teaching and learning process in an arts classroom” (p. 1) and recommends that the physical aspects of any place should meet the needs of the people who will use them. Susi (1986) considers arrangement and use of a classroom’s physical space especially significant for art educators, since they form part of a complex non-verbal communications system. Stokrocki (1986) also recognises this feature of an art classroom. Further, he identifies spatial, pedagogical, extra-structural, and philosophical dimensions to the art learning environment.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out regarding the effect of noise on students and their learning. Several studies are cited by Weinstein (1979), Higgins et al (2005) and Earthman (2004). Some studies concern the impact of environmental noise - such as schools near train lines or airports - for example those by Kyzar (1977) and Stansfield and Matheson (2003). Other studies deal with the effects of chronic noise exposure on reading and cognitive function, such as those by Evans and Maxwell (1997), Maxwell and Evans (2000) and Slater (1968). Although several of these studies reached conflicting conclusions, Earthman’s review of findings (2004) ascertained that “the ability to clearly hear and understand what is being spoken is a prerequisite for effective learning. When this ability is impaired through unwanted noise students do not perform well” (p. 5).
A number of studies have been undertaken regarding noise and open classrooms. Evans (2006) suggests that noise in open classrooms manifests problems with distraction and off-task time. This is supported by Moore (1986). Evans also cites studies by Kyzar (1977), Bennett et al. (1980) and Weinstein (1979) which suggest that noise levels are higher in open classrooms, and teacher complaints about noise are common.

Other factors which might be considered in relation to the physical classroom environment include overcrowding and furniture arrangement. According to Earthman (2004), overcrowding in classrooms makes it difficult for students to concentrate, reduces the time and effectiveness spent on innovative techniques such as cooperative learning and group work, and sees individual student-teacher contact all but impossible. Achilles, Finn and Bain (1998) state that high levels of cognitive achievement are impossible to meet in large classes and overcrowded schools, and propose that small class numbers encourage quality, equality and equity.

Several studies have investigated the effect of various furniture arrangements in classrooms. Evans and Lovell (1979) evaluated modifications to the design of a classroom which was characterised by distractions, interruptions, high noise levels and poor traffic flow. Their findings indicated significant improvement through modifying the physical design of the room. Sommer and Olsen (1980) remodelled a traditional college classroom to create a ‘soft’ classroom with cushioned benches, adjustable lighting, carpet and decorative items, finding a higher percentage of students participating voluntarily in the newly-decorated area. In explaining such changes, they state that “introducing a new physical form requires people to change established patterns of behaviour” (p. 3).

Children’s thoughts about their ideal schools and classrooms which were gathered in the guise of an English newspaper competition are presented in the text Schools I’d Like (Burke & Grosvenor, 2003). Dozens of quotes by children provide insight into the students’ views of the rooms in which they spend so much time. Their call for comfort, privacy, space for social activity and rest, colourful and softly-textured interiors is frequently presented as a contrast to their existing school environments.

Recent changes in pedagogical thought have seen classroom design scrutinised in several studies. Jilk (2005) comments that the classrooms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mirrored the societal view that children needed to be controlled and disciplined in order to create “pliant citizens who would fit into the new industrialised world” (p. 30). Classrooms
with many children seated in rows were suited to the belief that their one teacher had knowledge to disseminate to the learners. Similarly, Shilling (1991) notes that the organisation of school space reflects “societal and legal rules which view children as subordinate to adults” (p. 32). He describes the physical school as being one in which students are subordinated and constricted into tightly ranked rows of desks in front of a large teacher’s desk, excluded from many areas, deprived of private space, and banned from staff areas. Students in these schools lack any ownership of the school and classroom space. Burke and Grosvenor (2003) suggest that appealing, comfortable, safe and inclusive environments have been compromised throughout history by concerns for cost and discipline, while Horne (2002) considers schools to have surrounded themselves with “physical and non-physical boundaries” (p. 6). This viewpoint is supported by Macgregor (2004a), who states that the architecture of schools and classrooms embodies ideologies of pedagogy and education through their “physical arrangement and the interaction with social space, employed through timetables, rules and other habitual organisational practices” (p. 13).

Horne (2002) suggests that such a school system - designed in the nineteenth century and developed through the twentieth century – is no longer capable of meeting the demands of modern society. Radcliffe (2008) identifies the changes to society which he sees driving innovation and experimentation in learning spaces as changing social patterns, generational change, changing funding environments, new and emerging technology, and the shift to a more learner-centred pedagogy. Similarly, Campion (2004) identifies societal changes as a factor in the evolution of classroom design, since the classroom must suit learning methods which aim at creating economically and socially valuable members of the society of the future. He recommends that 21st century classrooms should be environmentally responsible; be accessible to all learners, including those with special needs and the wider community; and allow for the development of pedagogical methods that are innovative and technologically appropriate.

Several authors endorse these recommendations for the classroom of the 21st century. Bunting (2006) suggests that school buildings could fail the educational system if they cannot be adapted to suit new learning styles. He recommends that “educational spaces must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate an ever-increasing range of teaching and learning scenarios and technologies” (p. 14). Cornell (2002) proposes that 21st century learning must take place in contexts which promote interaction, since “learning is a social process and is
often informal” (p. 41), stating that the environment must serve as a magnet to draw people in to learning, and to enable a sense of community to develop.

Brown and Lippincott (2003) suggest that the term “learning spaces” is more appropriate than “classroom” for the 21st century since it “captures a wide range of venues” (p.14). They state that the term “classroom” can no longer encompass the teaching and learning options which have been made possible by the rapid evolution and adoption of information technology (IT). They propose that virtual as well as real spaces need to be considered, outlining several features of virtual spaces pertinent to learning spaces. Unlike real spaces, virtual spaces can come and go; can be spontaneous as well as deliberate; can be synchronous as well as asynchronous; and their participants can inhabit more than one space simultaneously. This argument is supported by Oblinger (2005), who writes that new learning spaces not only incorporate technology, but also create new patterns of social and intellectual interaction, since our notions of space, time and place have been changed by the internet.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) defines learning spaces as “the planned environments, both physical and virtual, in which learning takes place” (2008, p.4). Their report states that spaces can shape and change practice, and that well-designed learning spaces can inspire creative, productive and efficient learning. Further, 21st century learning requires new spaces that connect school, home and community learning, and that have increasing flexibility to support learning outside the boundaries of school buildings and timetables.

Education.au (2009) is an agency for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) funded by the Australian government whose aim is to develop and provide innovative technology solutions to support priorities in education, training and careers. They recommend that 21st century learning spaces should include space for instruction, presentation and discussions; talk and privacy; private study and access to resources; technology; communication tools; and flexibility in space, location and resources. It should also reflect the school’s culture; accommodate both individual and group instruction through ease of furniture rearrangement; be reflective of new practices; and be both comfortable and safe.

**21st Century Pedagogy**

The evolution of classrooms into learning spaces has occurred in an attempt to appropriately house educational practices developing in the early years of the 21st century. Anderson
(2009) views greater cultural interaction made possible through global electronic networks, and an economic system which features knowledge functioning as a commodity, as identifying features of current society which drive today’s educational trends. He states that the role of knowledge today is “on the one hand, an explosion of information and knowledge, and on the other hand, a greatly increased value for knowledge that helps people get what they want” (p. 7). Anderson identifies the implications of the knowledge explosion as a faster pace of change to what is known and institutionalised, requiring skills in knowledge construction through learning strategies such as inquiry, project-based learning and constructivism; an explosion of information that requires new skills in adaptability, and learning strategies that involve accessing, organising and retrieving information; poorly organised and evaluated information systems which place demands on the ability to manage and critically evaluate information; and collective knowledge systems requiring collaboration skills and teamwork.

Several organisations have put forward papers and frameworks outlining similar assessments of society and promoting educational reform. Gregory Whitby (2006), currently the Executive Director of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Parramatta, postulates that the current model of schooling is redundant, needing drastic change to match the way of life in the 21st century world. He recommends personalised learning that is both “physical and virtual in nature” (p. 1), which will be enabling for the learner, and notes the capacity for anytime, real-time and contextual learning to transform and enrich education. Whitby deems the need for a 21st century pedagogy which “embraces these new opportunities”, and which reflects a “bold and creative commitment to relevance and quality learning and teaching” (2007, p. 1). He sees this pedagogy as having two essential strands. Firstly, it must be humanising, improving the learner’s own competence as a participant in society. Secondly, it must enhance the learner’s “communal and global consciousness”, fostering responsible citizenship. (2007, p. 1)

Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007), a leading American organisation, identifies and describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in the 21st century. They recommend that educational institutions promote learning and innovation skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving; information, media and technology skills; 21st century themes such as global awareness and financial literacy; and life and career skills, including initiative and self-direction.

Several earlier authors had also advocated the incorporation of these types of thinking skills, which are often termed ‘higher-order’, into educational practice. The work of Bloom (1956),
Gardner (1983) and Ryan (1990) was influential in this study. Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives is “a framework for classifying statements of what we expect or intend students to learn as a result of instruction” (Krathwohl, 2002, p. 212). It stemmed from research carried out in the late 1940s and early 1950s by Benjamin Bloom and his associates at the University of Chicago in the United States. The taxonomy attempts to classify forms and levels of learning by measuring them along a continuum running from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. It is comprised of six cumulative levels, based on the assumption that mastery of each lower level is necessary in order to move onto higher order skills (see Appendix C). Several scholars have attempted to refine and revise the taxonomy, modifying the terminology and further classifying types of knowledge and skills (Anderson, 2005; Forehand, 2005; Krathwohl, 2002). However, the basic tenet of the taxonomy remains unchanged.

Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited (Gardner, 1983). In striving to define intelligence, Gardner considered a wide variety of cognitive capacities, the symbol systems of many disciplines, and skills which were valued in a variety of cultural and historical settings. He defines intelligence as “the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings” (Gardner & Hatch, 1989) or “a capacity, with its component processes, that is geared to a specific content in the world (such as musical sounds or spatial patterns)” (Gardner, 1995, p. 201). Gardner proposed seven different intelligences, which he believed were exhibited to varying degrees in all people (see Appendix D). The significance of Gardner’s theory for the classroom lies in its acknowledgement of different “ways of knowing”, and its capacity to enable teachers to “meet individual needs and learning styles of students using the strengths of students in their preferred domain” (Rao, 2009). Incorporating the theory into assessment and evaluation also provides learners with options or alternatives to demonstrate their learning through means other than the traditional pen and paper test.

Fundamental principles of the work of Bloom and Gardner were merged in Pirozzo’s construction of an activity grid (New South Wales Country Areas Program, 2005) in an aim to actively engage students of all ages and abilities (Holden, 2005). Students select tasks which are meaningful to them, and which allow them to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways. The grid is viewed as an appropriate tool for the development of higher-order thinking skills (see examples in Appendices E and F). Likewise, Ryan’s (1990) Thinker’s Keys were introduced as an effective way to “generate intellectual rigour” in any learning setting.
Focusing on critical and creative thinking skills, Thinkers Keys are often included in contract activities, homework tasks, journal writing activities, extension tasks and as part of a student-centred approach to learning (see Appendix G).

A growing body of research and writing examines characteristics of students and their lives in the early 21st century, and the implications these characteristics have for education. Prensky (2001) identifies today’s generation of students currently in schools as the first to grow up with new technology, referring to these students as “digital natives”. He suggests that these students are no longer the people our education system was designed to teach, and recommends an overhaul of both methodology and content. This overhaul would see education become “all about creating and inventing... and sharing with an increasingly connected world”, using tools such as art, videos, writing, programs and simulations (p.3). Prensky’s thoughts are echoed in an Australian paper by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2008), which proposes ideal design and use of learning space frameworks.

Pletka (2007) agrees that there is a need to question the content, curriculum and process of education when teaching a generation “shaped by an environment that is information and communication rich, team-based, achievement-oriented, visually based and instantly responsive” (p.13). In considering skills required for the future workforce of the 21st century, he identifies the abilities to apply, analyse, synthesise, evaluate, problem-solve and create new knowledge, while demonstrating literacy in not only language and numeracy, but also science, economics, technology, as well as visual, information and multicultural literacies, and global awareness. “Simply being a reservoir of knowledge with basic competencies will not be sufficient to succeed” (p.48).

Similarly, Brown (2006) notes a need to “reconceptualise parts of the education system, and find ways of reinforcing informal learning” (p. 20) to cater to today’s students who “engage with the world differently than we did”. Brown recommends that in order to teach digital natives, teachers must learn the ‘digital vernacular’, investigating how they learn, how they like to learn, how they solve problems, and how meaning is created for them. As a means to this end, he suggests that teachers consider the digital natives’ video games, which require pattern recognition; sense making in confusing environments; multi-tasking; the need to sense, infer, decide and act quickly; learning from mistakes to try again; continuous decision-making; and which provide an instant performance measure.
Cain (2004) suggests that curriculum change is necessary if the world of the classroom is to keep pace with the world outside. However, he maintains that a clearly defined theory is necessary if teachers are to commit themselves intellectually to the inherent changes. Jones (2004) also questions the appropriateness of the traditional curriculum for the 21st century, noting its linear processes, as described in scope and sequence documents. He states that “teachers in this early stage of the 21st century accept that there is usually more than a single path between where a learner is at any given time and where they will have progressed to as they acquire new knowledge and skills” (p. 2).

Spady (cited by Killen, 2005, p. 5) advocates “total learning for total living. Spady’s recommendations for total learning include conscious learning, creative learning, collaborative learning, competent learning and constructive learning. Similar thoughts are put forward by Wright (2003), who states that an educational system for the 21st century needs to balance the intellectual, interpersonal, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of learning to cope with the demands of contemporary society (p. 37). She also notes the necessity for educators to focus attention on ‘how’ to learn, rather than ‘what’ to learn, thereby embodying the goal of educating for understanding.

**The Relevance of the Arts in the 21st Century Classroom**

Such changes in society, in the economy, in the power of technology, and in theories of learning have the potential to both influence and promote the arts. According to Aspin (2000), the arts are “analogous to and equal with the sciences in that workers, performers, and creators in the arts are leaders in framing new modes of thinking and new categories of working and imagining”, and are therefore able to set the example of a revolution in theory of knowledge, in style of learning, and in communication (p.78). Further, he states that the knowledge acquired and skills developed in the arts can be transferred to the workplace, noting examples such as management of time, space, resources and personnel. Hetland (2008) and Lynch (2000) endorse this viewpoint, with Lynch suggesting that skills taught in the arts may be mandatory for success in today’s society.

Several other authors view the arts as valuable in this way. Temmerman (2006) writes that today’s workplace and economy requires workers who demonstrate capacity in creative thinking, problem-solving, flexibility, and communication; who are well-rounded, original thinkers; and who are adaptable, confident and self-motivated knowledge workers (p.271).
Like Wright, (2003), she recommends education of the whole person, which embraces the development of creative thought and action.

The Australia Council’s *National Education and the Arts Strategy* (2004) proposes that the arts should be an integral part of the lifelong journey of every Australian, claiming that when the arts are part of education the quality of learning, and of life, can be improved. It also states that the arts are instrumental in developing the “kinds of skills and capacities needed to build a viable and environmentally responsible economy and society for Australia in the 21st century” (p.6).

American advocate of Arts Education, Elliot Eisner (2002), maintains that the arts should be moved from the periphery of curriculum to the centre, since they have a unique contribution to make to a child’s holistic development. Viewing cognition as a gamut of abilities and processes, including the ability to feel and work with the abstract, Eisner argues that specific aspects of cognition, including those valuable in our everyday life experiences, may be fostered through the creation and critiquing of art. In proposing lessons the arts teach, he justifies a niche for the arts within the 21st century classroom.

The arts are viewed by Paige and Huckabee (2005) as a means of recording human experience and making meaning in the world, signified by thoughtful, inventive and creative citizenry (p.1). These qualities are seen to be increasingly important as the global economy becomes faster and more competitive, and are therefore considered an integral part of a “complete, successful and high-quality education”. The arts instil in students the habits of mind that last for a lifetime: critical analysis skills, problem-solving skills, perseverance, the ability to deal with ambiguity, and a drive for excellence.

In corroborating this viewpoint, Choi and Piro (2009) offer some recommendations for incorporating arts education into 21st century learning. They propose that digital resources be adopted; that the significance of art masterpieces may be emphasised by considering them from artistic, sociological, cultural and economic vantages; that imaginative skills are essential for critical and creative thinking; and that artworks not only reflect community values, but may also be utilised in the communication of values.

Several authors also recognise the relevance of the separate arts disciplines within the realm of 21st century education. This relevance is often justified through the identification of ways in which the art form promotes the ideals of 21st century pedagogy. Cone and Cone (2005)
maintain that collaborative activities and experiences are often promoted through dance education, and propose that dancing in small groups students might assume leadership roles, share ideas, practise moving together, and develop group identity. The effectiveness of using digital technology in dance education is reported by Denson (2007), who describes it as a powerful teaching and learning tool. He proposes that digital recordings are valuable in providing summative assessment of student work, and also as a “creative tool to analyse, refine and develop their dance routines” (p. 16).

Since many of today’s students participate regularly in networks that are interactive and lacking in hierarchy, Lai (2002) sees them as being prepared for educational experiences that are interactive, nonlinear, non-hierarchical, web-structured, and cross-cultural. Lai recommends the use of email, chat rooms and discussion forums for art education, seeing these web-based tools as particularly valuable for visual arts learning because students can have both their chatroom windows and windows displaying visuals open simultaneously. This enables them to constantly refer to the artworks they are discussing in the chatroom.

Wilks (2005) states that thinking about artworks, and discussing controversies associated with art, serve to develop and extend thinking skills while at the same time providing a means for examining the complex relationships between people, culture and artefacts. In this way, visual arts education is not only relevant to 21st century education, but also particularly pertinent to several elements of the Quality Teaching framework. Similarly, Wright (2003) notes that the artforms provide an array of cognitively rich media that provide opportunity for using symbols and developing visual language, while Brown, Imms, Watkins and O’Toole (2009) state that the use of visual arts media and techniques promote “individual invention, aesthetic exploration, problem-solving and skills development” while offering the opportunity for direct and open-ended manipulation.

The place of drama in the 21st century curriculum is speculated upon by Sinclair, Donelan, Bird, O’Toole and Freebody (2009). They consider drama an appropriate vehicle to help students develop a sense of self through the construction of new social spaces, since it is active, social and experiential, involving critical inquiry and problem-solving. They also note that drama engages the whole person – the intellect, emotions, imagination and body – and develops social skills and knowledge.

Reflecting a constructivist viewpoint, Wiggins (2001), proposes that many school subject areas utilise innovative interactive approaches to teaching which are student-centred and
project-based due to an underlying philosophy of teaching for understanding. However, she notes that music education has often remained teacher-directed and performance-oriented. She cites Gardner’s definition of ‘understanding’ – “the capacity to use current knowledge, concepts, and skills to illuminate new problems or unanticipated issues” (Gardner and Boix-Mansilla, 1994, p. 200) – and contends that music educators in the 21st century must have a broad vision of music education to enable their teaching to be relevant and meaningful to their students. Wiggins advocates the idea that one must be able to understand the ways in which music works in order to perform, create, or listen to music. She clarifies that while students need to develop a conceptual understanding of musical ideas, these ideas are the way they hold music in their minds. That is, “musical thinking is thinking in sound, just as verbal thinking is thinking in words” (p. 24).

Webb (2007) proposes that cross-media listening is both a valuable and appropriate music education tool for students who are “immersed in a rich entertainment media environment that has been transforming the ways in which they listen and respond to music” (p. 147). In recommending video sharing sites such as YouTube, and providing valid musical examples, Webb describes and explains the possibilities for the teaching of musical style, performance practice, music transmission processes, and related social, cultural and historical aspects of music.

While there would appear to be a substantial amount of research into the place of the arts in 21st century learning, there is also noted “an urgent need for a detailed study of the impact of arts programmes within the context of Australian schools” (Bamford, 2002, cited in Gibson and Anderson, 2008). Gibson and Anderson state a need for stronger research into arts education in Australia, where they see a current void, viewing Australian research into arts education as lagging behind an international enthusiasm.

Literature in this area indicates that arts education in general, as well as each of the separate arts disciplines, has a valid place in classrooms of the 21st century. However, several of the abovementioned texts note the necessity to re-think not only the curriculum, but also the conceptual frameworks and the tools we use in our teaching.

**Conclusion**

Several implications may be drawn from the literature reviewed herein. Recent years have seen not only the emergence and development of Quality Teaching, but also of research into
various fields related to Quality Teaching. The currency of Quality Teaching and its widespread application across NSW schools provides ongoing opportunity for research. As with research into engagement, existing Quality Teaching studies tends to centre on ‘problem’ areas of schooling – low SES areas; minority groups of students; disadvantaged schools; and at-risk students. The Catholic education system has been slow to adopt Quality Teaching, and thus has not yet provided its own distinct focus for research. To date, the concept of the ‘insider classroom’ has been the subject of only limited research. Due almost certainly to the recency of its innovation, this provides ample scope for further research in this area.

Student engagement is an integral element of Quality Teaching, and is also a critical issue in 21st century pedagogical thought. Rapidly changing social, economic and technological structures foreshadow changes to school curriculum, and to the physical environments in which students learn. Such changes have implications not only for the way we teach the arts, but also for the role the arts play in educating today’s students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study. As my aim was to investigate changes occurring within a specific school community, it was essential to select research methods which allowed for the intensive study and description of the processes and relationships within that community, whilst continuing my own work of teaching the study’s participants. An ethnographic case study was deemed the most appropriate methodology for exploring and describing such changes. A detailed explanation of the ethnographic case study and rationale for its use in this study is provided. Purposive sampling, together with its place in this study, is discussed. This is followed by a description of the means of data collection, including participant observation, individual and focus group interviews, and the analysis of material culture and documents. Methods and techniques utilised in the analysis of data are discussed, in addition to aspects of validity and ethical considerations.

The Ethnographic Case Study

A case study may be defined as an in-depth study of the peculiarity and complexity of a unit, with a focus on relationships and processes, as they occur in their natural setting (Denscombe, 1999; Stake, 1995). It is both a process of inquiry, and the product of that inquiry. Case studies are typically qualitative in design, utilising multiple sources and multiple methods of inquiry. The strength of the case study method lies in its ability to examine a case within its real-life context, shedding light on processes, events, or persons of interest. It is pertinent for research aiming to provide a descriptive answer, or an explanatory answer (Yin, 2006).

Stake (1978) proposes that the value of case study research in educational fields lies in gathering information for purposes other than the cultivation of rules and laws (p.7). He deems case studies as “one of the more effective means of adding to understanding” through the “description of natural experience acquired in ordinary personal involvement” (p.5). This notion is supported by Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), who suggest that a successful case study is able to bring a phenomenon to life for its readers, aiding in the understanding of its meaning.

Stake (1995) distinguishes qualitative case studies from quantitative through three features. Firstly, the purpose of enquiry is for explanation rather than purely understanding. Secondly, the role of the researcher is personal rather than impersonal. Finally, knowledge is discovered rather than constructed (p. 37). In his later writing, Stake (2005) clarifies that the qualitative
case study is characterised by “researchers spending extended time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, and revising descriptions and meanings of what is going on” (p.450). This approach, denoted by Stake as anthropological or ethnographic, underlies the methodology of this study.

Ethnography is an approach to studying people that was initially developed within the discipline of anthropology. It focuses on people in their everyday settings, with particular attention given to the way that these people make meaning of their lives (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Ethnographers view human behaviour and the way that people make meaning of their worlds and lives as “highly variable and locally specific” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p.1).

Ethnography may be distinguished from other approaches in its assumption that the initial phase of developing an understanding or interpretation of a people comes from discovering what people do and the reasons they provide for doing it (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Another distinguishing feature of ethnography is the participatory role of the researcher. To interpret what the participants are doing or saying, the researcher needs to know and experience what life is like for the participants within the natural setting of the group (Eder & Corsaro, 1999). To this end, the ethnographer interacts closely with the participants over extensive periods of time, observing, interviewing and participating. (Bresler, 1995; Christensen, 2004). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe this process as “participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives . . . watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions . . . in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of the enquiry” (p. 3).

Ethnography is particularly suited to educational research through its humanistic and holistic approach, through its employment of people as the basic research instrument, and through its characteristic simultaneous recording of data on several different planes (Dobbert, 1982). These characteristics allowed for the investigation and exploration of my research questions within a school setting.

My role as a teacher within the school meant that I was already an integral part of the very processes I wished to examine. Having ready access to all creative arts lessons over three school terms provided extensive opportunity for observation, while pre-established long-term relationships with the staff, students and parents at the school meant that gaining access for data collection was not difficult. An ethnographic case study methodology allowed for the
exploration and description of processes, events and changes which unfolded during the course of a school year.

**Sampling**

Most qualitative research uses purposive sampling, “a conscious selection of a small number of data sources that meet particular criteria” (Russell & Gregory, 2003). In purposive sampling, people or documents are chosen to provide the researcher with substantial information about the structure and character of the experiences under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005), therefore meeting the purposes of the research (Wiersma, 1995). Purposive sampling is significant in that it enables the researcher to cover a range of relevant phenomena and experiences from an array of perspectives, and in so doing often evolves over the course of the study (Russell & Gregory, 2003). Several authors note the inclusion of ‘outliers’ or atypical cases as an important aspect of purposive sampling (Barbour, 2001; Patton, 2002; Russell & Gregory, 2003; Werner and Bernard; 1994). Werner and Bernard (1994) view the goal of purposive sampling as the maximisation of variation: “We cover as much variation as we can of the phenomena in which we are interested and, while we cannot say what is typical, we can say with some authority what range of traits does occur”(p.8).

In order to maximise the variation within the sample, students from each of my classes in all grades across the school were invited to participate in the study, as well as their parents and classroom teachers. Other school staff, including the Principal, Assistant Principal, Special Education staff, librarian, part-time staff and a student teacher of creative arts, were also invited to participate in the study.

In accordance with the ethics approval granted to this study, all participants were assured of their anonymity. To this end, pseudonyms have been applied throughout. The participants were also made aware that they might discontinue their involvement at any stage throughout the study without any adverse effect on our relationship. The study adhered to the requirements of the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee. This included obtaining informed consent from all participants, informed parental consent for child participants, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice.

**Data Collection**

The purpose of data collection in qualitative research is to provide evidence for the phenomena being investigated (Polkinghorne, 2005). Ethnographic data collection is
characterised by the researcher becoming, in effect, the research instrument. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) identify the tools of ethnography as the researcher’s eyes and ears, tools which they say are designed for discovery. Multiple sources of data are utilised, having been collected over an extended period of time. Several techniques are employed in order to identify perspectives on issues and events (Wolcott, 1988). Techniques utilised in this study include participant observation, interviewing and document examination.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation is widely recognised as the primary method of data collection for an ethnographic study (Bresler, 1995; Burns, 1990; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Denscombe 1999; Dobbert, 1982; Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; Wiersma, 1995). Viewed as both a method of data collection and an analytic tool (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), participant observation is integral to ethnography for several reasons, which are identified by Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999). It is central to identifying and building crucial research relationships, and endorses the presence of the researcher in the setting. It provides the researcher with an intuitive as well as an intellectual grasp of both the setting and the participants within that setting. It provides experiences which may stimulate later conversations with the participants, and demonstrates and confirms cultural patterns. It may also offer the researcher the opportunity to witness events from which outsiders are usually excluded. Matthews and Tucker (2000) add that participant observation allows children to be observed in their natural setting, providing a “rich inventory” of activities, descriptions, feelings and interactions, without requiring the children to provide oral, verbal or written accounts.

According to Burns (1990), participant observation may provide data relevant to both reality and to the organising constructs in relation to the lives of the students. Further, he views data collected through everyday interactions and conversations as being indicative of what is important or unimportant, as well as providing evaluative information. Dobbert (1982) sees participant observation as a means for the researcher to take some part in the patterns being studied, and thereby to be able to internalise some patterns in the same way as the participants. As it is characterised by conversational interviews using the local language and vocabulary, Dobbert also considers participant observation the least disruptive and intrusive method of data collection, which is particularly important when researching children in their school environment.
Jorgensen (1989) notes that there are several degrees of participation, ranging from nominal or marginal roles, through to the performance of ‘native’ or membership roles. The level of deepest involvement is often termed “active participation”, and has been defined by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) as being when the ethnographer actually engages in almost all the participants’ activities as a means of learning cultural roles (p.20). Active participation was considered appropriate for this study, since my role as teacher saw my full involvement in classroom activities intrinsic to daily school routines. Accessing the site, and building relationships of trust with the students were not issues in this study, due to my long-term employment in the school. It is notable that in my role as teacher, several of the issues affecting the student participants, such as the changes in classroom environment, also affected me both personally and professionally, endorsing my own participation as truly active.

Several classes were observed during the course of the study. The observations were carried out during scheduled creative arts lessons conducted in various rooms (detailed in Chapter 4) and during other school activities, as shown in the Table 3.1. Creative arts lessons were observed from mid-February until mid-November, a total of 30 school weeks. Some other school functions which included creative arts activities were also the subject of observation. For example, Year 5 performed as part of Catholic Schools Week celebrations, which also featured a Mass, morning tea, and classroom displays. Students across all grades also performed at Grandparent’s Day celebrations, where similar activities took place. Observations were made of the grades whose performances were prepared and rehearsed during creative arts lessons with me.
Table 3.1 Observations

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The traditional means for recording observational data is the making of fieldnotes, which are “relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts” (Hammersley &
Atkinson, 2007, p.186). Jorgensen (1989) stresses the importance of recording observations, but notes the possibility of recording through photography and video recording as well as through fieldnotes. These methods are particularly suitable for use in a classroom where the teacher’s responsibilities may make note-taking difficult at the time of the observation, and were utilised extensively in this study. My responsibilities as the classroom teacher saw my own role in class activities as vital, therefore providing very little possibility for note-taking during activities. This was especially so during lessons with the younger grades, where teacher direction tended to be more constant. It was therefore necessary to either make notes as soon as possible after an activity, or to video the activities and examine the recordings at a convenient time. This proved to be a more satisfactory means of recording observational data. However, video recording of activities in a large room with many children was limited by the capacity of the camera’s audio to clearly capture conversations.

Several issues pertaining to the research questions were addressed through observation. These included the description and analysis of engagement within creative arts lessons; the identification and description of aspects of a Quality Learning Environment in the creative arts classroom; the description of creative arts lessons within a learning space; and the description of the changing role of the teacher within an open classroom. Participant observation underlies many other ethnographic techniques, and aids in providing the context for supportive data collection methods such as interviews and document analysis.

