Chapter 5
The teachers’ context and aspirations for film learning

_The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. Even when a person builds a castle in the air he is interacting with the objects which he constructs in fancy._

*John Dewey, 1938*

Situation and interaction for John Dewey are inseparable in an experience. The drama teachers’ experiences in this research began with an environment and a desire to teach film. This chapter explores the participants’ context and aspirations by allowing the teachers to introduce their school and their role, and to explain their interest in film learning and their expectations of the film learning workshops. A pragmatic ontology of experience views experience as growing from other experiences, “wherever one positions oneself in the continuum…each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 2). In this chapter the teachers’ context and aspirations are an experiential base with which future experiences may interact.

The chapter is both an *orientation* and an *exposition*. Like watching a film the research analysis begins with an opening that “provides a basis for what is to come and initiates us into the narrative” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004, p. 80). As an exposition it describes the present state of affairs and gives information about past events that bear on the present (Branigan, 1992). The teachers’ contexts orientate our understanding of their experience, for it is through context a sense of vicarious experience is created for the audience (Stake, 1995).

The case studies in this collection cannot be a representative sample of all drama teachers interested in film learning. The value of these drama teachers’ experiences is that each
describes a unique and complex case embedded and interactive with its context (Stake, 1995). The context does not determine the teachers’ experiences and actions, but it does identify the conditions from which issues arise (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Six participants were chosen from the 17 teachers who attended the film learning workshops. In the selection of cases for this research, balance and variety were important and the opportunity to learn was of primary importance (Stake, 1995). Each case of a participant’s rich experience with film learning is unique but certain aspects of their experiences can be aggregated and interpreted as having similar or dissimilar characteristics. These characteristics may illustrate a phenomenon occurring in the circumstances of several exemplars (Stake, 2008). The particularity of each of the teacher’s school context and aspirations is evident in the vignettes in this chapter, however certain patterns and relationships can be observed and analysed across the cases. The pattern that emerges in this chapter is the teachers’ response to student interest in film.

The research participants’ names Jen, Michael, Carol, Clare, Jacki and Diana are pseudonyms and specific local details have been generalised to afford the teachers anonymity. Each teacher has chosen one of his or her favourite films. A poster image from the film is used as an association with their name and responses. The images aid as recognition of the six voices in the data. The teacher’s own voice and writings have been italicised. The extracts from the spoken and written data for each participant are mostly verbatim blocks but at times in the vignettes relevant blocks are combined thematically or narratively, and non-relevant sentences left out (see Appendix M for example).

The sources and dates of the extracts from the data are identified in the text. Logbook responses are sometimes specifically day dated by participants, at other times their entries can only be identified by the month. The six 6 hour Saturday workshops were held March 8, 15, 29 and April 5, 12, 26 in 2008. After the last workshop each participant was interviewed once in June, July or August of 2008. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. Questionnaire responses and logbook reflections were undertaken before,
during and after the workshops. The interview schedule, questionnaires and logbook questions are all included as Appendices. The workshops were all held at a government, performing arts high school where I had previously worked.

In this chapter the introduction to each of the participants’ vignettes is based on information taken from their questionnaire responses before the workshop and the interview. Local references have been footnoted for further explanation. The order in which the six participants’ stories are presented has been chosen only as device for the reader to compare and contrast the teachers’ contexts and aspirations for film learning. Although most of the data is gathered from interviews after the initial workshops, the teachers’ descriptions and explanations are reflective about ‘the state of affairs’ before the workshops. The teachers’ responses to a questionnaire completed before they embarked on the workshops are used to validate these reflections.

The teachers and their context

JEN

Jen’s favourite film is the romantic comedy, Lawrence Kasdan’s *French Kiss* (1995) starring Meg Ryan and Kelvin Kline. She unashamedly describes her favourite tastes as ‘cheesy’. Jen is a mid-career teacher, having taught for 20 years in regional and metropolitan, government and non-government schools in NSW. She is head of drama at an independent, metropolitan school. It is a co-educational, high-fee paying, K-12\(^1\) school that historically has a focus on the creative arts.

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\(^1\) K to 12 is kindergarten to year 12 and involves the 13 years of primary and secondary schooling in NSW.
**Jen’s school**

*The school has still got quite Christian values central to it, but there’s quite a bit of freedom within the arts… There’s over 1200 kids, and I think it is said that the school pulls from something like 260 different suburbs across the Sydney area, in fact some kids even travel from the central coast. There are some scholarship kids and some kids who really aren’t from well-off families who find the money from somewhere to send their kids here.*

*I’m head of drama here, currently also a head of House, and I teach drama. Because of my co-ordinator’s job and all the responsibilities with that job, in terms of admin and teacher support and training, and everything else that happens in the school, and running a house of 120 kids, I’m still here until the wee hours.* (Interview, June 20, 2008)

**MICHAEL**

The subversion of middle class morality in John Water’s comedy cult classic *Multiple Maniacs* (1970) starring Divine is one of Michael’s favourite films. Michael has been teaching for 22 years and views himself as a late-career teacher. He is the drama co-ordinator at an independent, high-fee paying, metropolitan girls school.

**Michael’s school**

*The school is K to 12 with a 1200 student population drawing on the lower-north shore of Sydney, so it’s largely a middle to upper socio-economic group. I’d say 99% are of anglo-celtic/anglo-saxon descent. The school has a really strong focus on the student as the centre of learning, and also a strong approach to social justice as part of the ethos of the school. It’s a lively school. It has a reputation for high achieving in terms of academia and results. There is a sense of working hard to do well. The expectations of what the kids are going to achieve are quite high. The parents have high expectations and*
the school has high expectations of what we will do for the kids and what the kids will achieve.

I’m the drama co-ordinator, so in that role, you basically run the drama department, and you’re responsible for guiding the teachers in your department and their teaching of the programs. Drama [performances are] the public profile of the subject in the...so it’s my responsibility to make sure it happens and that it’s good. Well good within reason. Apart from that, the school has an expectation you do more than just do what your employed to do. There is a sense you contribute. Not everyone takes the challenge but I do. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

CAROL

A film that has had a profound impact on Carol and how she looks at film is Vittorio De Sica’s Bicycle Thieves (1948). Carol has been teaching for 14 years but because she started teaching later in her life she sees herself as a late-career teacher. Prior to teaching Carol was a youth worker. She teaches drama at a regional, government, co-educational high school on the NSW coast.

Carol’s school

It’s a really successful, co-educational school. The school feeder is predominately professionals, but not all are wealthy. The housing is becoming quite expensive, so there is a growing affluence. The students are much more worldly, they’re kids who have travelled, but have not necessarily been to the theatre. But parents embrace all that, we can take them on excursions however in this economic climate, we have to consider what the kids can afford. In terms of staff at the school people don’t leave here, they retire from here.
I just teach drama and I am the drama co-ordinator. I was actually employed as a specialist teacher in drama in 1996. The school has an amazing drama history because all the people who have worked here have been innovators. It was a really good drama department and a past principal saw the potential for a performing arts and creative arts area at the school. I think I got the job because of my age, and because I was passionate and able to commit myself to the job fully. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

CLARE

Clare loves Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954) starring Grace Kelly and James Stewart. Clare is an early-career teacher who works at a metropolitan, independent, girls’ school. It is a selective, high-fee paying, boarding and day school.

**Clare’s school**

It’s a private school on the north shore. In terms of multicultural aspects, the school reflects our broader community, with some cultural diversity across the student and staff body. However we do have an intake from the country, therefore there’s a mix of both city and country girls, and in that there’s a diversity in terms of life experiences. The ethos of the school is to empower the girls, to enable them to have many options in life. There is a strong focus on girls going on to university and certainly there is a big focus on the sciences, English and extension subjects. But within that, the school is supportive across the board including the arts which is great.

I’m a full-time drama teacher and within that there are expectations to do extra-curricula activities such as school musicals, plays, theatre sports and so on. As a beginning teacher I’m certainly supported in the drama department. I’m part of a team, it’s like an ongoing staff meeting. I can ask for feedback on lessons, on students, but I’ve also put out for that support. (Interview, July 31, 2008)
JACKI

When in a sentimental mood, Jacki’s favourite film is Pixar’s computer animated *Up* (2009) directed by Pete Docter. Jacki is the head of drama at a large, independent, boys’ school in a regional city. Jacki describes herself as a mid to late-career teacher “depending on the time of day and how much work I have to get through!”

**Jacki’s school**

*We are a boys school and there is a blokey culture within this school. It’s a full high fee paying, day and boarding school. The staff are in the later part of their career, they’re highly experienced, but there are very few young people. We did a survey recently and the bulk of our staff probably finished school before the 1970’s. I’m the head of drama and that doesn’t mean a lot in a school this size – there’s a unit called creative and performing arts, and there’s a head for each creative arts subject.*

*The students have to do four elective units of the arts, so the school has put a premium on a well-rounded education. The school has a broad, liberal approach to education, that is, kids should be working in the arts, languages and across the board. The idea is that over-selecting their courses makes them not fit for the future. Too specific an education too soon will limit their choices later on. So we end up with students who either really want to do our subjects, and others who don’t.* (Interview, June 26, 2008)
DIANA

One of Diana’s favourite films is Julian Schnabel’s *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2006) based on the story of Jean-Dominique Bauby and his condition known as locked-in syndrome. Diana describes herself as a late-career teacher who has been teaching on and off for 23 years in government high schools and as a drama curriculum consultant for the Department of Education and Training\(^2\) (DET). She teaches drama at a co-educational, government high school that specialises in technology education.

**Diana’s school**

*It’s a technology high school, so the ethos is very much to expose children to a range of technology. We have a broad range of children. We have an Aboriginal hostel attached to our school, there’s public housing areas but there’s also really quite middle class, middle income to upper income people. It’s predominately white Anglo-Saxon, so we don’t have a great deal of an issue with languages. The break-up of girls and boys has been gradually changing, a few years ago it was two-thirds boys to one-third girls. But in the last five years the figures have come in fifty-fifty as people have accepted technology has value for females.*

*I’m the drama teacher at the school and I teach year 9, 10, 11 and 12 drama. I also tend to be responsible for all the actual performances that go on in the school, I’m responsible for maintaining the hall, running assemblies, providing production teams, all those extra, little jobs that happen, but essentially I’m a classroom teacher.* (Interview, August 6, 2008)

All the teachers teach elective junior and senior high school drama except Jacki who teaches elective film as well. Carol and Diana are the sole drama teachers in their schools. In Jen, Michael, Clare and Jacki’s schools there are designated drama faculties

\(^2\) The Department of Education and Training administers and manages government schools in NSW.
comprising a staff of three or more drama teachers. Jen, Michael and Jacki are head teachers or co-ordinators of these faculties. There are three co-educational schools, one being a specialist technology high and three single-sex schools. Four of the schools are high fee paying schools and five of the teachers are mid to late career teachers. All the teachers are confident, successful and committed drama teachers, and they are in schools where drama is consolidated in the curriculum. Within this context of well-established drama in their schools the teachers are all interested in teaching film.

The teachers’ aspirations for teaching film

The following vignettes introduce each teacher’s aspirations for teaching film by describing their interest in film and the expectations they have of the film learning workshops. Drama curriculum in NSW\(^3\) does not mandate the teaching of ‘small-screen drama’; it is a possible area of learning in drama (Board of Studies NSW, Drama Years 7-10 Syllabus, 2003). These teachers perceive film as the cultural medium of their students, and they wish to engage and teach students filmmaking in the drama curriculum or as a separate elective subject.

**JEN**

Jen views her area of teaching expertise in drama, especially in improvisation, performance and devised works. Some of her drama students do video as an individual project option in year 12. She aims to introduce film into year 9, although her experience with film learning, she says, is limited. Jen describes her lack of experience and why she wishes to introduce film.

**Jen’s interest in film learning**

*When I started teaching, at a country high school, cameras were cumbersome objects and editing was virtually impossible, and you had to film in a linear fashion. I remember*

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\(^3\) Drama is an elective subject in the NSW curriculum. There is the stage 4 and 5 syllabus for years 7 to 10 (2003) and the preliminary and stage 6 syllabus for years 11 and 12 (2009).
doing a project with my year 9’s in my first year where essentially I left it to them to experiment. I think my approach to film has often been, “well, the kids will pick it up” and I put my head in the sand. And I figured that people would realise film is not really drama, as I thought of it then, and that it would eventually disappear.

If kids picked it up in year 12 as an individual project option in drama then it was because they had experience and contacts out of school that would help them with their project. I could offer them limited help in that process and certainly not with the production aspect.

You can imagine that after all that time watching their films, and film becoming more accessible there’s really no excuse for you not to at least experiment with it, not to have a go at editing and putting a story together...I guess in the last couple of years “I...”, to quote myself, “I need to suck it up!”. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Jen’s expectations of the workshops

I need to extend my skills so I can assist students more and not rely on them in regards to film video techniques, language etc. I hope the workshops will help in implementing a video program into year 9 and also help the year 12 video drama students. I have expectations that teaching it in year 9 should help our students develop a video language and give confidence to the staff. I hope to be a better teacher by expanding my areas of knowledge and hopefully in time, expertise. (Questionnaire, March 5, 2008)

MICHAEL

Michael has teaching expertise in drama and theatre, but in 2003 he introduced film as a 100 hour course in year 10 drama. Michael describes his earlier non-interest in film and why he decided to start film at his school.
Michael’s interest in film learning

Going back historically for me, when I was training to be a drama teacher in Melbourne, a lot of drama teachers I was training with did a media studies and drama double major. I’d chosen English and drama and I thought at the time I really should change to do media studies but I never really had a sense of wanting to do it. I really loved the live performance and there wasn’t anything really instinctive in me to pursue filmmaking.

While I’ve been teaching drama I wanted something new, I felt a bit stale, so that’s one reason why I introduced film. The other reason was that I was aware that for kids this is the really number one medium through which they access stories. It was almost a responsibility to provide opportunities for kids to create their own stories in this media. I was also aware the school wasn’t providing opportunities for filmmaking in other subject areas. I knew that in English, kids were engaging in reading visual texts, but as a drama teacher I knew there’s a big difference between ‘critiquing’ something and what you learn from ‘making’ something.

So, we started filmmaking with a 100 hour course five years ago, I’ve been chipping away at it for a while. I then realised we reached a ceiling with what we were doing. I had never had any training in filmmaking, I had looked at doing courses, even a Masters, but they all seemed to be on film criticism, rather than filmmaking. I didn’t get round to doing it. We were asking kids to make films based on programs or information in textbooks, and from other teachers programs in other schools, and advice from my brother who is a filmmaker. I had no practical experience myself. I’d made tiny weenie films at school so that I knew what I was doing with the equipment, but I had never made a narrative, I hadn’t created my own story, shot it and edited it. When I taught it I could see the flaws, I knew there were real issues with our process but I was giving film the space to evolve. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Michael’s expectations of the workshops

I am expecting the film workshops to provide an opportunity for me to learn through practical experiences how filmmaking creates dramatic narrative. They will provide
further professional development for the drama teachers at my school. The workshops may also be useful as my school is attempting to address how to create filmmaking experiences for students in English, drama and visual arts. The plan for filmmaking in the drama program is that students who take the 200hr drama course will have two terms of filmmaking. In year 11 and year 12 they will have the option of making a short film as an individual project. I hope to offer a 200 hr film making course in the future.

(Questionnaire, March 7, 2008)

CAROL

Carol views herself as a competent drama teacher and in 2006 she introduced film as a semester course in drama. Carol describes her enthusiasm for teaching film:

**Carol’s interest in film learning**

*We have film at the school because I thought if we had film in the junior years we could get another drama teacher who could teach film and teach drama too. I saw film as a way to get another teacher, to expand the faculty, for me not to be the only drama teacher in the school, and take the pressure off me. We have a year 12 drama class every year, and it’s hard work.*

*I’m passionate about drama and I’m passionate about film these days. I actually did film appreciation as an undergraduate student in English, I learnt about the classics, I had inspiring teachers and I loved it. I see the films kids recommend, even in drama, because I think it’s their medium. I try to connect with the students in that way. At the beginning I attempted to teach film without cameras! And the students went with me! Then I went to the curriculum directorate workshops on introducing short film to junior school. Film was something new and the kids loved it. I showed students bits of films and they were so magically engaged. I then went to the Drama Australia conference and yours and Clare’s*

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4 Curriculum Directorate is a NSW Department of Education and Training unit that develops curriculum policy and provides curriculum support and services for schools.
presentation inspired me. I used your handout and packed it into a small unit and taught that.

I need to skill up. I have been teaching short film for two years and my students are beginning to suspect that I don’t know much. Although I have them bluffed from time to time I need to feel confident in what I am delivering, plus these students need extending filmically. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Carol’s expectations of the workshops
I hope to gain an understanding of how to use a variety of equipment. I know I will learn how to properly use the language of filmmaking. I would like to gain a better understanding of how to create assessments that allow a diverse group of students the opportunity to succeed. I think that these workshops will help me understand what is needed at my school to provide junior drama students opportunities to explore and experiment with film. (Questionnaire, March 7, 2008)

CLARE
Clare has come to teaching after an acting career. Clare has a keen interest in film learning after being involved in a student film project that I directed in 2006. Her honours thesis for her Master of Teaching was based on research of that film project. Clare began teaching drama at her current school in 2007 and she describes her developing interest in film.

Clare’s interest in film learning
Initially I was drawn to film before I was a teacher as an actor. I had experience with musical theatre, TV and the stage, but not a lot of experience with film. Film intrigued me as a medium to perform in. I knew it was different as an actor, I had moments when I really understood films but I wasn’t fully there as an actor. I was really a stage performer.
Then I came to teaching and was very passionate about drama and how it changes the lives of students, about its creative energy and the collaborative nature of the subject. As well as the content, the pedagogy was very exciting for me. Through drama I came back to film, as an educational tool. It was really exciting to work with film in a collaborative process (in the research project). As an actor I was always the actor and I never saw the other side of the camera, I never made a scene choice. Then suddenly as a teacher, I was able to facilitate students to be more than an actor in a film. They could see a whole lot more that they could do with film, of telling their stories through this really exciting medium.

I haven’t taught any film at this school. At the moment there is no film component within drama but I have a student doing an individual project in video in drama. I have suggested we put a film component in our drama course and my head of department was enthusiastic about that. And, so it’s in the program for this year 10 in term 4. We’re doing playbuilding and I suggested we do film instead. The drama department is interested in learning about film. They know I’ve got these skills, and it’s an opportunity to put a program in place. They are also aware that the students are really excited about making films.

To create an opportunity to teach film in drama is different to making a film in history, English and art. Our drama pedagogy of collaboratively learning is different. I also think the reality is that our subject needs to grow and change. We need to create new opportunities for students to be excited about taking drama. There’s a new subject that started at the school in years 9 and 10 called digital media and photography. Students are picking that subject because they are excited about it, so we are losing some of our drama students. There is a reality that we need to get on board with film in our subject, in order to show students we can do this as well, that they can learn about film through our subject. The reality is that we need to grow and change with the times. (Interview, July 31, 2008)
Clare’s expectations of the workshops

As I have worked with the researcher before I am aware of her model of film video learning. I expect to engage deeply with the model in theoretical and practical ways. I intend to make a co-curricula film with students and believe this pedagogy will assist in this project. I also aim to implement a filmmaking unit in our Year 10 drama course. I would like to be involved in the teaching of filmmaking within drama and also through a specialized filmmaking course. I believe these workshops will greatly assist me in all of the above projects. I hope to learn through participation in the film making process, to learn by doing. And to engage with other drama educators in a critical dialogue focused on the pedagogy of film video learning. (Questionnaire, March 7, 2008)

Jacki

Jacki has a visual arts background and has been a visual arts teacher. Through her career she has developed herself as a drama teacher and more recently as a film teacher. Jacki explains how film began as an extra-curricula student club and then evolved into units of year 9 and year 10 drama. When the school was structured into semesters, she began film learning units separate to drama.

Jacki’s interest in film learning

The need for film learning at the school evolved out of a student driven initiative. Kids began doing film projects and no one would give them an opening for it. I opened up a doorway, I said, “I’ll be the support staff if you want to do something!” It brought together some odd and uncared for children who began to demand different ways of delivering information to their teachers. The students said, “Can I make a film about it? Can I make a documentary? Am I able to represent this information in a way other than writing?” So, that began a little snowball effect of teachers trying to be a little bit different saying “It’s ok, there’s not just one way to deliver content knowledge”. There was a flurry of teachers saying, “Sure, make movies!” but not children who knew how to make movies. So, by and large there were teachers who couldn’t manage those projects
and who couldn’t identify whether the student had met the outcomes properly. The teachers abandoned the students, yet for me, the kids were growing in number but staff interest was narrowing.

We started building resources and buying cameras and slowly but surely, film was the place to be. We realised with semesterisation, we could stream off the film in drama completely, and make a film course. Kids could do both drama and film, or just film, or just drama. I’ve learnt about film from reading books and watching bits of movies with the kids. I’ve learnt from the students basically then I would know stuff and teach them. Then a new kid would come in with more skills. We amorphously collected knowledge.

Video has evolved from the drama applications at my school into a separate course. I want to ensure we are using good teaching practice and that sound pedagogy underpins the fledgling courses as we develop the programs. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Jacki’s expectations of the workshops
I hope to learn how other people have made decisions about how to teach or what to teach when developing film/video units. I want to have a professional discussion about teaching film/video that will stretch my own thinking. I need to have an opportunity to assess the work I am currently developing in light of ongoing research. The workshops are a good reason to keep reading about the subject and have a healthy chat about stuff that drama/film/video teachers like to chat about. (Questionnaire, March 6, 2008)

DIANA
Diana was involved in the early development of drama curriculum in NSW. A few years ago she developed and presented ‘small-screen video’ in-service units for the DET. She is on leave from her current school for health and family reasons, and is considering a change of direction in her career.
Diana’s interest in film learning

Film is a really important part of the drama curriculum and I’ve always made sure my students are exposed to that. I have quite good facilities at the school to do that. I’ve managed to acquire cameras for my own subject and I’ve also got access to cameras in other departments and we have lots of good editing facilities. In drama there is a term they actually make films, but I also use video all the time to evaluate their live drama work.

When I teach film in drama, I tend to start from where they are at. I start from the very beginning, like how to turn the camera on and off. There’s a time I allow them to play, just play with the technology. And they discover a whole lot of stuff that I don’t need to tell them. You need to know about the technology in some way before you begin. Then I start from the idea of developing a story, just as I would with playbuilding. I give them a starting point of an idea, they brainstorm, define what they need to do, then storyboard, go out and film, and edit.

There is a course, digital media at the school and a lot of film work goes on in that. I’ve done a video camp where I’ve taken digital media students and drama students away because it’s an area of interest to kids. It’s really very much part of their cultural experience and they love to be involved in that. They have a great deal of knowledge that I can use to get them to have some worthwhile drama experiences.

Film is a hole that’s growing because kids are interested and there are staff that the principal is realising are not really qualified to teach it. They know how a camera works, but they don’t really know how to teach what should go ‘into’ the film. The teachers themselves have realised too. They thought it was a good idea to teach film and then they discovered you can’t spend the whole time shooting things outside, you’ve actually got to create a story. And they’re not as skilled as a drama teacher is at managing groups of people, running about with equipment and trying to collaborate with each other.
Film is such a growth area it has actually taken away from drama. Because of the way they line up the subject selection, some of the kids that normally would do drama, make a choice and go to digital media. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

**Diana’s expectations of the workshops**

I have no particular expectations of the workshop other than they will develop my knowledge of film video and the teaching of it. I am not sure how relevant they will be to my particular situation but I think I will get enough information to be able to adapt it to the needs of my school. The only expectation I have currently is that I have to be able to fit it in my current drama program. My school has a number of film/digital media courses/units in various subjects so this course may be another opportunity for the school. I am currently on leave so I would not be able to fulfill my expectations immediately. I hope to gain greater understanding of the aspects of teaching film and a sharing of ideas with practitioners in the field. (Questionnaire, March 6, 2008)

**The teachers’ aspirations for film learning: a mediating cultural tool**

The participants in this research are primarily responding to the world of their students in their desire to teach film. Their responses are typified by the comments: “I think it’s their medium…Film was something new and the kids loved it” (Carol), “The need for film learning at the school evolved out of a student driven initiative” (Jacki), “It’s really very much part of their cultural experience and they love to be involved in that…Film is a hole that’s growing because kids are interested” (Diana), “You can imagine that after all that time watching their films, and film becoming more accessible there’s really no excuse for you not to at least experiment with it” (Jen). Their students’ interest in film, the accessibility and user-friendliness of the technology (Buckingham, 2003; Burn, 2009) and the cultural dominance of moving visual imagery to tell stories (Kress, 2003) are the conditions that have given rise to the teachers interest in film learning.

The participants’ aspirations for the students to make films are a response to the sociocultural context. Film as a culturally based pedagogy acknowledges the prevalence of the moving picture as an expressive form in student culture (Buckingham, 2003; Cope

Success defined as the learning of formal knowledge depends on the creation of a pedagogy that is culturally appropriate but that does not restrict the student to what he or she already experiences culturally. Culturally based pedagogy acknowledges the importance of various expressive systems and the varied forms of representing formal knowledge in use within a cultural group, and it attempts to socialize those forms and introduce new ones, going beyond what the student already possesses. (Lima, 1998, p. 103)

Michael’s comment “...I was aware that for kids this is the really number one medium through which they access stories. It was almost a responsibility to provide opportunities for kids to create their own stories in this media” encapsulates the sociocultural perspective of the participants’ aspirations for film learning in schools.

The drama teachers are responding to student interest in film however there are other motivating factors to teach film. Both Clare and Diana mention that drama in their schools is losing students to digital media courses run at their schools. This indirectly supports their wish to more effectively cater to their students needs by offering film in drama. Clare questions the relevancy of drama if it doesn’t explore film: “We need to create new opportunities for students to be excited about taking drama...The reality is that we need to grow and change with the time.” Although not expressed by the teachers losing student numbers in drama may be a threat to job security. Carol mentions that to have film as well as drama may mean another drama teacher in the school. This would support the load of responsibilities and teaching she feels pressured to undertake as a lone drama teacher.
Before the workshops the participants had mixed aspirations about where they would implement film learning in the curriculum. At the time of collecting the data there was no proposal for media arts as a subject in a national curriculum. The teachers’ aspirations for film learning have to be contextualised in conditions that have now changed, but their aspirations still resonate with concerns about films positioning in drama, or elsewhere in the curriculum. Clare is unsure whether to begin to develop film in drama or in digital media. Jen, Carol, Michael and Diana are currently exploring a small amount of film learning in drama but aspire to implement more in some way. Jacki has introduced film as an elective unit outside drama. Despite their varied aspirations for implementation, the teachers uniformly want deeper pedagogical and content knowledge to respond to student interest in film. This is why the teachers participated in the research and film learning workshops.

**The need for deep knowledge in film**

The major concern for the participants was their lack of deep knowledge in working with and teaching film. None of the teachers have any formal background in film learning and have mostly learnt through teaching some film. Clare is the only one who has previously engaged with the model for film learning. Carol articulates the need to acquire deep learning in her teaching: “I need to skill up. I have been teaching short film for two years and my students are beginning to suspect that I don’t know much. Although I have them bluffed from time to time I need to feel confident in what I am delivering, plus these students need extending filmically.”

Productive Pedagogies Research (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006) based on the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (2001) and authentic pedagogy research (Newmann and Associates, 1996) found that deep knowledge and deep understanding of an operational field contributed to student learning of a higher intellectual quality. Teachers with “strong disciplinary knowledge and solid understanding of how knowledge is constructed were better able to mediate their students’ critical engagement with knowledge in the classroom” (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006, p. 48). The NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003)
adapted Productive Pedagogies and described the elements of intellectual quality as deep knowledge, deep understanding, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage and substantive conversation.

The nature of intellectual quality each participant hopes to achieve from the workshops is dependent on the level of experience they have in teaching film. For instance, Jen has minimal film in her drama courses and she more generally wants to extend her skills, whereas Michael who has introduced some film in drama more specifically wants to explore narrative. Jen, Michael and Carol at this stage are more concerned with content knowledge. Clare, Jacki and Diana who have more experience with film learning have aspirations to learn more about how knowledge is constructed through pedagogy. Jacki who has introduced film as an elective program at her school wants to critique her own programs and pedagogy: “I want to ensure we are using good teaching practice and that sound pedagogy underpins the fledgling courses as we develop the programs”.

Diana observes some of the teachers of digital media at her school struggle to teach the disciplinary knowledge of “what should go ‘into’ the film” and that, “there are staff that the principal is realising are not really qualified to teach it.” She comments there are pedagogical skills drama teachers have in regards to managing group collaborative learning in film. Jacki also describes how once teachers across disciplines allowed students to make films for learning they couldn’t manage the film projects or identify whether student outcomes were met: “The teachers abandoned the students, yet for me, the kids were growing in number but staff interest was narrowing”.

Both Diana’s and Jacki’s comments about effective pedagogical skills for film resonate with research arguing teachers using digital video technology need to be proficient in integrating the technology with their curriculum-specific pedagogy and outcomes (Hofer and Swan, 2005). Teachers using filmmaking require skills and knowledge about how moving pictures communicate (Burn, 2007; Kearney and Schuck, 2005; Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002), what constitutes creativity, the teacher’s role in student’s creative work and how to evaluate the quality of the work (Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002).
The participants’ awareness of their own shortcomings and their observation of other teachers across the curriculum struggling with film learning support the premise of this inquiry into drama teachers and their experience with film pedagogy. Clare articulates the participants’ aspirations for deep learning in film when she says of the research workshops: “I hope to learn through participation in the film making process, to learn by doing. And to engage with other drama educators in a critical dialogue focused on the pedagogy of film video learning.”

