

Turning with Wa(y)ves of Learning
to use Drama in my Teaching

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date:

Abstract

Believing that learning occurs better when enacted I believe that learning to teach using drama would make me a better teacher by giving my learners the opportunity to learn by doing what they are learning. To test this belief, I endeavoured to learn to teach using drama by doing it. I compare the experience to surfing, another endeavour that is learnt by having the courage to go out and do it and learn from mistakes. Through using a self-reflective process, I learnt about learning, myself and teaching using drama. This dissertation presents some of the issues.

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“the universe changes when something as miniscule as a thought changes - because that thought is not merely in the universe, it is part of the universe.”

(Davis 1996 p.14 citing Varela Thompson and Rosch)

1.1 First In-troduction

I often find myself
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on the beach watching

the waves with trepidation. So many fears rolled into one moment that I can not say which is the greatest, or which is keeping me out of the water. Perhaps the real marvel is how often I do get in. Ignoring the male dominated waves, the size of them, the threat of sharks, the coldness of the water, what a clumsy oaf I feel walking in with big flipper feet, restrictive wetsuit and oversized pink floatation device / adrenaline tool / boogie board. Then I wonder why I resist when each venture brings such thrill, such a different perspective on the day. But I know. Confronting fears is no easy task, like going surfing, climbing mountains or writing a thesis. It seems so much easier to turn and run – why put myself through it all? But I know the answer to that too: What I learn will be so much greater. But I am

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..... on the beach watching the waves, looking for an unriden one, wondering if there is space for me, if it will be made – because I am not a man and my research is not clearly either empirical or rational. While the majority paddle in wondering how many waves they will get or what the waves are like, I am wondering what I will learn and how.

1.2 Who is Inside this Wetsuit

As a youngster, teaching was not something I dreamed of doing, but rather something I stumbled into as a traveller wanting a way to continue my travels. Aiming for a post graduate qualification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, I studied Journalism with a focus on English and ended up working in the journalistic field, first locally then abroad. My husband found me a job teaching when visa problems demanded a change of situation. Little did I know what a life changer it would be. Teaching became my primary desire, and travelling secondary. I fell in love with the children I was teaching and was enthralled by the constant challenge to do better than these children inspired. Perhaps having seen some potential, my employer endeavoured to nurture my development by charging the best teacher in the school with mentoring my development. We watched each other teach and spoke about each lesson and the children afterwards. Learning to teach in the East was a greater blessing than I realised. The fact that teachers are greatly respected provided a good environment and, as the demands on children are excessive, teachers need to create extremely creative and stimulating lessons to make learning more like play. The teachers I learnt from loved their work and were very good at what they did. I could not have asked for better role-models.

I believe in the interconnectivity of all things. My being in the water, my doing research, changes me, changes what I am researching, changes the world. Everyday teachers have an effect on learners¹ and they take that home with them or into the playground and inflict what they feel, what they have learnt in ways that makes one want to stay out of the water for fear of the possible consequences. Instead, most choose to ignore the effects of their influence and simply do what they can within their reach. I do not. I choose to live consciously, to be critically aware of

¹ From here onwards I refer to students in general as learners, and the university students I worked with as students, for clarity more than any other reason.

as much as possible and to work with my situation as actively as I can to make a positive contribution based on as much knowledge and experience as I can access. I chose to do this research, not primarily to contribute to a body of knowledge outside of myself but to contribute to my knowledge, improve my teaching practice on a daily basis, and through this have a greater impact on those that come into contact with me, especially learners. It starts and ends with me wanting to become a better teacher.

1.3 How and Why I Came to Experiential Research

I came to this beach through the (waves I surfed /) courses I did last year, in which we were exposed to ideas, which claimed I could be riding waves in another way with greater benefits for myself and those I interact with. Firstly, by being more aware of and in my practice, I could have more options in my daily exchanges and perhaps make more progress rather than repeating destructive and pointless pedagogical habits. This was

➤ How would these theories work in practice?

related to theories of learning through doing which were also linked to the use of drama in education. As first encountered in theory these ideas made sense to me, and emotionally the possibilities motivated, interested and excited me, but I wondered about the practical implementation and actual benefits. These encounters initiated the incentive for me to create a research situation in which I could test out these ideas. I decided to focus on my own learning in a context that would allow for experiential learning, specifically with regard to using Drama in Education. My reasons for walking into this sea this way are many and various.

1.3.1 My Own Teaching Journey

1.3.1.1 Improving practice and person

One way to extend my teaching was to learn another skill. I chose to learn to use drama in my teaching, which necessitated learning about drama as I had very little experience in the field. Another way was to become more aware of my practice, my

learners, my impact, my goals and direction. By knowing myself better I would have a more solid frame from which to act upon and within the world. I believe the benefits of this would grow exponentially from every person I come into contact with as well as accelerating and enhancing my learning. Research is a form of learning and in any research, the person conducting it is likely to learn the most. To focus my area of research, and hence learning, on that which I felt will be of the most benefit, firstly to myself and then to others, seemed an obvious thing to do.

1.3.1.2 Learning about Learning.

Part of the benefit of using drama to teach is that it uses experiential methods of learning; learners enact what they are learning; they actually 'do' the information rather than simply trying to absorb it from hearing or writing about it. Similarly I am hoping to learn through the methodology of my study. By doing what I am learning I test on myself the theories I aim to work with and I can learn about what my learners go through when I create situations that enable them to do what they are learning.

Coming from a government school, I was not ever exposed to much learning through action as a pupil. This was however my main method of learning to teach in my own (and other teacher's) classrooms. That teachers feel they learn the most in their first year of teaching is well known. As a teacher with no experience or exposure, as a learner, to this method, I believed the most interesting way for me to learn how to use drama, would be to do an experiential learning course. By being aware to the extent that I re-searched my experiences as I went through them, I could multiply the amount I learnt about learning, and teaching within the context of Drama in education. Kolb (as cited by Weil & McGill 1989 p.9) sees experiential learning as the process that links education, work and personal development. To me this research will be a continuous process linking my past experiences with present and future possibilities. Aspects of my initial research have generated questions as to what experiential learning is or should be.