**Interviews**

Interviews are frequently used as a means of gathering complementary information. Burns (1990) suggests that interviews may investigate the responses and reflections of the study’s informants in more depth than mere observation can provide. He notes that interviews might also provide information about events or circumstances affecting the study from which the researcher was excluded or absent. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994) recommend interviewing as a means for finding out how a participant feels, and to gain a perspective on how others understand and interpret reality. During the course of the study, it became evident that there could also be quite large discrepancies between what was observed, and what the participants were actually feeling or thinking, as they revealed during interviews. Interviewing was essential to gain a more accurate picture and understanding of the participants’ perceptions, actions and reactions.
Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were used in the study. Denscombe (1999) suggests that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer some flexibility within the questioning, and also provide opportunity for the interviewee to develop their ideas and discuss them more widely. Completely informal interviews wherein the interviewer may address key issues in informal conversation are termed ‘unstructured’ (Denscombe, 1999, pp. 112-113), and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 117) note that “ethnographic interviews are closer in character to conversations”. Ethnographic interviewing is a technique for gathering data which develops descriptive and open-ended questions (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994). These questions enable the participants to talk about themselves, what they do, and how they feel. In so doing, they build their own emic perspectives. An ‘emic’ perspective – the research participants’ perceptions and understanding of their social world – is intrinsic to an ethnographic study, and is balanced by the ‘etic’ perspective – the researcher’s conceptual and theoretical understanding of the participant’s world (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, pp.758-759).

In ethnographic interviewing, the researcher may not have exact questions prepared, and may not even ask the same questions of all participants. Rather, a list of issues may be at hand, which allow for the discussion to follow a natural flow. In this way, ethnographic interviews tend to be semi-structured. During the course of the study, several issues arose which were not originally proposed interview areas. Similarly, issues pertinent to some participants were not relevant to others. For example, Year 6 was the only group to have creative arts lessons in their learning space rather than in the creative arts classroom during Term 3. Hence, the conversational, semi-structured style of interviewing where unforeseen issues could be explored, was highly applicable.

Several authors propose that a shift has occurred in the focus of research with children. Current trends see researchers seeking information directly “from” children, rather than searching for information “about” children, thus making interviewing an important means of gathering data in research involving children (Cappello, 2005; Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Hood, Kelley & Mayall, 1996; Tammivaara & Enright, 1986). These researchers support Hammersley and Atkinson’s (2007) recommendations, that interviews can be regarded as a social event at which both interviewer and interviewee may be participant observers, and that both directive and non-directive questioning may be appropriate at different stages of the research.
However, since the research with children requires sensitivity to an “additional array of interpretive and contextual features” (Taamivaara & Enright, 1986), the aforementioned authors also propound the use of age-appropriate non-verbal communication as integral in interviewing children. Cappello (2005) notes that with traditional interviewing, children easily grow tired and distracted when talking, and that their limited vocabulary and memory see them unable to offer accurate descriptions. Pursuant to this statement, an interview carried out with Year 1 children in their learning space in November yielded responses lacking in depth or fluency. As well as being distracted, the children’s limited memory of earlier experiences restricted the accuracy and relevance of their comments.

A range of recommended interviewing aids have been suggested for use with young children, including drawings, games, exercises, trigger stories and sentence completion, which should be balanced with conversation (Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996). Practical considerations and suggestions include interviewing children as soon as possible after an event; providing retrieval cues (such as “What happened next?”); external cues (such as pieces of artwork, photographs, or the recording of a performance); and more than one opportunity to talk, for increased accuracy (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999). These ideas proved valuable when seeking verbal responses from children in the younger grades.

**Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews have long served as a principal method of data collection within qualitative research, and are notable in that they allow for interaction not only between the researcher and the participants, but also between the participants themselves. They were the chosen means of interviewing children for this study. Focus group research involves an organised discussion with a selected group of participants in order to gain information and understanding about their views and experiences. It is particularly useful in obtaining several perspectives about the same topic (Gibbs, 1997).

Gibbs (1997) maintains that focus group interviewing may be a particularly effective means of collecting data with children for several reasons. Focus groups may enable large amounts of data to be collected in shorter amounts of time, particularly since many views may be offered within the same interview. The interaction between the participants is particularly important, since they can ask questions of each other in order to clarify, re-evaluate and reconsider the issues at the heart of the interview. Such discussion may allow the researcher to identify an issue’s significance, as well as to discover why it is salient. Focus groups also
offer insight into the shared understanding of life and its experiences, as well as the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation.

Several authors also identify the informal setting and style of focus group interviewing as being a familiar and comfortable situation in which children can participate, since many classrooms encourage group and collaborative work (Lewis, 1992; Tammivaara & Enright, 1986). Lewis proposes that the group’s composition is also important, and recommends friendship groups as the single most important criterion in choosing an effective grouping for interviews with children (p. 418).

Each of these aspects was significant in deciding to use semi-structured focus group interviews with the children in the study. The presence of other students deemed this a more comfortable experience for the children, particularly for those who tended to be shy. Comments from other participants certainly acted as triggers, and helped to keep the conversation moving. The interviews were carried out in the creative arts classroom or in the children’s own classrooms, since this physical space was also familiar and comfortable. When possible, the interviews were carried out during the creative arts lesson times, which I believe helped the children to focus on the issues at the heart of the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were also carried out through the course of the study with staff and parents, both individually and in focus groups of three or four. Although all interviews with children were carried out on school grounds, some interviews with parents and staff occurred in my home. Parents preferred interviews scheduled in holiday or weekend time, which meant the school grounds were not a viable venue. Participants in an in-depth staff interview chose the informality of my home as a comfortable place for them to “chat”. A number of parents and a few teachers chose to respond to interview questions in writing, usually by email, rather than verbally. This lent the interviews a more structured and formal style, and the responses tended to be shorter, and more succinct.

While all planned interviews were recorded using audio or video recordings, some spontaneous interviews arose on occasions such as the school athletics carnival and Grandparents’ Day celebrations, or in the staffroom or playground. Recollections of these conversations were recorded in written form as soon as possible after they had taken place. The interview participants are shown in Table 3.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Individual Recorded</th>
<th>Audio Recorded</th>
<th>Video Recorded</th>
<th>Written Response (Email)</th>
<th>Notes Taken During Or After Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>2 groups of 3 students; 1 group of 4 students; 1 group of 2 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>3 groups of 3 students; 1 group of 2 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3/4</td>
<td>1 group of 5 students; 1 group of 4 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>1 group of 5 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>1 group of 4 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>1 group of 4 staff members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1 group of 3 parents; 1 group of 2 parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Material Culture

While participant observation and interviewing remain the primary means of data collection in ethnographic research, the study of artifacts, or material culture, is also necessary in providing a clear and thorough description of a group, as “things often ‘say’ and communicate precisely that which cannot be communicated in words” (Tilley 2001, p.259). Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) denote artifacts as material culture, defining them as “the various objects created by members of a . . . culture that can be studied as reflections of that culture” (p. 763).

The incorporation of material culture in ethnographic data collection is stressed by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), and Tilley (2001). Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that in order to make sense of a social world, the constitution of the physical world needs to be considered. They write that many ethnographic accounts have been lacking in a sense of space and place, while in fact the environment helps to shape the individual and collective identities of the group. This viewpoint is of particular significance to this study which explores the effect of classroom environments.

The products of class activities, including artworks, recordings of dance, drama and music performances, are other valued pieces of artifact data utilised in the study. This data provides insight into several aspects of the children’s learning, particularly to in relation to the Quality Learning Environment elements. The significance of art forms in providing insight is noted by Tilley (2001) who sees them as a “powerful medium” through their autonomy from the spoken word (p. 259).

Documents

Documents form a substantial and vital element of data for this study. Documents may be defined as “any symbolic representation that can be recorded and retrieved for description and analysis” (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese & Schneider, 2008, p. 127). Types of document utilised in this study include advertisements, school newsletters, email correspondence, teaching materials, websites, work samples, blog posts, student reflections and reflective journaling.

Qualitative research often includes the study of written communication found in the natural setting of the study (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), and a qualitative approach to document study focuses on the description and the tracking of words, meanings and themes over a period of time (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese & Schneider, 2008). The collection and study of documents is considered advantageous for several reasons. Access to documents is usually easy and
economical, and documents are stable and permanent (Denscombe, 1999; Hodder, 2003; Love, 2003; Wolcott, 1988). Further, Love (2003) adds that documents may be used to enhance and enrich data obtained through participant observation and interviewing; they appear in the natural language of the setting, thereby helping to provide vocabulary; they may provide information about the unobservable; they may suggest or identify a particular focus; they may serve to stimulate interview questions; and they may assist in triangulating or problematising data.

Of particular significance in this study is the use of student reflections and reflective journaling. Akin to the practice of diary-writing, journaling potentially provides an emic perspective of what happens in the classroom, why it happens, the significance for teaching and learning, and personal feelings or emotions stirred (Denscombe, 1999; Hall, 2008).

Although I had planned to include written student reflections in the data for the study, several features of these documents increased their significance to the study. The collection of students’ written reflections was a time-effective means of data collection, since it was possible for a whole class – or even a whole grade – to complete a reflection simultaneously in just 15 or 20 minutes. Pen and paper were the only resources needed, and were usually at hand, unlike recording equipment for an interview. This activity was also considered “normal” by the students, because of the inclusion of written reflections as part of Quality Teaching practice in the school, as opposed to the extraordinary event of video-recording an interview which required setting up. Reflections were able to be completed and submitted anonymously, which gave the students freedom to openly express their views. Since the reflections were time-effective, it was possible to repeat reflections at later dates with the same group of students, which helped to depict the students’ changing thoughts, new ideas and progression of learning.

Reflections were completed as a means of evaluating activities, classroom spaces, and the students’ own work. The reflections also served as a means for students to make suggestions about preferred activities and styles of learning, as well as to reflect on their own learning experiences and achievements. All of the students in the primary grades completed written reflections about the creative arts classrooms in response to a short class discussion and three or four guiding questions. The reflections offered some illuminating insights. The large number of reflections collected enabled these insights to be validated through their duplication across classes and grades. (See Table 3.3).
Specific reflective documents of Stage 3 students included the post-it notes favoured by Year 5 students, and the blog used by Year 6 students. Post-it notes were utilised in a study by Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006) in an aim to develop the students’ language for self-assessment and reflection, so that they could discuss the content and processes of their learning. The teacher in the study offered some guiding probes, such as ‘what I learnt’; ‘what I liked’; ‘what I didn’t like’; and ‘what surprised me’. The students wrote on the post-it notes and then placed them on charts with those headings, where they could be viewed and discussed by the other children in the group. The researchers subsequently observed children having “serious, shared conversations about each other’s thought and their learning” (p. 18), and becoming more relaxed and familiar with self-assessment and reflective processes, which resulted in more detailed and expressive reflections. In turn, a greater understanding of learning by both teacher and students “opened up future negotiated learning possibilities” (p.19).

While the post-it notes were introduced at the beginning of the year to students across Years 4-6, the Year 4 students laboured over the writing, and the Year 6 students were uncommitted to the task. Consequently, these year groups did not continue with these reflections. However, the Year 5 students took to the task of writing a short reflection at the end of each lesson and posting it on the inside of the classroom door with great enthusiasm. One area of the door was designated ‘What I really enjoyed today’, and another area ‘What I didn’t really like today’.
Students could also choose to comment on aspects of the lesson which did not relate to these probes. Ideally, the posted notes might have been viewed and discussed either formally or informally amongst class members in future lessons. However, because the room was used by all of the classes in the school, it was not possible for the notes to remain posted long term.

The value of the post-it notes lay in their brevity, immediacy, and regularity. Reflecting at the end of each week’s lesson, the experiences were fresh in the minds of the students, while the small size of the notes and the few minutes allocated to the task encouraged the students to write only what was of utmost importance. The post-it notes proved beneficial in tracking not only the thoughts of the students, but also the development of their reflective processes.

When creative arts lessons began in the Year 6 learning space, a blog was set up to encourage reflection within a technological framework. Moderated by one of the Year 6 teachers, the blog provided an optional avenue for reflection and for communication. The Year 6 students who used the blog had the opportunity to do this at school, or at home. These reflections were not directed to me, yet were openly available for my perusal. Conversational in nature, the posts were teacher-inclusive, and allowed for multi-directional comments and responses.

During Term 3, a student teacher of creative arts visited the school one day per week, both observing and presenting lessons to a small number of classes. One of her university-allocated tasks was to write reflections about her experiences each week. These reflections were made available to this study, and are of great value in providing observations by another adult, not only in contributing another point of view, but also in decreasing the risk of bias.

While the collection and analysis of documents has been a vital element of this research, it remains limited through its non-interactive and non-responsive nature. In this respect, it is complementary to observation and interviewing.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the practice in which the study’s raw data is examined and ordered to enable the extraction of useful information. Dey (1993) describes the process as resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structures, and notes that while data provides a description of the research subjects, it is through analysis and asking how, why and what, that we are enabled to interpret, explain and understand and possibly to even predict. LeCompte (2000, p. 147) describes this process as the organisation of data to
construct a portrait of the original phenomenon under study, and an explanation of the meaning of the portrait.

According to Ezzy, (2002), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and Wiersma (1995), the analysis of data in qualitative research is an ongoing process which begins soon after data collection begins. Wiersma sees this as a process of successive approximations which finally evolve into accurate descriptions. This process of refining data collection and data analysis is termed ‘grounded theory’ (Charmaz, 2003; Glaser, 2004). Charmaz (2003) views this as a flexible method of research, and states that researchers can “pick up and pursue” themes of interest as they are found in data, and then “return to the field to gather focused data to answer analytic questions and to fill conceptual gaps” (p.312). Ezzy (2002) concurs, and proposes that the simultaneous collection and analysis of data strengthens qualitative research as a “method for building theory and interpretations from the perspective of the people being studied”, and “allows the analysis to be shaped by the participants in a more fundamental way” (p. 61). Ezzy also states that the examination of data right from the beginning of data collection, and the subsequent guiding of data collection, is what makes grounded theory ‘grounded’ (p.63).

Grounded theory allowed for the natural integration and progression of data collection and analysis in this study. The ability to collect comparatively large numbers of short, written reflections early in the study was particularly valuable, as it allowed for emerging themes to become the focus in future data collection. It also enabled the study to take a different direction from that planned at the outset, as data evidenced unexpected issues arising through daily happenings in the school. For example, unforeseen changes to the school environment that affected the progress of the study were able to be adopted into the focus of the data being collected. As noted by Spindler and Hammond, “the problem one thinks one is going to investigate is not usually the one actually studied. Particularly in the first stages of fieldwork, the problem must be allowed to develop without predetermination, and the views of the natives must be allowed to dominate” (2000, p. 42). Issues arising through early data collection were identified through the process of coding.

Coding is an integral part of qualitative data analysis. Ezzy (2002) defines coding in grounded theory as “the process of identifying themes or concepts that are in the data” (p 86). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe the process as the “assigning of tags or labels to the data, based on our concepts” (p. 26), thereby categorising bulky data into more manageable units. These
categories, created when a researcher groups or clusters the data, become the basis for the organisation and conceptualisation of that data (Dey, 1993). The process of coding is viewed as intrinsic in the generation of concepts from and with the data.

Seidel and Kelle (1995) delineate three stages of coding as noticing relevant phenomena; collecting examples of these phenomena; and analysing these phenomena for key themes, commonalities and differences. Dey (1993) also distinguishes three stages of analysis, referring to them as describing phenomena, classifying it and seeing how the concepts interconnect. Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify three stages of coding. The first is termed ‘open coding’. During this stage, the data are sorted into smaller sections, and allocated a descriptor, or ‘code’. The second stage involves the codes being grouped into similar categories, and is termed ‘axial coding’. The final stage, ‘selective coding’, entails “integrating and refining the theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). Although varied in terminology, there is agreement in the notion of moving from the establishment of broad codes, through a process of refinement, to “the identification of the . . . story around which the analysis focuses” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 92).

There are several different techniques which may be utilised in the coding process, and Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) recommend the systematic selection of these tools for analysing qualitative data. For the purposes of this study, constant comparison analysis and keywords in context analysis proved to be appropriate analytic devices. According to Glaser, (1965), constant comparison analysis is “concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting . . . many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon” (p. 438). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) suggest that constant comparison analysis is the most common type of analysis in qualitative data analysis, and note that the term sometimes refers to the process of coding. They propose that it is suitable to use “when you want to answer general arching questions” (p. 565), and contend that it may be used with talk, observations, drawings/photographs/video, and documents (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008). These features deemed it applicable for use with this study.

The assumption underlying key words in context analysis is that “people use words differently and, thus, by examining how words are used in context of their speech, the meaning of the word will be understood” (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594). It is utilised when there is interest in capturing the actual words used by participants, and Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) suggest that it is particularly useful when analysing short responses.
For this reason, it was appropriate for use in this study, since data included many short responses collected through post-it notes, blog posts, and written reflections. In particular, this type of analysis was utilised when examining data focusing on aspects of the classroom environment.

**Validity and Triangulation**

Part of ensuring procedural validity is understanding the relationship between the observer (researcher), the observed, and the setting (Flick, 2006, p.374). It is, therefore, important to note my own close association to the research. As a longstanding member of the school community at the heart of the study, my own thoughts, beliefs and feelings are bound to have coloured my observations, perceptions and interpretations of data to some degree. Spindler and Hammond (2000) note that while teachers are in some ways ideally placed to become participant observers, they are also “busy playing their role as emic members of the situation, and may have trouble finding either the time or the perspective to observe their own work situation from enough distance to achieve an etic view” (p. 46). Attempts to lessen the impact of my close association were made through data triangulation, “a strategy that will aid in the elimination of bias” (Mathison, 1988, p. 13), and by considering several recommendations contained within literature pertaining to qualitative analysis.

According to Mathison (1988, p.13) “good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods, data sources and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings”. Patton (1999) concurs, stating that the qualitative researcher “has an obligation to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the process of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product” (p. 1191), and suggests that the triangulation is necessary since “no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations” (p. 1191). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) recommend increasing triangulation not only by using multiple data collection tools, but also by utilising multiple data analysis tools.

Data triangulation refers to the use of several data sources, which enable cross-data validity checks to be carried out. Patton (1999) notes several ways in which data sources might be triangulated. Firstly, data triangulation allows the comparing of data collected through different means. In this study, observational data were compared with data collected through interviews and documents. Secondly, data collected in public may be compared with data collected in private. This study used data collected through public avenues such as
observation and focus group interviews with individual interviews, email interviews, and individual written reflections, which enabled not only privacy, but also anonymity. Thirdly, data may be checked for consistency about the same thing over a period of time. My daily presence in the school allowed for this testing of consistency. Finally, data triangulation allows the comparison of different points of view. In this study, sampling of staff, parents, and students from across all grades within the school enabled several different perspectives to be gained regarding issues of significance.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggest several ways in which bias might be avoided in a study, and some of these practices were adopted in this study. They include staying as long as possible on site; using unobtrusive measures; making intentions apparent; carrying out some interviewing off-site; using a variety of informants, including those with differing points of view; keeping the research questions in mind; sharing field notes with a colleague; and triangulating with several data methods. Further, they recommend the utilisation of at least two data analysis tools in order to carry out triangulation. To this end, constant comparison analysis and keywords in context analysis were utilised, as is discussed in the preceding sections.

**Conclusion**

The research method chosen for this study was that of the ethnographic case study. Purposive sampling was utilised to gather participants representing all grades within the school population, as well as parents and staff. Data were collected through means of participant observation, interviews and focus group interviews, material culture and documents. Qualitative methods were used to analyse and discuss the data, notably grounded theory with its inherent progressive coding. The triangulation of data sources and data analysis aided in providing validity to the study, which was carried out in accordance with guidelines provided by the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee. The results of these combined processes are outlined in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 4

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

The environments that housed the creative arts program were seen to have considerable influence on both curriculum content and learning experiences. The effects of classroom environments are investigated in the following chapters, beginning with a description of physical phenomena, and moving through a discussion of conditions deemed necessary for learning within the ideals of the Quality Teaching framework, towards a consideration of factors affecting student comfort, ownership and engagement. In so doing, the path from traditional classroom to open learning space is also traced.

The extensive building program carried out in the school had a number of ramifications for the creative arts program, not the least of which was the physical accommodation of the program which was housed in five different classrooms from the beginning of 2008. The three classrooms appraised in this study accommodated the creative arts program from the beginning of 2009 until the end of Term 3, 2009. Observations, interviews and reflective writing bore witness to the effect of changing environments on cognitive, operational and affective aspects of student learning. The data also highlighted several key aspects of classroom environments pertinent to this learning.

Student participants identified and discussed factors significant to the learning environment that were consistent with those highlighted in the Literature Review. These included purely physical aspects such as overcrowding, noise, and furniture arrangement, as well as those related to comfort, ownership, and personal interactions. Other factors identified by the students in this study included the physical location and relocation of the classroom, and the provision of technological resources in the environment.

The Creative Arts Classrooms

For many years, several classes in the school were housed in temporary or ‘demountable’ classrooms, awaiting the construction of permanent buildings. Building began in earnest in late 2007, and several stages are now complete. This building program has had major implications for the school and for this study. Persistent disruption resulted not only from the construction of buildings in close proximity to both playground and classrooms, but also from the necessity to shuffle students and teaching materials from classroom to classroom as each
stage of building was completed.

Children have attended music lessons in a specialist classroom for the past ten years. Usually housed in a number of demountable classrooms over those years, the music room always contained minimal furniture. The students were seated, and participated in most activities, on a large carpeted floor area which was particularly convenient for dance and movement activities. An assortment of musical instruments including classroom percussion (tuned and untuned), an electric keyboard, several guitars, a drum kit, and a miscellany of multicultural instruments lined the walls of the classroom. A single computer provided the sole access to technology.

Because of the building program, the music (and subsequently creative arts) room was housed in five different classrooms – four of them demountable – from the beginning of 2008 until October 2009. Three different creative arts classrooms were used during the course of this study in 2009. The first, which will be referred to as the ‘Term 1 classroom’, was situated in an original building within the school. (This area is currently part of the Year 4 learning space as shown in Figure 4.1.) It was one of a cluster of four traditional classrooms around a shared activity area, complete with wet area, that was accessible through a large folding door. The other three classrooms were used by Year 2 classes. Approximately 20 years old, the room was carpeted, with a large whiteboard, and several pin boards for displaying student work. Shelves built into the classroom and a large storeroom provided good storage, and allowed for a relatively clear floor space.

Four weeks into Term 2, the creative arts classroom was moved to allow refurbishment of the Term 1 classroom. The second creative arts room, a disused demountable staffroom, was being utilised as a storeroom for various items of furniture, computers, and school resources. These items remained in the room while it served as a creative arts classroom, encroaching on the classroom space. At one end of the room, a kitchen and bathroom were available for staff use, with several staff members choosing to make use of these facilities during lesson times. At the opposite end of the room, an open doorway led directly into a Year 4 classroom. The confined space and close proximity to the Year 4 class affected ownership of the space, causing creative arts activities to be very restricted during this time. Although on several occasions the veranda and grassed area outside the room allowed for dance, drama and music activities, weather conditions during the winter months meant that this was not always a satisfactory alternative.
At the beginning of Term 3, the Year 4 class moved into its new permanent accommodation, and the demountable classroom was made available for creative arts. Since the Term 2 room was to remain unused, the creative arts resources were able to remain there, keeping the new room uncluttered. Although isolated from the rest of the school, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1, the space allowed for safe, unrestricted performance experiences in each of the arts. It should be noted that the position of the creative arts room in relation to the other school classrooms affected the time available for teaching and learning activities, since the children were required to walk for 5 to 10 minutes across an open playground to reach the creative arts room. Inclement weather conditions could deem it necessary for students to remain in their own classrooms, since there were no covered walkways between the creative arts room and the remainder of the school.
In October, with the completion of the classroom building program, the demountable classrooms were removed from the school grounds. Since no provision had been made for a
creative arts classroom within the new building plans, all arts equipment and resources were packed and placed into storage, and creative arts lessons were conducted in the new classroom spaces. The data collection period ended just four weeks into this arrangement.

**Physical Aspects of the Classroom Environment**

The creative arts program was affected by a number of physical aspects of the classroom environments. These included overcrowding, noise, and furniture arrangement, as well as the location and relocation of the rooms, and the classroom resources.

*Overcrowding*

Of the purely physical aspects of classroom environments noted above, overcrowding and noise were those mentioned most often by the student participants of the study. Data collected for this study evidenced student preference for quiet, spacious learning environments, as is supported by the related literature. According to Earthman (2004), overcrowding in classrooms may have a detrimental effect on student concentration, may make cooperative learning and group work tasks difficult and ineffective, and may decrease individual student-teacher contact. Data revealed that student participants in this study tended to equate overcrowding with lack of space, or with smaller classroom areas. The general consensus was that overcrowding was detrimental to learning processes and activities.

Although the Term 1 creative arts classroom was of standard classroom size, it was square in shape, rather than rectangular as the demountable rooms which had previously housed creative arts had been. Many students perceived the Term 1 classroom to be much smaller than the demountable rooms, which had proven most suitable for dance activities where the students could be placed into a few long rows. This was an ideal way for students to view my dance step demonstrations, for me to watch their progress with steps, and it also allowed for the rehearsal of locomotor movement. Many students in the primary grades commented in their reflections that the Term 1 creative arts room was too small for dance activities. A written reflective response by a Year 4 student exemplified these comments: “there wasn’t anoyf [enough] Room [sic] to do creative arts when we did dance” (Odette, Reflection, September 29, 2009).

Several students confirmed the desire for a large space through response to the stimulus statement, “the space I least liked working in”. These written reflections are exemplified through the following statements made by Year 6 students: “It is very small” (Cane,
Reflection, September 14, 2009); “It’s [sic] gets really crowded” (Vicki, Reflection, September 14, 2009); and “it’s very small and we can hardly spread out and have our own space” (Anonymous, Reflection, September 14, 2009). Such sentiments were corroborated by students from Years 3, 4 and 5.

The Term 2 creative arts room, as described earlier in this chapter, was a disused demountable staffroom being utilised as a storeroom for unused furniture, computer equipment, and other school resources such as blackboards and whiteboards. This room was also deemed by the students as having inadequate space. The stored items encroached on the floor area of the classroom, and class activities were limited to those which could be carried out safely in such an unsuitable space. Reflecting on this learning environment, Nathan noted that “there was a lot of instruments stored and it wasn’t safe because people could trip over things” (Reflection, September 30, 2009), while Leah agreed that “it wasn’t safe and there wasn’t much room” (Reflection, September 30, 2009). Other Year 4 students commented that “you don’t have enough space to spread out to dance” (Anonymous, Reflection, September 29, 2009), and that “if you wanted to dance you had to stay close to each other” (Annie, Reflection, September 29, 2009).

The Term 3 classroom was used by all grades from Kindergarten to Year 5. As the Term 2 classroom was not being used for any other purpose during Term 3, it was possible to leave resources in that room, and make full use of the large open floor space of the Term 3 classroom. A very small number of students did not like the bareness of the space: “it felt empty and hardly had any think in here [sic]” (Joel, Reflection, September 29, 2009). However, the great majority of students appreciated the space and the activities it allowed. For example, Alison reflected that “it had lots and lots of space” (Reflection, October 21, 2009), and an anonymous Year 4 reflection stated

> I like the . . . room because you have more room to dance and act and less objects in the room to avoid and you can spread out instead of being squished in the other room. (Reflection, September 29, 2009)

Another Year 4 student chose to depict the relative space for dance and drama activities in the creative arts classrooms diagrammatically, emphasising this aspect of the classroom environment (Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2 Comparative Classroom Space

(left-right: Term 1 classroom; Term 2 classroom; Term 3 classroom)

Although simplistic in style, the drawings show the student’s perception of the classroom furnishings and resources impinging on student space. Both the Term 1 and Term 2 pictures have the student figures placed close together, in a relatively small space on the edge of the room. Resources such as desks and guitars can be seen in each of these drawings. The Term 1 classroom drawing also shows storage in the lower left hand corner. This may represent either the classroom’s storeroom, or a large storage shelf which ran along one side of the room, both of which encroached on the floor area of the room. In contrast, the Term 3 drawing shows the student figures spread out in a central position in the room, with the furnishings shown in a less cluttered manner around the edges.

The student teacher’s reflection described the Term 3 creative arts room in the following way:

The children have moved into yet another room for the creative arts . . . The new creative arts room is a very bare space which has definitely kept the kids more focused to start off with. There are no plans to put desks or chairs into the classroom and decoration will be kept to the teaching posters, the whiteboard, and student work. [The students] weren’t distracted by the instruments, CD’s etc which were in the room next door [sic]. (Reflection, August 11, 2009)

This reflection supports Earthman’s (2004) claims that overcrowding in a classroom makes it difficult for students to concentrate. The stored items in the Term 2 classroom had proven to be a visual distraction for the students. More importantly, the presence of these items demanded the students’ focus on safe practice during performance activities. Certainly the
less cluttered Term 3 classroom proved to be the most satisfactory space for participation in performance activities in drama, dance and music, allowing the students to concentrate on the task, rather than on avoiding contact with furnishings or with other students.

Year 6 students had creative arts lessons in the Term 1 and Term 2 classrooms, and also in their learning space during Term 3. At the end of Term 3, the Year 6 students were encouraged to write reflections about the creative arts classroom environments. Since the students had been observed to be very engaged in their lessons within the learning space, and had expressed enjoyment about their tasks, it was not surprising that 69 of the 74 reflections indicated that the learning space was the preferred learning environment for creative arts.

By far the most common student response when questioned as to the reasons for preferring the learning space to the Term 1 or Term 2 classrooms, was the advantage of having a bigger space. These responses were expressed with a variety of connotations, such as Amy’s comment that “there [sic] big and everyone fits inside” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), implying that she favoured lessons with all the grade together; Brent’s statement that “its [sic] bigger and easier to get around” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), indicated the need for ease of movement within the space; and an anonymous reflection that “it has more space to work in groups” (Reflection, September 14, 2009) denoted a possible preference for group tasks as afforded by such an area. The necessity of uncrowded spaces to accommodate group work was also noted by Earthman (2004).

On a number of occasions throughout the course of the study, the restricted classroom space precluded planned group-work activities. Overcrowding was alleviated by moving the lessons outdoors when the weather permitted. Other benefits included improved air quality and a reduction in noise interference (see sections this chapter). Several grassed areas around the school provided a satisfactory setting, as did the Covered Outdoor Learning Areas (COLA).