Teaching and learning for transformation

Maxine Greene (2001) describes teachers in the arts as passionate and excited about searching to find their students’ ‘voices’ and celebrating young peoples’ sense of agency through the arts. Clare expresses this sentiment of agency and transformative learning: “…suddenly as a teacher, I was able to facilitate students to be more than an actor in a film. They could see a whole lot more that they could do with film, of telling their stories through this really exciting medium.” Greene’s use of the word ‘passion’ to describe teachers in the arts is worth noting in relation to Michael. He comments, “I felt a bit stale and that’s one reason I introduced film”. This feeling of a lack of passion in teaching is developed in the following chapter as a trend amongst the experienced teachers. Professional learning and teachers celebrating their own sense of agency and transformative learning (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009; Groundwater Smith and Mockler, 2009) is an issue explored in this research.

The teachers’ decision to introduce film learning as something new in their schools is ‘mindful action’ in curriculum making (Ewing, 2010a). Greene argues an aesthetic education should always be in a process of mindfully enlarging experience for both teachers and students.

We want our students to choose themselves and be strengthened in their choosing by art experiences that open doors, that allow them to realize how wide and various and enticing the contemporary world can be. I have been trying to say
throughout that we are all in process, we who are teachers along with those we teach. (Greene, 2001, p. 185)

According to Greene encounters with the arts should release the imagination and in doing so open new worlds and disclose new vistas. To imagine is to “find ourselves creating new patterns, finding new connections in our experience” (Greene, 2001, p. 178). Transformative pedagogy also relates to existing conditions and being able to create something beyond the present situation. Education is then conceived as “a mode of opening the world to critical judgements by the young and to their imaginative projections and in time, to their transformative actions” (Greene, 1995 p. 56). To release the imagination and promote critical understanding and transformation of the lived worlds is empowerment and an act of freedom.

The teachers in this research are not only endeavouring to achieve transformative learning for their own students they are also developing their own sense of agency in their aspiration to teach film. Their aspirations to teach something new can be seen to be an individual decision to be creative (Sternberg, 2003) and that has the possibility of transforming an existing domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Moran and John-Steiner, 2003). The existing domain is the teachers’ context and conditions of film learning in each of their schools.

**Conclusions**

All the participants have elected to pursue film learning in thought or action in their schools on their own instigation. They have not had the teaching of it thrust upon them. Their curriculum backgrounds are strongly based on the teaching of drama as a live medium and they have little training or experience in film learning. The teachers have made the decision to teach an area of learning that is new to themselves and to their students in their schools.

The creative act according to Sartre (1950) is the source of human freedom and these teachers want their students to have the freedom to express themselves through the aesthetic of film. Greene (1995) argues young people in an ‘aesthetic education’ have
“the right to find works of art meaningful against their own shared lives” (1995, p. 150). The teachers have responded to their students’ ‘shared world’ of film and the wider social context of a world dominated by moving imagery and story.

The role of the individual teacher in curriculum making is as Ewing (2010a) asserts “a moral practice of mindful action. What teachers think about and how they think impact significantly on what they do” (p. 186). As much as the participants’ mental actions create a learning environment, their actions are related to their sociocultural contexts. The orientation and the exposition of the teachers’ stories highlight the interrelationship between the individual teacher and the sociocultural milieu. The teachers’ response to their students interest demonstrates the Vygotskian (1997a; 1978) model of the interdependence of social and individual processes to co-construct learning through semiotic mediation (see chapter 3). The teachers have individually decided to undertake the research workshops to deepen their knowledge in the emerging area of film to more effectively mediate semiotic and cultural learning with their students.

The context and the aspirations in this chapter have identified the conditions for which the teachers’ issues and interest with film learning have arisen. The teacher’s experience is an interaction of the environment and their personal aspirations and actions (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007; Dewey, 1938). The tension in this research narrative is whether the teachers’ aspirations for film learning will be realised in action and if so, how will they be realised? Or, to return to John Dewey, are the teachers ‘building castles in the air’? The teachers’ actions in film learning in their schools will be explored as realisations in chapters 10 and 11. The next chapter reveals how the teachers’ aspirations became expectations after the experience of the workshops. It explores the teachers’ reactions to the workshops as collaborative professional learning.
Chapter 6
The teachers’ expectations: responding to professional learning

You did me a great service. You gave me a confidence in myself that I shouldn’t have had alone.

Jean-Paul Sartre to Simone de Beauvoir

The relationship between Sartre and de Beauvoir is used by John-Steiner (2000) to explain how an additional psychological dynamic of collaboration is empowerment or ‘the gift of confidence’. A theme emerging from this research was the beneficial dynamic of collaborative and creative endeavours in the development of teachers’ professional learning. The premise of John-Steiner’s (2000) creative collaboration is that “each participant’s individual capacities are deepened at the same time that participants discover the benefits of reciprocity” (p. 204). It is this mutual appropriation and interdependence of the individuals and the group in the research workshops that underpins the themes in this chapter.

Responding to the workshops as a process of professional learning emerged unexpectedly as a theme in the cross-case analysis. It was not a focus in the original research questions but became meaningful as a pattern when the gathered data was codified. Stake (1995) likens this process in case study research to casting a net to find common relationships amongst cases. The teachers’ response to the professional learning of the workshops as a process has implications for affecting the teachers’ expectations and experience with film learning. A socio-cultural approach to learning explains that the social process by which learning is engaged is paramount to the making of meaning.

A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29)
This chapter examines professional learning as a social process that generates meaning for the participants in their experiences with film learning. A theme that emerged from the responses to the workshops was the need to develop confidence to practice ‘new learning’ and the need for self-reflection to re-engage with ‘old learning’. This raises issues about the nature of teachers’ professional learning and how in particular the emotional dimension of teachers’ work needs to continue to be developed. Good teaching involves emotional work, “infused with pleasure, passion, creativity, challenge and joy” (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 108). In this research the rekindling of the passion for teaching continues as a theme for further attention in professional learning (Day, 2004).

This study illuminates the role and benefits of pedagogical, collaborative and experiential practice in teachers’ professional learning but it also points to issues with film pedagogical professional learning in NSW.

**Teacher professional learning**

Professional learning communities for teachers both in-school and out-of-school are recognised and advocated as important tools to align pedagogy and curriculum development (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006). Effective professional learning of teachers is a key to student success in learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Based on case-study analysis of teacher education programs in the United States, Darling-Hammond (2006) presents a framework for an ‘adaptive’ mode of teaching that aims to maximise learning for each student by providing an educational environment with a range of opportunities for success. Adaptive teaching “requires deep and sophisticated knowledge about learning, learners, and content” (p. 77). The framework is organised around three general ideas:

1. **Knowledge of learners** and how they learn and develop within social contexts.
2. **Conceptions of curriculum** content and goals – understanding of the subject matter and skills to be taught in light of the social purposes of education.
3. Understanding of teaching in light of the content and learners to be taught, as informed by assessment and supported by productive classroom environments. (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 83).

These three aspects conceptualise the knowledge base of teaching and shape pedagogy. The research workshops (for workshop outlines see Appendix N) aimed to develop teachers’ conceptual knowledge of film pedagogy through workshop experiences in the theory and practice of these three integrated concepts. Carol’s, Jacki’s and Michael’s responses to the workshops reflect the intentions of the film pedagogy workshops to introduce a ‘body of knowledge’ that can develop curriculum programs appropriate to students learning needs.

Carol

The workshops have been amazing and they informed me in a much more pedagogical fashion and because of that you can do more things with the students. You can only do piecemeal stuff with the kids for only so long. You have to have a body of knowledge that they can get a hold of. That’s what the workshops have done. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Jacki

I learned some great stuff that has started me re-writing aspects of the course I currently teach. (Logbook questionnaire, April 23, 2008)
I would love to do more film learning modules. The workshops had very clear concepts, excellent delivery and were really accessible and appropriate for my students and me.
(Logbook questionnaire, April 24, 2008)

The teachers were very positive responding to both the pedagogical framework and processes of the workshops as professional learning, and the film pedagogy introduced within those workshops. Detailed responses to the conceptual knowledge of the film learning are dealt with in the next chapter. In this chapter the six participants’ responses to the workshops processes are explored because they:

(i) shaped the teachers’ expectations of their film teaching experience, and
(ii) provided insights into the benefits and problematic issues of pedagogy and practice in professional learning.

To begin is the role of confidence in the process of new professional learning through the collaboration of “shared visions and shared growth” (John-Steiner, 2000, p.188).

Confidence with new professional learning

Jen’s, Diana’s and Coral’s reactions to the film pedagogy workshops illustrate that self-awareness, confidence and risk taking need to accompany new learning (Day, 2004; Hargreaves, 2003; McMahon, 1999) if the teacher is to feel they can take action with new learning.

I was excited by the workshops. I think what stops a lot of drama teachers teaching film is they don’t know where to start, or they’re intimidated by the technology, or they think they already know it. So having done those first couple of units in the workshops, you
suddenly say, ‘I can do this’. I’ll probably make mistakes on the way, that’s natural, but ‘I can do this’, ‘I will want to do this’. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Diana

As a teacher I constantly think I need to know more, but from doing the workshops I feel brave enough to perhaps say I’ve got enough knowledge and enough material to structure a course in film. I can see the beginning and I can see where I want to go. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Carol

All the resources in terms of ideas and exercises are so valuable and have left me feeling much better equipped to teach film. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

I feel so much more excited and confident about teaching film. The workshops empowered me to empower the students. It’s empathic intelligence, it’s that mirroring of what I do and what they do that creates knowledge. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

New challenges in teaching will only be confronted or sought when people have confidence and a sense of self-efficacy (Rosenholtz, 1989). New learning in itself does not necessarily promote confidence, but confidence for these teachers is an important component that shapes their expectations to teach film. The confidence as Carol explains empowered her capacity for knowledge creation with her students through empathic intelligence.

Empathic intelligence is not the same as emotional intelligence or cognitive intelligence, because it is essentially concerned with the dynamic between thinking and feeling and the ways in which each contribute to the making of meaning…When there is an intensity of feeling matched with intensity of thought, transforming learning experiences may occur. (Arnold, 2005, p. 20)
Transformative learning experiences according to Arnold (2005) are when teachers and students focus beyond their roles and status to create new meanings and shared insights. The notion of empathic intelligence for transformative learning prioritises the dynamic of thinking and feeling, of knowledge and imagination, confidence and enthusiasm, self-reflection and compassion. Meaningful teacher professional learning can be framed in terms of empathic pedagogy. Learning processes that encourage the ‘relatedness’ qualities of enthusiasm, expertise, capacity to engage, and empathy (Arnold, 2005) are vital in the development of teacher confidence in professional learning.

Jen’s and Diana’s confidence developed from the pedagogy’s scaffolded structure (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976), “I can see where I want to go” and a framework of conceptual teacher knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2006), “I’ve got enough knowledge to structure a course”. Diana’s and Jen’s efficacy comes from gaining knowledge but it also derives from a personal will and commitment; “I constantly think I need to know more” and “I’ll probably make mistakes”. Wanting to know more and a willingness to learn from mistakes cannot be underestimated as a motivation and facilitation for teachers to develop professionally (Hargreaves, 2003, Day, 2004).

The link between risk taking, efficacy and professional learning is similar to strategies for the ‘investment theory of creativity as a decision’ (Sternberg and Lubart, 1991, 1995). According to Sternberg (2003) some strategies to invest in creativity are:

- Encourage sensible risk-taking. When taking risks, one must realise that some of them just will not work, and that is the cost of doing creative work.
- Build self-efficacy. Individuals need to believe they have the ability to make a difference and be creative.
- Allow mistakes. Creativity takes risk taking and making mistakes. Exploring mistakes can be an opportunity for learning and growing.
- Encourage creative collaboration. Collaboration can spur creativity by learning from the creativity of others.
Aligning learning to ‘investing in creativity’ is instructive in conceptualising strategies for developing effective teacher professionalism. Creativity in the ‘knowledge society’ links learning with the capacity to think and innovate (Hargreaves, 2003). Without self-efficacy and the commitment to risk taking, mistake making and creative collaboration, new learning may not be undertaken or acted upon. It is evident from the teachers’ responses that collaborative processes and a culture of collegiality (McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993) contributed to their self-efficacy with the challenge of new professional learning.

**Collaboration in professional learning**

Hargreaves (2003) argues that collaborative professional learning is integral to teaching in the ‘knowledge society’. “No one teacher knows enough to cope or improve by himself and herself. It is vital that teachers engage in action, inquiry, and problem-solving together in collegial teams or professional learning communities” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 25). Solving problems through action and learning by the people who face the problems is the ethos of action learning (Revans, 1980). Groups sharing experiences and supporting and challenging each other to take action and to learn “implies both organization development and self-development – action on a problem changes both the problem and the actor” (Pedler, 1996, p. xxx). Shared action and learning requires collaboration. In this research the qualities of collaborative processes in professional learning can be examined and explained as a ‘thought community’ of creative collaboration (John-Steiner, 2000).

**Clare**

*Initially of course for me it was so engaging and stimulating to be back within the world of film pedagogy and learning, beyond that, it certainly extended my learning in many ways. This was partially because the workshops were with a group of very experienced and committed drama teachers. There was a level of experience and expertise in the room that was wonderful. Straight away we went into deep learning. That was excellent.*
There was a range of experiences of film even though these people may have been very experienced drama teachers they were not necessarily very experienced in terms of film. There was the ability to learn from each other. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

Jacki

Being able to work with people who are like me, who just want to work it out together too was really edifying and really exciting. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Carol

Working with others gave me the confidence to contribute, but I didn’t feel pressured... I have loved the mix in this whole group process, all interesting, experienced and informative learners. Everyone has got involved in every aspect of the workshops. I always love working with young teachers because they bring a positive approach that inspires and motivates others and me. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Diana

It has been valuable to hear the experiences of other teachers. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Michael

The exchange of ideas and thoughts is really stimulating. (Logbook questionnaire, April 24, 2008)
As a collegial and collaborative group the participants themselves added value to the professional learning. Collaborative practice was encouraged as part of the workshop design. Reflection and evaluation of the content and processes were undertaken throughout the workshops in the form of semi-structured group discussions. The introduced film learning is fundamentally underpinned by creative, collaborative group learning and the focus of the workshops was for teachers to experience this in practice. The sharing and creation of knowledge as a process in the workshops illuminates John-Steiner’s (2000) ideas of the cognitive and motivational aspects of mutuality where the person is both agent and recipient:

In collaborative endeavours we learn from each other. By teaching what we know, we engage in mutual appropriation. In partnerships we see ourselves through the eyes of others, and through their support we dare to explore new parts of ourselves. We can live better with temporary failures as we rely on our partners’ strengths. By joining with others we accept their gift of confidence, and through interdependence, we achieve competence and connection. (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 204)

The implications for teacher professional learning is that collaborative practice facilitates, enhances and consolidates learning in terms of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978). By interacting with more experienced others individuals go beyond their existing level, “there was the ability to learn from each other” (Clare).

Collaboration as John-Steiner (2000) argues is complex and not only charged cognitively but also emotionally. To take on challenging and innovative endeavours such as a new area of teaching requires risk taking and confidence. Interactive, transformative collaboration that thrives on dialogue, risk taking and a shared vision (John-Steiner, 2000) needs to be scaffolded as emotional requirements in the learning. Seen as an emotional zone of proximal development a shared experience can facilitate “identification, scaffolding, expansion by complementarity, and constructive criticism” to create the ‘gift of confidence’ (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 128). This is encapsulated in Jacki’s comment; “Being able to work with people who are like me, who just want to work it out together too was really edifying and really exciting”.
Acknowledging learning through collaboration, and confidence through mutuality were not the only cognitive and emotional dimensions evident in the participants’ responses to professional learning in this study. The professional learning promoted the reigniting of passion in teaching through the introduction of new learning and a revitalisation of old learning although these outcomes were not an intended objective of the workshops.

Reigniting the passion for teaching

In the previous chapter Michael explained that one reason he had introduced film at his school was because he had begun to feel “a bit stale” with drama teaching. The teachers’ engagement with the professional learning in the research was also reigniting a passion for teaching. Emotion and passion are recognised as integral to effective teaching (Arnold, 2005; Day, 2004; Fried, 1995; Hargreaves, 1997; Nias, 1996; Palmer, 2007). The attributes of a passionate teacher as described by Day (2004) depict the participants in this study.

Passionate teachers are aware of the challenge of the broader social contexts in which they teach, have a clear sense of identity and believe that they can make a difference to the learning and achievement of all their pupils. They care deeply about them. They like them. They care also about how and what they teach and are curious to learn more about both in order to become and remain more than merely competent. They are aware of the role played by emotion in classroom learning and teaching. They are committed to working co-operatively and at times, collaboratively with colleagues in their own and other schools and seek and take opportunities to engage in reflection of different kinds in, on and about their practices. (Day, 2004, p. 2)

In this research the participants’ passion for teaching was manifest in their curiosity, commitment and challenge to be involved in the voluntary and collaborative film pedagogy workshops. Despite being committed and passionate teachers in this way, the professional learning fuelled an awareness of a lack of passion, a recognition of passion’s key role, and re-fuelled an enthusiasm for teaching, as Jen, Michael and Jacki indicate:
Jen

As a teacher sometimes you feel a little stale when you’ve seen it all and done it all before. It’s all new to the kids but for me having done it for so long and being involved in so many aspects of drama teaching, it’s not as exciting to me as when I started. Film opened a new door. I got to experiment with things I’ve ignored for a long time. Suddenly there’s different ways of telling stories and exploring ideas. But its not just exciting for me, it’s exciting for the kids. To realise there is a whole world of film that they can employ and a whole skill set they can build to tell stories through film. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Michael

The workshops enthused me. They reinforced learning through ‘doing’ and that kids love that as well. It really enthused my interest in film. Not that’s its lagging but I was feeling frustrated about the direction I was heading in with filmmaking. So it encouraged me to pursue my intention of adding filmmaking units throughout the drama programs. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Jacki

I think what happens to teachers who have been at the game too long, unless you keep refreshing, is to get into bad habits. You forget that when you were first doing it you brought a real passion and new ideas to it. You get tired. In a school like this you can get really lazy unless someone is smacking you over the head saying, ‘Have you thought about this?’ and you suddenly think, ‘You know what, I haven’t, I’ve been lazy’.
What was timely about the workshops was it re-invigorated the passion that comes from new discoveries. You know it's more than the content you are delivering to students, it's that passion you can share with them that comes from newness and freshness. I think teaching becomes very tiring especially teaching in the creative arts. The arts suck everything out of you until you feel bone dry. You can't manage to get up in the morning let alone give the students another idea or force them in a new direction. So, for me the workshops were like filling the vessel up again. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

These participants’ acknowledgement of a dissipating passion for teaching supports the findings of a number of studies that examine the phases of a teacher’s career (Fessler and Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1989, 1993; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985). The mid-career to late-career stage is a time of career frustration and career stability. Career frustration is described by Day (2004) as a “phase when passion may die” (p. 128) “either through lack of support, disillusionment with the difficulty of the challenges of classroom teaching, lack of recognition or adverse personal circumstances” (pp. 127-128). Career stability is when teachers plateau in meeting the requirements of the job and stagnate.

The workshops were designed to meet the teachers’ specific interest by supporting them pedagogically with film learning in a collaborative and experiential learning environment. They were not designed to deal with the issue of passion in continued professional learning. Passion is a key emotion in teaching and the workshops highlight its significance. It suggests that ‘personalised professional development’ for specific teacher needs rather than ‘collective in-services’ (Hargreaves, 1997; Marczely, 1996) may be more effective in re-vitalising the passion of mid-career to late career teachers. A framework that combines and integrates a ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approach in educational reform can meet the needs of democratic societies and the empowerment of more teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Day (2004) argues that at the core of teachers’ professionalism is:

1. To improve schools by investing in professional learning.
2. To improve teachers by setting the professional learning within the contexts of personal and institutional needs although these will not always coincide.

3. To recognise that teachers’ hearts (passions, enthusiasms, personal identities, commitment, emotions) are as important a focus as their heads and hands. (pp. 131-132)

Day’s last point focusing on teachers’ emotions can be linked to Vygotsky’s discussion in *The Psychology of Art* (1971). Emotion according to Vygotsky motivates the use of the imagination and thinking to create art. And art Vygotsky (1971) argues “introduces the effects of passion, violates inner equilibrium, changes will in a new sense, and stirs feelings, passions and vices without which society would remain in an inert and motionless state” (p. 249). It is interesting to consider the link between art and passion when considering teacher professional learning and passion. Treating professional learning as a creative, ‘artistic’ enterprise may help to develop the emotional energy needed to fuel teachers’ excitement and drive for future possibilities in teaching.

The success of the workshops can be attributed as much to meeting the teachers’ personal interests, needs and emotions, as the workshop content itself. To have a group of teachers together in workshops that supported each other with a shared interest and passion was integral to the effectiveness of the professional learning. *New* learning excited the teachers but re-engaging with *old* learning was also stimulated.

**Re-engaging with old learning**

Although much of professional learning for teachers involves supporting change through *new* learning McLaughlin (1997) contends that seeing ‘old’ activities in new ways is also required to rebuild teachers’ professionalism. Although McLaughlin (1997) examines *un-learning* for teachers through a positive learning community (Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994), some of the teachers’ responses in this study are better described as *re-engaging* with *old* learning. Even Clare as a recent university graduate in teaching was reminded of the importance of scaffolding in learning.
Clare

Certainly the workshops confirmed what I knew, but as an educator you need to continue life-long learning, even when it’s as simple as ‘scaffolding’. You need to be reminded of that, how to do it and how to do it better. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

Diana

The workshops made me think gee there are things I need to apply to my drama teaching and some of the things I do outside teaching. I started to make connections with some of the workshop exercises such as ones that dealt with focus. These were drama exercises and you were applying them to film but it reminded me of things I really should do in my drama work. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Jacki

Old dogs need new tricks. I want more. I suspect Miranda [the teacher/researcher] worries that we know all this stuff, so it feels stupid to teach ‘mothers to suck eggs’. But sometimes revisiting the old stuff replenishes, opens new windows and feeds the tired soul. As an ‘older’ (a term used advisedly) teacher I feel I have fallen into a rut. The school I work at has provided many ‘tools’ for teaching but with lots of expectations and some fairly serious hardline deliverables in bugger all time with no culture of support and few opportunities for renewal and extension.

At the workshop being asked to sit in a room with a bunch of other teachers and being asked to simply imagine something and then watch a very familiar movie was strangely like summer rain. This simple task was re-engaging my imagination and didn’t require any serious gear or very much time and yet the teaching was profound. It let me see what
was possible and allowed me a strategy to engage with the students – to empower them to trust their instincts when ‘dreaming up a movie’.

*It is sad to think that learning about film was required to open me back up to some perfectly good old-fashioned drama and visual art ideas.* (Logbook reflection, April, 2008)

In the workshop context of developing new learning, some old learning was reflected upon and re-engaged with. These teachers reflections-about-action (Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1993) affirm the benefits of time allocated for out-of-school independent professional networks or contexts that stimulate and support appropriate processes for self-reflective practice in teacher learning.

Since the needs of society and students change, it is necessary for teachers to be able to evaluate the part they play in meeting such needs. It follows that they need regular opportunities to exercise discretionary judgement; to reflect upon their moral and social purposes; to work collaboratively with colleagues in and outside school; to engage in a self-directed search; and to struggle for continuous learning related to their own needs for growth and expertise and maintenance of standards of practice. In short, they need to be educated to become and remain passionate practitioners at the heart of whose practice is reflection. (Day, 2004, p. 122)

Jacki’s feelings about why she hadn’t self-reflected resonate with Leitch and Day’s (2001) research on the influences affecting opportunities for teacher reflective practice. They are identified as:

1. **The paradox of productivity.** In schools less people are doing more so there is less time to engage in reflection.
2. **Isolation and contrived collegiality.** The business of the school culture and increased accountability means time is allocated to satisfy bureaucratic demands rather than collaboration.
3. **Feelings of bereavement.** These are feelings associated with the radical social changes that undermine a teachers’ sense of professional identity.
4. **Time.** There are problems with competing demands and choosing how to use real and perceived time. This is linked closely to feelings of guilt and sacrifice.

5. **Habit.** Habits and routines are difficult to break because they reach “down into the very structure of the self” (Dewey, 1932/1985, p. 171).

(Based on Day, 2004, pp. 114-117)

Although Jacki has been dynamic in her school in setting up a film course the above identified influences on teacher reflective practice resonate in her following comment:

**Jacki**

*What I have really enjoyed about the learning in this workshop is that frequently Miranda [the teacher/researcher] has set off with little knowledge, made the mistakes, learned from it and then gone back and begun to codify the basics so that fewer mistakes are made in the same areas (always future mistakes in new areas to be made!). I worry that many teachers do that when they have the time but the older you are – the more complicated your life gets and the more responsibilities you have at work the less time you have to go back and refine your work, codify, or really nail what would make it better. Worse, you frequently drop approaches, units of work, topics or themes don’t fly because you can’t afford too many mistakes or you stay in a rut of tried and true and everything gets stale.* (Logbook reflection, March, 2008)

The tyranny of time (Hargreaves, 2003) is symptomatic of all these factors and the inability for teachers’ to self-reflect. How time is *made* and *used* is also instrumental in the effectiveness of professional learning according to the teachers’ responses to the experiential learning processes of the workshops.

**Experiential teacher professional learning**

The experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) involves grasping experience through concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation, and transforming experience through
reflective observation and active experimentation. These ideas of experiential learning are fundamental to the pedagogy of drama in NSW:

This syllabus draws on the contemporary drama and theatre practices of making, performing and appreciating drama. These practices are active, experimental, critical and reflective. While students develop knowledge, understanding and skills that pertain to each of these practices, it is vital to integrate experiences in these areas in order to effectively realise the outcomes. (Board of Studies NSW, Drama Years 7-10 Syllabus, 2003, p. 8)

Drama learning is experiential so it is not surprising that the drama teacher participants in this study responded positively to the benefits of experiential learning in the workshops. What was unusual about the learning in these workshops was the time given to experiential practice and the teachers’ experiencing film learning from a student’s point of view.

Clare

You can’t learn this from a book you have to do it. The group, who are very experienced perhaps in teaching film and definitely in teaching drama, were not necessarily experienced in making film. What was exciting for me in the workshops was to discuss the pedagogy and critique it but more than that, to actually work with it. To do what we ask our students to do and to get it wrong and to look at each others films and say where we got it wrong, to be that specific. It’s very easy as an educator to forget to practise what it is you teach. That was very exciting because it was an opportunity to practise, to take creative risks and explore something more than a theory or an idea. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

Michael
I think the workshops were fantastic, I mean the proof is that we know from drama with kids you don’t understand until you’ve done it. You can tell kids about expressionist theatre for example ‘til you’re blue in the face but until they have performed it or viewed a performance of it, they don’t get it at all. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

This more intensive course is by far the best way to complete professional development in our area. I have found this much more satisfying and effective than the two-hour workshops at conferences etc. As we know with our work with kids the creative process is enormously time consuming so it seems logical that for teachers to also engage in this area it will be time consuming as well. I think the six-hour blocks allow for the making and appreciating which is crucial for the learning. This is where the theory/ideas you [the teacher/researcher] present to us crystallise. (Logbook questionnaire, April 24, 2008)

Diana

I have an absolute belief in the need to ‘experience’ the learning. Besides that I have felt by doing I can think about some of the issues that might affect the students. The ‘process’ continues to be integral to the ‘product’. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Carol

All the practical work is valuable teaching experience. It leaves you better prepared for the classroom. In this situation you become your own student and as a consequence you have a much better perspective of how they will approach and deal with set task/work. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Jacki
Being the kid again grounds the teacher in the real problems of learning, like working in groups, grappling with personalities, or keeping a journal and doing it regularly, or making creative decisions and having them fail and how that feels. Having the teacher ask difficult questions during the development and realising you have holes in your work and how that feels at the 11th hour. So the experiencing is essential if teachers are to create rich experiential classrooms. (Logbook reflection, March, 2008)

I have realized learning alone from a book is not as fun or as easy as learning it with others in the way it could be taught. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

The response to the experiential learning of these workshops raises the issue of the nature of appropriate learning styles in professional learning practices. Teacher professional learning communities are most effective when they have a shared vision (Andrews and Lewis, 2007), collective responsibility (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995), reflective professional inquiry (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009; Louis, Kruse et al, 1995), collaboration (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995), collective learning (Louis, Kruse et al, 1995) and mutual trust, respect and support (Bolam et al, 2005, Stoll et al, 2006). The responses to the workshops in this study echo the significance of these qualities for effective professional learning but they also demonstrate the capacity of experiential learning. Experiential learning can invigorate the learning dialectic between theory and practice of new pedagogy and encourage the empathising and critiquing of learning from a students point of view. The availability, time and access to appropriate and experiential learning in film pedagogy are however problematic.

**Issues with film pedagogy experiential learning**

Jacki, Diana, Michael and Clare express issues in delivering experiential and film pedagogical learning in NSW. Despite the research workshops involving 36 hours of experiential learning teachers still wanted more time to continue the pedagogical learning.
Jacki

The three and half-hour drive seems insurmountable and I don’t want to get up at 5am and I don’t like driving home into the sun but the workshops have been worth it. I would like to do it again if it were offered. How do other country teachers access this kind of workshop based on experiential learning? More help is needed and teachers need considerably more in-services than is currently available. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Diana

It has involved a considerable amount of time but I am not sure there is another more effective way than this. There are so many side benefits from bringing teachers together and the whole days gave an opportunity to share in a worthwhile manner rather than the rushed experience of a four hour or less after-school meeting. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Jen

In these workshops there was too much knowledge squeezed into a small time frame. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Carol

I would like to see us able to finish the modules we began. We have started something and it feels as though we have had to rush to the end. The problem is now that I have started this I want to keep learning more. Time restraints will hinder this process to a degree. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 08)
Diana, Michael, Clare and Jacki discuss the appropriateness and availability of film pedagogy workshops currently in NSW.

