

**DRAMA IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Drama in South African Secondary Schools: Meeting the Challenges of Educational Change

South Africa is undergoing fundamental transformation at all levels of government and civil society, requiring a firm commitment to redressing the legacy of apartheid and to the development of South Africa's people. Part of this commitment is to undertake research which complements transformation processes, investigating the most appropriate ways to meet the challenges posed by such change. This study examines the potential of drama in the secondary school to meet key educational challenges, motivating strongly for the inclusion of drama as part of the formal curriculum in all schools.

Social transformation has been greatly influenced by policy such as the Reconstruction & Development Programme (RDP) and subsequent Government White Papers which identify the need to develop South Africa's human resources as crucial. It is in this light, and in the context of great disparity that exists across the education spectrum, that learning experiences of high quality must be provided in schools. It is argued that drama, as an art form and an educational medium, is able to provide such qualitatively sound learning experiences because it is essentially learner-centered, experiential and holistic, offering unique ways of knowing, understanding and gaining insights.

However, the classroom drama experience needs careful conceptualisation itself, particularly in view of the fact that life experiences of pupils are characterised by multiplicity and diversity within a new era of social and cultural mixing, as well as increased global interaction through, for example, the mass media and the internet. This study thus argues from a post-structuralist perspective, which embraces notions of multiplicity, proposing a reconceptualisation of the classroom drama experience that challenges the oppositional or binary perspectives that have previously characterised the way we think about drama and education. Examples include art versus utilitarianism; process versus product; drama versus theatre. Investigating the classroom drama experience in the light of developments in postmodern theatre, this study proposes that classroom drama should be seen as a form of theatre itself and suggests the term *theatricalisaction* to describe this classroom-theatre process which is based on action, reflection, experience and creative expression. It becomes a theatre of activity or an activating theatre.

In this light classroom drama is considered in a specifically South African context. In particular, this study examines the ways in which the following contexts impact upon the drama experience: the education system, the place of the arts within that system, and cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. Drawing on policy documentation,

conference proceedings and studies that have been carried out in multiculturalism and multilingualism, the specific educational challenges facing South Africans are identified.

In further exploring the potential of drama to meeting these challenges, this study documents the results of surveys conducted with drama teachers and with students who have studied drama as one of their formal subjects, highlighting in particular their perceptions, perspectives and experiences regarding the aims and value of drama education.

Finally, in light of the information gained from teachers and learners, and of the concepts and contexts investigated, this thesis considers the ways in which the drama experience can contribute to meeting three primary educational challenges: the building of a culture of learning; the development and empowerment of pupils; and the embracing of cultural and linguistic diversity. This study concludes that drama is able to contribute significantly to educational change because of the teaching and learning processes it offers as an art form, and in particular, a theatre form. It is such a participatory, democratic classroom-theatre which provides a teaching and learning approach that should be at the core of transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Theatre is an experience.... Like other experiences - falling in love, attending a football game, or learning to ride a bicycle - it requires our personal presence, and it changes from moment to moment as we encounter a series of shifting impressions and stimuli. It is a kaleidoscopic adventure through which we pass, with each instant a direct, immediate experience.

Edwin Wilson: The Theatre Experience¹

Edwin Wilson highlights the *experiential* nature of theatre. It is an experience requiring the participation of all involved to a greater or lesser degree, challenging our senses, our thoughts, our emotions.

It is an experience fundamentally characterised by the *encounter*... the encounter between actor and audience... the encounter between the performers themselves... the encounter between participants. Whether in the form of a ritualistic performance celebration or a formal presentation in a grand playhouse, the theatre experience creates fictional and imaginatively challenging contexts in which people encounter each other, as well as new ideas, perspectives and insights. In these contexts, the 'real' and the 'fictional' find constant resonance in each other.

Whilst Edwin Wilson captures the dynamic, sensory nature of the theatre experience, he tends to see it very much in terms of those who perform and those who observe. Theatre practice this century has led to a challenging and breakdown of this relationship. For example, Jerzy Grotowski's poor theatre and para-theatrical experiments and Augusto Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed' reconsider the nature of the theatrical encounter, shifting the boundaries between performer and audience and often eliminating them altogether in favour of a theatre of participation.

¹ Wilson, 1980, p.1.

Classroom drama is also an experience. It too relies on the encounter between participants to provide new insights. Through the process of metaxis, participants operate simultaneously in real and fictional worlds, and learn through reflecting on their experiences in these contexts.² It has an aesthetic dimension requiring that pupils not only engage in imaginative adventures of discovery and exploration, but that they express meaning through creative media. In this sense, the drama classroom also becomes a theatrical encounter, and, as will be argued in this dissertation, needs to be seen as a form of theatre itself.

South Africa is undergoing a radical process of transformation affecting all aspects of society and government, including the crucial area of education. As new education policy embraces pupil-centered, experiential philosophies, we need to consider approaches to education that will redress the legacy of the past, meet the many challenges facing educationalists, and, fundamentally, provide a learning experience of quality that empowers learners. It will be argued that this learning experience lies in the *theatrical encounter*.

This study thus has two key aims: firstly, to reconsider the traditional split between 'drama' and 'theatre' in drama education, and in so doing, reconceptualise the way we understand Educational Drama & Theatre (EDT) in a contemporary South African context; and secondly, to provide a strong motivation for the inclusion of drama as part of the formal secondary school programme in South Africa.

Chapter 1 examines debates that have characterised EDT, particularly re-examining the tensions in EDT discourse between 'art' and 'function', and between 'process' and 'product'. Drawing strongly on post-structuralist thought, the ways in which we have understood EDT in terms of dichotomies are challenged, reconsidering the notion of classroom drama from a postmodern perspective.

² The notion of metaxis is suggested by Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.42. (The section dealing with metaxis first published in *Bulletin du theatre de l'opprime*, No 5, 1981).

In *The Rainbow of Desire*, Boal describes metaxis as "the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image" (p.43).

Chapter 2 considers some of the *contexts* that impact upon our understanding of the classroom drama experience in South Africa. In order to provide a clear motivation for the inclusion of drama as part of the secondary school programme, and in light of the concepts developed in Chapter 1, this investigation draws strongly on policy documents and initiatives that have taken place in South Africa during the 1990's. The contexts considered are those of cultural and linguistic diversity, the transformed (and transforming) education system, and the place of the arts within education.

Whilst much policy formulation happens at a high level or among government-appointed task groups, the views of teachers and learners are often sidelined or marginalised. Chapter 3 documents the findings of a survey among drama teachers, investigating their perspectives in terms of aims and experiences of classroom drama. Chapter 4 investigates perceptions among university students who have studied Speech & Drama as a formal school subject in terms of the value of the subject and their experiences of it within the school context.

In concluding the study, Chapter 5 draws together the ideas and perspectives of Chapters 1 to 4, examining the ways in which drama is able to contribute constructively and integrally to educational transformation in South Africa and providing a strong motivation for its inclusion in the formal secondary school programme.

Research Approaches

Various research approaches have been used in this thesis, including:

- * a **philosophical** or **conceptual** methodology aimed at reconsidering some of the concepts underlying thinking in Educational Drama & Theatre discourse;
- * an **interpretive** approach through the use of interviews and questionnaires to survey teacher and student perspectives and opinions, based primarily on qualitative methodologies, but including quantitative elements;
- * the critical use of writing in the fields of drama and theatre studies, education, cultural studies and literary theory in an attempt to build on, or respond to, previous research, and to consider drama education in the light of research undertaken in other disciplines.

Research into Educational Drama & Theatre has faced certain difficulties in determining appropriate methodologies. Lynn Dalrymple points out that South African researchers in this field tend to straddle Education and Arts faculties, and because Drama Departments are situated in Faculties of Arts there is often very little contact being made with research in education.³ This dissertation attempts to draw on current thinking in education, particularly in relation to policy formulation and to research on diversity in education.

A further difficulty is that there is often pressure on researchers in this field to "prove scientifically" that drama is able to fulfil the many educational and developmental claims that are made for it. Whilst there is clearly a need for rigorous analysis and sound methodologies, investigations highlight that scientific-positivist approaches (which have as an underlying assumption the view that reality is unitary and can be only be understood by empiric analytic enquiry) are generally inappropriate for educational drama research and that interpretive or critical approaches are more useful.⁴

As John Somers points out, Research in EDT is more suited to qualitative analysis. He suggests that rather than involving themselves in a search for the "facts", qualitative researchers "more often 'see what's there', describing what they find and sometimes generating hypotheses from it, taking part in a search for meanings".⁵ In a sense, such an approach relies on subjectivity to a greater degree, acknowledging the subjective experience of individuals as significant. It is possible of course to combine elements of quantitative research with qualitative methods and this becomes increasingly important in attempting to

³ Lynn Dalrymple, "Researching Drama and Theatre in Education in South Africa" in South African Theatre Journal (Vol 9, No 2, 1995b), p.66.

⁴ For example, see John Somers, 1996b; Philip Taylor, 1996; and Lynn Dalrymple, 1995b. (The underlying assumption mentioned in relation to the positivist approach is taken from an overview by Hilary Randor quoted in Dalrymple.)

⁵ John Somers, "Approaches to Drama Research" in Research in Drama Education (Vol 1, No 2, 1996b), p.168.

determine the impact of using drama methodologies.⁶

However, it is worth noting John Somers' observation that it is not useful to characterise quantitative approaches as objective and qualitative as subjective; he quotes Maykut and Morehouse (1994) who state:

We have chosen the word 'perspectival' instead of 'subjective' to describe the way qualitative researchers see the world. Qualitative research discovers contextual findings - not sweeping generalisations.⁷

The word "perspectival" accurately describes the approach taken in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. In drawing on the experiences, reflections, observations and perceptions of teachers and learners, we are able to develop an accurate impression of the value of drama in the classroom. In terms of the questionnaire design, the emphasis has not been on quantitative analysis (although results have been documented in such a way as to give numerical indication of respondents to particular issues); in most cases, responses gauged do not facilitate a ranking of responses or compiling of statistics because of the relatively subjective nature of information required. As Randor points out, an interpretive approach such as this has as an underlying assumption the notion that "there are multiple realities which require multiple methods for understanding them".⁸ This is strongly suited to the post-structuralist perspective taken in Chapter 1 and recognises that there will be many differing experiences (and even contradictory experiences) in the drama classroom. The approach taken in Chapter 1 draws on what might be called a *philosophical* or *conceptual* methodology.

⁶ For example, see Dalrymple, 1995b, who points out that internationally, the use of drama for health education is needing to show more "concrete" evidence of the impact of drama (ie. beyond subjective impressions or speculation).

⁷ Somers, 1996b, p.170.

⁸ Dalrymple, 1995b, p.60.

Sharon Bailin suggests that

one centrally important type of research is often neglected, that is, research which is philosophical in nature. This is an omission which is not confined to the field of drama education. Indeed, too often in the educational literature, research and empirical research are seen as synonymous. Yet the kind of inquiry which philosophy embodies is, I would argue, of central importance to the development of sound theories and practices.... the purview of philosophical analysis is the conceptual realm rather than the empirical.⁹

Bailin refers to Coombs and Daniels (1991) who suggest that "basically, analytic philosophical enquiry aims at understanding and improving the sets of concepts or conceptual structures in terms of which we interpret experience, express purposes, frame problems, and conduct research".¹⁰ Chapter 1 takes this approach, reconsidering classroom drama in a fresh light and providing a conceptualisation of the experience which takes account of contemporary South African contexts and draws on thinking in other disciplines. The concepts proposed in Chapter 1 are not *the answer* to understanding the classroom drama experience, but represent a different way of thinking about such an experience, a way that is useful for considering educational transformation in South Africa.

As Bailin points out, quoting Barrow (1993), conceptual analysis "does not involve providing a concise definition, but rather elucidating the concept in order to provide 'a clear and fully articulated understanding'".¹¹

Finally, we should take note, that this thesis sites the classroom drama experience firmly in the realm of **arts** education. Philip Taylor questions whether arts education research can

⁹ Sharon Bailin, "Philosophical Research in Drama Education: the case of creativity" in Research in Drama Education (Vol 1, No 1, 1996), pp.79-80.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.80.

¹¹ *ibid*, p.81.

ever achieve its artistic-aesthetic mandate within a climate of scientism and neo-positivism. He quotes Maxine Greene who suggests that the test for arts curriculum and arts research

is the aesthetic experiences we can make possible, the privileged moment through which we enable our students to live. There must be attending; there must be noticing, at once, there must be a reflective turning back to the stream of consciousness - the stream that contains our perception, our reflections, and yes, our ideas. Clearly, this end-in-view cannot be predetermined. I am arguing for self-reflectiveness, however, and new disclosures, as I am arguing for critical reflection at a moment of stasis and crystallised habits. If the uniqueness of the artistic-aesthetic can be re-affirmed, if we can consider futuring as we combat immersion, old either/ors may disappear. We may make possible a pluralism of visions, a multiplicity of realities. We may enable those we teach to rebel.¹²

¹² Philip Taylor, Researching Drama and Arts Education: Paradigms & Possibilities (London: The Falmer Press, 1996), p.2.

A Note on Terminology

One of the struggles faced by writers on drama and education has been to find the appropriate terminology to discuss and describe the processes. As John Somers points out in the inaugural issue of the international journal Research in Drama Education, drama and theatre in education exists in many forms and their constituent parts bear a confusing variety of labels: "what some drama communities refer to as 'Drama in Education' is termed 'Theatre in Education' in others.... Currently because of the inexactness and divergence in labelling, we are in danger of inhabiting a tower of Babel and we may need to develop a common language".¹³

The understanding of the following terms used in this thesis is described here to ensure clarity in the discussions which follow:

- * ***Educational Drama and Theatre (EDT)***: A broad umbrella term referring to a variety of approaches including Theatre in Education, Drama in Education, Creative Dramatics, and the techniques of Augusto Boal. It is based in a child-centered, experiential philosophy of education and sees improvisation and imaginative exploration as fundamental. Unlike Speech & Drama, it is *not* rooted in elocution or Arnoldian philosophies of Art ("the best that has been thought and said in the world").

- * ***Theatre in Education, Drama in Education and Creative Dramatics***: *Theatre in Education* is understood to refer to the presentation of pre-scripted theatre work by a group of actors which might include a greater or lesser degree of participation by the audience; it is usually performed by companies who visit the school, perform and then leave.

Drama in Education refers to the process that pupils experience in the classroom under the guidance of the teacher (often in role). The aim is not necessarily performance on a stage for an audience, but is focused more on improvisational

¹³ Somers, 1996b, p.6.

activities through which pupils learn by experience and reflection.

Creative Dramatics, developed in the USA, is very similar to Drama in Education (developed predominantly in the UK) and is based very strongly in games and imaginative development.

- * ***Classroom Drama:*** In this dissertation, *classroom drama* refers to drama either as a methodology for any subject or as a subject in its own right (it includes Drama in Education and Creative Dramatics). It indicates the use of drama in the school classroom, recognising it as a learning process.
- * ***Pupils and Students:*** In South African education, learners at previously white schools have been called pupils, whilst those at formerly black schools have been called students. In this thesis, all school-going learners will be termed *pupils* to differentiate them from learners at tertiary level who will be termed *students*.
- * ***Grades and Standards:*** Under the new education system, standards will eventually be replaced by grades, thus std 6 and 7 will be grades 8 and 9. For clarity, reference will be made to standards (eg. std 6, rather than grade 8), the terms that are still currently in use.
- * ***Race and Culture:*** The issue of how to discuss South African society in post-apartheid South Africa without resorting to the discourse of the apartheid government is a problematic one. The terms *white*, *black*, *coloured* and *Indian* will be used in this thesis where necessary to discuss aspects of the education system which was so completely rooted in such categorisation of people. It is not really possible to discuss transformation in South Africa without some reference to 'population groups' as determined by the previous government. The use of these terms should not be seen to imply an acceptance of such categorisation of people on the part of the author. Further, *race* and *culture* should not be seen to be synonymous (eg. *cultural background* does not necessarily mean whether a person is black or white); this is clarified in Chapter 2 in the discussion on cultural diversity.

CHAPTER 1

Drama in schools: Unresolved Tensions

Debate on Educational Drama & Theatre is most often characterised by dichotomous viewpoints on the functions, purpose and status of drama in schools. These opposing viewpoints seem to create inherent tensions in the discipline which largely remain unresolved, requiring a continuous refining, re-defining and re-assessment of what precisely is meant when we talk of Educational Drama & Theatre (EDT).

For some, school drama means performing in the school play and learning to act, whilst for others, school drama has nothing to do with performance, but is rather an effective classroom methodology for experiential learning. Some argue that drama is about developing the art form of theatre, whilst others tend to emphasise a more functionalist approach in using drama to attain other ends (such as life skills).

This chapter works towards a re-conceptualisation and re-assessment of the way we understand EDT by focusing on two of these tensions: firstly, the debate between **drama as art** (recognising its link to theatre, and encouraging artistry and aesthetic development) and **drama as function** (a utilitarian approach); and secondly, that between **drama as process** and **drama as product**.

It is not the intention here to solve these unresolved tensions. In many ways, the nature of EDT is enriched by the paradoxes encapsulated by these tensions. Rather it is an attempt to highlight current debates in attaining a clearer understanding of the possibilities for drama in the South African school, and to use these perspectives as a basis for critical analysis in reconceptualising the classroom drama experience.

It is not enough, however, to focus exclusively on the opposing viewpoints that these tensions seem to encapsulate (ie. the content); the ways in which these debates have been understood in terms of polarities (ie. the methodology) needs to be re-assessed and

challenged. There is a need to get beyond an *either/or* view of these dichotomies to an understanding of the tensions which accommodates both extremes in a *both/and* approach.¹

Much thinking about EDT has been strongly founded on structuralist thinking, most fundamentally perhaps on the distinction between **drama** on the one hand, and **theatre** on the other. In many ways, EDT has been greatly suited to structuralist analysis because of a perceived need by practitioners to prove and validate drama's worth as scientifically as possible within the education system.

Post-structuralist thinking - and in particular postmodernist thinking - however, has demanded a radical reassessment of the methodologies employed in making sense of the world. It is in this light that it becomes necessary to re-examine EDT from a "post-structuralist" perspective, including that of deconstructionism which sees structuralism as "fundamentally flawed for perpetrating the oppositionality of binaries".²

In the first part of this chapter, the link between classroom drama and theatre is reconsidered. This relationship has generally not been given as much prominence in writing on EDT as has the potential of drama as a 'tool' for achieving other educational and developmental goals. The latter has been well documented in much writing on EDT, and is crucial to understanding drama's potential contribution to the education of the pupil. However, the aim here is not to provide a motivation for drama based on a functionalist

¹ Philosophically, the tendency to understand knowledge and society through polarities (or through systematic categorisations which imply dichotomous or oppositional relationships) is particularly characteristic of structuralist or formalist thinking, most strongly represented in the thinking of the linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, and anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss; in terms of theatre studies it is perhaps most clearly seen in the form of semiotic analysis. This involves trying to understand knowledge through systems of signs and appears to be borne out of an attempt to find *scientific* methodologies for analysis of disciplines that have traditionally been termed *humanities*.

² Srinivas Aravamudan, "Deconstruction, Soma-significance and the Implicate Order: Or, Can David Bohm and Jaques Derrida have a Dialogue?" in The Search for Meaning, ed. Paavo Pykkäne (Northamptonshire: Crucible, 1989), p.238. (Derridean thinking in particular is concerned with the disruption of oppositions).

perspective - rather, it is to pay closer attention to the other side of the dichotomy³, namely **classroom drama's link to the art form of theatre**.

Further, it is not the aim to show that classroom drama is concerned with developing theatre practitioners - the author strongly supports the notion of individual growth and enrichment through the drama process - but rather to suggest that to cut classroom drama off from the notion of theatre is to provide a less enriching, stimulating and creative learning experience for pupils.

1.1. Utilitarianism vs Artistry

Opposing Viewpoints...

The publication of David Hornbrook's book, Education and Dramatic Art, in 1989, followed by Education in Drama (1991), ignited a fierce debate which seems to have characterised writing on drama education during the 1990's. Hornbrook challenged dominant notions of school drama, asserting that theatre should be reinstated as its basis.⁴ The question of whether drama in schools should primarily provide an aesthetic experience for pupils, developing skills of artistry, or should fulfil an educational, developmental or social function is certainly not a new debate, but appears to recur constantly as drama educators around the world struggle to motivate for drama's inclusion in the formal curriculum.

In Britain, for example, where much of the debate is lead and published, and where many roots of South African EDT lie, educationalists appear to be no closer to getting drama fully and equitably recognised within the curriculum as they were decades ago, and have thus been forced to reassess their approaches. Writing in 1973, David Male suggests that

³ In Derridean terms, the secondary and often down-played half of the dichotomy.

⁴ In the 1992 editions of the journal, 2D Drama Dance, devoted to educational drama & dance, many of the articles respond to Hornbrook, both supporting or opposing his arguments, or offering alternative perspectives.

"much misunderstanding and disagreement **still** exists as to the nature of drama in education", whilst over two decades later (1994), John Somers proposes that "there is little agreement about drama's purpose in education, where a fierce debate has raged among theorists".⁵

David Hornbrook perhaps captures the crux of the debate when he suggests that

Historically, schools have included drama in the curriculum on the basis of two implicit suppositions. One is that the subject is part of the aesthetic field and therefore cannot reasonably be excluded from a balanced arts education. The other is that drama - at least in the forms commonly practised in schools - is an independent developmental and pedagogic agent, embodying in its special processes the fundamental premises of liberal, or progressive education.⁶

He proposes that whilst in practice many teachers involve themselves in both "aesthetic" and the "developmental/pedagogic ends" of school drama, arts education in general has "not been partial to aesthetic theories which concern themselves with the social or political context of art making. Predominantly, arts educators have relied upon psychological accounts of creativity which place aesthetics beyond the reach of ideology".⁷

Thus, as Somers states it, on the one side stand those who "give priority to drama's role in child development", and on the other are "those who see drama as an art form indivisible from theatre".⁸ This is not a phenomenon that is unique to British drama educationalists. Interviews with drama teachers in South Africa show a very similar dichotomy. The extremes of opinion are perhaps reflected in the following two statements made by teachers from different South African schools during personal interviews:

⁵ David A Male, Approaches to Drama (1973), p.9.
John Somers, Drama in the Curriculum (1994), p.8.

⁶ David Hornbrook, Education in Drama (London: The Falmer Press), 1991, p.18.

⁷ *ibid*, p.19.

⁸ Somers, 1994, p.8.

"Speech and Drama is not about teaching people to become performers. **It's about the development of self-confidence, inter-personal skills, group work... life skills.** If you want to be a performer then you go off to university and study under a specialist. In the same way that it is not the purpose of school to turn out nuclear physicists in the science classroom, it is also not the purpose to turn out performers in the drama class."

- Teacher A -

"The syllabus as it stands says that we are not here to train performers, we are here for some sort of nebulous humanitarian reason or something... as you may have gathered, I don't really support that. **My primary concern is to produce a technically proficient performer.**"

- Teacher B - ⁹

Beyond Oppositions...

There are increasing numbers of teachers, however, who are beginning to see the functional and aesthetic sides of drama as being integral to the efficacy of classroom drama. Somers suggests that many practitioners are now starting to embrace both viewpoints, seeing drama "as a continuum": at one end lies improvisation where learning takes place through participation and reflection, and at the other is full-blown theatre. Somers observes that these teachers are "confident in knowing on which part of the continuum they are operating and their work moves easily between the use of drama as hypothesis and drama as theatre".¹⁰

⁹ Statements made by secondary school teachers in personal interviews during December 1993, Teacher A from Kwazulu/Natal, Teacher B from Johannesburg; [emphasis mine].

¹⁰ Somers, 1994, p.9.

This notion of EDT as a "continuum" rather than a series of polarities has gained increasing recognition and is discussed in further detail in the second part of this chapter in relation to the writing of John O'Toole. This viewpoint closely parallels Derrida's deconstructionist philosophy which argues against the notion of structure which "always presupposes a 'centre' of meaning of some sort" (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p.144). It was in his highly influential paper, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (presented at a symposium at John Hopkins University in 1966) that Derrida challenged the desire for a centre (what he later called "logocentrism" in debating the polarity between speech and writing) in favour of notions of plurality and "différance".

The notion of the integral relationship between the art form and the educational aims is picked up by Gavin Bolton (1993) in a different way when he too warns against entrenching this dichotomy. Bolton believes that "drama has a great deal to do with pedagogy **because** it is an art":

the richness of classroom drama lies in its potential to achieve change of understanding (a pedagogic objective) along with improvement in drama skills and knowledge of theatre (an artistic objective). The two objectives are interdependent. The current instrumental perspective of education as instruction has upheld a view of drama education as having a purpose either to do with practising life-skills or to do with acquiring prescribed theatre knowledge or skills. **Both purposes are reductionist and functional.** I believe that classroom drama is to do with creating an art form in a way that is significant for its participants: **from the art-making experience something new is understood or something is newly understood.**¹¹

In South Africa, it has become common to refer to drama as part of **Arts Education** (as opposed to 'Life-Skills Education' or 'Recreation', for example), and the notion of 'arts for all' is replacing elitist notions of arts for talented pupils. It is such a notion of 'arts for all' which crucially embraces developmental and life skill ideals - it has something to offer **all** pupils - but the key word is **arts**, this being the basis of the educational experience.

One of the reasons that school drama appears to have become dislocated from the art form itself has been the necessity to try and prove drama's worth in education systems moving increasingly towards a vocational or technological bias, in which a strong link of the potential future contribution of the child to the economic growth of the country must be made. Thus to link drama to notions of child development and life-skills development appears to make the task of justifying the existence of drama in the curriculum that much easier. This is not to undermine the potential contribution of a drama experience to life-skills development - it must be acknowledged that the contribution drama can make to these

¹¹ Gavin Bolton, "Drama in Education and TIE: a comparison" in Learning Through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education (2nd ed.), ed. Tony Jackson (London: Routledge, 1993), p.39 [emphasis mine].

developmental aspects of a pupil's education is of paramount importance, and decades of writing on drama education attests to this. However, there needs to be increasing recognition given to the fact that drama is an art form, and it is precisely because of this that it provides such a unique way of knowing, understanding and perceiving the world.

Unique learning opportunities...

Louis A Gill proposes that this "unique way of knowing" has to do with the kinds of multiple processes that pupils go through when engaging with the medium. He suggests that

Arts education is concerned with **awareness** (in all its forms), with the **acknowledgement and identification of a feeling response** to a stimulus, and with the **structured expression** of that response.... The uniqueness of the arts experience provides 'another way of knowing'.¹²

As Gill's statement suggests, this way of experiencing the world requires not only that pupils look inwards and outwards (in to themselves and out to their environment), but that in responding to what they see, feel and understand, they **communicate** and **express** that response, drawing on imagination and creativity. This then implies that pupils require a certain level of literacy in the medium; they should be equipped with "the skills to think and communicate fluently in a particular medium".¹³

The challenge for the teacher of course is to provide opportunities to acquire the relevant skills without inhibiting original expression. Part of the debate between artistry and utilitarianism stems from the distinction between seeing drama as a form guided by strict technical, aesthetic criteria (as manifested in the form of **theatre**), and seeing it as a useful medium which allows for free, uninhibited expression, unfettered by notions of 'technique' and 'skill' (as seen in some approaches to **classroom drama**). Inevitably teachers teach their pupils various skill-based aspects, yet it could be argued that often insufficient attention is paid to these. For many, the focus is not on using the art form **to its greatest**

¹² Louis A Gill, The Arts - Do We Need Them? (London: Franklin Watts, 1990), p.7, [emphasis mine].

¹³ *ibid*, p.8.

potential, but simply using the art form at any level, as long as the required developmental goals are reached in the end.

The question thus arises that if one is suggesting that art-making and aesthetics need to be more central to the classroom drama experience, is it being implied that teaching 'technique' is a key part of school drama? (a notion contrary to much writing on drama in education). Gill's suggestion that pupils require the necessary skills does not imply that technique must become the essential focus of the drama experience (such as might be the case in classical ballet, for example), but that pupils have to be equipped with an appropriate *vocabulary* for ensuring that in reaching all the other desired pedagogic and developmental goals, the medium itself is used to its full potential, and the intrinsic benefit of participating in art is derived.

As Gill points out, much of the experiential knowledge and insights gained through the arts may be incapable of being reduced to straight discursive statements. He suggests therefore that the need is to find "a vocabulary, a symbol system, appropriate to the task" and quotes Eisner who summarises the situation thus:

Each symbol system - maths, the sciences, art, music, literature, poetry and the like - functions as a means for both the conceptualisation of ideas about aspects of reality and as a means of conveying what one knows to others. Each symbol system has unique capabilities. Each symbol system has set parameters upon what can be conceived and what can be expressed.¹⁴

This implies that within the education system broadly, **each area of study** provides access to **different kinds of knowledge and insight in different ways** and should thus not be seen to compete with each other (eg. "pupils should rather do maths as it is more beneficial"), but should be viewed in **a complementary relationship**. It is in this sense that the arts provide "access to an area of 'knowledge' unreachable by other means"; another way of knowing.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gill [quoting E W Eisner], p.27.

¹⁵ Gill, p.27.

Gill's suggestion that a drama experience can provide "different ways of knowing" is crucial to understanding the necessity for this kind of activity within an educational experience. Current educational philosophy tends to favour a more holistic or integral notion of learning and teaching, however, seeing a less strict division between disciplines; this brings with it the challenge of understanding *knowledge* and *learning* in a different way (a perspective which challenges the semiotic assumptions on which Gill bases his argument). Thus, rather than seeing drama or the arts as *a category* of knowledge or activity which complements *other categories* of knowledge or activity, it should perhaps rather be seen as an activity which becomes incorporative and interactive.¹⁶

It is important to note that Louis Gill is an advocate of the notion of 'arts for all', that is, a belief that **all** pupils are capable of participating in arts activities. Thus, emphasising the dramatic medium itself should not be seen to imply that drama is only for 'talented' pupils. As Gill states, "the ability to be creative is not the prerogative of an élite minority, whether we are considering the arts or any other area of human endeavour".¹⁷ He suggests, however, that it is the demands in terms of discipline and rigour that are frequently underestimated and that

failure to produce the desired standard is often wrongly attributed to lack of talent. (Unfortunately, in the past, there have also been too many instances where arts teachers themselves have contributed to, if not created, the 'no talent' label which the individual has then carried for life.) There is no mystique. At one end of the creative spectrum we find a small number of geniuses and at the other end a corresponding minority who seem devoid of

¹⁶ Derrida's notion of "intertextuality" is important to this understanding, which, like David Bohm's "quantum interconnectedness", in terms of physics, acknowledges the "trace-like relationality of seemingly disparate phenomena". Drama interacts with the rest of the curriculum and with the outside world at multiple levels. From a deconstructionist perspective, "philosophy abandons the quest for ultimate meaning, but instead allows the free play afforded by language to bring fresh insights to enquiry" (Aravamudan, p.238). This is surely what the drama experience is all about - whilst Eisner's systems are suggestive of fixed bodies of knowledge which can be learnt (and this is very much the assumption that Western education systems are founded on), Derrida and Bohm's thinking suggests a learning methodology which is based on the insights that experience brings.

¹⁷ Gill, p.31.

any aesthetic sensibility. But, by definition, the majority have some place on the continuum between the two extremes. By far the greatest inhibitors of the development of creative and expressive abilities are (a) social attitudes and (b) absence of sustained effort and persistence.¹⁸

The linking of talent to school drama seems to be linked to perceptions that such drama is about the school play and not much more. This is particularly so among many school administrators and decision-makers whose knowledge of amateur dramatics usually far outweighs that of educational drama. It highlights the confusion between 'theatre' and the broader notion of 'drama', a distinction which is in many cases unheard of beyond the drama community.

Theatre and Drama...

This dichotomy between 'theatre' and 'drama', which is at the base of much of this debate, is given prominence in Brian Way's seminal work, Development Through Drama, in which Way proposes that

'Theatre' is largely concerned with **communication** between actors and the audience: 'drama' is largely concerned with **experience** by participants, irrespective of any function to communicate to an audience.¹⁹

This has become a commonly accepted distinction among drama educationalists and supports the notion that drama in education is not primarily concerned with training performers. It is a useful distinction because it distinguishes between **experience** which is at the heart of the learning process in educational drama and **performance** which is the essence of theatre. However, it is also a problematic distinction in that it seems to propose that the two aspects are completely unconnected. If classroom drama means the extraction of dramatic elements from the art form to simply be used for other purposes, then in essence it cannot really be described as being more than quasi-dramatic or proto-dramatic. As John O'Toole states it, it is the way the elements of drama are used that distinguish it

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.28.

¹⁹ Brian Way, Development Through Drama (London: Longman, 1967), p.2.

from "quasi-dramatic" events such as war games, role simulation training and certain sporting events.²⁰

Way's distinction also leads to the misconception that communication is not central to the drama education experience. Such a misunderstanding seems to be reflected in the writing of David Male, for example, who states that the distinction between actor and audience "has no place when drama is considered as a means of self-expression" (as opposed to when it is considered as "art").²¹ He quotes Way's definition in support of his statement.

Male's interpretation is flawed, however, because by its very nature, expression (including self-expression) requires the opportunity to 'express to...'. The participant could be expressing something to his or her partner in the group, to the other class members, or to a larger audience. It is the form that that expression takes (whether through prepared presentation or improvised role play) that makes the drama experience unique, for it provides physical and vocal resources to be used in an imaginative way beyond the use of everyday conversation or communication.

As theatre practitioner and theorist, Peter Brook, states in The Empty Space: if a person walks across an empty space whilst another person is watching, a theatrical encounter takes place.²² It is this broad notion of 'actor' and 'audience', or for our purposes perhaps better stated as 'communicator' and 'recipient' that needs to be taken into account when considering the various intersections and commonalities between 'theatre' and 'educational drama' as they have developed during this century.

Stephen Lacey and Brian Woolland propose an alternative perspective on the debate, suggesting that drama in education is theatre and should be seen in relation to a "post-

²⁰ John O'Toole, The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning (London: Routledge, 1992), p.5.

²¹ Male, p.12.

²² Peter Brook, The Empty Space (London: Penguin, 1968), p.1.

Brechtian modernism".²³ Responding to David Hornbrook's challenge that theatre should be "reinstated" as the basis for drama education, Lacey and Woolland set out to examine a drama lesson, subjecting it to scrutiny "using a specifically theatrical vocabulary" - their contention is that

drama in education does not simply intersect with theatre in interesting, but often marginal, ways, but **is itself a form of theatre practice**;... it is potentially radical in terms both of the formal strategies it might employ and the nature of the issues it seeks to explore.²⁴

By classifying drama in education as "post-Brechtian modernism", Lacey and Woolland group it with other forms of theatre which share a common objective, namely to "challenge dominant (mainly naturalist) theatre practices" and a concern with *form* as a way of "confronting contemporary social and political realities in new, and more appropriate ways".²⁵ These writers point out, however, that post-Brechtian modernism is not a tradition in the sense of being a self-conscious theatre movement, but rather a series of often very different theatrical practices. Practitioners such as Dario Fo and Augusto Boal are cited as different kinds of examples of this broad term.²⁶ In our context, much South African theatre, and especially the politically-inspired theatre of the 1970's and 80's would fall into this category.

For Lacey and Woolland, Brecht is seen as key in the development of theatre because of his challenging of the traditional separation between form and content. As they state it,

²³ Lacey and Woolland, "Drama in Education - A Radical Theatre Form" in 2D Drama Dance (Vol 8, No 2, 1989), p.5.

²⁴ *ibid*, p.5. The lesson they use in their argument is not discussed here. It is a very interesting example, however, and is described in detail in the article referred to.

²⁵ *ibid*, p.5.

²⁶ *ibid*, p.8.

the nature and function of the protagonist and an attitude towards the artifice of theatre were not simply givens of theatrical practice in Brecht's work, but were **subject to negotiation and debate**.²⁷

This notion of a 'negotiability' within theatre is even more evident in Augusto Boal's work where, in his Forum Theatre, for example, the audience intervenes directly in the action and may even change its direction completely.²⁸ This also clearly brings us closer to notions of drama in education where pupils are involved in a process which allows them to explore content issues through negotiating the form of the medium. This is explored in more detail in the next section which considers the debate between process and product.

It is not only this relationship between form and content or the encouraging of active spectators (Boal would call them "spect-actors"), however, on which Lacey and Woolland base their proposition. They also refer to the kinds of characterisation that are evident in this kind of theatre. Rather than being imbued with psychological depth, characters tend to be more functional and the writers suggest that the concept of *teacher in role* relates very strongly to this idea, particularly in relation to Brecht's suggestion that actors should always maintain something of themselves when playing the role, "showing the character and at the same time showing the act of showing".²⁹

In terms of narrative structures, Brecht emphasised that narrative conventions are not ideologically innocent but imply a system of values. It is an awareness of the values implicit in any dramatic action that are in many cases key to the drama process within the classroom, and as Lacey and Woolland point out, there are even more radical ways of re-shaping narrative structures in drama in education than are available to the dramatist. It is also possible to have multiple narratives proceeding simultaneously.³⁰ This potential for

²⁷ *ibid*, p.6 [emphasis theirs].