1.3.1.3 A Diversity of Ways of Knowing and Learning

Being comfortable in a post-modern world and frustrated by the perceived limitations of analytical approaches to thinking², I have a desire to explore other forms of knowledge and learning. “Cognitive science is waking up to the simple fact that just *being there*, immediate coping, is far from simple or reflexive. Immediate coping is, in fact, the real ‘hard work’ since it took the longest evolutionary time to develop” (Varela 1999 p.18). By trying to be aware of my learning while doing a course involving experiential learning, I put myself in a position to study my own immediate coping ability in a fairly unfamiliar environment. A

“Philosophers and scientists who study the mind have grossly neglected skilled behavior, which is immediate, central and pervasive, in favor of exploring deliberate intentional analysis. To counter this imbalance we must impress upon ourselves how much of our lives is spent in skilled behavior – working, moving, talking, eating – and how little is spent in deliberate intentional analysis.” (Varela 1999 p.23)

class can not be planned down to every last detail because so much depends on learners, their response and feedback. As a result, I constantly find myself in moments trying to (re)act appropriately (to cope) using what I know. This will facilitate my research about learning in general and specifically about my own learning as I notice and then attempt to work with and improve my coping abilities.

1.3.2 The Teaching and Learning Experience of Others

1.3.2.1 Learning through Drama

During a course on the Communicative Aspects of Teaching, I presented a seminar on the use of Drama in Education. My research for the seminar started with the theories and stories of Dorothy Heathcote as presented by Wagner (1979) and included a variety of other practitioners using drama to teach. The outcomes of their stories astounded me, and the possibility that I could do the same inspired me to learn more about how to use drama in my teaching, and to discover whether the possibilities really are as great as some of the following suggestions:

- Children learn better as they test out (for themselves) the knowledge being presented, by doing it. The medium is the human body which provides for a

² See Chapter. 2

unique learning situation not found in many other learning frameworks, but extremely prevalent in life. Even in the other arts, such as music or visual art, the medium is outside of the body (Morris 2002).

- Doing drama in a classroom is a social project. It points to and develops communication as children struggle to find and use the language needed to contribute to and develop the drama. In my preliminary research a first grade child stood up, looking at his fingers and holding the first as he made his point, then moving on to the next finger as he tried to articulate his second point and then progressing on to the third and fourth as he struggled to find the language (using his hands) to explain and remember all of his ideas, hoping they would be accepted and followed by the class.
- Group work at solving problems teaches children to work together proactively. Maxine Greene, another lone female surfer, talks about, “creating situations in which diverse persons name what stands in the way of their becoming and their community” (Greene, 1991 p.42). If our desire is a just society, the people of our country need to be able to say what problems they face and then to work as a group, as a community, towards solving them. To be able to name barriers that we often do not even see takes a degree of critical thinking which needs to be developed alongside the necessary problem-solving skills. Drama as a teaching method develops these abilities through acting out imagined situations in which obstacles or predicaments are spontaneously generated and then analysed and circumvented or resolved by the group. This is useful to a democratic country wanting active citizens.
- Drama is the ideal tool for developing imagination and abstract thought because it works in the realm of the metaphorical, but with the human body. Primary school children are grounded in the concrete. Drama creates an imaginary situation where that situation becomes the concrete, allowing for hypothesising (Morris 2002). This ability to imagine and feel what it is like to

be another is how one starts to treat others with “as much respect as which one treats oneself” (Egan 1992:55). Through imagining they can be something or someone else, children are more able to understand others’ as well as their own experiences. This results in growth in the learner’s understanding about human

Through drama “the world of fantasy and make believe finds a disciplined outlet, and this helps clear the confusion in the minds of many children between fantasy and reality.” (Morgan 1968:10)

behaviour, themselves and the world they live in. In reference to Dewey, Greene says, “Imagination, which is a cognitive capacity, is what frees persons to look at things as if they could be different ... young persons have to be aroused to stop and think on occasion. They have to be enabled to look through the windows of the actual, to perceive what might be, perhaps what ought to be” (Greene, 1991 p.14).

- The power can shift, in the classroom, towards the learners as they direct the drama and learn to shape their own destiny rather than always following a teacher’s directions.

Learning occurs on so many levels: factual aspects about the tale they are enacting can be learnt on a deeper level because they are being enacted; social skills can be developed through the interactive and communicative skills needed for the group to solve a problem. Primarily, they learn to listen to each other and communicate their ideas. Although I do expect to discover something about these possibilities, they are my motivation and not the object of this dissertation.

1.3.2.2 The Demands of Teaching with Drama.

The new curriculum in South Africa requires the teaching of Drama. One of the outcomes of this study will be a measure of insight into how easy or difficult it is for experienced teachers to learn to use drama in their teaching having never done it before. (It does have to be born in mind that I approach this with dedication, desire to learn and the time to spend learning – that many other teachers may not have.)

Ultimately I would like to motivate other teachers to take a similar path and to teach by creating situations for learners *to do* what they are learning because I believe it is

a fundamental way of learning. Research that presents facts and figures may impress teachers but in the same way that my readings of successful drama teaching situations have inspired me to venture this way, I hope my research / story will inspire other teachers to attempt a similar path.

Experiential learning (or action research / learning as it is also referred to) seems to be a growing phenomenon. We learn well by doing things. It is easier to remember and theory is more meaningful after experience. Linked to this is the idea of using drama to teach, a method based on the theory. However, although drama has been used in this way for over a century, it is still an exclusive endeavour and I wonder why this is so. I believe more children deserve the opportunity to learn through doing, and the more research undertaken about this, the more likely it is that the practice will develop.

1.3.2.3 Theoretical Contribution

Although I do not attempt to create a theory of educational development, I hope that this study will contribute to the development of “a theory which can adequately describe and explain the educational development of individuals” for which Whitehead (1989 p8) appeals. My experiences up to the beginning of my research lead me to believe certain theories would make for good teaching practice. By exploring questions around these theories and how they operate, I will open the space for creating and substantiating a personal theory with regard to both teaching and learning in my own practice. This falls in line with Whitehead's (ibid. p.8) call on educational academics to “make a claim to know their development and subject it to public criticism.” Zuber-Skerrit (1993 p.49) believes “professionals should develop their own theories on which to base their practice and action.”