Diana

*I think there are workshops on film and I’m sure people want to know different things. I’ve done some workshops with teachers on the beginning stages, just getting them thinking about film. It was a pretty basic workshop. I think there would be teachers who would like to take a step back before these workshops if they’ve not really thought about film - like this is how a camera works and this is what you can do with it.* (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Michael

*In terms of professional development with film I think there’s a lot of interest. There are people who want to do this and do it well, but in terms of knowledgeable, solid advice and resources, I don’t think there is anything. You want stuff that’s about teaching kids in schools by people who understand that context. There are courses for your aspiring teacher-filmmakers and they are still probably useful but not quite right. You time is limited as a teacher and the resources to pay for courses are limited too.* (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Clare

*I don’t think there’s anything out there specifically offering what we did in the workshops. I’ve experienced other film learning workshops and got a lot out of them but in terms of in-depth understanding, there’s nothing that articulates a model and goes*
through scaffolding and specific fundamentals. There are courses out there that helps you work with film but not necessarily anything that works with film and talks about how we teach that to our students. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Jacki

There are courses in Melbourne at the VCA. They run summer programs on different areas of production but its expensive. So I didn’t get to those. And I don’t really want to be in the film industry. I’m a teacher and I want to know how to teach it. What you frequently get in these courses is people teaching you how to do it but not necessarily being good teachers. Learn from what you do is good but that doesn’t help you teach it any better. I still have to work out what’s the task that will teach this to students in a much more effective, time-conscious way. I want to be really targeted in how the students learn it so that they’re more productive sooner. (Interview, July 26, 2008)

Conclusions

The teachers’ responses to the workshops as a process demonstrate the need for a conceptual framework for film pedagogical knowledge in professional learning. It is a framework that aims to develop:

- A knowledge of learners and the learning process
- Knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy
- Knowledge of contexts and curriculum.

(Darling-Hammond, 2006)

The teachers in this collective case study expressed a lack of film pedagogical frameworks offered as professional learning to support teachers in the NSW. The teachers responded positively to professional learning that explored a conceptual knowledge base for film learning that used the process of experiential learning to facilitate, explore and consolidate the learning of theory and practice. Although

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5 The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) is a faculty of the University of Melbourne and is a visual and performing arts training institution.
pedagogical, collaborative and experiential practice in professional learning appears highly beneficial for these teachers, the availability, time and access to these learning practices appears problematic in the current NSW context.

Professional learning communities are offered as holding “considerable promise for capacity building for sustainable improvement” (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas, 2006, p. 221) in schools and student learning. Fullan, Hill and Crévol (2005) argue that “professional learning ‘in context’ is the only learning that changes classroom instruction” (p. 25) because it focuses ongoing learning for each and every teacher. The development of professional learning communities is applied primarily to the school context but this study affirms the benefits of teachers from different schools forming a professional learning community through a shared vision and shared endeavour ‘outside’ their schools. In The Fourth Way of Educational Reform, Hargreaves (2009) argues for an extension of professional learning communities beyond the classroom and the school.

Teachers can only really learn once they get outside their own classrooms and connect with other teachers. This is one of the essential principles behind professional learning communities. Likewise, schools can only really learn when they connect with other schools…private schools, catholic schools and state schools all working together on transcendent agendas that help each other and serve the common good.” (p. 30)

Professional learning communities however must be mindful of becoming performance-training sects (Hargreaves, 2003) that impose on teachers, standardized knowledge through intensive training. Effective teaching involves personal, moral and political choices and “teachers must be allowed and encouraged to question and critique what they, as professionals, are being coached in, and not just practice exactly what the coach directs them to do” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 181).

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) argue for an inquiry-based model of professional learning that generates teachers’ engagement with their own curiosities about their work. They like Hargreaves (2003) privilege teacher knowledge production over knowledge consumption, and the posing of questions and debate over watertight answers and compliance. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler advocate that teachers’
knowledge and learning should contribute to policy and practice but recognise this requires “a willingness to collaborate and forge true collegiality which brings teachers into professional discourse with each other about things that really matter for their schools, their students and society more broadly” (p. 65).

The process of this research’s workshops indicates the effectiveness of envisioning teacher professional learning as a collaborative and creative enterprise that can encourage the critical exploration of new learning practices and the reflection of old learning practices. The dynamics of collaboration support both cognitive and emotional dimensions in teacher professional learning through the creation of a ‘thought community’. John-Steiner (2000) argues that, “Participants in these thought communities experience a stretching of themselves, as they share the sustained labour of changing their domains” (p. 204). Professional learning that is collaborative, experiential and reflective does however require teachers to have a shared vision, and the time and effort for, and access to such productive, pedagogical processes. How to maintain and develop the support of teachers in their school context through out-of-school professional learning community is also problematic. This will be examined in the teachers’ realisations chapters.

This chapter has explored the social and emotional processes of the pedagogical professional learning in the research workshops as they affect the teachers’ expectations to teach film. The next chapter examines the teachers’ expectations in terms of their responses to the framework and processes of the film learning in the workshops.
Chapter 7
The teachers’ expectations: responding to film pedagogy

*Poetry is what you can’t translate. Art is what you can’t define. Film is what you can’t explain. But we’re going to try, anyway.*

*James Monaco, 2000*

Film semiotician Christian Metz (1974) said, “Film is difficult to explain because it is too easy to understand” (p. 69). Film as moving imagery is too intelligible; it is what you see, and what you can’t imagine. Film is a semiotic system of signs and codes where the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’ are almost identical (Monaco, 2000). Moving images bear a direct relationship with what they signify in meaning, something words rarely do. The image of a rose is a rose but the word ‘rose’ bears no resemblance to the image. “Everything is present in film: hence the obviousness of film, and hence also its opacity” (Metz, 1974, p.69).

In part the grafting of ‘aesthetic expressiveness onto natural expressiveness’ in film is one reason why it is difficult to explain the ‘opaque’ mechanics of film. Primarily it is difficult to explain film learning because it is a relatively new phenomenon for schoolteachers and there is little pedagogical guidance in terms of professional learning and curriculum support (Burden and Kuechal, 2004; Burn, 2007; Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002). How to explain and explore the film aesthetic in learning underlies the teachers’ responses in this chapter.

The film learning (discussed in chapter 3) was experienced and explored by the participants’ in the workshops and their responses to the professional learning provide:

(i) an insight into the participants’ learning and its possible effect on their teaching of film, and
(ii) a critique of aspects of the approach to film pedagogy experienced in the workshops.

Trends in the data suggest that developing fundamental ‘film elements’, using a film learning metalanguage and scaffolding the film learning are key aspects of the participants’ responses to the learning. The role of the audience and the construction of narrative are considered integral to film learning, but the participants felt these fundamental aspects were neglected in their own teaching and knowledge. The benefits and difficulties of collaborative, creative practice in filmmaking also emerged as a persistent theme in the teachers’ reflective logs of the workshop process. The workshops facilitated direction and support for the participants teaching film but the educational framework for film learning requires further exploration, development and refinement.

**Framing film pedagogy**

The workshops aimed to support teachers’ endeavours to teach film through the experience of film learning. Despite the range of film teaching and filmmaking expertise in the group, the responses from the six participants in the case study suggest there is little in pedagogical or curriculum support in NSW to guide these teachers in their teaching of film in drama or outside drama. Support is needed in both having a conceptual framework (Darling-Hammond, 2006) to teach film, and more specifically having deep content knowledge (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006) in film learning (Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002). The workshops were attempting to provide these capacities to the teachers as Clare’s response suggests. At the same time film pedagogy is still developing as a framework as Diana’s response indicates:

Clare

*I believe the learning in the workshops has been about both the film learning itself and the pedagogical approach. In fact the two are really inseparable. For example through the spiral metaphor of the scaffolding process of film learning we were engaging with*
both the individual components of the DNA of film learning and the overall pedagogical approach and the philosophy of collaborative learning. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Diana

What I think these workshops attempted to do was to give a total framework to the teaching of film, just as we were struggling in creating a framework for drama many years ago. I think that’s what this workshop was trying to do, to develop some unique terminology to filmmaking and education. (Interview, 6/8/08)

Diana’s reference to the struggles “in creating a framework for drama many years ago” is interesting in light of where film and media pedagogy currently stand in NSW. Diana witnessed the development of drama in the 1970’s and 1980’s in NSW. She is recalling the issues in framing drama learning and introducing it into the curriculum as a discrete discipline in the arts (see Anderson, 2004). Presently film is across curriculum areas in NSW (see chapter 2) but there is little curriculum support, and specialist training of teachers in film pedagogy (see chapters 5 and 6). The workshops attempted to provide a ‘developing’ pedagogical framework for the teaching of film. The success of the introduced pedagogy can be evaluated in part in the teachers’ responses to the workshops and its effect on their expectations and realisations of teaching film.

Making and appreciating in a sociocultural framework

In the film pedagogy, making and appreciating are intrinsically interrelated to empower students through learning in both the imagination and perception of the aesthetic experience. There were negligible reactions from the teachers to the interrelationship between making and appreciating as a model for learning. It can be surmised that as drama teachers they readily accepted the arts learning model as it is a foundation of the NSW drama syllabus’ pedagogy: “The aim of the Drama Years 7-10 Syllabus is to engage and challenge students to maximise their dramatic abilities and enjoyment of
drama and theatre through making, performing and appreciating dramatic and theatrical works” (Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 10).

In the film pedagogy introduced in the workshops making and critically responding are not bifurcated. These twin arms are inextricably linked as they are learning approaches that inform each other continuously. Appreciating in all arts learning entails framing and interrogating art works in a socio-cultural context, as art forms are a function of sociopolitical, psychological, technical and economic factors (Monaco, 2000). This conceptualisation of the arts framework is not new for these drama teacher participants but is new in terms of being applied to film learning.

What the participants responded overwhelmingly to in the film pedagogy was the emphasis on aesthetic control through learning in scaffolded fundamentals in the film form.

**Controlling the aesthetic through scaffolded learning**

The aesthetic experience in arts learning is in both perceiving a work of *art* and in creating the *work* of art (Eisner, 2002a). Experiencing the aesthetic of an art form through appreciating and making can heighten consciousness and the senses (Eisner, 2002a), enhance personal agency (Greene, 2001) and interrogate the cultural and social processes of the form’s creation (Ferneding, 2007). The development of artistry in an art form is the capacity to learn to control the aesthetic and communicate more effectively through it. Pedagogical knowledge in teaching the arts is in developing a sequence of learning that takes students from the known to the unknown through supportive and challenging tasks to develop skills and understandings in the aesthetic. (Eisner, 2002a).

Art teaching can be a collection of unrelated activities that do not develop the skills that lead to mastery and satisfaction. Creating tasks in which what has been learned can be used and through which connections can be made between what has been learned in the classroom and the world outside it is one of the critical needs in teaching the arts. (Eisner, 2002a, pp. 55-56)
A deep understanding of essential principles and fundamental structures help to explain complexity and make learning comprehensible and connected (Bruner, 1977). If students have the fundamentals, they can generalise from what they have learnt to what they will encounter later on. In the film learning one such fundamental is the relationship between form and function and this is discussed later in this chapter.

With affordability and user friendly accessibility to filmmaking technology, students and teachers have been encouraged to approach film production in schools but teaching how to control the aesthetic has been underdeveloped (Reid, Parker and Burn, 2002). This is borne out by Jen’s, Clare’s, Jacki’s and Michael’s responses to the learning of aesthetic fundamentals through a scaffolded and sequential approach in the introduced film pedagogy. The approach aims to allow for support, discovery and challenge for all students in the learning. Their responses to the pedagogy encouraged them to reflect on current film teaching practices in their schools.

Jen

*I learnt that you have to get the fundamentals first before running off with the video camera. Bloody obvious really but why is it that I do that as an essential understanding in drama but I have been known to throw a camera at a class and say ‘make a film’. Crazy.* (Logbook reflection, March 8, 2008)

*I see kids sometimes stumble upon how to put a good film together in terms of narrative, tension, action and all those things as drama practitioners we might have a little more insight into. We have more and more kids that don’t have the scaffolding. Kids can master the technology probably better than most adults but what they don’t get is how to use it effectively.*

*At this point in time we teach a little bit of film in year 9 and year 10 and it’s dabbling, basic skill stuff. I don’t think these programs are overly effective because we haven’t*
really thought about the skills we need to teach in that unit, it’s just the experience of doing it. I don’t think we’ve given them enough scaffolding to do it successfully for the majority. They get a taste but it’s not really affective. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Clare

In this relatively new area of learning it is ironic that many teachers feel to ‘give the students a camera and let them make a film’ is enough! To truly engage our students in a sophisticated way with film learning, a new language needs to emerge to articulate what the fundamental components of film are and how we as educators can best facilitate and scaffold film learning. This workshop was invaluable at articulating, creating and using the language of film learning to give me both as a teacher and a student the ways and tools to articulate my choices in filmmaking. The workshops allowed me to make a choice in filmmaking with control and understanding of the film aesthetic. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Jacki

The course for me put back the fundamental stepping-stones, which I realised, I had missed. I had been on a ‘feral’ journey together with the students. I realised I had missed ‘step 3’ or ‘step 7’ or leapt over some steps because I was on this interesting journey with the children. When [I began to teach film I forgot] kids don’t all get ‘step one’…in your class there’s going to be a mix of kids. [I was really] only on a journey with kids who thought like [me].

The workshops were a good chance to visit ‘step one’. When I taught visual arts I always started with the elements and principles of design and how to mix colour. You have to go back to those fundamentals because upon them everything is built. I knew I needed step one for film but I just wasn’t sure what it was because I personally hadn’t started there.
When you start with inherent knowledge you don’t know why you know it, you just know it. And you build on it without ever being completely aware of why that works. It’s about being really clear, it’s about ‘this works because...’ (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Michael

The kids had no idea about what the camera was meant to be actually doing. You can come to filmmaking with an instinctive sense about visuals and how the camera helps contribute to the creation of meaning, and you are just lucky if you have that. But if you don’t have that, then it’s all a bit of a disaster. On our creative arts nights the drama work always looked better than the film work. I’m trying to fix that by this opportunity to do the filmmaking course that you’ve run and develop my understanding of how kids can have better control of both the drama, the story and the way the direction of the camera and the actors can effect the story. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

A book [about filmmaking] doesn’t have the clarity of the workshops. It doesn’t have the lovely step by step sequencing of concepts that I experienced in the course you ran. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

In the workshops controlling the film aesthetic to create and communicate meaning was learnt through a scaffolded and sequenced learning structure. The effectiveness of the scaffolding to control the film aesthetic was demonstrated by the participants’ positive responses to the learning. Jen, Michael and Jacki realised they were scaffolding and sequencing fundamental learning in drama or visual arts, but had not applied this approach to their teaching of film. Scaffolding in their drama teaching began with the fundamentals of understanding and controlling the ‘elements of drama’. In the NSW stage 4 and 5 syllabus the elements of drama are explained as:

Role and character are directed by focus driven by tension, made explicit in time, place and situation through the use of space, structure, language, sound, movement, rhythm and moment to evoke atmosphere and symbol, which together
In one of the workshops Jen wanted to know what the ‘elements of film’ were. Principal elements as foundations used in drama learning raise the issue of foundational elements in film learning.

The elements of film

Dramatic elements are indeed fundamental to narrative construction in film but the aesthetic of the film form demands learning and processes at variance with the demands of communicating in the ‘live dramatic form’ since film is in a mediated and two-dimensional form. This is the focus of discussion in the next chapter but it does point to the necessary evolution and development of clear and comprehensive ‘elements’ in film learning that are holistic and essential without being reductionist and simplistic. O’Toole (1992) one of the authors of the elements of drama model said, “… beware: this model is not objective truth” (p. 5). He points out ‘there is no universally valid definition of the elements of dramatic form and although it does sit still conveniently and authoritatively upon a page, it is a thing to be received and analysed’ (pp. 5-7).

The ‘principal elements’ as foundations of learning are aligned with how the conceptual framework of a learning area is defined in the curriculum (Bruner, 1960). A pedagogy’s conceptual framework dictates processes to facilitate learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and this is then related to the pedagogy’s metalanguage (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006). For instance, the drama pedagogical framework in the NSW drama curriculum is defined in part by the elements of the dramatic form and these are explored through the process of making drama, the product of performing drama and the critical appreciation of drama (Board of Studies NSW, Drama Years 7-10 Syllabus, 2003). A specific metalanguage in drama is developed to facilitate learning in these concepts and approaches. Part of a film learning framework is the development of the ‘elements’ or principles and practices, and a metalanguage for the teaching and learning of film. An educational framework in video production according to Connolly (2008) “is needed
within which to locate the principal elements of the moving image so that they can be taught and learnt” (p. 29).

Like drama pedagogy in NSW, the film pedagogy framework uses the constructs of learning through the *process* of making and the *product* of producing film.

**The role of process and product**

In the establishment of drama education in NSW there were debates about whether drama learning should focus on the ‘process’ of making drama or on the ‘product’ of dramatic expression (Anderson, 2004). The dispute was resolved by acknowledging that process and product was a false dichotomy and that process and product was interrelated in the approach to drama learning (Anderson, 2004). The *processes* of learning in making drama are considered as vital to the learning in performing drama as a *product* to an audience: “In the *Drama Years 7-10 Syllabus* both the processes and performances of drama are valued equally” (Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 8). In the scaffolded discovery learning (Bruner, 1977) of the film pedagogy the learning in making as *process* and producing as *product* is acknowledged in Jacki’s response.

![Image](image.png)

**Jacki**

*The process of learning in film produces artefacts which can be made permanent but that does not make them finished works and like improvisation in drama, film work is used to teach concepts and to explore ideas so you can make worthy finished products later.*

(Logbook reflection, March 28, 2008)

*What was powerful to me was that we all went away and made these little exercises and I realised we all got there differently. We got this and they got that, there were different interpretations of the one task. Knowing we all got something wrong and we all got something right was edifying and exciting and opening my eyes. In class we were always making complete statements but you [the teacher/researcher] made us think in moments.*
In drama you do that all the time with improvisation, you do it in art with painting exercises. These are crappy, not very good-looking things but they are designed to teach. Once you’ve learned then you can go and make art. In our film classes we were making kids create art but they hadn’t ‘made’ the tools. We hadn’t really learnt why that works, we hadn’t thought enough about our mistakes to really not make those mistakes again. Unpacking how it works is really exciting. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

The process of making exercises allows the ‘tools’ of the film aesthetic to be explored, discovered and refined, but the process of making is also an experience in the aesthetic (Eisner, 2002a). Clare’s reaction to filming highlights the experience in the aesthetic and how it can be a heightening of experience that brings a sense of pleasure (Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002) and sense of ‘flow’, “an effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p.110).

Clare

Once I felt the camera in my hands and looked through the two-dimensional frame at the three-dimensional world I felt the rush of tension in the frame...

This creative process is expansive, you can make a bland corridor appear like a threatening alley, you can manipulate and enhance the story through the aesthetic choices of lighting, sound and acting, shot size etc...You can put the audience in the film, beside the murderer as they stab the victim, or you can place the audience in the head of a murderer!!! All through your aesthetic choices. However just as it is expansive, it is also tightly focused and controlled, which I was reminded of as we all folded our bodies around the camera with eyes on the screen and called “camera rolling”. Time seems to stretch as you collectively breathe with the actor and the camera to capture the dramatic purpose of the living moment. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

The pleasure of learning and achievement can also be experienced through the aesthetic of producing a product for an audience as Jen’s response indicates:
In an ideal world we probably needed a minor re-shoot to add context to phone text scene but we made do. Some of the shots were great – the use of light in the room as he hid, the diagonal lines, the cut from the phone going off to picking it up, we were so proud of that edit.

After lunch we finished editing and it was time for everyone to watch each other’s films. First time just watch, second evaluate and then discuss. We were first up and we had taken a more suspenseful aspect to our film than others. I learnt that editing mirrors the heartbeat and that tension can be heightened by quick edits. I never realised this before, bloody obvious isn’t it? I was pretty happy with our film and we got some mixed reviews, most enjoying it and putting it in the ‘A’ range, a few ‘B+’s. The clock seemed to be out of place, the text message a bit confusing, the context of why he is there not quite working for some. Others accepted this and all agreed there were some top shots and editing.

(Logbook reflection, March 29, 2008)

To experience the aesthetic however requires pedagogical encouragement and motivation of learners to commit to the process, as a part of Jen’s experience with filmmaking demonstrates:

After some initial contributions I kind of flaked out of the film and either sat and watched, made token comments and then went and gossiped with Miranda [the teacher/researcher] who did comment on perhaps my lack of process learning here – fair cop. (Logbook reflection, March 15, 2008)
Part of learning in a shared creative endeavour is to develop a ‘culture of collaboration’ that values commitment, trust, debate and experimentation through an ethic of care (Nicholson, 2002). Collaborating in the film aesthetic is challenging and it requires skills that have to be scaffolded as part of film learning. To experience and control the film aesthetic as a process of making and a product of producing and appreciating, teachers and students need a metalanguage for learning in the film classroom.

A film learning metalanguage

Metalanguage is a tool for constructing learning, it acknowledges the specificities of technical vocabularies for an area of learning in the way it communicates knowledge and meaning (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006; NSW Quality Teaching Framework, 2003). The semiotics of the film aesthetic are used and expressed to create meaning in the making of a film, and the semiotics are perceived as meaning in critical film appreciation (Monaco, 2000). To teach and learn the semiotics and cultural frames of film’s form, a verbal and written metalanguage is required to communicate these concepts in a learning context (Buckingham, 2003). Carol, Jen and Clare voiced the key role of developing a metalanguage in film learning.

Carol

I kept coming back from the workshops with all these new words and new ideas, a terminology. It was a vocabulary in understanding visual knowledge. I was bringing that back to the students at my school and they understood so much of it. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Jen

The workshops helped in terms of the year 12 kids doing video drama and being able to give them meaningful feedback about what’s working and what’s not working. Before instinctively you feel it’s not quite right but I didn’t always have the language to explain
why. The workshops really helped me as a teacher to be able to be more critical and analytical in breaking down the components of film of what’s not working and why. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Clare

Making film isn’t enough, we need the scaffolding, we need the language, we need the pedagogy. We need to make choices about that as educators. (Interview, 31/7/08)

In an arts educational framework, a metalanguage must be functional to teach students in the making and appreciating of the art form (Eisner, 2002a). A pedagogical metalanguage in aesthetic film learning may be different to media studies’ analysis of media texts (Burn and Parker, 2003) and media literacy (Burn and Durran, 2007). Connolly (2008) discusses how the acting aesthetic in film for instance goes beyond the metalanguage of a media studies approach:

Professional directors are often most interested in seeing what they can get from their actors in terms of movement and speech – and as we shall see, student filmmakers also spend a good deal of time worrying about this. Acting, however, is often barely mentioned by the textbooks on film analysis. In Bordwell and Thompson⁶, it is lumped in with mise-en-scene more generally, which seems inadequate given its importance as a means of communication within the film. (p. 31)

The film learning introduced to the teachers in the workshops attempted to develop a pedagogic metalanguage in the semiotic and cultural structures of making and appreciating film as a narrative art form. A fundamental element in the pedagogy and hence the metalanguage was to perceive or express the dramatic intent of the film aesthetic to engage an audience.

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Dramatic intent and audience

Meaning in film is negotiated between the filmmaker and the audience (Monaco, 2000). The form of the aesthetic in film narrative functions to engage and affect an audience. Bordwell and Thompson (2004) refer to this interplay of form and function with the following questions: “What is this element doing there? and How does it cue us to respond?” (p. 60). This can be described as the dramatic intent of the film aesthetic and this contributes to the dramatic action, tension and engagement of a film story.

Narrative is the manipulation of time, space and causality (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004; Branigan, 1992). Dramatic action is a building block of film storytelling and it is purposeful, varied and probable within the logic and pattern of the narrative form. Dramatic action propels the story forward, creates tension and engages the audience with the ‘journey’ of the story. For example, to show a person running is not necessarily dramatic action, but to see someone being chased is. In the small narrative unit of dramatic action, an element of tension is created to engage the audience to know more about the action or the event and connect it with an aspect of story. Tension within dramatic action has its source in the gap between the characters and the fulfilment of their purpose (O’Toole, 1992).

The dramatic intent of particular elements in the film aesthetic such as framing, composition, a character’s motivation in a scene, elements of mise-en-scene, sound, a genre’s paradigm etc contribute to the dramatic action, serve the story and engage the audience in a meaningful and purposeful way. The following teachers’ reactions to the concept of dramatic purpose and audience suggest it is an approach that helps to explain learning in the film aesthetic at a fundamental level.

Carol

Why do we use that shot? What’s that shots visual impact? What’s its dramatic purpose?
This preparation is so crucial to the intended outcome. I gave this sheet out to my
students back at my school and they were all amazed at how their shots changed or were justified by asking this set of questions. (Logbook questionnaire, March, 2008)

Clare

I liked the task where we drew the shot and then had to find the function or dramatic purpose of the shot. After this task I went straight back to one of my students and went through this with her. I did not want to assume that she has this knowledge. The task confirmed she did not completely understand the dramatic purpose of shots. The other task I asked her to do was the one where you find and cut out different shot sizes and then unpack the dramatic purpose of the shot. I watched her grow in confidence and understanding through this task. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Jen

When you see video presentations at my school at assemblies for example, we clearly see kids with skills but they don’t necessarily know what their intent is, they don’t seem to understand their audience. I would like them to produce more sophisticated work. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Jacki

The notion of audience for me in the workshops was really important. All the time you have this contractual arrangement in drama that ‘I don’t care if you’re good, you can whistle in the dark but no one can see you’ it’s about presenting and performing for the audience. And that really is what makes the difference between kids who run around with a camera and make it for themselves and those who actually understand that they are making this for a wider audience. (Interview, June 26, 2008)
Diana

You get the people interested in the whole techno thing but I didn’t feel that with our workshops. I didn’t feel the camera/technology part was the critical stuff. You were asking us to ‘be the camera’. I felt I had to think like I was the eye of the camera and that was a really good thing for me. What you were doing was making me think about being an audience. I do that in live theatre all the time but I don’t think I did it so critically with film. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

The relationship between performance and audience is considered essential to drama learning (Board of Studies NSW, 2009, p. 6 ; Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 8) but paradoxically the role of the audience wasn’t initially realised by the drama teachers as fundamental to narrative film learning. The film director, Wim Wenders (2002) says simply that making a film depends a great deal on the reason you make it:

As for knowing for whom you’re making it, I think that someone who shoots films for the images alone does so for his own benefit. After all, the perfection of an image, the power of an image, is an extremely personal notion, whereas telling a story is, by definition, an act of communication. Someone who attempts to tell a story necessarily needs an audience. (p.74)

Diana’s comment about the workshops, “I didn’t feel the camera/technology was the critical stuff”, and Jen’s previous comment, “Kids can master the technology probably better than most adults but what they don’t get is how to use it effectively” may suggest that using the technology seems to ‘mask’ or ‘obstruct’ the learning of how the semiotic of film essentially works for an audience. In the workshops the participants discussed how understanding the dramatic purpose of the aesthetic to construct a narrative was a weakness in students’ film work and teacher professional learning in film.
Narrative in film learning

The film form can be ‘categorical, rhetorical, abstract and associational’ (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004) but the NSW secondary drama curriculum is concerned with narrative film (Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 39; Board of Studies NSW, 2009, p.44). The pedagogy in the workshops focused on the perceptual and cognitive function of narrative in film learning because narrative is viewed as a “primary act of mind transferred to art from life” (Hardy, 1977, p. 12) and the film story is a pervasive cultural form (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004). In the narrative film form the audience actively relates and unifies all the elements of the narrative to make sense of and engage with a story. Stylistic unity or the way the film looks contributes to the narrative and is integral to the film’s meaning (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004). The teachers’ response to the concept of understanding and exploring the elements of narrative construction indicates it is an area that needs to be developed in learning with film.

Michael

*Like we discussed in the workshops, the kids really didn’t understand narrative. They seem to think they did, but when I’d say, ‘I don’t understand this’, or ‘What happened here?’ or ‘Why are they doing that?’ and the kids would often say, ‘I don’t know’. It’s almost that it appeals on an emotional level to them in terms of the visual aesthetic…but in the linking of that to a conclusion they were struggling.* (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Jen

*Other workshops revolve around the technology and some of the film language, it gives you insights into the shots and what they are but they don’t talk about the importance of how you use them to tell a story. I think what’s missing is the narrative. Other workshops are about giving you confidence with the camera and the editing but it’s not about*
building the skills of telling a story or dramatic intent in a film. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Clare

We ask our students to make a narrative film but none of us can articulate exactly what narrative is. How on earth do our students understand narrative in film? For me that was another extension I gained from the workshops. Looking at what narrative is, critiquing it and looking at ‘how’ we tell a story. How do you manipulate your audience to go on this story with you? How do you make aesthetic choices to know specifically what you’re doing to your audience in that moment? (Interview, July 3, 2008)

The necessity for understanding how to construct a narrative and the creative processes to generate an idea for a story is pointed out by Diana in her school context. She explains how her drama pedagogical knowledge in narrative and creating a ‘vision’ with stylistic unity complemented a science teacher’s technical knowledge.

Diana

I worked quite closely with a science teacher who is really fantastic and wonderful at photography and wonderful at working with kids but he could never come up with any sort of storyline. He learnt that a good thing was to show me some of the things that the kids had done and asked me how can I create some sort of narrative out of these images. He started to realise the value of having a person who can construct a story and understands the creative process. He was also fantastic because I would say things like you know it would be really good if we had a scene that did such and such. And out of the technology he could create that. I learnt a tremendous amount from him and also he learnt from me. What he enjoyed from me was that I would have an idea, a vision.
would go ‘I’d like this to happen’ and he would have enough knowledge of the equipment to say ‘Yes this can happen, but this would be difficult’. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Diana’s creative collaboration with the science teacher has been fruitful in the development of filmmaking at her school. It illustrates how collaboration can transform learning because it provides scaffolding in expanding social meaning (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003).

Collaboration and creativity in film learning
Schrage (1990) defines collaboration as: “two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have known on their own” (p.40). The previous chapter discussed the mutual benefits of collaborative and creative learning being supportive both intellectually and emotionally (John-Steiner, 2000) in the context of professional learning. The workshops focused on the creativity of filmmaking as an aesthetic experience, illustrated by Clare’s response, “I felt the rush of tension in the frame” and Jen’s comment, “we were so proud of that edit”. The filmmaking experience can also be a collaborative process to learn, and a process in learning to collaborate.