²⁸ Augusto Boal, Theatre of The Oppressed (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p.139.

²⁹ Lacey and Woolland, p.9.

³⁰ *ibid*, p.11.

multiplicity within classroom drama, not only in terms of narratives, but in terms of possibilities implied by the decision-making procedures inherent in the process, can be seen not only from a modernist perspective, but also has elements in common with **postmodern** philosophies.

A Postmodern Perspective...

It is worth exploring EDT from a postmodern perspective, for as Charles Jencks points out, the 'Modern Age' is fast becoming a thing of the past with industrialisation giving way to post-industrialisation, making way for a 'Post-Modern Age' "characterised by incessant choosing" - this is an age, suggests Jencks, in which all traditions seem to have some validity, partly as a consequence of the information explosion, world communication and cybernetics.³¹ This is significant in considering the essentially eclectic approaches in EDT which are concerned not with the passing on of knowledge in the form of *fixed truths*, but in providing experiences in which pupils can use their own insights to collectively and individually make sense of the world. It is an educational approach which acknowledges the value of subjectivity, and which is not necessarily culturally specific (although it can easily become so), but is able to work with the variety of traditions, backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences that participants bring to the class (the event) with them.

Jencks acknowledges that there is no definitive answer to the question "What is post-modernism?", and writing on the subject attests to the fact that the concept has changed continually over the last six decades, only reaching some kind of clarification in the last ten. Whilst the meaning of the term 'postmodernism' has been hotly debated and inconclusive, however, the leading contentions of postmodernism are generally agreed to be that:

³¹ Charles Jencks, What is Post-Modernism?, 2nd ed. (New York: St Martin's, 1987), p.7.

first, the 'grand narratives' of historical progress initiated by the Enlightenment are discredited; and second, any political grounding of these ideas in 'history' or 'reality' is no longer possible since both have become 'textualised' in the world of images and simulations which characterise the contemporary age of mass consumption and advanced technologies.³²

Jencks proposes that

the challenge for a Post-Modern Hamlet, confronted by an embarras de richesses, is to choose and combine traditions selectively, to eclect (as the verb of eclecticism would have it) those aspects from the past and present which appear most relevant for the job at hand. The resultant creation, if successful will be a striking synthesis of traditions; if unsuccessful, a smorgasbord. Post-Modernism is... both the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence.³³

This is perhaps the very reason that the artistry/utilitarianism debate remains unresolved: because EDT is both theatre and is not theatre. It is characterised by an inherent paradox by, on the one hand, being perhaps the most 'democratic' form of theatre in existence (possibly equal only to Augusto Boal's forum theatre in this respect), and on the other, not being theatre at all but rather an educational methodology employing dramatic elements for its efficacy.

There is little doubt that the world faced by South African school pupils in the latter half of the 1990's and into the 21st century is very different to that faced by pupils even five years ago in the early 1990's. It is characterised by a new world experience of cultural mixing in contrast to the traditionalist, divisive apartheid years, not only in the context of post-apartheid society, but in the context of a 'global village' in which the mass media, the internet and international transport have become increasingly available, opening a whole

³² Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.174.

These views are particularly associated with the writings of two of the most influential postmodernist thinkers, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard.

³³ *ibid*, p.7.

new realm of experience and interaction.

South Africa is a country in which censorship laws have virtually disappeared and a whole world of experience which was once kept from its people is suddenly abundant; it is a strange mix of what some might term 'first-' and 'third-world': both a developing country, and, in some respects, quite developed. The image of a 'Rainbow Nation', although needing to be treated critically and with a certain amount of caution, is nonetheless a symbol of the positive embracing of multiplicity in our society. In short pupils face a very different world faced by that of their parents in which less appears to be decided for them (by those in power), and more is left to their own choice.³⁴

It is this very context which undermines the neat systematising of knowledge and demands a response which takes account of diversity and multiplicity of experience. All this suggest that from a **social** perspective, South Africa has begun to embrace notions encapsulated by the term 'postmodernism'; this in turn implies that it is necessary to consider **aesthetic** notions of postmodernism if we are to come to terms with the potential role of classroom drama in South Africa in relation to theatre developments.³⁵ From a **functionalist**

³⁴ Selden and Widdowson suggest that the postmodern experience is widely held to stem from "a profound sense of **ontological uncertainty**" in which the world and the self become "radically 'decentred'" (1993, p.178; emphasis theirs). The advent of democracy in South Africa has brought with it not simply the uncertainty of change, but the challenge to contribute to decision making in way that the apartheid system systematically denied. Because of its rigid authoritarianism (coupled with extreme censorship), apartheid society also became very predictable, set up in a clear framework of rules and limits. It's demise has automatically taken away a point of reference (a centre). The sense of dislocation that comes from the view that "we have never been asked our opinion before" appears not to be uncommon among adults in South Africa. It should be noted of course, that whilst society more broadly has become more open and democratic, the school system itself has tended to continue to promote a very strongly authoritarian hierarchy.

³⁵ Lyotard suggests that aesthetics becomes replaced by "paraesthetics" which in artistic terms means "exploring things unsayable and things invisible" (Lyotard, "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity" (translation) in The Lyotard Reader, edited by Andrew Benjamin, 1989, p.191).

For Baudrillard, the postmodern aesthetic becomes one of "pastiche" - this is in light

perspective, drama is in an ideal position to be able to encourage the development of the many life-skills required for the kind of post-modern existence referred to above. From an **artistic** perspective, it also seems to embrace many elements evident in approaches to **postmodern theatre**.

Fred McGlynn suggests that the theoretical announcement of a postmodern theatre was given by Antonin Artaud in his seminal work The Theatre and Its Double (1930's).³⁶ In his writing, Artaud proposes a "theatre of cruelty" in which a "dead theatre of authors and word" is replaced by "a sacred theatre of gesture", and a "passive theatre of speculation" is replaced by a "sacred festive theatre of participation".³⁷ At one level, Artaud's "theatre of cruelty" can be seen to be at the opposite extreme of the theatre spectrum to EDT. At another, however, it embraces similar philosophies in its reaction to the 'well made' theatre of the turn of the century. Whilst EDT generally does not embrace the ritualistic, sacrificial, often raw emotive aspects which are, admittedly, fundamental to Artaud's vision, it does deviate from traditional theatre in its liberation of the actor and audience. As McGlynn states it in discussing Artaud:

In this traditional theatre [ie. the theatre to which Artaud is responding] the author dictated his 'text' to the enslaved actor, who could only perform the role of mouthpiece for the absent author. Such theatre was then received by the passive audience within the closed space of the proscenium stage. The author functioned like an absent god.... A resolution of this problem requires that the actor cease being an actor and that the audience cease being a witness: it requires a collapsing of the space of theatre.³⁸

of his thinking that there is no longer a 'real' external world to which signs can refer because of an 'implosion of image and reality' (Simulations quoted in Selden and Widdowson, p.180). The term "pastiche" is also used by Marxist postmodernist, Fredric Jameson.

³⁶ Fred McGlynn, "Postmodernism and Theatre" in Postmodernism - Philosophy and the Arts, ed. HJ Silverman (London: Routledge, 1990), p.137.

³⁷ Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double (London: John Calder, 1970), pp. 61ff; McGlynn, p.137

³⁸ McGlynn, pp.137 & 143.

This seems to be a very pertinent description of what happens to drama in the classroom, especially in the form of drama in education. The blurring of the distinction between performer and spectator results in the participant who functions dualistically, both in the fictional world of drama and in the broader context of the real world from which this fictional world derives or on which it reflects.

This point is further illuminated in the light of Lyotard's notion of the "singularity of the event" (the experience) as counterposed to a "theatre of representation" which sets up specific limits: the "'inside' of representation's theatre as opposed to the reality 'outside' that it is the business of theatre to represent".³⁹ This is the polarity underlying much conventional theatre practice. EDT itself can clearly be seen to challenge this polarity for it has always been a concern of drama educators to create an 'interface' between classroom learning and the world outside of the classroom. As Gay Morris points out

...schools do not help the child's learning if they separate the language from the life it is meant to contain.... While the world - captured in the educational media - comes closer to the classroom, sometimes the distance between the classroom and the home back garden grows and grows and the lessons learnt at school are kept more and more at school and the child does not take them home. Why? The child is learning the languages to encapsulate the facts, why doesn't she want those facts? Why doesn't she take them home? I think her bicycle has got a puncture and her satchel is too heavy to carry.

In our schools in our formal education we are so anxious to give children what is logical, clear, helpful: what is clearly in the disciplines, that the learning loses touch with the life out of which it arises.⁴⁰

³⁹ Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.96.

Lyotard discusses 'theatrical-representational apparatus' in *Des Dispositifs pulsionnels*, showing how thought is restricted to the concept by being enclosed within a theatre of representation. He points out that in this case, the theatre consists of three closed spaces articulated together: the backstage apparatus (support), the stage (image) and the auditorium (viewer), which locate themselves in opposition to a fourth, open space, the space of the real, of the world outside the theatre (Readings, p.93).

⁴⁰ Gay Morris, "Drama's Maverick Nature", p.4 [emphasis hers].

This is the reason that Lyotard attacks the structuralist penchant for "paraphrase", which according to Readings is part of a general attack on "modernist conceptualisation in the name of speedier circulation".⁴¹ From our perspective it might be understood as follows: it may be quicker to **tell** pupils what they should know ('chalk and talk' teaching) - a "paraphrase" experience - but it denies the importance of the **event**, the experience itself, albeit in a secondary or artificial form. For it is in reflecting on that event that learning takes place, and each pupil learns in the context of his or her own personal life experiences.⁴² Thomas Docherty argues that "what in modernity passes for understanding (the particular discursive mode of rational thinking) is itself really a mastery or a domination, not an understanding at all".⁴³ Unlike many traditional views of education, EDT is not concerned with 'mastering' a subject, but with developing insights and understandings. In Derridean terms, EDT encourages intertextuality and cross-referencing. As Lyotard states, each singular event is not one of paraphrasing, but of "rephrasing" in a unique way (thus exactly the same drama lesson repeated with the same group of pupils will be different because it is not repetition, but a singular event in itself - a little narrative). Unlike semiotic thinking, the event does not *stand for* something (ie. a symbol in which material and its organisation needs to be penetrated), it simply *stands*, functioning through its material and organisation.⁴⁴

McGlynn proposes that there are three phases of reaction to Artaud's challenge which become postmodern theatre: firstly, the early work of Samuel Beckett which represents a transitional phase between a modern and postmodern theatre. Secondly, the work of groups who attempt to achieve the "communal festive theatre" proposed by Artaud, such as Richard Schechner's "Performance Group" (presenting work such as Dionysus in 69) and French

⁴¹ Readings, p.xx [Of course, the inherent irony here is the question of how one discusses even the work of Lyotard himself without resorting to some form of paraphrase!]

⁴² This process of reflection is central to the classroom drama experience and is discussed more fully in the second part of this chapter.

⁴³ Selden and Widdowson, p.182.

⁴⁴ Lyotard, "Beyond Representation" (translation) in The Lyotard Reader, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p.158.

groups of the late 1960's and early 70's such as the Theatre du Soleil. The final phase suggested by McGlynn is found in the work of France's Daniel Mesguich and The USA's Herbert Blau who interrogate the text and modes of presentation even more radically than proposed by Artaud.⁴⁵

The above point to a development in a concern both with **communality** in the theatre experience and with the awareness of the form itself to the extent of **metatheatricity**, that is a conscious exploration and commentary on the medium itself within the work. Whilst applying in a very different way to the above example, both these characteristics of the postmodern theatre apply in some way to classroom drama which encourages a communal experience in a very real sense (it is completely participatory), and it is also very aware of the form it employs; the interrogation of the medium and the reflection on the experience is fundamental to the way elements are manipulated for experiential learning.⁴⁶

A further response can be seen in Lyotard's rephrasing of culture in terms of "little narratives" (as opposed to a "grand narrative" of history) which suggests multiple perspectives and lack of a fixed point of reference. This is an important assumption for classroom drama which has always argued that even though the teacher might guide the progress of the dramatic experience, each pupil or participant contributes his or her own ideas, perspectives and assumptions, genuinely impacting on the progress of the work and the many meanings which might be embodied in that creative work. From a Lyotardian perspective, aesthetics comes to be understood in terms of "singularity" which evokes "an art of *invention* rather than *mimesis*".⁴⁷ This is central to the notion of 'arts for all' in that

⁴⁵ McGlynn, p.138.

⁴⁶ Selden and Widdowson point out that several theorists draw attention to the way postmodern critics reject the elitism and sophisticated formal experimentation found in modernist writers. Ihab Hassan, for example, in Paracriticisms (1975) provides a "suggestive list of postmodernist footnotes on modernism" which include "Anti-elitism, and authoritarianism.... Art becomes communal... improvisational". (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p.177).

⁴⁷ Readings, p.xxiii, [emphasis his].
It is worth noting Readings' point that Lyotard's writing has been taken up across a number of disciplines: "literature, philosophy, legal studies, political science, art

it suggests that art at school is not about **re-presenting** or **recreating** "great works of art" (as one might talk of traditional acting forms), but of **presenting** and **creating**; it has to do with the creation of meaning, and with challenging the imagination.

Perhaps a final consideration in terms of the postmodern perspective should be in terms of the emancipatory and imaginative challenges it poses. South African philosopher, Johan Degenaar, distinguishes between pre-modern, modern and post-modern. He points out that in pre-modernity, "Nature is assumed to be a fixed frame of reference in which particular cultures operate within a self enclosed socio-mythic orbit", whilst in modernity, "Culture" becomes the frame of reference in which rationality takes pride of place. Post-modernity, however,

introduces no fixed points of reference, neither Nature and mythology, nor Culture and rationality. It cultivates **a sensitivity for a diversity of approaches** which cannot be reduced to a final unity.... Because post-modernity takes away our cherished myths, we are not so keen on taking it seriously. This is a mistake, for in this manner we exclude ourselves from what is so important in the reality of life, also in the context of a changing South Africa, namely, the **liberation from all gods and tyrants who enslave us by thinking and acting on our behalf. It is post-modernity which succeeds in celebrating the imagination as the most creative aspect of the human mind.**⁴⁸

This is precisely what EDT philosophies embrace - the empowering of the individual through an educational experience which challenges the creative and imaginative faculties.

history, intellectual history and cultural studies are some" (p.xii). EDT practitioners have tended to argue in favour of the cross-disciplinary possibilities that classroom drama offers, and the cross-disciplinary nature of Lyotard's postmodern investigations thus provides a firm basis for understanding the value of this approach to education.

⁴⁸ Johan Degenaar, "Arts and Culture in a Changing South Africa" in NAC Documents: Bringing Cinderella to the Ball (Johannesburg: Cosaw, 1995), p.64 [emphasis mine].

Reconceptualising the 'drama experience'...

There are clearly links and parallels that can be drawn between the development of theatre and the development of classroom drama. It must be emphasised that the idea here is not to try and fit Educational Drama & Theatre into a neat category (such as 'modernism' or 'postmodernism') - for one thing, the many varied approaches to EDT seem to place it beyond neat definition, and for another, such categorisation tends to lead to a restricting of its possibilities. There are, nonetheless, aspects of the aesthetic and philosophical discourses of these notions which help to clarify possible links between the development of EDT and theatre practice more broadly this century, and allow us to reconceptualise the experience of classroom drama in terms of a theatrical discourse.

The notion classroom drama as a form of theatre itself seems to imply the need for a term that encapsulates the nature of the **drama experience** that pupils go through. Perhaps a new word is needed which reflects both the rooting of the medium in theatre and the active participation that pupils are involved in. It is proposed here that the word *theatricalisaction* be used. For in considering classroom drama as a form of theatre itself, we are arguing not simply for a *theatre of action*, but for a *theatre of activity*; an activating theatre.

It is a theatre based in notions of improvisation and role-play, in which the audience may be formal (such as the audience watching a play in a theatre building) or informal (such as the class members, or the partner that one is working with). It is a theatre in which the performers are not exclusively concerned with presenting new insights or fresh ideas to the audience, but are concerned with arriving at new insights **themselves** and in so doing, developing an understanding of themselves and the world. It is a theatre of originality, imagination and creative expression. And in as much as it is a theatre of action and activity, it must be seen to be a theatre of reflection - for it is in reflecting on the active experience that the essential learning takes place.

Whilst 'theatricalisation' might be seen to imply a recreation or theatrical interpretation of life experiences by **performers on stage**, *theatricalisaction* must be seen to embrace an active exploration of the multiple narratives and perspectives brought to the experience by **the participants** through a dramatic medium which is rooted in a notion of democratic,

participatory theatre.⁴⁹

In addition to exploring the classroom drama experience in the light of theatre, this chapter has also begun to explore the link between art and education, proposing that as an art form, drama offers unique ways of knowing and learning precisely because of the kind of experience engaging with an art form offers. At the heart of much of this, however, is the decades-long debate as to whether the emphasis in drama education should be on *process* or *product*, that is, is it the working process in drama which is of greater educational value, or the final dramatic presentation, representing a culmination of the effort of pupils during the preceding process?

Those teachers who argue for drama education as form of training would tend to argue that ultimately, it is the product that counts, whereas those who support the notion that drama is a part of the general formative education of children tend to place emphasis on the process. It is unlikely that teachers would focus exclusively on either process or product, but it could be argued that where the emphasis is laid has implications for the type and quality of educational experience which pupils receive. The following section thus highlights aspects of this process/product tension.

⁴⁹ The conceptualisation of this term will be developed throughout this dissertation, and will be distilled and clarified in the concluding chapter.

1.2. Process vs Product

The development of educational drama and theatre this century has been greatly influenced by developmental psychology and progressive educational philosophies. Notions of stages of child development and aligned ideas of child-centered approaches to education have highlighted issues about the *processes* of learning and teaching. In trying to reconcile the dual objectives of artistic expression and experiential learning, debates on the relative importance of **process** (the learning, participatory experience) and **product** (the performance, showing, theatre event) have been central to drama education.

Negotiating Meaning...

Perhaps the most in-depth enquiry into the drama process in recent years has been carried out by John O'Toole who, in his book The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning, has attempted to define the notion of process. He points out that the word 'process' (particularly in relation to drama in education) is very rarely, if ever, defined:

It is a word often used in drama these days, as it is ubiquitously in education, and seems to denote anything that keeps going on, and hasn't come to something called 'product', which has somehow stopped.⁵⁰

O'Toole suggests that 'process' should not be seen in a dichotomous relationship with 'product', but supports the view that they are both points on a continuum, a processual model of drama.⁵¹ He proposes that process in drama may be defined as:

negotiating and re-negotiating the elements of dramatic form, in terms of the context and purposes of the participants.⁵²

⁵⁰ O'Toole, 1992, p.1.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p.10.

⁵² John O'Toole, 1992, pp.1-2.

O'Toole's whole book aims at clarifying and expanding on this definition - it is quoted here at the risk of doing disservice to the author, for it is a truly remarkable analysis which cannot be given its full value in this kind of summary; any person

It is the continual **renegotiation** that participants go through which lies at the core of this type of experiential education, for in creating meaning - in exploring and expressing - participants are not only working with the form of the medium, but with multiple contexts and in a group consisting of unique individuals.

O'Toole thus distinguishes three key areas worth considering, namely **dramatic form**, **context**, and **participants**. In reference to drama in education, O'Toole notes that the experience is very dependent

both on **the specific group of people taking part**, and on **external conditions** over which they have very little control, and so they must continually renegotiate the way in which they can manage and manifest the basic elements of dramatic form. It is always therefore very processual, and has the potential to operate at quite extreme levels of processuality.⁵³

Clearly for O'Toole, the idea of **dramatic form** (that which requires constant renegotiation) is of central importance to his understanding of process. He proposes a model consisting of identifiable elements all needing to be present for the drama to happen and illustrates them diagrammatically as follows:

interested in further exploring the notion of "process" in drama would be well advised to consult O'Toole's work more thoroughly.

⁵³ *ibid*, p.4; [emphasis mine]

This idea also echoes Lyotard's notion of the "singularity of the event" (discussed on p.29). Each event is made up of its own "little narratives" and represents a "little narrative" in itself.

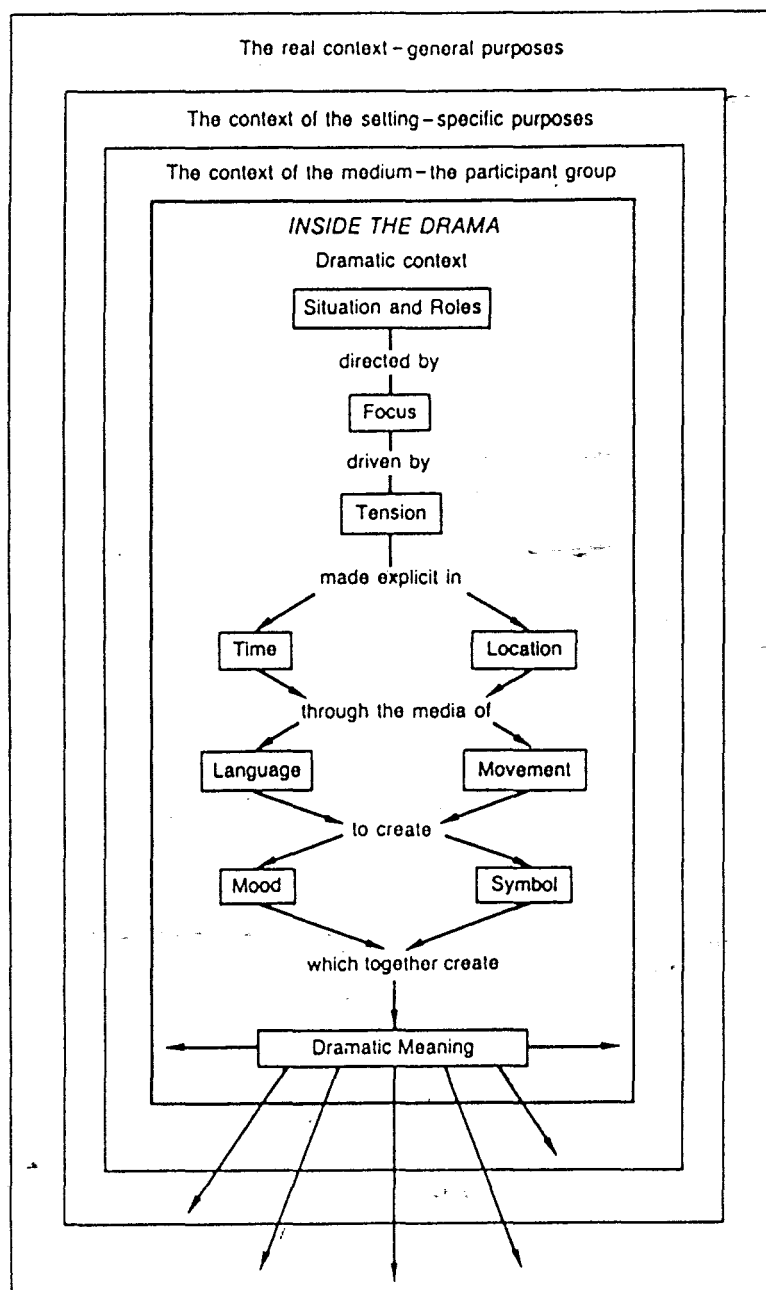


Diagram 1: John O'Toole's Model: The elements of dramatic form

From: O'Toole, *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*, 1992, p.6

Whilst at first it might appear that O'Toole has adopted a structuralist approach in attempting to illustrate the drama process, it soon becomes clear that this notion also fits in very well with the postmodern paradigms discussed above in that it acknowledges the multiple contexts and emergent multiple meanings that drama in education works with. O'Toole himself acknowledges that the model is not processual itself and that attempts to objectify drama in this way are inherently flawed;⁵⁴ nonetheless, the model serves to highlight the kinds of elements that require constant negotiation when engaging with the art form.

This notion of "negotiation" can be more clearly understood when considering firstly, the dynamism of the medium (drama) and secondly, the multiple contexts within which participants are required to operate. O'Toole proposes that both education and art are dynamic processes which people apprehend subjectively. In terms of drama, this dynamism can be seen at a number of levels:

- * drama exists in physical action, three-dimensionality and time;
- * it is a group art, relying on collaboration either directly or indirectly;
- * there is a relationship between artist and audience with meanings emergent between them being inevitably shifting and dynamic;
- * drama is "multi-medial" - it operates in a number of contexts simultaneously, each with its own sign systems and cultural and ideological referents.⁵⁵

The notion of 'multiple contexts' is crucial to understanding drama as a process for in many ways this is what makes it unique as an experiential learning mode. Improvisation, role play, teacher-in-role, enactment, etc all rely on participants being able to **operate simultaneously in both real and fictional contexts**. Somers points out that the relationship that exists between the real and the imagined is actually key to "the learning process unique to drama".⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.7.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.7.

⁵⁶ Somers, 1994, p.11.

This idea of simultaneity carries forward a postmodern perspective, for in

Augusto Boal has also grappled with this idea of operating in these dual contexts in developing his "poetics of the oppressed". He uses the word **metaxis** to describe the state of consciousness which holds the imagined and the real in mind at the same time.⁵⁷

O'Toole expands on this notion on metaxis, but proposes that in addition to the **real context** (the participants 'reality', what we bring to the drama in terms of cultural background, experiences and attitudes) and the **fictional context** ("the make believe world of the drama which we have agreed to believe in together"), there is also the **context of the setting** and the **context of the medium**.⁵⁸ The setting has to do with where the drama takes place, and the kinds of dominant messages imposed by that setting. This is particularly significant to drama in schools where the classroom or school hall generally provides an environment which mediates against the willing suspension of disbelief (as opposed to a theatre or cinema for example). Thus the 'negotiation' of this contextual layer becomes a crucial part of the drama process, and can be seen in the many games and exercises used by drama teachers to create suitable conditions for the activity.⁵⁹

The context of the medium has to do with the coming together of people for the drama experience itself, particularly as drama is a group art whose actions and meanings are collective. In a sense this layer relies on the *agreement* to use the space for the fiction, the group has to be united in agreeing to have drama:

This is one reason why teachers are scared of using drama with their classes: **you can't impose an agreement to do drama, it has to be negotiated with the children**. If one child refuses to accept the group's fiction - who, when the rest of the class are tensely engaged in rescuing the orphans' gold from the dragon's cave, loudly states 'This isn't a dragon, it's just Philip', or in an egotistical bravado creates his own fiction and zaps the dragon, cave

Lyotardian terms, it does not suggest that the drama experience takes the place of real life experience, but that it stands as an event on its own, operating intertextually between various contexts.

⁵⁷ Boal, 1995, p.42.

⁵⁸ O'Toole, 1992, pp.48-51.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.50.

and orphans with a raygun - the dramatic context disappears, and with it, the drama.⁶⁰

Thus in essence, O'Toole is proposing that there are a number of contextual layers - three external to the drama itself, and one incorporating a variety of dramatic elements - which all require the constant activity of negotiation based on those people who are participating.⁶¹ The idea of negotiation implies an **active** engagement with the dramatic medium, and thus becomes crucial to characterising *theatricalisation*, the drama experience that pupils go through. The experience embodied in the notion of *theatricalisation* does not stop at a negotiation of meaning, however; it includes the creation and expression of meaning, thus implying a commitment to putting forward one's own perceptions or ideas.

Expressing Meaning...

It is interesting to compare O'Toole's model to that of Louis A Gill who places emphasis differently, siting the centre unequivocally in the **participant** rather than in the medium or form. Both models, however, seem to complement each other very well in showing aspects of the drama process from different perspectives.

Gill groups the arts in education under the generic term of "Expressive Arts" lending weight to the notion that the act of **expression** is crucial to the educational process. Drama as part of the education experience is more than simply experiencing; it has to do with expressing responses and it is here that the idea of product (*how* does the child express?) becomes key. As mentioned above (p.16), Gill describes the process of arts education as including awareness, the acknowledgement and identification of a feeling response to a stimulus and the structured expression of that response.⁶² He represents this diagrammatically as follows:

⁶⁰ O'Toole, 1992, p.49.

⁶¹ The difference between O'Toole's model and Lyotard's "Theatre of Representation" (see footnote no.39) is that O'Toole does not see the categories setting up oppositional relationships (eg. the world of the drama is not in opposition to the world outside).

⁶² Gill, p.7 [emphasis mine].

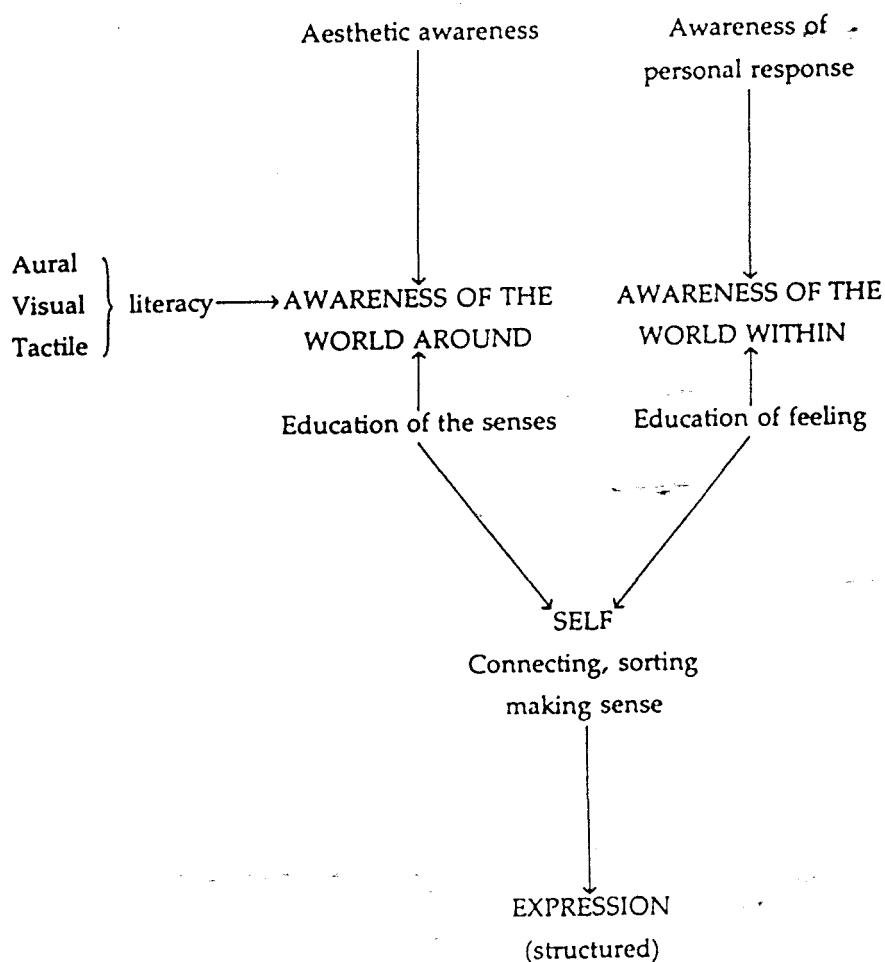


Diagram 2: Louis A Gill's Model: The process of engaging in the arts in relation to the self

From: Louis A Gill, The Arts - Do We Need Them?, 1990, p.40.

Thus in the process of engaging with the art form, the pupil needs to look both inwards and outwards: he or she responds to stimuli in his or her external environment, is also required to look inwards in identifying or coming to terms with that response, and finally is challenged to give expression to that response, to imbue that response with meaning.

John Somers sees the drama process in a similar way, proposing that the stages in making drama ("drama-making' not necessarily being the same as 'play-making'") can be characterised broadly as *speculation, exploration, shaping, and communication*.⁶³ Although using a different terminology to Gill, Somers' understanding is fundamentally the same. He, too, is aware of an internal and external dimension to the activity in which the pupil is drawing on personal experience, intuition, and individual reflection, as well as collaborating, crafting and communicating.

In providing an example of the above stages, Somers suggests that when children are asked to explore a particular stimulus, concept or idea

their **speculative** abilities are used in reacting to and unpacking it. If a newspaper article is used as a stimulus, for example, participants will call on their previous experience of incidents described to ask questions and develop hypotheses.... Having created a number of hypotheses in the speculative stage, students create drama models to **explore** situations which will advance or illustrate their thinking.... Having explored the chosen topic, students can use the medium to symbolize more exactly the meaning that has emerged. **Shaping** and crafting the dramatic metaphor to make it a more effective representation of their thinking are aided by an ability to use drama skills.... If they discover material they feel may be of interest to others, they may choose to **communicate** it. This can be as simple as one pair telling another what transpired, or as complex as a full public performance.⁶⁴

Whilst the above obviously needs to be understood very broadly (in the sense that a drama lesson can take on so many different shapes or use different approaches), it is a significant analysis of the *theatricalisaction* process in that it takes into account the fact that a drama experience may or may not be geared towards performance, that is, arriving at a tangible 'product'. Either way, the pupil is still required to make sense of the experience and to explore possible ways of coming to terms with, and communicating, that experience through a dramatic medium.

⁶³ Somers, 1994, p.52.

In terms of our conceptualisation in this chapter, the idea of "drama-making" might be linked to *theatricalisaction*, whilst "play-making" might refer more closely to *theatricalisation*.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.52, [emphasis his].

It is important to note that the process is usually not an uncontrolled process: it is seldom that pupils are simply faced with a stimulus and left to do their own thing. The teacher obviously has certain pedagogic aims with the lesson and needs to ensure the efficacy of the process. There is of course a danger that the teacher could use drama very manipulatively to impose certain perspectives, understandings or 'insights' on the pupils. The drama process thus needs to be as genuinely open and flexible as possible (that is, **really** draw on what pupils bring to the class with them in terms of experience or thoughts) whilst at the same time leading participants to fresh understandings.⁶⁵

One of the methods that the teacher can use to facilitate this kind of process is to use the 'teacher-in-role' technique. It is not the aim here to provide a detailed description or analysis of this technique, but it is worth mentioning to show that the process is a multi-faceted one, which seems to provide another layer of experience and meaning to the analysis provided by O'Toole above. As Bolton points out, when a teacher takes on a role as part of class drama, she or he is, "at a fictitious level, joining **with** them, but at an educational or aesthetic level, s/he is working **ahead** of them".⁶⁶ Bolton suggests that whilst left to themselves, children will structure the action to meet their wants (closer to game-playing than drama), the teacher is able to sharpen and deepen the experiential mode by structuring the fiction "towards a theatre form":

⁶⁵ Both Derrida and Bohm allude to the notion that "it is in allowing free reign to 'play' and the multiple dissemination of meaning that the self can be liberated...; as Bohm himself suggests, play ('ludere') is the most creative and energetic aspect of consciousness. Deconstruction has often been branded frivolous, unserious, nihilistic and anarchistic... and while many might dismiss the creativity of free play as anarchistic or iconoclastic, both Bohm and Derrida would rather describe it in terms of 'seriousness' recognising that it too is a game, except with rules and assumptions that are not readily exposed." (Aravamudan, p.243). The development of EDT has often be linked to play and especially to Piaget's theories. (See, for example, Richard Courtney's, Play, Drama and Thought (1974)). This is perhaps why some educationalists have often taken an unserious view of drama; in structuralist terms, play is seen to be in a polar or oppositional relationship to work!

⁶⁶ Bolton, 1993, p.41 [emphasis his].

Just as a playwright and director will consciously create tension etc. so that an audience might experience, so the teacher-in-role uses elements of theatre so that participants might experience. But experiencing, in itself, is of little value. It is reflection on the experience that leads to change of understanding.⁶⁷

This perception appears to deviate somewhat from earlier writings on educational drama which sought to distinguish completely between drama and theatre. It does, however, support O'Toole's notion of a negotiation of dramatic elements, and seems to support the idea of classroom drama as a form of theatre in its own right. In the *theatricalisation* process, the teacher could be seen to be *activating* (as in initiating and spurring on the action) rather than playwrighting.

A crucial point made by Bolton is that on the value of **reflection**. This is an aspect of the process which both O'Toole and Gill seem to stop short of emphasising.

Action and Reflection...

Brian Edmiston, in his article, "Structuring for Reflection: The Essential Process in Every Drama", suggests that most writers on the structuring of classroom drama have stressed the importance of reflection, but have not highlighted this aspect showing it to be essential for learning.⁶⁸ As Edmiston points out, it is Dorothy Heathcote who has consistently argued that students will only learn if they reflect - reflection happens when students think about their experiences in drama and find meaning in them.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Bolton, 1993, p.42.

⁶⁸ Edmiston, 1992, p.2.

Edmiston refers to the following as examples of writers who have included the importance of reflection in their writing: Bolton (1979, 1984); O'Neill et al (1976); Neelands (1984, 1990); Davies (1983); Byron (1986); Booth (1987); Morgan & Saxton (1987); Swartz (1988); O'Toole & Haseman (1988).

⁶⁹ Edmiston, p.2.