1.4 Missing Waves

There seem to be many books providing guidelines for studying others on an experiential learning path, but I have not found many documenting researchers (specifically teachers) on their own experiential (action) learning path, especially with regard to their learning a new teaching skill, with an even more extreme paucity focusing on the use of drama. The closest work I found is a paper titled *Wo/a ndering through a Hall of Mirrors... A Meander through Drama Facilitation* by Linds presented in a book containing papers presented at a conference in Canada called Unfolding Bodymind; Exploring Possibility Through Education (Edited by Hocking, Haskell & Linds, 2001). In it Linds explores the phenomena of his experiences facilitating improvised drama. His theoretical approach is very similar to what I aim for in terms of the “unlearning of the habits of mindlessness, and beginning to pay attention to what I am thinking / feeling / doing in the moment of (inter)action with others” (Linds 2001, p.16). His perspective however comes from 20 years of experience as a Drama facilitator. I aspire to his skill as a facilitator and observer of himself in the process and will quote from his writing. Whereas his paper “explores the phenomena of his experiences facilitating improvised drama,” (ibid. p.16) as a qualified drama practitioner focusing on the finer aspects of his awareness and learning through his facilitation, mine focuses on my learning as a beginner and this will be my contribution.

It was a relief and an inspiration to find Unfolding Bodymind as the work is written in a way in which I like to write (with visual content contributing to the meaning of written words). It is based on theories I subscribe to (enactivism, holistic education etc). The book contains a number of papers on enactive learning through teaching, but as I said, nothing on the conscious learning of a new skill as a teacher, either experientially or otherwise.

Research can have many results and it can have none. As a teacher, the ripple effect of improving my methods by learning another skill outweighs any other research I could imagine doing. But although learning another skill is not research, it is only one aspect of this dissertation. The research is in the conscious investigation of learning in general, and mine in particular as well as how that relates to my teaching and understandings of it.

In summary, three basic ideas got me into the sea to tackle the waves you'll read about in this paper. Firstly with regard to teaching, the importance of becoming and being aware as a teacher is a skill I wanted to work with and improve. Secondly using drama in teaching presents amazing possibilities and lastly, linked to that, the aspect of learning (about learning) through doing, which requires being aware. A wonderful hermeneutic circle in which each element shapes and is shaped by the others.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

Education is "about sensitivity to and transformation in others. The only certain place to stand is in the most unlikely place: ourselves" (Mason 1994, p.5).

2.1 No Traditional Mould

As a female boogie boarder in the midst of male surfers or a researcher examining my own experiences, I do not fit into a traditional mould. By choosing to research my learning, I place myself within a subjective framework that rejects positivist notions of objectivity with regard to either passive analytical learning of facts or (re)searching external 'truths'. As Davis (1996 p. 191) cites Smith "a clear split between subjective thinking and objective thinking is ridiculous because my subjectivity gets it's bearing from the very world I take as my object." Through opening myself to an active negotiation of meaning and learning, I find myself working with interpretations within a dialectical epistemology in which I actively keep who I am (ontology), in line with what I know, (epistemology). I believe that anyone claiming to know exactly how learning occurs would be deluding themselves and perhaps others too. Learning, as in how we come to know, is, like many other aspects of life, too complex for any one person to fully know and understand. At best there are many theories, some contradicting others but perhaps all having some validity in certain situations. In this situation I will attempt to uncover my own processes of learning, thereby accelerating the specific of my learning and perhaps shedding some light on the general process of learning.

2.2 The Roots of Conceptions of Knowledge

Our conceptions of knowledge and learning overall are still firmly entrenched in the roots of modernist thinking that grew from revolutionaries such as Bacon, Descartes and Newton around the 17th century. Prior to that, "the world was seen as an ecological whole, of which one was part. This world was not believed to be fully knowable...the universe was believed to be enchanted" (Davis, Sumara, Luce-

Kapler 2000, p.162). The dominance of religion and superstition meant the way people thought was “characterized by the interdependence of spiritual and material phenomena and the subordination of individual needs to those of the community” (Capra 1983, p.37).

The Age of Enlightenment shifted thinking towards analysis with a separation of things into their components. Technological metaphors of the time reinforced this shift. Comparisons were made with machines and this tendency persists in, for example, how the brain is likened to a computer. Machines are complicated and can be understood by learning about their parts. Through this analogy, it came to be believed that knowledge (truth) could be clarified and understood by separating it into its components and understanding them. While this has had benefits in the scientific fields, it is not adequate in the social sciences. Recently, the distinction between complicated or complex phenomena has been used to illustrate how processes such as thinking involve so many variables that they cannot be understood by understanding their parts. They are too complex.

The analytical tendency to research and understand learning by “cutting apart” influenced and was influenced by ideological separations - mind and body, self and other, subject and object - which still have an impact today. The aim of analysis was objective study, primarily because Descartes believed the senses could not be trusted and so tried to find a way of knowing without using the senses. What emerged from him and others were rational and empirical methods, both of which rely upon this separation of the knower and the known in the search for irrefutable truth. Today, knowledge claiming to come from an empirical, or rational objective, or scientific perspective is still viewed as superior to that gained by experience, i.e. subjective experience (Breen 2000, p 96). A growing body of theory, however, is interrogating the problem of objectivity, especially in relation to the humanities and more particularly, teaching and learning.

2.3 Encompassing the Roots

2.3.1 *Enactivism*

Far from being able to separate self from other, knower from known or mind from body, “Merleau-Ponty suggests that the body is that which renders the mind and world inseparable... the body is our means of belonging to the world, a world that shapes us and a world that we participate in shaping” (Davis, 1996, p.9). The theory of enactivism stems from the work of Maturana and Varela (1988), Varela Thompson and Rosch (1991), and is based on the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962). Davis links Merleau-Ponty’s idea to that of Varela, Thompson and Rosch who define what they call one’s structure (body, or self) as that which “comes about from the combined influence of biological constitution and one’s history of interaction in the world” - a blend of inner and outer influences (Davis, 1996 p.9). Maturana and Varela (1988) illustrate this idea with an analogy of a raindrop which, as it slides down a mountainside, affects and is affected by the slope down which it rolls. “That raindrop’s experience is its incontrovertible truth, though rain falling on an opposite slope finds quite a different path. Thus our ‘reality’ is interactive. Moreover, our reality is mutually constructed” (ladylucero 2001). If we see the same thing, it is because we have agreed on it.

Therefore the basis of cognition and hence learning is not to be found in the rationalist “I think” nor in the empiricist “I observe” but in the enactivist “I act.” Acting encompasses both thought and observation: acting presumes both actor (subject) and acted upon (object)...acting demands reunions of mind and body and subject and object ... cognition is inseparable from and fundamental to perceptions and action (Davis 1996, p.12).