Filmmaking is essentially in practice a collaborative art form with “creativity as constitutive at every level of cinematic activity” (Watson, 2003, p. 140). Filmmaking lends itself to a collaborative learning approach. The collaborative practices underpinning film pedagogy involves group work where ideas, roles and tasks are negotiated and shared. This is not dissimilar to the way groups work in drama learning (Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 10; Board of Studies NSW, 2009, p.11). Drama educator John O’Toole (1992) explains how the functions of playwright, performer, audience and director in Western theatre are performed by separate people with discrete tasks and responsibilities, but says that in drama education these “functions are subsumed in other functions and roles and another network of relationships—the real roles and purposes of people in school” (p. 4). In the drama classroom, for example, students devising drama together are all performers, playwrights, directors and audience at the same time. In the film
classroom, groups of students can be writers, directors, cinematographers, editors and audience at the same time.

The participants’ responses to the group filmmaking work provide an insight into the learning challenges of collaboration. Moran and John-Steiner (2003) point out that the creative, collaborative process can be quite painful at times because the emotional intensity of collaboration is high. “In Vygotskian terms, as collaborators form new functional relationships, they create varied social expressions of their joint commitment” (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003, p. 82). Developing trust, and skills in negotiation, listening and sharing was sometimes surprisingly difficult for some of the participants. It is these skills they aim to develop in their students everyday in drama but their autonomous identity as a teacher in a classroom may have contributed to the challenges of collaborating in the workshops. Despite collaboration being difficult, emotionally charged and personally confronting the participants acknowledge the benefits in learning to collaborate and learning through collaboration for themselves and their students.

**Clare**

*Through the group film task I was again reminded of the dynamics of group learning and life skills (emotional intelligence, communication skills etc) needed to maintain a creative and productive team approach, where all individuals felt they contributed to the whole. We made choices together and switched who filmed every shot. We used all of our skills to create a film with a greater vision than I alone could have conceived.*  (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

**Jen**

*As drama teachers we are controlling and having to give up control was a personal challenge to me in terms of group work. You might have a particular vision and intent*
you want to convey and other people want to take it in a different direction. Sometimes
the group is divided and you have to find a way to adjust and give over your ideas or at
least to be able to express your own properly to convince other people.

I think group learning is really important particularly when you’re starting. I think you
learn so much from other people sometimes from the mistakes you make. If it was a
project you had to do on your own I don’t know if half the people would do it. Sometimes
you have to be carried a bit and sometimes you’ve got to do the carrying. I think that’s a
really important part of group work, so if you drop the ball someone else is there to pick
it up. It might sound strange but particularly when you’re starting in a process that’s new
and where you are learning from each other and learning that process as well. I think it’s
essential to do it in groups. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Carol

In teacher workshops, obviously everyone has their own style and approach to the work
as experienced teachers and this can be problematic. When strong personalities get in the
way most of us are professional enough to recognise that it is happening and preventing
us from learning. Therefore we pull our heads in and use personal control to allow the
learning to continue. This is the same kind of scenario you deal with in the classroom and
this experience reinforces the need for constant supervision of the process with each
group. Keeping the set task in sight is something that I will emphasise in class because
even though we are teachers, keeping on task was problematic. (Logbook questionnaire,
March, 2008)

Jen

I think potentially what made the task difficult was that the group wasn’t cohesive and
one person was driving the operation who on the surface seemed to listen to others but in
the end did what she wanted and wasn’t always clear in her instructions to others.
Having said that we were all tired too and didn’t assert ourselves much and at least our group leader was committed to getting the task done. Large groups made filming and input problematic. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Jacki

I realised that I wanted to do all the bits because I loved it and I had to consciously step back and make room for people who in many ways know heaps more than me. I needed to be more collaborative and I learned that in fact we made better footage because I listened. (Logbook reflection, March 28, 2008)

Clare

Interestingly on our final filmmaking task I was surprised by some of the teachers who seemed happy to stand aside as we were filming and not look at the camera’s screen while shooting. I could not help but lean in to view the performance in the frame and strongly believe you cannot know if you have captured the dramatic purpose of the shot unless you breathe with the actor and camera in this way. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Carol

When you see kids working in a student-centred way, you see them all communicating and having their say. It means they feel connected to what they’re doing. Everyone must have a role, they mustn’t judge each other, and they must work together and talk things through. Everyone should be looking down the viewfinder. Then they’ve got perspective of what there are doing as a group. That’s how they learn, from each other. It’s a very positive thing to see, the energy that comes from them. (Interview, July 3, 2008)
Diana

In any team I work with I stress ‘Your role is critical to the team, if you don’t do your job really well it’s going to break down the team’. I say to kids ‘You have to give support to other people but you also have to let them do their job’. I have to be careful of that as a teacher too. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

The collaboration and participation of those making film and the mediated connection between the making and the audience is the sociocultural function of all the arts (Greene, 1995). Collaboration is a means to embed learning and thought processes (Engestrom, 2001; John-Steiner and Mahn, 2003; Moran and John-Steiner, 2003) and contributes to learning in how to collaborate creatively (John-Steiner, 2000). The challenges of collaborative practice are learning in itself as witnessed by some the teachers’ self-awareness of their actions in the group work. Collaborations as Moran and John-Steiner (2003) argue, provide a microcosm for understanding and examining personality and culture, emotion and cognition, creativity and development.

…a novice’s problem or solution at the edge of social meaning may be labelled as error and possibly corrected. But among equal collaborators who encourage each other to take risks, new solutions are more likely to be socially presented and found useful in the larger society. Through collaboration, individuals can form thought communities and mutual zones of proximal development in which to continue their own and each other’s creative development. (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003, p. 83)

The teachers’ responses to the group learning highlight how problem-solving through collaborative processes in filmmaking can be a challenging but productive aspect of the teaching and learning in film learning.

Conclusions

Teaching control and understanding of the film aesthetic in the learning aims to empower students in their participation and pleasure in the filmic culture (Monaco, 2000; Reid,
Burn and Parker, 2002). The more teachers and students critically understand, explain, explore and create, the more vital and resonant is the work of art and the learning as an experience (Greene, 2001; Reid, Burn and Parker, 2002). The prevailing trend in the six participants’ responses to the pedagogy was a positive reception to exploring the film aesthetic through scaffolded learning within a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1977).

Foundational practices and principles for continuous learning frame the nature of this approach to learning. Understanding and explaining film learning in an arts educational context requires concepts that combine fundamental aesthetic understandings of the film form with aesthetic pedagogical understandings (Pinar et al, 1995). These underpinnings are intrinsic to all arts learning (Eisner, 2002a; Greene, 1995), and within the particular principles and practices of each art form, a semiotic metalanguage is developed to facilitate learning in students. Students learn in, through and about the film aesthetic.

The participants accepted the making and appreciating arts framework as a ‘given practice’ probably because it is integral to drama and arts learning in NSW. However processes common to both film and drama pedagogy were paradoxically neglected by the teachers in their teaching of film. This included exploring film aesthetic fundamentals through processes of making and processes in producing and appreciating film as product. These learning approaches involve inter-related, sequenced and scaffolded creative filmmaking and film appreciating exercises to develop artistry in film understanding and expression.

Understanding film as an art form is to understand how sociocultural, psychological, technical and economic determinants shape the experience of film (Monaco, 2000). The participants accepted an arts framework for film learning that explores and investigates creativity, self and society and culture in this way. What was new to the teachers was learning through scaffolded fundamentals in the film aesthetic. The supportive, student-centred and collaborative approach in the pedagogy was considered effective in allowing for discovery and challenges in this learning. The development of foundational ‘elements of the film form’ to support a spiral curriculum was felt to be integral to film pedagogy.
just as the ‘elements of drama’ are to drama pedagogy in NSW. The shaping of fundamentals for film learning needs continued development.

Fundamental to film learning is the link between form and function, and in the narrative form this is explained as the ‘dramatic purpose’ to communicate and engage the audience with a story. Being the ‘eye of the camera’ and determining the dramatic purpose and action to tell a story appeared a revelation in the participants’ teaching and learning of film. They acknowledged that these understandings were underdeveloped in their teaching and their students’ film work. The participants also recognised the value of collaborative group work as enriching the learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Although collaborative processes of the creative filmmaking tasks were often personally difficult, revealing and confronting, the emotional challenges were considered beneficial and rewarding learning (John-Steiner, 2000).

The participants’ reflections about the workshops are an indirect critique of the pedagogy. Their favourable responses suggest they will attempt to adapt the framework to the needs of their students within their school and curriculum structures. These expectations will be analysed in the teachers’ realisations in chapters 10 and 11. The research workshops offered a ‘developing’ pedagogical framework to be experienced and explored by the participants. Through their responses and experiences film pedagogy continues to be developed and refined as a framework beneficial for student learning in film. The next chapter considers the teachers’ expectations for teaching film by examining their comparisons of film and drama learning.
Chapter 8
The teachers’ expectations: comparing drama and film learning

Comparison [between stage and screen] has proved a rather difficult undertaking, and anyone who ventures into this domain will find it slippery, uncomfortable ground, mined with explosive paradoxes.

Gay McAuley, 1988

This chapter explores how the ‘explosive paradoxes’ when comparing the stage and screen lay bare the distinctive differences and similarities between drama learning and film learning. McAuley’s (1988) perspective is that film and theatre are fundamentally different but between them is a complex and dialectical relationship. Comparison is ‘slippery, uncomfortable ground’ because the two art forms continue to develop and change, and any ‘essence’ normatively prescribed to either is fixed and framed by historical, cultural and personal contexts.

The participants in this study make many references to the relationship between drama and film. Their comparisons highlight the fusion and fission of aesthetics and learning processes in drama and film. In a Vygotskian sense (1978) the dialectical tension provides an opportunity to examine processes of transformation in the interrelationship between the two learning areas. Analysing these transformative processes provides a more robust understanding of film pedagogy and the way it has shaped the teachers’ expectations of teaching film. It demonstrates what these drama teacher participants can bring to film learning. Their comparisons between film and drama may have implications for the nature of the symbolic experience and the focus of learning in the respective aesthetic forms.

The participants discover through the film learning workshops, aspects of the ‘essentialness’ that differentiates the two aesthetics of film and drama in fundamental
ways (Balázs, 1945/1970; Bazin, 1967/2005; McAuley, 1988; Sontag 1966;). The dramatic mode, however, is integral to film in the narrative form (McAuley, 1988; Esslin, 1987; Williams, 1954/2001) and this gives the drama teacher participants’ considerable insights into aspects of film learning (Jefferson and Anderson, 2009). Raymond Williams (1954/2001) argues that the dramatic tradition has had an enormous causal and indirect influence on film, and that the “film-maker who asserts that he is using his new medium without reference to the general tradition of drama and literature is plainly deceiving himself” (p. 26). Williams (1954/2001) argument could be equally applied to teachers who teach film without dramatic and narrative knowledge.

To begin, the participants’ responses reveal insights into differences between the drama and film aesthetics and learning. At the core of drama learning is ‘fictional role-taking’ or ‘the student in role’ and this is fundamental to drama’s pedagogical way of ‘knowing and doing’ (O’Toole, 1992). Pivotal to film’s symbolic arts experience is the ‘directorial eye’. In *Feeling and Form* (1953), Langer likens drama to ‘action’, “creating a total imminent experience”. Film is compared to ‘dream’ and creating “a virtual present, an order of direct apparition” (p. 412) where:

Places shift, persons act and speak, or change or fade – facts emerge, situations grow, objects come into view with strange importance, ordinary things infinitely valuable or horrible…In its relation to the images, actions, events, that constitutes the story, the camera is in the place of the dreamer. (p. 413)

The camera is not itself ‘in’ the picture but as the ‘minds eye’ (Langer, 1953) and this phenomenon may be central to the student’s learning experience in the film aesthetic.

**Directing as central to film learning: acting central to drama**

McAuley (1988) argues that theatre like film is a collective art form but the actor in live performance is central to the aesthetic of theatre. Peter Brook’s (1968) description describes this essence: “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged” (p. 11). In film the actor is a significant but
fragmentary part of the aesthetic. The totality of the actors’ performance in film is created by the manipulation of the camera and the editing.

The totality comes not from the actors’ performances but what is done with those performances, from their exploitation by the camera, and from the ordering and juxtaposition with elements not derived from actors’ performance that takes place during the editing process…The work of the actor, far from being the central communicating force that it is in the theatre, is simply one of the things the camera records, relates (in both senses of the word), and comments upon” (McAuley, 1988, p. 51).

Jacki articulates the same perspective in her observation of drama and film learning.

Jacki

*I think drama in a school is about embodiment and living the moment whereas I think film requires you to picture, it’s a more directorial skill. It’s seeing the picture, whereas the acting thing is living the part. The kids we attract into film are big picture thinkers. Different kinds of kids respond differently to the mediums of drama and film, and yet there are kids who flip through both.* (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Acting and directing are interrelating aspects of the drama and film aesthetic. Acting and role-playing however have a central position in drama learning. Directing may be central to film learning. It is a profound divergence in the focal experience and learning of each aesthetic. Clare expresses the omnipotence and exploitation of the ‘directorial eye’ when working with the film aesthetic:

Clare

*The importance of control and understanding of the aesthetic choices in filmmaking and creating were reiterated through the group task...The control needed to ensure all elements work in harmony; the breath, look, smile, belief of the actor, the way the light*
falls, the sound, the angle of the chair, the framing of the shot to capture the dramatic intent or purpose, and then the way in and out of the shot to ensure the flow of meaning. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Understanding and learning how the ‘directorial eye’ functions in film can be explored in the embodied, kinaesthetic aesthetic of acting, as Clare explains:

Clare

I could tell my students to storyboard but I couldn’t do one myself. I would block myself and say ‘I can’t draw’. I could visualise it but how could I put down in 2D what I see in 3D? The reality was I’m an embodied learner, once I’d jumped out of my chair and jumped around the room all of a sudden I could storyboard. That’s what my year 12 student needed to do. She would sit down with me and be blocked and couldn’t put it down on paper. But once she put herself in the environment and jumped around the room she could suddenly storyboard. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

The embodied storyboarding task in the workshops was an excellent way for me to experience the creative process of capturing the dramatic purpose through the enactment of drama. I felt much more connected to the dramatic purpose of the characters in the film and therefore the shot selection was clearer to me. As a group this was a very fluid and stimulating experience because once we bounded out of our chairs and engaged our bodies, our creative ideas bounced around in a more dynamic and connected way. The collaborative embodied storyboarding allowed us all to contribute to the filmmaking in a more organic way. This is a clear link to our drama form. (Logbook reflection, April, 2008)

The kinaesthetic, psychophysical learning approach (Gardner, 1983/2004) of embodied storyboarding explores the dramatic intent of a scene and characters’ motivations. Acting
or role-playing is a drama pedagogical approach that explores meaning through identification as an act of make-believe.

Acting behaviour is an act of fiction-making involving identification through action, a prioritising of determining responsibilities, the conscious manipulation of time and space and a capacity for generalisation. It relies on some sense of audience, including self-spectatorship. (Bolton, 1998, p. 270)

Bolton (1998) describes acting as an aesthetic learning feature in drama but it is employed in the film pedagogy to understand and determine how the camera should directorially ‘frame’ the dramatic and narrative action in film. Improvising and acting out the dramatic action helps to ascertain what and how shots should be used to affect and engage the audience. It is a way of teaching, learning and understanding the film aesthetic as a form of storytelling.

The kinaesthetic acting approach is an attempt to use ‘acting’ or role-playing to explore what is central to the aesthetic concept of film: the camera’s directorial eye. The role of the ‘directorial eye’ in film learning is central because of film’s mediation of dramatic action through the camera and editing. This is a fundamental shift from the centralised role of the student’s body as the mediation of meaning in drama.

The student as the directorial eye in film learning can be linked to another essential aesthetic element: the ‘framing’ of the dramatic action and narrative through the technology of the camera.

**Film in a frame: drama in a space**

Framing in the camera is key to film since the choices of

(i)  *what* goes into the frame (denotative quality),

(ii)  *how* it is framed (paradigmatic connotation) and

(iii)  *how it is presented* with other shots (syntagmatic connotation) create meaning and engagement for the viewer (Monaco, 2000). The capture of a scene framed by the camera communicates meaning through the artifice of the mise-en-scene
and editing. This may have consequences for learning in film. Diana comments that film learning places children in a ‘frame’ and drama places children in a ‘space’.

Diana

Film is still the same collaborative work. It’s the same way I would work a drama class but focusing on different things. The terminology needs to be different because you’re asking kids to think more visually and 2D. You’re not placing them in a space you’re placing them in a frame. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Diana’s reflection corresponds with McAuley’s (1988) comparison of film and theatre.

Film is a construction made up of a series of images: hundreds of separate shots in which any action is fragmented and then reassembled. It is a form of storytelling posited essentially on a linear sequence of images. Theatre, on the other hand, is a construction made up of a series of events (not fictional events at the level of plot but real events at the level of performance). It is a form of storytelling posited on physical movement into, out of and within a given space. (p. 53)

In drama the body exploring physical space shapes the aesthetic experience of storytelling and hence the learning. In film, the experience and expression of ideas, feelings and stories for students are constructed often in a real space, (not always with animation) but composed for and captured by the technological space of the frame. In the workshops Michael comments on this learning experience and the changes that occur in the creative, ‘fragmented’ process of filmmaking through the framing of the camera and the rhythm of the editing.

Michael

The most powerful learning was the shift from the original idea of what you think the film will be and what you end up with, the change that happens through the process of filmmaking. You can think up these shots and storyboard it, and then be in the actual
space and it's not quite as you imagined, and even the movement, the action within the scene cannot be what you imagined, and then the editing. I found this fascinating all this change. Whereas with drama you kind of end up with what you imagined. It does change in drama too but I think it’s about the processes of filmmaking, it’s in the camera and the editing that really alters it. It’s all about being within the camera. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

The framing, fragmenting and reassembling of the images is a formal and artificial construct crucial to the learning experience of the film aesthetic. It is a creative process substantially different to processes of drama making and performing. Also different is film’s capacity to capture the ‘reality’ or authenticity of an unimagined environment.

**Film in an unimagined environment**

With or without a ‘staged’ setting the central aesthetic of the actor in a space in drama creates an imagined representation of the world. In the theatre the invisible is made visible through the imagination (Peter Brook, 1968) and “in the absence of the actor it does not exist” (Robert Edmond Jones, 1941/2004, p. 20). Theatre is both stage and fictional place and “nothing on stage has any stable meaning divorced from the human agency of the actor. It is for example the actor who creates the sense of place even if an elaborate representational décor is also used” (McAuley, 1988, p. 50). Theatrical representation and imagination communicates through metaphor; the stage becomes the world and suggests “the immanence of a visionary world all about us” (Robert Edmond Jones, 1941/2000, p. 24).

A screen image without an actor is still perceived to be a place. In film, place is not imagined but it is still a symbolic representation of the world through the choice of imagery, and often imagery from the ‘real world’. In spite of its capacity to attain the appearance of the real world, film transforms what it represents. Arnheim (1957) argues; “Art begins where mechanical reproduction leaves off, where the conditions of representation serve in some way to mould the object” (p. 57). Aesthetic choices such as framing, composition, location and dramatic action shape the artistic artifice of film but
at the same time film’s resemblance to reality, its ‘lifelikeness’ is integral to the artifice (Bazin, 1967/2005). Film has the ability to capture the temporal and spatial continuity of the world for “the image of things is likewise the image of their duration” (Bazin, 1967/2005, p. 15).

The artificial construct of ‘authenticity’ of an unimagined world in film is integral to the aesthetic experience. McAuley (1988) compares the difference between the film and drama experience as one of abstraction and concrete physicality.

The filmic process inevitably interferes with and distorts the profilmic reality from which it then reconstructs a new ‘reality’. This totally artificial construct nevertheless possesses the power to convince us of its authenticity. Despite the apparent realism and the objective credibility of the images it presents, film is in fact an abstract, cerebral, essentially analytical medium. Theatre on the other hand, despite its need for artifice, convention and ritual in the presentation of the real, is paradoxically a physical, sensuous and essentially concrete medium. (McAuley, 1988, p. 54)

In the representation and experience of the world, film and drama can be different ways of ‘imagining’ and experiencing the symbolic embodiment of human meaning. In the workshops one of the film learning modules was concerned with how character is defined by a virtually represented environmental landscape in the imagery and Michael makes this observation:

Michael

*I loved the whole interrogation of how environment is an extension of the character and the dramatic action. I also like the thinking about how you might achieve this in theatre and how it is very different in film. An aspect of the course that has been really beneficial is the drama/theatre/film comparisons. It has sharpened some definitions for me and also brought up a whole lot of new perspectives and questions about the two mediums.*

(Logbook questionnaire, April 24, 2008)
The comparison and tension between drama and film learning heightened Michael’s understanding of fundamental aspects of the film aesthetic and its contrasts to drama as a symbolic form. In this instance described by Michael the symbol is the denotative and connotative relationship of character to an unimagined environment in film.

The participants’ responses in this study reveal how their drama teaching not only provides contrasts to film learning, but also informs and enhances their understanding and teaching of film. In a profound sense, the participants recognise drama’s connection to film’s dramatic mode of storytelling.

**The ‘drama’ in film**

Film transgresses the practical, environmental, pictorial, dramatic, narrative and musical spectrum of the arts but it is known best as a dramatic, narrative art (Monaco, 2000; Bordwell and Thompson, 2004). Raymond Williams (1954/2001) argues that film in its main uses is of the dramatic tradition since it has the elements of ‘performance’ and ‘imitation’.

The relation of performers to audiences, and the audience’s expectations, have varied widely in the whole dramatic tradition; the larger continuity overrides the particular variation of the cinema. And because the recognition of continuity is creatively important I hold to the argument that film, in its main uses, is dramatic in terms of its elements of performance and imitation; and that it is capable of producing works in the categories of tragedy, comedy, farce, or in any of the new categories which the variations of dramatic history have produced. This is not to deny that film, as a particular dramatic medium has its own conditions…(Williams, 1954/2001, pp. 28-29)

Film, Williams argues, is a part of the changing nature of performance conditions in the history of the dramatic form. Film’s changing ‘conditions of performance’ in the dramatic arts are manifest in the visual and narrative potential of the medium. The visual elements of film are aligned with the expressive quality of the pictorial arts. Film’s capacity for the fluidity of space, time and shifting point of view are associated with the narrative of the novel (Monaco, 2000). The fragmenting and reconstituting of the visual through editing and the way rhythm is crucial to meaning for the audience is closely aligned with music (McAuley, 1988). The ‘senses are synchronised’ in film through the
expressive quality and rhythm of unifying the image with sound and music (Eisenstein, 1947).

Film has a complex relationship with all the art forms, omnivorous in being able to assimilate elements of the other arts and turn them into its own (Langer, 1953). In essence, however, drama on the screen and drama on the stage both use dramatic and narrative modes of storytelling (McAuley, 1988). These modes are used in different ways and to different degrees through the different mediums of the screen and the stage, the frame and the space. Carol, Jen and Jacki’s responses indicate some of the dramatic and narrative elements fundamentally related between the drama and film modes of learning.

Carol
As a drama teacher I bring an understanding of how dramatic elements are used in the theatre and I can apply those principles to the way we look at narrative in film. A drama teacher looks at how meaning comes through in narrative. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Jacki
I’m sold on the whole idea that drama teachers should teach film because we get the whole audience thing. Nobody else quite gets it. Audience is really about the public, it’s out there and drama teachers get that because we’re always trying to deliver to the widest possible audience. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Jen
I think drama teachers get used to putting all the pieces together to tell a story. It’s what we do. I remember asking at one of the workshops where do the dramatic elements come
in and then realising it comes in here, it comes in there. I suddenly realised that anybody who didn’t have knowledge of this, and it is integral to all aspects of filmmaking, is really at a disadvantage. It’s about storytelling, tension and the dramatic elements, and acting for the camera. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Jacki

Film is a different way of acting it’s a different way of thinking. I used to think of drama as a hybrid, that it took the best of a whole bunch of the arts and pushed them together. And film is its bastard son. It uses many of the arts, so drama teachers are used to working with the visual and the auditory and the whole kinaesthetic thing. Film is a multi-skilled sport. You need teachers who are not just one discipline, they have got to effectively embrace many disciplines. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Jen and Carol believe that drama teachers’ understanding and teaching of the dramatic narrative is vital to the learning in filmmaking. Jacki is emphatic that the way drama teachers understand audience is constituent to the teaching of film learning. Her view echoes Raymond Williams’ (1954/2001) argument that the relation of performer to audience is creatively important to recognise in film. Jacki also likens the totality of the multi-modal sensory and literacy experience of the theatre to the multi-modal, hybridised nature of film. She argues drama teachers are adept at teaching the multi-modality of film learning.

Jacki’s metaphor to describe film as drama’s ‘bastard son’ is a strong affirmation of the bond between drama and film, although curiously it is an illegitimate connection. The connection between drama and film continues in Jacki comments; “film is a different way of acting it’s a different way of thinking”. The aesthetic tension between drama and film reveals the commonality of acting to both art forms but also its differences.
Acting in film

Acting is a kinaesthetic, visual and auditory mode and uses the ‘self’ as the instrument of the art form. In drama, communication through the body, voice and emotions and the playing of role or character is an expression and exploration of self, ‘other’ and human experience (Bolton, 1998; O’Toole, 1992). Jen comments on how she will convince her drama staff to teach film by explaining her view of the role of acting in film learning.

Jen

I can tell my staff that the way we teach film can still have a lot of drama in it. I do see drama and film as different, but in terms of acting for camera or workshopping storyboarding, those things have their heart in drama although they manifest themselves in a very different way in the end. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Acting as an element of film is usually ‘lumped’ with mise-en-scene learning, and according to Connolly (2008) this seems inadequate given its significant part in communicating within a film. Connolly (2008) suggests that acting in film learning has a strong pedagogical connection with drama:

…[acting] is something that is not often talked about in class; it belongs to a different pedagogic tradition, that of the drama teacher, although logically the pedagogies of drama and media should fuse at many points, especially in view of the intertwined histories of theatre and film. (p. 31)

The strength of acting in students’ film work according to Jen is paramount. She makes the following observation about the impact of acting to film storytelling:

Jen
…you know from watching videos if you get a good cast that makes the difference to bringing that story to life. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Acting can be instrumental to the film aesthetic. These drama teachers’ understanding of acting processes and how to teach it can be beneficial to learning in and about film (Jefferson and Anderson, 2009). At the same time, the differences between stage acting and film acting are challenging for these drama teachers, as Clare comments during the workshops:

**Clare**

*I feel that film acting is very challenging and different to acting for theatre. This task highlighted again the importance of internalising the intention and allowing the camera to come to you (rather than project your performance out). Also the intention must be communicated by the actor but the ‘circle of tension’ is smaller than in the theatre. Also depending on the shot size the performance an actor delivers should differ to achieve the dramatic purpose in the frame.* (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

The ‘dramatic code’ is apparent in acting in the film aesthetic although stylistically it differs to live, theatrical drama. Churcher (2003) likens theatrical acting to exploring the universe through a telescope and film as exploring the atom through a microscope, yet both “the macro and micro worlds illuminate each other” (p.21). These drama teachers’ comparisons too illuminate how the acting aesthetic and processes work in film.

From the participants’ responses it is apparent that when they as drama teachers teach film there are acts of transcoding the dramatic codes of drama in a ‘space’ to drama in a ‘frame’ (Mooney, 2004). There is also transcodification of dramatic elements and narrative structures, acting technique and the use of multi-modal, aural, visual and kinaesthetic modes of performance representation for an audience. Filmic techniques
may also be transcoded from film to the stage aesthetic. The transcodification becomes a hybridised integration of the film and stage forms in drama learning.

**Filmic techniques in drama**

Multi-media performance commonly describes theatre that mixes live performance with machines and/or mediated forms such as projections and film (Allain and Harvie, 2006). Performances of this kind have been and continue to be a presence in the theatre. Drama practitioners and researchers (Anderson at al, 2009; Carroll et al, 2006) are exploring the creative possibilities of extending drama learning into digital technologies. Michael considers the possibility and complexities of teaching filmic techniques in drama to explore hybridised drama forms.

Michael

*I’m now thinking I don’t know if I’d pull out those film units from drama if we have a stand-alone, where there’s film kids and just drama kids. I’m sort of getting an inkling that film and drama may sit together quite nicely. I think they are very different, you really are changing gear teaching drama and then teaching film but the idea of multimedia and performance, I think there’s something there. The problem is there’s not enough time to really put the two [multimedia visual imagery and live drama] together in a way that’s integrated.* (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Michael’s thoughts echo Sontag’s (1966) discussion of two opposing principles to describe the arts and the possibility of synaesthesia:

> A painting is a painting. Sculpture is sculpture. A poem is a poem, not prose. Etcetera. And the complementary idea: a painting can be “literary” or sculptural, a poem can be prose, theatre can emulate and incorporate cinema, cinema can be theatrical. We need a new idea. It will probably be a very simple one. Will we able to recognise it? (Sontag, 1966, p. 37)
Haseman (2002; 2004) argues that in our ‘converged world’ the drama curriculum will recognize the central place of hybrid and collaborative experiences in the arts, design and the media. Neelands (2009) believes drama education has a responsibility to integrate technology into its pedagogical paradigm. In the context of these ideas Michael comments that to integrate the aesthetics of theatre and film in multi-media performance more curriculum time is required to accommodate this extension of learning.

The participants’ responses to the relationship between drama and film learning raises questions about the paradigm parameters of drama, film, and media as curriculum areas and pedagogies. In the light of discipline boundaries and the ‘intellectual precision’ of deep learning (Eisner, 2002b), is film learning a strongly bounded discipline with a specific mode of inquiry and learning distinct to drama learning?

**Drama and film: different ways of imaging and learning**

The relationship between film and drama is complex because they are both similar and divergent. Whether to assimilate or separate the learning of film and drama is to consider how different drama and film are as symbolic ways of thinking, imagining and learning. For Jacki and Clare teaching and learning in film is a different way of knowing.