In arguing the importance of reflection, Heathcote suggests that

in drama... expression takes place through what can be seen to happen, what can be heard to happen and what can be felt to happen. The elements of darkness and light, stillness and movement, sound and silence are held in a constantly changing expression of life.... It is the use in common of these elements that make classroom drama and theatre kin. In theatre they are used for their effect on other people whereas in teaching they are used to make the impact on the very persons who create the work. Drama is about filling the spaces between people with meaningful experiences. This means that emotion is at the heart of drama experience but it is tempered with thought and planning. The first is experienced through the tensions and the elements; the second through the reviewing process. Out of these we build **reflective processes**, which in the end are what we are trying to develop in all our teaching. Without the development of the power of reflection we have very little. **It is reflection that permits the storing of knowledge, the recalling of power of feeling, and memory of past feelings.**⁷⁰

It is possibly the acknowledgement of the importance of reflection which crucially distinguishes process from product for it points to experience which operates simultaneously on a number of levels, pedagogic and dramatic. However, as Gavin Bolton warns in emphasising the need for reflection, participants in drama may merely reinforce their existing ways of looking rather than modify or clarify them, perpetuating existing stereotypes and prejudices or simply maintaining the same outlook rather than enriching or challenging it.⁷¹ It is through a process of reflection that students are able to attach personal meaning to the events of the drama, confronting their own beliefs or values.

As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the process of reflection is a crucial part of *theatricalisation*, for the experience, if it is to be educationally sound, should be seen not

⁷⁰ Dorothy Heathcote, "Drama and Learning" in Dorothy Heathcote: Collected Writings on Education and Drama, ed. Liz Johnson and Cecily O'Neill (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p.97, [emphasis mine].

⁷¹ Edmiston, p.4 [referring to Bolton (1979)].

simply to be a theatre of action or activity, but a theatre in which action is guided and formulated by constant and consistent reflection.

It is in the educational philosophies and psychological theories of this century that support for the importance of reflection has had long-standing support, particularly in the work of Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky. As Edmiston shows, it was Piaget who demonstrated that children are not passive receivers of information, but actually construct their understanding of the world.⁷²

This construction of meaning should not be seen as a purely internal mental activity - it also comes through talking, vocalising, showing (often in role). This view is particularly significant if seen in the light of Vygotsky's theories which recognise that when we talk, "our thoughts come into existence", that is, talking helps to actively construct one's thoughts about events, facilitating the reflection on experience.⁷³ David Booth, who is concerned with promoting language growth in children through drama "without diminishing the inherent worth of the art form",⁷⁴ suggests that

the child in drama is inside language, using it to make meaning, both private and public, in the 'here and now dynamic', with the potential of abstract reflective thoughts at any given moment.⁷⁵

Booth's observations are particularly significant to the process/product debate in that they highlight a fundamental difference between a process-based emphasis (classroom drama, DIE) and a product-based emphasis (school play, drama training): in the latter, the emphasis is usually on saying other people's words in such a way that these words are expressed with

⁷² Edmiston, p.2.

⁷³ Edmiston, pp.2/3 [referring to Vygotsky (1962)].

⁷⁴ David Booth, "Talking in Role, Thinking for Life" in 2D Drama Dance (Vol 8, No 2, 1989), p.40.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.41.

the intended meaning; in the former, children are actively engaged **in making meaning for themselves**. This process of making meaning has been described by Norman as "making personal meaning and sense of universal, abstract, social, moral and ethical concepts through the concrete experience of drama".⁷⁶ This becomes a vital consideration when considering drama in an educational context, not only supporting drama's role in life skills education, but highlighting part of the intrinsic value of engaging with the artistic medium.

This inter-relationship between action and reflection has been strongly argued by Paulo Freire who uses the term "praxis" to define the "dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection to action".⁷⁷ Freire developed this understanding in relation to literacy work carried out in South America. He argues that liberation of people does not come simply by teaching them to read and write, but by taking them through a process of **conscientisation** through which they can become aware of the power relations which affect their lives, often holding them in states of oppression because of their illiteracy. Significant to our study is the fact that, as discussed in the Chapter 2 of this study, the South African Interim Core Syllabus for Speech and Drama sites "praxis" as one of three principles on which the syllabus has been based, thus giving strong support to the interrelated processes of action and reflection.

Reconsidering Polarity...

It can thus be seen that the processes involved in educational drama are multiple and complex: they involve negotiation of form and medium in terms of drama itself as well as a critical awareness of the self as an individual and as part of the group; they are concerned with action and reflection, with thought and feeling. Gay Morris encapsulates the value of the drama process in the following statement:

⁷⁶ Edmiston, p.3 [quoting J Norman (1981)].

⁷⁷ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (London: Penguin, 1972), p.61.

Drama experiences force us to cross refer from past experience to present; from our immediate responses to visions of the future; from thoughts and feelings about who we are trying to be in this drama to hopes that others won't notice our inadequacies; from giggling at the funny side of participating in a drama to total concentration on creating that imaginary world and the risks it involves. This process is helpful. This process doesn't separate education and the learner into components. This process really nurtures the learner.⁷⁸

There can be little doubt that the processes which pupils engage in through drama have the potential to make a substantial contribution to their education. It is important, however, that these processes do not become limiting, but open up a whole realm of experience to the pupil. The headings used in this chapter have indicated 'Artistry **versus** Utilitarianism', 'Process **versus** Product' - these in many ways represent a past response to EDT and in concluding this chapter, it is important to strongly contest these oppositional relationships. In getting beyond simplistic dichotomies, it is necessary to pay close attention to the notion of drama as a continuum on which art and function, process and product all have a place.

This understanding of the classroom drama experience must be considered within a South African context, however. There can be little doubt that the influence of British Educational Drama & Theatre on South African practitioners has been immense and we need to acknowledge that there are many very important lessons to be learnt from drama educators in other parts of the world; in addition to Britain and the USA, South African educators have looked towards Australia and South America, for example, where much innovative exploration has taken place. However, to ensure that the ideas discussed in this chapter are not accepted uncritically, and to work towards a genuine South African response to the education and drama, we need to take close cognisance of the context in which we are

⁷⁸ Gay Morris, "Drama's Maverick Nature", p.13.

operating, that is the context of education and the arts in South Africa. In order to gain the necessary critical perspective the following chapter thus explores the context in which South African drama educators are operating, examining firstly, the educational context ; secondly, drama and the arts in relation to education; and thirdly, the context of cultural and linguistic diversity.

CHAPTER 2

Multiple Contexts: Implications for the Drama Experience

The aim of this chapter is to consider the **contexts** that impact upon the ways in which the drama experience can constructively contribute to educational transformation in South African schools. It is within these contexts that notions of the classroom drama experience developed in Chapter 1 will be further developed in the rest of the dissertation.

The following diagram highlights the contexts that will be considered in this chapter. Rather than illustrating them as contextual "frames" within which the drama experience is situated, these contexts are shown to be dynamic, intersecting at multiple points and impacting upon each other.

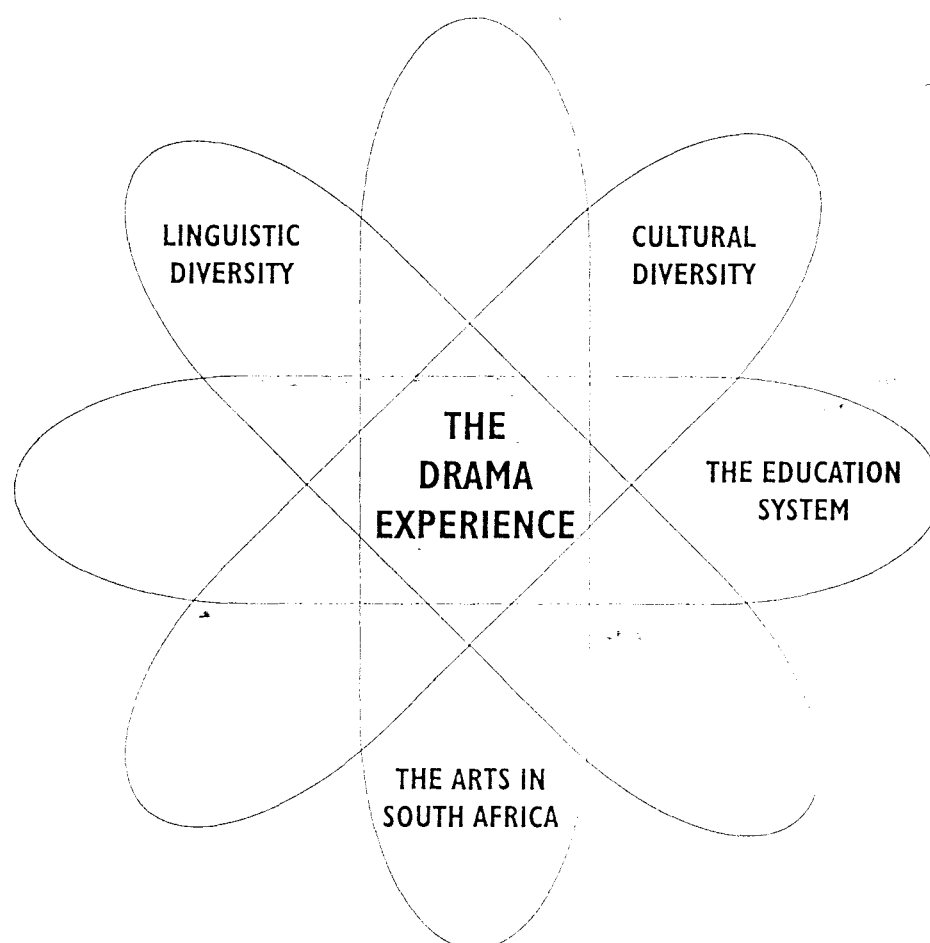


Diagram 3: Contexts that impact on the classroom drama experience in South Africa

2.1. The Educational Context

THAMI:...I have tried very hard, believe me, but it is not as simple and easy as it used to be to sit behind that desk and listen to the teacher. That little world of the classroom where I used to be happy, where they used to pat me on the head and say: Thami, you'll go far... that little room of wonderful promises where I used to feel so safe has become a place I don't trust anymore. Now I sit at my desk like an animal that has smelt danger, heard something moving in the bushes, and knows it must be very, very careful.

Athol Fugard, My Children! My Africa!, 1990, p.173.

The South African education system during the apartheid era was characterised by the inequitable resourcing of schools, underqualified teachers, lack of facilities, and fundamentally skewed education philosophies. But the education crisis that precipitated went much deeper than this. As Fugard's play, My Children! My Africa! reminds us, the crisis manifested itself at the level of the individual pupil, and particularly black pupils, who found that the world of school became a threat, a place of militancy in which violence not only flourished, but became a force for self-preservation. South Africa during the 1970's and 80's, and as recently as the early 1990's, was a country in which it became necessary to have large national organisations with names like the 'National Education Crisis Committee' (NECC), and to coin terms like 'the lost generation' to describe pupils of school going age during that time. Fugard's image of the cowering animal, the cornered animal on the brink of violence, is an appropriate one for the position in which many young people found themselves.

One of the crucial challenges now facing South Africa is the reconstruction of the education system based on a clear mission of redress. Effective redress, however, cannot only come through equalising spending or employing better qualified teachers - it also encompasses the **quality of the learning experience**. As shown in the previous chapter, the world faced by pupils poses many challenges, and in contemporary South Africa the development of life-skills within a multicultural and multilingual context demands approaches to education which are pupil-centered, taking cognisance of the needs of young people today.

In arguing for the use of drama methodologies in providing qualitatively high teaching and learning experiences, it is important to come to an understanding of the educational transformation taking place in South Africa. This requires a contextualisation of the current state of education both historically and in terms of policy formulation for future development.

The vision for developing education in South Africa is captured in two key documents: the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Government's White Paper on Education and Training (which is based on the RDP). Particularly pertinent to this study is the emphasis that the RDP places on **human resource development**:

Our people, with their aspirations and collective determination, are our most important resource.... Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment.¹

An Historical Perspective...

The RDP vision suggests a very different philosophy to the one which has characterised secondary school education in the past and which has brought education in South Africa to the point of crisis. Ken Hartshorne describes it as follows:

Secondary education in South Africa has had a particular kind of style: it has been authoritarian, teacher-dominated, content-oriented and knowledge-based. It has become common to attribute this to the influence of the Afrikaner and the ideas of Christian National Education, and there is no question but that transmission theories of identity, culture, 'moulding', 'fitting into ordered society' as propounded by both Afrikaner politicians and educationists have had powerful effects. But this is not the whole story: the

¹ The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A Policy Framework, African National Congress, 1994, Paragraph 1.3.3, p.5.

It must be noted that although the RDP as a specific government ministry no longer exists, the crucial impact that it has had on all development initiatives in South Africa must be acknowledged. Most development initiatives in South Africa at present are very strongly rooted in an RDP vision.

particular British traditions of prefects, houses, games, the powerful headmaster, the separation of the sexes and so on have all tended to re-inforce the conservative and generally traditional nature of the secondary school. In black schools, until recently, absolutely male-dominated, traditional authoritarian modes were re-inforced after 1955 by large scale appointments of Afrikaners to black State universities, teacher training colleges, and boarding high schools. From time to time, black students were to challenge this authoritarianism in a way that their white compatriots never did, but it was only from 1976 onwards that these challenges had any real effect. Fifteen years later, it is black secondary schooling, almost on the point of collapse, that has become the main focus of concern of all those that are party to education negotiations - the government, the private sector, black political and community organisations. It is the black high school which is perceived as being at the heart of the education crisis.²

This crisis is in many ways a result of the setting up of racially exclusive and inequitable systems of education as part of the apartheid ideology. Alexander Coutts points out that within a year of the electoral victory of the Nationalist Government in 1948 the Eiselen Commission began its work with the assumption that education offered to whites and to blacks should be clearly distinct. They reported that the task of education for blacks should be the transmission of 'bantu' culture which, they argued, could be most effectively achieved by using the geographical areas reserved for the 'bantu'.³

The passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 put an end to the missionary education which had gone before it by creating separate education structures for each "population group"; (one of the biggest tasks that the post-apartheid government has faced has been to integrate these seventeen separate departments into a single national department of education with regional tiers). The 1953 Bantu Education Act also stipulated that no high schools for blacks were to be built in urban areas, causing severe hardships and increased expenses for many parents and pupils⁴. Together with the blatant discrimination and inequality in the provision of resources, students became increasingly angry and frustrated,

² Ken Hartshorne, Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1992), p.60.

³ Alexander Coutts, Multicultural Education: The Way Ahead (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1992), p.2.

⁴ *ibid*, p.3.

and this led to the emergence of the Black Consciousness movement. The Soweto uprising of 1976 was a clear signal of the depth of that anger and frustration.

The inequalities in the provision of education between different sectors of the population which existed, and still exist, included expenditure, the qualifications of teachers, teacher-pupils ratios, and provision of buildings, classrooms and equipment.⁵ The result of much of this is reflected in matriculation pass rates. At the end of 1991, the matric pass rate for DET pupils was 38,6%, and at the end of 1992, 41,9%.⁶ Pass rates cannot be taken as the prime indicator, however; other indicators could include levels of self-worth in pupils, basic life-skills acquisition, and personal development, all of which contribute to the "human cost" referred to in relation to the experience that Fugard documents in his play. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, affecting significant redress in expenditure, provisioning and teacher qualification is only part of the solution. The impact that such a system has had on peoples' lives as human beings demands a clear commitment to a

⁵ MJ Ashley, South African Education in the 1990's (Urban Foundation, 1991), p.8.

Ashley points out that as recently as 1978, expenditure on white education (14% of the student population) accounted for 65% of the education budget, whereas black education (70% of pupils) received 16%. By 1988 this had changed to 42% for black education and 41% for white education, but this still represented a 1:3 per capita expenditure ratio. The teacher-pupil ratios in 1985 were 1:19 for white schools and 1:42 in black classrooms. Another inequality which has had a profound effect on education is the major underqualification of teachers. By 1978, 40% of white teachers in schools had degrees (the remainder were matriculants), whereas in black schools, over 80% of teachers didn't even have matric, and 15% only had std 6. The remaining 5% were graduates. By 1987, this had improved to 60% of teachers in black schools having a matric, whilst the proportionate number of graduate teachers in Asian schools overtook that in white schools (p.6). Whilst previously white schools probably still have more favourable ratios than township schools, these can no longer be considered in terms of race categorisation. Nonetheless, the legacy of such inequitable staffing highlights one of the reasons that the quality of education is so uneven across South Africa's schools.

⁶ Department of Education and Training. Annual Report 1992, 1993.
(The DET is the education department that catered for black pupils under the previously segregationist education system.)

learning experience which is qualitatively sound.⁷

If black pupils were severely disadvantaged, white pupils, although better provisioned, were also faced with a system that was bent on political indoctrination. Through the introduction of Christian National Education (National Education Policy Act of 1967), the Government used a fundamental Calvinist interpretation of Christianity to justify apartheid, and it was this that became core to white 'education'.

South Africa's Minister of Education at the time of writing (1994-), Sibusiso Bengu, notes that the policies of Christian National Education resulted in the imposition of a "culturally exclusive, Western-dominated, inequitable provision of education in which the rich cultural traditions, values and heritage of the majority of South Africans were suppressed".⁸ Such cultural exclusivity, resulting in hegemonic dominance, provides a clear counterpoint to a system which embraces multiculturalism and encourages diversity of expression.

In providing a context for the new education vision, the Government White Paper on Education and Training attempts to characterise the nature of apartheid education and suggests that new education policies should reflect "a common culture of disciplined commitment to learning and teaching".⁹ Interestingly, the **Draft** White Paper identifies numerous educational legacies needing to be transformed, which are not included in the modified final version. The Draft version lists "trends which have dominated the troubled history of South African education and training under White minority rule" as: separate

⁷ There are probably many different opinions on what constitutes a 'qualitatively sound' learning experience, but perhaps the key indicator in this study is that it is empowering for the pupil. The quality of the experience becomes dependent on his or her ability to make sense of the world, to become critically aware, to feel free to make choices and to develop the decision-making skills that are part of such freedom. It is not dependent on the ability to master rote learning or to uncritically accept dominant doctrine.

⁸ Keynote Address presented by Prof Sibusiso Bengu, Minister of Education, at the opening of the Ilitha Arts Education Conference, Grahamstown, 24 April 1995. Proceedings published in the Ilitha Arts Education Conference Journal, 1995, p.11.

⁹ Department of Education, White Paper on Education and Training, March 1995, p.19.

racial and ethnic departments; the inequitable funding of education; restricted access to education; a top-down, authoritarian and bureaucratic style of management; curricula, textbooks and teacher education manipulated for ideological purposes; a male dominated system in which women have suffered discriminatory treatment; and academic learning having been given a higher status than vocational learning, with virtually no articulation between the two.¹⁰

The final tabled version of the White Paper moderates this view by suggesting that education and training reflects a "pattern of contrasts and paradoxes", based on the view that South Africa has achieved the most developed and well resourced system of education and training on the African continent which compares well with other industrialising countries, but notes that at the same time South Africa has millions of functionally illiterate adults.¹¹ Whilst the spirit of the revised version seems to lean towards that of reconciliation and nation building, couching its assessment of the past in more politically acceptable terms, the issues identified in the draft version should not be ignored, for they represent key issues that need to be dealt with in considering educational transformation.

Integrating Classrooms...

The process of integration in schools, begun in some schools during the 1980's (especially the Anglican and Catholic private schools), is a significant part of educational change. It is important to consider because the way this process is undertaken will fundamentally affect the quality of the learning experience. For example, an assimilationist approach will imply a very different quality of education to one which encourages multi- or inter-culturalism.¹² We should, however, bear in mind Hofmeyer and Buckland's observation that "because of the arithmetic of pupil numbers and past residential patterns, most schools

¹⁰ Department of Education, Draft White Paper on Education and Training, September 1994, p.9.

¹¹ Department of Education, White Paper on Education and Training, 15 March 1995, p.18.

¹² These notions of multiculturalism and assimilation are discussed in greater detail on p.75.

will still be black, and relatively few integrated in practice".¹³

Thus, the implications of having racially exclusive schools in a society committed to non-racialism, embracing both nation building and diversity, are immense. Integration is not simply a matter of putting pupils of different backgrounds into the same classrooms and Monica Bot points out that "as experiences in other countries have shown, integration is not an easy process and is therefore **likely to remain an issue, no matter what changes occur**".¹⁴

The importance of integration policies has very significant implications for the choices that are made in terms of learning programmes - for learning cannot simply deal with 'facts and figures', but needs to deal with human relations at a most basic level. It is in this light that the experiences provided by drama, that is the process encapsulated in the idea of *theatricalisation*, must be carefully considered.

Towards Pupil-Centered Notions of Education...

Clearly, the challenge that is faced in a reconstruction and development programme for South Africa requires not simply structural change, but **attitudinal** and **philosophical** change, working towards a process of reconciliation and nation-building. The RDP states:

The challenge that we face at the dawning of a democratic society is to create an education and training system that ensures **people are able to realise their full potential in our society**, as a basis and a prerequisite for the successful achievement of all other goals in this Reconstruction and Development Programme.¹⁵

In ensuring that education strives to help pupils reach their full potential, an approach to

¹³ Jane Hofmeyer and Peter Buckland, "Education System Change in South Africa" in McGregor's Education Alternatives (Kenwyn: Juta, 1992), p.44.

¹⁴ Monica Bot, "Educational Integration" in McGregor's Education Alternatives (Kenwyn: Juta, 1992), p.62 [emphasis mine].

¹⁵ Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994, par. 3.1.5., p.59 [emphasis mine].

education is needed which allows the pupil to develop as a whole person, that is, an holistic approach. The RDP's commitment to a 'person-driven process' seems to imply a pupil-centered education philosophy, and this finds support in the Department of Education White Paper itself which states that the curriculum and teaching methods should "encourage *independent and critical thought*, the capacity to question, enquire and reason, to weigh evidence and form judgements..."¹⁶ Considered in relation to the processes outlined in Chapter 1 (action, reflection, awareness, expression, etc), it becomes evident that contemporary understanding of arts education, and particularly drama-based education approaches are strongly in line with the vision and policy requirements for a reconstructed education system.

The White Paper suggests that the new system must be based on the Constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, cultural freedom and diversity whilst developing its culture of commitment to learning and teaching.¹⁷ It is this developing of a new *culture* in education that lies at the heart of the debate on the place of drama in the curriculum. We need to assess the role that the drama process could play in contributing to a culture of learning, to the building of democracy which implies participation, and most importantly, to an education process which sees human development at its core.

Education and Training...

It should be noted that the White Paper refers to both **Education** and **Training**, emphasising an integrated approach. It states that the Ministry of Education sees this integrated approach as "a vital underlying concept for a national human resource development strategy" and that this approach implies a view of learning which rejects "a rigid division between 'academic' and 'applied', 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowledge' and 'skills', 'head' and 'hand'".¹⁸ The Derridian perspective developed in the preceding chapter supports this view, requiring a more integral understanding of the interrelationship between education and training, rather than seeing them in an oppositional relationship. An

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.22, [emphasis theirs].

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.17.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.15.

activating theatre of participation inherently encompasses an approach in which active experience, and thinking critically about that experience, bridges traditional notions of *doing* versus *learning about*. Drama in schools integrates both theoretical and practical concerns, experiential and cerebral activities. This places such a notion of theatre in a strong position to meet the demands of the key motivation for integration, set out in the White Paper as the requirement of

citizens with a strong foundation of general education, the desire and ability to continue to learn, to adapt to, and develop new knowledge, skills and technologies, to move flexibly between occupations, to take responsibility for personal performance, to set and achieve high standards, and to work co-operatively.¹⁹

This again raises the notion of a more holistic approach to learning and teaching, that is, an approach which integrates theory and practice and engages mind, body and emotion in the learning experience - it does not separate 'intellectual' activities and 'physical' activities into neatly definable categories. Such an understanding calls for a recognition that different kinds of knowledge and skills exist which together contribute to a holistic education and training of the individual. The MEC for Education and Culture in the Eastern Cape Province, Nosimo Balindlela, has stated it as follows:

The child should be given the chance to develop all of her cognitive skills - the skills of enquiry, of critical analysis and interpretation; of understanding and challenging values that are different from her own, while at the same time respecting the right of others to hold different views. We need minds that are "inclusive" not "exclusive" in their attitudes to people who are different. Children should know and love their own culture, but they should be able to criticise it, without feeling threatened when it needs to be criticised.... But cognitive development is not everything. Our children must be more than thinking beings. They must be "feeling" beings - emotional and spiritual beings.²⁰

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.15.

²⁰ Keynote Address presented by Nosimo Balindlela, MEC for Education and Culture: Eastern Cape, at the opening of the Ilitha Arts Education Conference, 24 April 1995. Proceedings published in the Ilitha Arts Education Journal, 1995, p.9.

Further Challenges...

An aspect which government policy documentation does not adequately take cognisance of is the increasing demands of being part of an international community. Whilst documentation is clear on the implications of this for economic policy, it fails to realise that more and more, individuals will find themselves part of a so-called '**global village**'. As mentioned in the previous chapter, pupils are faced with much more sophisticated communication systems and far greater choices than previous generations, and the implications of this for education must be considered. For it has implications not only for our own world views or life-styles, but our very understanding and perception of culture, and by extension, the arts and drama.

Further, whilst emphasis is placed on the need to develop independent and critical thought, education policy fails to recognise a need for **creative and imaginative thought** in our society. This, it could be argued, is another major challenge in reconstructing the education system, and this study hopes to highlight its importance in realising the vision for a transformed education system.

2.2. Drama, The Arts and Education

2.2.i. Policy Debates

In 1993, the Weekly Mail newspaper reported that:

In black schools, arts education is minimal: only 25 high schools run by the Department of Education and Training (DET) countrywide offer art as an examination subject; drama and music are virtually non-existent. In schools run by the House of Representatives, only nine offer formal art,... and two formal drama.²¹

Since the publication of this article, major steps have been taken in the development of policy for arts education, including, most significantly perhaps, the Ministry of Education's acceptance in principle of the arts as an important part of the school curriculum.

For the first time the White Paper on Education states that:

Education in the arts, and the opportunity to *learn, participate and excel in dance, music, theatre, art and crafts* must become increasingly available to all communities on an equitable basis, drawing on and sharing the rich traditions of our varied cultural heritage and contemporary practice.²²

This is in stark contrast to previous policy where the arts in education were constantly faced with marginalisation, and usually seen as subjects for either 'talented' pupils only, or for 'weaker' pupils who could not cope with subjects such as maths and science. Part of the reason the arts have often been accorded a 'Cinderella' status has been a misunderstanding of the kind of educational experience they can provide.

Drama for Talented Pupils...

In 1991, the Department of Education under the previous National Party Government devised a strategy for the transformation of education, the Curriculum Model For Education in South Africa (CUMESA). For the first time, this document suggested that the arts should

²¹ Supplement to the Weekly Mail, March 1993, p.6.

²² Department of Education, White Paper on Education and Training, 1995, p.22, [Emphasis theirs].

become a core part of the education system. However, it forwarded a notion of arts education which failed to recognise the impact that the arts could have in the total education of the learner, thus limiting rather than broadening educational possibilities. It classifies Arts Education as a 'vocational subject', reasoning that this is because the emphasis in arts education is primarily on "the application of knowledge and/or the mastery of skills", through which "learners can gain experience in the three areas of *creation, recreation and appreciation*". The document also describes Art, Dance, Drama, and Music as "talent subjects".²³

Although the CUMESA document has now been disregarded as policy with the election of a new government and the restructuring of the Education Ministry, it should be borne in mind that it nonetheless represents **a mindset and attitude to the arts in education which has not necessarily disappeared**. As Lynn Dalrymple points out, it is "an indication of an approach that still prevails among many education planners towards arts education".²⁴ It is worth comparing CUMESA's understanding of arts education with that of Louis A Gill as discussed on p.39 of the preceding chapter - Gill's understanding of arts education has a stronger focus on the developmental potential for the participant, and represents a model of arts education which is more pupil-centered.

Whilst the current Education White Paper seems to **imply** more of an 'arts for all' ethos than CUMESA did, it also suggests that everyone is compelled to meet the challenge of "creating a system which *cultivates and liberates the talents of all our people* without exception".²⁵ Whilst the spirit of such a statement is welcome, the notion of 'talented' pupils in classroom drama work must be strongly qualified. For whilst it cannot be denied that there are clearly pupils who have greater ability in drama (ie. more 'talented' pupils),

²³ Department of National Education, A Curriculum Model For Education in South Africa (CUMESA), 1991, revised 1993, pp.4-11 [emphasis mine].

²⁴ Lynn Dalrymple, "Making Sense of Arts Education", a Keynote Address presented at the Ilitha Arts Education Conference, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 25 April 1995; Proceedings published in the Ilitha Arts Education Journal, 1995a, p.27.

²⁵ White Paper on Education and Training, 1995, p.5, [emphasis mine].

it must be clear that a fundamental tenet of drama in education is that it provides an experience for **any** pupil. Whilst 'talent' may be beneficial for theatricalisation, in which the quality of the final product is of key importance, *theatricalisation* is a theatre for all pupils, employing educational drama techniques to work with the pupil at his or her developmental level.

A danger, as Dalrymple points out, is that it is highly likely that seeing the arts as essentially for 'talented' pupils could translate into 'special schools' such as the National School of the Arts in Johannesburg and Pro Arte in Pretoria for vocational training in the arts. That is, 'talented' pupils could go to special schools, and this would limit the general availability of an arts education.²⁶

Drama for all Pupils...

The view of 'arts for all' finds support in South Africa in widely discussed policy documents. The National Arts Initiative's Discussion Document of 1993 which has strongly influenced current transformation policy suggests:

The point is that the education system should surely not simply be training cogs in the economic machine, but should rather be creating individual human beings to be responsible, creative, constructive citizens within society, to ensure that society develops as a whole, that human beings develop to their full holistic potential, and that they understand and may consciously act - as free individuals - within society to bring about and sustain a democratic order, free of racism and sexism, where human beings and human relationships are restored and human rights and life are respected and celebrated.²⁷

This view that the arts should not simply be a part of vocational training was further consolidated in the National Arts Coalition's "Resolution 10", one of 17 resolutions adopted by artists and arts educators in December 1993 [See Appendix A]. The resolution states, under the "Believing" clause, that "every child has the right to **general formative**

²⁶ Dalrymple, 1992b, p.11.

²⁷ National Arts Initiative. "Discussion Document on Future Arts Policies and Strategies" (1993), p.36.

education in the arts" and that "skills learned in the arts are essential and **transferable to other areas of academic and educational pursuit**".²⁸ However, the clause does not concentrate solely on a functional or developmental motivation, but notes that **the future support and quality of the arts** are dependent on the exposure of children to the arts.²⁹

Further support is to be found in the recommendations of the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) to the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and the subsequent Draft White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage. In Chapter 8 on Arts Education, the ACTAG document states as part of its vision that "we assert the right of **every learner** to access to equitable, appropriate, life-long education in the arts...",³⁰ and states further, as one of its guiding principles that "**every student** shall be offered the opportunity to learn about and experience the arts in their diverse forms".³¹ This commitment to an 'arts education for all' approach is underscored in the document's recognition that the values and benefits of arts education include the making and appraising of art, but significantly also extend to psychological and developmental benefits, individual and social benefits, the healing of a violent society, and the development of life skills.³²

The views of the ACTAG document are reflected in the Draft White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, which sites the experience of learning about and through the arts clearly in the context of multicultural nation-building, stating that

the whole learning experience [in and through the arts] creates, within a safe learning environment, the means for shaping, challenging, affirming and exploring personal and social relationships and community identity.

²⁸ National Arts Coalition, "Resolutions as Adopted at the National Arts Convention, Durban, South Africa, 1-4 December 1993", 1993, [emphasis mine].

²⁹ *ibid*, (Resolution 10; pages unnumbered), [emphasis mine].

³⁰ Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG), Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group to the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, June 1995, p.243, par.1.1., [emphasis mine].

³¹ *ibid*, par.1.5.7., p.245., [emphasis mine].

³² *ibid*, par. 1.6., pp.246/7.

Experiencing the creative expression of different communities of South Africa provides insights into the aspirations and values of our nation. This experience develops tolerance and provides a foundation for national reconciliation, as well as building a sense of pride in our diverse cultural heritage.³³

This is in line with the views expressed in the Education White Paper and encapsulates a pupil-centered viewpoint, rather than the subject-centered perspective of CUMESA.

The ACTAG Document, on which the Draft White Paper for Arts, Culture and Heritage is based, seems to represent the most comprehensive vision for arts education in South Africa, and has much in common with documents preceding it and dealing more specifically with drama, notably the **Southern African Association for Drama and Youth Theatre (SAADYT)** Discussion Document of 1993 which states unequivocally that

Drama should be offered as an optional subject for **matriculation exemption** and be given **full status** as part of the **general formative education** of secondary school pupils.³⁴

Notions of Drama...

The SAADYT document makes a crucial distinction between the notions of *Drama Studies*, *Speech and Drama*, and *Educational Drama*. The first would refer to general courses about drama and theatre in secondary or tertiary education as well as professional courses.

The second approach, 'Speech and Drama', has its roots in elocution. Dalrymple et al point out that this approach was established in South Africa from the 1920's, the aims being to teach "a particularly prized English accent referred to as Received Pronunciation in order

³³ Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Draft White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, par.31, p.25.

³⁴ Lynn Dalrymple, Veronica Baxter and Clare Erasmus, Curriculum Proposals for Drama and Theatre Studies in a Reconstructed System of Education: A Discussion Document (SAADYT, June 1993), p.20 [emphasis mine].

to achieve upward social mobility".³⁵ There was subsequently a shift, however, influenced primarily by the work of Elizabeth Sneddon, to the notion that speech training did not have to do with learning a specific accent, but with developing communication skills generally. Sneddon's approach is regarded as a form of **general** education, not concerned with training actors, but aimed at all people, developing skills and encouraging an appreciation of theatre as an art form.³⁶ An important observation made by Dalrymple et al is that

although Speech and Drama is a much broader concept than elocution, value is still attached to the 'beauty' of a particular English accent and the development of the mind is directly related to an appreciation of theatre and literature that has been defined as 'art'. The criteria for establishing what is and what is not art have reflected a Eurocentric approach to theatre and drama studies.³⁷

The courses presently offered by South African schools are generally known as *Speech and Drama*, and it is surprising that even the curricula revised as part of the Education Department's transformation process retain this name. It should be noted that whilst these courses are rooted historically in this approach, many teachers seem to have embraced the far broader methodology of *Educational Drama* based largely on the thinking of exponents such as Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton.³⁸

Educational Drama is largely an improvisational activity conducted in the classroom, offering an enactive mode of learning. Dalrymple et al point out that Educational Drama is **not** the end-of-year school play, its focus is **not** on performance on stage for an

³⁵ Dalrymple et al, 1993, p.50.

³⁶ This was an important contribution made by Elizabeth Sneddon, and the positive role she played in introducing drama to schools must be acknowledged.

³⁷ Dalrymple et al, 1993, pp.13-14.

The authors point out that the ideas of Speech and Drama as developed by Sneddon are rooted in the ideas of Matthew Arnold and FR Leavis, the idea that there is great educational value for everyone in an engagement of the mind with 'the best that has been thought and said in the world'.

³⁸ The survey carried out with teachers seems to indicate that this is the case. A more detailed analysis is provided in Chapter 3.

audience, and its aims are **not** to train talented members of the school in performance skills. It could include method courses in teacher education, but also includes the approaches which have come to be known as Drama in Education, Theatre in Education and Creative Dramatics.³⁹

The notion of Educational Drama comes much closer to the idea that is being argued for in this study than the other two do; however, as described above, it still tends to advocate process and product as being separate. Nonetheless, educational drama is really at the core of a theatre of activity, for *theatricalisation* is not so much an alternative approach as a term to more accurately describe the classroom drama experience from a theatre perspective.

All three approaches to drama education and training are evident in South African institutions. This study argues, however, that whilst drama in secondary schools needs to be firmly entrenched in the pupil-centered, experiential learning philosophies of the Educational Drama school of thought, the notions of **arts** and **theatre** cannot be ignored. What differentiates the understanding of *theatricalisation* from the ideas of theatre as encapsulated by the Speech and Drama school of thought, is that in this case theatre and art are not seen from an Arnoldian perspective in terms of 'high art', but are seen as fundamental media through which pupils can express their own perspectives and experiences. (This does not deny the value of being exposed to arts of a high quality, but it does open up the notion of what constitutes art in that it is rooted in an 'arts for all' ethos).

In the light of the above policy debates regarding the arts broadly and drama more specifically, it is necessary to examine in a little more detail the drama curriculum itself if we are to set a clear context in which to understand drama's potential role in educational transformation.

³⁹ *ibid*, p.15.

2.2.ii. The Drama Curriculum

What we are calling for, is a re-evaluation of the values, assumptions, aims and objectives which have underpinned the curricula of the past and a reconceptualisation in terms of the needs and interests of learners and their communities.

(ACTAG Report, 1995, par. 5.1., p.257)

It has been argued that what makes education through drama qualitatively sound is the opportunity that is provided for experiencing and then reflecting on that experience. As mentioned, the Freirian notion of **praxis** suggests that a pupil-centered approach through drama means that developing a critical consciousness and decision-making skills based on experience become part of the methodology; a so-called 'action-reflection cycle'.⁴⁰ The idea of praxis has been one of three key informing principles in the development of a new secondary school drama curriculum and represents a significant shift in understanding the educational role that the drama experience can play.⁴¹

The other two principles are: firstly, the recognition that our ways of seeing, experiencing and expressing our local South African world are **immediate**, whereas our experience with the rest of the world is **mediated**.⁴² This implies that our study of and through drama should start with our immediate experience and broaden to incorporate the rest of the world, rather than be rooted in a study of European theatre, with South African and African studies added on as an appendage. Such an approach is clearly evident in the syllabi themselves. The recommended syllabus for std 8, 9, and 10, for example, features a very strong South African component, with South African plays and historical studies making

⁴⁰ Freire, p.61.