2.3.2 A Subjective Thread

This search for knowledge based on a study of my learning involves looking at my own actions without a single question to which any one answer can be found. It is an evolving process that changes direction and focus as my circumstances change and my experience grows. Questions and answers emerge in an ongoing process where one answer usually begs another question and then even more possible answers. I move back and forth between planning, acting, observing and reflecting on issues that arise. These questions and answers are sites of growth and learning that do not form a linear progression, although I often find myself trying to fit them into one.

Rather there are a number of strands that form the fabric of my understanding. A tug at one necessitates changes in others, and rather than coming to a single conclusion, I aim for a greater understanding of changing possibilities. This study is all interpretive as it is based on my subjective experience which is irreducible. Any account of my experience is an interpretation and any analysis of that, an interpretation of an interpretation. Therefore it is hermeneutic both by design and by choice.

2.3.3 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics forms a fundamental framework for my understanding and interpretation, in that I cannot objectively study anything, as I am always a part of what I study and thus have an influence on it. Rather than the separation of this or that which has become the norm due to Cartesian duality, my study seeks a “richer understanding through problematising the distinctions and boundaries that tend to be drawn” (Davis 1996 p.18). It is a study of interpretation, in how I come to know what I know, how I use that knowledge, how I – as opposed to others, see it and how I work at improving my skills through learning and planning. It is hermeneutic in this acknowledgement of past, present and future understandings as well as in my acceptance that there is no external truth to be found, rather “truth keeps happening” (Davis 1996, p.19 citing Weinsheimer). In other words the ‘object’ of hermeneutic

inquiry is a moving target” (Davis 1996, p.22). In studying my own actions (with specific regard to my learning), I hope to seek their sources, understand as much as possible and try to make changes where necessary and desired - using the discipline of noticing and action learning³.

On a daily basis teachers find themselves responding to unpredictable situations in a way that is not based on careful thought and considered response, but rather on years of experience, of enaction, on simple coping. Varela (1999 p. 9) calls, “such readiness for action a *microidentity* and its corresponding lived situation a *microworld*.” These are continually changing as we move through each day. How I handle these changes, and respond to my changing microworlds will contribute towards understanding myself, my teaching, thinking and learning. Thus I find myself in a hermeneutic circle (Davis 1996, p.21) moving between the particular of the microworld in which I find myself and the general of the literature I refer to as I attempt to analyse and theorise about the teaching situation. The particular reveals the general and the general feeds into the particular, both highly dependent on my interpretation of different situations.

2.4 Drama in Education

As a teacher, I believe that what I aim to teach is best done as an exploration with my learners where we all get to experiment and work with the information in a dynamic and active way. I have chosen to focus my learning on the use of drama within the context of education for the reasons set out in the introduction. In the following section I shall examine the theoretical framework of using drama in teaching and learning.

³ See Chapter 3 Research Methodology

2.4.1 Teacher – Transformative Intellectual or Transmitter of Information ?

While Davis and Sumara (1997 p.109) maintain that “Knowledge tends to be discussed as if it were an object – some third thing – to be grasped, held, stored, manipulated, and wielded rather than being associated with our acting and existing in a biologically and phenomenologically constituted world,” the same applies to traditional views on “getting an education” (Gadamer 1975). The lecturer is viewed as the one holding the knowledge to be passed on to the learners, with all their knowledge and experience back grounded. Using drama in teaching requires and contributes towards Giroux’s theory (1988) of the teacher as a transformative intellectual, rather than a transmitter of information. Teachers using drama as a method of teaching often succeed more as participants than as directors. They coach learners who are actively engaging in the solving of a problem they have chosen to explore. They nudge them to consider certain implications, they enrich their language, they push them to greater depths of understanding and help them reflect and come to a better understanding of themselves and of people in general. The last thing they are is ‘living books’ trying to drum ‘knowledge’ into passive receptacles.

Perkins (1994, p.222) sees one of the roles of a teacher as “an intellectual coach whose responsibility it is to help learners learn to solve problems and strive for intellectual excellence through careful, critical analysis and creative decision making.” Teachers are on far more shaky ground here than when standing in front of the class parroting information. Often they cannot guarantee where a lesson will end up as the medium of drama is the (en)actors in all those cases where the dramatic activity is more or less improvised – even if it is planned.

2.4.2 Learners - Passive Receptacles or Active Shapers ?

Learners are put in the driving seat, choosing where they want things to go and, most importantly, using the knowledge they have, to go further. This allows for an often serendipitous situation where that which is most relevant or needed by the learners emerges from the dialogic situation that is created, rather than decided and enforced by what the teacher imagines is most needed. The power shifts. Children learn to shape their own destiny, engaging with their environment in a group, from a young age, in secure surroundings. In the pretend world of dramatic improvisation, if they learn that they have the power to change and solve problems, they are more likely to try do something about things they are not happy with in the real world. The power dynamic in the classroom needs to be more fluid, more dynamic, but as long as learners are raised in a hierarchy where they are at the bottom with little say, they will struggle to develop the skills to engage with others on an equal footing.

Heathcote describes what she does as, “Not creative dramatics, role-playing, psychodrama, or sociodrama, but a conscious employment of the elements of drama to educate – to literally bring out what children already know, but do not yet know they know” (Wagner 1981, p. 13). The use of drama is often stifled by the conception of ‘putting on a play’, which drama processes are not, although they can lead to play making. Putting on a play is more about showing what they know than actually learning by doing their own play for no one else but themselves. Learning through drama is more about free-flowing improvisation as learners test what they know, in a role and sometimes out of role.

To start with, Wagner (1979) explains that Heathcote does not believe in directing drama, she *evokes* it by letting the children make as many of the decisions about the drama as possible. This helps motivate them because, essentially, the drama is what they are interested in exploring. The traditional power and dominance of the teacher is not present; the learners are (to a large extent) in the driving seat and the teacher

on far more tenuous ground, as what was intended is not always guaranteed to be the result. The evoking she does is mostly with questions. She takes what children say seriously and leads to them to greater depths, finer detail and new understandings through questions. Heathcote has a marvellous ability to think on her feet and, through questions and the children's directing, bring them to a point of new understanding.