The great majority of students appreciated the opportunity to participate in dance, drama or music activities without the restrictions imposed by the classroom space. Year 5 post-it reflections were quite unanimous in their approval, and were exemplified in the unanimous note “drama is very fun outside because we got a lot of room outside to move around a lot more [sic]” (Reflection, August 7, 2009). Further, Tyson’s post-it reflection intimated that overcrowding not only restricts practical activities, but also the manner in which they may be executed. He wrote “I think that drama outside was a lot better because it was more fun and active” (Reflection, August 7, 2009).
Overcrowding was a significant issue in the learning environments that housed the creative arts program, particularly in relation to the safe and effective execution of practical or performance activities. The new learning spaces, with their open and flexible design, together with the availability of COLAs, resulted in areas less subject to overcrowding for the creative arts program. However, despite the flexibility of the spaces, it should also be noted that rearranging classroom furniture to provide a larger space always encroached on the lesson time, which is restricted to one hour with each class.

Noise

Creative arts activities are by their very nature often noisy. Since the creative arts room had previously been housed apart from other classrooms, there had never been an issue with the amount of noise created in music, dance or drama activities. However, the relocation to the Term 1 creative arts room, with its close proximity to other classrooms, meant that it became necessary to restrict activities that might interrupt the three Year 2 classes. For example, while the shared activity area was a most suitable size and space for whole class dance activities, the noise produced in such an activity could be very disruptive to the nearby Year 2 classes. Several planned activities were altered or omitted from the program because of this condition.

Many students also commented on this aspect of the Term 1 classroom during both written reflections and focus group interviews, with similar comments made by students in all grades from 3 to 6. The following reflection excerpts, written in response to the question ‘Which room was not so good for doing creative arts in, and why?’ specified the Term 1 classroom because the activities were restricted in this way. Brody wrote ‘[It] was not good for doing creative arts in because . . . you could not make that much noise’ (Reflection, September 29, 2009); while Kirraly and Aislin cited disturbance to the other classes: “We had to be quiet because if we weren’t quiet it would make all the other class distracted [sic]” (Reflection, September 29, 2009) and “Because classers are close by and we don’t want to besterve [disturb] them. They might be doing an asesment [sic]” (Reflection, September 30, 2009).

On the other hand, many students saw the close proximity of the other classes as distracting and disrupting the activities through their high noise levels. Jai wrote that “When we were trying to work the little kids were making to much nose [sic]” (Reflection, October 21, 2009); while Greta and Nathan commented on the distracting effects of noise: “All the other classes were around us and when they were noisy we couldn’t focus or listen to Mrs Brooks” (Reflection, September 29, 2009), and “There was noise around the and I couldn’t work very
good and also I couldn’t consentate very good [sic]” (Nathan, Reflection, September 29, 2009).

The problems associated with noise did not diminish with the move to the Term 2 classroom, which was housed in a demountable building alongside a Year 4 class. Without a door between the two rooms, the creative arts classroom was subject to all of the noise and conversations from the Year 4 room. Similarly, noise generated by creative arts activities caused disturbance and disruption to the Year 4 class and teacher. Several students wrote comments intimating the disadvantages of such a restrictive environment, for example “we kind of couldn’t do must [much] loud Dancing [sic]” (Anonymous, Year 4 Reflection, September 30, 2009) and “we have to be really quiet” (Amy, Reflection, September 14, 2009). A Year 3 student’s reflection displayed her perception of this restriction as “By sharing a room and we don’t realy get to have much fun and spules [spoils] our music teachers plans [sic]” (Susie, Reflection, October 21, 2009).

At times it was possible to move group activities out of doors in order to minimise noise interference. As noted in the section on Overcrowding, there were several advantages to outdoor lessons. This was particularly true of music and drama activities, where students were able to work on composition or performance tasks without feeling that they were disturbing others. The convenience of working outdoors was also noted in a reflection by the student teacher.

    Music, dance and drama are by nature noisy a great deal of the time and the alternative to carry out these lessons properly is to take the students outside. However, removing the students from the classroom entirely takes away the space boundaries which contribute to making sure the students do not run riot. (Reflection, November 20, 2009)

A disadvantage of working outdoors, identified by the student teacher in her reflection, was the lack of physical boundaries. Likewise, the weather during the winter months was not always satisfactory for outdoor work, particularly early in the school day.

Noise was a most significant and ongoing problem in the Year 6 learning space. Observational, reflective writing and interview data collected in the learning space supported existing research, as noted in the Literature Review, which suggests that noise levels are higher in open classrooms, and that this noise manifests problems with distraction and off-
task time (Evans, 2006; Moore, 1986; Weinstein, 1979). Data collected later in the study, as younger students moved into their learning spaces, verified this finding.

Approximately one third of the Year 6 students considered the noise in the learning space to be problematic, with comments such as “There’s far too much noise and mess” (Terri, Reflection, September 14, 2009), and “[a disadvantage is] working with the whole grade because it gets really noisy and gives me a headache” (Celia, Reflection, September 14, 2009). Adam also noted that in the large space “it echoes when the noise gets loud and the noise can get to high to work [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), and Sally wrote “that we get distracted [distracted] and it is loud at time [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009).

Although the students in lower grades had only a few creative arts lessons in their learning spaces, their experiences in other KLA lessons resulted in their identifying noise as a key issue within this type of learning environment. Focus group interview questions regarding any perceived disadvantages of creative arts lessons in the learning spaces gained the following responses from Year 5 students:

Katie: The other kids can be loud.
Eliza: And then we can’t hear, and they distract us. (Focus Group Interview, October 26, 2009)

while an interview held with different students on a later date gained congruent responses:

WB: And what would be the worst thing?
Kristine: That the other Year 5’s are noisy.
Cora: Yeah, it’s noisy (Focus Group Interview, November 9, 2009).

Focus group interviews with students from the Stage 2 composite class also identified noise as a key problem.

WB: And what might be things that are not so good about doing creative arts in the learning space?
Alice: If there’s other classes in here, it might be noisy because if they’re doing fun activities and we’re doing something quiet, then we can’t hear or concentrate.
Alicia: A group in here could be doing different loud things. Or split up classes can be working loud.
Ella: And if we were really on task but they make a lot of noise, we can lose our focus (Focus Group Interview, November 2, 2009).
A second focus group interview held on the same day with different students provided similar responses.

WB: And do you think there will be some things not so good about doing creative arts in the learning space?

Anna and Alexi together: The noise.

Tamara: People will touch things that we are making.

Cain: People get distracted by noise.

Briony: It will get squishy with everyone here.

Anna: The other classes might distract us. (Focus Group Interview, November 2, 2009)

It is interesting that in this interview, each time a student suggested another disadvantage of working in the learning space, the conversation continued to return to noise. It is also interesting that such a large number of children identified noise as having an adverse effect on their learning, despite their being involved in creative arts activities that are typically high in noise production. This is of particular significance with the move from a specialist classroom to learning spaces, where up to 90 children could potentially be involved in a creative arts activity at the same time.

*Furniture*

A surprising discovery made through the course of the study was the number of children across all primary grades whose responses regarding classroom environments made reference to the lack of traditional classroom furniture in the music and creative arts classrooms. It had always been my choice to have a large, open floor space in the creative arts classroom, without any desks or chairs. This allowed for music, movement, dance and drama activities to be executed without moving any furniture, and aided in safe practice. Students were seldom required to use pen and paper, but usually chose to lie on the floor when these tasks were required. I had always viewed this arrangement as quite satisfactory for my teaching and my classes.

With the move to the Year 6 learning space, sometimes referred to as “an agile or flexible learning space” (Principal, Focus Group Interview, November17, 2009), the environment was not specific to creative arts, but was intended to be flexible for all KLAs and activities. Thus, a drastic change to the physical setting for creative arts included the provision of tables and
chairs within the area. The learning space was furnished with several clusters of tables and chairs, and a large number of students viewed this as very advantageous, as was affirmed in their reflections. In justifying the learning space as the preferred area for creative arts, Billy wrote “I have a coice [choice] on where to sit and we actually have tables and chairs” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); Jack commented that “we get to use computers and tables rather than sit on the floor” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); Joel said “it is very big and I have my desk” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); and John suggested that “it is more better than sitting on the flore in the old class room [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), with Krissy agreeing “it is much easier to work on desks then [sic] the floor” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). These reflections also exemplified several received from students in Year 3, 4 and 5.

During two separate focus group interviews with Year 5 students, Colin (Interview, October 26, 2009) and Kristine (Interview, November 9, 2009) both responded to questioning about the advantages of having creative arts lessons in the learning space by saying “We have tables to work at”. Similarly, a focus group interview with students from the Stage 2 composite class provided Annie’s response, “I think it’s good doing it here [in the learning space] because we can do tables or floor” (Interview, November 2, 2009); and Ben from Year 3 noted in his written reflection that “we have desk’s [sic] in our room and we have chirs [chairs] in our room” (Reflection, October 19, 2009).

While the desire for desks and chairs was a common response, only a few students provided reasons. Some Year 3 children proposed that desks would help to keep the floor and surrounds free from damage by art materials such as paint and oil pastilles. Jason wrote that “When we have messy paints . . . so we do not make a mess of instroments [sic] and the carpet” (Reflection, October 21, 2009), and Molly wrote “colouring with oil pastilles, it might go on the carpet” (Reflection, October 21, 2009). Chloe noted that “you can feel weird or uncofturble [uncomfortable] on the carpet” (Reflection, October 19, 2009).

Although extraneous issues such as timetabling made it very difficult to interview children in Year 1, a single focus group interview late in the data collection period gained some small insight into their experiences with creative arts. When the children were asked about their favourite place for creative arts lessons, it is interesting that the initial respondent replied in favour of the specialist room because there were no desks. However, the availability of desks was seen as desirable by another child.

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WB: And where do you like doing it? Because we used to have a special room, and now we don’t.

Bree: In the classroom and the music room.

WB: Which is the best place?

Bree: The music room because you have bigger space. There’s hardly no tables, but there’s a teacher’s desk.

WB: Does that make it a good place to do art? On the floor?

All: Yeah.

Bree: You have bigger space because you have lots of stuff to do on your art, you can actually have a better space to do it.

WB: So is it ok in your classroom, because we don’t have a music room any more?

Jacob: I like it in my classroom at my desk (Focus group interview, November 2, 2009).

Although the Year 1 learning space had a section of wet area designated for art, observations and informal interviews with the Year 1 teachers indicated that the area was used by only a few students at a time. This would be a possible explanation for Bree’s comment being in contrast to all other respondents. It is also possible that students in the infants grades are more familiar and more comfortable with working on the floor, or that Bree’s opinion was not representative of all Year 1 students, especially since Jacob stated his preference was to work at his desk.

**Location and Relocation of the Rooms**

Although the physical location of classrooms has not been identified as a significant factor in available research literature, it was identified as a key issue by the student participants in this study. The creative arts classroom was relocated twice during the course of the study, and had been relocated twice in the year prior to the study. The specialist creative arts room was lost altogether at the end of Term 3. As well as resulting in changed environmental conditions, the relocations also caused considerable disruption to the creative arts program.

A Year 5 student reflected “when the classroom moved we lost our time doing music because we had to carry up instruments instead of playing instruments” (Jack, Reflection, July 7, 2009). Given that the students only attended creative arts lessons for one hour per week, the loss of valuable lesson time through classroom relocation resulted in significant lack of fluency between lessons. It was also difficult for me, as the teacher, to maintain enthusiasm
and focus within the program while faced with the extraneous demands of packing, transporting resources, and organising classroom spaces.

Although the Year 5 students had participated enthusiastically in post-it note reflections during Term 1, it is interesting to note that after the move to the Term 2 classroom, all voluntary reflections ceased. Although I was keen to see the students begin their reflective processes again, I was also interested to establish whether or not they would do so without any intervention. Across the three Year 5 classes that had contributed post-it reflections regularly, not one student wrote, or even mentioned the reflections, for several weeks into Term 2.

Eventually, I raised the issue, and asked the Year 5 students why the post-it reflections were no longer written. After a brief discussion, written responses offered several reasons that the practice may have ceased. A number of students wrote that it was just forgotten after the move: “people forgot about things and were fascinated with the classroom” (Tyson, Reflection, July 7, 2009) and “people forgot things because its [sic] a very different classroom” (Jerry, Reflection, July 7, 2009). Others related the post-it notes to the types of activities undertaken, as was the case with Joel, who noticed that “the posted-notes [sic] were always on the shelf, we don’t play instruments any more” (Reflection, July 8, 2009) and an anonymous reflection that “everybody stopped putting on the poster notes. Cause we havn’t being using the instruments [sic]” (Reflection, July 8, 2009). Ally wrote “we got disturbed/interrupted by moving up to the new classroom [sic]” (Reflection, July 7, 2009), and Sharon’s reflection referred to the fact that “people whernt [sic]used to the room it will just take a while for people to adjust to the room” (Reflection, July 7, 2009).

Although the brevity of these statements restricts the insight they might impart, they certainly reflect the disorientation of the students at this point in time. It would appear that some students connected the writing of post-it reflections with a particular type of lesson. The type of lesson presented in the Term 2 classroom was vastly different from those in the preceding term through the restricted space, the lack of organisation of resources, and the need to make as little noise as possible. Such a sudden and drastic change in the content and presentation of creative arts lessons may well have left students feeling a degree of confusion as to what the lessons were and what behaviour was expected during them.

This confusion, or disorientation, is implied in Jasmine’s comment, that tends to sum up the feelings of the Year 5 students: “Not one person done the notes, because, well we all just
didn’t realise we could still do them. Everything changed when we moved [sic]” (Reflection, July 8, 2009). The magnitude of the effect of the relocation is expressed through Jasmine’s use of the term “everything”. Rather than isolating a particular event or practice, as her classmates had done with the use of the instruments, Jasmine noted much broader changes. For the students and myself alike, the relocation itself, with its many interruptions to lessons, and its resultant restrictions to both space and activity, caused a sense of displacement, confusion and marking time, and severely affected the flow of the program.

While the relocation process was particularly disruptive, the building program caused several other disturbances to the creative arts program. Fenced-off areas, and out-of-bounds areas were rearranged continuously, in order to maintain student safety in such close proximity to building work. As the students walked to the creative arts rooms from their own classrooms, the path taken also changed continuously, and it sometimes took far longer than desirable to detour away from builders and their tools.

For the duration of Term 3, the creative arts room was the only classroom situated on the eastern side of the school grounds, its location therefore quite isolated. This feature was favoured by students such as Emily, who considered it “quiet and easier to concentrate” (Reflection, September 29, 2009) and Leah, whose reflection indicated that it was a “quiet [quiet] peacfull area [sic]” (Reflection, September 30, 2009). Although the location necessitated that each class walk a distance to the room, it also removed limitations surrounding noise produced in creative arts lessons, with Year 4 student, Alice, noting that in the Term 3 room “we can make lots of noise” (Reflection, September 30, 2009).

However, the students did not always view the location of the room as advantageous, with a large number of students noting the lesson time used in moving between rooms. Reflective writing and interview data collected across the primary grades evidenced this point of view. Year 6 student Tony explained that “We had to walk up the back. Every week. And we had to take our pencil cases. And now we just stay here, and we have our pencils at our desk” (Interview, November 9, 2009), while his classmates Kye, Nathan and Madeleine commented on “the waste of time going up there and back” (Reflections, September 14, 2009).

These opinions were corroborated through reflections from students in Years 3, 4 and 5. For example, Chloe wrote “We had to walk a long way and it wasted some of our time” (Year 3 Reflection, October 19, 2009); Ellie commented that “we had to walk up and down to the room” (Year 4 Reflection, September 29, 2009); and Colin suggested that a benefit of
working in the learning space was that “You don’t have to walk. And then you don’t have to worry about getting back late” (Year 5 Focus Group Interview, October 26, 2009).

Classroom Resources

In considering the learning environments for creative arts, many students referred to the availability of resources, and particularly of technology. This became more evident as the year progressed and classes moved into their newly appointed learning spaces. As the Year 6 students had had opportunity to use the technology with creative arts, these children were the main source of data collection regarding this issue.

While there had been only one computer in the creative arts classrooms during Terms 1, 2 and 3, the permanent and laptop computers housed in the Year 6 learning space enabled student use of technology in creative arts lessons. This necessitated a re-thinking of the creative arts program in light of 21st century educational thought (See Chapter 3: Literature Review). While several authors assert the teaching of information, media and technology skills (Anderson, 2009; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007; Pletka, 2007; and Prensky, 2001), the processes and activities considered appropriate for children described as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001) were also far removed from the traditional notion of a teacher imparting knowledge to the students.

The incorporation of activities that might best utilise the technological resources resulted in quite drastic changes to the creative arts program for Year 6, and also to my role as a teacher. For example, prior to Term 3 when lessons moved to the learning space with its technology resources, a typical lesson in pitch notation might have included teacher instruction from the whiteboard together with students working through exercises using tuned percussion instruments. Teacher assistance and feedback was provided to students in turn. Within the context of the learning space, students might choose to practise notation skills using online games, while other students were working on a visual artwork, a task from the Bloom’s/Multiple Intelligences Grid (see Appendix E), or a research task. The games utilised learning strategies such as those recommended by Anderson (2009), including accessing, retrieving and organising information, and the preferences of digital native thinking for games to serious work, and thriving on instant gratification and rewards, as noted by Prensky (2001). Feedback came from the games themselves. Technological classroom resources changed my approach to the lessons, as well as my role in the lessons, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter 8: The Arts in the 21st Century Classroom.
Many Year 6 students enjoyed using the technology in the learning space, and noted the availability of technology and computers in both reflections and focus group interviews. Jai felt that “computas to rechearch [computers to research]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009) were an advantage of having creative arts lessons in the learning space; and Ally noted the availability of “more computers so everyone gets a turn” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). The following excerpt from a focus group interview is also indicative of the perceived value of technological resources.

WB: You’ve done music in lots of different classrooms. Where has been the best place?
Tamara: I think maybe this one.
WB: In the learning space?
Tamara: Yeah, because all the classrooms get together to do it together and it’s a lot more bigger. It’s got more computers.
Billy: Same.
WB: And which would be the worst place?
Tamara: I think maybe the old staffroom.
WB: Because?
Tamara: It was like, a bit small.
Billy: And it didn’t have any computers in it. (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009)

Although the Year 5 students had creative arts lessons in their learning space for only 4 weeks, they also deemed availability of technology a most valuable aspect of the area, with Colin’s response to the question “What would be the good things about doing creative arts in our learning space?” being “The interactive white board. You can look up things” (Focus Group Interview, October 26, 2009). In separate focus group interviews with Year 5 students, Katie (Focus Group Interview, October 26, 2009) and Tyson (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009) also identified the interactive whiteboard as a valuable feature.

Several younger students also considered the interactive whiteboards to be a definite advantage of their new learning spaces. However, the novelty of being able to watch DVDs on occasions such as wet weather lunchtimes outweighed any educational benefit perceived by the children. A Year 3 student suggested that the new learning space would be a good place for creative arts because “we can wach movies on the wite board [we can watch movies
on the white board)” (Ben, Reflection, October 19, 2009), while the Year 1 focus group interview provided the following responses:

WB: Tell me about your learning space. Is it nice in your learning space?
All: Yes.
Jacob: We like to watch movies on the interactive whiteboard.
Bree: It’s actually very cool. We have 3 classrooms all blocked together that we get a big space. And you can watch DVDs. And there’s lots of toys to play with.
Brent: And movies.
Jacob: I like watching movies (Focus Group Interview, November 2, 2009).

Although the move to the learning spaces has afforded use of technology through computers, iPods and interactive whiteboards, it must be noted that the move away from a specialist classroom also made many resources unavailable. A major disadvantage of the new arrangement has been the unavailability of specific music resources, such as classroom instruments, posters and displays. While it was possible to have these brought to the learning space for the lessons, this required careful planning, used lesson time in transportation, and also contributed to noise issues within the space. This aspect was also identified by students as a disadvantage, with Kye writing in his reflection “We do not have the equipment we would have in the music room” (Reflection, September 14, 2009).

Non-physical Aspects of the Learning Environment

Comfort
Data relating to comfort in the classroom was obtained through written reflections and interviews with Year 6 students. However, several connotations of the term ‘comfort’ were detected. Some students referred to the air quality of the room when mentioning comfort, as did Jai, who described the Term 2 classroom as “uncomfortable and stuffy [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009) For others, comfort was related to the ease with which tasks could be undertaken, as was the case with Brent’s response which stated “its sometime quiet and much more comfortable to work [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), while others equated comfort with the familiarity of the learning space, as did Emilia who considered it advantageous that “we don’t have to walk over to another room and we feel comfortable with where we are learning and working” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). Younger students also noted familiarity of a space, with Jason preferring the Term 3 classroom because “thats my
sisters class [sic]” (Reflection, October 19, 2009), and Chloe stating that “you feel comfotable and relaxed that you’r in you’r classroom [sic]” (Reflection, October 21, 2009). Year 4 student, Catherine, explained a room’s comfort through her written reflection “I think we need to get a comfodiile [comfortable] room so we can put lots of thing in but it not so squashy and not to emty [sic]” (Reflection, September 29, 2009).

While the student reflections allude to differing aspects of comfort, they reiterate findings noted in previous sections of this chapter which stress the effect of air quality, noise, location of the classroom, and overcrowding respectively. This highlights the association between the physical learning environment with the students’ physical and personal comfort, and subsequently with their learning. However, a sense of familiarity and belonging is also clearly an important consideration in a child’s concept of comfort.

Ownership
Ownership is a significant issue for both teachers and students in a classroom. Shared ownership is an important condition in the creation of an insider classroom. It is also essential in creating a Quality Learning Environment that encourages engagement, student direction and student self-regulation. Data indicated that ownership may be affected by the classroom environment itself.

A number of Year 6 students alluded to ownership of their learning space in their focus group interviews and written reflections. For example, Sally preferred working in the grade’s space because it was “our space”, and “we know where everything is all the time, like we know the paint is over there, and if we need another book for creative arts, we know where they are” (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009). Aiden agreed, writing “we know where everything is and we get used to the learning space we work in” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). However, it was in the Term 2 classroom that several issues of ownership became most evident.

Originally intended as a staffroom, the Term 2 classroom featured a small kitchen and two staff toilets at one end. As the room was quite a distance from the school’s staffroom (see Figure 4.1 Map of the School Site), these facilities had been designated for staff use, and were utilised by staff teaching close to the room, or staff on playground or other supervision duties. This resulted in several interruptions as teachers made use of these facilities during class time. This was quite distracting for the students on a number of occasions. As well as implying a certain disrespect for the lessons underway, these interruptions also affected the sense of
ownership of the space for myself and the class. Interruptions occurred most often during Year 3 lesson times, and it was these students who asserted the effect of such interruption. Penny wrote that “teachers sometimes come in to get a drink and disturb us” (Reflection, October 19, 2009) and Jacob noticed that “at the start of the class ther [sic] were teachers walking in and out” (Reflection, October 21, 2009).

As described in the Overcrowding section earlier in this chapter, the Term 2 creative arts room was also utilised as a storage space for unused school resources. Together with a lack of shelving or available storage areas for the creative arts resources, this created a state of disarray which was both unattractive and quite unsuitable for teaching and learning activities. Because the Term 2 classroom had only been intended as interim accommodation, such inconvenience was viewed as temporary, and an unavoidable repercussion of the building program. However, the effect on ownership remained considerable for students as well as for me, since it was not possible to organise and use the room in ways we might choose.

The move from traditional classrooms to shared learning spaces was a major upheaval for school staff, and in the concluding weeks of the study, most grades were still in the developmental stages of organisation and practice. Since there was no room allocated for creative arts in Term 4, I was required to move from grade to grade for creative arts lessons. This was both confusing and challenging, as staff sought to establish their own places within the new learning environments. For example, while some staff endeavoured to modify their teaching practices to incorporate activities consistent with the ideals of 21st century pedagogical philosophy, and inclusive of all children within the grade, others struggled to maintain their own habits and methods, and to keep their class housed and learning separately from other classes in the grade, but without any walls separating them. Such differences made it quite impossible to develop or practise any consistent approach within the creative arts program.

The reflections made by the student teacher were a particularly valuable source of data during these few weeks, as her role was often to observe my teaching. Since she had spent some considerable time in the Term 3 classroom, she was able to gain and convey some understanding of the new situation and its challenges. In particular, the student teacher noted the challenges associated with the sharing of a learning space between teachers if they chose not to work together, writing
The possibilities for lessons are greatly reduced by the need to be considerate of the other two classes in the space. However, the other teachers do not have this same consideration... which I think reflects directly on the value they place on creative arts education... it is difficult to capture the student’s [sic] attention and even if you get it, they can barely hear you anyway because of the noise coming from the other parts of the room. Students from the other two classes had no defining barrier on their space either and would walk in to speak with students with no regard for the teacher attempting to conduct a lesson... (Reflection, October 27, 2009).

Just as ownership was a significant issue with regard to the Term 2 classroom, so too it became contentious during the final weeks of data collection. During this time, ownership of the learning spaces by some grade teachers made them unwilling to accommodate a creative arts teacher and activities. Conversely, lack of ownership within the space for me as a ‘visiting’ creative arts teacher resulted in my feeling like an “intruder in my own classes”, as I journaled at the time.

The student teacher observed and reflected on this dilemma, displaying an accurate perception of the difficulties faced. Writing about her own feelings and experience, she noted the restrictions imposed in a shared space.

In a learning spaces environment I feel less comfortable planning lessons because I have to be conscious of the other classes in the room who may need quiet to complete the tasks they are completing. (Reflection, November 20)

Through her observations of my teaching, she was able to develop this line of thought to include the effects of a lack of ownership on both the teacher and students in a classroom.

The creative arts teacher has no opportunity in these spaces to establish rules, routines and practices that are specific to their teaching style and this will affect how comfortable the teacher is with the students throughout the lesson and ultimately the overall positiveness and enthusiasm of the teacher and students.

She explained “it is very hard to keep a positive attitude when you feel under valued and bit like a packhorse from having to carry all your belongings from place to place [sic] ” (Reflection, October 27, 2009).

This was certainly very true of my experience in these final weeks of data collection, and I would concur with the student teacher’s conclusive remarks from her reflection: “Clearly demonstrated here is the importance of the physical environment on the emotional one”.

Personal Interactions
Social and intellectual interactions play an important role in the learning process within a classroom. A favourable feature of the Year 6 learning space noted by a substantial number of
students was its capacity for the entire grade to work together. For many students, this provided the opportunity to work in friendship groups rather than class groups. Ashleen “like[d] how you can work with the whole grade instead of just your class” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); Aiden could “work with [his] friends and give them advice” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); Robbie wrote “there is more space and you can sit with friends from other classes” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); Tahlia viewed the benefits as being able to “work with the people you get along with” (Reflection, September 14, 2009); and an anonymous student reflected that “in the [Term 1] room when it came to do Partners, groups, etc I didn’t have people to do it with . . . No one wanted me in their group. But in Year 6 [learning space] I can be with my friends [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). Focus group interviews late in the data collection period confirmed this as a priority for the students, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

Tony: I like it in here (learning space) because there’s lots of room and we can work with our friends.

Brent: I like this room too because we’re with our friends.

Robbie: This is my favourite too, because it’s a bigger space and you get to interact with other classmates. (Focus Group Interview, November 9, 2009).

The students’ overwhelming responses in favour of working in chosen friendship groups across the grade were quite a surprising revelation of the study. Although inter-class friendships had always been observed on the playground and in social settings at the school, the advent of learning spaces, and the associated changes to teaching and learning practice, provided the opportunity for the students to bring these friendships into their learning experiences. While this study has identified the significance of this aspect of learning space practice for students, further study might provide some insight as to the significance on student engagement and achievement. Since Year 6 was the only grade working together as a grade in creative arts, no data was available from children in other grades to support this.

**Conclusion**

Data collected across the course of the study identified and described several key issues significant to classroom learning environments. Many of these issues were consistent with those described in the relevant literature, such as overcrowding, noise, furniture arrangement, comfort, ownership and personal interactions. However, participants in the study also asserted the importance of other aspects of the classroom environment such as the location of the
classroom, the effects of relocation, and the provision of resources within the classroom. In particular, the study participants viewed available technologies as a vital element of the classroom environment.

The loss of a specialist creative arts classroom has resulted in the majority of these environmental elements being within the control of the grade teachers in each learning space. However, the impact of the classroom environment on student learning necessitates that they be considered in the planning and presentation of the creative arts program. The flexibility of the learning spaces, together with the availability of COLAs, allows some control over physical aspects of the classroom environment. The availability of technologies, together with the lack of specific creative arts resources within the learning spaces, compels a rethinking and restructuring of the creative arts program within the framework of 21st century pedagogical thought. The Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching also develops the concept of the effect of environmental factors on student learning, through the presentation of six elements considered vital to quality learning. These are explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Quality Learning Environment is one of three dimensions which comprise the Quality Teaching framework. As discussed in Chapter 2: Literature Review, this dimension is founded on the premise that learning is improved when the classroom provides high levels of support for learning. The classroom environment includes not only the physical space, but also the interactions and relationships between students and teachers. An ideal Quality Learning Environment is evidenced by students influencing the nature of classroom activities, engaging seriously with their studies, regulating their own behaviour, and being aware of the explicit criteria and expectations in approaching a task.

In order to examine the features of a Quality Learning Environment as they exist in the creative arts classroom and program, observational, interview and written reflection data were collected and analysed with regard to each of the 6 elements that constitute the dimension. One of the elements, Engagement, is the focus of a research question, and for this reason has been discussed in a separate chapter (See Chapter 6). The other elements are described and discussed in this chapter.

Explicit Quality Criteria

Explicit quality criteria are frequent, detailed and specific statements regarding what the students are required to do, and to achieve. Observational, interview and reflective data were analysed to appraise the use of explicit quality criteria within the creative arts program. Findings indicated some disparity in the ways in which criteria might be developed and presented, but an overall positive effect on teaching and learning.

Teachers across all grades in the school are committed to providing explicit quality criteria in their lessons. A number of teachers were interviewed in order to determine the ways in which they presented criteria to their students. I saw this as particularly important with teachers of younger grades, since I tried to maintain a consistency of approach between that of the general classroom teacher and that enacted in my classroom where the children spent only one hour per week.
The infants grade teachers all used the term ‘quality work’ when expressing criteria to their students, and usually showed an example of a correctly completed task. Work completed by the children which was considered to be of high quality was often placed on display in a particular area of the room. A discrepancy noted was that the kindergarten teachers also displayed an example of a piece of unacceptable work, though this was only an example prepared by staff, and not a piece of work completed by a student. Criteria regarding unacceptable standards of work were not conveyed to this extent in other grades, and a few teachers expressed distaste with the notion, suggesting that there was nothing positive to be gained through the display of such work.