This notion has also been central to the approach adopted by DramAidE; for example see Gill Seidel, "DramaAidE - Towards a Critical Consciousness" (1995), p.145; and DramAidE Eastern Cape, "Final Report" (1996), p.15.

⁴¹ This Interim Core Syllabus was developed by the National Education and Training Forum (NETF) sub-committee for Drama during the latter half of 1994.

⁴² National Education and Training Forum. "Guide to Speech and Drama Syllabus: Standards 8, 9, 10 (Grades 10, 11, 12)", November 1994, p.1.

up at least half the prescribed work, and being used as a starting point for studies.⁴³

Secondly, the methodological approach of **Praxis** informed the NETF's work, that is, a methodology aimed at creating learning situations "in which students can experience and then be skilled with ways of thinking about those experiences critically".⁴⁴ The "Guide to the Speech and Drama Syllabus" describes this 'teaching drama as praxis' as "experience, reflection, analysis, and re-experience".⁴⁵ Such an approach is rooted in educational drama, supporting the notion of drama as general education rather than vocational training.

Thirdly, the development of the new curriculum was influenced by the view that drama should be promoted as both a way of knowing and a specific body of knowledge, that is, knowledge **through** drama and knowledge **as** drama.⁴⁶ This thinking reflects the motivation provided in the earlier 1993 SAADYT Document which makes this distinction crucial to its definition of Educational Drama.⁴⁷

In sharp contrast to curricula of the apartheid era, currently proposed curricula take emphatic account of the **diversity** which characterises South African society. The "Guide to the Speech and Drama Syllabus" suggests that the syllabus

emphasises **respect for the diversity of cultural histories** amongst learners. It is inclusive and redresses the imbalances of the past by **affirming the cultural dynamism of South Africa**. The syllabus includes material drawn from Southern and South Africa in an attempt to start with the known

⁴³ National Education and Training Forum, "Recommended Interim Core Syllabus: Speech and Drama. 0306113200 Higher grade: Standards 8, 9, 10 (Grades 10, 11, 12)", November 1994.

⁴⁴ Lazarus, 1995, p.1.

⁴⁵ National Education and Training Forum. "Guide to Speech and Drama Syllabus: Standards 8, 9, 10 (Grades 10, 11, 12)", November 1994, p.1.

⁴⁶ Lazarus, 1995, p.1.

⁴⁷ Dalrymple et al, 1993, pp.16-17.

(local) and extend into the world.⁴⁸

This is further stated in the syllabus itself which proposes that one of the aims of drama is to "cultivate in learners an interest in their own cultural history and to develop a respect for, and an understanding of, the cultural history of other peoples through experiential learning" and that the subject encourages verbal and non-verbal communication, employing the range of registers "that exist in a multilingual society".⁴⁹

The ACTAG Report makes this viewpoint crucial to its vision for arts education, stating that "our vision is to foster unity, reconciliation and the building of a national democratic culture which reflects and respects our diverse cultural heritage, traditions, and cultures".⁵⁰

This attention to a multicultural society raises the apparent paradox of, on the one hand, celebrating diversity, and, on the other, building a unified nation. However, its emphasis on experiential learning is at the core of bringing these two aspects into a complementary relationship. Drama relies not only on experience, but on active co-operation, on interaction, and on communication, and as will be argued, the value of these activities within a multicultural context cannot be underestimated. Thus, the final section of this chapter examines cultural and linguistic diversity in South Africa as a fundamental context for our investigation into classroom drama.

⁴⁸ National Education and Training Forum, "Guide to Speech and Drama Syllabus", 1994, p.1., [emphasis mine].

⁴⁹ National Education and Training Forum, "Recommended Interim Core Syllabus: Speech and Drama", Nov 1994, pp.1-2.

⁵⁰ ACTAG Report, June 1995, p.243.

2.3. The Context of Cultural & Linguistic Diversity

The emphasis on cultural diversity in the Interim Core Syllabus for Speech and Drama must be seen as positive in light of the discussion in Chapter 1 which suggests that taking cognisance of multiplicity is fundamental to contemporary life. As discussed, such a perspective gets beyond structuralist thinking and holds important implications for the ways in which we understand and relate to other people. Such a view does not see 'otherness' in terms of something to be feared and kept at bay or as 'exotic curiosity'; rather, 'otherness' becomes integral to the understanding of 'self'.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa as a society in transition is bringing together what might superficially appear to be contradictory objectives: on the one hand, to build a unified South African nation based on 'nation-building' principles and values such as non-racialism, non-sexism, democracy and peace, and on the other to recognise and celebrate the diversity of South African society. In terms of the education system, this becomes a major challenge, and the question of how to embrace this paradox positively in a learning experience of quality becomes a key consideration. Drama, perhaps more than any other subject, is able to facilitate such learning experiences because of the **active** and **creative** participation and collaboration that is required of pupils. The role of the drama experience should thus be considered in the context of multilingual and multicultural classrooms.⁵¹

Diverse Classrooms...

It must be emphasised that multicultural education does not simply refer to the pupil composition of a classroom - placing black and white pupils into the same drama group together does not automatically constitute multiculturalism; there is every possibility that such a situation could reinforce racism or prejudice. The term is more all-embracing of the

⁵¹ There have been various approaches that have been devised to deal with cultural diversity in education including 'multiculturalism', 'inter-culturalism' and 'anti-racist teaching'. For the purposes of this discussion, the term 'multicultural education' is used, and should be seen to include the idea of 'anti-racist' education. For further discussion on multiculturalism and anti-racist teaching see Carol Gales, p.5 and Elizabeth Henning, p.55.

education experience including the **ethos of the school** and the **design of the curriculum**. Based on the broad and dynamic notion of culture, we should further note that diversity manifests itself in a variety of ways and multiculturalism should not become a synonym for multiracialism.⁵² As John Stonier points out we need to appreciate the impact of all difference, including class, age, sex, physical differences (eg. physically disabled), sexual or affectional orientation, and religion. In other words, multicultural education should not seek to straight-jacket pupils into nicely defined 'cultural groups' (which is essentially the approach apartheid took), but needs to recognise that based on their uniqueness as individuals, pupils can identify with a variety of groups.⁵³ The fact that drama methodologies concentrate on the **individual** pupil (taking cognisance of developmental concerns) **within the group context** means that notions of multiculturalism can be easily accommodated.

Thus, even if most South African schools remain predominantly black as is likely in the future, there will still be diversity in terms of gender, religion, world views, etc; all those aspects that go into making up a dynamic notion of what culture constitutes. Each pupil brings a different set of life experiences to the class, and in this sense, the class already has the foundations of multiculturalism. Using what the pupils bring to the classroom as individual people, the teacher is in a unique position to introduce them to human perspectives and insights which, as a group, they may not have previously encountered.

⁵² A dynamic notion of culture is key to understanding multiculturalism. Unlike the apartheid world view which saw culture as something static to be preserved at all costs, a dynamic view sees the constantly changing nature of culture as something to be embraced. It is argued that the essence of a potentially rich educational experience is to be found in recognising and engaging with that dynamism. This broad view of culture goes beyond notions of 'Art' and 'good taste' as it is often used in the colloquial sense (eg. a 'cultured person') and finds strong expression in the writing of Raymond Williams (1965, pp.41ff.), for example, who describes culture as a particular way of life which "expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour". As Albie Sachs puts it, it is "everything; it is who we are, how we see each other" (Sachs, 1991, p.1).

⁵³ Address by John Stonier, Director of the Intercultural Education in South Africa Trust, presented at Victoria Girls High School, Grahamstown, 9 September, 1993.

A crucial aspect of cultural diversity in South African classrooms is linguistic diversity. In a country that now has twelve official languages (eleven spoken, plus sign-language) and in which major influences on pupils' lives such as television become increasingly multilingual, the need to develop multilingual skills as part of a quality learning experience becomes crucial. There can be no doubt that South Africa is multilingual in composition and debates on language and language policy in South Africa encompass a myriad issues.⁵⁴

In terms of education, Ruth Versfeld points out that it is rare to find a school where everyone speaks the same first language and "impossible to find one where there is knowledge of only one language".⁵⁵ This suggests that the notion of a 'monolingual school' is a myth, because even though all activities might be carried out in one language, pupils usually learn another language (such as English first-language pupils learning Afrikaans), or learn in a language which is different to the language of day to day interaction (such as black pupils who might speak Xhosa to their friends, but study in English), or pupils whose family speaks a different language at home (such as Greek, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi, Hebrew, etc). The following table gives an indication of the number of speakers in South Africa for whom a particular language is a home language (Table 1):

⁵⁴ Such debates include: language as a medium of instruction; languages to be studied as subjects; languages of administration and interaction within the school; national language policy (official languages, languages of record, etc); language as an access to power; language and cognitive development in pupils; equality of languages; language related prejudice; approaches to language learning and acquisition.

⁵⁵ Ruth Versfeld, "Using Yo Dude: What Do You Assume?" in *Bua* (Vol 2, No 8, June 1993), p.16.

Table 1
LANGUAGES AND THE NUMBER OF SPEAKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA⁵⁶

<u>Official Languages</u>	<u>No of Speakers</u>	<u>% of Population</u>
Zulu	8 541 173	21.61%
Xhosa	6 891 358	17.44%
Afrikaans	6 188 981	15.66%
Tswana	3 601 609	9.11%
North Sotho	3 437 971	8.70%
English	3 432 042	8.68%
South Sotho	2 652 590	6.71%
Tsonga	1 349 022	3.54%
Swazi	926 094	2.34%
Ndebele	799 216	2.02%
Venda	763 247	1.93%
<u>Other Languages</u>	<u>No of Speakers</u>	
Portuguese	57 080	
German	40 240	
Hindi	25 900	
Gujerati	25 120	
Tamil	24 720	
Greek	16 780	
Italian	16 600	
Urdu	13 280	
Dutch	11 740	
French	6 340	
Telegu	4 000	
Chinese	2 700	
Other	22 740	

⁵⁶ Table adapted from National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI): Language, Oxford University Press/NECC, Cape Town, 1993, p.23.

It is significant that English has a relatively low percentage of Home-Language speakers compared to the dominant languages (Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans). Further, as shown in the NEPI Report, there is not one region which is homogenous in terms of language.⁵⁷ This has important implications for decisions around medium of instruction in schools and the development of cognitive skills through language. The above figures suggest that the education experience of South African pupils should provide opportunities for coming to terms with multilingualism. The drama experience provides such an opportunity and has been shown to be particularly effective when the attention of both teacher and pupils "is primarily focused on the demands of the dramatic situation, rather than on the language being used".⁵⁸

A further factor to be taken into account regarding multilingualism in South African schools is that very often pupils in a particular class are at very different levels of ability and development. Research undertaken by Paul Walters of the Institute for the Study of English In Africa suggests that the average former DET English-Second-Language pupil entering a Model C school at Std 6 will have a general proficiency in English approximately equivalent to that of English First-Language pupils in Std 2.⁵⁹ This means that in a single class there can be as much as a 5 year language difference between pupils. Such a situation places an enormous burden not only on the language teacher, but on **all** teachers in the school who are faced with the task of equalising such disparity. Possibly the most important point that the report highlights for our purposes is that much of the disparity in skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening is the result of the 'Rote Rhythm' method of

⁵⁷ NEPI Report, 1993, p.23.

⁵⁸ Ken Byron, "Drama and Language" in 2D Drama Dance (Vol 4, No 2, 1984), p.26.

⁵⁹ Paul Walters, Personal Interview, 30 September 1993. Walters' findings are documented in "Access to Std 6 (Model C): Some Linguistic Barriers for Pupils from a DET Background. Interim Findings from Research in Progress", in Crux, Vol 27, No 2, 1993.

Note that this research was conducted in the context of the previous system of Education (ie. a split into racially divided education departments). Although DET and Model C have now been done away with, the disparity in education still exists with schools from previously divided systems operating at significantly different levels.

teaching.⁶⁰ This rote transmission teaching method also has a negative effect on listening comprehension, because pupils can rely on memorising what the teacher is saying, masking the fact that there is very little, or no, comprehension.⁶¹

In addition, it is estimated that about nine million adults in South Africa are illiterate posing significant implications in terms of the home backgrounds of pupils. Helen Robb, of Cape Town's Early Learning Resource Centre, points out that statistics show that almost one out of every two black adults is illiterate, and one out of every three coloured adults is illiterate. "This means that many children grow up in homes where there is no example of reading or writing. There is no-one who can read them a story. There is no-one who can help them with their homework. There are no books. There is no pencil/crayon or paper".⁶²

In the light of these very real language problems, our consideration of drama needs to be a holistic one in which communicative and expressive skills both enhance and are enhanced by, an increased proficiency, not only in English, but in *language* more generally, and in which drama provides a very significant alternative to rote transmission methods of learning. It is the dramatic process of metaxis, discussed in Chapter 1, through which participants work in both a real context and a fictional context, that the ability to develop language through action is enhanced. As Ken Byron points out, through the drama experience **new contexts**, **new roles**, and **new relationships** begin to operate which make very different demands on us than those of the 'real' classroom, so that new possibilities for language use and development are opened up.⁶³ It should be noted, however, that the

⁶⁰ Rote Rhythm refers to teaching by requiring students to memorise facts through constant repetition (the way the times tables might be learnt, for example). In terms of language learning then, it does not take account of the pupils needing to understand, as much as memorising the rules.

⁶¹ Walters, p.20.

⁶² Helen Robb, "Implementing an Anti-Bias and Multi-Cultural Curriculum as a Strategy for Transformation and Reconstruction", SAADYT Conference Papers 1992 (SAADYT, 1992), p.27.

⁶³ Byron, p.18.

use of drama should not simply be the setting up of dialogues to practice language skills; "our use of language is challenged when **real demands** are made on it - not when we are asked to 'practice' skills against the time we might need them for real".⁶⁴

Multiculturalism, Assimilation and Amalgamation...

Elizabeth Henning identifies the main tenets of multiculturalism as being **equality and equity of opportunity to learn, anti-racist education, and holistic teaching and learning**. These tenets are based upon what seem to have become established principles of discourse in the literature of multicultural education. Henning suggests that most fundamentally "monocultural education, both in context and process, is not a feasible way of educating pupils who live in a world where demands are made multiculturally".⁶⁵

It must be understood that multiculturalism and multilingualism represent specific responses to diversity in the sense that as terms they are both descriptive and prescriptive. They describe a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous society and prescribe particular responses to that diversity.⁶⁶ There are other ways of responding to diversity, the two most important in terms of this discussion being **assimilation** and **amalgamation**.

It is important to distinguish between these responses here because in exploring the classroom drama experience we need to be very clear about the ideological assumptions or rationale underpinning such perspectives.

Assimilation occurs when different cultures are required to adapt and conform to the dominant culture, and, according to Pratte, can be "symbolically represented as $A+B+C=A$, with each letter representing a different cultural group and A being the dominant one".⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.25.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Henning, "The Standard Six English Classroom at an Urban Multicultural School: An Ethnographic Enquiry", Diss. RAU 1991, p.48 [emphasis hers].

⁶⁶ Carla Gia Spinola, "An Analysis of the Phenomenon of Multiculturalism in the Education Process", Diss. UNISA 1991, p.36.

⁶⁷ Spinola [quoting Pratte], p.15.

This has been the predominant response to cultural diversity in the United Kingdom where immigrants (such as Pakistanis, Indians, and Chinese) have been expected to integrate fully into dominant British culture. In South Africa, many previously 'white' schools have adopted an assimilationist approach, where pupils are expected to adjust to the prevailing ethos of the school, often under the guise of 'maintaining tradition', rather than the school adjusting to accommodate its diverse pupil population.

Gaye Davis points out that in many schools, multiculturalism gets interpreted narrowly, "in terms of token nods: Eid gets celebrated along with Easter, for example".⁶⁸ She refers to Kathleen Heugh of the National Language Project, who suggests that such a notion of multiculturalism simply turns cultures which are not mainstream into curiosities - "true multiculturalism would validate, rather than trivialise, other languages and cultures".⁶⁹ This sounds a good warning, for even those with good intentions of getting pupils to share cultural experiences could fall into the 'culture as exotic-curiosity' trap.

The other approach which is favoured by some in South Africa, but which seems to have been largely discredited by its failure in the USA is **amalgamation**, also known as the '**melting pot**' approach. This can be represented as $A+B+C=D$, where "D denotes a synthesis, or a new cultural group, derived from the infusion of many different cultural groups".⁷⁰ Whilst it is possible to confuse amalgamation with the notion of nation-building, it must be borne in mind that this approach will generally favour the dominant culture in society, and thus, unlike multiculturalism, does not have equality of cultures as one of its fundamental tenets. In South Africa, the call for a 'new' South African culture based on a combinations of the diverse cultures that exist presently could be termed an amalgamationist response.

Francis suggests that multiculturalism exists as another response but cannot be symbolically represented in the same way as assimilation and amalgamation because it is an ideal which

⁶⁸ Davis, 1993b, p.4.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.4.

⁷⁰ Spinola, p.15.

"articulates the interactive relationship between **the dynamic individual and his/her circumstances** within a culturally diverse society".⁷¹ Thus, as Spinola suggests, it is almost impossible to represent this ideology symbolically for "rather than an ethnic group, it refers to the **individual**, and rather than distinct ossified cultural groups, there is a **dynamic conception of culture** and cross-cultural interaction".⁷²

This has significant implications for our understanding of drama as an educational experience in the South African classroom, in that it implies the need for approaches to learning and teaching which can effectively maximise the cultural dynamism existing within any classroom. In terms of the idea that we are developing in this dissertation, it could be argued that the notion of school drama as reflected in the school play, or in older ideas of Speech and Drama as teaching people to speak 'correctly', often has to do with presenting or representing culture in a static form - it becomes a way of preserving culture. *Theatricalisation*, on the other hand, relies on dynamic notions of culture for its efficacy. Drawing strongly on Educational Drama principles, this approach to classroom drama constructively utilizes everything that the pupils bring with them to the classroom, in terms of life experience and cultural 'baggage'.⁷³

Assimilationist responses are also used most often in terms of multilingualism, but there are other factors that we should take account of.

Multilingualism and Assimilation...

As suggested in Chapter 1, communication or creative expression is fundamental to the process of drama. If drama is to be seen primarily as an **expressive art**, then the issue of

⁷¹ Francis, 1981, p.291, [emphasis mine].

⁷² Spinola, p.18, [emphasis mine].

⁷³ Schools today often tend to perpetuate the static or Arnoldian notions of culture through a dichotomy between sport and 'culture'. Pupils either participate in sporting activities or cultural activities, and are encouraged to develop both physical prowess and become 'cultured' members of society. Rugby is sport, the school play is culture. Perhaps rugby is more essentially a part of South African culture than theatre?

language needs to be given serious consideration. Peter Chilver suggests that drama is about people interacting with each other - "it is a form of thinking employed not only by dramatic artists who write plays and make films (for example) in which they seek to capture the living experience of people interacting with people, **but also by people in the everyday world**".⁷⁴ Clearly the "everyday world" is not monolingual, and in a 'theatre of activity' where pupils draw on their own everyday experiences the multilingual context needs to be acknowledged and promoted. For it is in understanding the way in which the *theatricalisation* process contributes to a qualitatively sound learning experience that the opportunity for pupils to explore and come to terms with a world characterised by multiple languages becomes fundamental.

The multilingual context has two important implications in terms of the classroom drama experience: firstly, the ways in which the drama experience can contribute to **language development**, and particularly in relation to second-language development or multi-language ability; and secondly, the ways in which a drama experience can influence **attitudes to multilingualism**, using the variety that pupils bring with them to the class and countering what has sometimes been called 'linguistic nationalism' or 'linguicism'.

Whilst in the past, multilingualism has often been perceived to be problematic to the efficient functioning of society, a shift in thinking has led to the embracing of language diversity as potentially enriching education and personal development.

The following statement encapsulates the view that has influenced South African language policy formulation during the 1990's:

There is general consensus amongst those advocating more democratic language policy for South African education that South Africa's multilingualism should be **utilized creatively as a national resource** and no longer viewed as a national *problem*.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Peter Chilver, "Drama and Language Development" in Jon Nixon (ed.), Drama and the Whole Curriculum (London: Hutchinson, 1982), pp.81/2, [emphasis mine].

⁷⁵ Lockett, "Behind Bilingualism" in Bua!, Vol 8, No 2, June 1993, p.20; [bold emphasis mine; italics hers].

This is a view which is not only prevalent in South Africa, but which characterises current international language debate.⁷⁶

Although there may be an increasingly common acknowledgement of multilingualism, approaches to dealing with it are less uniform and have implications for the way the teacher using drama consciously deals with language. As with cultural diversity, the most common approaches in South African schools to dealing with linguistic diversity tend to be **assimilationist**. Kathleen Heugh points out that those who choose the assimilationist approach tend to see multilingualism as a problem and monolingualism as a desirable goal:

These language policies are **subtractive and transitional**. In other words, the home languages of the marginalised groups get weeded out of the education system as soon as possible (and the) dominant / powerful language

⁷⁶ In South Africa, this view is strongly forwarded by influential NGO's such as the National Language Project (NLP) and the Project for the Study of Alternative Education (PRAESA). Evidence of this view internationally can also be found in Denise E Murray (ed.): Diversity as Resource: Redefining Cultural Literacy (1992); Richard Fardon and Graham Furniss (eds.): African Languages, Development and the State (1994); and Peter Mülhäusler: "Babel Revisited" (1995).

The shift in thinking from seeing multilingualism as a problem to seeing it as something positive requires a re-assessment of both mythologies or philosophies that have influenced our perception of language diversity and socio-political change. For example, Mülhäusler suggests that the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, which portrays linguistic diversity as a divine punishment, has "dominated western thinking about languages for centuries and as a result many people believe that a multiplicity of languages is undesirable" (Mülhäusler, p.4). Nhlanhla P Maake refers to the above metaphor in drawing links between the Bible story (Genesis 11:5-7) and the policies of apartheid, showing how differences of language can be used to divide people: "The Tower of Babel must be dismantled, a tower which has been in the process of construction since the enforcement of the use of English by the English Governors such as Lord Charles Somerset in the 1840's, and that of Afrikaans by the Afrikaans Government in the 1970s, which led to the catastrophic climax of 1976 when school students took to the streets in protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for at least half of the subjects taught in African schools" (Maake, 1994, p.118). Fardon and Furniss also point out how language policy in Africa has been dominated by nineteenth century European ideals of "the coincidence of a singular people, nation and state united by culture and language" and suggest that there is a growing feeling in African countries that this ideal is not only unattainable as a goal in Africa, but even undesirable (Fardon and Furniss, 1994, p.ix).

of wider communication (usually a European language) becomes the target language and all social, political and economic rewards are accessible only via this language.⁷⁷

A strong reaction to an assimilationist approach was clearly seen in the Soweto uprisings of 1976, for example, when a very overt attempt to implement such a strategy was made. Assimilation is not always as overt as this, however. The drama teacher who requires that all pupils speak only English in the drama class because it is an English medium school could well fall foul of assimilationist approaches, missing significant learning opportunities for pupils.

Whilst it may be argued that the hegemony of English is unproblematic if it gives people access to jobs, to the international community, and to power, it must be emphasised that such a notion fails to take account of the educational losses which such a policy will encourage, and the continued disadvantage of those who do not have English as a first language. Davis points out that although the immediate solution would appear to be to teach everybody English, research shows that this approach could be disastrous, for example "...in African countries which have adopted the languages of their former colonists, only between five and 20 percent of people are able to use the official language well enough to have power" whilst perhaps even more significantly studies of children's cognitive development show that before competency in another language can be achieved, "children need to first thoroughly understand the way their own language works and their first-language skills must be sustained while they're learning their second language".⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Heugh, p.27.

⁷⁸ Davis, 1993, p.4.

Luckett points to recent research literature which has many examples attesting to the cognitive abilities of bilinguals over monolinguals in domains such as "concept formation, divergent and creative thinking, categorisation skills, perceptual disembedding, communication sensitivity and metalinguistic awareness" (Luckett, p.20). Agnihotri also points to work done in Canada and India which shows that multilingual children have better cognitive skills and generally perform better in maths and science (NLP Video, 1993).

The most viable option to the assimilationist approach appears to be 'multilingualism' in which language is treated as "a positive right", and language policies are implemented through an educational system which "reflects a validation of the multilingual nature of society".⁷⁹ Heugh suggests that multilingual education is regarded as a process which helps to facilitate the following:

- * firstly, the "equalisation of the entire education system", exposing all children to similar cognitive processes at equal stages in their education;
- * secondly, ensuring that all children are equally advantaged in access to language systems; and
- * thirdly, comprehensively challenging "linguicism" or linguistic racism, a vital part of the struggle to eradicate prejudice based on race, class and gender.⁸⁰

This approach then does not simply aim at getting pupils to learn languages, but has at its heart, the building of a more equitable and democratic education system in South Africa with a view to a transformed society in which people are not held in subservient positions through language.⁸¹

It is the positive acknowledgement and embracing of multilingualism within education which provides a key contextual consideration for our study of drama. Because the drama experience requires that pupils draw on real life, opportunities for coming to terms with multilingualism should be an important factor informing the teacher's approach. In this theatre of activity, the emphasis is not on learning **about** language, nor on learning to speak the language *per se*; rather it has to do with 'communicative competence', the favoured approach of language teachers today. In actively engaging in learning through language, pupils not only have the opportunity to develop language in action, but also come to terms

⁷⁹ Heugh, p.28.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.29.

⁸¹ In relation to this perspective it is interesting to note that Augusto Boal's notion of a "Theatre of the Oppressed" is strongly influenced by the need to liberate people who are held in subservience through illiteracy or semi-literacy. As mentioned above, his work is strongly influenced by the ideas of literacy worker and language theorist Paulo Freire.

with the many other paralinguistic features of communication such as body language and gesture. It thus not only becomes easier to acquire other languages⁸², but it also becomes a way for the teacher to encourage an appreciation for the value of language diversity and multilingualism.

As Neville Alexander states:

Some of us have arrived at the position that... a multilingual nation is possible. The issue in nation-building is **not language but communication**, not a particular language but the ability to communicate with one another, and similarly that cultural values can be carried by any language.⁸³

Education for Diversity: Lessons in Freedom...

Thus, it is being suggested that as a response to diversity, multiculturalism and multilingualism are more useful notions for considering educational transformation than are either assimilation or amalgamation.

Katz summarises perspectives of multicultural education as provided by a range of groups concerned with the issue, highlighting the kinds of skills that such an education promotes:

Multicultural education is a preparation for the social, political and economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters.... Multicultural education could include, but not be limited to, experiences which (i) promote analytical and evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory democracy, racism and sexism, and the parity of power; (ii) develop skills for value clarification including the study of the manifest and latent transmission of values; (iii) examine the dynamics of diverse cultures and the implications for developing teaching strategies; and (iv) examine linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a basis for

⁸² The term language **acquisition** tends to be favoured over language **learning** in terms of the process that students go through in building on to their existing language ability. See, for example, Stephen Krashen, Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning, 1981.

⁸³ Neville Alexander and Jerzy Smolicz, "The Quest for Core Culture" in Bua!, Vol 8, No 3, September 1993, p.5 [emphasis mine].

the development of appropriate teaching strategies".⁸⁴

Elizabeth Henning has examined multicultural education as a "liberational and empowering pedagogy",⁸⁵ describing it as education towards "a liberated mind which is free from the shackles of behaviourist learning and teaching and which is therefore also a critical mind".⁸⁶ Parekh sees this liberation as going further, suggesting that multicultural education is

essentially an attempt to release a child from the confines of the ethnocentric straightjacket and to awaken him to the existence of other cultures, societies, and ways of life and thought. It is intended to decondition the child as much as possible in order that he can go out into the world as free from biases and prejudices as possible and able and willing to explore its rich diversity. Multicultural education is therefore an education in freedom - freedom *from* inherited biases and narrow feelings and sentiments, as well as freedom *to* explore other cultures and perspectives and make one's own choices in full awareness of available and practicable alternatives... It does not cut off a child from his own culture; rather it enables him to enrich, refine and take a broader view of it without losing his roots in it.⁸⁷

It can be argued that if, in South Africa, we are truly concerned with democratic nation-building, then this ability to be able to see alternatives is something that must be encouraged and nurtured; to relate to other people not simply from the perspective of one's own world view, but through an education which provides the opportunity to explore other perspectives through interaction.

⁸⁴ Katz quoted in Sohan Modgil, Gagendra K Verma, Kank Mallick and Celia Modgil (eds.), Multicultural Education: The Interminable Debate (London: The Falmer Press, 1986), p.5.

⁸⁵ Henning, p.40.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.9.

⁸⁷ Parekh, pp.26-27 [emphasis his].

2.4. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES: A SUMMATION

This chapter has examined the arts and education in South Africa in order to provide a context in which to explore the potential role of drama in meeting the challenges of educational change. It has provided a brief historical context and has explored both policy issues and theoretical issues, investigating debates regarding multicultural and multilingual education approaches. The key challenges, as discussed above, can be summarised as follows:

- * An education system which is a crucial part of the human resource development of our country. This implies empowerment, personal development, and the development of the individual within our social context of democracy and participation;
- * A move away from an authoritarian, teacher-dominated, content-oriented, knowledge-based approach;
- * The redress of historical imbalances, through both infrastructural transformation and the creating of high quality learning experiences;
- * A curriculum which develops independent and critical thought, and aims to realise the full potential of pupils;
- * A system which encourages diversity rather than cultural domination;
- * A transformed system which seeks to integrate the notions of education and training;
- * Structural change which includes the integrating of school pupils from different educational, cultural and language backgrounds, and the implicit challenges facing pupils and teachers in this situation;
- * Coping with change itself and meeting the challenges posed by a dynamic society through developing skills of adaption, initiative and co-operation;
- * A system which promotes cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and physical growth, that is, an holistic learning experience.

All the above change is underpinned by the challenge of accommodating notions of unity and diversity in the education system and society as a whole. Importantly, multiculturalism (including 'anti-prejudice' education) should be seen as a desirable alternative to assimilation or amalgamation. As discussed, multilingualism should be viewed as a 'resource'

rather than a 'problem' and, in the drama classroom, can contribute to both language development and the countering of linguisticism.

Finally, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, education in South Africa needs to work towards rebuilding a **culture of learning**. It is this notion of a culture of learning which Henning suggests could be the synthesizing factor in building unity and accommodating diversity. That is, if a culture of learning is a fundamental commonality among pupils, then multicultural schools can accommodate social, linguistic, political, economic and ethnic origins gracefully, while at the same time "focusing on a common culture of learning which could bring empowerment".⁸⁸ As part of our exploration, it is important that we not only come to terms with the drama experience as contributing to a culture of learning, but see it as a culture of learning itself.

Whilst we have explored in some depth the contexts impacting on the drama experience in schools, we should also note that much of the policy and theory dealt with above has been formulated by specialists through NGO's or tertiary institutions. If we are to formulate a genuine understanding of the potential role of drama in the above context, however, it is necessary to take into account the thoughts and attitudes of teachers and learners themselves. The following chapter thus details the results of surveys carried out among drama teachers.

⁸⁸ Henning, p.46.

CHAPTER 3

"Sharing Humanity": A Survey of Teachers' Perspectives

In the light of the challenges facing all those involved in educational transformation, it is essential that the views of teachers themselves are taken into account. There has been a sense in the past that teachers in South Africa have generally felt sidelined from participating in major education policy discussion and decision making. This view seems to be consistently articulated at meetings to discuss current policy issues¹. It is only with a new era of transparency and consultation in post-1994 South Africa, that opportunities for teachers to participate more directly have seemed possible.

This chapter reports on a survey undertaken with Speech and Drama teachers and aims to add further perspectives to the philosophical conceptualisation developed in Chapter 1 and the contextual frameworks developed in Chapter 2. The survey has been undertaken partly in response to the concern that practising drama teachers' views be taken into consideration in formulating arts education policies. Further, whilst the preceding chapter formulates a contextual basis for considering drama and educational transformation, this chapter seeks to take account of some of the practical day to day considerations that impact upon the ways in which drama might play such a role. The aim of this study has been to:

1. collate information on the present state of drama in South African secondary schools;
2. gain insight into drama teachers' experiences of, and attitudes to, drama (as far as possible both objective and subjective);
3. gain insight into drama teachers' motivations and anticipations for the future of drama in schools.²

¹ Such views were particularly strongly articulated at the Ilitha Arts Education Conference held in Grahamstown, April 1995. Other meetings where such views have been expressed include forums hosted by the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) and the National Arts Coalition.

² Note that teachers' comments have been recorded here as spoken; colloquial language has thus been maintained to give a sense of teachers thinking as they're speaking.

3.1. Profile of Teachers and Schools involved in this study

The following survey was conducted among thirty-three (33) currently practising secondary school drama teachers. Of those thirty-three:

- * twenty-six (26) were surveyed through questionnaire; and
- * seven (7) participated in in-depth, individual interviews.

The names of drama teachers in KwaZulu/Natal were supplied by the Speech and Drama Subject Advisors in that province and questionnaires were sent to all those teachers. The response rate was 52%.

Through the education policies of the past, only traditionally 'white' (House of Assembly) and 'Indian' (House of Delegates) schools have offered Speech and Drama as a formal subject, and the majority of these schools have been situated in the KwaZulu/Natal Province. As a result, this survey does not include any teachers from the former DET schools ('black') or House of representative ('coloured') schools. Whilst it is clearly imperative that these schools are involved in the process of formulating and implementing drama education policies, their lack of participation in this survey should not be seen to undermine its aim which is to gather information and ideas from those teachers currently involved in the teaching of the subject.

The teachers who responded by **questionnaire** are all based in schools in KwaZulu/Natal. Of those teachers, 7 teach at private or independent schools, and 19 at state schools. 14 teach at co-educational schools, 11 at girls only schools and 1 at a boys only school (see Table 2).

Of those **interviewed**, 4 teach at private or independent schools, and 3 at state schools. All 7 schools are co-educational. 1 is based in KwaZulu/Natal, 1 in the Eastern Cape, and 5 in Gauteng (4 in Johannesburg and 1 in Pretoria). It should be noted that 2 of the state schools are specialist arts schools where pupils can specialise in art, drama, music, or dance (until now, ballet). Of the seven, 2 had been following the Natal Education Department (NED)

syllabus (until the change to the Interim Core Syllabus), 3 the Transvaal Education Department (TED) syllabus, 1 the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) syllabus, and 1 has had devised its own syllabus. It must be noted, however, that the school that followed the JMB syllabus wrote the NED exams, and the TED syllabi and exams were based on those of the NED.³

Two of the 33 teachers teach only juniors (std 6-7), and four teach only seniors (std 8-10). 18 teach all standards from std 6 - 10. The remaining 9 teach both junior and senior standards, but not the full range from std 6-10. This does mean, however, that 27 respondents (82%) teach **both junior and senior level drama**. Twenty-two schools offer drama extra-murally **as well as** as a school subject, while 11 offer drama as a formal subject only. (The following table indicates the above figures, showing the percentage breakdown in terms of schools involved in this survey).

Thirty-one schools (ie. not the two 'arts schools') allocate less than 5 periods per week to the junior classes, and 5 to 10 periods per week (on average, 6) to the senior classes.⁴ The 2 arts schools teach 14 periods a week to the Juniors and 20 periods a week to the seniors. Clearly far more time is allocated to those schools where pupils are studying the subject as a "specialist" subject. In both these schools, the time is actually made up of **two complementary subjects** (which all drama pupils have to study): Speech and Drama and History of Theatre, Costume and Literature.

³ Although all schools would now follow a national core syllabus, this breakdown has been given to show the possible differences or similarities in terms of the approach that teachers in previously separate systems may have used.

⁴ One period refers to approximately half-an-hour/35 minutes. The number of hours allocated seems to be fairly standard.

Table 2
PROFILE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THIS SURVEY

School/Teacher Information	Number of schools	Percentage Total
1a. Private or Independent	11	33%
1b. State School	22	67%
2a. Co-educational School	21	64%
2b. Girls School	11	33%
2c. Boys School	1	3%
3a. Drama is only offered as a formal subject at the school.	11	33%
3b. Drama is offered as an extra-curricular activity as well as a formal subject.	22	64%
4. Teacher teaches Drama to:		
a. Juniors only (std 6/7)	2	6%
b. Seniors only (std 8-10)	4	12%
c. Both Juniors and Seniors	27	82%

Notes:

1. The above figures show totals for all 33 respondents, ie. the total for those surveyed by interview or questionnaire.
2. Figures in this table do not refer to the number of schools that offer drama overall in South Africa; they refer only to schools who participated in this survey. However, indications seem to be that they do reflect the general trend of Drama in schools. A 100% response rate to such a survey (as opposed to the 52% of this survey) would possibly show a higher percentage of girls only schools offering drama and would probably show a larger percentage of schools offering drama only at junior level.
3. The teachers indicated in point 4 of the table refer to the specific individual teachers who participated in the survey.
4. Except where specifically stated in the table (3b), the word "Drama" refers to the subject "Speech and Drama".