2.4.3 Class is a Stage

How we handle each verbal interaction with learners in the classroom contributes to, reaffirms or contradicts our own and our learners' understanding of life and language and how it all works. Children learn from a young age to communicate with gestures more than words. Before they can understand spoken language, they are interpreting and reacting to physical gestures. As Warnock explains, "There is always more to experience and more in what we experience than we can predict" (Warnock 1976, p.202). In this sense, the class is very much like a stage where everyone's roles are acted out and, in this manner, entrenched through daily practice and reinforcement. Through acting the traditional role of a teacher, the teacher models and naturalises what children come to see as a teacher's role. The implications of this are greater than is initially perceived because the traditional role of the teacher is that of bearer of knowledge, and the learners are characterised as passive receivers, with knowledge being an unproblematic parcel to be passed on (usually without question). Perkins (1994, p.225) draws on Brechtian dramatic theory to illustrate how, "theatre's problem is education's problem." Contemporary theatre and TV,

"allows the audience to view 'realistic'... characters through the open 'fourth wall'...of a room, house...etc.... Audiences are passively induced by the plot to assume that the heroes experiences are universal and, thus, like theirs. Consequently they fail to challenge the social or political conditions that limit the extent to which human experience is universal and, thus, the extent to which audiences can identify with the characters" (Perkins 1994, p. 225).

In the same way, passive learners fail to challenge, engage or realise the significance of the knowledge that is “passed down” by the teacher who is “expected to play the role of heroic expert, knowledge holder and disseminator” (Perkins 1994, p.226).

Using drama to teach, however, allows the teacher, like Brecht, to nudge the learners to go beyond first impressions and test situations out for themselves by means of role-play. It is an ideal method of interacting with knowledge and learning – it allows for active engagement rather than passive reception or rejection. It brings words and actions together.

2.4.4 Bringing Word and Movement Together

The theory of bringing word and movement together forms an important foundation in role drama. Burniston and Bell (1972, p.7) cite Montessori as saying, “Movement has great importance in mental development itself, provided that the action which occurs is connected with the mental activity going on.” Burniston and Bell (1972) also believe in and use movement to enhance and aid language learning. Movement is often used as a foundation for, or introduction to using drama in the class.

Sometimes this is done with mime, sometimes with music. Stabler (1978) gives an example where learners are talking about a monster. First they make monster sounds and then monster movements and expressions, before making monster actions and combining them with the sounds in small groups. Creating this imaginary effect seems to be a vital aspect of building belief, which I come back to later.

Another similar situation led to the children talking about how to deal with such a monster, and whether feeding it a poisoned human was an option. The discussion centred, “on two real moral dilemmas; the value of one human life, and the right to choose, freely” (ibid. p.95). It is, I believe, this step-by-step process that brought the children to a point where they could discuss such an issue with complete absorption.

2.4.5 Role-Playing

An extension of bringing words and movement together is role-playing another person or character. Taking on a role is something that we do almost everyday of our lives. People 'act' differently in different situations: using different language, posture, tone, body language and clothing depending on whether they are in a classroom, a bank, at home with family, friends or business associates, with children or with adults. The success of those interactions depends on how well we assume the expected "role". Heathcote sees drama not as something special, but as a "technique most ordinary people regularly employ as a way of coping with a new or unsettling experience" (Wagner 1979, p.16). In order to prepare ourselves for an upcoming situation or interaction, we role-play in our minds possible events, questions and how to deal with them. We go over traumatic or embarrassing moments again and again until we come to accept and feel more comfortable with them. Role-play is a tool for coming to terms with any difficult, old or new situation. No role is automatic; we are socialised (taught) how to take on each and every one, either by watching and internalising or through overt instruction, as in a parent communicating to their child what is acceptable and what is not through the child doing it the wrong way and being corrected.

Drama and role-playing with children provide the opportunity for them to understand the world around them and to develop the tools with which to handle new situations. Essentially it is a way to bring what is being taught to life, to illustrate how it applies to life, to give learners a chance to test things out and see if they really do make sense, to come to a new understanding and importantly for a teacher, to review something that has been taught by giving it physical expression. "Drama then is a way of thinking about what we are learning and relating it to what we already know" (Nixon 1982, p.90). Knowing something and acting it out are two very different things; doing something makes it more real because in the process of converting thoughts into

actions new light is shed on that knowledge. and, as that knowledge has to be put into words, the process also improves communication.

2.4.6 Communication is the Essence

For learners to create something successful with drama, good communication (on both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels) is essential. Firstly, learners need the courage to communicate their knowledge, their ideas and desires to the teacher, trying to bring a drama to life. They also need to be able to listen to others' ideas in order to develop the drama. This is usually a strong growth point among children learning through drama. Often learners find themselves searching for new words or using new words, a key to extending their language. The other aspect of communication that is awakened is the sensitivity to gestures. This comes through working with movement, stepping out of role and talking about aspects of the drama, including the characters portrayed, in terms of how and why they move the way they do.

Basically this kind of work depends on three things one must win from and for the children: willing participation; willingness to listen to others and see the sense of relating to what others have to say in this mutual enterprise of learning; and the understanding that one may do better if one tries; and the willingness to try (Fines in Nixon 1982, p.122).

If one can achieve these results from using drama and have them become naturalised through regular enacting, then I would argue that one has achieved perhaps the most important things education can offer. Learners would emerge with the courage to tackle things that stand in their way and to cooperate with others in the achieving of goals.

2.4.7 Problems persist

The use of drama in education is not without problems. In 1975 in the UK it was found that drama "had yet to realise its potential 'in helping the child to communicate with others, to express his (sic) own feelings and thoughts, and to gain confidence in a variety of contexts'" (Nixon 1982, p.12). This may be because it is not being

properly used or to its full advantages. The fact remains that there is potential, which I aim to work with. In general learners do need to be pushed to work with and improve their communicative abilities. To do this a teacher must be well prepared with a goal in mind that does not get lost. Even if an improvised drama meanders, it can usually be brought back to the teacher's original aims for the lesson or even greater unplanned but productive ones.

Related to this, Nixon (1982) asks the pertinent question as to whether the work really is the learners' work or the teacher's drama under the guise of handing the decision making over to the learners. "Is there not a chance that the teacher's influence will be greater because his teaching was covert?" (p. 41) Heathcote counters this criticism knowing that she is usually the only adult in the class, with a lifetime of experience and hence insight into situations that she can share with her learners. I believe that the aim is not just to have the work belong to the learners, but rather to encourage questioning and allow insight into aspects of life, to improve communication, decision-making, co-operation. Therefore, for the learners to be able to learn, the work need not be 100% theirs - which ultimately, is the goal.