Jacki

Jacki was a visual art teacher previous to being a drama teacher. *The film workshops were like when I had to stop being an art teacher to become a drama teacher. You realise you’re thinking with a different brain. Like acting on the stage and acting for the camera, everything is different.* (Interview, June 26, 2008)

Clare
I feel like after this task my ‘film way of thinking’ has been reignited. I honestly feel there is a different way of thinking and creating in filmmaking compared to drama. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Diana and Clare also comment that if film is given time and space as a discipline separate to drama it has the capacity for deep knowledge and deep understanding in student learning.

Diana

I think film is different enough to drama because it’s an art form in itself. It’s a whole other area that could be investigated. I think that in our NSW drama course so much of the course involves the skills that are important for live theatre and only a tiny bit of it can really involve looking at film. In my drama courses, I feel I only ‘lick’ film.

... I think my response to the workshops was film could be a course I could do separately to drama, which I did speak to my school about. I said I think this is something that could exist by itself using all the same ideas that are important in drama but it was so much more in-depth. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Clare

I really enjoyed teaching film as a separate subject because I can see how much there is to teach in film and how it is a different aesthetic to drama. However, I can see the way collaborative learning works in drama and I can see how it works in film. I can see how to make exemplary films there is a whole other course and curriculum that can create really deep learning for students. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

In Diana’s and Clare’s vision of film as deep learning they continue to make comparisons to drama learning. Diana says, film uses “all the same ideas that are important in drama”
and Clare remarks, “collaborative learning works in drama and I can see how it works in film”. In this study comparing drama and film, like comparing the aesthetics of the stage and the screen (Balázs 1945/1970; Bazin, 1967/2005; Langer, 1953; McAuley, 1988; Nichols, 1936; Sontag, 1966; Williams, 1954/2001) helps to reveal some of the inner learning processes in both. Understanding these processes may provide profound insights into film learning and clarify its’ capacity and focus for learning in schools.

Conclusions

The film learning workshops prompted the participants to compare drama and film learning and this has shaped and refined their expectations of film learning. Their responses to the fundamental differences in the aesthetics of film and drama may provide understandings of the different symbolic ways of imaging and knowing, and hence student learning in the respective art forms. The participants discovered the following fundamental differences between film and drama:

(i) directing is central to film pedagogy whereas acting is central to drama,
(ii) stories are told in and through the assemblage of frames in film, in drama they are told in and through a space, and
(iii) environment is symbolically embodied and represented but unimagined and virtual in film, the environment in drama is represented through metaphor and being imagined.

For the participants these formal attributes of film and drama are profoundly different aesthetic experiences in the ‘process’ and ‘product’ of learning. It is encapsulated in Jacki’s remark, “you realise you’re thinking with a different brain”.

The tension between drama and film and their shared history as a dramatic tradition (Williams, 1954/2001) suggests there are significant ‘same’ ways of thinking between drama and film. The narrative film as a pervasive communication presence (Bordwell and Thompson 2004; Monaco, 2000) has the dramatic mode inherent to it (McAuley, 1988). The drama teacher participants perceive their knowledge of dramatic elements, narrative and acting as advantageous to the effective teaching of film. Extended and deep learning
in film may also give rise to the possibilities of exploring hybridised arts performance forms.

The strength of the participants’ response to the effectiveness of their involvement as drama teachers with the teaching of film is typified by Diana’s reflection:

Diana

I am starting to feel that if the drama community doesn’t do something film will end up being taken over by other subjects and that may not be a good direction for the learning. That is not to say that teachers of other subjects should not be involved. It is just that we should be clear on what place drama practice has in the teaching of filmmaking.

(Logbook questionnaire, 28 April, 2008)

“The place drama practice has in the teaching of filmmaking” that Diana refers to, has in part been illuminated by the participants’ responses in this chapter. These drama teachers understand the dramatic, narrative and performative codes of film and their representation for an audience. In the ‘slippery ground’ of comparisons between drama and film, the participants’ responses suggest that film and drama are different aesthetics and different experiences of learning. At the same time these drama teachers have pedagogy and content knowledge that complement the teaching of film. Diana’s comment that film “being taken over by other subjects and that may not be a good direction for the learning” indicates her concerns with film learning in the wider educational and political context of curriculum development.

Film learning in the curriculum is a theme continued in the next chapter. It examines the teachers’ goals for film learning and their expectations for film as a subject in the arts curriculum.
Chapter 9

The teachers’ expectations: film as a discipline in the arts

In all but a few benighted corners, film has been accepted as an art. But the way in which it fulfils artistic criteria, given its distinctive technological character - a character which has evolved and continues to evolve – is a fascinating and far from settled matter.

*Murray Smith, 2005*

In 1953, Susanne Langer proclaimed, “Here is a new art…[film is] not only a new technique, but a new poetic mode”. Yet as Murray Smith (2005) points out, there have been opposing views like those of Theodor Adorno’s (1947/1979) who claim film’s mechanical and commercial nature corrupts its aesthetic potential. Film has long been argued to be an art (Arnheim, 1957; Balazs, 1945/1970; Eisenstein, 1949) but its recording, technological and commercial character, its recency in relation to the traditional arts and its capacity for technological evolution continues to challenge film’s ontology and be a ‘far from settled matter’. For many of the same reasons how film is developed in the curriculum is also a ‘far from settled manner’.

In this chapter the teachers’ responses reveal how they envisage film as a distinct discipline in the arts curriculum. From the teachers’ goals for film learning in their schools, the reasoning and potential of film as a subject in the arts is examined. The chapter considers:

(i) why there should be film learning in education,

(ii) why film learning is in the arts, and

(iii) the possibilities and problems for film learning in the proposed discipline ‘media arts’ in the new Australian curriculum.

At present in NSW the drama and English curricula can accommodate a small amount of narrative filmmaking (see chapter 2) but as Clare commented in the previous chapter: “I
can see how to make exemplary films there is a whole other course and curriculum that can create really deep learning for students”. The introduction of media arts in the prospective Australian curriculum allows for film learning. Film’s role in the new media arts is unclear at this stage (see chapter 2). The timeline for the curriculum documents to be written for the arts in the Australian curriculum is 2011 (ACARA, 2011). Media arts in the current Draft Shape paper for the Arts (ACARA, 2010) encompasses a range of media communication technologies. Media education historically has emphasised learning about media (Buckingham, 2003) rather than the arts learning approach of learning in and through the aesthetic, creative experience of art forms (Eisner, 2002a; Greene, 1995). The teachers’ expectations of film learning in this chapter highlight these issues in arts curriculum developments.

**Why there should be film learning in education**

According to Dewey (1916) children’s development is mediated by the stimuli we select and control as part of their education. Education is, in Dewey’s terms, ‘loading the dice’ through the selected and charged preceding successes of human activity. Loading the dice in education is choosing from the past and present, what is of value for children in the future. Like dramatic tension (Langer, 1953), education lives in ‘the perpetual present filled with its own future’. The participants in this study consider film learning as aesthetic learning, unique learning, authentic learning and learning for the future. This is reflected in Diana’s and Jen’s responses:

**Diana**

*Film is such a new area of drama education that I really don’t think has had the consideration it deserves given the growth of interest from students. The workshops have made me really reflect on the unique qualities of filmmaking.* (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)
Jen

I think film is the way of the future in the sense kids are going to do it with us or without us, so let’s take the journey with them. And I would like to think the school embraces that as well. These are the things that separate schools from each other. There are many ways of learning and this school offers the opportunity to learn in many different styles. And film forces you to access all of those styles. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Diana and Jen observe the growth of interest in film from students and they see film learning as a cultural, communication tool that young people will continue to use and respond to in the future. The teachers’ visions reflect concerns that education should connect with the social world of children (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hargreaves, 2003; Hayes et al, 2006; Newmann and Associates, 1996; Wyn, 2009) and utilise cultural, semiotic forms to mediate learning and development (John-Steiner and Mahn, 2003; Kress, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981; Wertsch, 1994). An authentic connection to young people is to employ ‘culturally appropriate understandings of participation’ and this has positive implications for their sense of wellbeing and learning (Wyn, 2009).

Knowledge is ideologically and socioculturally constructed and represents cultural, local and human interests (Habermas, 1987). Cognitive pluralism as a curriculum ideology (Eisner, 2002b; Hirst, 1974) acknowledges the plurality of knowledge through the creation and manipulation of symbols. Symbols represent meaning, so film as an aesthetic, symbol system is culturally critical to create aspects of meaning. Eisner (2002b) argues:

Because the pursuit of meaning is a basic part of human nature, and because meaning is in large measure achieved through the use of symbol systems, the ability to read symbol systems that mediate meaning is critical if meaning is to be secured. (p. 82).
In cognitive pluralism, film knowing is then another way to describe our personal and social world and make meaning (Goodman, 1978). Diana suggests this when she comments on the “unique qualities of filmmaking”.

Related to the plurality of knowledge is the plurality of intelligence (Gardner, 1983/2004). Varied learning styles recognise different intelligences that are not simply aptitudes but socially constructed ways of solving problems and seeing the world (Gardner, 1983/2004). Jen believes film offers a learning environment that accesses a range of cognitive modes for children. Diana and Jen’s perspectives of film learning concur with Greene’s (1995) view of the arts as a dynamic form of learning that connects teachers with the world of the young and extends the worldview of the young by tapping a range of human intelligences.

It becomes all the more important that (the young) tap the full range of human intelligence and that as part of our pedagogy, we enable them to have a number of languages to hand and not verbal or mathematical languages alone. Some children may find articulation through imagery; others through body movement; still others, through musical sound. Mastery of a range of languages is necessary if communication is to take place beyond small enclosures within the culture; without multiple languages it is extremely difficult to chart the lived experience, thematizing experience over time. (Greene, 1995, p. 57)

Filmmaking is an aesthetic language or symbol system for students to chart and thematise the world as a lived experience. It is as aesthetic learning that Michael and Clare articulate why they think film learning should be in the curriculum:

*Michael*

*Kids need that space in a curriculum loaded with deconstruction, loaded with factual learning. They need the space to speak, and drama does that for them, visual arts does that for them and filmmaking will do the same I think.* (Interview, July 2, 2008)
Clare

_Ultimately I would like to get students to year 12 having a strong aesthetic understanding of film and being able to make choices to tell their stories, to be critical and analytical, to be immersed in the world of film which they are, but to be critical in that world._

(Interview, July 31, 2008)

Michael and Clare explain how film learning as aesthetic learning focuses on students being empowered to express themselves symbolically and to examine symbol systems and culture with a critical, interpretive eye. Greene (1995) argues that in arts pedagogy young people make sense of culture by being encouraged to interrogate conceptual networks and symbol systems through interpretive dialogue. Film learning as a form of aesthetic learning encourages students to experience, learn, interpret and communicate the lived world through a plurality of knowledge and multiplicity of consciousness. Knowledge and learning in aesthetic learning is not static acquisition, it is a dynamic concept changing according to the students vantage point (Greene, 1995).

Underpinning the teachers’ expectations for film learning in the curriculum is the ideology of cognitive pluralism (Eisner, 2002b) and a unique way of knowing (Habermas, 1987). It is in both these aspects of cognition and knowledge that the drama teachers have expectations that film learning as aesthetic learning is vital for young people’s future.

**An aesthetic approach to learning**

The arts are viewed as intrinsically valuable in education (Abbs, 2003; Eisner 2002a; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, and Brooks, 2004). The aesthetic experience is a symbolic form of knowing that enriches the capacity and wisdom of being human (Abbs, 2003; Eisner, 2005; Greene, 1995). To think and learn is to mediate the semiotics of cultural tools (Eisner, 2002b; Vygotsky, 1978) and these tools can be oral and written language or the aesthetic of particular art forms and their symbol systems. The past, present and
future of human history and learning itself, cannot be understood or transformed without mediating the semiotics of cultural tools.

… symbol systems not only have the potential to provide unique forms of meaning, they also have the potential to practice and develop particular mental skills. Without these skills, the meanings made possible through the various symbol systems will be unrecoverable. (Eisner, 2002b, p.80)

The uniqueness of arts learning is to connect emotions to the imagination (Greene, 1995; Vygotsky, 1971) and feelings to the intellect (Eisner, 2005). As such, arts learning is student centred and meaningful to young people’s lived experience (Abbs, 1994; Eisner, 2002a; Greene, 1995). The learning fosters increasingly informed and involved encounters with the arts, as participant art makers and artwork percipients, and these experiences are acts of communication through aesthetic knowing (Eisner, 2002b; Greene, 1995; Sinclair, Jeanneret and O’Toole, 2009).

**Film in the arts paradigm**

Jacki and Diana articulate how they conceive film, like drama, as an aesthetic way of thinking and knowing.

*Jacki*

_Drama is about re-shaping opinions, thoughts and ideas. Film is too in a very different way._ (Interview, June 26, 2008)

*Diana*

_I saw film as related to drama. It has very much the same processes, it takes kids through the same steps and it applies the same sort of critical thinking._ (Interview, August 6, 2008)
The ‘steps’ in ‘critical thinking’ Diana is referring to is the creative, aesthetic process of arts learning. Eisner (2002b) explains that exploring and using symbol systems or forms of representation in the arts are particularly important to learning in the following ways:

1. They stabilize evanescent thoughts and feelings: nothing is more elusive than an idea.
2. It then makes it possible to reflect on what has been represented and to edit thinking.
3. The public transformation from what is private to what is public makes communication possible.
4. To represent is to provide an occasion for the invention or discovery of ideas, images, or feelings that were not present at the inception of the activity: it is an opportunity for creative thinking.
5. The features of particular symbol systems both constrain and make possible particular types of meaning: they express the inexpressible. (p. 80)

Filmmaking, if understood as an aesthetic process of learning, involves the ‘steps’ of conceptualisation, reflection, transformation and communication to develop creativity and express the inexpressible. What are missing from this creative process of learning in the aesthetic experience are the sense of ‘play’ (O’Toole, 2009b), ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) and heightening of feelings (Eisner, 2002a) associated with using the imagination. Diana refers to it as a ‘buzz’ in her following comment about the creative filmmaking process.

Diana

*Film is that wonderful creative process. You have an idea, you work out how do to it, you go and do it and then you see the results. And you have a whole stack of people look at it too and give you some feedback. It’s a buzz.* (Interview, August 6, 2008)

The ‘buzz’ of the arts, is for Abbs (2003) intrinsic to the value of arts in education.

It is this power of cognition, buzzing and tingling through the engaged senses and the imagination, which makes the arts so educationally significant. It is their sensuous mode of operation which makes them stubbornly specific and
differentiates them from other forms of enquiry into human existence. (Abbs, 2003, p. 56)

For the participants in this study film learning has the attributes of aesthetic learning. Cognition is developed through the imaginative and creative process, by engaging with the senses, ideas and critical thinking. It is from the perspective of the arts paradigm that the teachers’ goals for film learning are situated.

**The teachers’ goals for teaching film**

The teachers’ expectations for film after the film learning workshops are presented as short vignettes. Their responses reveal a similar purpose for film learning: film as a discrete arts discipline in their schools.

**Clare**

*I think film can be and should be a completely different subject. I think at the moment it exists because it’s such an exciting medium, it exists within lots of curriculum areas but I don’t think in any of these curriculum areas students are really engaging with film in a deep way.*

*Ideally I would love to be involved in both subjects. I certainly don’t want to leave drama at the moment. I’m really passionate about drama. It would be as well as rather than instead of. To have both courses would be best for our students, they could do both or specialise in one area or the other.* (Interview, July 31, 2008)

**Jen**

*It’s a school so heavily based in the arts (music/visual arts and drama) but we all go off and do our own thing. But I think there’s a connection particularly with film in all those areas. Film is one of the best ways to bring it all together. I’d like our kids to understand*
you don’t have to sacrifice one art form for another, that actually you can incorporate them.

I’d like to see film as a separate elective in 9 and 10 owned by the drama department which would necessitate a larger department of course. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Carol

I’d like a whole block of film within the school, as an elective and that the film block and the drama block would be together within one faculty. It would be great if there were a drama class and a film class. I now see the value of teaching film and think film would complement everything else that is in the creative and performing arts department. I didn’t even think of film as a separate subject until I’d done the workshops, I’d only thought of film in drama. It’s a bit out of my ability to work out how to do it, there’s no curriculum or program or time allocated to explore and develop. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Jacki

In six months time we will have completed the one-year film course and what I hope to achieve by then is a steady bunch of kids who are working with me to push for the extra two units of our film course. In six months time I want to be in a bargaining position to grow the course. Having mostly got the technology under control I’m now in a position to be able to teach the course better. I’m pretty keen to learn about the fundamentals because I’ve had enough of a taste to realise I’ve missed the boat on a couple. And as much reading as you do, it’s just someone’s opinion on film, not how do I teach it better. I really would like to know how do I teach this better. (Interview, June 26, 2008)
Diana

The school does the BOS digital media course in years 9 and 10 which is a bit like the drama course was at the beginning, it’s very open. Open because anyone can teach it, it has to be flexible to just get it into the timetable. Then you work out how it should be taught. If I’m at the school the plan would be to start with one class in year 9 and start at the beginning. I’d re-structure the course with a different slant to accommodate all sorts of kids. The science teacher has said there’s a whole stack of kids in the class who have an interest in digital media but not really in all the technology. They are the kids he uses for the in-front-of camera stuff. That’s where he feels he really struggles. They tend to be the kids who do the story and have the ideas, but then it all jams up.

I would like to see a course that is more than digital media. I think the digital media course allows for film but you don’t have to do it, you can do a whole lot of other stuff nothing to do with film. And that’s what has happened in some of the courses, and some of the students at our school have wanted more film. They’re hungry for film, they enjoy the whole process. I would like to see more of that in schools. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Michael

What I’m hoping is that we’ve had the baptism of fire and can go into the next phase of consolidating and refining, so we are more effective teachers of filmmaking. I think it would be great to have filmmaking as its own course, as an elective 9 to 12, even earlier 7 to 12. I’ll dream big, K to 12 because of its potential. I’m really just seeing a glimpse of what kids could achieve. It’s like drama, sometimes your blown away by what kids achieve, given the right groundwork, the right foundations, the skill building over years. At the moment we’re going to offer film units throughout drama, but it’s not necessarily sequential, and I don’t think it will be comprehensive, for instance only a tiny hint of genre, it’s very basic skills stuff. Whereas if it was stand alone all the way through, if you
had kids making films from kindergarten, it would be incredible what they’d be doing by year 12 in terms of sophistication of the work. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

The six participants have an expectation that film learning has a capacity for deep learning beyond other curriculum areas such as drama or digital media. This is explicitly stated by Clare who claims, “[film] exists within lots of curriculum areas but I don’t think in any of these curriculum areas students are really engaging with film in a deep way”.

Diana would like to see “a course that is more than digital media” focusing solely on film and accommodating a range of students. Jacki who already has film as a course at her school is keen to develop more film units and teach the course better. Michael envisages film learning from kindergarten to year 12 and as an elective throughout secondary school. Jen would like film as a separate elective discipline in years 9 and 10 to incorporate facets of learning across the arts. Carol observes that film as a separate curriculum area “would complement everything else that is in the creative and performing arts department”.

To consider the teachers proposed goals for film learning as a discrete subject and how it would complement other arts areas, the nature of curriculum construction needs to be explored.

**Defining disciplines in the arts curriculum**

The ‘curriculum narrative’ is shaped by the choices of the past and the present, for future learning (Apple, 2004; Pinar, 2004). Pinar et al (1995) compare the resultant affect of curriculum choices to “a series of narratives superimposed on each other, interlaced among each other, layers of stories merged and separated like colours in a Jackson Pollock painting” (p. 448). The development of curricula is a complex and evolving plot over time. Definitions of areas of study in a curriculum are developed as a way of classifying relationships between subjects and delineating boundaries between them (Bernstein, 1971).

Where classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries. Where classification is weak, there is reduced insulation
between contents for the boundaries between contents are weak or blurred. Classification thus refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents. (Bernstein, 1971, p. 49)

These boundaries can change over time. Drama and dance for example are new discrete art disciplines in NSW having historically resided in English and physical education respectively. How then are discipline boundaries defined?

Schwab (1962) argues that a discipline has a distinctive structure that defines the mode of inquiry and the subject matter inquired into. Well-defined disciplines with a history and tradition of organised concepts and theories offer a clear structure for students to acquire knowledge. “The order disciplines provide, the methods they employ, and the criteria they use make intellectual precision possible” (Eisner, 2002b). Higher order thinking, substantive conversation, deep knowledge and deep understanding in the learning stimulate the quality of intellectual precision within discipline boundaries (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006; Newmann and Associates, 1996). Associated with a discipline are social outcomes connecting students’ learning to the world around them (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006; Newmann and Associates, 1996). The teachers’ expectations for film learning in this research suggest filmmaking has potential as a future arts learning discipline with its own distinctive structure to acquire knowledge.

The current arts education paradigm and ‘curriculum narrative’ in Australia is epistemologically to bring together areas that learn through the aesthetic experience (O’Toole, 2009a). In the proposed Australian curriculum for 2012 the arts includes dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts. The curriculum framework presumes each of these disciplines are unified as symbolic forms and aesthetic knowledge but that each discipline also its has own mode of inquiry and subject matter. The symbolic form and aesthetic experience unifies the various disciplines in the arts (Abbs, 1994) but it is also their unique, ‘untranslatable’ aesthetic forms that distinguish them apart.

Although acknowledging that the teaching of knowledge, skills and practices of separate arts disciplines is essential, Ewing (2010b) advocates the need for the centrality of the
arts collectively in the curriculum. She argues creative and critical arts processes should be embedded in pedagogy across the curriculum. The relationship between the arts disciplines suggests commonality and the benefits of multi-disciplinary approaches.

The Arts have the potential to promote self-understanding and illuminate the advantages of viewing the world from multiple perspectives. There is, therefore, a need for educators, arts practitioners and students to consciously explore the blurring of boundaries between the arts disciplines and to explore multidisciplinary initiatives, while maintaining respect for the integrity of each. (Ewing, 2010b, p. 7)

Jen’s comment, “you don’t have to sacrifice one art form for another, that actually you can incorporate them” and Carol’s response, “film would complement everything else that is in the creative and performing arts” resonate with Ewing’s multidisciplinary initiatives for the arts across the curriculum.

It is evident from the drama teachers’ discussions in comparing drama and film learning in the previous chapter that film learning is a unique form of aesthetic learning. Film also relates strongly to drama and other areas in the arts. The teachers’ goals in this chapter indicate they believe film learning has its own mode of inquiry, subject matter and intellectual precision to classify it as a robust and relevant arts discipline for the future.

The data in this research was collected before media arts was proposed in the Australian curriculum for the arts and so the teachers were not responding to these current developments. Their goals for film learning as a discipline provide a critique of the current situation of arts learning in NSW. The teachers’ responses can also be used to review possibilities in the proposed Australian arts curriculum by considering whether the participants’ vision for film learning is accommodated in the proposed media arts discipline.

What is ‘media arts’?

Media education has developed from the paradigm of Cultural Studies with its roots in the cultural theory of Raymond Williams (Burn, 2009). A social definition of culture was
instrumental in shaping the educational philosophy of media education. It values not only art and learning but also institutions and ordinary behaviour (Williams, 1961/2001). Media education is concerned with modern communications media and the media texts carried by these communication modes (Buckingham, 2003). ‘Media’ includes the whole range of modern communications such as television, cinema, computer games, radio, newspapers and the internet. With the advent of and access to digital authoring technologies, media education shifted from the dominance of analytical practices and moved to incorporate creative digital production (Burn, 2009). It is this shift to ‘making media’ that moved the media education paradigm from a humanities-based, cultural theory model towards a more arts-based model.

Media as a discipline is undergoing metamorphosis as it is developed within the arts educational paradigm. Burn (2009) contends there are challenges to the traditions and conventional models of media studies when media production is absorbed by other learning areas such as English, design technology or the arts. The transition invokes “pedagogies, cultural preoccupations and forms of evaluation quite different from those of media studies” (Burn, 2009, p. 88). There is, according to Burn and Durran (2007) “a tension between models of media literacy and media education historically associated with English, language and the literacy curriculum, and models which pull towards other areas of the curriculum” (p. 164). It is these tensions that predicate the evolution of a media arts in the arts paradigm.

For media education to be defined in the arts paradigm its curriculum as a mode of inquiry must primarily be understood as an aesthetic text: “That is, the curriculum comes to form as art does, as a complex mediation and reconstruction of experience” (Pinar et al, 1995, p. 567). The arts curriculum as an aesthetic way of knowing invokes an aesthetic way of teaching and at its core is the imaginative experience and a sense of wonder.

To understand the role of the imagination in the development of the intellect, to cultivate the capacity to know aesthetically, to comprehend the teacher and his or her work as inherently aesthetic: these are among aspirations of that scholarship.
which seeks to understand curriculum as aesthetic text. It is an effort not aimed at reducing uncertainty and achieving universal truth. Rather, as Dewey reminded us, “art departs from what has been understood and ends in wonder”. (Pinar et al, 1995, p. 604)

The evolution of media in the arts paradigm is an opportunity to create a ‘new’ discipline that allows media arts to develop a unique arts pedagogy. Burn (2009) argues that it is necessary to move forward and be clear about the semiotic principles that underlie media education. To do so, he says, requires integrating understandings of drama, media and English pedagogies.

In practical terms, the obvious message is that Drama, Media and English teachers need to talk to each other more, and overcome their separatist histories: Drama emphasising the value of mediated dramatic presence; Media ignoring the bodily semiotic of face, voice and gesture in the vast majority of its textual canon; English blind to the extra-linguistic. (Burn, 2009, p. 89)

A more multidisciplinary approach to curriculum may better suit the lived experience of students (Ewing, 2010b). Eisner (2002b) posits the argument that the practical problems of life are in fact ‘messy’ and therefore learning requires a multiple approach to knowledge.

Yet it can be argued that the problems that citizens confront in their daily lives seldom come in the forms with which the disciplines can deal. Most practical problems of life are “messy”. They require the use of diverse kinds of knowledge; they demand the application of practical judgement that is not rule-governed or accessible, using the criteria that might be suitable for a single discipline. (Eisner, 2002b, p. 145)

This is an argument for allowing students and teachers to explore a more multidisciplinary, pluralistic approach to modes of learning and knowledge.

**How will media arts accommodate film pedagogy?**

In the current draft shape of the Australian Curriculum: the Arts (ACARA, 2010) the paradigms and parameters for media education maintain traditions from cultural studies and at the same time shift to the aesthetic tradition of the arts. The arts curriculum will be
written in 2011 and it is uncertain how media arts will accommodate the participants’ expectations of an aesthetic approach and deep learning in film.

Curriculum change does offer the opportunity to develop a media arts learning model underpinned by aesthetic experiences unique to modern media communications including film. It is an opportunity to redress media education pedagogical tensions.

The dramatic element in the multimodal ensemble of moving image production is under-recognised in media education: at its worst, the acting roles can be given to students perceived to be less competent with filming and editing. More generally, however, it is simply a failure of dialogue between the pedagogic traditions of media and drama education: the one has equipped itself with a language of representation, mediation, screens and distributed exhibition; the other with a language of dramatic presence, phenomenological embodiment, and local, immediate display. The truth is that the two need each other. (Burn, 2009, p. 150)

The film learning explored by the participants in this research provide insights into possible developments for media arts in the aesthetic curriculum. Film pedagogy in this study is an aesthetic learning approach that transpired from a dialogue between drama and media pedagogies. The participants’ response to film learning in this study provides ideas that could be harnessed in the metamorphosis of media arts in the Australian Curriculum.

**An aesthetic film pedagogy perspective of media arts**

Much of the participants’ responses to film learning echo the preoccupations of the traditions of media education and its critical approach to popular culture and more recently its blending of social semiotics and multimodality (Burn and Durran, 2007). The fundamental difference is that the drama teacher participants’ responses to film learning are from the perspective of curriculum as aesthetic text and aesthetic pedagogy. Jen’s comment: “There are many ways of learning…And film forces you to access all of those styles” encapsulates an arts method of inquiry that cultivates the capacity to know aesthetically and understand the teachers’ work as inherently aesthetic (Pinar et al, 1995). Michael too recognises the aesthetic cognitive space offered by film when he says, “Kids need that space in a curriculum loaded with deconstruction, loaded with factual learning.
They need the space to speak, and drama does that for them, visual arts does that for them and filmmaking will do the same I think”.

The focus of learning in the aesthetic curriculum is through imagined potentialities, interpretive experience and multiple perspectives (Pinar et al, 1995) and this means that aesthetic learning is open to the texts of young people’s lives (Greene, 1995). Students’ sense of agency through expression of symbolic forms is fundamental to learning in the aesthetic curriculum (Greene, 1995). Film as an art form involves a performance of self not only in front of the camera, but a ‘technical performance’ mediated through the camera, recording devices and editing and digitally generating software (Anderson and Jefferson, 2009). Burn (2009) argues: “Whenever a child makes a text, they are saying something about themselves. In moving image texts, especially when it is their own voice or face they have framed, modelled and edited, such representation is strongly performative” (p. 81).

Michael discusses performance of self through film stories as the chance for ‘kids to speak’. For Clare it is students being able to “to make choices to tell their stories, to be critical and analytical, to be immersed in the world of film which they are, but to be critical in the world”. Critical analysis in the film learning model is inherent in a learning approach where making and critical appreciation interact as a form of praxis (Friere, 1970/2006). By interrelating practice and theory as a method of learning the aesthetic curriculum explores the students’ lived worlds and critiques cultures and traditions through a learning experience facilitated by the imagination and creativity (Greene, 1995). It is in the experience of aesthetic praxis, that Jacki likens film learning to drama learning in its’ capacity to ‘re-shape opinions, thoughts and ideas’. Diana highlights the pleasurable ‘buzz’ and critical thinking derived from such an experience.

The transformative and reflective practice of film learning as experienced and expressed by the teachers in this research is in alignment with many of the traditional outcomes of media education. The difference is one of perspective, core underpinnings and epistemology. The film learning model in this research regards film as an art form with
unique cognitive possibilities. It is an aesthetic curriculum perspective that manifests specific learning experiences in and through an art form. Those aesthetic experiences and processes centre on emotions and the imagination, feelings and the intellect. The traditional media perspective is “the process of teaching and learning about media; media literacy is the outcome – the knowledge and skills learners acquire” (Buckingham, 2003, p.4). The subtle but fundamental difference is the primacy of the aesthetic experience in the process of learning through and in media in an arts based curriculum. Madeleine Grumet (1978) articulates the aims of an arts pedagogical approach: “The aesthetic function of curriculum replaces the amelioration of the technological function with revelation” (p. 280).