Similarly, some teachers disagreed with the notion of displaying only the work considered to be of a high standard. This became apparent in an interview with a Year 5 class teacher, who commented, “but I reckon we should display all work. I don’t like that some work might not be acceptable, like in the part about criteria. Especially with art” (Tom, Interview, July 10, 2009). This statement reflected a sentiment echoed by several other teachers, who felt that the display of all work enabled each student to have the chance to feel proud of the level of work that had been achieved.

In using explicit quality criteria in the creative arts classroom, I adopted the use of terminology with which the children were familiar. For example, I began to use the expression ‘quality work’ with the students in the infants grades. Examples of completed tasks were displayed at the onset of the task, and where I noticed works in progress meeting the criteria, this was pointed out to all class members. However, I chose to display pieces of art and other tasks completed by all students who were willing to have their work on show.

With older children, some tasks were preceded by the presentation of rubrics specific to the task, the use of which is described in the Literature Review. Since the students were conversant with the school’s system of reporting, which denotes the various levels of achievement A through E, rubrics used in creative arts carried this same designation. Using these rubrics allowed the students to not only understand exactly what was required to achieve a certain grade, but also enabled them to assess their own work on its completion. This is consistent with characteristics of the insider classroom.

In an aim to increase student ownership of creative arts, all Year 6 students were invited to contribute to the development of criteria for a series of tasks in a unit of work based on Italian artforms. Offering the students some control over the choice of activity, pace and assessment
criteria presented many challenges, particularly since there were 85 students in the grade. Involving a large number of students in decision-making is quite difficult, and in an aim to include all students, this was carried out through whole grade discussion, small group discussion and also through written reflection.

Initially, the students were shown a series of photographs of art projects which had been created by former students, titled ‘Amazing Masks’. This composite artwork consisted of a two-dimensional collage of mask shapes, and a decorated, three dimensional, half-face mask. Many of the students noted that they recalled seeing the artworks displayed the previous year, and voiced excitement that they might complete a similar project.

Whole group discussion revolved around the students’ initial perceptions of the artworks, their likes and dislikes, and their opinions about what made particular artworks effective. This discussion also included revision of concepts such as texture, line and space, and how they might be realised in an artwork. Having been given an outline of the procedure for creating each stage of the composite artwork, the students divided into small groups of their own choice to discuss the criteria upon which the artworks should be assessed, and the number of lessons which would be required to complete the task. Once each group had reported their ideas, a consensus was reached and criteria were set. Reflections submitted upon completion of the task also provided an avenue for students to offer suggestions about the suitability of these rubrics set by the class. A reflection by the student teacher confirmed my own observations of the students’ commitment to and engagement in this activity, and also supported the statement by Nystrand and Gamoran (1989), that in order to be engaged, students as well as teachers should have some input into the business of learning.

Year 6 began their mask making process by determining for themselves what the marking criteria would be. This was an enlightening challenge and it produced surprising results with the students demonstrating higher order thinking skills. (Reflection, August 2, 2009).

At a later date, during a whole group discussion, a group of students proposed that the time frame we had decided upon for the task was not quite long enough due to external limitations, such as the size of the learning space area designated for artmaking, and the time-consuming nature of the task. Consequently, a revised time-frame was decided upon in consultation with the students, thus ensuring their continued input.
The presence of two other teachers in each creative arts lesson in the learning space allowed for the evaluation of my own use of explicit quality criteria during this unit of work. Like the students, the teachers were unfamiliar with the content of the lessons, yet since they were assisting in the classroom, it was vital that the requirements of each task be clear to them, as well as to the students. During an interview to discuss this aspect of the creative arts program, the teacher of 6Z stated “you were very explicit with what you wanted from them like when they were producing the masks and the terminology that you used” (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009).

The expression of explicit quality criteria concerning the entire task, or the end product of a task, did not seem appropriate for all activities. At times students were engaged in an activity through their curiosity at the unknown direction the task was taking. Such was the case with guided drawing lessons that took place with the primary grades. These lessons involved the children copying shapes and lines from the whiteboard, without knowing what the end product might be. In this instance, eliminating criteria about the end product took away any doubt that students might have in their ability to reproduce a complicated drawing. A reflection by the student teacher confirmed my observations of this occurrence.

The students were not shown . . . what they would be drawing at the start of the lesson, and had to figure it out as they drew. By the time they worked out that it was a picture that they thought was beyond them, they were nearly done and were very pleased with themselves. (Reflection, August 11, 2009).

She reported similar perceptions following a Year 4 drawing lesson.

I find the guided drawing lessons interesting because the students are not shown what they are drawing and it is broken down into parts with the final picture being revealed as they finish. The students do not have any “but I can’t draw” complaints because they do not see what they are drawing as too hard, not knowing what it is. (Reflection, September 10, 2009).

However, it should be noted that while explicit quality criteria concerning the end product might not have been given, very explicit criteria were presented both verbally and visually throughout the entire process. For example, the students might be instructed to “draw a very thick line, arching like a rainbow, from the very edge of the paper on the left, to the very edge of paper on the right, and using just the top half of the page”. This would be demonstrated on the white board or interactive whiteboard.

A similar process was used in a Year 6 musical composition task, where students were required to write and perform a four-bar pentatonic melody on classroom percussion. The
actual task was preceded by several exercises in improvisation, each with its own clear criteria. However, explicit quality criteria applicable to the end product were not provided until the final stages of the exercise. As with the guided drawing activity, the incremental process helped to build student confidence.

Towards the end of Term 2, I had the opportunity to spend an entire day working on creative arts tasks with the Stage 2 composite class. Having extended time meant that we could undertake time-consuming artwork such as papier-mâché, something that our usual class time did not allow. The students were very excited, and became engaged in a number of activities, working in small groups around the room. By the end of the first two hour session, I was amazed at the concentration and co-operation displayed by a group who were renowned for their clashes of personality and will. I decided to interview a few of the children informally regarding their engagement, as we readied the classroom for the recess break.

I chose to speak with Matthew, a very sensitive boy who struggled to complete tasks in class, and who was frequently involved in spats with other class members. When I asked Matthew if he could explain the reason class members were still working so hard on their projects, after such a long time, he said “it’s because they want to finish it”. Sensing that I would learn something more about their engagement, I asked Matthew why he thought there were no fights or disagreements in the classroom, since it was quite rare for this particular group to have worked co-operatively for an entire morning. “Oh, that’s easy,” Matthew replied. “It’s because you explained it so well, so they know exactly what to do, so there is nothing to fight about” (Interview, Matthew, June 26, 2009).

Matthew’s comments helped to point out another important aspect of using explicit quality criteria. I had failed to see that the provision of clear criteria would also affect the students’ confidence in approaching the task, which in turn could affect not only their engagement and achievement, but also interactions with other students.

**High Expectations**

The element of high expectations is closely linked to explicit quality criteria, since both elements are concerned with the standard, or quality, of the students’ work, and high expectations are often conveyed through the use of explicit quality criteria. Consequently, distinguishing between the two areas during data analysis was quite difficult at times.
Similarly, interviews with staff indicated that they, too, experienced some difficulty with distinguishing the two elements, sometimes using the terms interchangeably.

High expectations demand that all members of a class should be involved in challenging work, and learning important knowledge and skills to an appropriate standard, and this must be communicated to the students. Students are encouraged and recognised for taking conceptual or other risks in learning. Expectations are also high when students at all levels are expected, and try, to master challenging work whether the challenge is intellectual or performance-based.

Because each class is with me for only an hour per week, communicating and clarifying my own expectations is vital to the smooth running of each lesson. However, in order to avoid confusion on the students’ part, especially those in the younger grades, my expectations need to be fairly closely aligned with those of each class teacher. This means that constant communication with class teachers is vital to the smooth running of the creative arts program.

The effect of communicating high expectations was made clear in the Year 6 learning space as students approached the task of completing 6 chosen activities from a Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid (see Appendix E). Following the Year 6 students’ initial exposure to and attempts to complete tasks from the Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid, I realised that I had not, in fact, communicated high expectations to the students. Although the required number of tasks had been completed, the presentation was often careless, messy and disorganised. Responses to questions were superficial, with little or no reference to the questions themselves. Drawings and diagrams were poorly executed – freehand versions using ballpoint pen and lacking refinement. If the students considered this standard of work to be adequate, then two of the criteria for high expectations were not being met: firstly, the work was not challenging, and secondly, it did not demand knowledge and skills of an appropriate standard.

A second Grid of tasks was therefore constructed, herein referred to as Grid 2, and shown in Appendix E. The second grid was presented to the students with a list of expectations. These expectations included the labelling of tasks with at least its Bloom’s heading; neat, clear presentation; full sentence answers, expanded where possible; and all drawings and diagrams to be accurate, in proportion, and either in lead pencil or coloured where appropriate. For example, the most popular task on both grids was an ‘analysing’ task that involved the
making of a jigsaw puzzle from a picture of a mask (Grid 1) or from the picture of an Italian artwork (Grid 2). The students thoroughly enjoyed this task. In raising expectations, as well as making the jigsaw, the students were required to label the task as ‘Analysing – Make a Jigsaw’, and to provide the name of the artwork and its artist. The task was also made more challenging through the requirement to create pieces of irregular shape and size. A few students who thought the task was quite easy were asked to provide further information about either the artist, or about the place of the artwork in art history, or in Italy’s culture. However, only a few of the children required this further challenge.

Another popular task was to draw instruments which might have been used in 16th Century Italy (Grid 1), or instruments used in ‘The Four Seasons’ (Grid 2). In raising expectations, the students were required to identify the task ‘Understanding – Instruments from the Four Seasons’, to research the names of the instruments, and to provide labelled drawings that were detailed and in proportion, rather than to quickly draw inaccurate versions. The task required students to use refined skills in observation and drawing, and challenged them to discriminate between the discrepancies in shape and construction of the various string instruments. Students displaying more advanced drawing skills were also required to shade their drawings, a skill which had been practised in creative arts the previous year. Students displaying stronger writing skills were also required to verbally describe the differences between these instruments and their modern day counterparts.

Although the changes to the criteria were only minor, the standard of work improved considerably when the expectations were raised. Completed work shown to staff was often sent back for revision, in order that it meet higher expectations, or if it was felt that the individual student was not being challenged. As well as improvement in these corrected tasks, following tasks by these students often showed a higher standard of work. One of the Year 6 class teachers also noted this improvement, commenting during an interview “I think with the high expectations, they’ve really stepped up to the plate this term with their Bloom’s and what you’ve asked of them” (6Y class teacher, Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009). It is also important to note the close interrelationship between elements of the Quality Learning Environment dimension, since the very act of providing explicit quality criteria in itself may communicate high expectations to the students.

As noted in the Literature Review, Douglas and Jaquith (2009) consider high expectations an important component of choice-based artmaking experiences. They view students as willing
to work toward greater mastery when engaged in the pursuit of their own artworks. In light of this notion, observations were made of several Stage 3 students during visual arts and music activities.

The ‘Amazing Masks’ task provided Year 6 students with the opportunity to create a mask using a theme, materials and colours of their own choice. Such an investment of their own creativity resulted in the utmost care being taken with design and decoration of the masks. A small number of male students became dismayed when their masks did not turn out the way they had hoped. One such student asked if he could start the task anew, and asked me to show him how he might use a paintbrush to achieve the desired effect. He cautiously pencilled guidelines onto the mask, and concentrated carefully while I demonstrated the appropriate ways to choose, hold and use a paintbrush to achieve the look he wanted. Taking the paintbrush from me, he worked painstakingly to copy my technique, and was well-pleased with the end product.

Another Year 6 student chose an army camouflage theme for her mask, since her older brother was on deployment in East Timor. Although this girl appeared to enjoy creative arts tasks, her work was often haphazard, and on previous occasions she had been unwilling to spend adequate time and effort on perfecting skills. However, in accordance with Douglas and Jaquith’s (2009) aforementioned proposal, a personal investment in the artwork resulted in raised expectations. An informal interview with the student’s parent at a sporting event confirmed the girl’s high expectations of herself to “make the best art I have ever done”, as well as high levels of engagement with the task. Upon completion of the work, with which the student was very pleased, a photograph was taken that could be sent to her brother.

Similarly, offering students the opportunity for choice-based arts experiences often resulted in them undertaking risks with their learning. At times, this involved them setting out with tasks which might be considered grandiose, or out of their reach and experience, such as the sculpting of a dragon from clay, the choreographing of a Bollywood dance, or the composition of a piece of music to accompany a dramatic performance. For other students, it may have involved participation in an activity considered quite ordinary by classmates, but one far from comfortable for the particular student. For example, a Year 6 boy performed his own pentatonic composition on a glockenspiel from the notated score as part of Grandparents’ Day celebrations. While there was nothing remarkable about such a performance for a Year 6 child, this boy struggled with fine motor skills required for performing accurately, and with
notating and reading his composition. Together with the stress of performing publicly, this provided a very great challenge for the student, whose performance exceeded all expectations, and was a source of great pride for him for several weeks.

**Social Support**

Reflective and interview data were integral to an analysis of social support within the classroom, due to the personal nature of this element. High social support for student learning is characterised by the encouragement of all students to try hard in a climate of mutual respect. Classrooms high in social support display behaviour by both teacher and students that encourage and value effort, participation, and the open expression of an individual’s views. The classroom is free of negative personal comment, and any disagreement or conflict is resolved in a constructive way. Since it is the students themselves who are able to comment on these conditions, it was necessary to gain their perceptions both orally and in writing.

Classes in the school are ungraded academically, thereby creating a challenge to provide activities that are both demanding, yet achievable, for all students. An interview with a learning support, or special education teacher addressed this issue, particularly in light of the special needs students within the school. She perceived the change to a multi-arts program, with its inclusion of dance, drama and visual arts as well as the previously existing music program, to be inclusive of more students, and allowing for a variety of skills and learning styles, stating that “the program with its various activities ensures that the diverse needs of the students are successfully realised” (Mary, Interview, June 29, 2009). She noted the potential of practical (rather than theoretical) activities to allow students to excel wherever they might have strengths, and saw this as a means of reaching “successful outcomes for all students”.

Observations of several classes confirmed Mary’s perceptions about practical activities. Students who tended to struggle with academic tasks in other KLAS were not only comfortable with the practical activities, but also pleased with their achievements. It was most rewarding to witness a child with poor literacy and numeracy skills run to his class teacher to show an excellent piece of visual art work.

Where class tasks were beyond a less competent student, simple alterations such as substituting a melodic ostinato with a less complex version, or allocating a dramatic role requiring little reading were often sufficient to enable these students to play an active role in class activities, and to achieve success in their tasks. A post-it note written by a special
education student in Year 5 at the conclusion of a lesson where he had mastered the performance of a simple melodic ostinato simply stated “I enjoy” (See Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Post-it Reflection

The act of voluntarily putting pen to paper to write a response was an indication of the boy’s engagement, since any writing was both time-consuming and difficult for him. His excitement and enjoyment at his success were also readily observable in his body language and facial expression during the lesson.

Significant to the element of social support, peer tutoring was also utilised extensively in the creative arts classroom, particularly with lessons in dance and music. Having a confident student help a struggling student master a skill required for a creative arts task proved to be an effective teaching tool, and also encouraged social support within the classroom. Peer tutoring became common practice in dance performance activities, as a large number of students learn dance outside of school, providing a great resource of experience and even expertise. Most of these dancers were only too willing to teach or rehearse a dance step with a student experiencing difficulty, thereby encouraging the valued participation of all students.

An example of peer tutoring and its role in Social Support was observed in a drama lesson involving group work in Year 5, where it enabled all students to be fully involved in a performance. A peer tutor was allocated the task of cueing and prompting a student with poor reading skills. While this system requires careful planning if the peer tutor is to also perform his/her own role confidently and competently, observation of the lesson revealed enjoyment, camaraderie and a feeling of satisfaction on the part of both students during the task.

Social support is most evident during group work activities which are utilised extensively in the creative arts program. Interesting observations were made of a lesson with the Stage Two composite class. Free to choose their own groups of four or five for a drama activity, friends quickly banded together, and sat on the floor, holding hands, arms around each other, smiling
and giggling together. Pairs of friends clung to each other and wandered around the room in search of another pair who might make up a group with them. One boy, Matthew, stood on his own, and stated that no one would want him in their group, because he wasn’t good at that sort of work, and because “everyone is just mean”.

Once the groups were basically formed, we discussed how we might find a spot for everyone, how we might be able to manipulate the groups a little to make them more even in size, and criteria for what should be achieved in that lesson were outlined. The group that Matthew had joined found a place in the room to work, and enthusiastically began to discuss the plans for their drama. Matthew remained on the fringe of the group. After a few minutes, he turned away from the group and began to rearrange the markers in a tray near the white board. One of the boys in the group who was talking animatedly about the drama reached over to Matthew, tapped his arm, placed his hand around his shoulder, and gently guided Matthew back to the perimeter of the group. He kept his arm there for a few moments, until Matthew offered a suggestion, and the arm dropped. All of this had occurred without any interruption to the boy’s comments, and without him taking his eyes from the rest of the group; his interaction with Matthew was minimal, yet effective in the social support it offered.

As the students became more familiar with the practice of reflecting, it became quite common for them to comment on aspects of their group work pertaining to social support, often to the exclusion of anything else. For example, post-note reflections at the conclusion of a drama lesson included “I like how we try to work together as a team” and “I enjoyed it because everyone listened and played their part properly” (Post-it Reflections, May 27, 2009).

Co-operation was a key factor identified by the students as necessary for successful group work, and this was expressed through both positive and negative comments contained in Post-it Reflections. These include statements such as “I didn’t like it when my group didn’t co-operate to the reader” (Post-it Reflection, May 19, 2009); “Can we change Alyx or Liam with someone from a different group. They don’t work well together. Thankyou” (Post-it Reflection, August 4, 2009); and “Acting and reading was fun but the boys and Chloe were being stupid. I learnt acting isn’t fun when no-one’s co-operating” (Post-it Reflection, July 27, 2009).

The element of social support was discussed in an interview with the Year 6 teachers (November 17, 2009), where they suggested it existed among both staff and students in the learning space, and was shown through verbal support and encouragement, through
celebration in the sharing of achievement and success, and through the students’ behaviour as both performers and audience in class drama and music presentations.

6Y Teacher: The social support’s there, and it’s not only the students but the teachers as well, supporting one another, and bouncing ideas off each other and directing students as well as “perhaps you could try it like that”.

6X Teacher: And even the celebration amongst them, you know when they all did their mask and everything, they absolutely loved walking around and seeing what everybody else was doing.

6Z Teacher: And then when they’ve done their performances and things like that, they love getting up there, and then watching the other kids do them.

6Y Teacher: And I don’t think I’ve ever heard anything negative about any of the performances.

While the teachers were able to observe social support within the classroom, the blog created for student communication and reflection also offered several examples of the social support evident within the creative arts program. An example of a post and its responses is shown below, unaltered in presentation, apart from the removal of names. The blog posts utilise ‘textese’, or SMS language, the abbreviated language developed and accepted through mobile phone use, and commonly used in internet and email communication. Most posts lapse in and out of textese. It was very typical for the posts to be written this way, even though the Year 6 teacher who was moderating the blog asked the students to write using ‘correct English’. It was also very typical for the posts and their responses to warmly offer praise, support, and encouragement of other students, as may be seen in the following excerpt.

The initial post, by the student ‘T’,

How are all your projects and blooms tasks going????? My project is nearly done and so are my blooms. So I’ve still got a bit to go!!cya

received five responses within approximately one week of posting.

- **Sep 3rd 2009 at 9:06 pm**

  Hi everyone,
  It’s C.
  I have enjoyed creative arts sooo much this term. I have liked it because I got to choose what I wanted to do for my Blooms tasks and my assignment so that was good.
  i have just started my assignment and I have a few Blooms tasks to do. I chose to do
  **Who is the Mona Lisa?** Great job on your masks by the way. They look fantastic …. 
  cya at school
• Sep 4th 2009 at 7:42 am

Heyy T

I have Finish my bloom’s activites, how many do you still have to do? I saw your mask in class and I love the purple!

Anyway See ya 😊

• Sep 4th 2009 at 3:45 pm

Hi
I have finished my Bloom’s Activities, I’ve handed in my project & finished my mask! Your mask looks so cool!

• Sep 8th 2009 at 11:56 am

hey.........this is T To v: I’ve finished my blooms lol thanxx [you know what im talkin bout] and i’ve finished my project and reflection so i’ve finished everything!![thanxx girls] cya

• Sep 11th 2009 at 9:36 am

Hey t, great to hear that you are having fun so am i

Written reflections submitted by Year 6 students at the end of Term 3 stressed the importance of friendship and social support within the learning situation. Of the 69 students who preferred the Year 6 learning space to either of the previous creative arts classrooms, 13 of these stated that this was because they could work with their friends from other classes, while 6 stated it was because the whole grade was together. When asked to identify the advantages of lessons in the learning space, 16 included working with their friends from other classes. For some, this gave them greater opportunity for assistance, as was the case with Sally, who wrote that she could “ask people for help before going to the teachers” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), while for others the focus was that they “got to do socialising tasks” (Kristine, Reflection, September 14, 2009).

Focus group interviews with Year 6 students confirmed the importance of working with friends in the learning space, with a comment by Sally noting the availability of social support within the classroom: “If you want some help you can ask a friend ... if your class mates don’t know you can ask like... someone else” (Interview, November 3, 2009). This was confirmed
by participants in another focus group, whose responses to the question “what’s the best thing about doing creative arts in the learning space?” included the following:

Tony: You have your friends with you.
James: You’ve got all your friends and if you need, like, all the teachers are here.
Brent: And there’s friends to help you out and the teachers to help you out too.
(Interview, November 11, 2009)

These focus group interviews and written reflections completed by the Year 6 students in Term 3 highlighted the role of the teacher as part of the social support network in the classroom. Several students included the fact that there were three teachers in the learning space as an advantage, with some comments indicating that support was necessary from both staff and students. For example, Holly responded that there were “more teachers for help if we need it and more kids for help” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), and Jasmine also noted that there were “more teachers to mark our work” (Reflection, September 14, 2009).

The importance of social support from teachers was also a feature of some post-it notes from Year 5 students, and fell into two different categories. The first category involved students noting the participation of the teacher in activities (see Figure 5.2). This participation is a feature of all creative arts lessons, and I believe it is important in encouraging student engagement.
Figure 5.2  Teacher Participation Post-it Reflections

("I like how Miss Brooks sang [then] we sang and danced too." And "What I liked was dancing with you.")

The notes would suggest that the students appreciate my participation in activities, and my own observations would confirm this. Since my performances are often far from perfect, I frequently comment in class that I really need to practise to do things really well, and I believe that this helps the children to feel more comfortable with their own mistakes, as well as providing both invitation and encouragement for the children to work at improving their skills.

The second category of comments regarding my role in social support within the classroom is a form of thanks for help with a task. One of the most explicit, concerning a lesson on shading, is shown in Figure 5.3.
Despite the children’s acknowledgement of support from peers and teachers, low levels of social support were also evident on several occasions during the course of the study. While social support was most evident during group work, it was also during group work that low levels were observed. Post-it note reflections gathered from several Year 5 lessons stress the significance of social support, and the effects of inadequacies in this area: “I didn’t like it because Chris was bad.”; “Kersten stopped when we were ready and was mean.”; “In my group I was posed [sic] to be reading but Kersten made me the farmer. She was bossy.”; “I didn’t enjoy music today because Daniel kept on being silly”; and “I like playing the music but I didn’t like it when Brad was being mean to me. But it was really fun” (Post-it Reflections, Term 2, 2009). Minor altercations and occurrences that I had considered trivial and unworthy of attention during the actual lessons were noted as highlights of the lessons by the students themselves. This discrepancy between my observation and the students’ own reflections, stresses the importance of using different sources of data. Students were always encouraged to resolve such problems themselves during group activities, and usually they were able to do this.

Students’ Self-Regulation

The prime data collection method used to determine the presence of students’ self-regulated learning (SRL) was observation. Observation was appropriate since within the Quality Teaching framework, SRL is evident when a lesson proceeds without interruption, and when students demonstrate initiative by accepting responsibility for their learning and for the consequences of their behaviours, with minimal teacher attention to the disciplining and regulation of student behaviour.
There are few notable behaviour problems within the school, and creative arts lessons are rarely interrupted through student misbehaviour. Most often, interruptions to lessons are a calling to order when engaged students become excited and noisy in their tasks, rather than for disciplinary reasons. However, interruptions do occur at the hands of disengaged students, as discussed in the ‘Disengagement’ section of Chapter 6. Such behaviours are deemed unacceptable, by both staff and students. On just a few occasions, such interruptions were commented on by Year 5 students in their Post-it Reflections as exemplified in the following: “I liked today because we used music but people were mucking up”; “I didn’t enjoy because everyone was mucking around”; and “I didn’t like it because no one worked”. Student engagement, as outlined in Chapter 6, is quite influential in the development of SRL, as engaged students rarely need to be disciplined. This influence also highlights the inter-relationships between the elements of the Quality Learning Environment, as mentioned previously.

Christian values lie at the heart of the school’s mission statement, with the school’s values displayed in every room, and shown and recited at weekly school assemblies. Commonly referred to as ‘the 4 c’s’, they are: “I show care and compassion for others; I communicate respectfully with others; and I cooperate with others”. Furthermore, the school’s commitment to ‘restorative practices’, an emerging field of behaviour management that focuses on repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than on punishing offenders, encourages the application of school values within each classroom. A school focus on these values is adhered to quite consistently, and would seem effective in promoting thoughtful and respectful learning behaviours among the students.

An interesting phenomenon across all grades in the school is student monitoring of class members who do not work well together, or who cause disruption when they are together. Restrictions placed on these students by their class teachers are carried to the creative arts classroom, where they are reported eagerly to me by class members. Usually, this means that some students are not permitted to sit together, or work together in group activities. As mentioned previously, it is important to maintain consistency between my own expectations and those of the class teachers. While this may include the class teacher informing me of seating restrictions, it is usually other class members who report these restrictions to me, and thereby enforce separation of troublesome students.
On many, many occasions throughout the course of the study, students in all grades were observed choosing to physically move away from another student. Several different reasons were given by various students, such as ‘too loud’, ‘rude’, ‘annoying’, ‘talking too much’, ‘distracting’, ‘touching my things’, and ‘stopping me from concentrating’. Such decisions perfectly exemplify self-regulating behaviour, or the lack of it.

**Student Direction**

Analysis of data in relation to student direction required the recognition and identification of instances where students were influential in both the choice and realisation of specific tasks and activities, and where they assumed responsibility for completion of such activities. The concept of student direction is fundamental to philosophies underlying pedagogy in the new learning spaces, and it was in this setting that student direction was most evident.

The physical setting of the Year 6 learning space was conducive to student-centred and student-directed learning activities, notably collaborative projects, or individual research or investigative assignments. At each end of the space, circular hubs of computers provided work areas for research and technology tasks. The number of fixed computers at each end of the space was augmented by the availability of another 12 laptop computers during creative arts lessons. At one end of the space, two clusters of tables were designated for visual arts activities. Close to the wet area, and the resource cupboard, the tables accommodated approximately 10-12 students at a time. At the opposite end of the space, a large floor area provided a gathering area for the entire group, and was also quite suitable for small numbers of students to rehearse drama or dance exercises. The area in the centre of the learning space housed a number of clusters of student desks and chairs. This setting lent itself to student directed activities wherein a variety of tasks could be undertaken simultaneously by large numbers of students.

In order to ensure all students could be engaged simultaneously, it was necessary to provide a number of activities which could be carried out simultaneously and independently using an assortment of resources in various areas of the learning space. Activities for the first unit of work included the composite artwork as described in the ‘Explicit Quality Criteria’ section of this chapter; an investigative research project into one aspect of the work of Leonardo da Vinci; and 6 tasks from the Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid (see Appendix E).
Although the overall format of the ‘Amazing Masks’ artwork was set, students were free to choose the design, theme, colours and materials for their three dimensional masks. Allowing the students to make such choices about their artwork not only contributes to the development of student direction, but also allows for the development of artistic behaviours “by enabling students to discover what it means to be an artist through the authentic creation of artwork” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 3). Douglas and Jaquith (2009) also consider the ability to make choices about artwork a contributing factor for creativity, and view self-direction as an important agent in students becoming knowledgeable about their own artistry.

Students in the Year 6 learning space relished in the opportunity to engage in choice-based artmaking, as was evidenced in the following blog post and responses (September 3, 2009).

Hey Everyone!!

It’s V. I have really enjoyed working on creative arts this term. I like it how we can choose our activities and work in groups or, if you like, to work by yourself then you can. But my favourite part of creative arts would be designing and creating the mask and the bloom’s activities too.

See you soon :p

V :) 

3 responses so far ↓

- **// Sep 4th 2009 at 3:45 pm**

  Hi V
  I liked creating my mask as well! The bloom’s activities were cool as well!

  E 😊

- **// Sep 7th 2009 at 10:46 am**

  My mask looks beautiful too. 
  Yours looks nice 😊):P

- **// Sep 14th 2009 at 5:30 pm**

  hi v

  i think i liked the designing the best, because it was it was so fun to do. there was heaps of choice like the colour, the decoration’s and heaps more cya guys.
While some students were engaged in their “Amazing Masks” artworks, others completed an investigative research task on one aspect of Leonardo da Vinci’s art. A readily accessible box contained several laminated copies of various research tasks. Although these were intended for class use, several students borrowed them overnight or for a few days so that they might continue to work on them at home, indicating a high level of engagement with the task.

Students were also able to access the tasks through the web-based ‘CENet’, (Catholic Education Network), which provided another communication avenue for staff and students. Each assignment had two sections: the first involved finding information, while the second required the student to offer a personal interpretation, opinion, or application of the researched report. The students were able to select a project dealing with such aspects of Leonardo’s work as journal writing, inventions, the identity of the Mona Lisa, the theft of the Mona Lisa, perspective in art, proportion or measurement, and painting techniques.

As with the artwork, the blog posts and responses yielded several comments which evidenced the students’ appreciation of being able to choose a task, as well as their enthusiasm and engagement with the task. An example of a blog conversation to this end is shown below.