2.5 To Test these Waves

In the drama lesson there is the potential to tackle issues of power and who holds it in the classroom; knowledge and how it is constructed (enacted); our views of childhood; looking at things big rather than small; giving people the tools to look at situations critically to see how they are constructed (e.g. media) and therefore avoid being subliminally affected.

Believing;

- that knowledge is not an object that either should or can be handed from the knower to the learner in any passive way;

- that we need to interact to come to know and drama is the ideal medium for such learning,

so I endeavour to get into the water and test these waves of theory for myself, on myself and with myself. I do not think all of us who learnt through chalk and talk would necessarily have learnt that much better, but perhaps the dropout rate would be less. Perhaps we would be able to communicate better without shouting and resorting to violence when conflicts develop. Perhaps we would have more respect for each other. Perhaps we would know each other better or have a better idea of what it is like to have no home, enough to take action, to make a contribution, to work towards the better future that we may have in mind.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Getting Into The Water: The rip that carried me out

Theory, like simply watching the sea before getting in, helps in deciding where and how to get into the water. Getting to the action⁴ when waves are rolling towards you as you try make your way out with big swimming fins attached to your feet, involves walking backwards (if there are no rocks to pick your way across) so that the waves do not catch your fins and make you stumble face-forward into the knee-deep water, while looking over your shoulder to avoid a big wave knocking you over and back to shore. Occasionally though you can be lucky and spot a strategically placed 'rip' where the water rolling in to shore is all washing out; similar to a river between the waves. You can almost fall into the rip and get carried out to where the real action is happening without having to 'duckdive' any waves or even paddle very hard to get there.

The lucky rip that made my paddle out easy was a course run by the UCT Drama Department in which Drama Honours students experientially learn how to teach drama to learners at local schools by visiting them weekly to give a Drama lesson. When I approached Gay Morris, Associate Professor in the Drama Department, with what I was hoping to do, she suggested I join the course and that she supervise me from there. Having never studied Drama, I would be doing this course as a teacher with no experience in Drama, trying to learn to use it in the classroom by reading about it, watching others do it, doing it myself and learning from my experiences and observations.

⁴ The action (back-line) is where the bigger waves are just starting to break, with smooth hills that can be ridden.

The course started with one demonstration lesson (which I was not fortunate enough to attend) by Liz Van Breda who co-ran the course with Gay. Then there was one practice demonstration with the other drama students teaching classes before jumping straight in with foundation phase learners. Each week we were required to plan and teach a lesson, as well as watch the other students before discussing and analysing lessons afterwards. Individual feedback on each lesson was also written down by whichever supervisor – Gay Morris or Liz van Breda (hereafter referred to as Gay or Liz) was attending the teaching that morning.

3.2 Where I surfed (setting and sample)

I decided to focus on primary school learners (grades 1 to 6 – Foundation and Intermediate Phases) both to limit the scope of my study and because the majority of my teaching experience is with this age group. As a result I only worked with the drama students for the four months that they taught in primary schools. When they moved to older learners I continued with younger ones at another school. The classes I was given were left up to the discretion of Liz and what classes were available at the chosen schools. I have no doubt that the classes I ended up teaching greatly influenced my findings and what I learnt, but the rip that carried me into this project also seems to have provided an excellent variety of experiences each with its own challenges. I taught three different age groups at three schools all in the Cape Town area, which I have labelled, A, B and C in order of my experience with them.

- School A learners (referred to as children in order to distinguish them from learners in Schools B and C) were from a middle to lower income pupil intake almost proportionally representative of the rainbow mix of race groups found in South Africa. The girls and boys were first grade children (aged 6 – 7), of whom most did not speak English as their first language. There were about 35 children in the class who seemed easily able to slip into the

imaginary world and play with drama (following rules of the game). Their attention span was short, so I received very quick feedback in the form of disruptive and inattentive behaviour if the drama was not working for them. I taught this group for eight half-hour lessons, between February and May 2002. They were supervised mostly by Liz and occasionally by Gay. The other drama students watched many of these lessons and sometimes had comments, suggestions and feedback. I also watched at least two other drama students teach, either before or after each of these classes.

- School B learners (referred to as girls) consisted of a privileged group of over thirty grade 4 girls (aged 9 – 10) with excellent co-operative skills and little difficulty understanding English. The majority were white. This age is considered the best for undertaking imaginative dramatic activities. In May and June 2002, I taught this group for seven half-hour lessons, of which Gay supervised most of these lessons and the other students watched with occasional comments. I also watched three other students give a lesson each week.
- School C learners (referred to as scholars) were a group of about 30 grade 6 scholars (aged 11 – 12) from an inner city private Catholic school. I taught them for eight one-hour lessons in August and September. Gay supervised when she could. Here there were no other students, either watching or teaching, so I never had the opportunity for group observation, interaction or discussion of lessons.

At all of these schools the drama lessons were conducted in the school hall, so constraints of limited space or **noise** were not an issue. Sometimes the space available had to be limited by means of rules to stop learners venturing onto the stage. The learners, coming from classes where space (and therefore movement) was restricted, had excess energy and excitement, which had to be directed. There was, however, no need to keep them quiet for fear of disturbing other classes. In all

cases the classes arrived for each lesson at the hall and duly removed their shoes and socks.

3.3 How

There is an interconnectivity in terms of how my study shapes me whilst I try shaping it, which is related to my belief that, “Truth and knowledge are not static, ... but contingent ... existing in a dynamic interaction and engagement...(they are) dialogical. As such the method used ... needs to be conversational.” For “Gadamer ...the relationship between the research question and the phenomenon under study is not uni-directional but reciprocal. ...the topic, at least in part, reveals the manner in which it should be investigated” (Davis 1996, p.25). The methods I use are framed by these ideas.

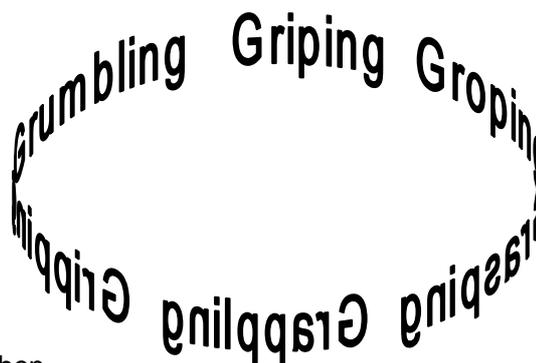
3.3.1 The Discipline of Noticing

Data collection and analysis was based on my experiences with regard to the classes I taught, and involved two approaches. Firstly, I utilised the Discipline of Noticing, as explained by Mason (2002), starting with awareness and choices. Every moment of everyday in every interaction we have choices. If I am unaware, my choices follow habits in familiar situations and instincts in new situations. If we notice our choices we can use them better. Every act of teaching depends on noticing. If I do not notice something in the classroom, I will not be able to consciously use that moment. So I endeavour to become more aware, awake in the moment – to see what I notice (accepting that what I notice depends on my structure, as previously defined) and work on that, to use it for learning.