How the film learning model and its aesthetic perspective may sit within the future Australian arts framework is uncertain. The participants’ responses to film learning in this study:

(i) affirm the development of aesthetic and performative learning in media arts
(ii) affirm the development of narrative film as an area of deep learning in the arts curriculum

Conclusions

Creativity is an investment and contribution to a process of change that propels a field into a new direction (Sternberg, 2003). Teaching film for these participants is a creative decision and attempt to re-construct the current curriculum in some way. The teachers’ responses are of course subjective but curriculum theorist William Pinar (2004) argues that subjectivity is significant to teaching, to the processes of education and the reconstruction of the curriculum. Pinar (2004) theorizes that curriculum development is to consider the significance of subjectivity as inseparable from the social, that is, “pedagogical work is simultaneously autobiographical and political” (p. 4). It is by subjectively considering the past and the future that teachers can mobilize the present.

The method of currere – the infinitive form of curriculum – promises no quick fixes. On the contrary, this autobiographical method asks us to slow down, to remember even re-enter the past, and to meditatively imagine the future. Then,
slowly and in one’s own terms, one analyses one’s experience of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully, with more complexity and subtlety, one’s submergence in the present. (Pinar, 2004, p. 4)

In this chapter the participants’ expectations for film learning are autobiographical thoughts that ruminate on past experience and future fantasies. Their experiences and responses allow for understanding of film learning in the present.

The participants explore the potential of film learning in the aesthetic epistemology of the curriculum. At the core of their experience with film pedagogy is an arts learning approach that cultivates the imagination, new experience and an aesthetic way of knowing (Abbs, 1994; Eisner, 2002a; Greene, 1995). In this way film learning is similar to other arts in the curriculum.

The arts curriculum not only provides students with an aesthetic literacy crucial to the development of thought and feeling in an imagistic world. It provides a theory of knowing divergent from those associated with mainstream educational psychology…(Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996, p. 571)

Common to all the arts in education is “…their sensuous mode of operation which makes them stubbornly specific and differentiates them from other forms of enquiry into human existence. Art makes visible the cognitive life of the senses and the imagination” (Abbs, 2003, p. 56). The film learning in this study is the exploration of that cognitive life through the unique qualities of filmmaking as an art form.

Key to the aesthetic film learning in this research is “engaging with film in a deep way” (Clare) and “complementing everything else” (Carol) in the arts curriculum. The pedagogy explores the narrative art form of film as a learning approach that connects with the understanding and expression of students’ storied lives (Greene, 1995) and a storied culture (Bruner, 1986). The learning is embedded in the imagination and the creative process as an aesthetic experience. It is an experience that endeavours to affect and transform consciousness through a heightening and refining of the senses so that human experience of the world is made more complex and subtle (Eisner, 2002a).
Film learning is viewed as a form of semiotic mediation where learning is developed through the interrelationship of an individual’s mental processes and cultural tools. Film as a pedagogy recognises the aesthetic experience as a means to embody cognitive pluralism and socio-historical learning. Film stories have the capacity to explore cultural change over time, and cultural difference across the world. The symbolic form of film has a history of codes and conventions that continues to influence other art forms and innovations in new media (Monaco, 2000; Burn, 2009).

Socio-historical learning in the arts explores the past, the present and the future through a symbolic form of consciousness. These sentiments are expressed in Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s (Kath Walker) poem, *The Past* (1970):

> Let no one say the past is dead.  
> The past is all about us and within.

Learning as a creative, aesthetic experience allows young people to inhabit play and use the imagination to explore self, consciousness and culture. It is in this light that film learning can be understood and examined as arts pedagogy and a ‘film’ way of knowing.

The participants’ expectations are to develop deep learning in narrative film by having its own distinct and discrete discipline. Their expectations challenge the framework of the current NSW curriculum. At present the potential for narrative film learning is constrained within the drama curriculum. The shaping and underpinning of the proposed media arts subject in the Australian curriculum poses challenges to film learning as well. It is uncertain whether film knowing as deep, experiential aesthetic learning can be developed within the evolving pedagogy of media arts.

The teachers’ autobiographies provide an opportunity to imagine the future and potential of film learning. Like learning, curriculum change viewed as an aesthetic text is an act of imagination.

…to learn and to teach, one must have an awareness of leaving something behind while reaching toward something new, and this kind of awareness must be linked
to the imagination. As John Dewey saw it, for example, imagination is the “gateway” through which meanings derived from past experiences find their way into the present: it is “the conscious adjustment of the new and the old”. (Greene, 1995, p. 20)

The idea of film as a pedagogy and discipline in the arts is an imaginative leap for curriculum development. The next two chapters explore how the teachers’ expectations as acts of imagination are complicated by realisations in the school context. These realisations involve issues with technical and curriculum resources and support.
Chapter 10

The teachers’ realisations: technology and pedagogy

_The human with a steel axe is different than the human without one – the transformational effect becomes clear when we regard as the primitive of our analysis, this human-technology pairing._

Don Ihde, 1995

Understanding technology phenomenologically is to see technologies as more than mere objects. Ihde (1995) conceives technology as belonging to human experience and the use of technologies as a human-technology relation. The human with a camera and computer is different from the human without one. The introduction or transfer of new technology into a context is not neutral; it has the capacity to transform the quality and possibilities of human experience. Integrating the new multimedia technology of digital cameras and computers into schools can be understood as a ‘technology transfer’. These material artifacts have been transferred from filmmaking to the new context of teaching and learning in schools. Ihde (1995) argues that technology transfers across contexts are not simply economic or productive exchanges, but multidimensional, cultural and existential encounters. Technology use in learning is not a neutral tool but an instrument of culture (Vygotsky, 1978).

Technology as a socio-cultural experience underpins the participants’ encounters with technology in this research. Film learning is a construct of multimedia technology as cultural instrument. The technology is more than a tool, it has allowed the development of film pedagogy and made new learning possible (Anderson and Jefferson, 2009). This chapter examines how the teachers’ expectations for film learning are affected by realisations concerning technology integration in their schools. The participants’ responses demonstrate that if education systems and schools do not recognise the pedagogical and hence cultural purpose of technology, problematic issues arise in integrating and managing technology in education. In this study the problems with
technology resource management and allocation are primarily symptoms of curriculum and school politics.

**Integrating technology and learning**

Without the technology, the film pedagogy is non-existent. It is the invention of affordable and user-friendly digital cameras and editing software that has allowed students to make films (Buckingham, 2003; Burn, 2009) and to learn through a new creative, aesthetic process (Anderson and Jefferson, 2009). The film learning focuses on creating film stories in the technology of multimedia. Using the technology as a tool is linked to making film stories as a cultural artifact. The pedagogy and the technology are understood together; the technology is a cultural instrument of learning through socially created and embodied film stories. Conceptually, film pedagogy recognises a social *way* of learning in technology use. The pedagogy very specifically orientates the technology use. Similarly, Anderson, Carroll and Cameron (2009) explore how drama pedagogy shapes technology use for educational purposes.

In this research the professional learning in the teacher workshops focused on pedagogy rather than ICT-competence. Learning *in* and *through* the technology was integrated in the film pedagogical learning. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) 2006 *Second Information Technology in Education Study* (SITES) on pedagogy and ICT use (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008) found: “The impact of ICT-use on students appears to be highly dependent on the pedagogical orientation that teachers adopt in regard to that use”, p. 275). As a result the study recommends, “ICT-related professional development for teachers should give priority to developing pedagogical rather than technical ICT-competence” (p. 276). Pedagogy is key to ICT use and life-long-learning practices (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008).

In the integration of technology and learning, Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan (2002) describe two types of mindsets:

...the divergence is between people who see the world as being more or less the same as before, only more “technologized”, and those who see the world as now
being fundamentally changed, in large part because of the way new technologies have impacted upon it. (Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan, 2002, p. 14)

In the encounter between the school world of education and the virtual technocultural world, film pedagogy endeavours to bring a new mindset to the social practices of teaching and learning. Film pedagogy recognises that telling narratives through multimedia technology is a cultural instrument for learning. Like oral and written language or any symbolic form in the arts, the pedagogy uses the ‘language of film’ and the aesthetic and collaborative processes of creation as a form of semiotic mediation for young people to learn about the world (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003; Vygotsky, 1981). An aesthetic approach to learning in and through technology can also position young people to be self-reflective about technoculture and the mediated space.

**Technoculture and self-reflexivity**

In a technological society arts learning in media, Ferneding (2007) argues, must examine “the process and experience of mediation itself – the ability of electronic media to shape and constitute the phenomenon of social experiences and economic structures” (p. 1333). Socio-political issues concerned with the “psychic and physical numbing induced by electronic technologies” (Ferneding, 2007, p. 1347) raise ethical questions about technologies’ role in political and social justice, and a sustainable human ecology in the world. The film pedagogy attempts to address these concerns about technoculture and human ecology by emphasising learning through film media as a collaborative, aesthetic and empowering experience.

Aesthetic learning focuses on the intertwining of the intellect and the emotions and the self-reflective experiential process. Aesthetic learning with technology can express and interrogate the desires and fears of a pervasive, consumerist and disembodied technoculture.

Artists, because they engage in self-reflection about their emotional experiences, are poised to reflect upon and actualise the phenomenological reality of the mediation process to which we are all exposed within a technological society. We live within a Matrix-like condition (as depicted in the movie ‘The Matrix’).
man-made atmospheric “technological cocoon” (Ihde, 1979) without a moment moment’s reflection about its sensibility of common sense. Artists live as the proverbial canary in the coal mine of our “technological cocoon”… (Ferneding, 2007, p. 1332)

Drama teachers, in particular with their focus on identity, performance conventions and embodiment, are able to inhabit a self-reflexive space when examining the virtual and mediated world (Carroll, Anderson and Cameron, 2006). It is the social responsibility of the arts and education to question technology and explore its relationship with culture through a self-reflexive, aesthetic learning approach (Ferneding, 2007).

Integrating technology in learning is more than simply addressing access to and using technology in schools (Bell, Schrum and Thompson, 2008; Ferneding, 2003; Stapgles, Pugach and Himes, 2005). Technology and learning is an interface between technology and human experience. To be integrated effectively in education technology has to be understood pedagogically and culturally.

**A pedagogy beyond partnering**

Prensky (2010) proposes a partnering pedagogy for teaching ‘digitally native’ students in the 21st century. Prensky’s premise is teachers don’t have to use the technology, but know how technology can enhance students’ learning. Partnering as a pedagogy is essentially a problem-based (Bruner, 1960), student-centred (Dewey, 1938) and collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1978) approach. Prensky uses the metaphor of nouns and verbs to explain the relationship between technology and learning.

Verbs are the skills that students’ need to learn, practice and master…Whatever subject we teach, we want students to be proficient at such verbs as thinking critically, presenting logically, communicating, making decisions, being rigorous, understanding content and context, and persuading.

…Nouns on the other hand, are the tools students use to learn to do, or practice, the verbs. Nouns include such traditional tools as books and essays as well as more 21st century tools such as the internet. (Prensky, 2010, pp. 45-46).

Prensky treats technology as a tool to achieve curriculum outcomes, where it is the job of the students to use the ‘nouns’, and the job of the teacher to assess the quality of the ‘verbs’.
The partnering of pedagogy with technology in Prensky’s model fails to recognise learning ‘verbs’ in the technologies themselves. There are skills or ‘verbs’ in the ‘language’ of the multimedia technological medium, and in the creative, and often collaborative processes using it. Prensky, for instance, indicates that ‘verbs’ such as “exploring, finding, observing, communicating, modelling and trying, finding your voice” (2010, p. 116) are supported by the digital camera as a tool for learning. Film pedagogy acknowledges the learning value of these verbs but goes further. It recognises there is cognition and transformative empowerment in students learning aesthetic control of multimedia technology. To ‘communicate and find your voice’ in digital media is to learn the language, codes and conventions, techniques and socio-cultural context of the medium and its creative processes (Anderson and Jefferson, 2009).

Prensky’s (2010) educational model is a utilitarian approach to learning with technology. The model does not propose to use or interrogate technology as an instrument of culture. The processes and experience of mediation can be used as a tool for learning but electronic media also shapes and constitutes social experiences and economic structures (Ferneding, 2007). There are two levels in what Ihde (1995) refers to as a technology transfer, the individual and the socio-cultural. These two interfaces can be applied to understanding technology integration in schools. Ihde (1995) argues:

…just as at the individual level technologies must be understood as human-technology pairings, so must they be conceived as the social-cultural level. Only by understanding such gestalts will we be able to both understand and perhaps better prepare for transfer. (p. 41)

The integration of technology into schools is to consider technologies more like cultures rather than tools. How technology as culture is directed, shaped and used is then crucial to our social and political life (Ihde, 1995).

The relationship between technology, pedagogy, content knowledge, and student’s learning is socio-cultural and complex. Sprague and Pierson (2008) argue it is a question of not whether technology should be used, but how it should be used.
Researchers need to explore further the design features most beneficial to learning and the types of pedagogy these features support. Different technologies support different types of learning and different ways of teaching…Exploring these design features not only enables the creation of more efficient technology, but also enables teachers to understand how to match the right technology with their curriculum objectives and pedagogical beliefs. (Sprague and Pierson, 2008, p. 163)

Film learning in this research aims to go beyond Prensky’s partnering pedagogy. It explores filmmaking technology as a cultural instrument connected to pedagogical beliefs and curriculum outcomes. Film learning focuses on young people’s aesthetic control and understanding of multimedia for critical creation and engagement. Socially constructed learning is inherent in the technology use. It is in this social-cultural framework that the research participants’ realisations about film learning and technology integration are examined.

After the film learning workshops the participants’ expectations for film learning became realisations of issues with film learning in their school context. In their realisations it is evident that the politics of curriculum and school funding arrangements prevents technology being integrated fully to meet their film pedagogical requirements. The participants’ responses to technology issues are presented as a montage of anecdotes to allow the similarities and differences of their school contexts and experiences to emerge.

**Teacher vignettes: responses to technology resources**

*Jen*

*The problems will be the school investing enough money and making sure we have access to equipment. If you compiled what the school had, yes, we do have an editing suite and there are a lot of departments that have cameras and tripods. I would like our department to have a lot more than what we do because I want students to experiment with equipment in class rather than moving from building to building. The official line would be, yes the*
school has the equipment, but it won’t be easy. Getting a hub or a space would be lovely, but it’s not going to happen in the near future.

Maintenance of technology is an issue, getting things fixed in a timely fashion is a real issue. Communication in the school is often difficult because of the split campuses and how busy people are. There are logistics we have to factor in, but that doesn’t put me off, in this school I’m a bit used to it by now. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Clare

I’ve worked in different school environments and certainly in this environment I have access to incredible resources for my students such as cameras, tripods and editing labs. Within that there are difficulties, booking the cameras, picking them up, dropping them back. Time-wise I know that can be tricky. If you have a film room you can get your cameras and be out filming in ten minutes. There are logistical issues but that can be organised and worked around.

In terms of extension for film there could be better equipment such as bigger cameras, boom mics and lights. Those sorts of things would be able to be bought if the school should see the reason to get them. It requires the vision in order to co-ordinate it and get it organised. I don’t think there will be any problems with technical resources. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

Carol

The technology is adequate for how much I use. I think now that I’ve done the film course I obviously want more technology in my area, in my room. I think we need a hub, and it would get kids able to do more film whether it is in drama or in a film unit. You could introduce it much earlier if you have a hub, you have the ability to watch the kids using
the equipment. With other people going in and out using the technology the equipment doesn’t stay good for long, it gets abused. (Interview, July 3, 2008)

Michael

... we had big technical issues. I had planned for extra cameras but none of that stuff was ordered as happens in schools. I ended up running a class with 26 kids with not enough cameras and computers. So I had to borrow cameras from other departments, so that adds to the energy of the teacher. If you’re a bit stressed and bit rushed the kids aren’t enjoying it either. They sense what’s going on for you. It wasn’t a huge deal but it did contribute to the drama class struggling with film.

The school is an affluent school so there is money for technical resources. I’m very lucky because I can pretty much guarantee if I want something and ask for it, it will happen. It’s more fiddly things like suppliers and getting the same brand of camera or things being superseded or cameras not working or batteries flat. I look after maintaining the equipment and we have IT support for the computers and software. I have four computers in the drama space but I’m thinking of overhauling that, there’s not really enough room for a group to sit around a computer. I need double the number of computers and I need them to be spaced such that can get three or four kids sitting at them comfortably. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Diana

Film is a highly resourced course and I was lucky because I was in a position at a school where they were willing to support me. I’m eternally grateful but it’s not so easy in some schools. In my school, for instance, there’s multiple platforms so there’s none of that business that goes on in some schools of ‘it’s got to be PC’s, it’s got to be Apple’. That’s just not an issue in our school. You have everything. Everyone’s got to know how to work
them and the kids should know how to work them. I can imagine in some schools the whole issue of editing becomes a nightmare because we all know there are good editing programs and not so good editing programs. Money is an issue in some schools and I think maintenance for equipment is an issue. So is storage of equipment. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Jacki
We have been given a lot of money to buy lots of new cameras and certainly given access to the new computers. They want us to have access to the biggest computers that run faster. So from that point of view the business manager has done a lot to provide for us. We were given a lot of support setting up.

I’m passionate about film but we’ve been really heartbroken because the machines wouldn’t talk to our cameras. For six weeks we couldn’t get the IT department to fix it. All this beautiful film learning and all this excitement, learning new things and new approaches [from the workshops] was going by the wayside because the technology was falling over. Before we only had Apple platform and they talked to our machines and it was all beautiful. Then we got a new IT manager who decided to network the entire school as a dual platform and so all the computers suddenly belonged to the entire school network. The IT department didn’t even have a meeting with the educational technology department guru person who would have said this is the software we need to maintain here and the connection we need to maintain. They did it in the holidays, we came back and it had all changed. We had no control over it. We didn’t even get to back up what was on the machines before. We lost anything we were working on last year.

They ran Windows and Apple and put in new servers but they were Microsoft boxes so the Windows side connected quite well but it would periodically disengage the Apple side, so we couldn’t connect to anything. We bought a terabyte box in order to store our films but we couldn’t get access via the stupid network to our box to store our films. The
students would spend all period uploading their film and we try would try and save them to the destination but the connection wasn’t made and they would find they didn’t have any films saved.

Anybody could book to use our lab so the lab wasn’t ours alone anymore. We had to start locking things down. We had a group of kids who picked off all the keys on the keypads. We’ve had a lot of damage and destruction since we’ve become mainstream. After five years of owning our own little empire we’re now part of this amorphous mass of dual platform with only some of the facilities apple provides and we’re really angry about it. The head of educational technology is one of my film teachers and she’s unable to move the mind of the IT manager. There’s a major loggerhead between the powerbrokers who own the technology and how the technology should be used. We’re the drama department and we’re down low in the priorities. That’s just internal politics.

In the end we paid an Apple guru to come down to the school and work their way through each of our problems. But it was paid for out of my budget because the school wouldn’t pay a large sum of money to get him to come down and work through each of the different problems. It was three days of his time to solve all this. His recommendations were not all taken up.

It’s an old culture versus a new culture. It’s old learning versus new learning. Our kids are ready they’re switched on. They’ve brought in a policy where kids couldn’t use mobile phones. We created a project that required them to use their phones to film and discussing the difference between capturing and artistically setting up. We had to have a special letter to allow them to use their mobile phones as recording devices within the school and then we had to have a second permission to make short films which we then turned into podcasts. So we’re trying to use the technology. Lots of our kids have this technology and we’re trying to push the boundaries but we’re having the school say, ‘no ipods, no phones, no this, no that’. You can’t shut the technology down, the best we can do is to use it for our purposes and use it well for our purposes.
The hard thing about teaching film is that it doesn’t help you when the whole thing falls over. You know the technology is part and parcel of the deal and it’s really hard to build confidence with technology with your new staff. I’m lucky to have a couple of teachers that are willing to engage with film and sort it out but I’ve had teachers who won’t touch new technologies and are frightened to be seen to not know anything. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

The overarching thematic concern in the participants’ responses is their in-school access to technology. Although there are issues of inequities and access to technology in underserved and poorer schools (Solomon, Allen and Resta, 2002), the schools in this study range from adequately to well resourced with multimedia technology. The problem in most of these schools is the lack of technology funding and resources being apportioned to the participants’ specific curriculum area and pedagogy. The participants’ concerns are with technology resources not catering precisely to their pedagogical needs. Knowing how to use technology in their teaching practice of film does not appear to be an issue.

**Teachers using technology**

After the workshops the teachers did not express any anxiety about using technology in filmmaking. Confidence was discussed more generally in chapter 6 as part of the notion of teacher self-efficacy being inculcated by collaborative professional learning processes. Collaborative processes as well as assimilating pedagogical practice with technology use contributed to the teachers’ confidence with filmmaking technology. The effective integration of technology in schools is linked to simultaneous teacher professional learning in using the technology as it specifically relates to pedagogy and the curriculum (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005). The integration of pedagogy and using technology is captured in Clare’s response:
Clare

*I was reminded how little the ‘technology’ was an issue when it came to editing. My fear of editing software was quickly forgotten as I immersed in the creative process of editing our story together...This creative process was far more sophisticated and important to the film than the pressing of a mouse!* (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

Using technology in the workshops was an essential and integrated instrument in the learning. Jen’s comment in chapter 6 suggests the significance and effectiveness of pedagogy and technology being learnt in an integrated way: “I was excited by the workshops. I think what stops a lot of drama teachers teaching film is they don’t know where to start, or they’re intimidated by the technology”. Knowing ‘where to start’ is to recognise the pivotal role that pedagogy and professional learning plays in teachers integrating technology into learning.

Teachers being intimidated by technology was mentioned also by Jacki: “I’ve had teachers who won’t touch new technologies and are frightened to be seen to not know anything”. The IEA SITES study (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008) found, “Except for pedagogical ICT-competence, teacher’s background characteristics do not appear to correlate with teachers’ pedagogical use of ICT” (p. 275). The teachers’ confidence with technology use in this research suggests teacher professional learning that aligns technology, pedagogy and curricular goals supports the integration of technology (Mishra and Koehler, 2006; Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005). Understanding the pedagogical needs of technology use is integral to school administrations’ support of teachers and technology integration (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008).

**Designing technology systems for pedagogy**

The teachers in this study had access to adequate filmmaking technology, however all, except Diana at a technology State high school, wanted *easier* access to filming equipment and to acquire their own film teaching ‘hub’. By ‘hub’ they mean a space that
centralises and designates the resources for film learning as stand-alone and autonomous. In the film learning workshops, the participants experienced a designated film learning space. In the room, students work in groups for non-computer activities and around ‘hubs’ for group computer work. The equipment is stored for easy student access and the physical learning space also allows students to engage in plenary discussions and screenings. In the workshops the teachers’ experienced technical resources and physical spaces that aligned with the requirements of the film pedagogy.

In a case study of three urban elementary schools in the USA, Staples, Pugach and Himes (2005) found it necessary for schools to understand special curriculum requirements for effective investment in and integration of technology.

To use technology effectively, principals and other technology leaders who contribute to decision making regarding how a school will invest in technology first need a solid understanding of the difference between technology use to enhance learning of the curriculum and technology use for productivity – as well as the ability to make distinctions in the various kinds of supports that will be required for each. (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005, p. 306)

The teachers, except Diana, have the ‘realisation’ that access to technical resources is adequate but not ideal for the teaching of film in their school contexts. Diana in a technology high school can choose from a range of software programs and hardware to accommodate her filmmaking needs. Jen, Clare and Michael have had to access filmmaking technology resources allocated to and managed by other curriculum areas. Jacki has had to share her faculty’s film room computer resources across the curriculum and Carol has minimal film resources at her government school. For film pedagogy to be supported effectively requires technology funding and management to meet specific curriculum outcomes.

Management of technology in schools: participatory design

A theme in the teachers’ responses was how the investment, allocation and management of technology and physical space for technology in schools does not respond precisely to their pedagogical needs. Jen, Clare, Carol and Michael all mentioned how accessing cameras and computer equipment elsewhere in the school is interruptive and reductive of
learning time. Carol and Jacki made reference to the ‘abuse’ of technology when shared with other faculties for other purposes. Computer hubs that allow for group work are thought of as ideal for editing. The teachers’ believed combining the technical equipment and the learning ‘hub’ in the one space facilitates more productive and collaborative film learning practice.

Jacki who has the most established film learning programs and resources, lost the autonomy of her film learning space. The school’s administration’s decision to centralise access to their computer film room had consequences that impacted heavily for some time on student learning in film. Film learning has specific requirements regarding camera and computer compatibility, working memory and storage of digital imagery and sound. When technical and network facilities are shared more generally in schools, there are adverse consequences in meeting the specific needs of curriculum areas and pedagogies (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005).

Without a clear vision of the goal of technology as it relates directly to the curriculum, it is possible to get distracted along the way with the details of acquisition, with productivity goals, or with generalized uses of technology – but not uses that are specific to various aspects of the curriculum. (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005, p. 306).

Jacki’s experience at her school is an example where multimedia technology use in the school is generalised for non-specific pedagogical purposes. The result is a myriad of management and technical problems in the learning space: “We’ve had a lot of damage and destruction since we’ve become mainstream. After five year of owning our own little empire we’re now part of this amorphous mass of dual platform…There’s a major loggerhead between the powerbrokers who own the technology and how the technology should be used.”

Jacki’s situation at her school reflects problems with school administrations and their support of pedagogical ICT use. It is an issue that resonates with the IEA SITES study (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008) that found the lack of administrative support for ICT pedagogy is a major obstacle for teachers’ effective use of technology utilization. “The
most important school-level factors influencing teachers’ ICT-use for lifelong-learning practices are the vision that principals have in regard to ICT-use supportive of life-long-learning pedagogy and the technical and pedagogical support available for teachers and students” (p.276). The role of school administrations and their beliefs about technology integration is vital to whether there is support for integrated pedagogy and technology use (Sprague and Pierson, 2008).

The software industry’s notion of participatory design can be applied to the way technology may be integrated with specific classroom pedagogy (Means, 2008). The idea of participatory design is that those using the technology should be engaged in its implementation and organisation from the outset. The teachers’ responses suggest that designing the use of technology to their specific film pedagogical needs would create greater capacity and better efficiency for film learning in the curriculum. Participatory design recognises that successful technology integration depends upon resource structures serving and supporting teacher’s pedagogical objectives (Means, 2008).

**Technology integration: culture clash**

In the integration of new technologies in schools, Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan (2002) find a paradox between the learning freedoms associated with technology and cyber space use, and the constraining of those freedoms by the social spaces of schools. The response to the new-socio-technical culture has been met with a reassertion of discipline and constraint with technologies in schools. This paradox is evident in Jacki’s experience at her school: “...we’re trying to use the technology. Lots of our kids have this technology and we’re trying to push the boundaries but we’re having the school say, ‘no ipods, no phones, no this, no that’. You can’t shut the technology down, the best we can do is to use it for our purposes and use it well for our purposes”. It illustrates a tension between the wider techno-culture and the culture of schools that Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan (2002) describe as an unresolved culture clash:

> …the social order is unwilling to embrace possible liberations and flexibilities of the new technological world. In general, what this means is that we are facing a broad transformation of social life and social work by the introduction of new
technologies; but this is faced on the other side by a growing minimization and micro-management of the social spaces and routines of schooling. (p.155)

The cultural tensions between technology and school structures may also be exacerbated by film pedagogy and its aesthetic approach to learning. Jacki’s comment, “It’s an old culture versus a new culture. It’s old learning versus new learning”, is possibly not just about using new technology. At Jacki’s school, it is technology integration with an arts learning’s approach of self-expression and play that challenges and confronts more traditional curriculum and teacher-centred approaches at her school. The challenges and politics of aesthetic learning in schools are discussed further in the next chapter as a curriculum issue.

The freedoms associated with technoculture described by Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan (2002) could be scrutinised by aesthetic learning. Technology and its human use should be questioned in terms of social responsibility and the possibilities of social and psychic disconnectedness (Ferneding, 2007). An arts education approach such as film learning can interrogate the opposing struggles between freedom and domination in technoculture by examining human perception and technology from the ‘inside’ (Ferneding, 2007). For the participants in this study film learning as aesthetic learning interrogates technology and technoculture from the ‘inside’.

**Conclusions**

The experience of the teachers teaching film in this study is an opportunity to consider the issues of technology integration in schools. Recognising technology as a cultural instrument and not merely as a tool, explores the ramifications of technology integration in education as a socio-cultural experience. Using Ihde’s (1995) ideas of technology transfer from one context to another, the use of filmmaking technology in a learning context can be conceived both as an individual human-technology relation, and as a socio-cultural gestalt. Technology integration affects the human experience of learning and schooling (Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan, 2002), and human perception of social systems (Ferneding, 2007). To acknowledge the cultural impacts of technology is to better understand, prepare and use technology in education.
Specific technology is changing the way curriculum content is taught and conceived (Bell, Schrum and Thompson, 2008), and film learning is an example of this. Digital capture and editing technology has allowed for the development of film learning. The learning however shapes the technology use. Multimedia technology can be used for cross-curricula learning, however film pedagogy explores learning in the multimedia as a process of learning, rather than as just a form of partnering pedagogy with technology. Film learning endeavours to use technology to explore human expression and the nature of technology itself.

In this study, the participants’ efficacy and competence with technology use supports the contention that pedagogy is integral to confident and purposeful integration of technology in schools (Bell, Schrum and Thompson, 2008; Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008; Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005). The integration of pedagogy and ICT-competence has to be aligned with effective professional learning for teachers, and support from school administrations and leadership (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005).