- **August 31st, 2009**
  
  Hey R, Glad that you found the website useful. I am using it heaps! Bye  M

- **August 26th, 2009**
  
  Hey R,

  I have a helpful website – all you have to do is go to GOOGLE and and type in THE DAY THE MONA LISA WAS STOLEN – it’s a pretty good website!!! bye

- **Hi everyone! It’s R,**

  What activities have you all found the best so far? I have enjoyed the mask painting and decorating- I love how mine turned out! And which Leonardo da Vinci assignment are you all doing? R

- **August 26th, 2009**

  Hi-Hey,

  I can’t wait to research more on “Who Stole The Mona Lisa!” It’s an interesting topic.

  From Terrific T!

- **August 25th, 2009**
Hey everyone! Who is doing Leonardo’s Journal? I have an idea on why he wrote backwards... it’s to prevent people figuring out who is the the woman posing in the Mona Lisa!!!

Well, that’s my idea!

Bye  M

• August 24th, 2009

Hi guys it’s T
I was wondering if anyone knows where you can find the project tasks on CENet because I remember Mrs B or Mrs K saying they were on CENet.
Please help me if you can, T

• Hi Everyone!

I’m enjoying my Leonardo Da Vinci project soo much! What about you? I’m doing Who Stole the Mona Lisa!  E

However, it was with the Bloom’s Taxonomy/ Multiple Intelligences Grids (see Appendices E and F) that student direction was most clearly evidenced in the Year 6 learning space. The students were required to select and complete 6 activities – one from each vertical column - from a grid of 42. This meant that they would have the opportunity to use several levels of thinking, from simple to complex, and concrete to abstract. While it was suggested that they might start with the simpler tasks, this was certainly not compulsory, and observations showed random selection to be far more common.

The great majority of students both appreciated and enjoyed the chance to choose their own activities, and this was evidenced in reflective writing and blog posts, and observed in the enthusiasm with which they approached the task in the classroom. Comments referred to “a variety of choices that suit individuals”, with the option to complete at least 6 activities “very reasonable” (Tina, Reflection, September 14, 2009), while several students felt that the amount of choice offered was very positive. Liam noted that this choice “gives you activitys [sic] that you like and activitys that other people like” (Reflection, September 14, 2009), while Harry wrote “we can choose what we are interested in and want to learn” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). A number of students viewed the choice offered as time-effective: “I can choose what I want to do and if I work properly I can get my work done on time” (Linton, Reflection, September 14, 2009), and “I could pick the one I know I could do and don’t waste time” (Demi, Reflection, September 14, 2009). Madeleine (Reflection, September 14, 2009)
considered the choice offered as giving her the chance to “take control of my learning in my favourite subject”.

Similar comments were posted on the blog, for example

> It’s V, I have really enjoyed working on creative arts this term. I like it how we can choose our activities and work in groups or, if you like, to work by yourself then you can. (September 3, 2009).

However, a small number of students considered the amount of choice to be overwhelming, and a hindrance to their learning. For example, Graeme wrote that there was too much choice, because “I am to confuzed to think what I am goin to do [sic]” (Reflection, September 14, 2009) and Oliver commented that “it is hard to choose what to do and I never get any work done because of that” (Reflection, September 4, 2009). Statements such as these are particularly important when considering student direction, since they imply a diversity in preferred learning presentation and styles which may affect student readiness for self-direction. They may also be reflective of the fairly drastic changes to teaching and learning faced by the children in a reasonably short period of time, and the variations in student adaptability to these changes.

Discussing the Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid with the Year 6 teachers later in the year, it became apparent that a gradual presentation of student-directed activities would be a preferable way to develop this element of a Quality Learning Environment.

6X teacher: We had sort of built them up to a choice of activities over a period of time, so really having it in term three and then term four made them really... by the time we got to term three, they could cope with a bit more scope to choose activities. Term 1, it was contract work, but it was a prescribed contract. And then Term 2, we moved into something different... what was that? I think they might have had a choice of five activities out of seven.

WB: So then that was massive for them to get a choice of 6 out of 42?

6X teacher: Yes, that was a massive jump, because some of them did find it very difficult to wade through it all and choose what was best for them. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

Although the Year 6 learning space offered the most opportunity for both the implementation and observation of student direction, it was also encouraged in other grades in the school. Children in Years 3, 4 and 5 were also offered the opportunity to participate in choice-based
art activities on several occasions. These tasks were usually approached with great enthusiasm, although, as in Year 6, some students struggled with actually deciding what to do and with getting started on the task.

Student Direction in Years 3, 4 and 5 was also promoted through the introduction of Ryan’s (1990) Thinker’s Keys (see Appendix G). Due to limitations of space and visual arts resources in the Term 1 creative arts room, my initial aim in introducing the Thinker’s Keys was to provide worthwhile activities that were pursuant to the Intellectual Quality dimension of Quality Teaching, for students to undertake while they were waiting to take their turn at a visual arts activity, or while they were waiting for other students to complete their work. The Thinker’s Keys activities inadvertently provided the opportunity for the development of student direction, since they allowed for children to be responsible for selecting and completing tasks.

Interestingly, students in Years 3, 4 and 5 enjoyed the Thinker’s Keys activities if they were done as a class activity, for example during the lessons that were used to explain the requirements of different keys. They also showed a preference for the simpler, less time-consuming activities such as the BAR key, where the student is required to make a drawing bigger, add something to it, and replace something on it. This was evidenced in Post-it Reflections completed by Year 5 students, which noted “the drawing and thinkers keys the best [sic]”; “Doing the thinkers keys I like the bar keys the most”; and “I liked doing the bar key using a cherry” (Post-it Reflections, March 11, 2009).

However, the students were far less keen to work independently, either in selecting or completing tasks, sometimes complaining that it was too difficult. For example, “I didn’t enjoy the thinker’s keys because they were too hard” was written in reflections by four separate students in one Year 5 class, and several Year 4 students. While there would appear to be quite some discrepancy with the enthusiasm shown between these students and those in Year 6, it must be noted that the Year 6 students were already involved in student-centred learning across other KLA’s, while the younger students were not yet accommodated in learning spaces, and still involved in quite traditional classroom scenarios with their class teachers.

This aspect of the students’ attitude to learning experiences highlights several issues pertinent to the study. Firstly, it confirms the importance of consistency when teaching younger students for only one hour per week, as has been mentioned a number of times in this chapter.
Secondly, it attests to the necessity for thoughtful and diligent learning facilitation on the part of the teacher in order that the students feel confident to take risks working with new methods and practices. Finally, it emphasises the variation in readiness of both staff and students to adopt new philosophies and practices, which must always be considered in the implementation and evaluation of educational change.

**Conclusion**

A number of elements of the Quality Learning Environment were evidenced in the creative arts classroom and program. While each of the elements were observed to varying degrees and described using multiple means, the most significant inference from analysis of data is the intrinsic interrelationship and interdependence between the elements of the dimension. Each of the elements both influences and depends on the others. This is most significant to a thorough understanding of the Quality Learning Environment dimension within the greater Quality Teaching framework, but more importantly, it is integral to any application of the pedagogical ideals held therein.
CHAPTER 6

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

A growing body of literature identifies engagement as a significant factor contributing to learning and achievement in the classroom. An element of the Quality Learning Environment dimension of the Quality Teaching framework, engagement may be seen as a key component in creating an environment with conditions that support learners achieving their full potential. Student engagement is intrinsic to 21st century pedagogical thought, and plays a crucial role in improving student outcomes. Therefore, engagement is of fundamental importance to this study.

In this chapter various types and levels of engagement as evidenced in the creative arts program are identified and described. The outline begins with disengagement, the lowest level and least-desired type of engagement in a classroom. Moving upwards through procedural and substantive levels of engagement, the final section of the chapter discusses flow, the ultimate state of engagement.

Disengagement

As noted in the Literature Review, student disengagement is seen as a significant issue facing educators in the early years of the 21st century. Although disengagement has not previously appeared to be of particular concern within the creative arts program, observational data revealed several instances of student disengagement within the creative arts classroom, with students’ reflective writing aiding in both confirmation of their disengagement and providing clues as to the reasons for such disengagement.

Disengagement is often characterised by disruptive and inattentive behaviour, as was exemplified by a Kindergarten child in a lesson observed midway through Term 1. Noel, who had not yet reached his fifth birthday, became unsettled during the walk from the Kindergarten classroom to the creative arts classroom. As the Kindergarten children gathered into a group, seated on the floor at my feet, Noel was unable to settle. He moved from one spot to another, knocking into other children and distracting them. Calling out his name, I was able to bring his attention briefly to the activity. The children were singing nursery rhymes, and tapping or clapping the beat in various places on their body, and doing actions to the
words of the songs. Noel continued to move around the room on his bottom or his hands and knees. His eyes darted from one area of the room to another, and from one child to another. He tapped another child on the leg, and talked to him. The other child was singing, but lost concentration, and focussed his attention on Noel.

When asked to move to the front of the group, close to me, Noel settled briefly, and joined in the activities. However, his eyes continued to dart around, and his singing was not quite in time with the other children – he missed some words, and then caught up. Noel’s attention was gained momentarily when I took a violin from its case. We discussed the fiddle played by the cat in the rhyme ‘Hey Diddle Diddle’. Some children in the class raised their hands to ask or answer a question. Noel jumped up and reached for the violin, calling out that he wanted to play it. He was distracted by another child’s comment, and rolled around the floor, bumping into other children and generally disrupting the lesson.

Conversely, Jacinta, the same age as Noel, sat quietly in the front row of the group, appearing to be concentrating on the lesson. She did not speak to the other children: she seemed both shy and well-behaved. As the children in the class settled into a worksheet activity, I sat on the floor beside a small group of girls which included Jacinta. Talking quietly with the girls, I asked some questions about things we had done, and things we had talked about in this lesson. Jacinta did not participate in the conversation, so I directed a series of questions to her. She was unable to answer any of the questions correctly or accurately.

Neither Noel nor Jacinta was engaged in the lesson. However, the behaviours displayed by the two children were very different. Disruptive and bothersome, Noel’s obvious disengagement was easily recognised. On the other hand, Jacinta’s lack of engagement was concealed by her compliance with teacher direction. Newmann (1992) suggests that while obviously disengaged students are easily identifiable through their disruptive behaviour, they may also be well-behaved, attend class and complete work, yet show little indication of excitement, commitment, or pride in mastery of the curriculum. Such a dichotomy is also noted by Hargraves (2001) who suggests that boredom is easily misinterpreted as studious commitment, and that frustration or enthusiasm might easily be confused with hyperactivity.

In discussing the Kindergarten children’s disengagement with their class teacher after the lesson, we determined several factors which we believed influential. Firstly, the Kindergarten class was timetabled to have creative arts in the hour preceding lunch, a time not considered ideal for concentration in young children. Unfortunately this was not able to be changed. The
children had come directly to the creative arts room from a lengthy whole school assembly, where they were required to sit quietly on the floor for an hour. After a short toilet break, and a walk of approximately 120 metres, the children were again asked to sit quietly, once again on the floor. However, the creative arts room, devoid of the usual classroom desks and chairs, offered a large, free floor space. Since the timetable demanded that the Kindergarten lesson should follow assembly each week, it was clear that some changes must be made to the routine. In following weeks, I chose to begin the lessons with some loud, active dance and movement activities, in order to allow the release of some pent-up energy. I also outlined a small area on the floor with masking tape within which the children had to sit for quieter activities. This seemed to help with settling and with maintaining attention.

Another factor identified through discussing the disengagement with the class teacher was the breadth of age and maturity of the students in the class. The class consisted of children who had not yet turned five, and others who were already six. There were children who had attended child care and pre-school centres regularly, and others whose first educational experience was ‘big’ school (as Kindergarten is often termed), with the latter group still unsure as to the behavioural expectations of being in a large group of children.

Although I believed that the creative arts program already offered a large range of activities and experiences for the children, I examined it carefully to ensure that I had, in fact, included tasks which were realistically achievable for young children. I also considered the language I used with the children, and tried to use terms they related to play. For example, in performing arts activities, I began to use the phrase ‘let’s pretend’. For children like Jacinta, this was as if I gave them permission to play and have fun. Four lessons after Jacinta had been seen to be disengaged, she was observed in a drama activity pretending to be Little Miss Muffet, scared of a spider, and pretending to be a spider in a dance activity, very engaged in each experience.

On the other hand, these activities did not appear to fully engage Noel, who became distracted by other children in the room. Although Noel joined in, his actions and movement in the dance and drama activities were not always appropriate, and it was necessary to call his attention back to the task a number of times. Noel’s engagement in creative arts lessons did improve gradually throughout the course of the study, and an interview with his class teacher confirmed that this improvement also took place in the Kindergarten classroom. This would suggest that Noel’s disengagement may have been related to his immaturity, or his lack of familiarity with school practice and expectation.
Disengagement may be displayed quite differently among older students where the tasks require not only independent work and thought, but also an end product. During a guided drawing lesson with a Year 5 class, the majority of the group appeared to be very engaged in their work. Practising the skill of shading to give a three-dimensional appearance, the students worked excitedly, continually showing their progressing artworks to their peers and to me. Three boys sat to the rear of the room. Like the other children, they chatted amongst themselves, and appeared to be involved in the task at hand. At the conclusion of the lesson, each of these boys held only a blank piece of paper. By copying the behaviours of the children who were engaged in the task, they had made their disengagement quite inconspicuous. Like the younger Kindergarten children, the boys revelled in the freedom of the open floor space, and the opportunity it gave them to sit near their friends. Together with the informality of the lesson, this resulted in the boys viewing the lesson as “not real schoolwork” and “just some fun stuff to do” (Jake, March 18, 2009).

During the same lesson, another student was unable to engage in the activity. Although he had been very enthusiastic about doing the artwork, Daniel became dismayed as his work progressed that it did not have the required appearance: he was not at all happy with what he had done. Daniel looked at the work of several other students around him, and became agitated because he was not able to produce the same effect. His behaviour became loud and offensive, and he refused to complete the task, claiming his artwork “looks really bad. It’s not right”. Although I offered to help Daniel start the task anew, he was not willing to risk failure again. Daniel’s reflective post-it note at the end of the lesson confirmed his feelings about the artwork (see Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1 Daniel’s Post-It Reflection**

(I didn’t like doing the basket. It was too hard!!! So again another bad thing. So be jealous.)
Observation of this lesson revealed an interesting dichotomy that would have a considerable effect on future planning of content and presentation of lessons. On the one hand, the three boys were disengaged because the art was ‘just some fun stuff to do’, and they did not take it seriously. On the other hand, Daniel became disengaged because he considered the task beyond him. Thus, it became crucial to maintain a balance between presenting the tasks in a fun way, and as achievable by all students, while at the same time encouraging the students to value the activities as worthy educational experiences.

Daniel experienced difficulties with several tasks in creative arts, and often became disengaged as a result of this. When Daniel became disengaged, his behaviour tended to become loud and argumentative. This was corroborated by his reflections, as shown in Figure 6.2, wherein he makes no reference to the actual lesson or task, but rather displays his frustration through a series of disjointed comments.

Figure 6.2 Daniel’s Post-It Reflections (disengaged)

(“I think Brad is embarrassed from wetting his pants” and “She’s lying. It was all Thomas F. He threw my pencil case and slapped me. Tom may his coin to get. Crow come Daniel beats up Thomas. Order tickets or pay $20”.)

At times, Daniel’s disengagement stemmed from his frustration with creative arts tasks. At other times, Daniel’s ongoing issues with other class members impinged upon the creative arts classroom, and he was unable to become engaged in the tasks while he was distracted with personal concerns. Unfortunately, Daniel’s class was timetabled for creative arts lessons
immediately after lunchtime, which frequently resulted in the continuation of playground
altercations inside the classroom. Once again, the informality of the seating on the floor
within the classroom, with its casual groupings of students, may not have provided a
favourable setting for encouraging engagement, since it lacked the definite distinction of a
formal classroom setting with its arrangement of desks and predetermined student seating.

Since Daniel’s disengagement affected the entire class, it was important that it be explored
and addressed. It became evident through Daniel’s behaviour, comments and reflections, (as
noted above), that he would become disengaged if he felt the tasks were ‘too hard’. During
rehearsals for a performance to mark Catholic Schools Week, Daniel became agitated that he
could not sing and dance at the same time with the same ease as other students, and that he
had trouble recalling the order of movement. The song, ‘Manana Banana’, featured funny
words, a very singable melody, a section in two-part canon, and an interlude during which
banana jokes were told. Its calypso-style rhythm was catchy, and the tempo was particularly
suitable for movement with a large number of students of varying skill. The students were
very enthusiastic during both lessons and rehearsals for the performance. As the song and
dance performance was to be accompanied by a small number of students performing melodic
ostinati on classroom percussion, Daniel asked if he could be one of the ‘music dudes’. Daniel
was able to do this comfortably and confidently, and the change in his level of engagement
was most visible.

Interestingly, at the times Daniel was engaged in creative arts, and able to participate fully to
complete a task, his post-it reflections refer to the actual activities, and to his success, as
shown in Figure 6.3. The importance of achievement or success as a pre-requisite to
engagement for Daniel is evident through his identification of one small occurrence
(answering a question correctly) as the highlight of lesson.
(“I liked to be a music dude. Brad was too shy to dance” and “I enjoyed it because Brad asked me a question and I answered it”.)

The post-it notes, together with written work presented by Daniel and discussion with his class teacher, would indicate issues with Daniel’s literacy and fine motor skills, which may also have affected his engagement with tasks in creative arts, thus stressing the importance of providing Daniel with alternative or modified tasks. There were a number of occasions where it was possible to provide Daniel with such a diversion if he had become distracted by classmates or frustrated with a task. I also watched Daniel carefully in lessons, and attempted to provide encouragement at the first sign of doubt or apprehension on his part when he was working on a challenging task. However, his disengagement continued to a degree throughout the year, both in creative arts and in the general classroom, where he exhibited similar behaviours to those in the creative arts room.

**Procedural or small ‘e’ engagement**

While some students are obviously disengaged, others may display very low levels of engagement, as is the case with procedural engagement. Procedural engagement, evidenced through observational, interview and written reflection data within this study, reflects an accommodation of classroom rules and regulations, on task behaviour, and complying with the teacher’s wishes and instructions. Nystrand and Gamoran (1989) propose several identifying features of procedural engagement which were useful in data analysis. They include paying attention; not distracting other students; completing tasks; sometimes asking
questions, but usually about what they are required to do; and completing homework and assignments. That is, they competently go through the motions of learning.

The school at the centre of the study places great emphasis on respect as a core value, and the students are encouraged to be mindful of the needs and feelings of other students and staff. Most children in the school would be considered well-behaved: they follow teacher direction and there is little disruption in the creative arts classroom. Procedural engagement was therefore evident in virtually every creative arts lesson observed during the study.

It was clearly exemplified during a drama lesson with Year 4 students. Having been given a short Aboriginal Dreamtime story, the students were required to work together in small groups to dramatise the tale. Video-recorded observations of the performances provide sound examples of procedural engagement. The students acting out the drama were engaged in their performance. However, the engagement did not go beyond presenting the correct lines and actions at the appropriate time. The actors smiled at each other, encouraged each other, and reminded each other of what needed to happen next. Their eyes flicked around the room, or they looked at their feet. Hands fidgeted with uniforms or props. Similarly, the children participating as audience appeared focused and intent on the performance. However, when the performance failed to truly engage the audience, their behaviour remained polite and respectful of the performers, yet signs such as fidgeting and looking around the room attested to the superficiality of the engagement.

Many of the school’s students behave in this way when they are required to perform, despite the fact that they frequently ask for such activities and express enjoyment about their involvement in the activities. While the creative arts program provides opportunity for the students to practise and experience performing in front of other students and teachers, it would appear that the limited time allocated to creative arts each week does not provide adequate opportunity for them to become comfortable enough to be deeply engaged, or that the experiences themselves are not enabling this engagement. This is particularly noticeable if these students are compared to those who participate in dance or drama lessons outside of the school, and whose familiarity with performance allows them to actually engage in the performance itself.

One Year 5 student in particular exhibited the characteristics of procedural engagement in creative arts lessons. A quiet boy, James showed little enthusiasm for creative arts, although on a number of occasions he suggested to me that we should go back to the way things were
when we just did music. On entering the classroom, he always found a spot to sit on the perimeter of the room where he could lean against a bookshelf or wall, his body language indicating an unwillingness to be involved. James always completed his work quickly and quietly, and always to the lowest acceptable standard. He would present his completed work to me for feedback or correction. Most often, my response included a suggestion to spend a little more time improving the standard, or elaborating a response. My suggestions were always met with eye-rolling, or shoulder-shrugging. James did not write any post-it note reflections, which were always voluntary, except on one occasion when he voiced dislike of a visual arts activity (see Figure 6.4). James’s behaviours perfectly exemplified procedural engagement as proposed by Nystrand and Gamoran (1989).

**Figure 6.4 James’s Post-It Reflection**

(I don’t like shading and doing art all the time.)

Interestingly, the post-it reflections shown in Figure 6.5, discussed further below, were submitted at the end of the same lesson that James wrote this. The sentiments expressed in reflections by all other class members are antithetic in sentiment, and highlight James’s inability to engage in the task.

Although James’s lack of engagement was disappointing, I suspect it was influenced to a large degree by his parents’ attitude and influence. Having had older children involved in the former music program, the parents were concerned that a multi-arts program would not offer the same preparation for high school music education as their older children had received. They expressed an ongoing lack of confidence in the implementation of a creative arts
program within the school, which may well have affected James’s own attitude. Although the parents were invited to be interviewed as part of this study, they did not respond to the invitation.

Procedural engagement was particularly evident during Term 2, in the weeks spent in the disused staffroom. Without the space for safe dance or drama activities, and with restrictions on noise due to the close proximity of a Year 4 class, engagement was inhibited. For example, during a dance rehearsal for Grandparents’ Day with a Year 3 class, instructions given to the students included singing softly and jumping gently so as not to disturb the class sharing the building. In order to keep clear of the resources stored around the room, arm and motor actions could be executed with only minimal energy, and using only minimal space. Since a small group of staff were using the kitchen area at one end of the room, the students had to filter my instructions through the talk of the other staff.

During the weeks spent in the disused staffroom, the students continued to be well-behaved, and to do what was asked of them. However, the limited activities within an unsatisfactory space often appeared to result in the engagement being limited to a procedural level. This is consistent with Nystrand and Gamoran’s (1989) statement that student engagement depends not only on involvement, but also on the quality of schoolwork. Engagement is limited to a set of procedures unless the activities presented require more than purely a mastery of procedure.

Observations carried out during this particular time frame also reinforced several conceptions which were forming in my mind regarding engagement. That is, factors influencing student engagement may be external to teaching and learning experiences, for example timetabling, physical environment, age and maturity of the students, and the attitudes of family and friends. Conversely, personal characteristics such as self-confidence, comfort and interest are also influential. It also became clear that there was actually only an indistinct delineation between disengagement and procedural engagement, with neither condition adequate for deep, authentic learning.

**Substantive or big ‘E’ Engagement**

McFadden and Munns (2002) suggest that a definition of engagement should look beyond students being on task and complying with teacher wishes to a deeper level associated with longer term engagement, whereby students gain an emotional attachment and commitment, described by the authors as a sense of “school is for me” (p. 359). In analysing data related to
substantive engagement, observational, interview and reflection data were examined for signs
of active involvement, commitment, concentrated participation with a degree of care, and a
sense of satisfaction with school work, which were noted by Newmann (1992) and Woodward
and Munns (2003) as indicators.

Recognising substantive engagement can be difficult since it is not manifested in the same
way in all students. Nystrand and Gamoran (1989) suggest that substantively engaged
students may ask more questions that are content related, rather than about what is required of
them. Further, they propose that it may show as a “twinkle in the eye” (p. 6) or rapt attention,
or that it may not be visible at all. Interestingly, they note that it may also be seen as
disengagement, if students are so engaged in one subject or task that they are unable to focus
on another.

Each of these indicators was evidenced in a Year 5 guided drawing lesson (August 11, 2009).
With only 22 students, the class was of a very manageable size for a practical lesson. Seated
or lying on the floor, all of the students participated enthusiastically in the activity, chatting
quietly and showing each other their progressing drawings. There were a few moments of
dismay when a student’s drawing did not seem right: help was requested from either myself
or a peer. At the completion of the drawing exercise, some students asked to colour their
dragon drawings, and proceeded to do so, taking great care with choice of colours and
technique. Members of the class wanted to display their finished drawings, and an area of wall
was designated for this purpose. As students completed their artwork, they hung it on the
wall. The student teacher, present in the lesson, contributed the following reflection.

    Year 5 were a beautiful group to teach this week and I think this is mostly because of
the task they were engrossed in. They had a drawing lesson and learnt how to draw a
dragon, I spent this lesson at the back of the classroom doing the task with them and I
found it to be every bit as engrossing as the children, and surprising in how simple it
could be. (Reflection, August 11, 2009)

An interesting anomaly arising from the reflection and from observation is that the students
were actually very engaged in the task without having been shown or told what it was that
they were working towards. Even though the conditions of a Quality Learning Environment
stress the importance of Explicit Quality Criteria, or communicating the explicit demands and
requirements of the task, the students’ curiosity and inquisitiveness about the end result of the
drawing exercise appeared to be a contributing factor in increasing engagement. The students’
post-it reflections endorsed the thoughts of the student teacher (see Figure 6.5).
Figure 6.5 Dragon Drawing Post-It Reflections

Kirsten really loved and enjoyed this session.

I had fun drawing a dragon. Mine looks pretty good.

I liked drawing and I want to do it more.

Miss Broker: That was the best music lesson ever!

The four post-it notes displayed above are representative of the reflections from that class on that day. Two of the notes demonstrate the development in the thoughts expressed in the reflections during the course of the study. From the outset, the notes were utilised to express enjoyment (or otherwise) of a lesson or activity, as Kirsten’s does. As the students became more familiar with the practice of reflection, some began to include comments with a degree of self-assessment (I had fun drawing a dragon. Mine looks pretty good), as well as indications of what the students would like to learn in future lessons (I liked drawing and I want to do it more). Such comments also imply a degree of engagement with the task.

The post-it note in the bottom right hand corner illustrates an interesting phenomenon. The school’s long-term music program was replaced by a multi-arts program 18 months prior to the note being written. Yet the student refers to the drawing activity as “the best music lesson ever”. Staff and students alike have been slow to adopt usage of the phrase ‘creative arts’, and often refer to ‘the music room’ rather than the creative arts room, and ‘time for music’ rather than ‘time for creative arts’. In an interview with Year 6 teachers, the response to a question comparing student engagement in the creative arts room and the learning space invoked the response: “Mine were very excited to go to music, very excited to come back and tell me what
was going on” (6X teacher, Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009). Similarly, a blog post by a Year 6 student made reference to a Visual Arts task that required students to design a costume for an opera character:

   It’s good to hear your all havin fun!!!!!! How great is the stuff where doin this term [4]. I love how we did the people and we had to design it!!!!!! Music is so FUN!!! Tell me how everyone’s goin????? [sic] (Blog post, Tamara, November 3, 2009).

Perhaps use of the term ‘music’ is habit, perhaps it is because my role has always been ‘music teacher’, or perhaps it reflects a lack of familiarity with some terminology related to the creative arts. Whatever the reason, despite the arts being referred to by the names of their disciplines within creative arts lessons, as well as poster displays of the disciplines and their concepts in the creative arts room, it is not uncommon for students or staff to refer to any of the arts activities as ‘music’.

Sinclair and Johnson’s (2006) research into insider classrooms found that engaged students want to talk about their learning and to show their work to teachers, other students or parents. On several occasions during class time, students voiced a wish to show their achievements to someone else. For example, a Year 4 student who had finally mastered a box step in a dance lesson declared “I can’t wait to show my sister! This is so cool! I can do it!” Since the students came to me for their creative arts lessons during their class teacher’s RFF, I also asked several teachers whether or not the students talked to them about their creative arts experiences upon their return to class. A number of teachers confirmed that some of their students, particularly the more outgoing children, liked to talk about or to show their creative arts work. On several occasions during informal conversations in the staffroom teachers would comment to me that the children in their class had particularly enjoyed an activity. For example,

   I don’t know exactly what you have been doing with my class, but they absolutely love it, and they can’t wait to get back next week... so tell me what it is they were doing. I will have to try to follow up if they love it so much (Interview, Beth, September 18, 2009).

In investigating this aspect of student engagement, a number of parents were questioned as to whether their children talked about their creative arts experiences at home. The parents responded either in person during a focus group interview, or by email, confirming that creative arts lessons were discussed at home. Some responses were very specific, as in the case of Vivian who stated that her daughter had been “puppet making, making music sheets,
and using musical instruments. She seems to bring them home at the end of each term, and is always very proud of her accomplishments” (Email Interview, July 14, 2009). Others were of a more general nature:

Yes they do talk about creative arts at home. They have a very enthusiastic attitude towards creative arts and seem very excited about what they are doing in creative arts. They also talk about the different art techniques they are using . . . they have shown us some of their work and also talk about things they have learnt about. We have noticed the difference in the quality of work compared to previous years (Email Interview, Judy, July 10, 2009).

This particular characteristic of student engagement was found to hold a significant implication for the creative arts program. Student reflections and interview transcripts evidenced students referring almost exclusively to visual arts projects when discussing or describing favourite or notable experiences in creative arts. Focus group interview responses specified two reasons for this. Firstly, the students perceived visual art as “a way to express your feelings” (Sharee, Focus Group Interview, March 26, 2010), noting that “you can be creative” (Marian, Focus Group Interview, March 26, 2010) and “you can make yours a bit different to everyone’s and make it your own” (Caroline, Focus Group Interview, March 26, 2010). On the other hand, Alice stated that she did not think she could be creative in dance or drama, and Belle considered drama to be “more for showing skills like memorising scripts” (Focus Group Interview, March 26, 2010). However, all of the interviewed students agreed that the best thing about visual art was that it could be displayed, or taken home, and that they could see it again and feel proud of it, with Kylie pointing out that “with the other ones, it’s just the memory” (Focus Group Interview, March 26, 2010). This would suggest that it might be beneficial to record performances in dance, drama and music for students to have a concrete account of their learning.

While Munns (2007) agrees that engaged students may want to share their feelings about the task outside the classroom, he also notes that they may also want to spend more time on a task. He describes this condition as “beyond teacher, task, and time” (p. 4). This became quite a common occurrence during the course of the study, and was witnessed in students across the primary grades.