“Mason describes the Discipline of Noticing as research from the inside where the main expected product of the research is the development of the researcher” (Breen 2000 p.102). Teachers often get caught in day-to-day cycles with little idea of how to

break them or make any progress. Mason (2002, p.9) says a typical cycle involves the Gr's:

Grumbling about how things are,
Gripping about specific frustrations,
Groping for some alternative,
Grasping at some possibility,
Grappling with a possible solution,
Gripping hard to something that works, then



Grumbling and *Gripping* as the substance seems to leak out and a new cycle begins. Energy is lost in this cycle and little changes. If there is a desire for change, energy can be transformed from the Gr's into noticing – marking – recording and eventually working with accounts to the point where a range of alternative actions become a real possibility, not only for the teacher, but for colleagues and readers who find resonance in the research.

To break the cycle, the first challenge is to move away from floating through lessons (and life) not noticing, towards being aware and noticing, so that I observe my own and others' actions in order to remember, record and then work with them.

As an example Mason suggests you try to notice every time you walk through a doorway and mark it by saying, "I am walking through a doorway" (ibid. p.31)

Noticing and recording are particularly useful in drama teaching because feedback is "in-your-face" – very loud and clear. When things are working it is easy to float through but very often something is not right and there is room for fine-tuning and focusing. For many teachers the path of least resistance involves the 'Gr's' and little progress can be made. Being aware, noticing small signs to figure out how to resolve problems is essential to growth and development both in my teaching and learning.

From noticing I move to what Mason calls marking. Similar to remarking on what I notice, it helps me remember so that it can be worked with. Marking something that is noticed requires some sort of reflection, which can occur while the event is happening or anytime afterwards. Mason discusses the ambiguity of the term reflection and relates it to Schön's (1987) idea of a *reflective practitioner* to describe the expert who is awake to, and aware of, his/her practice, not just immersed in it. He talks about *reflection-in-action* as having part of my attention separated from the immediate actions, rather like an observer; *reflection-on-action* - retrospective contemplation of an event; to which he adds *reflection-through-action* - deliberately choosing certain actions to help maintain awareness - all of which are used in the Discipline of Noticing (Mason 2002, p. 15).

Recording what is noticed from reflection is the next step, and how I record an incident is important. I have a natural tendency to record incidents full of value-laden emotional terms due to judgements made that make it impossible for anyone else to enter into the moment. By enter into, I mean find resonance, in that they could recognise that moment, perhaps having experienced something similar or recognising the emotion it arouses. To record an incident – I try to give what he calls an *account-of* the incident rather than *accounting-for* it. *Accounting-for* an incident involves mixing up the details of an event with justifications, explanations and theorising, with value judgements and emotively laden terms, which make it almost impossible for others to challenge or discuss my analysis, ... all they can do is be swept along on my sentiments, or react against them. An *account-of* an incident attempts to remove the emotive aspects and focus on the specific visible behaviours and actions that, if others had been present, they would be able to agree had happened. This account opens an incident up for me to find alternative paths in the future, alternative explanations and so ultimately, alternative acts (ibid. pp.40-41).

Once I have a collection of accounts, analysing them, to find alternatives, involves a number of different steps, such as looking for grammatical actions like metaphors and metonymy that illustrate hidden (perhaps personal) assumptions. Taking it further I look for pre-determined actions (ruts I follow in similar situations), especially relating to past experiences. Then, by *seeking significance* in the account that I have not only marked the event, but also written about, I may find themes that link to other accounts. Mason calls this *threading themes*. Labelling them “can provide a framework which enhances noticing in the future” (Mason 1994, p.14) and draws on similar past experiences. Through these themes, principles that I have accumulated and used to make decisions or judgements can emerge, opening them for investigation and adaptation (Mason 2002, pp113-121).

The most helpful aspect for me is *gathering gambits*, which are tactics for future action. This is where I find different (and hopefully better) ways of dealing with similar situations in the future. Imagining myself using this gambit helps me remember it and increases the likelihood of it coming to mind in a future moment. Offering my accounts to others is another way to find new gambits. Mason then suggests *linking to literature* which gives a different perspective that I found helped me to understand some of the issues I was confronted with and gave me ideas to plan future action (ibid. pp.121-125).

3.3.2 Action Research

The second approach I have used is action research for both philosophical and practical reasons. Philosophically, many of the assumptions of action research (as explained by Zuber-Skerrit, 1993) are in line with mine. Firstly, action research falls into the interpretive, non-positivist paradigm. Secondly, it acknowledges the dialectical relationship between teaching and educational theory in that it assumes that knowledge and learning are developed dynamically by people looking for, and negotiating meaning. At the same time “results are not only of theoretical importance

to the advancement of knowledge in the field, but also lead to practical improvements during and after the research process” (ibid. p47). Practically, the “self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting” (Kemmis 1988, p.42) of action research suited my aims. I was already doing the first part required for action learning, that of planning. I started recording what I had done and remembered of each class in more detail than just the moments that stood out. I would also attempt to observe the effects of my planning during class, “reflection-in-action” and act appropriately out of my resources in that moment. After class I would reflect on this process and refer to available literature to plan for the next lesson.

3.3.3 Two Methodologies - how they blend

I found the need to bring in a methodology other than the Discipline of Noticing when, after teaching a class, the moments I had remembered and recorded were very small in comparison to the incredibly large amount I felt I was working with and learning. I could not justify leaving so much out. The moments that stood out for me also tended to focus on negative aspects of the class or failures on my part when there were positive events that also needed to be worked with. The fact that the Drama course I was enrolled in used group work and coaching was more in line with action research than the Discipline of Noticing (hereafter referred to as the DoN), and as such seemed a more suitable methodology. The DoN can be used very effectively in a group situation, but it requires a commitment to working with it by the members of the group. This requires knowledge of the process, neither of which was present nor desired in the group I was working with.