3.2. Drama Teachers' Aims and Objectives

In establishing what teachers believe their aims to be in the teaching of drama, two separate approaches were taken: with those who responded by questionnaire, fixed categories were given (multiple choice) and respondents were asked to tick one, or, if their primary aim included more than one category, to rank them in order of importance. Those who were interviewed, on the other hand, were not given possible options to choose from, but were simply left to articulate their objectives as they understand them. This sub-section will therefore look at each group separately and then draw conclusions at the end.

The teachers who responded by questionnaire were asked: What are your conscious aims (generally) in planning your drama classes? The following response options were given:

- a) Training performers for the profession
- b) The development of language skills
- c) Raising social awareness
- d) Building self-confidence in pupils
- e) Developing social skills ("life skills")
- f) Promoting creative expression
- g) Other (respondents asked to specify).

Responses have been collated to indicate teachers' first three options in order of importance, and are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3
CONSCIOUS AIMS IN THE PLANNING OF DRAMA CLASSES
(Teachers surveyed by questionnaire)

<u>Aim</u>	<u>1st choice</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>
a) Training performers	0	0	0
b) Language skills	0	2	4
c) Social awareness	1	1	3
d) Self-confidence	11	12	0
e) Life skills	13	5	3
f) Creative expression	1	5	14

Figures indicate the number of respondents, eg. 13 teachers indicated that their primary aim was life skills development.

Three teachers suggested further aims under option "g: other", namely **personality development; promoting tolerance and understanding; understanding the play in its social context.**

Some teachers acknowledged that it was quite difficult to rank the options because the aims are not necessarily as clear cut as indicated above. However, the figures do seem to indicate a trend in terms of philosophical approach. The greatest emphasis by far is on self-confidence and life skills, that is **human/personality development** rather than on training for the theatre. Priorities for these teachers thus tend to be **developmental** rather than **vocational**. This is generally in keeping with the aims of drama in education (such as those expounded by writers such as Bolton, Courtney, Heatchote, O'Neill, and Way), and with current South African thinking.⁵ It also indicates support for the thinking behind the recommended interim core syllabus for Speech and Drama, which in its introduction states:

Speech and Drama provides opportunities for creative expression; for the development of a critical perception of human situations; behaviour in a variety of contexts; and for encountering group dynamics in a creative situation rather than training specifically for the stage.

(Recommended Interim Core Syllabus, 1995, par. 1.3., p.1)

Of those teachers who mentioned option "a" at all (ie. training of performers), three teachers ranked it as their last/6th priority, one as their 5th, and one as their fourth priority.

"Promoting Creative Expression" features very strongly as a third priority, and this is possibly where an attempt is made to draw together developmental and aesthetic ideals. There is a sense that artistic and aesthetic engagement serves more of a developmental than vocational function.* This is not to deny the working towards high artistic standards, or giving pupils the opportunity to express themselves through the art form, using, for example, a theatrical vocabulary. It does suggest, however, that the personal and awareness

⁵ South African writing which highlights this point includes Lynn Dalrymple, 1987, 1992, 1993 and 1995; Esther Van Ryswyk, 1991; Phyllis Klotz, 1992; Yvonne Banning, 1992; Warren Nebe, 1993; National Arts Coalition, 1993; ACTAG, 1995; Pel Ngculu, 1996; Carol Steinberg [Dept. Arts & Culture], 1996; Ingrid Wylde, 1996.

skills which are developed, hold far more import than technical dramatic skills. Considered within the notion of 'education and training', such an approach would tend to favour *education*, leaving *education & training* to tertiary institutions.

The responses by teachers who were surveyed by interview seem to indicate similar results. Their responses have been categorised according to the options used above to make a comparison possible (see Table 4).

Table 4

CONSCIOUS AIMS IN THE PLANNING OF DRAMA CLASSES
(Teachers surveyed by interview)

a) Training performers	= 2
b) Language skills	= 1
c) Social awareness	= 1
d) Self-confidence	= 1
e) Life skills	= 3
f) Creative expression	= 2
Other:	
g) Have enjoyment	= 1
h) Develop critical thought	= 1

Figures indicate the number of respondents, eg. 3 teachers indicated that life skills development was among their primary aims. Some teachers mentioned more than one primary aim, hence the number of responses total more than seven.

The importance of the above figures lies in the fact that teachers are not given options to choose from and must therefore consider and verbalise these themselves. It is likely that given options to respond to, they may have indicated a far more comprehensive set of aims.

Perhaps the most significant difference lies in the category of "training performers", particularly considering the fact that the two specialist arts schools are among this category.⁶ A teacher from one of these schools suggests that he does **not** believe that the

⁶ It must be pointed out that the two specialist schools do not necessarily share precisely the same aims and philosophies. Whilst both appear focused towards vocational training, one definitely has a far more open approach in terms of the broader educational experience offered by drama.

primary function of drama is life skills, but to **train** "technically proficient" performers. He states for example: "I suppose many people would not approve, but I believe very firmly that although everyone need not speak standard English in everyday life, people *should be able to* speak in standard English as a performer." Hence this type of training would be integral to the course.

A teacher from one of the private schools was also very concerned about drama as an art form, veering strongly away from a functionalist notion. He stated that

at the same time as developing performers, I'm trying to work on imagination, and to get people freed up so that they can become spontaneous, so that they can think in the flow of the moment... But I think everything is driven by sheer artistic need. It is an art form we're working on.

The question of enjoyment in the drama class is an important one, and this has been noted as an aim by one of the teachers. It becomes particularly significant if one considers that one of the causes of negative attitudes towards drama by other teachers appears to be the perception that if pupils are enjoying themselves, they cannot be learning anything. As one of the teachers stated in their interview: "I think other teachers resent the fact that the subject is noisy and it sounds like fun. You know, so often people walk into your classroom and the pupils are screaming or whatever, and they think you don't learn in noise."

The above comment must be qualified, however. The teacher who mentions enjoyment as one of her primary aims suggests that 'enjoyment' is a difficult word because "by enjoyment I don't mean fun, **I mean being able to absorb them and make them concentrate on exercises**". This is crucial if one considers that drama as a form of education strongly supports a child-centered, experiential philosophy of education. This being the case, the ability to engage pupils imaginatively, cognitively and emotionally demands a process which is absorbing and gives pupils a sense of achievement, growth, and pleasure. Whilst an experience doesn't need to be enjoyable in itself in order to be educational - a drama programme dealing with the theme of death, for example, might not be enjoyable, although it might be very moving and impactful - the process as a whole needs to be able to stimulate a desire and enthusiasm to **participate actively**.

The responses quoted on p.14 seem to highlight the two extremes encapsulated in the aims expressed by teachers - on the one hand, the more functionalist approach with an emphasis on lifeskills development (Teacher A), and on the other, a more vocational response with an emphasis on training (Teacher B). However, it would appear from teacher responses generally that although teachers all see acting skills as forming part of what they are doing, there is a strong perception that one is forced to take an *either/or* position - **either** we should be teaching dramatic or theatrical skills, **or** we should be teaching life skills - rather than a view that the two could be integrally related.

Returning to the notion explored in Chapter 1 of getting beyond such oppositions and seeing functionalist roles and aesthetic concerns as integrally related at various levels, it becomes necessary to probe a little further into what the educational value of drama **itself** might be; does the experience of participating in drama or theatre activities have any **intrinsic** value? Clearly, much of this value has been mentioned already in this sub-section and might include aspects such as communication skills, social interaction, and aesthetic awareness.

3.3. The Value Of The Drama Experience Itself

Teachers who responded by questionnaire were asked to identify what they felt was of value about **the drama experience** itself. They were not given a list of options to choose from - the question was left entirely open. The responses indicated in Table 5 reflect the comments made by teachers. Note that although figures indicate the number of teachers who mentioned a specific idea, the figures should not be seen as a ranking of importance, simply as an indication of the very broad range of aspects which, in the opinion of the drama teachers, are a valuable part of the drama experience.

The argument developed in Chapter 1 suggests that the processes pupils go through when engaging in the drama experience are valuable in themselves, that is, that the drama experience holds intrinsic educational value. This is particularly notable if one considers Louis Gill's argument that the expressive arts represent a unique way of "knowing" and

"learning" particularly because so much of the experience is acquired through the senses.⁷

It is in the light of this notion that a possible 'intrinsic' value of drama education starts to emerge, particularly if one considers that drama requires a bringing together of mind, body, emotion, spirit and the senses in challenging the imagination. Whilst there may be other subjects which could develop communication skills, for example, there can be few that provide the **holistic learning experience** that drama provides.

Teachers were not given any definition or indication of what is understood by 'intrinsic value' and the following table thus reflects their own personal understandings.

Table 5

TEACHERS: THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE DRAMA EXPERIENCE

a) Develops communication skills	= 8
b) Builds Confidence	= 8
c) Teaches group/interpersonal co-operation	= 7
d) Promotes sensitivity and awareness	= 7
e) Promotes creativity and original thought	= 5
f) Encourages critical thinking and problem-solving	= 4
g) Self-exploration/awareness (strengths and weaknesses)	= 4
h) Allows freedom of expression	= 3
i) Involves commitment to a task	= 3
j) Gives people a sound ground knowledge of the world and people through plays/history	= 3
k) Builds a feeling of self-worth and achievement	= 2
l) Development of dramatic skills	= 1
m) The experience itself (see comment below)	= 1

One of the problems in trying to define this intrinsic value lies in the fact that it is not always easy to articulate precisely or to break down into artificial divisions or segments. Hence, for example, the teacher who suggests "the experience itself" as a response, and qualifies this statement by suggesting that the educational value of drama lies in the "full emersion in the experience as opposed to 'for a higher purpose' - the experience has its

⁷ Gill, p.27.

own validity - the depth and type of experience varies a lot". One still needs to question what it is precisely that validates that experience (and it's not always something very tangible), but it does suggest that an **experiential** approach to learning which encourages pupils to draw on their own resources and creative faculties makes it intrinsically more valuable than a knowledge-based, subject-centered approach.

One teacher emphasised that "drama is about **doing** - being an actively dynamic part of an experience. Drama is about **expressing** ideas - **communicating** with others." The idea of drama as an **expressive** art form gains particular significance if considered within the context of an **active** participation in the learning experience. It suggests that pupils' opportunities for expressing ideas, thoughts and observations through a variety of expressive **forms** are greatly enhanced.

As one teacher states it: "It gives the pupils an opportunity to experiment with expression of different kinds and also to gain insight into these forms of expression on a more analytical level." This process of expression also seems to lead to the development of a range of communication skills. One respondent points out that it exposes pupils "to a new world - a world of spoken language, (unlike the study of literature) a world of doing," whilst another points out that it does more than simply teach people to use and speak language well - it teaches people "how to listen with critical sympathy".

3.4. Teachers' Personal Responses to the Drama Experience

Teachers were not only asked to consider the value of drama from the perspective of *teacher* (as recorded above), but also to reflect on their **own experiences** of studying drama or participating in drama activities. That is, to consider the ways in which drama may have impacted on them personally. Clearly responses here are subjective, but they do give an insight into the ways in which drama teachers themselves feel affected by the drama experience. It thus becomes a process of self-reflection for the teacher. Teachers were not asked to select response options; the question was left open.

Responses tend to fall into six basic categories which have been classified as follows:

Response category 1: An increased awareness of the world and people; social awareness; deeper understanding of humanity; increased sensitivity and tolerance.

Response category 2: Building of self-confidence.

Response category 3: The development of "life skills"; problem solving.

Response category 4: Creative development; bringing out personal creativity; creative expression; aesthetic development.

Response category 5: Generally more "rounded" as a person

Response category 6: Development of communication skills; listening skills.

The following table indicates the number of teachers whose responses fall into each category.

Table 6

***THE INFLUENCE OR IMPACT OF PARTICIPATING IN DRAMA ON
TEACHER RESPONDENTS PERSONALLY***

1) Awareness/humanity/tolerance	= 16
2) Self-confidence	= 13
3) Life-skills	= 10
4) Creativity	= 10
5) Well-roundedness	= 8
6) Communication	= 6

Figures indicate the numbers of teachers who indicated a specific response, eg 13 teachers suggested it has contributed to the development of self-confidence. Because the question was an open one, the above table should not be seen as a ranking.

It should be noted that the above categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for example response categories 3 and 6 often co-incide (that is, communication might be regarded as a life-skill rather than a separate category by some respondents), and there is a lot of overlap between categories 1, 2 and 5.

The following comments written by respondents serve to highlight aspects of each category. Category 1 appears to encapsulate a view which is widely held by teachers, linking drama's perceived value firmly to experience within a social context. Teachers suggested that it "heightened awareness of situations- people and problems". One teacher commented that it

made me aware of the 'commonness' of humanity - how much we share, how external differences are purely superficial dividers. We can all relate on a

fundamental, elemental level. The power of working together towards a common purpose.

The development of observation skills (and by implication understanding and awareness), including fine body language and other non-verbal communication was also mentioned as an important element.

Study of drama provides the opportunity for a more intensive study of humanity than, for example, history or sociology or anthropology on their own, because it inevitably combines so many of these elements. Drama and theatre studies are concerned with both the individual and society and the inter-relationship of the two; as one teacher states it:

...from a study point of view, it has given me a lot of insight into the human condition, given me a way of looking at people, a way of looking at myself I suppose. It's given me a perspective on society and its workings... It's a more intense study, I think, of human beings and society than people normally undertake.

The responses in this category are significant in that they seem to point to a development of a form of empathy in people. For us in South Africa, this ability to empathise has to be seen as a major element in the breaking down of prejudice.

Response category 2 indicates that 11 teachers thought that their experience of drama had improved or developed their self-confidence. This included aspects such as "encouraging self-belief and the ability to tackle any task whether drama related or not". One teacher stated it more personally in suggesting that "I am basically a shy and reserved person. Having studied drama has helped me tremendously in my day to day contact with people. My husband is in a high-profile position and I am able to handle numerous social activities with apparent (outward) ease."

This becomes especially important in the classroom situation because it offers a form of empowerment to pupils making them more willing to participate, contribute and share. As

will be shown, this form of empowerment becomes especially important in a classroom where pupils are of varying language abilities.

In terms of life-skills development (response category 3), organisation and problem-solving appear to be important aspects. One teacher commented that it "promoted group skills and organisational/creative skills", whilst another felt that it taught her to "think on my feet". Another of the respondents suggested that "there is more than one acceptable way of solving a problem; drama as a subject affords opportunities for practising skills which can be utilized in our daily lives."

Creativity and expression are other important concerns for these respondents, including the stimulation of imagination. One teacher suggested that it "has inspired me to be creative in everything I do, but especially in my relationships with other human beings."

Creativity in drama is not exclusively an intellectual activity, but engages the body, thought, feeling, and emotion.⁸ It is this notion of mind/body integration which appears to contribute to a feeling of "well-roundedness" in some respondents. This "well-roundedness" category is a more difficult one to deal with in the sense that it suggests a less tangible effect of drama. However, comments written by teachers serve to expand on this notion. One teacher suggested that it made her "more perceptive; more sensitive; gave an appreciation of arts as a whole; more balanced in terms of 'effort' in physical and emotional movement". Another stated it as feeling "more confident in and about what I do and how I feel as an expressive, communicative, thinking, feeling individual", and that drama has "released unexplored internal resources and often hidden depths of emotion". There is also the suggestion that "it has made me more open-minded and tolerant, and given me the confidence to 'explore' every aspect of my life in which I'm interested" and that drama has "created sensitivity and awareness of integration of mind and body".

Perhaps what is most significant about all the above responses is that they seem to indicate

⁸ This is in line with the thinking developed in Chapter 1 which opposes notions of polarity in favour of multiple perspectives.

not simply *self*-development (ie. a more self-centered notion), but rather self-development-*in relation-to-other* people (ie. personal growth through interactive enrichment). In the context of the South African education system, this is vital if we are to provide a learning experience which encourages growth and development in the individual **and** contributes to the processes of reconstruction and reconciliation.

It is clear from this section that drama teachers feel very strongly about drama's educational value. One of the problems in convincing others, however, could be attributed to the fact that individual perceptions of what precisely school drama is vary so much. For many, it appears to be simply the school play, and it is this tradition which has become problematic for a number of teachers.

3.5. The School Play

The traditionally perceived dichotomy between process and product in drama teaching, and a reconceptualised view of process and product being part of the same continuum, raises the question of the importance of 'the school play' or the presentation of theatrical productions. It is a particularly important question when one considers that for many schools, the school play is the only form of drama offered, and that it is perceived by many as being what drama is all about.

From this survey, it appears that a conflict arises between the **potential value** of the school play and the way it is **actually used** by the school. As an example of the former, the play would be seen to be part of the educational experience, product-work coming out of process-work. The reality, however, is that in many cases the school play becomes no more than a publicity exercise for the school, limiting the kind of work that can be done, and detracting from the more fundamental aims of teaching drama.

Whilst the majority of teachers surveyed feel that the play is important, it is a significant number who question the importance of the play or have mixed feelings (see Table 7).

Table 7
TEACHERS: IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL PLAY

Very Important	=	9
Important	=	12
Average/Mixed Feelings	=	6
Not very Important	=	3
Not important at all	=	3

Summary: 'Very important' and 'important' = 21 (64%)
Mixed feelings/not important = 12 (36%)

Figures indicate the number of teachers who responded to a particular category, eg. 9 teachers felt the school play is very important.

A number of differing reasons are given by those teachers who feel that the school play is of importance, influenced primarily by their own personal experience, and also reflecting their particular philosophy to drama teaching. For example, those teachers who believe that the aim of drama is to train artists tend to place much more emphasis on the importance of performance. One such teacher suggests that the play offers the opportunity "for a wide variety of skills to be shown", whilst another believes that "the only way to learn drama is to **do** drama, so we put on as many plays as we can".

As an illustration of the way this experience assists pupils in the development of performance skills, one teacher offers the following case:

We did Annie last year; this is an example of the girl who played Grace. She was a "C" candidate, not bad, but not brilliant at all, she was 60's, high 60's sometimes, but pretty much a "C" candidate. After the experience of Annie she had just learnt so much that she got the highest marks in the class, she got a distinction for practical drama at the end of the year. For me that says it all. The school play is very, very, very important.

However, reasons for the importance of the play extend way beyond the opportunity that it gives for developing theatrical or performance skills. All those teachers who felt that the play is of importance suggested that the experience builds confidence in pupils, builds a close-knit group who support each other, fosters group co-operation, responsibility and self-

discipline, and teaches commitment, punctuality and creative expression.

The fact that theatre is a collaborative art form drawing together a range of skills and ideas and depending on the overall commitment of **the group** for its success should not be undervalued. The opportunities that this kind of experience offers in the development of interpersonal skills and creative faculties is possibly one of the greatest assets of the school play.

One teacher suggested that "in my experience, for five years running in a co-ed school the lead roles always become head boy and girl, and prefects were leading drama participants. It stirs and elicits leadership". It is obviously debatable whether those pupils became prefects because of the leadership skills which the drama experience engendered, or whether they got the lead roles because they had already developed leadership skills and attained a certain level of maturity. Nonetheless, the opportunities which the drama experience offers for the development of these kind of skills needs to be acknowledged.

This development of leadership skills should not be confused with the taking of lead roles, however, but should rather be seen in the initiative that is encouraged. Pupils have different responsibilities **as part of** the collaborative effort, be it lighting, sound, costumes, acting, make-up, or stage management, and should have the opportunity to feel that they are genuinely making an important contribution to the overall production. The learning of words by actors, the ensuring that costumes or sets are ready on time, are all aspects which encourage self-discipline, motivation and responsibility. In terms of the concept of drama being developed in this dissertation, the hierarchical thinking, in which the 'good' scholars get the 'good' parts and a dichotomy between the 'leads' and the 'extras' is created, needs to be challenged; from an holistic viewpoint, all participants are important contributors to the experience.

A number of teachers felt the school play was important for building 'school spirit', whilst one, who teaches at a boy's school, suggested that it is important from the perspective of social interaction:

The school and I firmly believe that participating in school drama productions is a wonderful way to build a strong team identity... We usually work together with a girl's school. Being a boy's school we like the co-operation that exists between ourselves and the girls schools and we think this interaction assists the students to interact more naturally when they meet socially.

Those teachers who had mixed feelings about the value of the school play, or felt it was not important tended to forward two primary reasons: firstly, the undervaluing of its potential as a educational experience by school administrators, and secondly, the amount of time and effort that is expended in relation to the perceived benefit which is derived.

In terms of the first, teachers suggest that it is important to schools because it showcases the school and is good publicity, but that school administrators have little understanding of the aims of drama teaching. One teacher suggests that "it has little to do with drama as a subject", whilst another proposes that "the school play detracts from my aims in drama. It gives people the wrong perception of what the subject is about. 'Theatre' is a very small part of the scope of the dramatic arts and I feel it has been inflated beyond its value."

A question that is raised is whether it should be the drama teacher who is responsible for the school plays, particularly in the light of the perceived split in function. One teacher is quite vehement that her aim as the drama teacher

is not to put on the school play... My job is what I do in the classroom and it's important work. It's very personal work and I get to know the kids very well... In drama you get to know the children and that's very rewarding, that's maybe a plus about the subject, it's another whole environment of learning and that's why I think the learning is so relevant personally. And the school play doesn't do that; the school play gives accolades to the school.

This same teacher does acknowledge, however, that there is value in doing school plays and that children learn a lot; her negative response appears to stem from a frustration in terms of the clash of aims and perceptions.

In terms of the second major response by teachers, the general feeling is that "far too much time and effort is spent for not enough growth and development". One teacher acknowledges that this could be overcome with a more interesting choice of play, but that often this choice of more challenging theatre is not **popular with the school at large**, and thus it ultimately comes down to doing the plays that will be good for marketing the school, especially musicals.

Another teacher echoes these sentiments in suggesting that the time and effort required to get a cast together and for rehearsals in a school timetable where there are already so many other demands (unlike professional actors) is questionable, as the end result doesn't always seem justified. She, however, also acknowledged that the children enjoy it and derive benefit from it.

What becomes clear is that those teachers who think it is not important or have mixed feelings do not write off the experience completely. Rather, there is a sense that in their experience, the notion of 'the school play' is problematic, and this then becomes their major concern. How does the function and status of the school play become more rooted in the educational experience? - this becomes a key question for these teachers.

3.6. The Future of Drama in the School System

Whilst much of this survey has been concerned with ascertaining teachers' opinions and understanding of the role and value of drama, it has also attempted to gain some insight into their thoughts on the future of drama in schools and how it should be incorporated into the education system.

Teachers who responded by questionnaire were given a list of options and asked to tick the one that they favoured. The options given were the following:

- a) as an extra-mural subject only
- b) as a subject offered only in special schools for talented pupils
- c) as an optional subject in all schools for pupils who are weaker in subjects such as science and maths
- d) as an optional subject from std 6 to 10 for all pupils
- e) as a compulsory subject in std 6 to 7, and an optional subject in std 8 to 10
- f) as a compulsory subject for all pupils, std 6 to 10
- g) as a subject integrated with the other arts as part of an optional Expressive Arts course
- h) other (respondents asked to specify)

Teachers responses are recorded in Table 8 below (the wording used on the table has been shortened; the actual wording which teachers responded to is that above.)

Table 8

TEACHERS: THE INCORPORATION OF DRAMA INTO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

a) Extra-mural only	= 0
b) Special schools for talented pupils	= 0
c) Option for weaker maths/science pupils	= 0
d) Option for all std 6-10 pupils	= 5
e) Compulsory std 6-7; optional std 8-10	= 19
f) Compulsory for std 6-10	= 2
g) Integrated with other arts (Expressive Arts)	= 6
h) Other (Cross-curricularly)	= 1

Figures indicate the number of teachers who responded to a particular option, eg. 5 teachers felt that drama should be offered as an option for all pupils from std 6-10.

The above figures indicate very strong support among these teachers for drama to be offered as a subject from std 6-10 in one form or another, with the majority (73%) supporting the idea that drama should be compulsory in the junior secondary standards and optional in the senior secondary standards. It should be noted that the figure next to "h: other" indicates that one teacher mentioned cross-curriculum drama as a further option; it is likely, however, that the majority of teachers would take it for granted that drama should be used as a **methodology** across the curriculum.

It should be further noted that where possible some respondents ticked more than one option, eg. e) and g). Where two options have been ticked, both have been recorded.

It is perhaps significant that **none** of the teachers supported the view that drama should only be for 'talented' or 'weaker' pupils. **All** respondents felt that drama should be available to **all** pupils. Where differences of opinion are apparent are in terms of compulsory/optional options.

The following comments highlight some of the thinking behind the choices made by teachers. Those who opted for "d" (optional for all std 6-10 pupils) pointed out that any subject which is compulsory has disadvantages, arguing that whilst the subject does offer something for everyone, people who don't want to participate will benefit little as they will not participate fully and will often become a disruptive influence in the class.

Those who selected option "e" (compulsory std 6-7; optional std 8-10), on the other hand, argued that all children should be taught to be confident and exposed to drama for at least std 6 and 7 - "with the educational developments as they are, communication and understanding skills are vital in early high school. Thereafter, developing those skills is a choice." It was further noted by one teacher that on a practical level, pupils cannot select drama as a matric subject without experiencing it at std 6 and 7 level, but emphasised that "ideologically, every child needs to develop expressive skills, regardless of their later subject selection".

It appears from written motivations for choices made that teachers also feel quite strongly that the developmental stage that pupils are in in std 6 and 7 (ages 12-14) make a subject like drama crucial. One comments that "as std 6 and 7 are difficult years at the best of times, it is most beneficial for pupils to be given opportunities to be creative and co-operative at this stage of their adolescence".

Of those indicating option "f" (compulsory from std 6-10), the major argument was that drama provides invaluable life skills, regardless of a pupils field of ambition, and should therefore be beneficial to anybody. One of the teachers suggested that although it should

be compulsory for all secondary school pupils, it should be an exam course at std 6 and 7 level, whilst in stds 8-10 it should be a non-exam course **and** an exam option (that is **all** pupils would do the non-exam course, and those pupils who wanted to do it as one of their formal subjects would have the option to do so). The teacher's motivation was that although pupils should be given the chance to choose drama as a subject option if they want to, "all pupils should be given a chance to develop their communication and social skills at all levels of their school life".

Generally, teachers were quite adamant in their written responses that drama must **not** be placed against the sciences, nor must it be seen as a 'soft' option or as a 'talent' subject - "this restricts the opportunities drama has to offer in providing a well-balanced education," commented one teacher.

3.7. Drama in a Multicultural and/or Multilingual Context

Teachers who responded by questionnaire were asked whether they have had any experience of using drama in a multicultural and or multilingual classroom, and if so, to state what they thought the specific value of drama for such a context is.

Twenty teachers answered that they **had** had experience of using drama in such a context, whilst six answered in the negative. (The term "multiculturalism" was not defined for teachers, and this perhaps indicates a lack of awareness on the part of some teachers about the virtually inherent multiculturalism of classes (as discussed in Chapter 2), or could point to teachers seeing the term as a synonym for multiracialism.

The following table indicates the responses by teachers regarding drama's value in the multicultural/multilingual context. They were not given a list of responses to choose from, thus these figures should not be regarded as the total number of teachers who support each response. It is simply an indication of the number of teachers who mentioned the point independently.

Table 9**THE VALUE OF DRAMA IN A MULTICULTURAL/MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM CONTEXT**

a) Communication skills	= 6
b) Utilization of non-verbal communication/expression	= 5
c) Language development	= 4
d) Tolerance and understanding	= 4
e) Exchanging thoughts and ideas	= 4
f) "Cultural awareness"	= 3
g) Non-threatening environment	= 2
h) Social awareness	= 1
i) Interaction and acceptance	= 1

The figures indicate the number of teachers who mentioned a specific response. The list is compiled from an open-ended question and should therefore not be seen as a ranking.

In considering teachers' comments, it becomes clear that there is a general lack of understanding, or a superficial understanding, by some teachers of what is meant by multiculturalism. This becomes problematic in that it reduces the possibilities of using drama fully to assist pupils in their educational development. One teacher who answered "no" to the question of whether she had had experience teaching in this context commented: "We do have pupils of different languages and cultures but they are in the minority and learn to fit in quickly with their peers from other cultures." This very much represents the **assimilationist** approach referred to on page 75. In this context, rather than using drama to bring out the immense educational potential embodied in such a group of pupils, differences are ignored or discouraged in favour of a uniform school culture.

Responses like the above, however, were certainly not in the majority, and most of the emphasis seems to have fallen on drama's ability to "break barriers" and "bridge gaps". Whilst completely relevant to the South Africa of the 1990's, which will be seen historically as a period of reconciliation and nation-building, the value of such an exercise should be seen to hold a certain universality and timelessness. The whole of human history is characterised by forces of conflict and reconciliation, a dynamic flow of human attraction and repulsion, and if an educational experience such as that offered by drama can be shown to actively "break barriers" and "bridge gaps", then its long-term and future value, particularly as we move towards more of a global culture, seems assured.

Even though multiculturalism extends beyond notions of race or ethnicity, it does include these aspects and the possibilities of drama encouraging a more positive relationship between pupils of different races are widely acknowledged by teachers. One of the teachers from a traditionally white school noted that "I have found the black pupils have learnt to be accepted by their peers more readily in Drama because they have to pool ideas and talk together and make joint decisions. If the black pupils work on their own ideas, the sharing of these ideas will help other pupils because they are often so different. The white pupils enjoy this difference as it spurs their creativity."

The emphasis on "breaking barriers" and "bridging gaps" appears to be highlighted mainly because of the perception that drama allows pupils to **really communicate** using different means (verbal and non-verbal), exchanging and debating thoughts and ideas. One teacher described drama as a "great leveller" because one can call on non-verbal skills (which is particularly good in a multilingual context), but can also develop verbal communication (which is particularly valuable for second-language learners). A number of teachers noted the importance of the "safe environment" which drama provides for the using of language and expression of ideas:

It involves work which does not always rely on the spoken word and pupils can thus express themselves universally using mime and body movement. Drama classes give tremendous opportunity for discussion and interpersonal communication which promotes understanding of other people. Drama draws on a variety of different cultures for the basis of some of its exercises and thus an awareness and understanding of these cultures can be explored in a non-threatening environment.

Exchanging thoughts and ideas appears to be an important aspect of drama's role, and it is through this open discussion that some teachers feel pupils prejudices are challenged, their imaginations are spurred on and a sensitivity towards others is developed, primarily through the encouragement of co-operation and communication in a creative context.

The comments documented in this chapter offer various perspectives on drama in the school system. However, these perspectives come from *one* of the 'partners' in the learning process, the other partners being the learners themselves. The following chapter provides us with additional viewpoints through documenting the results of an investigation into learners' perceptions.

CHAPTER 4

"Communicating Creatively": An Investigation into Learners' Perceptions

In coming to terms with role that the drama experience can play in a transformed system of education in South Africa, it is important that **learners'** perspectives are taken into account, allowing a sense of their own experiences of the subject to impact upon our own understandings, theories and philosophies of drama education. Whilst teachers' views have often been overlooked in determining education systems in South Africa, learners' perspectives have been even more marginalised.

This chapter reports on a survey undertaken among 15 university students who have studied Speech and Drama as one of their formal school subjects. The decision to base this investigation predominantly on university students was taken for two main reasons: firstly, it allowed for the gathering of information from students who had attended **a range of schools** in terms of school type and geographic location; and secondly, it gave opportunities for **reflection** from different degrees of time distance (as explained in greater detail below).¹

It must be emphasised that this investigation concentrates on learners' **perceptions**: perceptions in terms of their practical experience as well as perceptions in considering the

¹ There are clearly a number of methods that could be used to investigate learner perceptions including interviews and focus groups with pupils and the observation of classes in schools. Whilst the motivation in this thesis for surveying students includes the practical consideration of getting a broad range of students in a small group located in one area, the investigation does exclude a range of pupils still operating in the school context. Nonetheless, I believe that this survey constitutes important foundation research, and that further research would be necessary to expand our understanding through both a larger sample of pupils and a greater range within the school grades themselves. Note that 15 was the total number of students in the Rhodes Drama Department (out of 135) who had studied Speech and Drama as a formal subject.

subject through reflecting on issues that they may not have thought about before. The aims of this survey were thus to:

- a) gain a sense of the ways in which students had experienced Speech & Drama at school;
- b) gain insight into students' perceptions of what their teachers' aims and intentions had been; and
- c) ascertain what pupils perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the subject to be.

Whilst it is likely that teachers and educational planners are in a better position to make educational decisions based on their experience, qualification and commitment, these factors should not be seen to rule out learners' own contributions to educational development. This is particularly so in light of contexts outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 where a multiplicity of world views and experiences characterise the classroom.

Each of the 15 students participating in this study was required to fill in a short questionnaire with personal information, and was taken through an interview which was tape recorded. Tape recordings were then transcribed and transcriptions used for analysis. Every effort was made to create an open environment in which pupils could feel free to speak critically about their experiences rather than "saying the right thing" or "what you think I want to hear". They were given the opportunity to reflect on both aspects that they may have considered before and those that they have not necessarily thought about consciously.²

4.1. Profile of Students Involved in this Study

Of the 15 Drama students interviewed, 10 were in Drama I at the time of the interview, 4 were in Drama II and 1 was in Drama III. The interviews were conducted at the beginning of the year, so the Drama I students (all of whom had come to university directly from school) were fairly fresh out of their school Drama experience, whereas those in Drama II

² As with the teacher survey, student comments are recorded in the colloquial spoken language used during interviews.

and III were able to respond with a greater degree of hindsight.

In terms of school attendance, 11 of the 15 students had studied at private or independent schools and 4 at state schools (see Table 8). Of those who went to state schools, 2 studied at special arts schools (1 at the School for Performing Arts in Johannesburg and 1 at Pro Arte in Pretoria), 1 studied at a formerly House of Representatives ('Indian') school and 1 studied at a formerly House of Assembly ('white') school. Whilst the balance falls strongly towards independent schools, this does not seem to have affected the study significantly in the sense that there were no major noticeable differences between those who attended state schools and those who attended independent schools. There is, however, a greater degree of variation is between those who attended specialist arts schools and those who did not (this is discussed in more detail in this chapter).

9 of the 15 students attended co-educational schools, while the remaining 6 attended girls' schools. It must be noted that all the participants in this interview were girls (there were no boys at Rhodes who had done drama at school) and this seems to accurately reflect a much larger proportion of girls who take Drama as a subject.³ In terms of geographical distribution, 7 of the students attended school in Kwazulu/Natal, 7 attended in Gauteng, and 1 in the Western Cape.

Five of the students studied Speech and Drama as a formal subject from std 6-10; 9 studied the subject formally from std 8-10; and 1 from std 6-9. In compiling a profile of the students, each was asked to answer the following question: When choosing Drama as a subject, did you hope to one day enter the professional theatre as a career? Seven of the 15 answered Yes, and 8 answered No. Of those that answered No, the following future careers were mentioned as those that they had had in mind: writer (1); child psychologist (1); broadcaster (1); journalist (1); lawyer (1); a "people oriented career" (2).

The following table displays the above statistics:

³ This issue of the disparity between the number of boys and girls who take Drama as a subject at school requires further comment and will be taken up in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Table 10
PROFILE OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THIS INVESTIGATION

School/Student Information	Number of Students	Percentage Total
1. Student currently in:		
a. Drama I	10	67%
b. Drama II	4	27%
c. Drama III	1	6%
2. School Attended:		
a. Private/Independent	11	73%
b. State School	4	27%
3. School Attended:		
a. Co-educational	9	60%
b. Girls School	6	40%
c. Boys School	0	0
4. Geographical location of school:		
a. Kwazulu/Natal	7	47%
b. Gauteng	7	47%
c. Western Cape	1	6%
5. Student studied Speech & Drama as a formal subject in:		
a. std 6-10	5	34%
b. std 8-10	9	60%
c. std 6-9	1	6%
6. Was the student hoping to enter professional theatre as a career when choosing Speech & Drama at school?		
a. Yes	7	47%
b. No	8	53%

4.2. The Enjoyment of Drama: Some General Comments

The first question asked of all students was a very general one: "Did you enjoy studying drama at school?". The purpose of this was not only to put students at ease and allow students to feel free to express themselves, but to gain a **general impression** of responses to school Drama.⁴

In the main, the response was very positive with the exception of two students who had had mixed experiences of Drama at school. Whilst this may be predictable in the sense that the participating individuals are all people who have elected to study Drama further at tertiary level, responses nonetheless provide us with a good indicator of **specific factors** that seem to contribute to pupils' enjoyment of drama as well as those that detract from such enjoyment. The following table lists the key reasons mentioned by students for their enjoyment or lack of enjoyment of the subject and is followed by selected comments which highlight further details of student responses.

⁴ Please note that throughout this chapter, the word "Drama" will be used to refer to the school subject "Speech and Drama", unless otherwise indicated.