Year 4 students were given a short Aboriginal Dreamtime story, and required to work together in small groups to dramatise the tale. Ample time was allotted in class for preparation and rehearsal of the drama. One group of girls who were particularly engaged in the task chose to
spend part of their play time each day practising their drama. If I was on playground duty, they called me over to show me parts of their preparation, and if they saw me around the school, they ran over to tell me about their rehearsals. It is interesting to note that while the girls displayed this level of engagement with the task, when it came to performing in front of the other class members, their engagement level dropped considerably. Several possible factors may have influenced the students’ engagement during the performance, including their relationships with other class members, the focus of attention solely on their performance, or the fact that the performance was being video-recorded and assessed. This would imply that the level of engagement may be affected by aspects of the classroom environment extraneous to the activity itself.

During another Year 4 unit of work, pirate maps created by the students were washed with a cold tea solution, crumpled, and left to dry outside the classroom. As the maps were still wet at the end of the creative arts lesson, several children asked if they might return to the creative arts room at lunchtime to see their finished work. They busied themselves unfolding the maps, comparing them, and placing them on display in the creative arts room. The enthusiasm of these Year 4 children was quite contagious, and they encouraged each other’s continued participation and engagement in the activities.

Sometimes, however, students’ engagement with a task resulted in their willingness to work alone, and outside the bounds of allocated class time. An unco-operative Year 6 student, who was at times quite antagonistic in creative arts lessons, became so engrossed in a visual arts activity, that he was unable to leave it at lunchtime to play a game of football with his friends. He sat at a desk, alone, deep in concentration as he applied finishing touches to his artwork. He asked several questions about the best way to achieve the look he wanted. He followed my suggestions, using the paintbrush slowly and carefully. He finished his painting, and sat back in his seat, admiring it with a big smile on his face. Then he dropped the brush, and bolted through the door toward the playground. I called him back, and asked him to clean and tidy the area he had worked in. “I can’t Miss. I have to go. I’ll clean up later.”

Engaged in composing a short pentatonic melody using glockenspiel, another Year 6 student was particularly dismayed as the end of the lesson neared and her composition was incomplete.

Katherine: Can we just stay here and do this in recess?
WB: No, we can’t today – I have playground duty, so we need to pack up now.

Katherine: But I’m not finished. I really want to finish it.

WB: We will have some time to finish it next week.

Katherine: I don’t want to wait till next week. I won’t be able to remember it by then. Can I just keep doing it now? I hate that we have to wait another whole week to do music again. (Journal, June 9, 2009).

During the weeks spent in the Year 6 learning space, almost every lesson had students asking to stay in the room at recess or lunch to continue working on their creative arts tasks.

Well the kids are asking to come in at lunch and recess. That says a lot about where they were and what they thought about creative arts in the last two terms, at least. That spoke volumes. So I’d say the majority of them are really engaged. They’ve also taken things home and worked on them at home as well, and they’ve been on the blog. (Focus Group Interview, 6Y teacher, November 17, 2009)

There were times that I was unable to supervise the students in the learning space at lunchtime due to playground duty commitments. On a number of these occasions, a small group of students would carry their creative arts projects to a covered area within sight of my duty area, and work on them in the playground within my view, coming to me for advice or to show me their progress.

The newness of the Year 6 learning space and its innovative teaching and learning styles resulted in an increasing number of visitors from within the school and within the Diocese during the course of the year. As the creative arts program was accommodated within the space, it too became the focus of these visits. Observed by teachers from other schools, principals from both primary and secondary schools within the Diocese, and the Catholic Education Commission, the children’s engagement with their creative arts learning was often the focus of visitor comments. In order to investigate the reasons for this, engagement was discussed during an interview with the Year 6 teachers and the Principal. The class teacher of 6X offered the following explanation.

They do separate the time of the day; they know when creative arts time is; their focus is that they can pick a goal and try to achieve that goal; I think all of the things like being highly cognitive and all of that, that’s definitely seen when you walk into the space; it’s almost immediate that people can see although there is a lot of noise, it’s engaged noise. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

When I questioned the staff further as to how ‘people’ know it is ‘engaged noise’, they cited conversations with the students as evidence. Nystrand and Gamoran (1989) affirm that
examining conversation within the classroom is useful in determining the extent of substantive student engagement. The class teacher of 6Z noticed “with the terminology [the students] were using when they were doing all the Italian masks . . . they would be some of the kids that normally wouldn’t say boo about creative arts, but they were telling me all these things they had learnt” (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009). The principal, who had not only observed the students during their creative arts lessons, but who had also participated in a few lessons as a collaborating teacher, suggested that the students’ “ability to engage in conversation about what they are doing and why they are doing it” attested to their engagement (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009). He clarified that the tasks in which the students were engaged were higher order tasks.

You can have high engagement in an activity that’s low order thinking, because they’re just colouring in a stencil sheet, but the conversations I have had with them since they have been doing creative arts in the learning space are highly engaged students with very difficult tasks.

According to Nystrand and Gamoran (1989), the types of activities presented in the Year 6 learning space would be conducive to substantive engagement among the students. They suggest that engagement is often high in small group work or a collaborative learning context, particularly when there is guidance and facilitation rather than control of student learning on the teacher’s part. This type of engagement was evident not only to me, but also to the other teachers and visitors to the learning space, as mentioned above.

Nystrand and Gamoran (1989) also suggest that engagement is possible “only where the students as well as the teachers have input into the business of learning” (p. 11). One of the aims in the learning space was to encourage the students to take some ownership over their learning, developing self-direction and self-regulation. The students were included in discussions over the time-frame and assessment rubrics of various tasks, and were able to choose their own tasks from the Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid. They were also responsible for showing their work to a teacher on its completion, with the students themselves deciding how many tasks they should complete before seeking feedback.

These features of the activities in the learning space were also conducive to personal communication with the students. Because the learning was more student-centred, communication from the teacher was often less formal, and not necessarily directed to the entire group. This resulted in increased opportunity to discuss issues affecting engagement.
with the individual students, and to offer suggestions which might increase engagement with these individual students.

Although the engagement of children working in the Year 6 learning space was considered by several teachers to be high, close observation of students within the space revealed that several students were able to feign engagement by continuously moving around the space with a book in their hand, looking busy, and avoiding direct conversation with a teacher. This occurrence was also noticed in the year 4 learning space, as was indicated during an interview with a teacher.

    I think for the most part most kids are engaged but with larger numbers in this space this is hard to get on top of or spot at times. I believe some kids have become lost in the space and this is a major area of concern. Those who feel they want to get lost can do so quite easily at times. (Michael, Interview, December 16, 2009)

In the year 6 creative arts lessons in their learning space, a very small number of students did not complete any of the set tasks, which would indicate their lack of engagement within the creative arts program. Although only a small number of students exhibited this behaviour, it was considered a serious problem, and one which warranted both investigation and correction.

Reflections completed by these students, together with conversations in the classroom, were helpful in determining the reasons for this lack of engagement. A small number of students found it very difficult to establish the requirements of activities on the Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid since their literacy skills were not adequate to this task. This was easily remedied, with ready assistance from either staff or peers to read or explain the instructions. Likewise, a few students found the choice offered by the Grid to be quite overwhelming. Consulting with the class teachers, who knew the students well, made it possible to offer suggestions as to activities these students might enjoy and which would be of an appropriate difficulty.

The noise in the room was considered distracting by a large number of students, although it seemed to inhibit the engagement of only a small number of children. Similarly, while most Year 6 students considered it advantageous to be in the learning space where they could work with their friends, the distraction and disruption to learning that this caused was also noted in both reflections and interviews.

    Tony: It’s too noisy and you get distracted by your friends.
    James: Yeah, it’s too noisy, and . . . um . . . yeah you get distracted, and . . .
WB: So, it’s good to have your friends here and to work with them, but it distracts you as well?

All: Yeah. (Focus Group Interview, November 9, 2009)

Above all else, engagement is personal. Conditions and tasks favourable for one student’s engagement, may be detrimental to the engagement of another student. This will always be an issue for teachers working with classes of 25 or 30 children, and presents a far greater challenge for those working with groups of up to 90 children in a learning space setting.

**Flow**

Just as there is little delineation between disengagement and procedural engagement, so too is there little to distinguish substantive engagement from the state of ultimate engagement termed ‘flow’. In order to recognise and describe instances of flow, it was necessary to examine collected data for characteristics proposed in the writings of the Hungarian psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1997, 2002), as detailed in the Chapter 3: Literature Review. Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as “an intense and focused concentration on what is happening in a present moment” (2002, p. 90). He describes the state of flow as when an individual exhibits a merging of action and awareness; a sense of controlling his or her own actions; a distortion of time (usually that it has passed too quickly); a balance between the perceived difficulty and perceived action opportunities; and an opinion that the experience is intrinsically rewarding.

However, despite the provision of such descriptions and suggestions, it is very difficult to identify students who have reached a state of flow due to the very personal nature of such a state. While it was not at all uncommon to observe students at high levels of substantive engagement, it is difficult to judge whether all conditions of the state of flow have been met.

The tasks set for Year 6 students in the learning space had clear goals and expectations, with the wide choice of tasks providing each student with a balance between the level of his or her ability and the task’s challenge. Having three teachers in the room who were all committed to providing feedback gave students prompt clues as to how well they were achieving. As previously mentioned, it was quite common for students to become so engrossed in the task that they lost track of time, or did not want to leave the task. Several students chose to complete extra tasks, indicating that the activities were enjoyed for their own sake. Thus, the
conditions for achieving a state of flow could have been met by Year 6 students in creative arts.

An impromptu interview with a Year 6 student waiting on bus lines after school hinted that he may well have achieved flow. Having transferred from another school early in Term 2, he told me that he had “never done anything at all like what we do in creative arts . . . not ever, not anywhere”. He “absolutely loved” the creative arts activities in the learning space, and wished we could do it every day. He was so relieved that there was still another lesson this week, and hated the end of the Wednesday lesson, since it meant there was no more until the following Monday. The student spoke of his favourite Bloom’s tasks, dwelling in particular on a drama exercise which would see him perform an improvised scene before the entire Year 6 group. He spoke excitedly, his words tripping over one another. He smiled continually, and his eyes sparkled. He moved his hands in an animated fashion, using them to explain his plans for the drama task. He seemed oblivious to the noise and activity around him as other children waited for their buses. He discussed his research on Leonardo da Vinci, and shared with me the interesting things he had uncovered so far. He asked if he could do more than one assignment task, since he was enjoying it so much. He asked me what the next visual art project would be, and told me that his completed mask artwork was the best he had ever done. He was still speaking over his shoulder to me as the bus drew into the bay. (Bryce, Interview, September 7, 2009).

**Conclusion**

All types and levels of engagement were exhibited among the students in the study. However, it was very difficult to distinguish between the two lower levels of engagement (disengagement and procedural engagement), and between the two higher levels of engagement (substantial engagement and flow), due to their shared characteristics. Analysis of the data did, however, identify a number of patterns and themes leading to the establishment of key factors contributing to either low or high engagement levels. Factors influencing disengagement included aspects external to teaching and learning experiences, for example timetabling, physical environment, age and maturity of the students, and the attitudes of family and friends, as well as aspects fundamental to the content and processes of the program. Students’ personal attributes such as self-confidence and interest are also influential. Engagement is improved when the students are working on tasks that are appropriate to their
age and intellectual development, that appeal to their curiosity, inquisitiveness and interest, and that are challenging, yet achievable.

The results of this analysis have implications for both the content and process of the creative arts program. Since sustained substantive engagement is considered essential for significant academic achievement, the improvement of student engagement must be viewed as a major aim of the program. While substantive engagement has been readily and regularly observed within the program, the challenge remains to encourage this level of engagement in the many students whose engagement rests at procedural levels.
CHAPTER 7
THE INSIDER CLASSROOM

The concept of an insider classroom emerged through research into aspects of Quality Teaching, as discussed in Chapter 2: Literature Review. The characteristics of an insider classroom closely resemble those idealised in a Quality Learning Environment, and those of the wider Quality Teaching framework. For this reason, investigation into the establishment of aspects of an insider culture within the creative arts classroom was a natural extension of the research being undertaken in this study. Observation, written reflections, journaling and interview responses provided data which were analysed in a bid to identify and describe these characteristics, which include a shared ownership of the learning space, interaction and interdependence among the students, self-regulation, the opportunity for students to voice their opinions, and processes of reflection.

An aim of this study was to investigate whether these pedagogical traits might be replicated within a specialist classroom, with the restrictions implied therein. Repercussions of the building program also enabled data collection in relation to the establishment of an insider culture within a learning space. However, unforeseen consequences of the building program and subsequent relocation of the creative arts classroom inhibited the extent to which these traits could be implemented, as well as drawing the focus of the study to other areas, such as the physical classroom environments.

Changes to the Creative Arts Program

Implementation of the Quality Teaching framework involved a continual process of change to the creative arts program, as existing structures and practices were evaluated and modified to incorporate the ideals of the philosophy. Congruence with the Quality Teaching framework allowed for the simultaneous integration of insider classroom ideologies, affecting both physical and practical aspects of the program and classroom. According to Durrant and Green (2000, p. 103), this involves

finding ways of enabling and encouraging learners to enter into particular communities of practice, discourse and enquiry; how to become an 'insider' in the culture of the . . . classroom, for instance, and how to be an effective member of and active participant in that culture, able to engage productively in its textual and other practices.
Several aspects of an insider classroom are characterised by the physical environment, as described by Sinclair and Johnson (2006). Although at the outset of the study the physical conditions seemed simpler to implement, conditions imposed through the building program and relocation of the classroom meant that this was not always the case. An insider classroom “represents a home” for the students (Sinclair & Johnson, 2006, p. 74), and they are familiar with the resources, their location and their purpose. The obvious limitation to this condition was the fact that the students would only be in the room for one hour per week. The unforeseen limitation was the lack of a stable classroom environment throughout the course of the study (see Chapter 4; Classroom Environments). With accumulated lesson time in any one room less than ten hours, it is most unlikely that any student felt truly at home.

Other conditions were easier to fulfil, for example the display of important work, and subsequent meaningful discussion about that work. The incorporation of visual arts into the creative arts program resulted in an abundance of artwork being displayed in the Term 1 and Term 3 classrooms. The displays always included a written explanation of the concept being explored, and were often the focus of classroom discussion, particularly at the start of lessons when students entered after a week away from the classroom. The following conversation with Year 6 girls, journaled during Term 1, was typical of these conversations.

Sandra: Oh. How cool are those fish! Who did that?

WB: Year 3 made those. They did a great job, didn’t they?

Sandra: Yeah. They are so cool. How come we didn’t get to do that when we were in Year 3? Can we do it now?

WB: We were only doing music when you were in Year 3. You are working on other things now, like your rangoli.

Katia: Well, what does this mean? About the texture? If we learn about that, can we make one?

WB: The cupcake papers give the artwork texture – so you can feel it.

Sandra: The cupcake papers look so cool. I love this one with heaps of colours.

Katia: No, I like this one with just pink and green. I like how that looks. Hey, Mrs Brooks, if we use rice and those orange things [lentils] on our rangoli for the doorway, does that mean it will have texture too? Because you will be able to feel it, but it will feel different to the fish. Is that still texture? (Journal, March 25, 2009)
This type of conversation was quite common throughout the course of the study, and was an unforeseen benefit of displaying student work, since it often involved discussion of the important concepts being displayed.

Recommendations for change in classroom practice necessary in the establishment of an insider classroom were provided by Munns, Lawson, O’Brien and Johnson (2006) within the document *School is for me: Pathways to student engagement*, which chronicles the Fair Go Project. (See Chapter 3: Literature Review). These changes to classroom experiences and processes, considered to be the “dual key vehicles” for improving student engagement, are outlined in the following diagram (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 Classroom Changes**

![Diagram of classroom changes](image)

(Munns, Lawson, O’Brien & Johnson, 2006, p. 11)

During a focus group interview with the Year 6 teachers and school principal late in the data collection period, a brief discussion ensued around the diagram, and whether or not these experiences and processes might be witnessed in the creative arts program as it operated in the Year 6 learning space. The 6X teacher responded, “I think this particular model is something that we are striving for on a daily basis” (Focus group Focus Group Interview, November17, 2009). The significance of this comment lies in the fact that the aim to create an insider culture in the Year 6 learning space was not solely tied to the creative arts program, but was
also sought by the three other teachers within the space. This removed a key limitation, through providing consistent attitude and aim among all teachers involved with the Year 6 students, and through its application to all KLAs at all times. It is also important to bear in mind this discrepancy when considering aspects of the insider classroom in the learning space as opposed to the creative arts classrooms.

In explaining the model presented in the diagram, Munns, Lawson, O’Brien and Johnson (2006) clarify the “balanced interplay” of experiences required. They suggest that elements from the Intellectual Quality dimension of Quality Teaching might afford high cognitive activities; careful attention should be paid to developing competent and empowered learners in order to provide high operative experiences; and learning situations negotiated between the teacher and students might bring about stimulating and enjoyable, or high affective, classroom work. To this end, the Quality Teaching framework provided a sound basis for planning suitable experiences, since the three dimensions together allow not only for these conditions to be met, but also provide ideal conditions for the students to become engaged in their learning. Further discussion of this aspect of the insider classroom appears in the Substantive or big ‘E’ Engagement section of Chapter 6: Types of Engagement.

Processes

Student Community of Reflection

The findings of the Fair Go Project (Fair Go Team, 2006) provided a valuable guide for the introduction of these processes into the creative arts program from the beginning of 2009. Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006) state that a student community of reflection is evidenced by the cooperative sharing of ideas and processes about learning, with substantive communication encouraging student voice and control, and the movement toward shared ownership over all aspects of learning experiences. The adoption of reflective practices within the program has been integral to the growth of the program, and has often served as the link binding all of the processes. For example, students complete short reflections at the conclusion of activities and tasks, or at the end of a unit of work, which often incorporate self-assessment processes. An example of such a reflection is found in Figure 7.2, a Year 3 student’s reflection carried out at the end of Term 1.
Figure 7.2 End of Term 1 Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I really enjoyed</th>
<th>What I didn't enjoy</th>
<th>What I learnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cupcake fish</td>
<td>Looking at Chinese fish paintings.</td>
<td>With Prince and Drama games I learnt about space, and with the cupcake fish I learnt about texture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama games and Drama games</td>
<td>Thinking hot activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing a clown fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I found too easy</th>
<th>What I found too hard</th>
<th>What I would like to learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dance games and Drama games</td>
<td>Drawing a clown fish.</td>
<td>how to paint seaweed on the cupcake fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking at Chinese paintings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such reflections were sometimes used as stimulus for teacher-inclusive conversations, particularly to encourage sharing about learning, and shared ownership through discussion regarding the direction of future lessons.

Less formal reflections were also an important source of student self-assessment. These reflections allowed the students to choose aspects of activities and achievements to comment on, allowing them more 'voice' in the learning process. Figure 7.3 exemplifies such a reflection, written by a Year 4 student in response to a drama activity. It should be noted that the reflection also serves as an example of student self-assessment, illustrating the close interconnection of these processes.
Figure 7.3 Informal Drama Reflection

[In our group, I reckon Angelica could have rehearsed her lines more and Lauren speak a bit louder. Mollie did a fantastic performance and was very confident. I think Maxwell’s group was the best because of their courage, but other than that our group was pretty good too. But need to work a bit harder. Well done, group.]

The reflective post-it notes, favoured by the Year 5 students, provided the opportunity for regular reflection. This was a voluntary activity, and the majority of Year 5 students chose to regularly contribute brief responses to the lesson. The use of post-it note reflections replicated an exercise in self-assessment described by Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006), whereby students placed notes on a board under headings such as ‘What I like’, ‘What I want to know’; and ‘What surprised me’. In that study, students were able to view and discuss reflections by classmates, “sharing conversations about . . . their learning” (p. 17).

Limitations of using such a practice in a specialist classroom included the fact that reflections completed at the end of a lesson were unable to be viewed by classmates until the next week, thus decreasing the effectiveness of the practice. With twenty other classes using the room in the course of a week, it was also very impractical to try to retain the post-it notes in their positions for an extended time, especially since other classes may have been using the same practice. As discussed in Chapter 4: Classroom Environments, relocation of the creative arts classroom, together with the physical learning environment, also had an adverse effect on this reflective process and the inherent aspects of ownership.

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However, benefits of the regular post-it note reflections included gaining insight into activities that large numbers of students enjoyed, aiding in the planning of high affective activities, and gaining understanding about activities the students considered too difficult or too easy, aiding in the planning of high cognitive activities (though some activities also focused on skills development). The brevity of the notes also allowed for an immediacy of response, since only a few moments were necessary to complete a reflection, and in this way tended to provide an avenue for the students to express the single, most notable response to the current lesson. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the post-it notes, though, was the capacity to track the development of reflective thought of the students. For example, over the course of the study Courtney’s reflections developed from simple statements of like or dislike (1); to the inclusion of simple self-assessment (2); to the provision of a reason for liking the activity, and the naming of what was most liked (3); to the identification and evaluation of group processes (4); and finally to more complex suggestions for future lessons (see Figure 7.4).
[1. It was so much fun. 2. I wasn’t very good but it was so much fun. 3. I enjoyed it, it was funny and fun. Making the dragon (at the) was the best. 4. I learnt it is fun when we cooperate together. 5. Drama was really fun but it would be better if we could maybe be given our roles or create our own drama.]

Unfortunately, disruption to the post-it reflection process was caused through classroom relocation, (see Chapter 4: Classroom Environments), meaning that it was not possible to track this developmental aspect with any consistency.

During the focus group interview with the Year 6 teachers, it was noted that while we had worked at instilling reflective practices into the teaching and learning processes within the
learning space, there was some question as to whether we had developed a “community of reflection”, or whether it remained an individual activity.

I’m still thinking about the reflection, because I think they’re reflecting not as a community but as individuals, but should there be a distinction there? I haven’t spoken to them in a group and reflected on their learning that way, we’ve been doing it individually and they’ve been doing that really well, so that’s something we need to look at, how we can bring that alive. (6Y teacher, Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

Observational data evidenced some growth in both the amount and the quality of community reflection as students became more practised and more comfortable with the process. However, the data also identified limitations to the “cooperative sharing of ideas” in both the specialist classroom and the learning space. Within the specialist classroom, students took many weeks to become familiar with the practice of sharing their reflections due to the brevity and irregularity of lessons. With only one hour per week, time for reflective sharing could only be limited to a fraction of this time. As with any activity, after a long break, the students had to become re-acquainted with the process upon its reintroduction, which decreased the efficiency of the practice.

Creative arts lessons in the Year 6 learning space were held three times per week, thus making the inclusion of community reflection a more valid use of lesson time. However, the large number of students in the space excluded effective community reflection involving the entire group. Although some successful whole grade discussions did allow the students to voice their thoughts about learning processes and experiences, and enabled some shared ownership of the tasks, pace and assessment (see Chapter 5: Quality Learning Environment), substantive communication was limited to small group discussion, with only a small percentage of students able to share with the entire group.

Despite the limitations imposed, the introduction of reflective processes into the creative arts program has resulted in students thinking, talking and writing about their learning, and has increased their ownership of their learning, its environment, and the program in its entirety. An unexpected benefit of the reflective processes introduced into the program has been the value of the reflections as data in this study.

Student Self-Assessment

While some aspects of student self-assessment were incorporated in and encouraged through the reflective processes introduced into the program, insider classrooms feature self-
assessment practices that focus on several dimensions at varying levels. Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006, pp. 23-23) developed their own version of Biggs’s SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1991) to promote deeper reflections about learning and aid in gaining insights in to students’ understandings. I have depicted the Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006) version of the taxonomy diagrammatically in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5 SOLO Taxonomy

The lower level of the taxonomy is termed unidimensional, and deals with content-based questions such as ‘What did you learn?’ , ‘What did you do?’ and ‘Did you like it?’ Student participants in the study became quite familiar with this level of self-assessment, as is shown in Figure 7.2. Unidimensional self-assessment was also evidenced in a large number of post-it note reflections, as exemplified in Figure 7.4 (1). However, such self-assessment did not always include cognitive, operative and affective dimensions, as is recommended by Munns, Woodward and Koletti.

The second level, termed multidimensional, utilises thought about processes of learning as well as content, with questions such as ‘How did you arrive at the answer?’ , ‘How did you do it?’ and ‘Why do you like/dislike it?’ This level of self-assessment was used by students as they became more practised with the process of self-assessment. For this reason, it was
evidenced more in the Year 6 learning space, where creative arts lessons were more regular, and time allowed for lengthier reflections. However, even the very youngest students were encouraged to articulate their likes and dislikes about their work. Operative dimensions of this level were most often utilised when students were reflecting on their achievements with choice-based artwork. For example, in the final few weeks of the study, Year 5 students were free to create an artwork using any of the creative arts disciplines, around a theme of dragons. Self-assessment of the task included describing the processes involved, as well as their affective responses to the end product.

Using the relational self-assessment level involves consideration of the ways in which the learning is related to other areas, through questions such as ‘How does this relate to something else you know?’ ‘Where else could you do this?’ and ‘Have you ever felt this way about something else?’ Although used infrequently, mind maps and diagrammatic schema provided opportunity for relational self-assessment with students in Years 4, 5 and 6.

According to the taxonomy, the highest level of self-assessment is conceptual, where ideas are translated into concepts. Questions include ‘Why is it important to know/understand this?’, ‘Why is being able to do this important?’ and ‘Why is it important to acknowledge this feeling in your work?’ Although the questions suggested provide valuable stimulus, responses provided by Year 5 and Year 6 students would indicate various depths of understanding and conceptualisation within this level. For example, in identifying why it is important to be able to complete tasks from the Bloom’s grid, Year 6 responses ranged from “it teaches us hand-eye co-ordination, and when we do music, when we do different things with music, it will help with high school” and “We can use the things from art, like the perspective, we can use that in maths” (Tony, November 9 2009) to “It helps with our self, like there... like you can choose group work, like learning mathematically, working by yourself and all that” (Celia, November 3, 2009). Year 5 focus group interviews yielded a similar variation in response. For example, while some students failed to see any importance in their learning in creative arts,

**WB:** Is there anything that we have learnt in creative arts that you think is important for you to know?

**Katie:** Um... no.

**Eliza:** No.

**Anabelle:** No. (Focus group interview, October 26, 2009)
others identified more concrete benefits, such as Eliza’s response “when we learnt about shading and then we could do shading on other things” (October 26, 2009). The processes involved in their learning were discussed in one focus group.

Kristina: The thinker’s keys.

WB: What about the thinker’s keys?

Kristina: Because we have grids in class as well.

Cody: I think the thinkers keys as well because in the grids it’s learning the same sort of things with different tasks. (Focus group interview, November 9, 2009)

Although the reflective post-it notes previously discussed were not prompted by guiding questions, it is interesting that these reflections developed naturally from concrete to more abstract thinking, as the students became more familiar and more practised with the process of reflection (Figure 7.4). This phenomenon supports the implications of the SOLO taxonomy.

The SOLO taxonomy was used as a self-assessment tool with a Year 2 class towards the end of Term 1. The children had completed a number of activities in music, dance and visual art that focused on patterns. The final activity had been a visual artwork featuring a 3-dimensional snake with a camouflage-patterned skin. The questions were presented and responded to verbally by individual children, who had their artwork placed in front of them. An example of the taxonomy is shown in Figure 7.6,
Figure 7.6 Year 2 SOLO Taxonomy Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>STIMULUS QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNIDIMENSIONAL</td>
<td>What did you learn about while we were making the snakes? How to do the lace and the background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULTIDIMENSIONAL</td>
<td>Can you tell me how you made the snake? With painting and cutting. Are you happy with your snake? Why/Why not? No because I made it too wet and it fell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATIONAL</td>
<td>Have you seen patterns like this anywhere else? Yes. Where? In the leopard book. Have you made something like this before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCEPTUAL</td>
<td>Why do you think it was important for us to make the snake? Because we had to do the pattern on the class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working through the self-assessment exercise with each child was very time intensive, and also required the remainder of the class to be occupied with independent tasks. However, the process proved very valuable in gaining insight into the children’s understandings about their artwork and the concepts being studied. Conversations with individual children also allowed for the clarification of their statements, and provided an ideal avenue for teacher feedback.

A member of the school’s executive staff passing by the classroom during the self-assessment exercise remarked upon the value of the exercise in terms of teacher feedback.

This is great. This is what we should be doing, not just putting ticks and writing ‘good’ on their work. That means nothing. They need to really talk about their learning. (Journal, March 26, 2009)

The comment provides further evidence of the interconnection and interdependence between the processes of the insider classroom.

Relocation of the creative arts classroom, together with timetabling and organisational issues, led to changes in the structure of Year 2 lessons, and the self-assessment process using the SOLO taxonomy was not repeated with this group of students. Because the exercise had been
so time intensive, and because the time spent in creative arts was so limited, future presentations of the taxonomy were restricted to class discussions of peer performances in music, dance and drama with students in the upper primary grades.

Teacher Feedback

According to Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006), the significance of teacher feedback lies in an awareness of the “power of written, oral and symbolic feedback on students’ self-concept as learners” (p. 18). Ideally, the feedback addresses the particular task and processes involved, and encourages student self-regulation. As previously noted in this chapter, teacher feedback is intrinsically linked to the other processes within the insider classroom. It is also integral to the Quality Teaching framework, notably through the element of substantive communication, which requires sustained interaction, communication focused on the substance of the lesson, and reciprocal interaction.

Data concerning teacher feedback was primarily gathered through a focus group interview with the Year 6 teachers, and was specific to the creative arts program as it existed within the Year 6 learning space. The Year 6 teachers agreed that having three teachers in the space allowed more opportunity for teacher feedback, and particularly for immediate feedback to individual students. They viewed this as helping to come to know the students better.

6Z teacher: Did we talk about teacher feedback? Well it’s pretty constant. Like – it’s not just that you look at their work and tick, tick, tick. Like, say with the Bloom’s tasks that you had, you know, you can give them feedback on the spot, because like you said there are other teachers there too, and it’s more one on one, than just feedback as a group, but it’s a lot more individual I think.

6Y teacher: But do you feel that you’re giving more feedback than you ever have?

6X and 6Z teachers: Yes.

6Y teacher: I think I give more.

6Z teacher: And I feel that I know the kids better.

6Y teacher: Yeah, and you know all of them as well. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

While teacher feedback was considered to be very positive in the learning space, one teacher noted an interesting aspect of providing feedback within the particular setting of a shared learning space.
When it comes to the teacher feedback though, I mean I can give feedback on a number of things in creative arts, but there are still certain specialist things that, well you’ve seen yourself that there were things that weren’t being marked correctly . . . I mean, I couldn’t give constructive feedback to somebody about playing a guitar, so I mean your role, it’s still a vital role. (6X teacher, Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009).