The general affluence of these teachers’ schools provides adequate to substantial access to filmmaking technology but access in those schools to those resources is problematic. Less resource-rich schools would have difficulties accessing funds to acquire filmmaking technology as Diana points out: “Money is an issue in some schools”. Wyn (2009b) argues that differential funding levels has privileged and disadvantaged student populations in Australia. It has created an ‘economic debt’ and unequal access to resources such as technology.

The economic debt is evidenced in the history of differential funding levels for schools, resulting in entrenched differences in the learning environments on offer to young people...It has been estimated that in 2006, average student expenditure on capital improvements was $659 for government schools and $1,687 for private schools (Vinson, 2009). Discrepancies in the assets and resources made available to schools over time create an economic debt. (Wyn, 2009b, p. 39).

Discrepancies in technology access are not apparent in the more resource-rich schools of this study. The allocation and funding of the technology in these schools however appears
dependent on curriculum and school politics. Ideally the management of technology funding and allocation in schools needs participatory design of hardware and physical spaces to support specific curriculum outcomes and processes such as film learning. Computer hubs in an all-in-one film room are desirable for easy access to filmmaking equipment and more efficient learning. To realise effective management and student use of filmmaking technology in schools requires fundamental understandings of technology’s relationship to specific pedagogy in the curriculum (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005).

The participants’ concerns with access to, design and control of filmmaking technology aligned to their pedagogy is indicative of resource allocation issues in schools. Jacki in her story about technology resources refers to power structures in the school and feelings of drama and film being marginalised in the curriculum: “We’re the drama department and we’re down low in the priorities”. Having access to effective technology resources for film pedagogy is reflective of wider political, ideological and economic issues in schools and the curriculum. Jacki’s perception of drama’s status in schools is not unique. O’Toole (2009b) contends: “Drama and the curriculum are somehow natural enemies. Certainly drama has been until recently excluded from the central curriculum of most schooling systems, and mainly exists in the margins…”(p. 2). It is in this marginalised context of the curriculum that the drama teachers’ realisations and more fundamental concerns with implementing film learning are situated. The availability and effectiveness of technology access and support is a symptom of more fundamental concerns with curriculum construction.

The next chapter analyses the teachers’ responses as realisations of curriculum issues impeding the teaching of film.
Chapter 11

The teachers’ realisations: curriculum issues

...when an idea moves from an invention to an innovation, diverse “component technologies” come together. Emerging from isolated developments in separate fields of research, these components gradually form an “ensemble” of technologies that are critical to each other’s success.

Peter Senge, 2006

For film learning to flourish in schools a number of diverse components have to come together to meet Senge’s (2006) criteria for innovation. In this chapter the teachers responses reveal that to achieve success with innovation in the curriculum requires more than a reasoned and justified exploration of film learning, and teacher enthusiasm and confidence. The teachers’ realisations of film learning in their schools illustrate that change initiated by teachers has to be supported by the component of mandated external policy (Ewing, 2010). Critical to the success of film learning in the curriculum is an integrated bottom-up and top-down approach to educational change (Darling-Hammond, 2005). To learn from and nourish teachers’ professional practice and provide educational capacity and equity across schools, requires schools and policy systems to recognise and support innovation, agency and transformation in the classroom as on-going organisational professional learning and inquiry (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009; Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009).

This chapter addresses curriculum structures, resources and tensions as the dominant impediment to the introduction and development of film learning in the participants’ schools. The uncertainty of where and how film learning is situated in the curriculum, the marginalisation of the aesthetic curriculum (O’Toole, Stinson and Moore, 2009; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996) and the political and ideological stakes involved in curriculum construction (Deng and Luke, 2008) all contribute to the teachers and their schools facing obstacles in implementing curriculum change. These curriculum
components have to be overcome, so that in Senge’s (2006) terms, the idea of film learning “moves from an invention to an innovation” (p. 6).

**Curriculum change**

In both the school and statutory policy context the curriculum is viewed as an edifice difficult to re-shape (O’Toole and Stinson, 2009). There are social, political and intellectual impediments to making change in the curriculum but if “the grounds for developing new modes of content organization are sufficiently compelling, one could try to make the changes or secure the resources to support it” (Eisner, 2002b, p. 145). The teachers’ responses highlight how teacher-initiated change and the knowledge, skills and confidence gained from the film learning workshops are themselves not sufficient to support curriculum change. Despite the teachers’ compelling grounds for introducing film learning, schools are unwilling and uncertain about introducing new areas into the curriculum without externally mandated policy. Ewing (2010a) argues, “that neither mandated external policy nor teacher-initiated change in classrooms is sufficient – both need to happen simultaneously, although inevitably tensions are created” (p. 166).

The tensions and the nature of the resources necessary to support curriculum change are revealed in the teachers’ ‘realisations’ of teaching film in their schools. The following teachers’ realisations are presented as individual vignettes. In juxtaposition with each other they create the effect of ‘montage’ and allow curriculum themes to emerge.

**Vignettes of the teachers’ realisations**

**Jen**

*The advantage of being a head teacher is you get to throw things on the table, more than you would if you were a classroom teacher. I wanted to look at introducing film as an elective for year 9 and although there were some murmurs of excitement particularly*
from the headmaster, the deadline we had to meet to put in a program was never going to happen.

When I threw film on the table, at the same time I asked for extra drama periods in year 8. We were reminded that because we don’t have compulsory hours\(^\text{7}\) we should be happy with what we have. Then the head of visual arts and the head of music came in and met with me shortly after. They said they could help me both with the film and drama allocation. Their proposal was that we would teach film to all of year 8 next year as part of a stage 4\(^\text{8}\) creative arts course and that each of us look at each of the components and what we can bring to it. They could see it as a collaborative process. Music would like to do music composition for film. For me crafting storytelling, workshopping storyboards and acting for the camera, visual language and literacy – all that we did in those first two units of the workshops fits in perfectly with what we can teach in year 8. Visual arts aren’t quite sure where they’re going to fit in. One member of the visual arts staff is quite resistant to it because she sees visual arts films as a very different medium. She feels that it doesn’t fit in with what I’m going to bring to it. Visual arts film can be based on very image based stuff where it doesn’t necessarily have to tell a story in any conventional way. It’s about what you interpret it to be.

I have a member of my drama staff who says are we losing out here? If we’re teaching film and narrative, we’re not really teaching drama anymore, so when it comes to make choices for electives in years 9 and 10, have they done enough drama to make a choice, particularly if we have film as an elective, will we lose our drama kids? I’ve had to nurture my own drama staff on the way that we teach film still has a lot of drama in it.

A problem is making sure that staff feel confident or have enough training in it. I know from my timetable I won’t be able to teach all of the year 8 classes next year. So, I’ll have to bring one of my drama staff on board and have to make sure we’re tackling it in the

\(^\text{7}\) Currently in NSW there are mandatory hours for music and visual arts in years 7 and 8, but not for drama.  
\(^\text{8}\) Stage 4 refers to years 7 and 8.
same way. Finding a time to make sure you invest in staff is needed. (Interview, June 20, 2008)

Clare

I do think the support is there within the school for me to do film but it’s going to take me to step up and organise those meetings. The reality is creating the space in order to do that. I’m starting a major play production now and with any creative project, you work on it every minute of the day. There’s a reality for any teacher, not just an early-career teacher but for any teacher: where will I focus my energies at the moment? There are many priorities and you have to find the balance in all of that. I guess I’m primarily immersed in the drama subject and embracing that and creating my place within the school.

Because I’m new to the school I need to understand the culture of the school in order to rise up, to step up to this new challenge of teaching film. I’m aware of the big picture of the school, and there are many experienced teachers and I don’t want to say, ‘I know everything about film’ because I simply don’t. I want to collaborate with the people that are there, to create together this new thing.

I have got to find how best to create the opportunity to teach film and maybe it is through the subject digital media that already exists but maybe it’s not. That’s what I need to discover, is there the room within that subject to teach film in the way I want to teach it? Or is it in fact putting it into our drama course, at least initially and teaching it in our way through the collaborative learning, and then it would grow from there. I’m sure that’s part of the problem. I’m not sure how best to fit it into the environment that I’m in.

Next year is the year of the musical and I’ve got to be realistic about time, of what I can do without burning out. There may be a way next year to do a film with a small group as
a co-curricula activity. It has to work within the framework of everything else that is happening. (Interview, July 31, 2008)

Carol

I think I’m a bit pushy in terms of my students and what I can do for them. I’m always questioning, am I capable of doing this? Can I really do this? Am I doing my job properly? Nobody else in the school knows what I do in the way that we teach. I think that puts pressure on me, am I doing it right? It’s just me. I take on that responsibility very seriously. So I push for things.

This principal has been brilliant she’s given me another classroom. She sees the positive coming out of the drama classroom right from the juniors up. Students were filming in the quad outside, using cameras and tripods and disrupting the school a bit and apparently they said to the principal and deputy, “Excuse me, you’re in the way”. I said to the principal they were filming yesterday, and it was great, and she said, “I know, they told us to get out of the way”. I see that as a positive, not a negative, she’s seeing the learning, she accepts that. I think that’s a very positive move forward.

I have had kids who wanted to do video drama for the HSC but the kids weren’t confident and I wasn’t confident to actually do that. I didn’t feel we could be as successful with video drama. But I could see kids in year 10 who wouldn’t take drama for years 11 and 12 unless they were going to do video drama.

You’re grappling sometimes getting your drama programs together, let alone that bit extra to start thinking about these other things like film. There’s not enough out there, but I’m inspired that you got that group together in the workshops and that group is the beginning that could set those things up for teachers who might want to do something, especially when they see what can happen. I saw what happened in my class without having cameras. (Interview, July 3, 2008)
Michael

I think the kids had chosen drama for practical live performance. At the start of the filmmaking unit [in drama] we started a lot with sitting and talking about framing and composition. They didn’t want that. That’s my sense. I didn’t ask them. They were a little bit more engaged when they had the cameras and doing something. But with their films, they were doing stuff that was great. It was like they had thought about framing and composition. I was really impressed with their shots and their explanations for why they were doing things.

The school isn’t really supporting me with film because there isn’t a cohesive valuing from the top of the administration about performing arts generally. I think they like the way the kids talk about it, they love the feedback from the parents and they love the results that the school gets, but really in an integral way of understanding the value of our subject and visual arts and so on, I don’t think they get it. I think if you have a natural interest in it or you’ve taught it, that’s how you understand it. Our principal’s background is geography and social sciences and she goes to the theatre, she sees films but it’s just not in her. And given the nature of her job, to find space to make it an inner understanding isn’t really there. But she’s open to listening to those she respects and she certainly respects what I do. I don’t think I have people who work against what I do, although there may be a bit of competition with visual arts.

Visual arts have introduced a 200 hours photography and digital media course. This will be my competition. They could say visual arts are already offering filmmaking. They do have moving image as an aspect of visual arts but it’s very ill-defined in the syllabus, it could be anything really. The justification of this course being offered through visual arts is similar to reasons why we’d have film run. That kids are exposed to it constantly. They need to engage with it and be in control of it but what we do in drama is very different. There’s a big difference between what visual arts wants to do, and remember it’s part of photography and website stuff, it’s not filmmaking solely. And it’s not about narrative it’s
not about the storytelling. And that’s where English is really supportive of what we want to do in drama because they can see the benefits for their kids in terms of their reading of film texts through an understanding of ‘making’.

So the school hasn’t said completely no. It’s just a bit slow. They may say you’re offering film in drama already, why would we have a stand-alone course? I’ll cross that bridge when I get there.

I’ve got inexperienced teachers, really skilled in some areas and not on others. That’s just the way it is. One of the drama teachers at the moment needs more experience, more conversation about film and more deconstruction of what kids are doing. (Interview, July 2, 2008)

Diana

The principal is in the process of making the whole timetable a little more flexible because one of the problems as we all know is time. We tried to explain to him that if you just have tiny 50 minute periods all the time it’s very difficult to get anything done. You sometimes feel that the timetable is driven by subjects that work from textbooks. There are a lot of people who would love more time. There are enough people working with extra time before and after school now for the timetablers to say we’ll start to accommodate this.

Teacher expertise is an issue. I mean who teaches film? It’s like the drama teacher syndrome for many years. Oh well they go to the theatre on a regular basis, they can teach drama. It’s a little bit like that with film. They know, they go to films every couple of weeks, they can teach film or they know how to point a camera. They don’t have the deep knowledge or the interest.
One of the ways we looked at approaching it was to look at teams. That’s how the science teacher and I tended to work when we were doing our video workshops and when he was doing stuff with his digital media kids he would ask my year 11 drama students to work with the year 9 digital media kids. It served a purpose for both of us. My year 11’s had to think about acting for screen. So that is one way of working and it was a sensible way to use teachers. But not everyone’s able to or prepared to do stuff like that.

Like drama, visual arts are losing kids to digital media. That’s why we’re getting visual arts teachers putting up their hands up to teach digital media but they’re finding they’re not always the right people. And so my principal is starting to say look I need people who actually have an interest in this and to think more broadly than just how to point a camera. He’s saying I need someone to engage the children in the learning. The kids like to do really creative things and like to be pushed.

You look at the stuff taught in English and the way film is taught in English and you keep saying there’s a whole opportunity for children, they need to understand the making of film in order to understand some of the stuff that happens in English. I don’t actually know how some of the teachers talk about what they do in English without having thought about some of the processes that we discussed in the workshop. I think it would benefit kids if they started to be exposed to a lot of the stuff we did in the workshops, a lot of the processes and lot of the questions we posed. (Interview, August 6, 2008)

Jacki

They don’t get the kids running around the school, they get all distressed when the kids are outside the classroom and worry about duty of care, despite us having logs and identifying them. The school’s not quite happy about it because it smells like children having fun and not delivering up nice outcomes. They’re fairly supportive of our film festivals and administration always comes to those and they like to hand out awards and stuff. There’s an enjoyment of what it produces but they’re not necessarily very
supportive of the changes we’re trying to make. I think one concern is that the arts whilst being supported in the school are feared a little bit. It’s a boys’ school, you don’t want too many kids doing arts because it might turn them into soft, poofter boys. At the same time our pastoral care teachers say the best leaders come out of drama and are the best well-rounded kids.

One of the worries setting up a separate film course is that they think we’re empire building. Those teachers of geography and history are more frightened because a course like this is famously popular. So if the school is going to drop an elective line and somebody is building a new elective course, it is those teachers who are most likely to lose courses or loose teachers who are being fairly anti the development of a new course in the school. For these ‘losing’ departments it’s so hard because it’s seen as ‘losers’ and ‘winners’. I’m some upstart arts teacher who runs poofter subjects, empire building with new courses and ‘dumbing down our school’. ‘Smart subjects’ like geography, economics and history are losing out because ‘we’re allowing the dumbing down’. Any kid will tell you, ‘don’t do drama if you’re looking for an easy life, it’s a bloody hard subject to do’.

I suspect we’re a school in great change and the creative subjects like film help kids but they also challenge the status quo. We live on the knife-edge between yes they want us and no they don’t. The administration is not firm enough in its decision making so we’re not supported at the top for growth but that same lack of firmness is letting us grow anyway. As long as we do it discretely we’re allowed to flourish and as long as geography doesn’t get too narky about it, we’ll win in the end. I think there are new ways of looking at the world and we’re conscious of it as a staff but not able to control how it happens. Our staff is frightened because they are largely old and when you don’t ‘get’ something it’s easier to shut it down than embrace it. (Interview, June 26, 2008)

From these vignettes, the teachers’ realisations of film learning in their schools give rise to the following issues:

(i) Teachers want guidance from curriculum support documents.

(ii) Lack of staff expertise requires in-service professional learning in film.
Teachers are unsure of where to make the curriculum space and time for film learning in their schools.

Student choices affect curriculum change for drama and film.

Curriculum change is political and ideological.

Drama and film are marginalised in the curriculum.

Teacher innovation needs to be supported by the structures and leadership of curriculum and school bodies.

**Guidance from curriculum support documents**

Jen refers to having to meet a deadline to submit a film program and not having the time and resources to meet it. Carol tellingly comments, “You’re grappling sometimes getting your drama programs together, let alone that bit extra to start thinking about these other things like film. There’s not enough out there”. For Carol and Jen, a lack of syllabus and program guidance and time allocated to construct such documents are impeding the introduction of more film learning into their school curriculum. Diana, who was previously a curriculum consultant in her career made this prescient observation during the research workshops:

> There needs to be some written support and some outline of a course that teachers could implement. (Logbook questionnaire, April, 2008)

The film pedagogical processes experienced in the workshops alone were not enough for some participants to introduce a significant increase of film learning time to their school curriculum. These teachers felt they needed the support and guidance of programmatic and policy documents, with the support of school leadership to implement curriculum change. It highlights the dependence of school leadership and teachers on programmatic and policy documents to re-imagine the curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2005).
The need for leadership and policy documentation to innovate in the curriculum may reflect an entrenched, heavily weighted ‘top-down’ culture that defines and manages schools and teachers. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) describe the recent rise of a compliant culture in education as symptomatic of a dominate neo-liberal, neo-conservative and managerial discourse. They argue teachers are not encouraged and supported to have professional judgment and courage and that there is little curriculum and school infrastructure to allow teachers to reflect, question and innovate through ‘bottom-up’ initiatives. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) argue that the practices of ‘top-down’, inflexible auditing and standardising in education, and a lack of systematic support for active, explorative and inventive teacher practice have generated a compliance agenda in schools and the curriculum.

**Lack of staff expertise and professional learning support**

All the participants mention that a lack of staff expertise, confidence and time for professional learning is affecting the success of undertaking film learning. Despite the confidence and knowledge they gained from the film learning workshops the teachers realise they don’t have time to in-service other staff with the same intensity they experienced in the workshops. Jen articulates these concerns: “A problem is making sure that staff feel confident or have enough training in it…Finding a time to make sure you invest in staff is needed”. Jacki points out that teachers on her staff who don’t feel overly expert in film learning have their confidence undermined when the technology does not function. Diana observes that some teachers at her school think they are expert because they go to films or know how to point a camera. The responses indicate that on-going, collaborative professional learning in robust pedagogical knowledge and inquiry is required for film to be taught effectively and confidently. Ways to address these concerns are discussed in the next chapter.

All teachers whether experienced or not need continued and shared professional learning and support to become experts (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006). The teachers and particularly their inexpert staff needed continued professional learning beyond the workshops to support the film learning specific to their school context. In Fullan, Hill and
Crévola’s (2006) 'breakthrough model' they assert that for transformative practice in classrooms to occur, professional learning must be ‘in context’.

We need to start at the classroom, reconstructing the problem and the solution as one of embedding personalization, precision, and teacher learning into the daily experiences of students and educators. In so doing, we need to build an infrastructure that surrounds the classroom and will make such transformation inevitable. (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006, p. 25)

The research workshops focused on teacher’s in-context concerns with film learning but the research design did not support the on-going application and progress of the pedagogy in-context. This study highlights that a holistic approach to professional learning is required to mentor, coach, debrief and reflect on teacher’ practice and process as a continuing concern (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006). Innovative pedagogical practices like film learning involve developing and sustaining teachers’ identities as experts and learners (Spillane, 2004). An inquiry-based model for professional learning is to consider teachers as problem posers and problem solvers (Lieberman and Miller, 1990) and embed a collaborative culture of enquiry, experimentation and risk-taking within schools and across schools (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009).

Fullan, Hill and Crévola (2006) argue teachers’ need refined and focused knowledge all the time and that professional learning needs to be systemic and on-going. This is achieved through lateral and vertical relationships between teachers, schools, curriculum personnel and professional networks and depends upon interactive leadership at all levels of the system (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006). To sustain teacher professional learning requires leadership, funding and time, and a curriculum and school culture with a shared vision and commitment to develop through action learning processes (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009).

**Curriculum space for film learning**

All the participants mention uncertainties and difficulties in accommodating film learning in their school curriculum. Clare is not sure whether to introduce film as part of the
drama course or in the digital media course at her school. In drama she feels she has autonomy in the way film learning would be delivered but wonders whether introducing film through digital media would be more effective. Clare uncertainly questions, “I’m not sure how best to fit it into the environment that I’m in.” At the technology high school, Diana spoke in chapter 9 about how the digital media course teaches some film. She feels the digital media course does not allow students to explore film to the degree and depth they want to. She says, “I think the digital media course allows for film but you don’t have to do it, you can do a whole lot of other stuff nothing to do with film…some of the students at our school have wanted more film.”

Michael is not being encouraged to introduce a stand-alone film subject at his school as he believes the administration thinks visual arts is already teaching film. He argues, “There’s a big difference between what visual arts wants to do, and remember it’s part of photography and website stuff, it’s not filmmaking solely. And it’s not about narrative it’s not about the storytelling.” At Jen’s school, visual arts is uncertain about the cross curriculum solution to teaching film in Year 8, “Visual arts aren’t quite sure where they’re going to fit in. One member of the visual arts staff is quite resistant to it because she sees visual arts films as a very different medium…Visual arts film can be based on very image based stuff where it doesn’t necessarily have to tell a story in any conventional way.”

School administrations and the teachers themselves are uncertain and hesitant to introduce film when it is not clear where it best fits in the curriculum. The teachers involved in the workshops have a clear idea of film learning but the school administration and community does not necessarily understand the pedagogy’s educational outcomes. For instance, Michael and Diana mention how film pedagogy would be of benefit to learning about visual texts in English. Diana says, “I don’t actually know how some of the teachers talk about what they do in English without having thought about some of the processes that we discussed in the workshop”. Michael comments that at his school, “…English is really supportive of what we want to do in drama because they can see the benefits for their kids in terms of their reading of film texts through an understanding of
making”. At Jen’s school there is the possibility of drama, music and visual arts collaborating and constructing a film course in year 8, although there appears to be some resistance and uncertainty about the idea. These ideas however illustrate the potential benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to arts pedagogy across the curriculum (Ewing, 2010b).

After this research data was gathered, the Australian curriculum was proposed with media arts as one of the arts’ disciplines. Media arts as a curriculum area may solve the dilemmas and uncertainties these teachers are facing. It may create a clearer space in the curriculum for film learning, and provide structures for professional learning and programmatic guidance for teachers. It is uncertain at this stage what precise shape the media arts syllabus in NSW will be. If media arts has a broad media and technology focus, film with its own rich learning may be marginalised in the breadth of this newly created national discipline.

The teachers in this study view the processes of learning inherent to film ‘making and appreciating’ as a profound and productive pedagogy deserving of curriculum space and time for their students. Students at the centre of learning are also instrumental in shaping the curriculum (Leadbeater, 2004).

**Student choice and curriculum change**

In the teachers’ responses, students are affecting the curriculum space for film and drama. For instance at Jen’s school, there are concerns from her drama faculty staff that by offering film rather than drama in year 8, less children will be exposed to drama and not take drama as an elective in years 9 and 10. If film becomes an elective they fear decreased drama student numbers. Carol mentions how previously her lack of confidence and support for video drama as an individual project in years 11 and 12 meant students were not electing drama in the senior years of high school. In part, student choices and personalizing the needs of the individual shape the school curricula landscape (Darling-Hammond, 2005).
Michael believes students have different expectations of film and drama learning. He observed of his drama students: “I think the kids had chosen drama for practical live performance”. Fundamental differences in film and drama learning were discussed in chapters 8 and 9. Jacki who has film learning as a discrete subject at her school pointed out that, “The kids we attract into film are big picture thinkers. Different kinds of kids respond differently to the mediums of drama and film, and yet there are kids who flip through both”. Diana says that at her school, “Like drama, visual arts are losing kids to digital media”. In chapter 9 she also commented, there are students in digital media “…who have an interest in digital media but not really in all the technology. They are the kids he [the teacher] uses for the in-front-of camera stuff…They tend to be the kids who do the story and have the ideas”.

In the participating teachers’ schools it appears that some students who wish to do narrative film are not necessarily catered for effectively in either the drama or digital media courses at present.

**The politics of curriculum change**

Student choice not only potentially changes the dynamic and student numbers of courses within the arts disciplines. Students choosing the arts can change the curriculum and culture across the school and this has internal ‘political, cultural and economic’ implications as Jacki illuminates in her school context:

*One of the worries setting up a separate film course is that they think we’re empire building. Those teachers of geography and history are more frightened because a course like this is famously popular…For these ‘losing’ departments it’s so hard because it’s seen as ‘losers’ and ‘winners’. I’m some upstart arts teacher who runs poofter subjects, empire building with new courses and ‘dumbing down our school’. (Interview, June 26, 2008)*

Like curriculum change at a systemic level the tensions involved in curriculum change at a school level reflects the social, cultural, political and economic concerns of what
knowledge is of most worth (Deng and Luke, 2008). Defining and deciding what knowledge is facilitated in the wider social policy context and in the institutional school context is dependent on the relationship between epistemology and the ‘powers’ of the sociocultural context.

...a sociopolitical approach construes knowledge as historical, material and discourse construction, reflecting interests, power, and ideologies that underlie relations between individuals and between groups...any formations of subject matter can be taken as acts of power, as bids for the reproduction of particular knowledge and the exclusion or marginalization of others with effects including inter alia, the stratification of educationally produced capital ...(Deng and Luke, 2008, p. 70)

The formation of film learning as subject matter can be taken as an ‘act of power’. It shifts the arrangement of educational cultural capital by recognising the role and value of arts education and film learning.

School knowledge is highly politicised both in the school context and in the community at large. Any re-consideration of the curriculum challenges the hierarchical status, value and power of established subjects and their paradigms of knowledge. Change in schools is ‘taken as a matter of political peril and caution’ (Deng and Luke, 2008) and this is typified by Jacki’s situation in her school and her attempts to introduce more film learning: “I suspect we’re a school in great change and the creation of these subjects like film help kids but they also challenge the status quo. We live on the knife-edge between yes they want us and no they don’t.” Michael’s wish to introduce film as a separate elective subject is also challenging the status quo, inherent in his remark, “the school hasn’t said completely no. It’s just a bit slow. They may say you’re offering film in drama already, why would we have a stand-alone course?”

It is in the status quo of current school curriculum structures that the arts and drama are marginalised (O’Toole, 2009c). This status of the arts in education is apparent in the participants’ responses.
Marginalisation of the arts in the curriculum

Drama is described as clinging ‘unregarded but limpet-like out there beyond the mainstream’ (O’Toole and Stinson, 2009) and this image permeates the teachers’ realisations of their school’s responses to both drama and film learning. When Jen asked for extra drama periods in year 8 she was ‘reminded’ that because drama doesn’t have compulsory hours she should be happy with what she has. Clare thinks the only way she may develop film is on the curricula fringes: “There may be a way next year to do a film with a small group as a co-curricula activity. It has to work within the framework of everything else that is happening.” Carol as the sole drama practitioner in her school remarks, “Nobody else in the school knows what I do in the way that we teach”. Carol’s situation is typical of the marginalized status and paucity of understanding of drama pedagogy in schools and curricula (O’Toole and Stinson, 2009).

Diana discusses how her school needs to extend the length of the teaching periods to accommodate more creative teaching practice. She comments, “You sometimes feel that the timetable is driven by subjects that work from textbooks.” The inference is that creative pedagogies such as the arts have limited influence on the organizational structure of learning. Jacki mentions the suspicion at her school of the ‘less conventional’, collaborative and experiential practices of film learning: “They don’t get the kids running around the school, they get all distressed when the kids are outside the classroom…The school’s not quite happy about it because it smells like children having fun and not delivering up nice outcomes.”

Michael and Jacki discuss the fringe status and parlous situation of creative art pedagogies in their schools: “The school isn’t really supporting me with film because there isn’t a cohesive valuing from the top of the administration about performing arts generally”(Michael). “…they’re not necessarily very supportive of the changes we’re trying to make. I think one concern is that the arts whilst being supported in the school are feared a little bit” (Jacki). The marginalized status of arts subjects and pedagogies such as drama and film contributes to their difficulty to afford any ‘sea change’ in mainstream contemporary curriculum design. O’Toole and Stinson (2009) contend that
being on the margins is a liminal space where significant change agents can always be found. How those change agents infiltrate curriculum design is the focus of the teachers’ realisations in this chapter.

Historically, educational policy and the shaping of the curriculum is reflected by the powers of the political economy but it is accepted, resisted and brought to life by teachers in classrooms (Ayers, Quinn, Stovall and Scheiern, 2008). This research recognises the value of teachers’ experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992) and knowledge (Shulman, 1986) and the student experience of aesthetic arts education (Eisner, 2002a; 2002b; Greene, 1995; 2001) as agencies for transformative curriculum theory and practice.

Curriculum not only describes the complex interactions of the common places of teacher and learner experiences, but it also includes a “critical praxis” that blends action, research, and autobiographical inquiry “by reflection on what it means to engage in worthwhile experience and how the latter can be purchased in the face of constraints on social justice (Schubert, 1986, pp. 176-177).

The autobiographical and the political are inseparable when teachers’ experiences, self-reflexivity and intellectual erudition advocate for change in schools, however they need hope and freedom to mobilize (Pinar, 2004). In part that freedom is afforded through the ‘critical praxis’ of teachers’ experience and research. The aim of this research is to voice teachers’ stories so meaningful learning experiences are developed for students in film and aesthetic arts education. To realise the teachers’ aspirations for film learning, their experiences have to be acknowledged and supported from the top-down in the curriculum hierarchy both at policy and school levels.

**Conclusions: A bottom-up and top-down approach**

A bottom-up and top-down approach to educational reform implicates individual schools and the policy system in a change process (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Although not explicitly stated by the participants in this study, many of their concerns in introducing film into the school curriculum are related to the absence of a top-down policy approach to support the process. Schools are apprehensive to introduce change in their school
curriculum without the ‘top-down’ support, guidance, and policy requirements of the government supported programmatic level of syllabus construction.

At the same time, policy at a syllabus level needs to acknowledge the ‘bottom-up’ role of teachers in influencing curriculum making. In schools and classrooms teachers are at the nexus of curriculum implementation. Their stories are integral to meaning making in the curriculum (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992). The realisation ‘stories’ of the teachers in this study demonstrate that in developing new ideas in the curriculum, policy has to be re-invented at different systemic levels in schools and at the state programmatic level to support changing pedagogical practice in the classroom. Darling-Hammond (2005) argues: “Neither a heavy-handed view of top down reform nor a romantic vision of bottom-up change is plausible. Both local intervention and supportive leadership are needed, along with new ‘horizontal’ efforts that support cross-school consultation and learning” (p. 366). As a matter of equity and social justice teachers’ insights, passions and professional learning have to be systemically shared, sustained and developed across schools (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Fullan, Hill and Crévol, 2006; Goundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009; Hargraves, 2009; Schubert, 1986).