Table 11
ENJOYMENT OF DRAMA AT SCHOOL

11.1. REASONS THAT STUDENTS ENJOYED DRAMA AT SCHOOL

* Allows one to be creative	=	3
* It is practical/involves "doing"	=	4
* It is fun	=	6
* Allows individuality	=	1
* A chance for self-expression	=	1
* Enjoyable "atmosphere"	=	1
* It is informal	=	3
* Group dynamics/relationship with peers	=	2
* A good/inspiring teacher	=	5
* Builds confidence and self-esteem	=	5
* Size of class small	=	2
* The content/subject matter	=	2
* No real reason ("just")	=	1

11.2. REASONS FOR NOT ENJOYING DRAMA AT SCHOOL

* Teacher disorganised	=	1
* Teacher unprepared	=	1

Figures refer to the number of students who mentioned a particular reason, eg. 3 students said that they enjoyed Drama because it allowed them to be creative. Reasons are listed in no particular order.

*It should be noted that the above figures only record those statements which were explicit, eg. a number of students **implied** that they had really good teachers (in mentioning the way the classroom was set out, for example), but the figure for Teachers only reflects the number (5) who **explicitly** stated that the teacher made Drama enjoyable.*

It appears from reasons given by students that enjoyment of Drama hinges greatly on the teacher him or herself, that is, the **teacher-pupil relationship** seems to be a significant factor for students. The only reasons for not enjoying Drama had to do with disorganised or unprepared teachers; one student stated:

My teachers were very disorganised and conservative... I suppose I expected a bit more... but my drama teacher wasn't really interested in what she did. We used to have more free periods than we had Drama, and when we did have Drama she wasn't very enthusiastic.... What I also didn't enjoy was that in three years we only had one very informal production (a supper theatre), so it was the only opportunity we had to act outside of the studio.

One clearly has to treat such comments with a certain critical caution for two key reasons: firstly, there could be a number of factors contributing to a poor teacher-pupil relationship, ranging from a 'personality clash' to misunderstandings of intentions and actions. Secondly, it could be argued that the teacher-pupil relationship impacts positively or negatively in any school subject and that one will always find pupils who do not enjoy a specific school subject because of the teacher. However, in light of the fact that drama is an approach which requires that the teacher work interactively, and often more intimately, with pupils, it takes on added significance, implying that the teacher is in a stronger position to 'make or break' the subject, and has clear implications for teacher education and training for Drama.

Comments highlighting the positive role of the teacher in contributing to the enjoyment of the subject refer both to the teacher directly - "I really enjoyed it because I had such a wonderful teacher; she was very charismatic and really brought it to life" - and to the obvious **influences** of the teacher such as the atmosphere of the class:

Drama wasn't as structured and formal as the other subjects. Like when you went into class you wouldn't go and sit at the desks, you would lie on the floor and things like that. You had the choice to be more creative and to be an individual, and the teacher made it so much fun.

Another student also comments on the importance of the classroom set-up stating that

we didn't have a rigorous classroom set-up, desks and things. It was a classroom with posters from different plays all over the walls and stuff, and it was just so much more relaxed and just a wonderful atmosphere.

Another aspect that seemed to contribute greatly to students enjoyment of Drama was the close interaction with peers that the subject encourages. Through having to express one's self as well as work interactively and collaboratively, a very strong sense of community often appears to be created in the drama class. One student suggests that she got to know the people in her drama class "much better than any of the other people in my form. They weren't necessarily my closest friends, because although I had my other friends, in the drama class I had a totally new group of friends who knew you backwards because you

worked with them the whole time". Another student suggests that the drama class became a "tight unit" that no-one else in the school could really understand, because as a class "you go through so much together and have to share so much of yourself".

Students also appear to appreciate the opportunity for creativity. One student suggests that "it was the most creative subject because it allowed you to express yourself in the widest possible variety of ways" whilst another suggests that "it was different to other subjects because it encouraged you to be creative and original".

Whilst the above factors clarify some of the factors that make Drama enjoyable as a subject, they do not give a full picture of what Drama can contribute to the educational process. Thus, during the interviews, students were challenged to consider what they had learnt in the subject: "It may have been fun and enjoyable, but did you learn anything worthwhile?". The words 'learn' and 'learning' were not defined for pupils and they seemed to include personal development as a crucial part of education without any prompting from the interviewer as the following comments show.

4.3. The Educational Value of Drama

The following table summarises students' thoughts on what they believe they learnt in (or through) drama.

Table 12

STUDENTS: THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF DRAMA

* Group Dynamics, collaboration and interaction	=	9
* Theory of drama and theatre	=	6
* Confidence	=	6
* Communication	=	6
* Insight into people/humanity	=	4
* Critical consciousness/ questioning/"thinking in a different way"	=	4
* Group Dynamics	=	3
* Drama techniques (prac)	=	2
* Patience	=	1
* Putting ideas into practice	=	1
* Learning about the theatre	=	1
* Critical skills	=	1

The above figures refer to the number of students who mentioned a specific point, eg. 6 students felt that they developed confidence through drama. Note that students were not given a list to choose from - this list compiled is from an open-ended question and should thus not be seen as a ranking.

Student responses tend to fall into two broad segments: firstly learning in relation to the theory and practice of drama itself (ie. content and technique)⁵, and secondly, learning in relation to personal development and life-skills. It should be noted, however, that students tend not to see these learning processes as happening separately, for example, they are building confidence at the same time as learning about theatre or developing drama techniques. They tend to express their experience in a more integrated way, implying that learning and development happens at a number of different levels simultaneously and interactively.

One student states it as follows:

⁵ Aspects mentioned here included theatre history, vocal skills, theories about theatre, plays and playwrights (that is, syllabus based work).

I'd say that of all the subjects I took at school I probably learnt more from Drama than any of the others, because you... *[pause as she thinks]* you don't just learn drama, you learn when you **have** to work with other people, you can't get out of it, your mark relies on other people as well as you, and I think that that's a very important thing to learn, to actually be able to live with other people.

Other students give similar perspectives, highlighting the fact that very often they found themselves working with people they might otherwise never meet with or socialise with; "It teaches you a lot about getting on with people," says one student, "I mean you choose your friends, but you don't get to choose the people in your drama prac... It teaches you patience."

Related to the development of life-skills is the acquisition of insight into people generally and understanding other people. One student points out that this **awareness of humanity** comes not simply from the group processes that participants go through, but from the exploration of drama and theatre itself:

... even just in reading networks, the analysis encourages you to think about the motivations that different characters have, and when you're acting, you obviously learn to think about what motivates a character to do something... I think its made me more aware of **why** people are doing things, or at least try to be more aware. It makes you more receptive to what other people have to say or what they're doing. It just fosters an interest in understanding people.

In some students' experiences, the group interaction offered through the classroom drama experience is a strong impetus to the development of collaborative, creative, expressive skills. Three of the students interviewed spoke emphatically about the importance of combining different people's ideas in order to arrive at a piece of work that is worth showing, or that works as intended. One student felt that "brainstorming" became a key activity in this light: "You learn to brainstorm effectively and to put people's ideas together so that they work, not just rejecting someone's input who you don't happen to like". Another student suggests that the value of drama comes in learning about dealing with people, "how to get a group motivated and how to work together to achieve a goal. You also begin to realise that you can be assertive".

This assertiveness, and the development of confidence more generally, was mentioned by a number of students (6). Students seem to link this development of confidence to: firstly, the need to work with other people and to contribute ideas (and to see those ideas implemented and thus validated), and secondly, to the need to communicate both actively and physically. Says one pupil: "I learnt to communicate better with people, and the atmosphere in the drama class meant we never felt intimidated by anyone." It is this 'safe' and encouraging atmosphere which the drama teacher should build that seems to go a long way to building confidence in pupils. In one of the interviews, the student says: "Our teacher was very good... just the things we did. It really made me confident and it was challenging; I know it's a cliché but it was. Our teacher motivated us in such a way that you just wanted to do your absolute best and became more confident in doing it." Another student points out that she has a lot of friends who did drama at school, who have not carried on with Drama at university; nonetheless, as far as she can tell, they still enjoyed studying Drama at school "because it gave them the skills of opening up and public speaking, as well as just meeting people on terms as people".

A point worth noting is that in addition to the actual drama theories or techniques learnt in class, and, as one student stated it, "a great love for the theatre", some pupils also saw the skills they gained in drama as linking to, or being transferable to, other subjects. Two examples that were given were that the confidence learnt in drama helped with orals and other languages, and that learning about theatre history helped them "grasp the details of previous ages in an interesting way", thus complementing their studies in the subject History. This "transferability" that these students have experienced becomes significant in the light of moves towards more integral, cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning.

Students' comments also related to the world of work and the value of drama in terms of the job market. The main link is made in terms of the communicative skills that they see Drama as contributing to. One student suggests that "you can't just go into a job and not be able to communicate with anybody... with Drama you learn to approach people and to communicate with them... it also just gives you a broader outlook". Another student complements this comment by pointing to the number of courses and 'voice clinics' that

have been established in South Africa aimed predominantly at business executives, suggesting that the types of skills that these courses offer (communication, confidence, self-presentation) are precisely what the school Drama experience offers.

Two students emphasised the ways in which the communication skills acquired through drama could contribute to constructive group interaction in the world of work and, even more significantly perhaps, to creative thinking:

Drama helps you think creatively, and in any place of work you will have to think creatively. If you want to achieve, if you want to be successful, you have to not only know the theory, that's important, but more importantly you've got to be able to communicate with people to show leadership when necessary, and also to be able to create new ideas.

In terms of the idea of school preparing pupils for the world of work, the question was posed to students whether they didn't perhaps think that subjects like maths and science were more useful in ensuring employment (and employability). With the exception of one, none of the students saw the arts and sciences in an oppositional relationship - rather than seeing drama and the arts in competition with maths and science, comments indicate a generally complementary relationship.⁶ One student states it succinctly when she says that

I think one's school subjects should complement one another. One shouldn't only take sciences and one shouldn't only take humanitarian subjects. I tried to maintain a balance (maths, science, English, Afrikaans, drama and history). And it was really nice because I had the mathematical and scientific side but in between that I had something else that provoked my brain in another way.

This relates very closely to Gill's notion of the arts as providing "another way of knowing" and experiencing the world (as discussed on p.17). This "thinking in another way" is described by another student as a different kind of knowledge: it's "knowledge that comes through insight into your own self. It is a kind of knowledge about yourself, because you open yourself up a lot, and you begin to realise that you can be assertive". In another

⁶ This perspective appears to support notions developed in Chapter 1 of this thesis in which oppositional (either/or) relationships are challenged in favour of multi-faceted, de-centered relationships, drawing on the thinking of Jaques Derrida amongst others.

student's comment this idea is linked to the development of critical thinking. She suggests that drama as an art form and as a subject "tends to make you think... You're exposed to a completely different way of looking at things... I just find there's a constant questioning and requestioning and requestioning of basically everything that you believe in, even on a very trivial level".⁷

Another student uses the same terminology in suggesting that Drama allows one to "think in a different way"; her comment is made in terms of **the nature of the experience itself**: "Drama is not a chance to relax, but to be able to think in a totally different way and escape from that very rigid school system which I really think gets a lot of pupils down; always being in uniform, always going by bells, if you're in boarding school everything is controlled by a bell."

It is perhaps this activity of actively engaging with the self that lies at the core of Educational Drama and of the notion of *theatricalisation* that is being developed; rather than a concern with mimesis and imitation (although these are aspects that are likely to be part of the experience at some point) the emphasis falls squarely on original, creative action. In the eyes of one of the pupils, it is this experience which makes one a "fuller person" fulfilling a key educational need:

I think that Drama makes you more full as a person. Not necessarily better. It makes you "fuller" as a person because for drama and acting you're reaching down into that part of yourself, and some parts of yourself you've never actually had to look at, had to reach into before, and a lot of it you're pulling out into the light and going over, and you're analysing, and you're coming to terms with yourself... I just think you get to know yourself better as a person and it makes you a lot more intuitive and perceptive about other people because you have to listen so hard. It's not just about going on stage and acting, it's listening and interacting and you can take that with you for the rest of your life, those lessons.

Whilst the above comments highlight students' own thoughts on what they believe they

⁷ It is possible to relate this constant "requestioning" to O'Toole's notion of the educational drama experience encompassing a constant "re-negotiation" of dramatic elements (p.33), ensuring a development of critical faculties through consistent reflection processes.

learnt through Drama at school, it is useful to ascertain their understandings of what they think their teachers may have been trying to achieve. The next section highlights students' perceptions of what they feel their teachers' aims were. (In many cases students had not necessarily thought about this in any detail previously and were thus being asked to reflect consciously and comment).

4.4. Perceptions of Teachers' Aims⁸

In a similar vein to responses above, comments show that students tend to perceive performance and life-skills development as integral, as comments below will highlight. An important distinction that students do make, however, is between training **for** the theatre, and learning **about** the theatre. The following table highlights the key aims that were identified.

Table 13

WHAT STUDENTS PERCEIVE THEIR TEACHERS' AIMS TO HAVE BEEN

* Developing communication skills (including body language)	=	5
* An awareness of, and love for, the theatre	=	4
* Developing self-confidence/ breaking down inhibitions	=	3
* Developing group dynamics	=	2
* Public Relations for the school	=	1

Figures indicate the number of students who mentioned a specific aim, eg. 4 students said that their teachers' aims had been to foster an awareness of, and love for, the theatre.

Note that students were not given a list to choose from - this list compiled is from an open-ended question and should thus not be seen as a ranking.

The aim of fostering a love for the theatre seems most often to be linked to the teacher's own enthusiasm for the subject. There is a sense from students' comments that the teacher's own dedication and commitment impacts on them strongly. For example one student comments that "our teacher's main aim was to get us all motivated about the theatre. We

⁸ It is interesting to compare what teachers believe their conscious aims to be with what students perceived their aims to be. Such comparison is made in Chapter 5 where ideas raised from both surveys are brought together in the light of perspectives discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

used to go on tours... and I think she just wanted to get us to love it...", whilst another suggests that "our teacher really loved her drama and this came across in all her work". The enthusiasm that students' perceive in their teachers is a significant factor, particularly when seen in the light of the teacher providing a learning experience that is substantially different in form and content to other learning experiences at school.

The strongest emphasis in student comments was on communication and language development through drama. One student suggests that "the main focus wasn't on becoming actresses or directors. It was more focused on being able to communicate in society... It had to do with learning about theatre, but also being able to use your skills if you became a public relations officer one day, or even a maths teacher". This comment is particularly interesting because it was made by one of the students who attended a specialist arts school and thus seems to indicate a much broader understanding of what the teacher was aiming for than training for the theatre. Similar sentiments were expressed by 4 other students in direct response to this question (and most students expressed similar points of view at some stages during the interview - in total 13 of the 15 students mentioned this perspective across the range of questions).

One student saw her teacher's aims as being more in line with public relations for the school because a lot of the work was done for public showing.

Two students mentioned directly that they believed their teachers' aims to be "multi-faceted" in the sense that the teacher concentrated on a general learning experience for all pupils, but were also able to identify those pupils who were better performers and were thus able to develop their skills in that area. One student suggests that "the teacher didn't necessarily pay more attention to them [the potential actors], but she guided them towards good performance. On the whole, however, the work was very much group oriented, there was a lot of emphasis on working with the group". Another student makes a similar point in suggesting that the teacher's approach

depended on the students - for some people that the teacher isolated it was definitely on building their confidence. For those who were more confident and were interested in acting, they would aim the work in that way... But the emphasis wasn't on gearing you to go and hit West End or Broadway. It

seemed fairly inclusive, if I can use that word..."

This sense of inclusivity seems to characterise comments generally, with the multi-pronged approaches taken by teachers being regarded in a positive light. In general, students' perceptions of their teachers' aims tend to align closely with their own experiences of the subject. One of the aspects that students comment most strongly on tends to be communication development (possibly because it is one of the more tangible or visible results that Drama achieves). The following section documents students' understanding of the links between drama and communication development in a little more detail.

4.5. Drama and Communication Development

Students were asked to consider the effectiveness of Drama in facilitating communication and language development from their own experiences, and to compare it, for example, to Language subjects at school. This question was only asked **after** the comments documented in the above sections were made so as not to influence students' responses in terms of their views on the educational value of the drama experience or teachers' aims. Students' comments in relation to communication are summarised in the table below and are particularly useful because they are not simply reflecting Educational Drama theory as the teachers might be inclined to do when commenting on the same issue (in the sense that students do not have that same training to draw on), and it therefore acts as a means of reflecting on the teachers' responses to the same issue.

Table 14**STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DRAMA**

* Builds communicative confidence	=	5
* Develops inter-personal skills	=	3
* Chance to come to terms with emotions	=	2
* Conducive classroom atmosphere	=	2
* Tolerance and open mind	=	2
* Develop close bonds with peers	=	2
* Develop skills in a second language and break down barriers; acts as an "equaliser"	=	2
* Cannot hide behind facades / develop a certain honesty	=	1
* Creative process makes certain communication demands		1
* Develop vocal skills (eg. projection)	=	1
* Awareness of body language	=	1
* Develops self-esteem	=	1
* Develops listening skills	=	1

The above figures refer to the number of students who mentioned a specific point, eg. 1 student mentioned the importance of Drama in developing listening skills.

Note that students were not given a list to choose from - this list compiled is from an open-ended question and should thus not be seen as a ranking.

A key aspect that seemed to be emphasised by all students is the importance of *action* as part of the drama experience, and the opportunity that this provides for developing communication at a variety of levels. The following selected comments serve to highlight some of the issues and perspectives raised by students.

The notion of active engagement in drama seems to complement students' perceptions that language and communication development is not always overt; as one student puts it: "Without meaning to, drama often develops language skills". In comparing Drama to Language studies, one student comments that

English is mostly reading networks, discussing on an intellectual level, whereas drama, if you do discuss the plays, it often touches on emotional aspects which really what it is all about... drama has allowed me to access emotional sides to myself... And if you can get in touch with the emotions that you're feeling and the emotions of the other characters, understand them better and understand how to control them, then you can communicate a lot

better, you will be less frustrated and less stressed.⁹

Students don't seem to imply that Drama provides a better form of learning than the language or literature class, rather that it provides an alternative way of coming to terms with humanity. As another student states it, "English can be incredibly thought-provoking... but Drama is less rigid in many ways and allows for more time for experimentation and discussion".

Another student also links the idea of expressive development to the holistic nature of the drama experience and especially its ability to tap into emotional response. She suggests that "very few people can actually express themselves properly through words... you don't always have the vocabulary, but you have the emotions and the feelings - drama teaches you to portray and express those emotions". She points out further that not only does the subject help to express emotions, but it opens the possibility for different forms of expression: "If you can put the feelings into words, you can put them into movement or singing, or just into your voice... it's often a lot easier to grab hold of those emotions and express them with your body than it is to learn a massive vocabulary and express them verbally".

This notion becomes especially important when considering that the class may be made up of students with different first languages or from unequal educational backgrounds in the sense that it provides an opportunity for people to develop confidence through using forms of expression that may be equally challenging to all pupils (for example, expressing one's-self through the body could act as a means to develop a group dynamic and build

⁹ Whilst this student shows an understanding of the importance of holistic approaches to developing effective communication, her comment also displays a way of thinking about issues which relies on oppositional relationships: for her, thinking and feeling are seen dichotomously. Part of the notion that this dissertation is forwarding is that such a notion is not a useful way of understanding the educational processes at work in drama, and that in light of post-structuralist theory, thought and emotion should be seen to exist in a more complex integrated relationship with a variety of other elements (senses, physicality, spirituality, etc.). See, for example, Srinivas Aravamudan (1989, p.241; also referred to in Chapter 1 of this thesis) who states that "deconstruction dismantles the authoritarianism of binary oppositions" in favour of "heterogeneous multiplicity, polyvalence and 'free-play'".

confidence without initially relying on pupils' language abilities). Two students were very aware of the possibilities for Drama contributing to the development of second languages and the ways in which the subject can act as an "equaliser" for pupils. In displaying an awareness that pupils coming from different educational backgrounds may have very varied experiences of education, one student points out that, in her opinion, Drama is able to be inclusive because it works with people from where they are as individuals; she states:

In terms of students coming from different educational backgrounds, when you come into the drama class, unless you're really talented, everyone is basically on the same level... For example with maths, if your junior school wasn't good you would struggle for the rest of the years. In Drama everyone goes in at the same level. You just go in as yourself and develop from there. I think it's a subject that is open to everybody.

One student is quite emphatic in her belief that drama plays a significant role in developing communication, and cites the following example:

Drama definitely has a role to play in developing communicative and expressive skills. There was a girl in my matric class who always used to talk like this [*she imitates speaking in a very heldback style*]. She was very shy, she couldn't say a word, and by the end of the year she'd grown so much in confidence and could talk to just about anyone and express her ideas more freely... she was generally a more communicative person, and this seemed to be from Drama especially.

Another student links a similar experience to the "atmosphere" that the Drama class provides. She refers to the set-up of the classroom (no desks, a carpet, a very different 'feel') and the fact that they sit in a circle to discuss as creating a situation where "people feel a lot less inhibited" because it tends to become a "more open discussion, encouraging people to come out of themselves".

The skill of listening is identified by one pupil as being important: "you have to be able to listen when you're working in a group and I think that Drama trains you to do that".

The above comments tend to refer to the drama process as a whole and especially to the type of improvisatory or workshop activities that happen in the classroom. The aspect of

"performance" also appears to be considered as fundamental to school drama and comments in relation to the school play specifically are documented in the next section.

4.6. The School Play

All students surveyed felt that the school play was important although not always for the same reasons. This seems to represent one key area where students differ from teachers, with students placing far more import on the school play. Part of the reason for this appears to be the desire 'to act', but it is also to be expected considering that pupils don't necessarily have the same broader insight into the educational possibilities for drama. Nonetheless, comments do highlight a range of issues which pupils regard as being beneficial to their school experiences.

The main reasons given for believing that the school play is important are listed in the table below:

Table 15

STUDENTS: REASONS THAT THE SCHOOL PLAY IS IMPORTANT

* A chance for everyone to be involved	=	5
* Work can be seen by other people	=	4
* Learn about each other and self	=	3
* Making practical sense of drama theory	=	3
* It is fun	=	2
* Teaches commitment, audition skills, etc	=	1
* Helps one acquire theatre skills	=	1
* Way of presenting a message	=	1
* Inspires enthusiasm	=	1
* Sense of personal achievement	=	1
* Builds self-confidence	=	1
* Alternative to academic & sporting achievement	=	1
* A chance to 'experience' theatre elements (lights, sound, costume, etc)	=	1

The above figures represent the number of students who mentioned a particular reason, eg. 5 students felt that the school play gave everyone a chance to be involved. The question was open-ended and students were not given a list of options to choose from, hence the list should not be seen as a ranking.

It is interesting to note that five of the students felt it to be important that the school play give "non-drama students" a chance to be involved. One reason might be that this becomes

a way for drama students to justify their own reasons for doing drama by 'proving' the amount of work involved and the positive aspects of such work; this is evident in the following comment, for example: "You know, sometimes people laugh at people doing drama and say 'oh, it's such an easy subject'... they don't realise that it's a huge amount of work. After the play, people see the amount of work that's gone into it and feel the sense of achievement".

A further important reason in students' minds, however, is the way such an experience contributes to learning about - and working with - other people. One student states that "it gives everyone a chance to have fun and to learn about each other, but not in a stiff, formal kind of way", whilst another suggests that

for students its incredibly important. Some people would normally not have the courage to even get up in class and say something... I mean I have seen some of my friends who have been up on stage almost transformed just by acting. It gives you a great sense of self-confidence... it doesn't even matter the size of your role or how well you did, it adds to your self-esteem-I think...

A significant point raised by one of the students is that you learn something about yourself because you're "given the opportunity to do something different. I mean there are sides of people that are never ever discovered at school unless they do something like a drama production." In terms of the ideas discussed in Chapter 1, this highlights the notion that this kind of self-awareness tends to rely on 'doing' or activity; it is the kind of learning that does not easily take place from a passive position behind a desk, and the holistic and experiential approach of drama contributes particularly to an awareness of one's self at different levels. The idea of "doing something different" (as the student phrases it) suggests that exposure to different kinds of experiences becomes crucial to holistic notions of pupil development.

In addition to learning about the self and **about** other people, learning to work **with** other people appears to be one of the benefits of the school play. The fostering of constructive group dynamics is potentially one of the most tangible and far-reaching consequences of

an activity like a school production. Students mention aspects such as "commitment" and "working as a group" as being elements that they feel one learns from participating in a school production.

Students are very mindful of the fact that the school production can provide an important complementary component to theoretical drama studies or practical classwork - "It's a way of showing what you've learnt in classes". This was particularly evident in the comments of the two students who attended the specialist arts schools, indicating a concern of their teachers to do more than put on a fun fund-raiser but to see the experience of the school play as integral to their other studies. (As commented in the previous chapter, this also seems to be the concern of most of the other teachers, but they face more of a struggle in convincing other members of the school administration that this should be the case.) One of the students comments as follows:

I think productions are probably the most important thing. Productions are when you take everything that you've been learning, everything that you've been made aware of, and you get to practically apply it. I think you learn more in one production than you probably do in a whole year of just studying, although you do need the studying, the theoretical side.

The sense of achievement that comes with the school play is another important factor and in terms of the process/product continuum seems to represent a key phase in the process. Students appear to be inspired and enthused by the opportunity to perform for an audience or to be part of a production (in whatever role) that is well received. Those that mention this point have a strong sense of the production as part of the process and see the audience response not as instant fame but as recognition for the process leading up to the production; as one student states it: "its wonderful to see that other people can watch what you're doing, watch what you've been working at for so long".

Another student saw the opportunity to be seen as part of the chance for communicating messages and inspiring people. She suggested that

it makes people listen to you and look at you, and listen to what you're saying, and if what you're saying is meaningful, then drama is a very

effective way of getting it across. Our school didn't really put on productions as plays, what we did was rather do little performances in assembly, whatever theme was running for that week, like AIDS awareness or drug awareness. I think it made an impact on people and inspired enthusiasm. Drama is a very enthusiasm-inspiring subject.

This investigation into perceptions of the school play tended to focus on the idea of a school production broadly and the notion of performance as part of the school drama experience, rather than explore the issue of the content and form of the production, that is, what the school play is about and what kind of production it is. This is, however, a crucial consideration in terms of the school play and will be commented on in Chapter 5.

The final part of this chapter investigates students' perceptions of drama in relation to multiculturalism. The term 'multiculturalism' was not defined for them but was left as an open term.

4.7. Drama in a Multicultural and/or Multilingual Context

This aspect of the survey attempted to gain some insight into pupils' experiences or understandings of multicultural education in the light of their own schooling. In terms of the notions of multiculturalism discussed in Chapter 2, two broad observations can be made in terms of students' comments: firstly, their understanding of multiculturalism is solely in terms of race (black and white pupils), that is, multiculturalism is definitely a synonym for multiracialism in their minds. Secondly, their experience of integration or 'mixing' appears to be predominantly **assimilationist**, that is, pupils being expected to conform to a dominant cultural ethos. This seems very dependent on each individual teacher, but comments from students (in terms of their **perceptions** of teachers' approaches) seem to indicate a lack of understanding of multiculturalism on the part of the teachers too (this is confirmed in the teacher survey in Chapter 3).

This misperception of what multicultural education is about is evident in the following student comment:

There were black and white students in the class - I'd say about two-thirds white. The school I went to though was almost as a precondition Western oriented. But I know my drama teachers used to deliberately break us up into groups for practicals and exams and split us up so that there would be an even spread of blacks and whites in each group... And in that there was a bit of cultural cross or whatever, but on the whole... you know I mean the black girls weren't hectoring into promoting whatever their belief systems were or something, they were more American oriented than most of the rest of us [white pupils] were.

Whilst there is clearly some value for creating opportunities for pupils from different backgrounds to work together interactively, the above comment highlights the distinct lack of cultural awareness in this student, even though she apparently worked closely with the pupils she refers to. Her comment that the other pupils weren't into "promoting whatever their belief systems were or something" seems to indicate that a real opportunity to come to terms with this kind of issue was lost, and that pupils don't 'automatically' learn about each other by just being in the same group.

Another student describes a different approach taken by the teacher in separating black and white pupils. The pupil's own experience seems to highlight a sense of discomfort and she was certainly not left with a false sense of harmony:

I suppose drama can make a difference in terms of sharing cultures, experiences and so on. I didn't really experience it in our group... I know in the other group there were often conflicts, but you can't really pinpoint it and say it was a racial thing... The one year, the drama teacher decided to split the group, to put the black girls into one group and the whites in another, to do their pracs like that instead, and there were totally different pracs that came out of it; the black girls' presentation was called something like 'I am black', and the white girls' one was typically neutral... Even in the final pracs, however, you could still see that although we all worked together and everything, we weren't totally mixed and totally getting on with each other; there was still friction, I'd say... I do think there's potential to overcome this... okay I'm not knocking our teacher, but I don't think that our teacher was trained in that field so that she could handle that kind of thing. Because everyone thinks okay if you get them to work together they're just going to move together, but I don't know...

This student raises some very important points: firstly, through her own experience, she has become aware that achieving some kind of integration and multicultural ethos is not just

about putting people together into a group to work together. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the process of reflection as part of the drama experience is crucial, otherwise groups could just re-enforce prejudice and preconceptions.

Secondly, the issue of the need for teacher training in multicultural education is raised. This becomes a vital requirement and highlights the need for understanding the ways in which diversity can be positively managed in education systems. Whilst it seems likely that the teacher's aim in separating the pupils was attempted as a form of empowerment for black pupils (to possibly give them a voice in groups where they might otherwise be dominated), such a context was not understood as such by this student and served to re-inforce an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy.

On the other hand, it is clear that some teachers do make very real attempts to open pupils minds and expose them to a range of cultural perspectives. The danger of seeing other cultures as 'exotic curiosities' is still a very real one, however. One student refers to a 'culture term' which was started at her school during which the drama class was taught how to gumboot dance which they performed at public functions. They then learnt Indian dance and held an evening at the school where Indian food was prepared and so on. Such experiences can play a very significant part in a pupil's understanding of other people, but it must be emphasised that this cannot be the sole focus of multicultural education. It is an important part of exploring cultural heritage (and cultural heritage has been identified as a key part of development in South Africa) and also serves to validate cultural experiences for pupils who come from those backgrounds. However, multiculturalism must be seen as going further than this, and it is the kind of fictional contexts that the drama experience can provide that allows for people to interact with each other as people (rather than as members of specific groups) that allows for this.

For the student concerned in the above example, the experience appears to have been a positive one. She states that

...basically what I liked about drama was that you lost a lot of your ignorance about what other people are, and that ignorance has often landed up in not liking or misunderstanding, therefore being biased, whereas

through drama and through seeing people not for what colour they were or what culture they belong to, but just for themselves with that as their background or influencing them... In Drama you have to accept people for what they are.

In another positive experience, a student suggests that she believes that Drama goes a long way to encouraging tolerance. What is significant about her comment is that she does not understand tolerance simply in terms of race, but in terms of people generally, acknowledging that each individual is different. She suggests that one has to be very tolerant of people because "you have those people who are shy and those who love the limelight and lots of attention. And when you are put in groups it's not in terms of all those who can act and those who can't... you have to work together, so it teaches you patience and you learn a lot from each other as well. I know that personally I became a lot more tolerant".

Learners raise important issues in sharing their thoughts and perceptions of the school drama experience. In the same way that reflection becomes a key element of the praxis process in classroom methodology, reflection should also be seen to be crucial to drama education research. Whilst the comments detailed in this chapter rely largely on subjective impressions on the part of students, they nonetheless give us insights into the ways that drama may be experienced and interpreted from the learner's perspective. The information discussed in this chapter, together with the teachers' comments discussed in Chapter 3, will be considered in the light of the challenges facing educational transformation in the following, final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Meeting the Challenges of Educational Change: A Theatre of Activity in South Africa's Classrooms

This study has been concerned with investigating the potential of the classroom drama experience in contemporary South Africa, firstly through providing a conceptual framework for understanding drama and education; secondly, investigating the various contexts which impact on drama in the secondary school; and thirdly, investigating perspectives and perceptions of teachers and students. This chapter brings together the ideas of the preceding four chapters and aims to:

- a) determine some of the ways in which drama is able to contribute constructively and integrally to educational transformation; and
- b) provide a strong motivation for the serious inclusion of drama in the formal secondary school programme.

The challenge of transforming, and in many cases rebuilding, the South African education system is a demanding yet exciting one, requiring a careful consideration of approaches to teaching and learning. One of the core challenges is to create what has been referred to in this thesis as a "learning experience of quality".¹ Whilst transformation needs to happen at a range of levels including infrastructure, staffing, and expenditure, it is the **learning**

¹ In a paper entitled "Is Quality a Question of Price: A View of African Humanism in Post Apartheid Thought" (1995), FR Hagemann argues that rather than adopting "absolute-rationalist" approaches to evaluating "quality", a "relativist" viewpoint should be taken in which the emphasis is on learning rather than testing. Such an approach takes account of the multiplicity characterising society and rather than trying to identify an "objective standard of quality" recognises that experiences can be qualitatively beneficial in various and multifaceted ways (p.30). As McGregor et al point out, there are no "hard and fast, unchanging standards" for judging the quality of drama; "this must be seen in the light of the group itself and the individuals who make it up" (p.87). This does not mean that "quality learning and teaching" is purely subjective - rather it suggests that quality is not linked to scientifically measurable "standards", but to the impact on the growth and development of the individual as a knowing, feeling, creative, critical, thinking, sensitive, moving, imaginative human being.

experience itself that is of key concern in this study.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the context of South African education; from this discussion, three **fundamental** challenges facing education have been selected to focus on here, namely: the need to build a ‘**culture of learning**’; effective pupil **development and empowerment** through quality learning programmes; and, the positive and constructive embracing of **cultural and linguistic diversity** within the classroom. Each of these is discussed in this chapter in terms of the classroom drama experience itself.

In Chapter 1 it was argued that the unique education opportunities offered by the drama experience lie in the fact that it provides an **arts** experience. Whilst the educational challenges identified will be strongly argued in terms of developmental outcomes, it will be further argued that the arts experience provides a unique way of encouraging such development and that as such, the notion of *theatricalisation* is fundamental. Thus, Drama is not a substitute for the Guidance class, the PT class, or the history class, although it does integrate aspects of all of these. What distinguishes it is that it is essentially an artistic experience through which pupils create and express meaning through an artistic medium.

5.1. The Arts Experience: The Notion of a ‘Theatre of Activity’

The walls must be torn down. First, the spectator starts acting again... Secondly, it is necessary to eliminate the private property of the characters by the individual actors.... [In this way] the people reassume their protagonistic function in the theatre and in society.

- Augusto Boal - ²

This dissertation has forwarded the notion that classroom drama should be seen as **a form of theatre itself** (p.31), and that in understanding this drama experience as a ‘theatre of activity’ or an ‘activating theatre’ we are better placed to consider school drama in South Africa at the end of the 20th Century and into the 21st. For clarification, it must be noted

² Augusto Boal, 1979, p.119.

that the notion of *theatricalisation* should not be seen as an alternative **method** to existing notions of EDT; rather it is an attempt to find a term that more accurately describes the relationship between drama and theatre in the classroom in the light of contemporary philosophical discourse.

Precedent for understanding theatre as a fully participatory experience can be found in two sources: firstly, in the work of Augusto Boal, quoted above, whose Theatre of the Oppressed has arguably been among the most influential theatre developments this century; and secondly, in traditional notions of theatrical performance and for our purposes especially, African oral traditions. Thus, support for such a notion is found in both traditional and contemporary practice.

Augusto Boal highlights a view of a theatre which fully embraces notions of democracy and participation in terms of countering oppression and social development. His theatre is situated in an historical context in which preceding ideas of theatre (from Aristotle to Brecht) are challenged in favour of a participatory, democratic theatre for "spect-actors". His notion of theatre is significant to our study for two key reasons: firstly, his breaking down of formal theatre structures does not imply an abandonment of 'theatre' (possibly in favour of 'drama'); **theatre** remains the fundamental form of expression and discourse as seen, for example in forum theatre and image theatre.³ Secondly, his notions of **participation** go much further than other theatre forms, drastically challenging the way we understand theatre.

Zakes Mda, himself greatly influenced by Boal, highlights the fact that "top-down" education in South Africa has meant a lack of participation in terms of the creation and distribution of messages in the classroom; as Mda stresses, participation does not only mean "responding to messages created by experts by way of feedback... but initiat(ing) the process of communication, and distributing their own messages".⁴

³ Boal, 1979, p.126.

⁴ Zakes Mda, "Learning from the Ancient Wisdom of Africa" in SAADYT & ADDSA Ubuntu Conference Journal (Vol 15, No 2, 1995), p.5.

Mda's point highlights the potential for drama to play a crucial role in empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning through providing opportunities for them to participate actively in the construction and expression of meaning. He argues that people should be full participants in their own development, and this would seem to apply not only to social and community development, but to *personal* growth. The key words in this approach are **action** and **activity**, but it is action that is linked to the imagination and to creative expression.