This comment highlights the change in a teacher’s role from a traditional classroom to a learning space, as well as the collaborative nature of the new role. It also stresses the necessity for teachers of the 21st century to be open to learning new skills and knowledge themselves. This point was also reiterated in the interview.

6X teacher: Well I’ve certainly learnt a lot more than I ever knew about anything [in creative arts]. And I have to say [to the students], “well I’m just going to go and check that up” and go chasing off to a computer to find out the answer.

WB: But that’s good too. And it’s good for the kids to see us as learners.

6X teacher: Yeah, it’s really good.

6Z teacher: It’s a different way to what I used to teach the kids, and it would be the same for the three of us, but I don’t know a lot of content. (Focus group Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

Although the Year 6 teachers were able to identify positive aspects of teacher feedback within the learning space, observations revealed that not all students were involved in the process. As described in Chapter 6: Types of Engagement, close observation of the learning space revealed that a small number of students not only feigned engagement in the tasks but also avoided any direct contact with the teachers. Therefore, these students did not receive any feedback at all for several lessons. Attempts to remedy this problem included teachers keeping a checklist, to ensure that all students were not only receiving regular feedback, but also that they were receiving assistance with choosing appropriate tasks and utilising appropriate processes.

**Teacher Inclusive Conversations**

An explanation of teacher inclusive conversations, provided by Munns, Woodward and Koletti (2006, p. 18), proposes several characteristics of this element of the insider classroom. They note an emphasis on sharing power with students; the involvement of students in discussions about classroom ethos and processes; the promotion of thinking, and opportunity for students to share about the processes of learning; a focus on learning rather than behaviour; and movement towards shared, mutual and reciprocal conversations about
learning. Congruence with the Quality Teaching framework, in particular with the elements of substantive conversation, social support and self-regulated behaviour, is also noted.

The sharing of power with students was sometimes enabled through reflective and self-assessment processes. For example, Year 6 students completed a visual arts task to design an Indian *rangoli*\(^2\). Student self-assessment and reflective discussion upon completion of the task resulted in one class suggesting that they would like to make a rangoli for the creative arts classroom. Together the students decided which rangoli design would be most suitable, the materials that should be used, how it should be made, and which class members would be responsible for the planning and construction of the rangoli. Although each Year 6 class usually followed the same program, this particular class chose the course their lessons would take at this time.

Similarly, the Year 6 students were given the choice as to what they might perform on Grandparents’ Day. One class chose to present a shadow puppet play, while another class chose to present several short pentatonic music compositions. Prior to the study, such choices would have been solely within my control. Although the sharing of this power required quite a conscious effort, its success, and the positive effect on the students’ confidence and learning, has encouraged the insider culture of the classroom.

Once the reflective data from Year 6 had been collected at the end of Term 3, it became evident that noise was having an adverse effect on learning within the learning space. This problem was initially addressed through a discussion with the entire grade, focusing on classroom ethos and processes. Although it was essential to include all students in this process, a discussion with 85 students is far from satisfactory, and does little to encourage involvement or engagement of all students. However, the discussion did result in some consensus from the students regarding the issue of noise. It was decided that the students would remind each other of the need for quiet in the space when they deemed it necessary.

While this was not entirely successful in creating a quiet learning environment, observations evidenced several conversations between either individuals or groups of students that addressed this problem, and resulted in some small improvement. The discussion and ensuing

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\(^2\) Hindu symbols and traditional patterns created with ground rice, powdered stone and flowers, especially during the festival of Diwali, when they are made on doorsteps to welcome the goddess Lakshmi.
behaviours of the students also indicated that their solution to the problem involved their own regulation of the situational behaviours, rather than relying on teacher intervention.

Although several opportunities were provided for students to share in discussion about their learning with others through group reflection and assessment, this was identified by the school principal as an area that might be improved upon.

[Creative arts is] a vehicle to celebrate learning as well, and that’s something that we do, but we don’t do enough. You know, “in my learning, this is what I found out, and this is how I found it out”. (Principal, Focus group Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

It is significant that the principal chose to use the term ‘celebrate’, with its highly positive connotations, within the context of sharing about learning. It would be interesting to introduce this terminology within the classroom, and to investigate the effects of viewing learning achievements in this light. Providing opportunity for this type of sharing within the setting of a learning space is particularly challenging, due to the large number of students within the space. While sharing ideas in small group settings remains a valid option, this enables only a restricted version of sharing about learning.

**Conclusion**

The congruence of insider classroom principles with the ideals of Quality Teaching allowed for their simultaneous implementation into the creative arts program. The adoption of recommended processes such as a student community of reflection, student self-assessment, teacher feedback and teacher inclusive conversations was moderately successful, yet was limited through extraneous restrictions such as relocation of the creative arts classroom, and time restrictions. The relocation of the program to the Year 6 learning space was unplanned at the outset of the study, and required a change in the focus of the program and its presentation, and subsequently steered data collection toward these new areas of interest and immediate relevance. To this end, less attention was granted to implementing insider classroom principles, as well as to collecting and analysing data pertinent to the insider classroom.

However, some generalisations might be made concerning the adoption of insider classroom principles within the creative arts classroom and program. Firstly, shared ownership of a learning environment is difficult when time spent in the area is restricted to one hour per week. Within this study, this limitation was exaggerated through the lack of constancy in classroom environments. Similarly, reflective and self-assessment processes are more
effective when they are incorporated as regular processes within the classroom, thus posing another problem given the limited time frame. Finally, data revealed an underlying interdependence and interconnection between the processes. An understanding of the way in which these processes work together would allow for their effective and successful adoption within a classroom.
CHAPTER 8

THE ARTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM

An unforeseen consequence of the school’s building program was the relocation of the creative arts program to the newly built learning spaces within the school. Although for the majority of grades this relocation occurred only a few weeks prior to the end of the data collection period, creative arts lessons were conducted in the Year 6 learning space from the beginning of Term 3, thus creating new conditions and a new focus for the study. The relocation necessitated several major changes to the program in order that it might be accommodated within the learning space. These modifications affected all aspects of the program, and necessitated changes to the role of the teachers within the space. Several issues arising from the accommodation of the creative arts program within the learning space were identified.

The Incorporation of Higher Order Thinking Skills

At the end of Term Two, I was approached by the three Year 6 teachers and invited to work with them in their learning space. Since each of the teachers was entitled to one hour RFF time, this meant that I would be working with the entire grade and the two remaining teachers for three hours per week. There were several advantages to this organisation of time, including the increase in the number of hours; the availability of two interactive whiteboards, several computers, iPods and other technology; and the opportunity to work with other staff.

In order to present creative arts activities for 85 students in a single large area, it was necessary to make several changes to the program. Previously, creative arts activities had involved a class group of approximately 30 children working on the same task in a relatively small area under teacher direction. While in the learning space, some planned activities such as sharing content through the use of the interactive whiteboard involved the whole grade working together. However, for the most part, activities were planned which allowed for self-regulated, self-directed, choice-based learning either independently or in small groups, and which were deemed consistent with the ideals of 21st century pedagogical thought. This was quite a departure from the more traditional lessons which had taken place in the creative arts classrooms.
The key tool used in order to incorporate activities promoting higher order thinking skills (see Chapter 2: Literature Review), was Pirozzo’s Bloom’s Taxonomy/Multiple Intelligences Grid (see Appendices E and F). The grids proved valuable in setting such tasks, and were also consistent with requirements of the Intellectual Quality dimension of Quality Teaching (see Appendix B). In evaluating the use of the grids, the teacher of 6Z commented “Well you only have to look at what you did with the Bloom’s and that, how you looked at all those different areas, which kind of match what these [21st century] skills are” (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009).

A second grid of tasks (see Appendix F) was developed upon completion of activities from the first grid for several reasons. Firstly, the grid had been a satisfactory way to encourage the type of thinking skills and activities promoted in literature pertaining to 21st century educational thought. Secondly, it provided a variety of activities requiring different resources, thus enabling a large number of students to be working simultaneously on their chosen tasks. A student, Anna, wrote that “We don’t have to be all doing the same thing at once and we get to pick what we do” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). Finally, the majority of students had approached the tasks with enthusiasm, and had appeared to be engaged in the tasks. However, in reviewing the completed tasks, it became evident that the depth and standard of completion was quite low (See Chapter 5: Quality Learning Environment, High Expectations section). The second grid provided an opportunity for students to improve the quality of their responses.

Together with DeBono’s (1999) Six Thinking Hats, Bloom’s Taxonomy also provided a suitable scaffold for activities concerned with the syllabus’s Appreciating outcomes in each of the four subject areas. These frameworks were utilised extensively within the program with all grades.

**The Utilisation of Technology**

Since there had been only one computer in the specialist creative arts room, the availability of various technological resources in the learning space opened up many possibilities for changes in both the content and presentation of creative arts lessons. Having access to a range of technologies enabled the inclusion of activities that might promote skills in critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving; information, media and technology skills; as well as

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3 The 6 Thinking Hats is a system of parallel thinking that can be used for exploring situations or challenges from several different perspectives. It uses hats of 6 different colours to focus thought on particular aspects of the situation or challenge.
encouraging self-directed and independent learning. It also allowed access to a vast range of resources and repertoire through the World-Wide Web.

Each of the subject areas within the Creative Arts KLA has outcomes in an area concerned with the appreciation of that particular artform, and it was in this area that the interactive whiteboard was most often utilised. The ready availability of internet-based examples of performance in each of the areas of music, dance and drama, together with examples of visual artworks, enabled the scope of the creative arts program to include a far greater range of repertoire than had previously been possible. The interactive white board allowed projection of both sight and sound to a large number of students at once.

Having taught music for many years, I was interested to observe the students’ reactions to watching recordings of music performances, as opposed to just listening to recordings of music. The students appeared to be far more attentive when they were able to view either the performance or a cross-media presentation of the music as recommended by Webb (2007), than when they were presented with only an aural recording. They also demonstrated a willingness to discuss the performances, and were able to recall features of the performances in lessons at a later date. Similarly, it was noted in an interview with the Year 6 teachers, that information presented via the interactive whiteboard, using a combination of teacher-talk, PowerPoint presentation and YouTube clips seemed to have been retained well by the students.

6Y teacher: There were other things in Quality Teaching I saw as well, like the metalanguage with Carnevale that they were using, and they were correcting me. (Laughs)

WB: They do that.

6Y teacher: Well I had no idea that it had something to do with meat!

WB: You must have missed that first lesson. Because it was just amazing to me that weeks later they were still reciting it back to me, and we just had talked about it once for an hour, but they were still reciting it right back at me.

6X teacher: I found too, that sometimes I’ve just wanted to sit in the space, and do my work in the space, in case I missed something. Because they all seemed to know things I missed out on. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

Although this was considered very beneficial to student learning, use of the interactive whiteboard also involved the entire group of students sitting on the floor in a reasonably
confined space. It became apparent that this configuration was only appropriate for short periods of time before some students became distracted.

6Y teacher: I think it’s the type of students, but I think some of them found it difficult this term with a lot of the input, with the interactive whiteboard and all that, some of the kids found that challenging,

WB: I found it challenging too because they’ve got to have a certain amount of content to start with, if they are going to do the activities. I’ve found that really hard, to know how much to give them.

6Y teacher: I think it’s just where our students are... this group are very hands on, whereas next year’s group might be all cerebral and sit there. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

It has always been a concern of mine as a music teacher that the students in the school have very little, if any, experience with live music performance, particularly with music of the Western classical tradition. For the very great majority of students, experience of live music was limited to two Musica Viva\(^4\) concerts per year, one of which usually featured music of a non-Western tradition. While recorded examples can never replace the value of a live performance, such recordings may certainly supplement the students’ exposure to a variety of musical styles and repertoire, and help to improve their familiarity with a variety of sound sources. It was interesting to note that several Year 6 students began to refer to string instruments by their correct names after they had watched a YouTube clip of excerpts from Vivaldi’s “The Four Seasons”. Prior to this, it was quite common for the students to refer to all string instruments as ‘a violin’, or ‘that big thing like a violin’ (Jay, Observation, October 21, 2009). Thus, the viewing of recordings via the internet appeared to be a significant factor in the students gaining some understanding and knowledge of musical instruments and styles.

Several desktop and laptop computers were made available for student use during creative arts lessons. Tasks included research for an assignment or for the Bloom’s Taxonomy/ Multiple Intelligences Grid, the making of PowerPoint presentations, the creation and/or appreciation of cross-media artworks, and skills-based games such as those discussed in Chapter 4: Classroom Environments (Classroom Resources section). As previously discussed, a blog was set up and moderated by one of the Year 6 teachers in order that the students might have an

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\(^4\) Musica Viva is a not-for-profit organisation and is the largest provider of music education programs across Australia. They offer practical teaching resources, in-servicing for teachers and live performance of small ensembles, offering a variety of musical repertoire.
appropriate avenue for reflection, discussion and communication about the creative arts program. Two iPods were also available for individuals or small groups of students to listen to or view examples of artworks.

As noted in Chapter 4: Classroom Environments, the Year 6 students considered the availability of computers a most favourable aspect of having creative arts lessons in the learning space. Comments to this end were evidenced in their responses in both written reflections and focus group interviews. For example,

WB: What’s the best thing about doing creative arts in the learning space?
Tamara: What I said before, we have a lot more computers.
Natasha: Same. Computers. (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009)

Celia made a similar comment in a different focus group interview held on the same day: “There’s more technology, like more computers and stuff, and it’s easy to research things”.

Although the students seemed to be overwhelmingly in favour of using the learning space’s technology resources, this was not always the case. Late in the data collection period, the students were shown a YouTube clip of a puppet show that featured vocal and movement ostinati created from the names of a popular children’s book and film. The students were required to work in small groups of their own choice to create a piece in a similar style, using ostinati. The students were given a number of suggestions as to how they might wish to create their ostinati, and present their completed pieces, including the utilisation of computers, iPods, or video camera. It is most interesting that without exception, the students chose to use their own vocal, instrumental and movement ostinati in live performance.

There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. Performance had been a major component of creative arts lessons prior to the move to the learning space. It may have been that the students enjoyed the opportunity to participate in an activity that had previously been very familiar to them. Similarly, the concept of ostinato had been reinforced many times over the years, and usually included some type of musical performance activity. Conversely, experience with creating activities using technological tools was still very much in the developmental stages within the learning space.

Although other creating activities had provoked interest among a small number of students, there had not been a focus activity for the entire group addressing use of the technology in this
way. For example, a choice-based activity with one Year 5 class offered the opportunity to create a piece based on a ‘dragon’ theme, using any artform. While the great majority of students chose to create two- or three-dimensional visual artworks using traditional materials, approximately one quarter of the class used computers to create either visual collages, or cross-media presentations utilising programs such as Movie-maker. The technology skills utilised were not specific to creative arts. Given that lessons utilising technology had taken place in the Year 6 learning space for only twelve weeks, and the Year 5 space for only four weeks at the conclusion of the data collection period, it would be assumed that this area would receive attention in the future, for example, in relation to creative activity in music.

The technologies available in the learning space provided the opportunity for the expansion of both the repertoire of creative arts lessons, and the type of activities offered. Data confirmed that this was an advantage of creative arts lessons being held in the learning space. However, it is also noted that further exploration of the capacities of technology to serve the teaching of creative arts is required in order to make full use of its integration into the program.

The Role of the Teacher

The pedagogical philosophies underlying the aforementioned activities also implied a change in the role of the teacher. Gravaso, Pasa, Labra and Mori, (2008) maintain that a traditional “teacher-centered approach characterized by transmission of information is sadly insufficient to equip students with . . . skills” such as “interpersonal relations and communication skills, ability to work in various contexts, and information literacy skills” (p. 109). As might be expected, observations, written reflections and interviews revealed several changes in the role of the teacher.

Because each learning space accommodated an entire grade with three teachers, the dynamics therein were very different to a traditional classroom. This was evidenced in the responses of both staff and students in their written reflections and in interviews. For most staff members, the experience of working so closely with other teachers was a new one. For many, the opportunity for collaboration and team work was seen as advantageous. For example, Michelle stated that she “collaborated with fellow teaching staff more” (Interview, December 16, 2009) and Susan considered that working as a member of team “has been very fulfilling” (Interview, August 25, 2009). Michael described the opportunity to work with others as “team teaching”, and noted the benefit of this for the students.
Our approach in the space has generally been one of team teaching and the kids have taken to it. They enjoy the different teaching styles and tend to be more engaged with a different face in front of them. (Interview, December 16, 2009)

Rosemary also identified some benefits in her interview, saying

I feel I have been more organised and feel more inclined to explore a greater range of activities having other teachers in the area to help with the organisation and ideas or polishing ideas. (Interview, December 19, 2009)

However, Rosemary also noted the importance of the relationship between teachers working so closely together in the confines of a shared area, stressing the need for “professional meeting of the minds to allow all to contribute to the learning experiences offered”, since she had felt “little control of the style of presentation of learning experiences”. Rosemary also expressed concern that “the working relationship between the teachers also affects the students if there is discord between them” (Interview, December 19, 2009).

Teachers and students alike viewed the availability of three teachers in the space as advantageous. Stage 3 teacher, Belinda pointed out that the organisation of students and teachers in the learning space allowed for teachers to get to know more students.

Well, I guess now we know what’s happening with all of the students, not just pockets of students in isolation, because it’s an agile space, we know all the students and all of their levels. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

Rosemary concurred that teaching in the learning space led to feeling “less of an identification with my class than previously but more of a relationship with the whole grade” (Interview, December 19, 2009). However, Belinda warned of the possibility that “the kids will play you off against each other” (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009).

Likewise, the Year 6 students also referred to the availability of three teachers in their written reflections, as noted in Chapter 5: Quality Learning Environment, Social Support section. During focus group interviews, Celia stated that an advantage of having creative arts lessons in the learning space was that “there’s more teachers to ask questions” (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009), and James said “you’ve got all your friends and if you need, like, all the teachers are here” (Focus group Interview, November 9, 2009). An anonymous written reflection confirmed that “we have a wide range of people to discuss how to do things for C.A.” (Reflection, September 14, 2009).
The term ‘teacher’ is being phased out in the school in relation to the learning spaces. Instead, the term ‘learning facilitator’ has been adopted, since it better describes the actual role played within the learning space. Observation, journaling and interviews identified a number of features of this new role. Michelle described the facilitation of learning as “more of a monitoring role” (Interview, December 16, 2009), while my own journaling, carried out as lessons in the learning space unfolded, noted “there is definitely a feeling that the teacher is no longer the centre of the learning experience” (Journal, August 25, 2009). The preparation of learning experiences and provision of resources replaced the dissemination of knowledge on the teacher’s part, and students became responsible for choosing their own tasks.

While several advantages have been noted, responses of Year 6 students in a focus group interview indicated that a balance of ‘teaching’ and ‘facilitating’ might be preferred by the students, particularly during the transition from classroom to learning space.

WB: How does that leave you feeling about creative arts then? Did you like it before? Do you like it better now?
Tamara: I like both. I think now’s a bit better but.
Billy: I like the old one.
WB: The old way we used to do things? What did you like about the old way?
Billy: It was more like talking to us than just going off and doing it.
WB: Ok. So you liked more that it was more a teacher actually teaching you?
Billy: Yeah.
Tamara: I like doing it myself, and I like doing the teacher too.
WB: So you like a mix?
Tamara: Yeah.
Natasha: I like learning with a teacher, but I like this as well. (Focus Group Interview, November 3, 2009)

The inherent changes in the teacher’s role are significant for both staff and students. Data revealed that although there are several advantages to the new arrangements, there are also problems arising from such changes, which must be monitored carefully if they are not to adversely affect student learning.
Issues of Significance

The changes to the creative arts program were both abrupt and extreme, and a certain element of ‘trial and error’ was involved in the implementation of such different pedagogical practices. It was therefore not surprising that some adjustments and alterations were necessary. This approach was consistent with that of the teachers in the space, who also noted that there was a degree of experimentation, with some planned activities failing to meet expectations.

6X teacher: Because we’d already had a clear plan of what we were going to do, when we walked in, and then the plan fell apart, because it just didn’t work. What worked on paper definitely did not work when we got with the kids, we were able to say [to the parents] “well we had this plan. It didn’t work. Now we’ve rearranged all of our thoughts and we’re working with the kids and trying to manipulate the plan so it does work

WB: And were they accepting of that?

6X teacher: They were very accepting of that. I think because they knew that, well whenever you do something new, it doesn’t work the first time you do it, and they were really pleased I think that we were able to say “It just didn’t work, so we’re changing it”.

6Y teacher: And that transferred to the kids, there was that transference as well, we just modified, and we’re still modifying it. We’re changing things all the time.

(Focus Group Interview, November17, 2009)

Although program evaluation is an important aspect of any teacher’s planning, the interview responses highlight the significance of constant evaluation when working with new processes and practices.

Similarly, observation, interviews and written reflections evidenced the necessity for constant evaluation, assessment and tracking of students within an open learning space. As discussed in Chapter 6: Types of Engagement, the learning space setting allowed a number of students to spend several lessons feigning engagement with their learning, and avoiding interaction with teaching staff. This issue had already arisen in other KLAs, and was being addressed by the year 6 teachers.

6X teacher: I think we’ve had to put lots of things into place with tracking the kids and individualisation because they felt they were in such a big space they could get lost easily, and they could get away with not doing things so we’ve put things
into place to keep track of them, and so that they would feel accountable for what they were doing.

6Y teacher: It held us accountable too.

6X teacher: It did.

6Y teacher: It’s different to [than] before, because even though you were accountable for those students, now you’re not just accountable for 30 students, you’re accountable for all 90, so you’re working together and it’s like a team.

6Z teacher: Yeah, communication’s really, really important – you’ve got to be on top of that. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

As well as the need to track the students and their learning, the interview also highlighted the importance of the staff working together as a team to this end. As a specialist teacher entering the space, this is significant, since it stresses the importance of working closely with the teachers in the learning space. In a school with seven learning spaces, this adds another dimension to the role of the specialist teacher.

As a music teacher, the experiences observed in the learning space were thought-provoking. On the one hand, it was wonderful to watch the growth of children’s interest in musical repertoire and musicology. It was enlightening to observe the students gain understanding through the use of new tools and resources. It was satisfying to provide resources and tasks that engaged their minds and stimulated interest and discussion. However, I also felt some disquiet with the lack of performance activities possible within the learning space. The students also noted this in their written reflections. For example, Colin noted that “we can’t play any music with instruments” (Reflection, September 14, 2009). This was also discussed in an interview with the Year 6 teachers.

6X teacher: One thing that we haven’t really been able to get in the mode of is using musical instruments and all of that kind of stuff which is... that’s sort of been because the space has been the way it has been, it’s been a bit hard to, I guess, manoeuvre that aspect. But I mean a lot of the time we like to let go in the learning space, as much as we can for them to do as much as they want, but I think that now that we’re comfortable in the space we can let go a little further with them, and maybe that side of things will just come in.

WB: Yes, if I’d been there this whole term, I would have liked to have done some guitar with them, but they’ve still got to have their choices so I would have to have been really careful how we worked out how to do that. I mean we’ve got 6 guitars and 90 kids.
Principal: So how do you do that?

WB: Well, you would have to work out, whether you take a group for two weeks and then swap, or how that works, you know, I don’t know....

Principal: That’s where the technology side of it comes in.

6Y teacher: I’d really like to get some instruments for the Macs. So. (To principal) Budget? (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)

The suggestions offered during the interview were not possible to implement prior to the conclusion of the data collection period.

The new creative arts activities brought enthusiasm and engagement to the program, as well as the interest of other staff from both within the school, and visiting staff from the Diocese, as was mentioned in Chapter 6: Types of Engagement. This was certainly significant in raising the profile of creative arts within the school, and has laid open the way for the future development of the creative arts program.

**Conclusion**

Although the relocation of the creative arts program from a specialist classroom to the Year 6 learning space was unexpected, it offered several opportunities for the development of the program in light of 21st century pedagogical thought. The relocation necessitated several significant changes to the program, notably the utilisation of technology and changes to the role of teacher. The incorporation of activities and tasks aimed at developing higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving through the utilisation of skills in information technology, and the student engagement that this appeared to generate, has contributed to acceptance of the program among staff and students alike. A focus group interview with the Year 6 teachers conveyed their acceptance of the program within their learning space, and provides a fitting conclusion to this chapter.

6Y teacher: Where before it was in isolation because we used to drop the kids off and that was that, we went to do what we want,

6Z teacher: And now you’re just part of the learning space too.

6Y teacher: That’s it.

6Z teacher: It’s your home too. (Focus Group Interview, November 17, 2009)
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the development of a creative arts program in a western Sydney school and to situate it within the wider school curriculum and community. In so doing, aspects of the program were examined in light of the school’s rapidly changing physical environment and pedagogical philosophies, entailing the movement from traditional classroom environments to open learning spaces and the implementation of Quality Teaching principles. The research questions, addressed through an ethnographic case study methodology, were:

- How do changes to the physical classroom environment affect children’s learning experiences and engagement?
- How is the Quality Learning Environment dimension of Quality Teaching evidenced in the creative arts program?
- In what ways can an ‘insider’ culture exist within a specialist creative arts program, and how is this evidenced?
- How are the creative arts accommodated within the 21st century classroom?
- What changes in role are required in the transformation from ‘teacher’ to ‘learning facilitator’?

Findings and Implications

The creative arts program was housed in three different classrooms and an open learning space during the course of the study. These relocations and the disparities between each of the classroom environments provided both the inspiration and the avenue for investigation of the environmental effects on learning and engagement. The physical learning environment was found to play a significant role in determining the types of learning experiences that could be offered, and thereby also affected the content of the creative arts curriculum. The Creative Arts KLA demands an area suitable not only for safe performance practice in the performing arts, but also for the construction, storage and display of visual art projects. Without a satisfactory area designated for use of creative arts, the program is potentially limited in the types of learning experiences that may be offered.
The physical learning environment was also found to have considerable influence on the students’ comfort during learning experiences and their ownership of the program, therefore affecting their engagement with learning. The lack of a stable and constant classroom environment resulted in disorientation for the students and disruption to the program, which was already limited to a one-hour lesson per week for each class. These conditions also affected my own planning and teaching of the creative arts program, necessitating last-minute changes, and increasing organisational demands.

Although extraneous conditions such as timetabling and the features of the available physical space will always impinge upon ideal conditions, it would appear that some measures might be taken to minimise adverse effects of unsatisfactory learning environments. With the introduction of flexible learning spaces, a more flexible approach to timetabling is recommended. While compliance with the number of hours outlined by the Board of Studies is essential, there exists scope to depart from current timetabling practices, which have been in place for several years. Arrangement of furnishings to provide a safe and flexible space suitable for the large variety of activities and experiences inherent in creative arts education, together with the storage of resources in such a way that students are easily able to locate them, could aid in improving student comfort and ownership. Aiming for some consistency of routine or presentation may also help to alleviate the adverse effects of a lack of consistency within the learning environment on student learning and engagement.

Likewise, these extraneous restrictions such as relocation of the creative arts classroom, and time restrictions imposed through timetabling proved to be quite limiting in the establishment of an insider culture within the creative arts program. For example, creating a community of shared ownership in only one hour per week was difficult, and became even more so within the context of changing classroom environments. Similarly, this lack of consistency reduced the effectiveness of reflective and self-assessment processes that were introduced. Conditions during this investigation were far from ideal for a thorough exploration, as the many interruptions to the program caused by the building program negated attempts to encourage practices and processes intrinsic to an insider culture. However, I would suggest that the effects of these restrictions might be minimised if the practices and processes characteristic of the insider classroom were also evident within the children’s general classroom. Thus, the creative arts classroom might serve as an extension in both environment and philosophy.
The development of an insider culture within the creative arts program is a notion worthy of pursuit. As well as further encouraging and developing the ideals and practices of Quality Teaching, the processes of an insider classroom are most relevant to arts education with a 21st century setting. Processes such as a student community of reflection, teacher feedback, student self-assessment and teacher inclusive conversations are particularly appropriate for incorporation within student-centred learning situations, since they allow for assessment, evaluation and progression on an individual basis. This is also most relevant for choice-based arts activities.

The learning environment was further explored through an investigation of one dimension of the Quality Teaching framework, the Quality Learning Environment, as it was evidenced within the creative arts program. This dimension consists of six elements, which together offer favourable conditions for learning. Each of the elements was found to be evident within the creative arts program, and interdependence between the elements was also noted. This interrelationship, as witnessed in the creative arts program, holds significance for an understanding of not only the Quality Learning Environment, but also of the entire Quality Teaching framework. Although the other two dimensions of Quality Teaching were not investigated as part of this study, their inclusion within the creative arts program was crucial to a representation of Quality Teaching, and interplay between the three dimensions, and all 18 elements was witnessed. Since a number of teachers commented that it was difficult to comprehend and bear in mind so many elements of Quality Teaching, it is possible that an increased understanding of the interdependence between the elements may aid in the development of a greater understanding of the framework in its entirety.

Congruence was also noted between the features of a Quality Learning Environment and those of an insider classroom. This would imply that the establishment of practices and processes characteristic of an insider classroom might contribute to the development of a Quality Learning Environment, and vice versa. I would suggest that further studies of insider classrooms, particularly those of a qualitative nature, might make a valuable contribution to research not only around Quality Teaching, but also in light of 21st century pedagogy, to which it is also particularly pertinent.

Engagement, an element of the Quality Learning Environment, was of particular significance to this study. The creative arts program was developed in response to a desire to engage students in the arts, and student engagement is a key concern in literature regarding education
in the 21st century. Several levels of engagement were evidenced within the creative arts program. These ranged from a lack of engagement, or disengagement, upwards through procedural and substantive engagement, to the ultimate state of engagement, flow. However, distinguishing between the various types of engagement was sometimes difficult, since there appears only a fine delineation between disengagement and procedural engagement, and also between substantive engagement and flow.

It also became evident that good behaviour or ‘busyness’ might give the appearance of engagement. In a school where the children are generally well-behaved and eager to please, it is essential that teaching staff are able to identify engaged behaviours in order that they might extend student engagement beyond the completion of tasks or compliance with teacher direction. Several measures were taken to this end during the course of the study, most notably in the Year 6 learning space, where student engagement drew the attention and interest of staff from the school as well as the greater Diocese. It appeared that this engagement was influenced by their interest in tasks that were age-appropriate, challenging but achievable, and that utilised tools and practices with which they were familiar and competent. This would imply a need for very careful and thorough preparation of tasks and resources, as well as for continued student input and reflection throughout the planning process. It also emphasised the need to develop an understanding of the ways in which students learn and relate in and to their world. This is an important implication of the study, since it would appear that changes to the creative arts program in line with this notion may have been influential in increasing levels of engagement with Year 6 students.