In their realisations with film learning the participants are affected by a lack of curriculum support documents and a lack of time and resources for the professional learning of inexpert staff. There is also teacher uncertainty as to how to implement curriculum change in their schools and reluctance by school leadership to create curriculum time for film learning. The workshop intervention for the individual teacher participants was an effective beginning but the research design highlights how support and guidance for teacher innovation and professional learning in schools must be authentic, participatory and on-going. The research indicates the need for policy, structures and organisational professional learning that sustains real engagement with teacher initiatives in classrooms.

Technology in schools when managed in a more lateral, participatory way could be more successful by integrating bottom-up teacher pedagogical design of technology with top-
down systemic policy and administrative support for technology. The workshops illustrate how the success of technology integration in schools is a complex interplay of pedagogy, professional learning and the curriculum. In film learning, pedagogy and technology are intertwined; both have to be learnt together. This supports the contention that teacher professional learning that aligns technology learning with curricular goals promotes a more judicious and successful integration of technology in schools (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005). Access, use and management of technology are integral components of film learning innovation in schools but technology integration too is shaped by larger curriculum concerns.

The marginal status of the arts in the curriculum and the impervious nature of curriculum structures are barriers to innovation with filmmaking technology. The participants’ realisations raise issues about how local teacher innovation in the classroom can be supported by the wider curriculum architecture, and also how such innovation can systemically be part of the architecture. Teachers’ experiences and practices are a prerequisite for curricula development, as Westbury (2008) contends:

Those who work at the chalk-face, in the schools and in teacher education and teacher development, are the only ones with the experience and practical knowledge that is the prerequisite for inventing curricula and pedagogies. It is only those at the chalk-face who can make curricula and school subjects that address their needs and that can be implanted in the light of their capabilities and the demands of the classroom and these (real) students. (p. 3)

Once innovation and agency is shown at the classroom level how can institutional and policy change be implemented? To integrate a bottom-up and top-down approach to curricula development requires structural and systemic change that allows for opportunities for teacher initiated growth and change. Westbury (2008) poses similar questions that reconsider the current architecture of schooling and curriculum:

What is there to be known about supporting changing practices in the communities within the schools? How can creative, chalk-face-led curriculum development be built into face-to-face communities of practice to become part of the routine work of teaching? How do new curricular objects, systems, and activities diffuse beyond their immediate worlds of invention and development? (p. 4)
The participants’ realisations that film learning as curriculum innovation is not easily implemented raises questions about school and curriculum architecture. It highlights the difficulties of teacher initiatives to develop change in schools. The Australian Curriculum’s proposed introduction of media arts has possibilities for film learning, and may solve some of the curricula problems these teachers are facing. It does not however answer the systemic question of how inventive teacher practice and experience can be harnessed by the curriculum system at large (Westbury, 2008). To return to Senge’s (2006) coming together of ‘component technologies’ as a criteria for innovation, the architecture of the curriculum system itself has to allow components to come together to form an ‘ensemble of technologies’ for change.

The next chapter considers the findings of this research as a ‘component technology’ for innovation in educational practice and policy.
Empowerment of the teaching profession produces good results. Professional teachers should have space for innovation, because they should try to find new ways to improve learning. Teachers should not be seen as technicians whose work is to implement strictly dictated syllabi, but rather as professionals who know how to improve learning for all.

Reijo Laukkanen, 2008, p. 319

...the arts matter because they serve – at their best – the deep human impulse to understand, to integrate and to transcend; they serve life’s ineradicable desire to live more fully, more abundantly. I have always felt that art and, especially, the making of art enables individuals to ratchet up their ephemeral lives to the level of high symbolic adventure and philosophical questing.

Peter Abbs, 2003, p. 67

In the 1920’s Soviet filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin conceived film editing as individual shots or fragments used to build up a whole scene. To use Pudovkin’s (1929/1970) concept of ‘linkage editing’ or ‘constructive montage’, the above quotes, like shots in a film, can be linked to construct the central findings of this research. Laukkanen (2008) attributes a key component for the reform and success of the Finnish educational system to the empowerment of teacher innovation. Finland is at the top of international rankings for a high-quality, consistent and equitable educational system (NCES, 2007; Sahlerg, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). A significant implication of this research is the need to allow and support teacher agency for curriculum innovation.
The curriculum innovation in this research is a creative and aesthetic approach in film learning. Film learning in this research refers to creating and critiquing stories in the communication technology of moving images. Abbs (2003) argues contemporary education must excavate aesthetic and metaphysical concerns in learning. Life understanding, life enhancement and life wisdom, he says, can be experienced and developed in the arts through the poetic modes of epiphanic revelation, Socratic questioning and prophetic possibility. This research supports the necessity and vitality of creating an aesthetic approach to film learning that embraces ‘high symbolic adventuring and philosophical questing’. It is an approach that aims to empower students and teachers with the agency of life wisdom through aesthetic creativity in film learning.

This study concludes that space needs to be made in current educational structures to allow for teacher curriculum innovation. Teachers and students are bound by a centralized, inflexible curriculum structure that inhibits innovation. More specifically in the NSW and Australian context curriculum space should be made for teacher innovation in aesthetic film pedagogy.

Interpreting the research findings

This research as a collective case study has investigated film learning in education through the personal, in-depth and unique experiences of six secondary drama teachers. The six teachers experienced professional learning in film pedagogy with ten other teachers through workshops facilitated by the researcher. The teachers’ detailed responses are examined as aspirations for film learning before the workshops, and as expectations and realisations of teaching film in their schools after the workshops.

The interpretation of this research is non-generalisable and non-reproducible but as Stake (1995) argues the quality and utility of a case study is ascertained on “whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued” (p. 135). The case study is not a problem or hypothesis, it provides readers with “good raw material for their own generalising” (Stake, 1995, p. 102).
The conclusions presented in this chapter are the researcher’s overarching reflections and interpretation of the case study’s findings. Using the film metaphor of the extreme long shot, the implications of this research involve pulling back from the close-up detail of the six participants in this study. In film an extreme long shot frames the landscape in which the human figures are barely visible; it is a bird’s eye view of the vista. The concluding reflections as an extreme long shot involve synthesising the teachers’ responses, the literature and the educational context of NSW and Australia.

The research findings as a ‘vista’ are not the final shot. The interpretation of qualitative research is neither terminal nor mechanical: it is emergent and unfinished, and embedded in an on-going historical and political context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The function of this case study is to extend the experiences of teachers to other teachers, researchers and policy makers. It is to value the personal and particularized experiences of teachers with emerging ideas, issues and contexts in film and arts learning.

**Implications and recommendations from this study**

Meaning is made and knowledge is constructed from the encounter with the vicarious experience of the six participants in this collective case study (Stake, 1995). Although not generalisable, the research contributes to the social construction of general knowledge based on the experience of the particular (Stake, 1978). In this chapter the concluding reflections of the study are made as ‘naturalistic generalisations’. The reflections involve recommendations that have implications for educational practice, policy, theory and research. The conclusions are:

1. Teachers must have curriculum space to innovate.
2. Creative, collaborative, reflective and sustained professional learning empowers teachers.
3. Film learning is a ‘productive’, ‘quality’ pedagogy.
4. Students should have access to aesthetic learning in narrative film.
5. A conceptual framework in film pedagogy needs to be developed.
6. Technology access and management must align with film learning in schools.
7. The connectivity between drama and film pedagogy should be developed.
8. Teachers need professional learning in film pedagogy.
9. More research is needed to analyse the benefits and processes of learning in the arts and in film.

1. Teachers must have curriculum space to innovate

The opportunity to imagine has been a strong undercurrent in this research, not only for students learning through film but also for teachers’ professional learning and innovation in the curriculum. Teaching viewed as artistry “depends on sensibility, it uses imagination, it employs technique, it takes pride in its craft” (Eisner, 2003, p. 655). Allowing teachers to imagine, experiment, create and share pedagogy and curriculum innovation have been features of the effective educational reforms in Finland (Sahlberg, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). The participants’ realisations in this research suggest that innovation for these teachers is not encouraged or supported by current curriculum and school structures in NSW.

The participants’ initiatives to innovate came from responding to the needs of their students and a changing sociocultural context. Jacki and Jen’s motivation to introduce pedagogy and curriculum in film is typical of all six teachers in the case study. Jacki said film learning evolved out of a student driven initiative: “Kids began doing film projects and no one would give them an opening for it. I opened up a doorway, I said, ‘I’ll be the support staff if you want to do something!’” Jen’s response was that “film is the way of the future in the sense kids are going to do it with us or without us, so let’s take the journey with them”.

In the study the teachers realise difficulties to introduce new learning into their school curriculums. The reasons for the difficulties are various but the thread that synthesises their responses is the lack of space, time, support and flexibility in the school and statutory curriculum structure for teachers to innovate. This is illustrated by Clare’s comment, “I’m not sure how best to fit it into the environment that I’m in” and Carol’s response, “It’s a bit out of my ability to work out how to do it, there’s no curriculum or program or time allocated to explore and develop”. The strictures of the curriculum
structure are apparent in Michael realising, “The problem is there’s not enough time to really put the two [multimedia visual imagery and live drama] together in a way that’s integrated”.

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) argue that current orthodoxies in a heavily centralised education system threaten progressive and authentic learning. They pose the risk of impoverishment in education through a compliance agenda supporting:

- The rise of audit cultures
- Standardisation of practice
- The diminishment of teacher professional judgement and
- The ‘quality’ agenda in education

The ‘one-size-fits-all’ orthodoxy of a compliance curriculum does not necessarily support teacher professional judgment, innovation and meet student needs and concerns. Allowing time and space for teacher professional judgment and innovation can be viewed as emancipatory and transformative for teachers’ professional learning and students’ learning (Stenhouse, 1983).

In the Finnish education system one of the core principles is balancing decentralisation and centralisation (Laukkanen, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is a professional structure that allows and encourages teachers to reflect, problem-solve and innovate in curriculum development at a localized level. “A typical feature of teaching and learning in Finland is encouraging teachers and students to try new ideas and methods, learn about and through innovations, and cultivate creativity in schools, while respecting schools’ pedagogic legacies” (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 152). Schools in Finland are able to learn from each other through “lateral capacity building” (Fullan, 2005) across systems.

The capacity for teachers to innovate then rests with a less centralised, more flexible curriculum structure that supports teachers’ endeavours to imagine and experiment. Lateral and vertical relationships and communities in schools and across schools need to be built as an interactive, long-term professional learning infrastructure emanating directly from the students and teachers in the classroom (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006;
Hargreaves, 2009; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009). This entails changing not only curriculum structures but also school cultures, as Jacki noted in her school: “Our staff is frightened because they are largely old and when you don’t ‘get’ something it’s easier to shut it down than embrace it”. The participants’ realisations suggest that experimenting and innovating is not easy or supported in the current curriculum structure and educational culture of NSW schools.

To empower, realise and sustain teacher professional judgement, professional freedom and pedagogical innovation requires curriculum and school structures and cultures to support it. The role of the teacher has to be defined as being responsible for professional learning and innovation and not “as technicians whose work is to implement strictly dictated syllabi, but rather as professionals who know how to improve learning for all” (Laukkanen, 2008, p. 319).

2. Creative, collaborative, reflective and sustained professional learning empowers teachers

Professional learning communities and action learning strategies that utilise collaborative, reflective and inquiry driven practice in situ are integral to building and sustaining improvements in schooling (Stoll, Bolam, Wallace and Thomas, 2006; Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009). The 6 x 6hr workshops on film pedagogy in this research created a vibrant learning community outside the school context although it strongly related to the teachers and the students’ interests and needs in their schools. Teachers with a mutual interest in film and drama came together to share, reflect on and develop professional practice. It was for all of them a unique and stimulating experience that developed confidence, motivation and a more positive and yet critical approach to teaching generally.

Key characteristics of the professional learning in the research workshops were:

- A community of practice model where participation in an activity system allowed participants to share understandings concerning what they were doing and what that meant in their lives and for their communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991)
• A mentor/researcher as academic partner to facilitate and support action learning processes in reflection, community, action and feedback (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009)
• Creative, collaborative and experiential processes facilitating learning and development (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003)

These characteristics of the professional learning are typified by Jacki and Clare’s responses: “Being able to work with people who are like me, who just want to work it out together…was really edifying and really exciting” (Jacki); “It’s very easy as an educator to forget to practise what it is you teach…it was an opportunity to practise, to take creative risks and explore something more than a theory or an idea” (Clare). The time necessary for rich professional learning experience was realised by Diana: “[The workshops have] involved a considerable amount of time but I am not sure there is another more effective way than this. There are so many side benefits from bringing teachers together and the whole days gave an opportunity to share in a worthwhile manner rather then the rushed experience of a four hour or less after-school meeting”.

The teachers’ reflections in this research suggest opportunities for establishing valuable professional learning communities are not widely accessible, sustained or inherent in the current systemic and school structures in NSW. Teachers in this study have a ‘will’ to learn and to innovate in pedagogical practice but there is a lack of space and structure in their school and curriculum context to implement new professional learning practices. On-going professional learning and communities of practice are not fixtures of the educational architecture supporting their professional role as educators. The lack of access for teachers to professional learning as a community of practice has ramifications for student learning as Jacki’s comment suggests: “As an ‘older’ teacher I feel I have fallen into a rut…What was timely about the workshops was it re-invigorated the passion that comes from new discoveries. You know it’s more than the content you are delivering to students, it’s that passion you can share with them that comes from newness and freshness”.
Creative processes have the capacity to invigorate professional learning for teachers. It is a concept supported by sociocultural theory and the dialectics of creativity and development (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003). When professional learning for teachers is treated as a creative endeavour it acknowledges creativity is an interactive and transformative process that leads to newly realized aspects of self and the expansion of culture. “Creativity, then, depends on development, and development depends on creativity” (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003, p. 63). These ideas are captured in Michael’s comment about how the creative and experiential learning processes in the research workshops clarified and embedded ideas: “I think the six-hour blocks allow for the making and appreciating which is crucial for the learning. This is where the theory/ideas you [the teacher/researcher] present to us crystallise”.

The six teachers’ reflections in the research suggest the workshops creative and experiential activities and processes contributed to dynamic and transformative professional learning. Creativity in a Vygotskian sense is in processes that involve sharing emotions and developing meaning to form the creative imagination (Vygotsky, 1971; 1997a). The professional learning workshops are an example of systems investing in creativity (Sternberg, 2003) and invigorating creative energies (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Creativity and collaboration can both facilitate and consolidate development as it transforms domains and provides scaffolding in expanding social meaning (Moran and John-Steiner, 2003).

An implication of this research is that teacher professional learning characterised by creative and collaborative processes and on-going action learning with academic partners empowers teachers. This has the capacity to transform and sustain the development of learning and creativity in schools.

3. Film learning is a ‘productive’, ‘quality’ pedagogy

The participants’ responses to the film learning workshops resonate with the dimensions of a productive pedagogy (Hayes et al, 2006) and the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). The characteristics of a pedagogy
that promotes intellectual quality and a quality learning environment, and generates significance by meaningfully connecting with students are evident in the participants’ reflections. Deep, problematic knowledge and higher-order thinking in film learning are apparent in these example participant responses: “I can see how to make exemplary films…can create really deep learning for students” (Clare); “The most powerful learning was the shift from the original idea of what you think the film will be and what you end up with, the change that happens through the process of filmmaking” (Michael); “What was powerful to me was that we all went away and made these little exercises and I realised we all got there differently” (Jacki).

Using a metalanguage and substantive communication are also elements of intellectual quality in the Quality Teaching Framework. Carol’s comment supports this contention: “I kept coming back from the workshops with all these new words and new ideas, a terminology. It was a vocabulary in understanding visual knowledge. I was bringing that back to the students at my school and they understood so much of it”. The collaborative processes of filmmaking support students self-directing, socially supporting and engaging with the learning: “When you see kids working in a student-centred way, you see them all communicating and having their say. It means they feel connected to what they’re doing” (Carol).

The connectedness of film learning with the students context is typified in Diana’s response: “[Film] is really very much part of their cultural experience and they love to be involved in that”. The focus on narrative and multiple ways of knowing also connects students with the intellectual demands of learning. Michael believes, “[film] is the really number one medium through which [students] access stories. It was almost a responsibility to provide opportunities for kids to create their own stories in this media”. Jen observes, “There are many ways of learning…and film forces you to access all of those styles”.

Film as a productive pedagogy has the capacity to create a rich, complex challenging and authentic learning experience for students.
4. Students should have access to aesthetic learning in narrative film

The six participants in this case study believe deep, creative and aesthetic learning in narrative film can meet student interest and learning needs. The teachers’ responses to the sociocultural context and the desire for aesthetic, transformative learning are characterised in Michael’s and Clare’s rationales for narrative film as an option in the arts curriculum: “Kids need that space in a curriculum loaded with deconstruction, loaded with factual learning. They need the space to speak, and drama does that for them, visual arts does that for them and filmmaking will do the same I think” (Michael). “Ultimately I would like to get students to year 12 having a strong aesthetic understanding of film and being able to make choices to tell their stories, to be critical and analytical, to be immersed in the world of film which they are, but to be critical in that world” (Clare).

The teachers’ desire for deep learning in film with an aesthetic narrative focus is a recommendation for film to be accessed as an elective subject in the secondary arts curriculum in NSW. Filmmaking is formally embodied in the drama curriculum documents in NSW, and in other curriculum areas such as English, visual arts and design and technology. In these curriculum areas there is little opportunity for deep and extensive learning in and through film narrative.

Aesthetic and imaginative learning is marginalised in education (O’Toole, 2009c) and not necessarily embraced in all areas of arts learning (Abbs, 2003). The teachers in this research however recognise the value of a learning approach that focuses on the students’ agency to explore meaning through the process and the product of the film aesthetic.

Abbs (2003) argues the value of the aesthetic and the imagination in arts learning lies in their power to affirm our being in the world, to probe and seek out the truth and to enlarge mental horizons. The metaphysical dimension of an aesthetic approach to learning with film is apparent in Clare’s description of film’s creative process: “Once I felt the camera in my hands and looked through the two-dimensional frame at the three-dimensional world I felt the rush of tension in the frame…Time seems to stretch as you
collectively breathe with the actor and the camera to capture the dramatic purpose of the living moment”.

The potential of film as deep, aesthetic learning challenges the current ‘cultural studies’ and broad media focus of the subject ‘media arts’ as proposed in the Australian Curriculum shape paper for the arts (ACARA, 2010). The cultural studies approach to media arts learning (Burn, 2009) focuses on technology, representation, industry, audience and language in the creating and critiquing of media communication technology. The pedagogical emphasis is a qualitative difference in the cognitive and affective experience for the student. The aesthetic approach to film emphasises learning through the art form. Media arts as cultural studies emphasises leaning about media.

Currently the proposed subject media arts in the Australian Curriculum does not allow for deep, aesthetic learning in film narrative. This research recommends narrative film as deep aesthetic learning be explored in the NSW curriculum.

5. A conceptual framework in film pedagogy needs to be developed
Emergent from the six teachers responses in the study is the need for continued development of a conceptual framework in teacher knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2006) for the teaching of film. The research workshops endeavoured to explore a model for teacher knowledge in film creativity and critiquing. To contribute to deeper knowledge in shaping learning, learners and content in film, the participants in the case study aspired to discover and examine further the essential aesthetic and learning elements of filmmaking as a creative and aesthetic pedagogy. Diana and Clare articulate the aspirations for a film pedagogical conceptual framework: “What I think these workshops attempted to do was to give a total framework to the teaching of film, just as we were struggling in creating a framework for drama many years ago” (Diana). “To truly engage our students in a sophisticated way with film learning, a new language needs to emerge to articulate what the fundamental components of film are and how we as educators can best facilitate and scaffold film learning” (Clare).
As a continuation of this research the following conceptual framework (see figure 12.1) seeks to clarify the essential aesthetic and learning elements of narrative film as learning praxis. At the beginning of the aesthetic learning framework for narrative film is the student as a collaborative film artist. Creating and perceiving the aesthetic form of film involves semiotic mediation of a cultural artefact (John-Steiner and Mahn, 2003; Kress, 2003; Vygotsky 1981; Wertsch, 1994). It is an interactive process by which culture is created and critiqued by the student.

The aesthetic learning elements for creating and critiquing film in the framework are an attempt to encapsulate the teachers’ responses to the workshops, summed up in Jen’s observation: “I remember asking at one of the workshops where do the dramatic elements come in and then realising it comes in here, it comes in there…it is integral to all aspects of filmmaking…It’s about storytelling, tension and the dramatic elements, and acting for the camera”.

In the conceptual framework the learning outcome from the process and product of creating and critiquing the artistry of film using the aesthetic elements, is the student’s aesthetic experience as a participant filmmaker and percipient audience. Jacki describes this aesthetic learning or knowing outcome in this way: “Drama is about re-shaping opinions, thoughts and ideas. Film is too in a very different way”.

Figure 12.1: A conceptual framework for aesthetic praxis in film learning.

Narrative film artists collaboratively

create ⇑ critique

culture

towards stories

in moving pictures technology

that are driven by tension and dramatic action of cause and effect

focused by framing

using space, time, movement, composition, perspective, codes, conventions, pace, rhythm, acting, sound, music, dialogue, mood, atmosphere

for an aesthetic experience and audience engagement
6. Technology access and management must align with film learning in schools

A recurring theme in the teachers’ responses was the need for accessible cameras to reduce a loss of classroom and preparation time, and specific and autonomous computer access for the teaching of film. It was acknowledged shared computer access with other curriculum areas did not support the specific requirements for the storage and maintenance of film learning needs and processes. The issue of losing control of the film room technology resources in Jacki’s school typifies the problems: “We’ve had a lot of damage and destruction since we’ve become mainstream. After five years of owning our own little empire we’re now part of this amorphous mass of dual platform with only some of the facilities Apple provides and we’re really angry about it… There’s a major loggerhead between the powerbrokers of who owns the technology and how the technology should be used”.

Participatory design for technology resource management (Means, 2008) utilises the teachers’ pedagogical input combined with school administrations and information technology expertise to produce decision-making that better serves student-learning outcomes. Pedagogy and technology is more effective for learning when interrelated with curriculum outcomes, resource management and physical architectural structures for technology in school spaces (Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005).

The teachers in this research aspired for the participatory design of resources in the teaching of film that allowed:

(i) computer hubs for group work
(ii) classroom access to cameras
(iii) autonomous computers for the requirements of film learning.

These physical resource demands can be likened to open drama spaces, science labs and design and technology rooms designed for specific pedagogical needs. School leadership and systemic and economic support are required to implement the integration and management of filmmaking technology that aligns pedagogy and curriculum learning.
outcomes in schools (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2008; Mishra and Koehler, 2006; Staples, Pugach and Himes, 2005).

7. The connectivity between drama and film pedagogy should be developed

The relationship between the dramatic forms of theatre and film (Williams, 2001/1954; McAuley, 1988) is illustrative of the connectivity and dialectic between drama and film pedagogy. This research demonstrates that drama pedagogy and drama teachers can profoundly inform the teaching of film. Understandings in drama revealed to the teachers essential aesthetic characteristics of learning in both pedagogies, such as:

- (iv) directing is central to film pedagogy whereas acting is central to drama,
- (v) stories are told in and through the assemblage of frames in film, in drama they are told in and through a space, and
- (vi) environment is symbolically embodied and represented but unimagined and virtual in film, the environment in drama is represented by being metaphor and being imagined.

The ‘essentialness’ not only defines content knowledge, it helps to explain the aesthetic experience for learners and learning. As with all curriculum areas the differences in knowledge and knowing in drama and film is one of emphasis and what is the central or core to the focus of the learning experience (Eisner, 2002b). Jacki expresses some of these ideas in her response: “I think drama in a school is about embodiment and living the moment whereas I think film requires you to picture, it’s a more directorial skill. It’s seeing the picture, whereas the acting thing is living the part”.

Strong pedagogical commonalities between drama and film learning empowered drama teachers to teach film. The teachers’ observed that film required:

- (i) Creative and collaborative learning processes
- (ii) Experiential and performative processes of learning
- (iii) Using, manipulating and unifying dramatic, narrative and performative codes and representations for an audience
These pedagogical synergies between drama and film are captured in the following participant comments: “Film is still the same collaborative work. It’s the same way I would work a drama class but focusing on different things” (Diana). “I’m sold on the whole idea that drama teachers should teach film because we get the whole audience thing” (Jacki). “As a drama teacher I bring an understanding of how dramatic elements are used in the theatre and I can apply those principles to the way we look at narrative in film” (Carol).

The connection between drama and film learning should be developed to enhance understandings of the conceptual framework for teacher knowledge in teaching film.

8. Teachers need professional learning in film pedagogy
Professional learning should support teacher innovation and learning in film as an ongoing, action learning, communities of practice infrastructure in schools and across schools supported by academic partnerships (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009). To implement innovation in film learning teachers need access and time for professional learning support in schools and teacher training courses. Jen articulates these concerns about the confidence and training of faculty staff in the teaching of film at her school: “A problem is making sure that staff feel confident or have enough training in it…Finding a time to make sure you invest in staff is needed”.

The inspiration and direction gained by the participants from the research workshops demonstrates the potential of professional learning communities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas, 2006) and lateral capacity building (Fullan, 2005) across schools to support and develop teachers: “I’m inspired that you got that group together in the workshops and that group is the beginning that could set those things up for teachers who might want to do something, especially when they see what can happen” (Carol).

Diana observes the lack of film teaching expertise at her technology high school as not just an issue of professional learning but also teacher interest and passion for deep
pedagogical learning. She compares teacher pedagogical knowledge in film with the situation when drama began as a curriculum subject in NSW: “It’s like the drama teacher syndrome for many years. Oh well they go to the theatre on a regular basis, they can teach drama. It’s a little bit like that with film. They know, they go to films every couple of weeks, they can teach film or they know how to point a camera. They don’t have the deep knowledge or the interest”.

This research has shown the capability afforded by a professional action learning framework to galvanise teacher and academic research, innovation, interest and knowledge. The opportunity for such communities of practice should be inherent to the career infrastructure of teachers. A major re-vitalisation of the agency and structures for teachers to learn as professionals would be to institute such a framework systemically. Re-designing schools and educational systems to support and stimulate effective teachers’ learning has the capacity to improve the quality of student learning (Aubusson, Ewing and Hoban, 2009; Sarason, 1990).

9. More research is needed to analyse the benefits and processes of learning in the arts and in film

Learning through aesthetic knowledge and experience is undervalued in education (Eisner, 2003; Ewing, 2010b; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1995) and this is manifest in the arts curriculum struggling to be an accessible or core learning experience for all young people in NSW and Australia (O’Toole, Stinson and Moore, 2009). Continued research in the intrinsic benefits of learning in and through the arts and film is needed. It is imperative in light of the arts fringe status in education and the current development of a national curriculum agenda in Australia.

The systemic architecture and economy of education needs to support schools and universities in an action learning, community of practice framework to re-vitalise teachers as its life-blood. Dynamic and meaningful professional learning communities can be created by academics working in partnership with teachers, and teachers in partnerships with other teachers in and across schools. These professional learning
communities are vital to sustaining and developing the capabilities and capacities of our teachers and our young people.

This study has shown the potential of film pedagogy. Unless there is the curriculum and school space for teachers to innovate and professional communities of practice to support innovation and development, the ensemble components needed to move from invention to innovation in learning will not be successful (Senge, 2006). This is not only relevant to the exploration of film learning but any creative innovation in educational endeavour.

**Athena’s shield: Wisdom and film learning**

In the Ancient Greek myth the gorgon Medusa has the power to turn all that gaze at her into stone. Perseus avoids Medusa’s eyes by seeing her reflection in Athena’s polished shield and is then able to cut her snake-ridden head off. For film theorist Siegfried Kracauer (1960) the film screen is analogous to Athena’s polished shield. Athena is the goddess of wisdom and the arts, and in the story, her shield is a reflection for humanity to confront reality. The shield is a mirror held up to reveal certain truths about human nature and the construction of our social world.

Like the shield, the film screen is a mirror held up to nature. Through the screen, film stories are insights into humanity and philosophy, as Noël Carroll (2006) asserts:

> Films are indubitably well-suited to give us empirical insights into recurring patterns of human behaviour – including some that may be more arcane than others – by means of clear examples whose actual analogues we may go on to find in our own encounters with life. And where that cinematic depiction of the pertinent recurring patterns involves a revealing glimpse into some or another paradox of the human heart, we might…be willing to call it philosophy…(Carroll, 2006, p. 385)

This research has explored how with access to filmmaking technology students can construct and reflect upon their own and others film-stories. By holding Athena’s shield as the camera frame and the screen, students can explore and examine the world through aesthetic and reflective processes in filmmaking and appreciating learning. Six drama teachers and their experiences with film learning have contributed *phronesis* or practical
Wisdom involves thinking, reflecting and acting wisely. Wisdom does not necessarily raise conventional educational testing scores but if wisdom is combined with creativity and intelligence, choices and conditions for the common good may be realized (Sternberg, 2003). If film is viewed as a poetic or aesthetic form of learning, then creativity, intelligence and wisdom could be its outcomes. An aesthetic approach to learning in film explores an arts way of knowing. For experience and knowledge in the arts “opens new modalities for us in the lived world; it brings us in touch with our primordial landscapes, our original acts of perceiving” (Greene, 1995, p. 149).

In Hunt’s (2006) discussion of film as a philosophical resource he ends, “Ultimately, though, motion pictures may resemble the humble laboratory rat in that its cognitive value may be found in what we do with it, rather than in what it tells us” (p. 404). Hunt is referring to the interpretation of films for philosophical inquiry, but what we do with film is just as relevant to educational inquiry. To return to Athena’s shield, it is through the screen’s reflection that students should have opportunities to learn creativity and wisdom from making and appreciating film stories in education.
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