The second precedent mentioned above is oral performance tradition which Mineke Schipper describes as "total theatre".⁵ She suggests that African oral traditions, part of the function of which has been education, does not exist without dramatic expression and that the performance is a total event with all present taking part whether by "making music, by clapping the rhythm, or by dancing or singing refrains. Throughout the performance there is favourable or unfavourable reaction, the spectators functioning as immediate critics. Everyone is closely involved in the performance".⁶

This perspective finds support in the following comment by Zakes Mda:

In their performance modes Africans do not have the line of demarcation that exists in western culture between the producers and consumers of cultural products. In the western world, and the urbanised African elite, art has been commodified to the extent that it is dignified to be a passive audience. There is a clear-cut division of labour. The actor's or singer's job is to perform over there on stage, and we the audience, ours is to sit quietly and consume. We can show our appreciation by applauding after the performance or by booing if we did not like it... Among the marginalised and disadvantaged in the rural areas and the urban slums, however, art is still part of the common festival. We all sing and dance.⁷

⁵ Mineke Schipper, Theatre and Society in Africa, 1982, p.10.

Other writers who comment on African oral traditions as forms of participatory theatre (part of the function of which is education) include: Ruth Finnegan, 1977; Isidore Okpewho, 1983; Edgard Sienaert and Nigel Bell, 1982; Sienaert, Bell and Meg Lewis, 1991; Liz Gunner, 1994; Gcina Mhlope, 1994; Gay Morris, 1996.

⁶ Schipper, p.11.

⁷ Mda, 1995, p.4.

Noting that classroom drama has participation as a key characteristic, and that one of the functions of traditional African performance is education, it becomes important to consider in what ways traditional South African performance practice forms part of the heritage of South African Educational Drama & Theatre. Liz Gunner argues that in the South African context, print culture, the written word, must concede equality with the "multiple other ways of 'writing the nation', namely performance based forms which have long-co-existed but not been accorded the same status as print".⁸ However, she points out that the role of the **audience** is consistently under-explored or under-researched; "it is, though, a crucial component in the making of culture 'from below', rather than its imposition 'from the top down'. The active dialogic role of the audience relates to broader issues of voice and space...".⁹ This parallels Mda's comments above on the creation and distribution of messages within the classroom.

Gay Morris has begun to explore some of the links between educational drama and oral traditions pointing out that although "Educational Drama is an academic, largely Western, discipline, oral education is central to it".¹⁰ She suggests that

like Educational Drama, storytelling in Africa (and other oral traditions such as the dance-songs and praise-singing) reinforces the community, bringing together artists and audience as a single creative experience, relying on shared beliefs and familiar bits of story or song.... Clearly there are important similarities between the two genres. However this does not mean that they are interchangeable or that one should accommodate the other without a

⁸ Liz Gunner, *Politics and Performance* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p.2;

This view is particularly significant in the light of the discussion developed in Chapter 1, particularly Derrida's notion of "logocentrism" and the breaking down of polar opposites such as writing and speaking. Further, Gunner recognises that there are a multiplicity of forms for expressing, understanding and coming to terms with the self and society.

⁹ *ibid*, pp.2-3.

¹⁰ Gay Morris, "Oral Education and Oral Tradition" in *SAADYT/ADDSA Journal: Drama Action - Strategies for the Future*, (Vol 16, No 2, 1996), p.37.

clear consciousness of what permutations take place.¹¹

Thus, in clarifying the idea of *theatricalisation*, the work of Augusto Boal and notions of oral traditions (bearing in mind both commonalities and differences) provide us with perspectives which site the educational process in a theatrical mode.

Contrary to what often seems to be popular belief, more traditional writings on Educational Drama & Theatre also place strong emphasis on the inextricable links between classroom drama and theatre thus providing possible support for reconsidering classroom drama as theatre. Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton begin their book, Teaching Drama... A Mind of Many Wonders, by stating that:

This is a book about classroom drama, so we are going to start by talking about theatre... because we have come to recognize, through observation and analysis, that the teacher who, instinctively or deliberately, makes use of the devices of the art form (theatre elements and play structure) has a better chance of achieving her educational objectives.¹²

A similar perspective is seen in the writing of Gavin Bolton who suggests that classroom drama is to do with creating an art form "in a way that is significant for its participants" and that from this art-making experience "something new is understood or something is newly understood".¹³ This "significance" is seen by Helene Rosenberg to lie in the

¹¹ *ibid*, p.40.

Morris emphasises that although there are commonalities between EDT and oral traditions, there are also some fundamental differences or "tensions" which should not be overlooked, including the ways that "building belief" happens and that "status" is used, with oral traditions often tending to reinforce traditional status relationships (pp.40-41).

¹² Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton, Teaching Drama... A Mind of Many Wonders (Cheltenham UK: Stanley Thornes, 1987), p.1.

Morgan and Saxton identify various elements of theatre used by the drama teacher, specifically focus, tension, contrast and symbolisation. They see the teacher working "almost as a playwright" (although they still tend to understand drama and theatre separately), and give examples of lessons through transcripts, highlighting the ways in which theatre elements operate throughout the lessons (pp.5-19).

¹³ Bolton, 1993, p.39.

combination of imagination and action; she argues that creative drama is not merely one point on the continuum between theatre and dramatic play... "rather, all three are inexorably tied to a fourth phenomenon: the connection of imagination and dramatic action."¹⁴ She suggests that dramatic learning encompasses internal processes and external behaviours (as has been argued in this study) as well as **the connection between imagination and action**: "It is this connection between imagination and action that permits individuals to do their best work. Within a typical education curriculum, creative arts activities often provide individuals with their only practice in connecting ideas to action. Research suggests that it is this skill in connecting ideas to action that transfers from the creative arts arena to real life".¹⁵

It is thus argued that fundamental to understanding the role of drama as a subject in the South African school curriculum is seeing it first and foremost as an **arts subject** and more than that, as a form of theatre itself. With this in mind, let us now consider such a 'theatre experience' in relation to the educational challenges identified above.

5.2. Meeting the Challenges

CHALLENGE No 1:

Setting the Stage - BUILDING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Chapter 2 highlights the demise of a 'culture of learning' in many South African schools and the need for the idea of education to become an integral part of the worldviews and outlooks of pupils; whereas in the past, education was seen to be manipulative and oppressive, positive and critical attitudes to the idea of education need to be rekindled.

Simply stated, Drama is able to contribute significantly to the rebuilding of a culture of learning in the following ways:

¹⁴ Helane S Rosenberg, Creative Drama and Imagination: Transforming Ideas into Action (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1987), p.99.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.85.

1. the drama experience **breaks down the hierarchical relationship** between the teacher and pupil, that is, learning structures and approaches are fundamentally altered through changing the 'balance of power' in the classroom;
2. as a result of this changed relationship, the **learning environment** changes to one that is more conducive to active learning, encouraging personal imaginative engagement and an ethos of discovery;
3. in this changed learning environment, pupils start to see learning **in relation to their own lives** - because learning draws so strongly on their own existing experiences, understandings, worldviews, thoughts and opinions, it becomes more relevant;
4. once pupils start to see some relevance in what they are studying or experiencing, their **sense of future** develops as they begin to see future possibilities (imaginative growth), and explore ways of dealing with that future (life-skills development, insight into humanity and creativity);
5. a sense of the relationship between the learning and their own lives, combined with an approach that encourages enjoyment of learning, is likely to lead to a higher degree of **enthusiasm and engagement**.

Towards a New Teacher-Pupil Relationship...

As both teacher and student comments in chapters 3 and 4 indicate, the teacher-pupil relationship is crucial to the quality of learning that takes place. Student comments suggest that the teacher-pupil relationship is among the most significant factors affecting pupils' enjoyment of the subject (p.116), and consequently the enthusiasm with which they engage in the process. In breaking down the traditional teacher-pupil hierarchy, a new relationship of 'partnership' is created.¹⁶

¹⁶ One of the positive aspects of working towards a culture of learning in this way is that through active participation and collaboration, a 'culture of democracy' begins to be instilled in pupils. Democracy implies that as primary partners in education, pupils have a chance to participate actively in the shaping of their learning. The democratic classroom is strongly linked to democratic society for as Dalrymple cautions "if we are to achieve an understanding of democracy we must set out to achieve it in the classroom, otherwise authoritarian systems will simply continue to

Lynn Dalrymple points out that various techniques such as teacher-in-role have been developed in order to shift the authoritarian and disciplinary role of the traditional teacher so that the teacher is "no longer a fountain of wisdom filling up empty vessels with knowledge but... a facilitator setting up learning situations".¹⁷ As Gavin Bolton suggests, the teacher-in-role is working both with pupils and ahead of them,¹⁸ in the *theatricalisation* process he or she can be seen to be an 'activator' rather than all knowing authority. Through acting as a facilitator (who is in a position to strongly guide learning process), the teacher is able to thoroughly draw on what each member of the class brings to the lesson in terms of their own experience. As Dalrymple states, the variety of drama approaches

challenge the orthodox relationship between teachers and learners and set up opportunities for learners to take initiative and responsibility for the learning process. It is a shift away from the regurgitation of facts towards providing opportunities for genuine critical teaching and learning to take place. In no way does this method imply that the teacher abdicates her responsibility. What it means is hard work and preparation..."¹⁹

This is highlighted by one of the teachers surveyed (Chapter 3, p.103) who comments on the importance of the intimacy of the teacher-pupil relationship when she suggests that the work is very personal and that she gets to know the pupils very well: "in drama you get to know the children and that's very rewarding, that's maybe a plus about the subject, it's another whole environment of learning and that's why I think the learning is so relevant

replicate themselves" (1992b, p.19).

¹⁷ Dalrymple, 1992b, p.18.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1, pp.41ff.

¹⁹ Dalrymple, 1992b, p.19.

This view finds support from Verity Davidson who, writing from the perspective of a teacher educator at one of South Africa's rural Colleges of Education, argues that our education system is suffering from "a legacy of restrictive, disempowering approaches to teaching.... Drama, by its very nature demands action, demands the participation of the teacher and student in the process. And once both teacher and students are actively participating (and) solving problems, learning begins to happen" (Davidson, 1993, p.1).

personally". It is in the identification of this personal relationship that we see a clear shift from subject-centered notions of learning to pupil-centered notions.

The breaking down of the teacher-pupil hierarchy is not just a symbolic one, but can be clearly seen in the day to day activity of the teacher. It has to do with the fact that the teacher and pupils sit in a circle to discuss and reflect; that when taking on a role, the teacher never takes the role of top authority; that the classroom is more often than not an open space that can be imaginatively transformed. It is these various manifestations of the changed teacher-pupil relationship that go towards creating an environment that is conducive to learning.

The Learning Environment...

The learning environment is both physical and 'atmospheric': it is physical in the sense that it has to do with the actual classroom structure. A pupil in a run-down, leaking dilapidated classroom will be impacted upon differently to a pupil studying in a freshly built, custom-made drama studio. However, it is also atmospheric in the sense that the teacher can create an atmosphere, a feeling, an environment, which is highly conducive to learning in any physical space - the teacher in the dilapidated classroom can create a stimulating, empowering environment just as easily as the teacher in the studio can provide pupils with a sterile, boring experience. The skill of the teacher and the potential of the methodology become more important in creating a learning environment than the physical surroundings, although these are obviously important.

Student interviews reveal that the classroom environment is a significant factor in making the drama experience an enjoyable and valuable one (pp.117 & 129). Some suggest that the classroom set-up and the "creative" and "relaxed" atmosphere are factors which encourage pupils to engage enthusiastically with the work; another pupil chooses to describe the atmosphere as "not a chance to relax, but to be able to think in a totally different way and escape from that very rigid school system which I really think gets a lot of pupils down".

It must be emphasised, however, that it is not simply the atmosphere created by good drama teachers that contributes to an effective learning environment (ideally all good teachers of

any subject should be creating such an atmosphere in their classrooms); **it is the transforming of the classroom into the *theatre space* and the elements of the drama experience itself** which contribute to such an environment, through, for example, the use of role and fictional contexts, and the creating of a 'safe' environment by the teacher in which this roleplay can take place. Kathy Joyce highlights this point through an interesting example of a lesson for a subject called Personal and Social Education (P.S.E.) which she observed in the UK (the subject includes life-skills and vocational preparation - close to what would be called Guidance in South Africa). She gives the following account:

A recent example I witnessed involved a teacher with ten minutes left of a tutorial session, deciding to play a game called *Goldfish Bowl*, which he assured me was widely used in P.S.E. in the school. It was rather like the 'hot-seating' technique used in drama **but without the protection of role**. A girl volunteered to be in the goldfish bowl and was seated in the middle of a circle. The group could ask her any question they wished and she must either reply honestly, or refuse to reply. After a few inconsequential questions relating to family, pets, address, one boy asked, "Are you a virgin?" The girl, confused and embarrassed, looked at the teacher, who rescued her by saying that she need not answer and such a question was 'not on'. He then asked the group to choose someone else to go into the middle but luckily we were saved by the bell... **Personally, as a drama teacher, I can think of no situation where I would allow or encourage a 'game' involving such personal exposure.**²⁰

The point is that whilst it is an important first step to break down the teacher-pupil hierarchy in favour of a less authoritarian and more progressive approach to learning (which could include the use of games, for example), creating an environment conducive to successful learning relies greatly on **the nature of the medium** itself, the **techniques** and **skills** employed by the teacher, many of which have been developed in EDT in recent decades.

In South Africa, the use of a theatrical medium not only contributes broadly to a conducive learning environment, but is also able to meet particular challenges. A concern that has been raised by South African teachers, parents and educational planners as far as the

²⁰ Kathy Joyce, "Drama in Personal and Social Education" in 2D Drama Dance Vol 3 No 1 (1983), p.9. [emphasis hers].

classroom environment goes is the **large size of many classes** which seem to mediate against effective learning. In this context one must argue strongly for the use of drama. Phyllis Klotz, who writes from her own practical experience of using drama in the classroom and her work in teacher education, suggests that educational drama supplies the method for overcoming some of the many problems encountered in classes with large numbers of pupils because "it relies fundamentally on the group experience. The teacher has the opportunity to divide the class into groups in such a manner that each group feels that its contribution is necessary and important. Then pupils take responsibility for their own learning process in a natural way".²¹

Thus, in establishing teacher-pupil relationships in a non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian manner the teacher is able to create an environment which encourages learning, and more than that, enables the pupil to learn in relation to his or her own life experience. The fact that the teacher uses pupils' own contributions, ideas, thoughts, opinions, and knowledge **integrally** in the learning experience means that learners' chances to reflect on new insights in relation to their day to day experiences, to actively bring their own perspectives to the learning process, and to see the relevance to their own lives are greatly enhanced.²²

The word 'relevance' is defined very broadly here. Through the kind of learning experience that drama provides, students are not only better equipped to understand why certain subject matter might be either directly or indirectly 'relevant', but through contributing perspectives and **building on prior knowledge or insight** in a dramatic context, they are in a position to 'create meaning' and to imbue the subject matter with relevance. This relevance can also be understood in terms of Dorothy Heathcote's suggestion that drama involves "bringing

²¹ Phyllis Klotz, "Educational Drama and the Third World" in SAADYT Conference Papers 1992: Educational Drama Strategies for Reconstruction (1992), p.35.

²² The notion of working with each student 'from where they are at' is strongly rooted in the thinking and work of Peter Slade (Child Drama, 1954) and Brian Way (Development Through Drama, 1967). These writings have been very influential in the development of EDT, and are themselves influenced by educationalists such as Caldwell Cook, seeing drama in relation to child's play at earlier phases of development. For a South African perspective, see also Gay Morris, "Drama's Maverick Nature" (quoted in Chapter 1 of this thesis on pp.27 and 45).

out what children already know but don't yet know they know".²³ It becomes an empowering process because pupils become conscious of how much of what they have acquired in daily living is relevant to the classroom, and consequently and more importantly, the converse.

'Relevance' manifests itself in numerous ways, and in teacher and student responses documented in Chapters 3 and 4 ranges from insight into humanity to tangible skills and a sense of preparation for the future. Teachers who suggest that drama develops insight into the human condition highlight the fact that the drama experience impacts directly on their own lives (p.98). This is seen primarily in terms of the inter-relationship between the individual and society, suggesting that the relevance of the experience lies in its building of group dynamics, encouraging personal growth through constructive interaction (p.100).

This is echoed in student responses, although often the search for relevance does not need to go much beyond the participation in, and enjoyment of, acting and improvisation. Nonetheless, in reflecting on these experiences, students tend to highlight the fact that basic life-skills, such as confident communication, are developed and acknowledge the different kinds of experience that a pupil-centered approach provides (p.117). Drama as a 'people subject' was mentioned by a number of students and so the opportunity to develop 'people skills' was seen to be a worthwhile justification for studying drama.

Into the Future...

Thus, in dealing with issues and subject matter in relation to themselves (even themselves as fictional characters), pupils are in a position to actively explore options, to make decisions and choices, to contribute ideas in such a way that the nature or direction of the learning experience may be altered. As Morgan and Saxton suggest

the learning environment in a drama or theatre class makes demands on both teachers and students which are different to those in a classroom environment, where knowledge and skills are pre-eminent. Knowledge and skills are important in drama but learning comes through the negotiation of this knowledge and these skills. Both students and teachers are operating in

²³ Wagner, p.13.

an imagined or fictitious situation where there is **no one right solution, only an appropriate one.**²⁴

This is one of the ways that a sense of future begins to be developed - through providing learning situations which highlight changes that personal action can bring about, and develop the confidence to take such action.²⁵ Further, because of the process of metaxis through which pupils are working in real and fictional contexts simultaneously, pupils are required to use their imaginations, to work in imaginary contexts, and in so doing, are given the opportunity to develop vision, to see future possibilities.

Thus the theatre space that is the classroom becomes a significant site for contributing towards the rebuilding of a culture of learning and to developing a sense of democracy among pupils. Through breaking down the conventional teacher-pupil hierarchy and encouraging pupils to be active participants in the learning process, skills and insights develop in relation to their own lives. Part of this is likely to come from a feeling of empowerment on the part of the pupils - as they feel more confident to face the world, their self-esteem grows, and life-skills and social understanding are developed.

²⁴ Morgan and Saxton, p.ix, [emphasis mine].

²⁵ It is likely that the lack of sense of future was a contributing factor to the breakdown of the 'culture of learning'. For students struggling against oppression the urgency of political liberation was more important than a future which seemed to offer little more than menial labour and servitude, resulting in a poorly educated generation that was termed the 'lost generation' by some. Still today, there is a sense of pessimism amongst pupils about their futures. The image of today's youth often portrayed in the media is one of despondency, with white students tending to cite affirmative action as the cause of a bleak future and black students still feeling disadvantaged in terms of not being suitably equipped to take advantage of opportunities. There also seems to be a general sense of jobs simply not being available amongst young people generally. The DramAidE Eastern Cape Pilot Project encountered a very strong feeling of lack of future among pupils resulting in a general lack of awareness of decision-making and consequences with a high incidence of high-risk behaviour; a sense of 'live for today', with little real vision of upward mobility (DramAidE Eastern Cape, Final Report, pp.31 & 40).

CHALLENGE No 2:

The Classroom-Theatre Experience: Rehearsal-Performance - DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

As the theatre of Augusto Boal shows us, the theatre experience for the 'spect-actor' is not only a performance in itself, but is in many ways a 'rehearsal' for life during which participants can try out possibilities and find appropriate solutions to issues. In a similar way, the 'classroom-theatre experience' becomes a theatre of empowerment. The crucial contribution of drama to the personal and social development of pupils, leading to a sense of empowerment, is the strongest indication of its value given in the teacher and student surveys. In terms of these surveys, such development seems to happen in at least three crucial ways which are significant to the education process, ranging from broad general notions of development to more specific perspectives such as tangible life-skills, namely: the **holistic development of the individual**, that is, coming to terms with the self physically, emotionally, cognitively, and creatively, and being able to work through developmental stages such as adolescence; secondly, understanding and **insight into humanity and the self**; and thirdly, **life-skills development**, including group and interpersonal co-operation, confidence and self-esteem, communication and language development, responsibility, initiative, and trust.²⁶

The word 'empowerment' has in many senses become a political catch-phrase in contemporary South Africa, losing much of its meaning in favour of political rhetoric. However, student and teacher comments give us a good indication of ways that the drama process becomes an 'empowering' educational medium. Whilst both teachers and students surveyed generally refer to all three aspects mentioned above, teachers tend to emphasise **developmental processes** whereas student comments highlight drama more strongly from an **empowering** perspective, that is, perceived **developmental outcomes**.

It is significant that the majority of teachers rated life-skills development, the building of

²⁶ Whilst these have been highlighted from the surveys, it must be noted that such development through drama also finds strong support from writings on EDT, as will be shown in this chapter.

self-confidence in pupils and creative expression as their top three aims,²⁷ and that students see 'empowering skills' such as confidence and communication skills as being high on the list in terms of the educational value of drama (p.119). This suggests that in the main, both teachers and students see drama as contributing significantly to general formative education rather than vocational training.

In exploring the notion of development in a little more detail, we should take note of two general points: firstly, Gavin Bolton's observation that in considering development in relation to classroom drama, the aesthetic or artistic aspect of the experience cannot really be separated from the overall notion of education and development processes because it is essentially an arts experience that pupils are involved in.²⁸ And secondly, the understanding that much of the development that happens through drama is dependent on the teacher's approach, skill, and understanding of each pupil's stage of development; as McGregor et al point out in reference to a lesson they had observed, the lines along which children developed "depended mainly on the teacher's assessment of 'where they were at' in the process and the kinds of learning that the teacher wanted to develop".²⁹ This implies that, to a relatively large degree, our understanding of the ways that development happens in drama is reliant on teachers' own understandings and observations as well as learners' experiences.

²⁷ 73% of teachers had lifeskills development as one of their top three aims, 70% had building self-confidence as one of their top three aims, while 67% had the development of creative expression as one of their top three aims; (see p.90).

²⁸ Bolton, 1984, p.140.

²⁹ McGregor, Tate and Robinson, p.142.

In the South African context this has particular connotations in terms of the education of drama teachers and the lack of suitably qualified drama teachers, especially in previously black schools. It also suggests that we need to be cautious: for whilst it may be true that all teachers should be able to use drama, and should be encouraged to use it cross-curricularly, we need to ensure that drama education does not become a field of mediocrity because of underprepared teachers; it is not necessarily the case that teachers with little or 'bandaid' training will successfully maximise the potential of the drama experience. Thus programmes for the education and training of drama teachers are a crucial priority in terms of arts development in South Africa.

Holistic Personal Development...

As shown in Chapter 1, drama is not only able to provide an holistic approach to personal development, but is able to take developmental differences among pupils into account. This is particularly important if one considers that in a particular secondary school class pupils might all be of a similar age, but may well be at different levels of adolescence or maturity, and, well utilized, the drama experience is able to take these differences into account.³⁰

Writing from the perspective of a research and clinical psychologist as well as a drama educator, Helane Rosenberg points out that one of the strongest assets of drama as a learning medium is that "it integrates cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor abilities".³¹ This sense of holistic development is the result of an arts experience which relies so strongly on action, reflection, negotiation and creative expression (as discussed, for example, in relation to Freire, O'Toole, and Gill in section 1.2.). Whilst the students surveyed for this study might not be aware of the technicalities of development as suggested by Rosenberg, their comments generally seem to support such notions of holistic development as seen for example in comments supporting a mix of subjects in their school programmes (which enable them to "think in different ways", p.122), and the opportunity to interpret and express ideas through various forms: vocally, in movement or singing, and through imagery (p.128).

It is the essentially **eclectic** nature of the drama experience that allows for the teacher and pupils to draw from the full range of human experience, and, as John Somers points out, provides the means "to pull together disparate facets of learning, acting as an effective catalyst for the integration of... often compartmentalised knowledge".³² This is perhaps one of the reasons that the teachers surveyed had difficulty in articulating the value of drama in terms of specific divisions or categories (p.95) - the integrated and eclectic nature

³⁰ In this chapter, it is generally assumed that in South Africa the teacher may be dealing with pupils at very different stages of development in a single class, but that he or she would generally be dealing with an age-range which tends to fall into the early-adolescence to early adulthood stages.

³¹ Rosenberg, p.5.

³² Somers, 1994, p.13.

of the experience is not conducive to categorical analysis.

A key facet of the integrated approach is that it is able to contribute to creative and imaginative development in pupils. The importance of challenging pupils' creativity has been strongly argued by Njabulo Ndebele who states that creativity is not something specific only to the writing of a poem, or the composition of music or sculpture - "it is also the inventing of a new technology, a new theory of management, or the reconfiguring of an entire society." He suggests that

If a major objective of a school curriculum can be to stimulate the creative imagination of the next generation, then I know of no other discipline that can best enable us to do this than the creative arts.

The intention here is not to make everyone a poet, but rather to let everyone participate in the activity of stimulating the imagination. The creative arts teach us to walk on uncharted avenues. They teach us to be open minded. They teach us to find possibilities and beauty in the most unlikely places, and by challenging orthodoxies, they tell us when old solutions have begun to be a problem. Seen in this way, the creative arts are not a peripheral activity, but are at the heart of our new society.³³

In this light, South Africa's development clearly relies on more than simply technical skill development - the nurturing of creativity and the imagination must be seen at the forefront of educating pupils.

As Chapter 4 shows, students tend to see creativity in two ways: firstly, as a fairly broad loosely defined term implying the chance to express one's individuality (eg. "Drama is fun because it allows one to be creative", p.118),³⁴ and secondly, as a more substantial empowering quality (eg. "in any place of work you will have to think creatively... show leadership... create new ideas", p.122).

³³ Njabulo Ndebele, "Arts Education and Social Innovation", a Keynote Address presented at the Ilitha Arts Education Conference, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 24 April 1995; proceedings published in the Ilitha Arts Education Conference Journal (1995), pp.22-25.

³⁴ This idea is developed by John Allen who suggests that "creativity" is a word "with no very precise meaning in psychology and one that in art we associate with self-expression" (Allen, p.28).

For teachers, creative expression through drama features strongly as having impacted on them personally, with comments suggesting that creative development impacts on many other aspects of life; as one teacher states: "it has inspired me to be creative in everything I do, but especially in relationships with other human beings" (p.99).

The above discussion refers to general notions of integrated development. The classroom-theatre experience must also be considered in terms of the specific **stages of development** that secondary school pupils are generally at.³⁵ McGregor et al point out that

Until about the age of thirteen, children are interested in the story line of plots of working within them. By the time they reach the age of twelve and thirteen there is an increased awareness of how they relate to others. There is also an increased interest in subjects such as authority and sex. By the time children are fourteen to fifteen many are becoming more critical about the kinds of work which the teacher is asking of them. There is also an increased tendency for older children to be more objective in the way they analyse their own and the teacher's work. By the time they are sixteen they are more aware of their possible roles in the outside world and become even more conscious about how they, as individuals, appear to other people when expressing their feelings and ideas. They have a more complex notion of reality than the ten-year-old and this is often reflected in the complex way they portray characters, or in the depth of their exploration. **The point here is that if teachers are aware that children are going through certain developmental stages they can take this into account when structuring sessions.**³⁶

In addition, as John Allen points out, it is in adolescence, and even late adolescence, that "a young person is most susceptible to emotional experience. He [or she] falls in love, turns against society, develops passions and prejudices".³⁷

An awareness of this development can be seen, for example, in the teacher survey where

³⁵ As mentioned, school standards are not always a good indication of age or developmental stage; the assumption made here is that the youngest in a class is likely to be age 12, 13-18 being more usual, but there may often be students going into the upper 20's.

³⁶ McGregor, Tate and Robinson, p.129, [emphasis mine].

³⁷ Allen, p.39.

a teacher suggests that drama is a positive experience for pupils in terms of interaction across the gender line (p.103). Because this stage of development is characterised by the development of sexual identity and the coming to terms with sexual orientation, collaboration through drama can provide a healthy form of social interaction. The emphasis on self development *in relation to* other people (p.100) also seems to highlight the value of the drama experience for pupils at this stage of development.

Perhaps the most detailed investigation into the relationship between drama and theories of development is to be found in the writing of Richard Courtney.³⁸ He suggests that of the developmental schemes put forward by psychologists, the most important in terms of education have been the **cognitive** (especially the work of Piaget), the **affective** (Erikson), the **moral** (Kohlberg) and the **empathic** (Hoffman), and, in considering the various "stages that they propose, he proposes a series of "dramatic stages of development".³⁹

Courtney points out that

Human action demonstrates the development of the human being **as a whole**. That is, actions of a person contain within them the elements of all other types of development... There is no thought which is purely cognitive or simply emotional. **Each thought is whole** -cognitive, affective, moral, aesthetic, empathic and psychomotor - **and it is expressed whole in dramatic action**.⁴⁰

This leads him to develop a scheme of developmental stages in terms of drama suggesting that dramatic action grows with maturation. He proposes four key stages, namely the

³⁸ Richard Courtney, Play Drama and Thought (London: Cassell, 1974) and The Dramatic Curriculum (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1980). Subsequent writings on drama and development have drawn strongly on Courtney's work. Investigation into notions of developmental psychology since the publication of Courtney's books indicate that the theories which he draws on are still the most influential; whilst aspects of these theories may have been challenged or re-considered, they are still generally accepted and do not seem to have been replaced by more contemporary alternative notions.

³⁹ Courtney, 1980, p.39.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, pp.43-44, [emphasis mine].

Identification Stage (0-10 months); the **Impersonation stage** (10 months - 7 years); the **Group Drama Stage** (7-12 years) and the **Role Stage - "The Student as Communicator"** (12-18 years).⁴¹ It is this last stage that is significant for us and suggests that the student's concept of *roles* is fundamental, initially in terms of appearance and later in terms of a realisation of his or her own personality bringing with it the recognition that his or her personality is multidimensional.⁴²

In the light of Courtney's proposal, two significant points emerge from student comments: firstly, the fact that drama requires pupils to draw so much on themselves helps to facilitate a process of 'role discovery' and 'role experimentation', for example the student who suggests that you have to reach down into yourself and in so doing get to know yourself better (p.123), implying perhaps that this drama process becomes a way of experimenting with role and coming to terms with personality. Secondly, the drama experience requires the pupil to work closely with other pupils who may not be their friends, thus challenging much of the cliquiness which characterises this age-stage as pupils determine roles and images for themselves. As one student put it: "you can choose your friends, but you don't get to choose the people in your drama prac" (p.120); whilst another suggests that the drama class provides a whole new group of friends who you may not socialise with normally but get to know very well (p.117).

This notion of 'role discovery' or 'role identification' has added significance in the context of a radically transforming society such as South Africa, where relations to other people are not only being clarified, but challenged at a fundamental level. As Courtney points out, society is created by people, originating in our thoughts and actions through a sense of internal and external realities; he refers to Martin Buber in I and Thou who suggests that

within a social interaction, I can treat you as an "it" - as an object. I do not "put myself in your shoes" and do not understand you as a human being. This he says, is not conducive to creating a good society. On the other hand, I can try to "put myself in your shoes" - put myself dramatically in your place - and treat you as a human person like myself. I am then treating you

⁴¹ *ibid*, p.44.

⁴² *ibid*, p.59.

as "Thou". This is the basis for a productive society.⁴³

In many senses, social interactions in apartheid South Africa encouraged the lack of understanding, identifying and empathising with other people. Today, "putting one's self in somebody else's shoes" becomes a crucial component of societal transformation. The notion of "I" and "Thou" links strongly to Louis Gill's conception of arts education described on p.39 in which the pupil draws on both internal and external resources and perceptions.

Thus, holistic development which takes account of each individual must be seen as a key way that the drama experience contributes to empowering pupils educationally. The second important aspect in terms of Challenge No 2 (as mentioned on p.152) is the insight into humanity that the experience provides. This suggests that together with subjects that develop technical skills and techno-scientific insights, the drama experience becomes a fundamental part of the curriculum for a full educational experience and qualitatively enriched education process.

Understanding and Insight into Humanity...

In recounting their own personal experiences of drama, 16 teachers mentioned that it increased their awareness of the world and people, developing a stronger social awareness, a deeper understanding of humanity, and increased sensitivity and tolerance (p.97). It is significant that this was expressed unprompted by a relatively large number of teachers highlighting this as a meaningful aspect of development. Of further significance are comments by students who suggest that such an awareness of humanity comes not only from the group processes that participants go through in working collaboratively with other people, but from the exploration of drama and theatre itself, studying plays, preparing characterisation, acting, improvisation, etc. This suggests that in the *theatricalisation* process human understanding and insight results from the combination of practical, theoretical and literary study.

⁴³ *ibid*, p.17.

This idea finds support in the writing of Gavin Bolton who suggests that

It seems to me that an art, in the main, must be dedicated to bringing about change. Either as a maker of art or a respondent to art, I can hope for new insights. And when the art form is **drama**, which draws on the complexities of life directly for its material, it is not unreasonable for me to expect some gain in understanding of life, my life and other people's.... What a teacher has to appreciate is that the (pupils) taking part in a drama do not set out with an intention to gain new insights, to break habits of conceptions and perceptions. It is in this respect that drama education differs fundamentally from traditional pedagogy. The participant's mental set in entering drama is **not** an 'intention to learn'. It is an intention to create or take part in or solve something.⁴⁴

This is crucial. The pupils learn not for the sake of having to learn, but through the process of engaging in creative exploration. Further, it is clear that insight does not necessarily result exclusively from dramatic action, but the process of reflection that is part of the experience. Jerome Bruner stresses that "drama... is an invitation 'to reflection about the human condition' This happens in drama not only because students experience but also because they reflect".⁴⁵

It is strongly argued that the insight into humanity that *theatricalisation* seems to encourage is crucial to the immediate challenges facing South Africa such as building democracy and promoting a genuine reconciliation among people, but also has longer term significance in ensuring the building of a tolerant and caring society: these have to be seen as educational priorities. In addition to nurturing such insights, the drama experience also seems to be well placed to contribute to the development of fundamental life-skills in pupils. This becomes another facet of the process of development and empowerment within the drama experience.

⁴⁴ Bolton, 1984, p.153.

⁴⁵ Brian Edmiston [quoting Bruner], "Structuring for Reflection" in 2D Drama Dance, Vol 12 No 1 (Winter 1992), p.2.
[Edmiston's reference to J Bruner is in relation to Actual Minds, Possible Worlds, 1986]. Bruner's comment clearly parallels Paulo Freire's notion of praxis.

Developing Life-skills...

There has been much debate in writing on EDT as to whether life-skills development should be the focus of a school drama programme or not, with some arguing that Drama has simply become a 'service subject' to fulfil the aims of subjects like Guidance.⁴⁶ Whatever the emphasis, however, (even if it is pure theatrical training), there can be little doubt that the drama experience contributes significantly, if often covertly, to life-skills development, primarily because of its participatory, creative, pupil-centered approach. Clearly one of the reasons that debates in this area have been so vociferous is **because** the drama experience is so conducive to life-skills development.

This is confirmed by both teacher and student surveys which highlight group and interpersonal co-operation as being a fundamental part of such development (pp.90, 95, 97, 119). They further note that the kind of creative and imaginative interaction that characterises the drama experience instills confidence and self-esteem whilst developing skills that are crucial to collaboration such as listening, brainstorming, and synthesising different ideas effectively. We should also take note of student comments which link these skills to the world of work, particularly because they require the pupil to engage in active decision-making, to communicate ideas, contribute to decisions, and experience the consequences of those decisions (pp.120-121). As a student points out, participating in the theatre experience gives one a chance to get to know and work closely with other people "but not in a stiff, formal kind of way" (p.131). This suggests that the classroom-theatre experience must be included as part of a learning programme if pupils are to be productive, co-operative members of a team who show initiative, rather than simply well-skilled parts of a machine.

The development of confidence and self-esteem appears to rate highly amongst both teachers (pp.90 & 97) and students (pp.119 & 127); teachers link it to the encouragement of "self-belief", the ability to tackle any task "whether drama related or not", confidence in potentially intimidating social situations (p.98), and contributing to creativity - as one

⁴⁶ See, for example, Brian Way (1967), John Nisbet (1983), Kathy Joyce (1983) and David Hornbrooke (1989 and 1991).

teacher suggests, it makes her more confident in what she does and how she feels as "an expressive, communicative, thinking, feeling individual". Students describe similar situations in which they feel generally more confident, but link this strongly to the need to work with other people and to communicate actively and physically in an atmosphere that is not intimidating (p.121). Through developing confidence in this non-threatening environment, the ability to interact confidently outside of the classroom environment is greatly enhanced.

Whilst all the teachers with the exception of one (who teaches at one of the specialist arts schools, quoted as Teacher B on p.14) strongly favour, or at least acknowledge, the development of life-skills through the **classroom** drama process, those teachers in strong support of the **school play** also highlight its importance in terms of life skills development (p.102), suggesting that it builds a close-knit group and encourages skills such as co-operation, responsibility, self-discipline, commitment, punctuality and creative expression. Perceiving the value of the school play in this way emphasises the need to see formal performance and improvisatory activities as points on the continuum rather than as either/or choices.