An indirect, though noteworthy, finding of this study was the preference and easy recall of visual art projects over dance, drama and music activities through their permanence and capacity for display. This supports claims that engaged students wish to share their learning, and thus necessitates that some action be taken to enable recording of dance, drama and music activities so that they may also be shared. As more technology resources are acquired within the school, and as students and staff become more familiar and competent with their use, it is anticipated that activities might be video recorded, or shared through methods such as podcasting.

Although the accommodation of the creative arts program in the Year 6 learning space during Term 3 was considered to be successful, several issues remain unresolved. While the utilisation of technology introduced a wealth of new experiences and extended available
repertoire, activities tended to be limited to those with Appreciating outcomes. The huge potential for the use of technology within other areas, such as Creating, is acknowledged, and it is expected that further development of the creative arts program would incorporate experiences from these areas. In light of rapid technological development, teacher inservice around the use of technology within the arts would be most valuable.

Of major concern in the learning space was the lack of opportunity for instrumental and movement performing experiences in music, and performing experiences in dance due to the large number of students. Although the possibility of taking smaller groups for such activities was discussed, there remained the issue of disruptions to other students and staff sharing the space, as well as the availability of resources such as musical instruments. While the COLA adjacent to the learning space provided an alternate venue, it was not always suitable due to inclement or extreme weather conditions.

The construction of open learning spaces also impacted upon the teaching staff within the school, necessitating a re-evaluation of teaching and learning strategies suited to such an environment. For many of the school’s staff, this led to working on a collaborative teaching team for the first time, and several staff members found this to be advantageous. Students also considered the availability of three teachers in the learning space to be beneficial. In terms of the creative arts program, the presence of two other teachers in the learning space during creative arts lessons has made my role within the school, and the creative arts program in general, far more visible. This is advantageous for several reasons. As well as increasing staff understanding of the concepts and processes of the arts disciplines, this has also enabled staff to consider the value and relevance of arts-related experiences for other KLAs. This is particularly significant for those students whose high achievement or engagement in arts education may not be reflected in other KLAs. As a specialist teacher who has always worked alone, this has also provided valuable opportunity for feedback and evaluation, as well as practical assistance when students are simultaneously involved in a variety of learning activities. An important implication is the requirement for thorough communication between the creative arts teacher and the teachers in the learning space with regard to aspects such as student engagement, lesson plans and organisation, and assessment.

However, the move to shared spaces has not been without some contention for staff. Changes such as the move from a personalised teaching space to an area shared with other staff have been quite drastic for many of the school’s staff. Similarly, personal teaching methods and
practices suitable to a traditional classroom have been discarded or modified in favour of those more appropriate to a shared learning space. While these resultant changes have often been very positive, it must also be noted that teachers’ sense of ownership and self-concept of their professional roles as educators may be adversely affected. Of utmost importance in this process of educational transition is the professional development of teaching staff to enable their confident progression in the facilitation of learning within a new environment. I would suggest that such professional development might include observation of learning spaces in action, intensive and extensive discussion around practice within learning spaces, and exposure to literature rich in descriptions of learning space pedagogical methods and appearances.

With the development of a more student-centred approach to learning, it was inevitable that the teacher’s role must also evolve, and the term ‘learning facilitator’ was adopted to more accurately portray this role. The facilitation of learning involves the provision of resources and raw materials, as well as guidance when required. Therefore, planning and preparation of learning experiences become paramount, with the dissemination of knowledge no longer considered the prime concern of the teacher. While some inservice of staff has taken place, continued professional development is necessary for the development of ideologies and skills relevant to education within the learning space environment. An investigation into the organisation of creative arts programs within the primary schools of the diocese would possibly identify other teachers working in similar situations. Networking of these teachers could provide an avenue for the sharing of skills and ideas which would aid in the development and growth of creative arts programs across the diocese.

Changes to the physical learning setting were extreme, and demanded major changes in the approach to learning for staff and students alike. The implementation of any new practice requires constant assessment and evaluation, and the findings of this study suggest that this constant evaluation, together with a willingness to try new methods and use new practices, is an ongoing requirement for continued and improved engagement and learning.

Recommendations For Further Study

Several avenues for further research have become apparent throughout the course of this study. Although a number of aspects of classroom environments have been the subject of research, the physical environment continues to have considerable influence on teaching and
learning. The extensive building program throughout Catholic primary schools in the Parramatta Diocese, with its conversion of classrooms to open learning spaces, has changed physical learning environments in many ways, all of which provide the potential for investigation and evaluation. A general evaluation of the effects of the building program itself would lend direction to future development within the diocese. There is also scope to investigate the effect of these changed environments on aspects of education such as academic achievement as evidenced in external examinations such as NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy), or the meeting of syllabus outcomes. Student engagement is paramount in the learning process, and its evidence and effect in open learning spaces warrants intensive exploration.

Many of the learning spaces have been furnished with resources unfamiliar to the traditional classroom. An investigation into the ways in which these might be most effectively utilised would be of great value, especially for those teachers inexperienced with their use. This is particularly the case with technology resources. Although creative arts activities utilising technology were viewed as having a most positive effect on student engagement, the limited time spent in the learning space as part of this study did not allow for the full potential of technology resources to be explored in relation to the arts. For example, the potential for utilising technology in cross-media creative arts activities with primary school students might be explored. Since the building program was carried out across the Diocese of Parramatta, it is likely that numerous approaches to the incorporation of creative arts have been made. A survey of creative arts education across diocesan primary schools may provide valuable assistance in the development of programs within these schools.

A significant number of Year 6 students expressed a preference to work in friendship groups across the grade within the learning space. Since collaborative learning is an appropriate vehicle for learning in this type of environment, further exploration into the effect of a group’s composition is warranted. This might focus on aspects such as engagement, achievement or task completion.

As Quality Teaching has become an inherent part of curriculum not only within the school at the centre of the study, but within a large number of schools throughout the diocese and indeed the state education system, the scope for further research is considerable. In light of this study, potential to explore each of the remaining dimensions in relation to creative arts would lend a more thorough outline of the framework. An investigation into the
interrelationships between the elements would possibly allow a better understanding of both the philosophy and classroom practices for teachers. Studies rich in descriptions of classrooms with high levels of Quality Teaching might aid in developing teachers’ understanding of the framework, and of the way it might look, or feel, for both students and teachers. As implementation becomes more complete, opportunities for the evaluation of the effects of Quality Teaching will also increase. This might also include a comparison of Quality Teaching as it is practised within state schools and Catholic schools, as well as the effects on learning outcomes and classroom processes.

Although this study was able to identify various levels of engagement within the creative arts program, it did not attempt to describe ways in which cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of engagement functioned within the creative arts program. As noted in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), Fredericks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) identified a need for future research to illustrate the development and interaction of various types of engagement. This recommendation is supported by the findings of this study, particularly in relation to the lack of distinction between levels of engagement described herein.

Since changes to the physical learning environment have necessitated changes in the teacher’s role, there is also great scope for further research in this area. Possible directions might include teacher perceptions of the learning facilitator’s role, the ways in which teachers work together in a shared space, or an investigation into the skills and characteristics required to successfully work within a learning space. It would also be interesting to explore whether the changes in the role of the teacher have personally affected teachers’ self-concept and self-confidence, since for many staff members the changes have been extreme.

**Conclusion**

As the creative arts program continues to develop, the findings of this study will aid in providing direction for its accommodation within the new school environment. The incorporation of the Quality Teaching framework and the inclusion of learning experiences congruent with 21st century pedagogical thought have helped to bring the creative arts program into line with current educational trends, and provide a sound basis for future developments. Several challenges remain, such as finding ways to include authentic musical performance and creative experiences within the program, and overcoming the difficulties involved in sharing learning spaces with general classroom teachers.
The relocation of the creative arts program from specialist classrooms to learning spaces has resulted in major upheaval, necessitating drastic changes to both the content of the program and to the type of learning experiences offered. However, these changes have also been instrumental in raising acceptance and profile of creative arts within the school, with children as beneficiaries.

To neglect the contribution of the arts in education . . . is to deny children access to one of the most stunning aspects of their culture and one of the most potent means for developing their minds. (Eisner, 1987, p. 40)
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Appendix A

Glossary

Active participation. The researcher engages in the participants’ activities as a means of learning cultural roles.

Agile learning space. Non-traditional learning area within a school. The term agile implies flexibility in physical arrangement of furniture, etc; in activity, and in the way learning takes place.

Artefact (artifact). The various objects created by members of a culture that can be studied as reflections of that culture.

Authentic pedagogy. Focuses on students constructing knowledge through disciplined enquiry to produce education that has value beyond school.

Auto-ethnography. The study of one’s own experience, commonly used by teachers.

Blog. Short for web log. An online journal which is regularly updated, and is readily accessible to the general public on a website. Blogs typically report and comment on topics of interest to the author.

Bloom’s Taxonomy. A framework to classify forms and levels of learning by measuring them along a continuum running from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract.

Coding. Condensing data into manageable units by creating categories with and from the data.

COLA (Covered Outdoor Learning Area). A covered playground area which might be used for learning activities.

Collaborative learning. Refers to both the method and environment in which learners engage in a shared task where each individual depends on and is accountable to the others.

Conceptualising. The process of grouping similar items according to some defined properties and giving the items a name that stands for the common link.

Constructivism. Constructivism recognizes that every learner brings pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and skills to their learning. It emphasizes the construction of new
knowledge through combining prior learning and new information. Individuals choose which new ideas to accept, and fit them into existing schemas of knowledge.

**Creative arts.** As used in NSW schools, a term encompassing the disciplines of music, dance, drama and visual arts.

**Creative thinking.** The ability to imagine or invent something new; the ability to generate new ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing ideas.

**Critical thinking.** The process of conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information which may have been gathered from, or generated by, processes such as observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication.

**Demountable classroom.** A portable classroom building. Often used in schools during times of rapid population growth to provide temporary accommodation.

**Digital immigrants.** Including teachers, the generation who are able to adapt to the new technological environment, but also keep a foot in their past.

**Digital natives.** The generation of students currently in schools who have grown up with digital technology.

**Early stage one.** Also called kindergarten, the first year of primary school, with children aged 4-6.

**Emic perspective.** The research participants’ perceptions and understanding of their social experience.

**Engagement.** Total attention toward something.

**Etic perspective.** The researcher’s conceptual and theoretical understanding of the research participants’ social experience.

**Explicit quality criteria.** Frequent, detailed and specific statements regarding what the students are required to do, and to achieve.

**Flow.** A term introduced by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) to describe moments of optimal experience when we feel “a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment” and which usually occur when the body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.
**Focus group interview.** An interview involving an researcher and a group of participants, who are free to talk with and influence each other in the process of sharing their ideas and perceptions about a given topic or issue.

**Grade.** An entire year group of children within the school.

**Infants.** The first three years of primary school. In NSW, encompasses Kindergarten, Year One and Year Two.

**Information technology.** Computer processing of data.

**Interactive whiteboard.** An interactive display that connects to a computer and projector. The computer's desktop is projected onto the board's surface, where users can control the computer using a pen, finger or other device.

**Key learning area (KLA).** The areas of learning for students in NSW primary schools. The Board Of Studies describes the Key Learning Areas as:

- **English** (students learn about, and learn to use written language); **Mathematics** (students develop the ability to investigate and solve non-routine problems); **Science and Technology** (students learn about natural and man-made environments); **Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)** (this area deals with peoples' interactions with one another and with their social, cultural and physical environments); **Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)** (aims to develop knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes that will help students to adopt active, healthy and fulfilling lifestyles); **Creative Arts** (students explore and experience different art forms including Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts); and **Languages** (students may have the option of learning and using languages other than English) (Board of Studies, 2009).

**Kindergarten.** Also called early stage one, the first year of primary school, with children aged 4-6.

**Learning space.** The space in which learning takes place; may be physical or virtual.

**Material culture.** (artefact). The various objects created by members of a culture that can be studied as reflections of that culture.

**Multi-arts.** A term used synonymously with ‘creative arts’. In NSW, this encompasses the disciplines of music, dance, drama and visual arts.
Multiple Intelligences. A theory proposed by Gardner in the 1980’s that suggests that there are seven “ways of knowing”. The seven intelligences are mathematical/logical; musical; visual/spatial; interpersonal; intrapersonal; kinaesthetic; and linguistic.

Open classroom. A spacious instructional area shared by several groups or classes, permitting more individualized, less supervised project learning and movement of pupils from one activity to another.

Open schooling. Built of the theory that children learn in different ways at different times from things they find interesting around them. The teacher acts as a guide and resource person, encouraging the students to proceed at their own pace and develop independence of thought. Aims to develop initiative, creativity, and critical thinking.

Ostinato. A repeated melodic or rhythmic pattern.

Participant observation. A technique of field research, used in ethnography, by which an investigator (the participant observer) studies the life of a group by sharing in its activities.

Pedagogy. The art or science of teaching.

Primary school. The initial phase of compulsory schooling, caters for students aged between five and twelve.

Problem-based learning. A learner-centred teaching strategy in which students collaboratively solve problems and reflect on their experiences. It is characterised by the provision of challenging, open-ended problems and teacher-facilitated learning.

Purposive sampling. People or documents are chosen to provide the researcher with substantial information about the experiences in question.

Reflective practice. The practice of engaging in reflection to identify important elements of past events.

Rubric. A document that articulates the expectations for a task by listing criteria required to achieve various levels of quality, and describing those levels from excellent to poor.

Secondary school. The final stage of compulsory schooling, that follows on from elementary or primary school.

Self-regulated learning. The learners direct their behaviour and their attempts to learn.
**Semi-structured interview.** An interview in which the interviewer is allowed some flexibility within the questioning, and in which opportunity is provided for the interviewee to develop their ideas and discuss them more widely.

**Social support.** The existence and availability of people on whom one can rely for assistance, support, and care.

**Specialist classroom.** A room in a school which houses equipment and classes for a particular learning area, for example, music.

**Stage One.** Made up of Years 1 and 2.

**Stage Three.** Made up of Years 5 and 6.

**Stage Two.** Made up of Years 3 and 4.

**Structured interview.** Formal interviews in which the answers to pre-planned questions are recorded on a standardised schedule.

**Student-centred learning.** Is focused on the student’s needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles with the teacher as a facilitator of learning. The students’ opinions are central to the learning experiences. Teacher-centred pedagogy has the teacher at its centre in an active role and students in a passive, receptive role. Learner-centred pedagogy sees students as active, responsible participants in their own learning.

**Student direction.** Students exercise control over one or more significant aspects of a task. This might be a choice of activities to be included in the task; the time spent on a task; the pace at which the task is undertaken; and the criteria by which the task will be assessed.

**Symbol systems.** A symbol is a pattern (of physical marks, electromagnetic energy, etc.) which denotes, designates, or otherwise has meaning. Gardner proposed that that intelligence requires the use and manipulation of symbols.

**Textese.** The language of SMS. May also be referred to as txtese, chatspeak, txt, textspeak, txtspk, txtk, texting language, or txt talk. Refers to the abbreviations and slang most commonly used in mobile phone text messaging, but also on the Internet, and in e-mail and instant messaging.
Unstructured interview. Informal interviews wherein the interviewer may address key issues in informal conversation.
## Appendix B

### Quality Teaching Dimensions and Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Quality</th>
<th>Quality Learning Environment</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep knowledge</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>Knowledge integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-order thinking</td>
<td>Students’ self-regulation</td>
<td>Inclusivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalanguage</td>
<td>Student direction</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Bloom’s Taxonomy

EVALUATING
Making an assessment or judgement.
Tasks such as select, justify, prioritise

CREATING
Making a whole from parts.
Tasks such as make, formulate, devise, generate, invent

ANALYSING
Taking apart a whole.
Tasks such as analyse, investigate, compare

APPLYING
Using the knowledge.
Tasks such as show, solve, use, illustrate, complete

UNDERSTANDING
Comprehending the information or message.
Tasks such as explain, interpret, discuss, restate

KNOWING
Remembering or recalling information.
Tasks such as list, describe, name, state, locate, recite
Appendix D

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences

LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL
Ability to handle long chains of reasoning; sensitivity & capacity to discern long or numerical patterns

LINGUISTIC
Sensitivity to words, their sounds, rhythms, meaning and function

INTERPERSONAL
Ability to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, desires, temperaments and motivations, of other people

MUSICAL
Ability to produce and appreciate pitch, rhythm, timbre and musical expression

INTRAPERSONAL
Ability to access and identify one's own feelings, strengths and weaknesses, and to discriminate among them

SPATIAL
Ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately, and to perform transformations on those perceptions

BODILY-KINAESTHETIC
Ability to control body movements and to handle objects skillfully.
## UNIT OF STUDY: Where in the World is Molly Maraca?  
### MASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom's Taxonomy: Six Thinking Levels</th>
<th>Seven Ways to be Smart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What words are associated with “carnaval”?</td>
<td>Write a short script for two characters in masks of your choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy doing hands-on activities</td>
<td>Make a list of materials that could be used for making a mask.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy making &amp; listening to music</td>
<td>What is a masquerade ball?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with others</td>
<td>Make a facts chart about two characters from Commedia dell’arte.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working by myself</td>
<td>List five things you know about carnival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven ways to be smart</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy reading, writing, and speaking</td>
<td>List the names of three Italian composers. Give their full names, their birth and death dates, and the type of music they were famous for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with numbers and science</td>
<td>Draw a timeline to show the following Italian composers: Monteverdi, Puccini, Scarlatti, Vivaldi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy painting, drawing, and visualising</td>
<td>Find a picture of a violin, and copy it, noting the proportions of the body, neck etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy doing hands-on activities</td>
<td>Introduce yourself as Antonio Vivaldi. Tell something important about your music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy making &amp; listening to music</td>
<td>Listen to the music from the Four Seasons by Vivaldi. What are the names of the pieces? Why did he write them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with others</td>
<td>Make a FACTS chart for Antonio Vivaldi. You can talk about his life and his music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working by myself</td>
<td>What is an opera? What are the rules of an opera? What is your favourite opera and why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix G

## Ryan’s Thinkers Keys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Reverse Listing Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Alphabet Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place words such as <em>cannot, never or not</em> in a sentence.</td>
<td>Choose an object or topic and compile a list of words from A- Z which have relevance. Expand on these.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The What If Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Variations Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You can ask virtually any What If question. Use the ideas wheel to record student responses.</td>
<td>Start each question with “How many ways can you…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Disadvantages Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Picture Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose an item and list a number of its disadvantages. Then list some ways of correcting or eliminating these.</td>
<td>Draw a simple diagram and students work out ways to link it to the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Combination Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Prediction Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List the attributes of two dissimilar objects, then combine the attributes into a single object.</td>
<td>Ask for a series of predictions in regard to a particular situation, product or set of circumstances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The BAR Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Different Uses Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make an item BIGGER, ADD something to it, REPLACE something on it.</td>
<td>List some different uses for items from your topic (emphasis on reusing and recycling).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Brick Wall Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Ridiculous Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a statement which could not generally be questioned or disputed, and then try to break down the wall by outlining other ways of dealing with the situation.</td>
<td>Make a ridiculous statement that would be virtually impossible to implement, and then attempt to substantiate it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Construction Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Commonality Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set up a wide variety of construction problem-solving tasks and use lots of readily available material.</td>
<td>Decide on 2 objects which would normally have nothing in common, and try to find common points between them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Forced Relationships Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Question Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a solution to a problem using 3 totally dissimilar objects. Objects cannot be used for what they were intended.</td>
<td>Start with an answer and list five questions that give that answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Alternative Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Brainstorming Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List ways in which to complete a task without the normal tools.</td>
<td>State a problem which needs to be solved and brainstorm a list of solutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Interpretation Key</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Inventions Key</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe an unusual situation and then think of some different explanations for the existence of that situation.</td>
<td>Inventions which are constructed in an unusual manner. Outline on paper and then possible construction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Ryan (n.d.)
Appendix H

The University of Sydney

Human Research Ethics Committee
Web: http://www.comrc.usyd.edu.au

Ref: DC/AP

25 February 2009

Associate Professor K Marsh
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Building C1
The University of Sydney
Email: kmash@usyd.edu.au

Dear Professor Marsh,

Thank you for your correspondence received 10 February 2009 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). After considering the additional information, the Executive Committee at its meeting on 17 February 2009 approved your protocol entitled “Quality teaching in the creative arts classroom: an ‘insider’ view.”

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.: 02-2009/11457
Approval Period: February 2009 to February 2010
Authorised Personnel: Associate Professor K Marsh
Ms W Brooks

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed.

Special Condition of Approval:

Please forward a copy of the approval from the Catholic Education Office when available.
Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:

(1) All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(2) All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(3) The HREC must be notified as soon as possible of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:
   - If any of the investigators change or leave the University.
   - Any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.

(4) All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 8627 8175 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8180 (Facsimile) or ethics@usyd.edu.au (Email).

(5) Copies of all signed Consent Forms must be retained and made available to the HREC on request.

(6) It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

(7) The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.

(8) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor D I Cook
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Ms Wendy Brooks; Email: wbro2538@usyd.edu.au

Encl. Approved Participant Information Statement for Students
Approved Participant Information Statement for Staff
Approved Participant Information Statement for Parents
Approved Parental (or Guardian) Consent Form
Approved Participant Consent Form for Staff
Approved Participant Consent Form for Parent/Guardian
Approved Participant Consent Form for Student
Approved Letter to Parents
Approved Information for School Newsletter
Approved interview Proformas
Approved interview Proforma (Staff)
Approved interview Proforma (Parent)
Approved interview Proforma (Student)
Appendix 1

Ms Wendy Brooks
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Building 641
University of Sydney
Sydney NSW 2006

10 March 2009

Dear Wendy,

Thank you for your Application to Conduct Research in Parramatta Diocese which we received on 12/8/2008. We have now reviewed your ethics approval and completed Working With Children. I am happy for you to approach Staff, students (K-6) and parents at Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, Cranbrook in order to carry out research on QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM: AN INSIDER VIEW.

We always stress the following points in relation to research requests:
- It is the school principal, who gives final permission for research to be carried out in his/her school.
- Confidentiality needs to be observed in reporting and must comply with the requirements of the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000.
- There should be some feedback to schools and a copy of the findings of the research forwarded to this office.
- This letter of approval should accompany any approach to schools.

I look forward to the results of this study and wish you the best over the coming months. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this research in our diocese, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 9407 7679 or john.decourcy@parra.catholic.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John DeCourcy
Head of Strategic Accountabilities Services
Catholic Education Office
Diocese of Parramatta
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS
Research Project
QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM:
AN 'INSIDER' VIEW

(1) What is the study about?
The study will look at the Creative Arts program and activities in our school. It will be exploring what happens in the classroom in your lessons in Music, Dance, Drama and Visual Arts. It will try to find out how the staff, students and parents are seeing your learning achievements, and whether we have Quality learning happening. The study will be looking for the things that produce high quality work, and that make Creative Arts lessons interesting and fun.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Corpus Christi’s Music Teacher, Mrs. Brooks. Mrs. Brooks studies at university as well as teaching at our school. This study will form the basis for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) at the University of Sydney. It will be supervised by Mrs. Brooks’s teacher, Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh, Chair of Music Education.

(3) What does the study involve?
The study may involve photographing and/or audio/video taping of students involved in both classroom and school activities. It may also involve talking with Mrs. Brooks in small groups either in class time or at lunchtime. Other teachers and parents may also talk with Mrs. Brooks in small groups.

(4) How much time will the study take?
Interviews will be take less than 10 minutes, and will be in a classroom, or on the playground. Observation and interviews will take place in the classroom, during your usual Creative Arts class time.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh
Chair of Music Education

Quality Teaching in the Creative Arts Classroom
Version: 1/11/2008
Being in this study is completely voluntary – that means you can choose whether you
want to be in it or not. If you do want to be part of the study, and then change your mind,
that decision will not affect your relationship with Mrs Brooks or with the University of
Sydney.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?
No one else will know the results of the study except Mrs Brooks and her teacher at the
university. Later, a report of the study may be made, but the report will not use the
children’s real names or classes.

(7) Will the study benefit me?
It is hoped that results coming from this study will mean that we can continue to improve
the way we teach Creative Arts at our school. This will be of benefit to all children in the
school.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes. You can talk about the study.

9) What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Mrs Brooks will discuss it with you further and
answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please
feel free to talk to Mrs Brooks at school, or have your parents talk to Associate
Professor Kathryn Marsh (02-93511333).

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study
can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351
4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or qбриody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
STUDENT

1. [PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project.

TITLE: QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM: AN 'INSIDER' VIEW

In giving my consent, I acknowledge that:

1. Mrs. Brooks has explained the project to me, and I have talked about it with my parent(s).

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement with my parent(s), and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue; the audio/video recording will be erased; photographs will be destroyed, and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

Quality Teaching in the Creative Arts Classroom

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i) Audio-taping       YES ☐     NO ☐
ii) Video-taping     YES ☐     NO ☐
iii) Photography     YES ☐     NO ☐
iv) Receiving Feedback YES ☐     NO ☐

If you answered YES to the 'Receiving Feedback Question (iii)', please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address, class.

Feedback Option

Address: ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________________________

Signed: .................................................................................................

Name: .................................................................................................

Date: .................................................................................................
Appendix L

Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh
Chair of Music Education

PARENTAL (OR GUARDIAN) CONSENT FORM

I, .................................................., agree to permit .................................................., who is aged ............... years, to participate in the research project.

TITLE: ........................................................................................................................................

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. I have read the Information Statement and the time involved for my child's participation in the project. The researcher/s has given me the opportunity to discuss the information and ask any questions I have about the project and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without prejudice to my or my child's relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

3. I agree that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published provided that neither my child nor I can be identified.

4. I understand that if I have any questions relating to my child's participation in this research I may contact the researcher/s who will be happy to answer them.

5. I acknowledge receipt of the Information Statement.

..................................................
Signature of Parent/Guardian

..................................................
Please PRINT name

..................................................
Date

Quality Teaching in the Creative Arts Classroom
Appendix M

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR STAFF
Research Project
QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM:
AN 'INSIDER' VIEW

(1) What is the study about?
The study will investigate the implementation of a multi-arts program, and associated
effects on students' learning and engagement. In so doing, it will consider the ways in
which the program reflects Quality Teaching thought and practice, and the effects on
students' music learning. A key focus will be student engagement. The study will also
explore the notion of the 'insider' classroom, and its implications for the specialist
classroom.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Corpus Christi's Specialist Music Teacher, Mrs Wendy
Brooks and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) at
The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh,
Chair of Music Education.

(3) What does the study involve?
The study may involve photographing and/or audio/video taping of students involved in
both classroom and school activities; focus groups interviews with students which may be
conducted in class time or at lunchtime; and focus group interviews with parents or
staff.

Staff interviews will aid in the identification of types of student engagement, and the
levels of engagement. Staff members will not be photographed or video-recorded. Audio
recording may be used.

Participating staff members are also invited to code Creative Arts lessons using the
Quality Teaching Model.

(4) How much time will the study take?
Interviews will be of less than 30 minutes duration, and will be conducted at a mutually
agreeable time on the school grounds. Observation of students will take place in the
classroom, during the students' usual class time. Each class is of less than one hour's
duration.

Quality Teaching in the Creative Arts Classroom
Version 1: 1/11/2008
(5) Can I withdraw from the study?
Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?
It is anticipated that results emerging from this study will contribute to further development of both Creative Arts and Quality Teaching within the school. This will be of benefit to all children in the school.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes. You can discuss the study.

(9) What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Wendy Brooks will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Wendy Brooks at the school (4729 0660) or Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh (61-2 9351 1333).

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 8708 (Facsimile) or phriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

STAFF

I, ........................................................................................................ [PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project:

TITLE: QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM
AN 'INSIDER' VIEW

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue. The audio/video recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.
7. I consent to: 

i) Audio-taping  YES ☐ NO ☐ 
ii) Video-taping  YES ☐ NO ☐
iii) Receiving Feedback  YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback Question (iii)", please provide your details i.e., mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: ________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________________________

Signed: ...........................................................................................................

Name: ...........................................................................................................

Date: .............................................................................................................
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR PARENTS
Research Project
QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM:
AN ‘INSIDER’ VIEW

(1) What is the study about?
In 2006, a Creative Arts program was implemented at Corpus Christi. The program
covers the subject areas of Music, Dance, Drama and Visual Arts, thus aiming to provide
a thorough and diverse approach to the Creative Arts Key Learning Areas. This research
project aims to investigate the program and its associated effects on students’ learning
and engagement. In so doing, it will consider the ways in which the program reflects
Quality Teaching thought and practice, and the effects on students’ music learning. A
key focus of the study will be students’ engagement with their learning.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by the school’s specialist Music Teacher, Mrs Wendy
Brooks and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) at
The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh,
Chair of Music Education.

(3) What does the study involve?
The study may involve photographing and/or audio/video taping of students involved in
both classroom and school activities, focus groups interviews with students which may
be conducted in class time or at lunchtime, and focus group interviews with parents or
staff. Interviews with parents and staff will not be photographed. They may be
audio/video recorded.

(4) How much time will the study take?
Interviews with parents will be of less than 40 minutes duration, and will be conducted at
a mutually agreeable time on the school grounds. Observation of students will take place
in the classroom, during the students’ usual class time. Each class is of less than one
hour’s duration. Informal focus group interviews with students will be of 5-10 minutes
duration.
(5) Can I withdraw from the study?
Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney.
For parents: Your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate will not prejudice you or your child’s future relations with the researcher or the University of Sydney. If you decide to permit your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child’s participation at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?
It is anticipated that results emerging from this study will contribute to further development of both Creative Arts and Quality Teaching within the school. This will be of benefit to all children in the school.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes. You can discuss the study.

9) What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Wendy Brooks will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Wendy Brooks at the school (4729 0090) or Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh (02-93511333).

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?
Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or qbrdary@usyd.edu.au (Email).
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
PARENT/GUARDIAN

I, ........................................... ...........................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project.

TITLE: QUALITY TEACHING IN THE CREATIVE ARTS CLASSROOM: AN 'INSIDER' VIEW

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researchers.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio/video recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

Quality Teaching in the Creative Arts Classroom
Version 1: 1/1/2008
7. I consent to:

i) Audio-taping  YES ☐ NO ☐

ii) Video-taping  YES ☐ NO ☐

iii) Receiving Feedback  YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback Question (iii)”, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: ______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________