It is argued that if we see drama as a form of **arts education** then life-skills development needs to be seen as happening as an intrinsic part of this experience not as the primary aim.⁴⁷ We should heed David Davis' warning that "life-skills drama" (ie. drama programmes created specifically for life-skills learning in schools) is often "a sort of role-play (that) is not drama at all", but is "actually about encouraging young people to conform

⁴⁷ An example worth mentioning here is the DramAidE programme, which, in focusing on health education, has identified life-skills development as a primary aim, recognising that drama is one of the most appropriate ways to develop such life-skills. What makes the classroom-theatre experience different to an intervention like DramAidE, however, is that DramAidE is consciously trying to develop life-skills and thus requires very specific skills, methodologies and understandings on the part of the facilitator (see for example Kelly, 1996, whose evaluation of DramAidE Eastern Cape suggests that facilitators need more indepth training in terms of what is known about life-skills development such as in psychology; p.50). The drama teacher should therefore not be directly concerned with developing life-skills, but with providing a creative arts learning experience.

in an acceptable manner to the dire position in which they find themselves".⁴⁸ Davis' notion of "social and lifeskills role-play" appears to be similar to John O'Toole's notion of "quasi-dramatic" situations such as interview role-plays referred to in Chapter 1 (p.19); the difference in Davis' mind is that the drama teacher is working in an art form and that

even in initial role-play exercises (mother and daughter; employer and employee...) which seem to shade into the same sort of role-play as social and life skills role-play, the drama teacher needs to be working to distort the role-play away from **simulation** (ie. a one-to-one correspondence with real life) towards the universalisation of that experience, eg. a universal aspect to do with employers and employees, such as the strains of mutual independence, or, in mothers and daughters, the pressures of freedom and responsibility... (expressed through elements of theatre) such as tension, contrast and symbolisation.⁴⁹

Whilst it could be argued that drama for life-skills education need not be bound by straightforward simulation and that the developing of critical skills and broader human insights (as suggested in his example) could be seen as life-skills in themselves, the danger of such an approach becoming a part of the schools 'hidden curriculum' is a real one.⁵⁰

What becomes clear from the students surveyed for this dissertation is that pupils are not concerned with learning life-skills, but with **doing drama**. When pupils participate in a school production, for example, they do not set out to 'learn life-skills' - they set out to act, or make props, or design costumes; they set out to have fun, to create a believable character, to have presence on stage or to impact on the overall quality of the production. Their comments in the survey do not suggest that life-skills, which they see as part of the educational value of the subject, come from role-playing job interviews, but from participating in the play or doing creative improvisations. This seems to be something they

⁴⁸ David Davis, "Drama for Deference or Drama for Defiance?" in 2D Drama Dance, Vol 3, No 1 (August 1983), p.29.

⁴⁹ Davis, pp.30-31, [emphasis mine].
Davis appears to draw strongly on Dorothy Heathcote ("from the particular to the universal") and David Hornbrooke in this thinking.

⁵⁰ See Davis, p.33 for further comment on drama and the 'hidden curriculum' which seeks to "socialise young people in an 'acceptable' way".

understand better than many teachers, who, in an effort to justify the existence of their subject, shift the focus to purely functional skills training.

In short, what is being argued here is that in considering the contribution of drama to the education experience of pupils, the experience should firstly be seen to develop life-skills in crucial and active ways, and secondly, should be seen to do so as a form of arts education which in itself should become a significant component of school learning programme design.

Thus far, it has been argued that Drama is well suited to meeting two fundamental educational challenges in South Africa: creating a culture of learning and contributing to the development of pupils in ways that are empowering. The final challenge that will be considered here is the suitability of the classroom-theatre experience for dealing with diversity in the classroom.

CHALLENGE No 3:

***Syncretic Theatre* - EMBRACING DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

The history of South African theatre this century attests to the diversity of South African dramatic expression drawing on the diverse heritage of South Africa's population. Whilst the development of this theatre aesthetic has gone through various phases, influenced by socio-political conditions, changes and upheavals (eg. the urbanisation of Africans, the introduction of apartheid, and the rise of Black Consciousness), the multifarious influences on performance style, subject matter, visual aesthetic and creative process is evident. It is a theatre that Hauptfleisch discusses in terms of "syncretism, hybridism and crossover".⁵¹

From the vibrant roots of the 'township musical' in 1959 with the creation of King Kong, the development of workshopped theatre at Dorkay House, the rise of the professional black

⁵¹ Temple Hauptfleisch, "Syncretism, Hybridism and Crossover Theatre in a Multicultural Community: Theatremaking in (a new) South Africa" in Assaph (C, NO 8, 1992), p.161.

actor (eg. John Kani) and writer (Gibson Kente), to the 'poor theatre', physically challenging plays of the likes of Maishe Maponya, Matsemela Manaka, Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, Barney Simon, and the Junction Avenue Theatre Company, it is possible to identify a myriad sources influencing these works, including a Western influenced literary tradition, and the communal, participatory traditions of African oral culture.

The Theatre of Activity that is classroom drama is also syncretic, providing opportunities for *aesthetics of diversity*. It does not simply reflect or draw on diversity, however, but becomes an experience strongly borne out of that diversity and even interacting with it **critically**.

In reflecting on the context of diversity discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 and the teacher and student comments of chapters 3 and 4, two issues become clear: firstly, the drama experience has great potential for meeting the challenges of diverse classrooms, particularly in light of the need to develop programmes which are not assimilationist and which utilise diversity positively as a learning resource. Secondly, however, it also seems that many drama teachers may not be sufficiently equipped to deal with notions such as multiculturalism and multilingualism, and thus resort to assimilationist practices, or to relatively superficial attempts at encouraging some form of inter-cultural interaction.⁵²

In broad terms, it appears that classroom drama is in an ideal position to meet the challenges of diversity because of its experiential, holistic nature. In light of the discussion on diversity in Chapter 2, it becomes apparent that drama is able to constructively employ diversity for quality learning in at least four key ways: firstly, it provides a viable and affirmative **alternative to assimilationist approaches** in encouraging the active, democratic participation of pupils; secondly, it is able to meet the demands of **multilingual education** through engendering a respect for linguistic diversity and contributing to language acquisition in first and additional languages; thirdly, it can provide insights into a variety

⁵² It is likely that there are individual teachers who have really grappled with the issue and are creating drama lessons which are enriched by diversity, but comment seems to suggest that in the main teachers have not made the fundamental mindshift that working multiculturally requires.

of **cultural perspectives**; and fourthly, it assists pupils in coming to terms with **social issues** that impact fundamentally on the diverse life experiences of the group.

We should be conscious, however, that achieving the above through the classroom-theatre experience relies strongly on the teacher's approach and sensitivity to the pupils.⁵³

Beyond Assimilation...

Both teacher and student surveys suggest that drama teachers have either tended to adopt assimilationist policies (as has been the case with integrated schools generally) or have made an attempt at encouraging an appreciation of diversity through what Edwards and Redfern call "celebratory multiculturalism", that is, a focus on superficial differences such as festivals and food.⁵⁴ Whilst this is undoubtedly an important part of coming to terms with cultural diversity, it does not necessarily get to the root of multiculturalism which includes an understanding of, and respect for, different world views, and an appreciation of socio-politico-historical issues that fundamentally inform the cultural perspectives that make up South African society; thus, other cultures may come to be seen from the "exotic curiosity" perspective in relation to the dominant culture which inevitably informs the ethos of the school.

⁵³ For example, drawing on her experience of working with culturally diverse groups of tertiary students, Gay Morris points out that we don't necessarily all understand conventions of drama in the same way. She quotes Liz Gunner who, on the one hand, points to the "fluidity of cultural identity in South Africa... (with) shifting boundaries... in regard to black and white culture, rural and urban music, and popular and elite hegemonic culture" (Morris, 1996, p.38). Morris adds that on the other hand, whilst culture may be fluid, "every student is imbued with a language and heritage of cultural experiences: performances, ceremonies, stories, dancing styles and songs to which they consciously or unconsciously may attach relatively fixed beliefs and values which they may have difficulty in renegotiating". Her concern is thus that the teacher often assumes that the participants are all able to understand the dramatic and performance conventions with which he or she is working, and while all students might be clear on the nature of the drama experience (role, building belief, etc), it is in the **development of meaning** within the action of the pretend world that the cultural values which each of us bring to the drama may differ (Morris, 1996, p.41).

⁵⁴ Viv Edwards and Angela Redfern, The World in a Classroom (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1992), p.73.

This does not imply that the teacher needs to know everything about all cultural perspectives - inasmuch as he or she needs to prepare thoroughly for the drama experience in terms of setting a context and providing stimulus and guidance, he or she also has what Denise E Murray calls "unlimited resources" in the drama class.⁵⁵ She suggests that because students bring experiences, cultural values, life histories, language and cognitive ability with them to the classroom, the resources for the teacher to draw on are literally unlimited. Edwards and Redfern suggest that these "resources" include not only the pupils themselves, but the parents and the community.⁵⁶

What makes drama particularly conducive to this kind of approach is highlighted in teacher and student surveys in relation to the value of the subject, that is, the collaboration in artistic expression that it requires, the provision of a 'safe' environment for self-expression, the development of confidence and self-esteem and the active participation of pupils in the learning experience. A key way of contributing to a healthy respect for diversity is through turning the classroom-theatre environment into a multilingual setting, engendering a respect for multilingualism, promoting the development of communicative competence and contributing to language development and acquisition.

Communication and Language...

It is significant that a high number of teachers see the development of communication skills

⁵⁵ Denise E Murray, Diversity as Resource: Redefining Cultural Literacy, (Virginia USA: TESOL, 1992). p.259.

⁵⁶ They suggest that a "partnership with parents and community, and the critical role which this plays in ensuring that the languages and cultures of all children in the school enjoy the respect which they deserve" is crucial to a strongly rooted multicultural programme. Whilst they acknowledge that parent participation in school activities is often difficult at the best of times, there is nonetheless a potentially rich source of dramatic material to draw on in terms of stories, forms of cultural expression, traditions, and languages. In South Africa, drawing on the skills of local community artists could become another rich source for the teacher. For a similar perspective, see also Building Bridges: Multilingual Resources for Children (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1995).

as being the greatest value of drama in the multicultural or multilingual classroom,⁵⁷ whilst in general, student comments reflect a broad view of the ways in which a drama experience contributes to communication and language development including communicative competence, language acquisition, confidence, inter-personal skills, creative expression, body language, and listening skills.

In her Handbook for Language Teachers, entitled Drama as a Second Language, Suzanne Hayes points out that

Language helps us to communicate our needs within the community and to negotiate with others but it also most importantly allows us to express our own personality and uniqueness and to develop consciousness.... Students come from a diversity of social, cultural and educational backgrounds, and their language level is not the only factor which determines their effective communication and control over their environment. Giving students confidence is a vital factor and this confidence can only come when they are able to express their own personality through language.... How do you teach confidence? It is my belief that it can be achieved **by placing learning into an active context**. It is gained by doing and speaking in front of other people; learning to think on one's feet; taking risks; trusting one's own judgement and finding resources in difficult situations. Language and confidence develop out of first hand experience.⁵⁸

As Hayes suggests, placing learning into an active context contributes to key communication skills (such as confidence), but, very importantly, takes account of the linguistic diversity within the classroom. Encouraging the use of multiple languages in the drama class heightens the process of metaxis for pupils in the sense that the fictional context and the real context intersect at more levels, thus encouraging pupils to see multilingualism as being normal and positive, and highlighting the fact that being multilingual is an advantage for the individual. In addition to informing attitudes to multilingualism and encouraging the confidence to use multiple languages, such an approach helps pupils to acquire and develop language.

⁵⁷ Although we should take heed of Morris' observation that the teacher may not always be sensitive to cultural signifiers in terms of communication (Morris, 1996, p.38), and thus unwittingly impose an assimilationist ethic.

⁵⁸ Suzanne Karbowska Hayes, 1984, pp.4-5, [emphasis mine].

Whilst language development and communication competence should be activities that inform the entire school curriculum, it is significantly the arts experience provided by drama that is particularly effective because the attention of both teacher and pupils "is **primarily focused on the demands of the dramatic situation, rather than on the language being used**".⁵⁹ In exploring the relation between drama and language development Ken Byron refers to Margaret Donaldson who, in her book, Children's Minds, stresses the importance of "creating learning situations which 'make human sense', that is, are embedded in a context of human purposes and interactions".⁶⁰ Donaldson argues that

children are able to learn language precisely because they possess certain other skills - and specifically because they have a relatively well-developed capacity for making sense of certain types of situation involving direct and immediate human interaction.⁶¹

Byron points out that because our pupils have the capacity and desire to make sense of direct, immediate human interactions, drama is a valuable provoker of their language development.⁶²

This perspective is supported by Charlyn Wessels who compares the drama experience to "dramatic techniques" that might be used in language classes. She suggests that approaches often "condemn both the learner and teacher to artificial and contrived dialogues" rather than facilitating "genuine communication".⁶³ In trying to answer the question of what is meant by "**genuine communication**", Wessels suggests that

Genuine communication, first of all, involves speaking to another person, but not in the tidy A/B/A/B sequence that we see in typical coursebook

⁵⁹ Byron, p.26, [emphasis mine].

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.26.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p.26.

⁶² *ibid*, p.26.

⁶³ Charlyn Wessels, Drama, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.11.

dialogues. Most ordinary conversations contain hesitations, interruptions, distractions, misunderstandings and even silences. Secondly, our emotions are involved. Depending on the subject, a conversation could evoke the whole spectrum of feelings from violent anger to the tenderest love in the speakers - are they total strangers, friends, relatives, lovers, officials or student and teacher? Relationships will in turn be affected by the status of each individual speaking.... And finally, there is 'body language' - facial expressions, gestures, the positions of our limbs and non-verbal sounds, which can be as eloquent as words.... Many of these aspects of genuine communication are overlooked in much classroom practice or coursebook presentation.⁶⁴

An exciting way of providing opportunities for such "genuine" communication and of developing insight into cultural perspectives appears to be through the use of *story*; multilingual or bilingual story-telling and story-creation become an important way to use language in action encouraging the creative use of drama and experiencing of alternative world views.⁶⁵

Theatre Stories for Cultural Insight...

Story-telling is fundamental to the multicultural drama class in the sense that it gets beyond superficial differences to a dramatic approach that is able to encapsulate both **cultural specificity and universality**, and which often incorporates basic philosophical perspectives of the cultures from which they derive. Gcina Mhlope points out that in as much as stories may differ from culture to culture, highlighting specific views of humanity, often through animal allegory, there are also many commonalities between stories from different cultures, suggesting a sense of universality in human experience; she suggests that often "the differences are the beauty and colour of these stories".⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.11.

⁶⁵ An interesting example of this was observed at a Dram-Ed conference in Durban in 1996, at which one teacher demonstrated the use of Zulu story-telling traditions in his drama class. In addition to the immense theatricality, the use of specific onomatopoeic words and sounds highlighted the value and fun of an approach which is multilingual and multicultural.

⁶⁶ Tyrone August, "Interview: Gcina Mhlope" in Politics and Performance, ed. Liz Gunner (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p.281.

As Gay Morris points out, story-telling allows for "free spontaneous creation according to the needs of the moment, thereby creating meaning afresh every time";⁶⁷ this suggests that such an approach is not simply about the **re-telling** of traditional stories, but about the theatrical interpretations of such stories and the creation of pupils' own theatre stories. The sharing of stories is raised as an important activity by Ann Cattanach who suggests that

stories are an exciting way of reinforcing self-esteem in children, developing pride in a living culture by reviving the oral tradition... Exciting use of theatre and dramatic forms, music and dance enliven and broaden the whole cultural spectrum.... (They help to connect) past and present in powerful ways. Sometimes we have just brought and told stories together, other times acted the story or used it as a stimulus by the group to create another story or ritual which had meaning for the group...⁶⁸

This notion of encountering 'other people's stories' is conspicuously absent from both teacher and student surveys (although it may be implied in comments highlighting the insight into humanity that drama provides). Stories which highlight universal themes or specific cultural perspectives represent a specific form of story which helps to come to terms with diversity; another kind of story which is crucial to heightening insight into cultural backgrounds is to be found in the day to day social events that impact upon communities and individuals. In this respect, the classroom-theatre becomes a site for social exploration. This kind of experience does not find any emphasis in the surveys either although one student does mention that the experience helped her overcome ignorance about other people, understanding them better in terms of their backgrounds (p.136).

Social Issues...

Shifra Schonmann provides an interesting perspective on the possibilities for drama in a culturally diverse society in her case studies of drama work with Israeli and Arab pupils. She highlights three different models which impact very differently on the way interaction is encouraged in diverse (and sometimes hostile) groups of participants:

⁶⁷ Morris, 1996, p.40.

⁶⁸ Ann Cattanach, Drama for people with Special Needs, (London: A & C Black, 1992), p.56.

firstly, the "**docu-drama model**" in which political and ideological concerns are at the fore and linked very closely to real issues, (in South African terms, an example would be enacting Inkatha-ANC conflict). In a context where pupil relationships are not characterised by tension, this could become a very useful way of coming to understand the kinds of political background from which each pupil comes. However, where there is potential tension (such as between pupils who experience such conflict first hand as in the above example) metaxis is often difficult to achieve because issues may be too close to personal experience and therefore too painful.⁶⁹

The second model Schonmann terms the "**mosaic model**" and here enrichment is seen to come from self-expression and communal expression.⁷⁰ This draws on students' stories rather than elaborated documentary material as in the first model; it is based in active participation and improvisation, and is oriented more towards pedagogical matters rather than ideological themes. This approach possibly holds the strongest value in a South African context, especially in light of the need to engender a genuine reconciliatory spirit. Schonmann gives the following example of a drama workshop with mixed Jewish and Arab participants:

Erez is a Jewish child who took part in (the workshop); his brother was injured in a terrorist attack a year ago and he is still an invalid with a mask over his face because of the burns. Erez said, 'With me, there is a lot of hate but now after I worked in a group together with Salim [an Arab child] and we made faces in a distorted mirror together and laughed together, I feel that Salim is a kid like me. I want to do things with him, and perhaps we'll play soccer on Saturday at the sports ground together'.

For (teacher) Lea Caduri, Erez's word created an emotional peak and she burst into tears. Lea, like other teachers who worked with Erez knew how deep-seated was his fear of Arabs, how profound his hatred; and so how remarkable this reconciliation was, this ability to speak out before everyone,

⁶⁹ Shifra Schonmann, "Jewish-Arab Encounters in the Drama/Theatre Class Battlefield" in *Research in Drama Education*, Vol 1, No 2, September 1996, p.176.

Another example would be a very conservative school that has unwillingly opened its doors to all in which case very real tensions among pupils might exist. An understanding of political background would thus be crucial if they were to start to build bonds - in this case the docu-drama method would be less suitable, and better suited to schools less characterised by such tensions.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.178.

not from a script of a play... but from a real-life text.⁷¹

Fortunately, South Africa is not in the same state of civil war as Israelis and Palestinians, but we should be aware that there are nonetheless varying degrees of mistrust. It is part of the function of multicultural education to break through such mistrust, and clearly, drama is able to provide an effective method for doing this.

The final model that Schonmann explores is termed the "**kaleidoscopic**" model, in this case a play written by a playwright, rather than improvised material, with focus on the artistic quality of the dramatic act aimed at creating familiarity among strangers through the art form.⁷² Schonmann suggests that although in the short period of this project (6 weeks) youths did not form personal friendships, "the fact that they were able to communicate and create jointly... elaborate, high quality results, shows this to be an important basis for the kind of co-operation that should be applied more often".⁷³

According to Schonmann a major challenge in this case was that

on account of cultural differences, gaps opened in the reactions of Jewish and Arab students in the willingness to accept criticism, in public and social behaviour, in the different manners and the different style. The *durgi* (direct speech) of the *Tsabar* (nickname for an Israeli-born Jew) contrasted with the circumspect approach of the Arab...⁷⁴

This links very closely to Morris' point above that the teacher needs to be very sensitive to different styles of expression influenced by culture. In South Africa this is very evident in diverse classrooms often resulting in black pupils being completely dominated by white pupils (and this tendency is seen right through tertiary education and adult dealings). The example from the survey of the teacher who split the group on racial lines (p.134) is quite

⁷¹ *ibid*, p.182.

⁷² *ibid*, p.178.

⁷³ *ibid*, p.184.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p.184.

possibly an example of dealing with just this issue, but as Schonmann's example shows, there are various collaborative approaches that can be employed and that often it is a matter of experimentation on the part of the teacher, particularly because each group of individuals will be unique.

Schonmann's research has been quoted at some length here, but it contributes important perspectives to our study of drama in South Africa, highlighting the fact that in addition to facilitating understanding through developing insight into humanity, it is a strong awareness of social issues effecting the lives of participants that contributes to more constructive relationships.

Elyse Dodgeson adds a further perspective to our understanding of social-issues based drama through an example of her own work as a teacher in a south London school, where a large number of her pupils are of West Indian origin. She points to two examples of work that she has done with pupils, the first being a programme based in apartheid South Africa (through which pupils could come to terms with their experiences of being black in the UK and their own experiences of racism), the second, called "Mothers and Daughters", dealing with their experiences as women and issues such as menstruation. Dodgeson concludes from her experience that

‘social issues’ teaching should concern itself with areas that are very close to us (for example, menstruation) and those which are at a great distance (for example, black women in South Africa). The art is to personalize areas of experience which are at a distance and to view those which are near at home in a wider context.⁷⁵

What is significant about Dodgeson's approach is her realisation that effective work of this kind requires thorough research on the part of the teacher, or it tends to become repetitive and superficial when approached primarily on the basis of subjective feeling or intuition.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.112.

This has similarities to Dorothy Heathcote's notion of "dropping to the universal" except that here Dodgeson is also working from the universal to the particular. In Heathcote's terms, these processes allow identification with a wide range of human beings throughout time (Wagner, p.76).

Dodgeson undertakes research work in five basic forms: factual material; interesting dilemmas; vivid images; analysis of an issue; and personal testimony.⁷⁶ One can begin to see very clearly the elements of drama inherent in this approach - dilemmas which will provide dramatic tension, visual imagery, human perspectives drawing on story-telling, emotion and factual information. It also highlights the fact that although one works very closely with what pupils bring to the classroom, it is necessary to provide the stimulation and leadership that is key to creating the environment that is crucial to this kind of learning.

Thus it can be seen that the classroom-theatre experience is potentially able to contribute to the enriching of the learning experience through the ways that it embraces and utilizes diversity, but that this requires a conscious determination on the part of the teacher and the acquisition of skills to enable him or her to really maximise the use of the class as a resource pool.

5.3. Conclusions: The Classroom-Theatre Experience and Educational Transformation in South Africa

This chapter shows that drama is not only an effective way of meeting fundamental educational challenges in South Africa, but must also be seen as a crucial part of the formal school curriculum. As a society undergoing radical transformation, it is vital that the school experience is strongly rooted in qualitatively sound learning experiences which are pupil-centered and promote holistic education. As has been argued, drama offers strong possibilities for providing such learning experiences, and can contribute significantly to the building of a culture of learning, the empowerment of pupils and the ethos of multiculturalism.

Further investigations...

This research also raises a number of key issues which need further consideration, suggesting areas for further in-depth research: firstly, the need for **teacher education &**

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.97.

training and resource development is essential. Pre-service education of drama teachers needs to be critically reconsidered in terms of the demands of multicultural and multilingual education to ensure that teachers are suitably equipped, and appropriate drama students need to be encouraged to enter the field of education. The development of resource material in support of the drama syllabus is also a priority, for example the emphasis on various forms of South African theatre, which contributes fundamentally to notions of diversity, suggests the need for resource material on which teachers can draw.

Secondly, this research suggests that the notion of **the school play** needs to be reconsidered as being far more integral to the drama experience. This is not an easy task as the school play generally derives from a different source (amateur dramatics) than that of Educational Drama & Theatre and is therefore seen to serve a very different function. There can be little doubt that potentially, the play offers very valuable experiences to pupils, as the surveys confirm; two areas that need further investigation, however, are: firstly, the ways that **attitudes** can be changed from seeing the play as simply a public relations and fundraising exercise to a more integral part of the education process. Perhaps researchers also too often assume what administrators think, and a more systematic investigation needs to be undertaken? Secondly, the actual **choice of plays** that schools make, again often influenced by the need to draw big crowds in order to fund-raise, requires further investigation. Whilst there are undoubtedly some schools who choose plays carefully according to a number of criteria, there also appear to be many schools who resort to worn-out musicals with often questionable 'subtext'.⁷⁷ Choice of school plays also need to be considered in terms of a multicultural school ethos - rather than contributing to processes of assimilation, such activities can make a fundamental contribution to encouraging an appreciation of diversity and, further, can draw from a potentially larger source of material.

Thirdly, it becomes evident that there is a clear differentiation between the **number of boys and girls** that participate in drama. In the schools surveyed, and experience of tertiary

⁷⁷ An example that springs to mind is the popular Grease which seems to suggest that the way to 'win a man' is to change your hairstyle and clothing, start smoking and generally act 'cool'.

drama, far more girls than boys choose to participate in such an activity.⁷⁸ There are probably numerous reasons for this including the common impression that drama does not offer suitable career prospects for boys, the differing socialisations of boys and girls within the education system and society more broadly, and perhaps the perception that 'culture', in the narrower sense of the word, should be second to physical prowess for boys. This seems to be a priority area for further research.

Considering drama in relation to transformation requires more than simply making ideas about drama fit neatly into line with educational challenges posed; rather, it requires a consideration of the ways in which we conceptualise drama in an educational context. This raises a concern about the fact that the subject is still called **Speech & Drama** at schools; as shown in this thesis the notion of Speech and Drama derives from a different set of assumptions to those which inform notions of EDT, and these assumptions are generally unsuited to the kinds of pupil-centered, general education that is being argued for here. A strong recommendation that comes as part of this research is that the term be dropped in favour of "Drama".

Drama in South African schools...

In arguing for the inclusion of drama in the secondary school, **developmental arguments** have been used to highlight the importance of the subject to the education process more broadly. According to Cecily O'Neill, this developmental approach could be regarded as a **contextualist** justification for art which emphasises instrumental consequences,⁷⁹ as opposed to an **essentialist** one which emphasises the intrinsic arts experience.⁸⁰ This

⁷⁸ According to teachers surveyed by questionnaire, senior standard drama classes in co-educational schools comprise on average approximately 70% girls and 30% boys. It should also be seen to be significant that 11 teachers teach at girls' schools and only one at a boys school (the other 14 teaching at co-ed schools).

⁷⁹ In Elliot Eisner's terms: leisure, physiological development, therapy, development of creative abilities, understanding of academic subject matter (O'Neill, p.29).

⁸⁰ Cecily O'Neill, "Context or Essence: The Place of Drama in the Curriculum" in Issues in Educational Drama, ed. Christopher Day and John Norman (London: The Falmer Press, 1983), p.29.

brings us back to the debate that we started out with at the beginning of Chapter 1, in that it assumes a clear dichotomy in approach. Rather than seeing these 'justifications' as polar opposites, it has been argued that the two approaches form a part of the multiple and intricate ways of understanding drama in the classroom. As suggested, reconsidering the ways we think about drama and education requires two primary mindshifts: **one is in terms of a postmodern perspective in which we no longer consider drama in terms of binary relationships**; the other is **rethinking classroom drama's relationship to theatre**, that is, seeing it as a form of theatre itself. Thus, through arguing for drama's contribution through notions of developmental outcomes, yet placing these arguments firmly in the context of the **arts experience** an attempt has been made to *subvert* notions of polarity in terms of function and art, requiring a reconsideration of the terminology that is used.

The drama process becomes a process of *theatricalisation* implying an activating theatre; classroom drama becomes the "**classroom-theatre**" experience. And, it must be finally argued, it is this experience which becomes an integral and significant part of transforming the education system in South Africa into one that is deeply rooted in respect for human beings, that encourages an enthusiasm for learning, and that sees to the critical and holistic development of young people. For it is a process that requires imaginative leaps... creative expression... collaborative action... critical reflection... and in this way... the classroom becomes the theatre.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: *National Arts Coalition: Resolution 10*

Appendix B: *Teacher Interviews: Questions asked of teachers*

Appendix C: *Teacher Questionnaires: Questions asked of teachers*

Appendix D: *Student Interviews and Questionnaire:
Questions asked of students*

Appendix A

NATIONAL ARTS COALITION: RESOLUTION 10

Adopted: National Arts Convention, Durban, 1-4 December 1993.

RESOLUTION 10

ARTS EDUCATION: PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Noting

- a. the deficit view of arts education and that most children have never had or do not have any form of arts education
- b. the tendency towards vocational and technical education in the school system at the expense of arts education
- c. the general marginalisation of the arts at tertiary, teacher training and school levels
- d. the cultural bias in arts curricula, teaching methods and written resources

Believing

- a. that every child has the right to general formative education in the arts
- b. that skills learned in the arts are essential and transferable to other areas of academic and educational pursuit and
- c. that the future support and quality of the arts are dependent on children's exposure to and development in the arts from an early age

We resolve

- a. that arts education should be introduced as part of the core curriculum for all pupils from the beginning of their compulsory schooling to the first exit point
- b. that the integrity of the separate art disciplines and the value of the integrated arts experience be recognised
- c. that the value of arts education for learning across the curriculum must be promoted
- d. that all pupils should have the option of at least one arts subject as a matriculation option, and choice must not be disadvantaged by subject packages
- e. that teacher training courses should be transformed to accommodate arts education so that trainee teachers may specialise in one or more areas, but that all teachers be exposed to using the arts as a vehicle for broader education
- f. that in-service training and opportunities to acquire skills and experience in arts education be made available to teachers
- g. that a subcommittee be established to investigate means to accredit arts educators who cannot, under the present system, be formally employed in our schools eg. community arts centre- and NGO-trained educators
- h. to lobby for artists from various disciplines to spend time in schools sharing skills: speaking, demonstrating and presenting their work
- i. that the Coalition seeks representation on all important bodies dealing with transforming and redesigning the education system, and to strongly lobby for arts education
- j. that the Coalition establishes a permanent subcommittee on arts education to research, advise on curricula, make formal proposals for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels and for teacher training and to monitor and keep abreast of developments in arts education
- k. that education in the arts be guaranteed constitutionally
- l. that adequate venues and facilities for arts education be provided at all educational institutions
- m. that until the objectives set out above have been largely achieved, the role of independent arts organisations and individual practitioners and educators in providing non-formal and informal educational opportunities be recognised and encouraged

(adopted with 100% in favour)

Appendix B

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Questions asked to teachers who were interviewed.

SECTION A

Name:..... School:.....

1. 1.1. How long have you taught drama at high school level for?
- 1.2. Have you taught drama at any other level (eg. primary, tertiary, privately, etc)?
2. Have you ever studied drama formally: university, technikon, 'speech and drama' lessons, teachers training college? (Give details)
3. What age groups or standards do you teach?
4. How many drama periods per class per week do you teach?
5. Approximately how many pupils are there in each class?
6. Do you follow a departmental syllabus or have you devised your own syllabus? (Give details)

SECTION B

7. I'd like you to consider **your own experience** of studying drama, participating in plays, involvement in aspects of the theatre, etc. Do you feel that drama has affected your own life in any way, ie. has it made any impact on you personally? (Give examples)
8. How strongly do each of the following elements feature in your drama classes? :

a) role-play	j) text interpretation
b) improvisation	k) acting exercises
c) drama games	l) mime
d) movement exercises	m) voice work
e) dance	n) watching plays/performances
f) public speaking	(eg. outings to the theatre / video)
g) singing	o) a study of theatre history
h) puppets	p) studying play scripts (literary approach)
i) shadow theatre	q) visual arts (sets, lighting, prop making, etc)
- Other:** (please specify)

9. What are your conscious aims in planning your drama classes (generally)?
10. 10.1. Do you think you achieve these aims?
- 10.2. How do you assess whether you have been successful in achieving these aims?
(ie. any proof of success?)
11. How important is "the school play" for you?

SECTION C

12. What facilities do you use? (hall, classroom, etc)
13. What sort of support do you get from the school?
14. What is the general attitude of other teachers towards drama as a subject?
15. 15.1. Education in SA is in quite a fluid state at present - have you felt a need to adapt your work in any way to cope with changing circumstances?
- 15.2. If yes, In what ways have you adapted? (Please give an example from your own work)
- If *no*, Do you think you may need to adapt in the future?
16. Is drama as a discipline changing in any tangible way (in your opinion) in line with, or because of, other socio-political changes taking place in SA? (Give examples)

SECTION D

17. What are your hopes for drama in South Africa?
18. It has been suggested by many that it is ridiculous to expect more money to be spent on arts education when there are so many problems such as housing, health, employment, etc which need to be prioritised. What is your personal response to this?
19. Do you have any particularly memorable experiences from teaching drama that you would like to share?
20. Any further comments or questions you would like to ask.

Scale for Question 8

1. **Very Strongly** - I use this element more than any other; 2. **Strongly** - This element features in many of my lessons; 3. **Average** - I use this element in some of my lessons; 4. **Seldom** - I don't use this element very often, but may occasionally incorporate it into a lesson; 5. **Very Seldom** - I hardly ever/never use this element in my lessons.

Appendix C

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

Questions asked to teachers who were surveyed by questionnaire.

SECTION A

(Please tick your answer)

1. How many pupils are there at your school?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| a) less than 250 | d) 651 - 900 |
| b) 251 - 400 | e) 900 - 1100 |
| c) 401 - 650 | f) more than 1100 |

2. Is your school..... ?

- a) boys only
- b) girls only
- c) co-educational

3. Is your school..... ?

- a) private / independent
- b) model C
- c) DET
- d) HoD
- e) other (please specify)

4. What standards do you teach drama to?

.....

5. How many periods of drama per class per week do you teach?

.....

6. Approximately how many pupils are there in each drama class?

.....

7. What is the percentage of girls and boys taking drama as a subject?

(eg. of the pupils taking drama 70% are girls and 30% boys)

Std 6 - 7: Girls:

Std 8 - 10: Girls:

Boys:

Boys:

8. Does your school also offer drama as an extra-mural activity?

Yes / No

SECTION B

(Please try to complete the following questions as fully as possible. Answers can be continued overleaf if necessary.)

1. What are your conscious aims (generally) in planning your drama classes?

(Please tick one. If your primary aim includes more than one of the following, please number your choices in order of importance, number 1 being your first priority).

- a) Training performers for the profession
- b) The development of language skills
- c) Raising social awareness

- d) Building self-confidence in pupils
- e) Developing social skills ("life skills")
- f) Promoting creative expression

g) Other (please specify):

2. How do you assess whether you have been successful in achieving these aims?

.....

.....

.....

3. Consider your own experience of studying drama or participating in drama activities. In what ways do you feel that drama has affected you personally, ie. In what way has the experience made an impact on you as a person?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. How important is "the school play" for you (and why)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

SECTION C

1. How would you like to see drama incorporated into the secondary school system? (please tick one)

- a) as an extra-mural subject only
- b) as a subject offered only in special schools for talented pupils
- c) as an optional subject in all schools for pupils who are weaker in subjects such as science and maths
- d) as an optional subject from std 6 to 10 for all pupils
- e) as a compulsory subject in std 6 to 7, and an optional subject in std 8 to 10
- f) as a compulsory subject for all pupils, std 6 to 10
- g) as a subject integrated with the other arts as part of an optional Expressive Arts course
- h) other (please specify):

2. Please give reasons for your choice above

.....

.....

.....

3. In your opinion, what is it about the drama experience itself that is of educational value to pupils? (That is, the value of participating in drama as opposed to the value of using drama to teach other subjects).

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Do you have any experience of using drama in a multicultural and/or multilingual school context? Yes/No
4.2. If yes, what do you think the specific value of drama for such a context is?

.....

.....

.....

YOUR NAME:

YOUR SCHOOL:

Would you be willing to participate in an interview early next year? YES / NO

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix D

STUDENT INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions asked to students (each participated in an interview and filled in a short questionnaire).

1. Did you enjoy studying drama? Why / Why not?
2. Did you "learn" anything in drama? (It may have been fun, but do you really learn anything?)
3. If parents came up to you saying that their son or daughter wanted to study drama for matric, but that as parents they thought it would be better for their son/daughter to do something that would help them get a job (like science, for example), what would you advise them?
4. How has drama impacted on you personally?
5. [Asked to those who mentioned communication in a previous answer:] You mentioned communication and expression... how do you think drama helps in terms of developing communication?
- 6a. Tell me something about the pupil composition of your class (eg. how many boys and girls, were all the pupils white? etc).
- b. Did drama give you a chance to explore that kind of mix?; did you ever feel that drama was 'multicultural'? (Please give examples)
- c. Did pupils who had home languages other than English use those languages in the drama class? (Did you ever have a sense of drama being 'multilingual'?)
7. If you could make any changes to the school Speech & Drama syllabus what would they be?
8. Do you think "the school play" is important? If yes, in what ways?
9. Did drama at school prepare you for drama at university?
10. Any other comments or questions that you would like to ask.

QUESTIONNAIRE:**UNIVERSITY DRAMA STUDENTS WHO STUDIED DRAMA AS A SUBJECT AT SCHOOL***(This questionnaire is a preliminary to a more in-depth interview)*

1. Name:.....

2. Which school did you attend?.....

City/Town:.....

3. In what standards did you study drama as a formal subject?

(Please tick)

a) Std 6

d) Std 9

b) Std 7

e) Std 10

c) Std 8

4. What was the name of your drama teacher?

5. When choosing drama as a subject, did you hope to one day enter the professional theatre as a career? **YES / NO**

5.1. If no, what career did you have in mind?

6. Was your school... ? *(please tick)*

a) co-educational

b) Private / Independent

c) Model C

Thank you for completing this questionnaire - please bring it with you to the interview.

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