Although the DoN has aspects that relate very closely to action research, (namely, the processes of acting, observing and reflecting) the differences required the latter. The DoN has mostly been used in mathematics teaching where the aim is to bring the whole class to a certain understanding. The aim when teaching using drama is not as convergent. The DoN also has methods of analysis, which suited me.

Blending and adapting the methodologies, to find an approach that suited my aims, allowed for the consideration of the many interrelated aspects and issues that arose in my research. Action research did not fit my body like a wetsuit because cycles of research call for the following of a plan, which does not allow for unpredictable events that always occur while teaching using drama. The DoN was required to supplement action research for the study of immediate coping in situations where what was planned was not used, either because learners chose to do something else, because I felt something else was more appropriate, or because a supervisor spontaneously suggested or did something to alter the original planned direction.

3.4 Time in the Water

Research was documented and done from February to September 2002 on a weekly basis during school term time. Data was collected before and after every class, in the form of accounts-of moments and journal entries. Analysis and reflection on data collected occurred on an ongoing basis from February to October, both to inform the lesson planning for the following week and to inform the overall direction of my learning, which included the writing of this paper.

3.5 Choosing Waves

Data collection and analysis was done using a combination of the two methodologies. If the planning, acting, observing and reflecting of action research is called my experience, then of that experience certain incidents and aspects are noticed and others pointed out in group discussions. Of those incidents and aspects a number (depending on both noticing and remembering) are recorded and from those recorded, themes emerge which are then analysed using the DoN with other literature feeding into the analysis and gambits emerging that then influence the next cycle of experience.

Focusing only on what I notice could be considered be a problematic issue; what about the things that I do not notice? Supervisors and other students watching my

lessons raise some aspects of my teaching and learning that I overlook, after which they may or may not become themes to work with depending on how important the observers and I rate them. The group's attention to my teaching provides a measure of reliability of my research; the external observation and assessment acts as a check and balance that can raise matters I may miss. Issues I struggle with reveal themselves repeatedly and are the ones that are most likely to be dealt with. Issues that arise briefly and are quickly overcome are not usually dwelt upon. Many of them are not relevant, some because I have dealt with them previously and have no need to go back there, others because I have not noticed them. If I do not notice something, I am probably not ready or needing to work with it. There is so much going on in every class but only enough space and time to focus on the issues I deem most relevant and most in need of development. This is not unusual in any research, Mason (2002 p.178) describes it thus, "All research comes down to noticing. If you are reading analysis and commentary, you can only notice what you are sensitised to, though this sensitivity may shift over time. If you are observing children or colleagues, then again your observations are theory-laden: you can only see aspects which you are already disposed or primed to see." The aim was not to get at an objective truth to hold on to and pass on. Rather, it was to find what I was attending to and through that, what I was not attending to and how I then work within that, how I learn and grow; as well as what makes me stagnate and how to work around such moments.

3.6 Rigour, Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

In quantitative research the issues of rigour, validity, reliability and generalisability would arise at this stage. As this is not quantitative research, these issues are not relevant in the traditional sense, moreover I reject the notion of the existence of an objective truth existing outside of myself with regard to research in the social sciences. Understanding is coloured by context, history, and socialisation particular

to the researcher and biased by his/her prior assumptions. I accept that as a researcher (attempting to be objective or not), I cannot help but foreground that which is relevant to me at the cost of that which is not. Objectivity in research is a myth when so many aspects influence it:

- What I notice and choose to research depends on my perspective and understanding of the world.
- How I inquire into it, how I structure the question will affect the outcome.
- The recording of events is couched in language, which creates an interpretation. To then analyse that interpretation makes it an interpretation of an interpretation. As Davis (1996 p.20) explains, “to interpret is to tug at the thread of existence, realising that in tugging – the texture of the entire fabric is altered.”
- What I study changes as I study it because I am there studying it.

I am part of the universe; I recognize my complicity in shaping the phenomenon. “We cannot extract or abstract our thinking (or ourselves) out of the world we are thinking about”(Davis 1996, p.18)

Whereas validation occurs in action research through external measures of improved performance helped by group work, in the DoN, validation lies in “the development of ways of working which enable others to take up and try something similar for themselves: the education of awareness which enables relevant action to come to mind as an option in the moment” (Mason 2002 p.200).

If validity cannot be found in the traditional sense, then Mason proposes that one looks to resonance. I think the word resonance captures the issue best; it means, “vibrating in sympathy” and asks whether your feeling, your reaction and intuition vibrate with any similarity. The viability of my research will be experienced in the reader’s reaction. It can say as much about the reader as it says about my research. Does it resonate with your experience, can you recognise the probability of the

issues? A lack of resonance will not necessarily equal irrelevance because the issue raised may not be something the reader is sensitised to notice at the time and may be at another. If it does resonate, the readers will see the value for themselves. The next question the reader could ask is whether the issues have a direct bearing on the matter in hand, whether they are relevant to my experiences, and are my thoughts on the matters clear.

Although I make every attempt to make explicit the validity of each step of my progress, it is all affected by my experience and needs at each point. Validity can only be identified in these terms, a teacher's experience. I have changed in the process and so will the learners I worked with. This work can therefore never be repeated. Perhaps the overall themes may be reflected in another teacher going through a similar learning experience, but another teacher is just as likely to encounter issues that are more prevalent/relevant to their own experience.

In any research, the person who does the research benefits the most. Everyone else can only learn from it if it resonates with his or her experience. Davis (1996 p.103) explains it this way: "The

"In social research, knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination." (Usher 1996, p.18)

concerns of this account, then, lie more with issues of viability, reasonableness, relevance and applicability – that is more with the qualities of an engaging tale which implicates the teller and listener alike than with an account that is sanitized of any human involvement." I make no claims for generalisability of this research; it is a personal study with some hints of a case study. As such, rather than attempting to generalise, the value will be realised if "future action is informed" (Mason 2002 p. 186), which is something I measure as long as the research continues but can not do so any further.

In researching my teaching and learning experiences a crucial question is “How can I be sure I am not fooling myself?” (Mason 2002 p.187) He goes on to explain that the issue is really one of developing an inner monitor and expert sensitivities to enable one to “deftly modify actions mid-stream” (ibid. p.187). This is about growing myself, about trying to become an expert, such that my choices in any situation will be greater. I am trying to develop an internal observer to monitor my own actions with greater awareness. It is about developing skills, not setting out, finding or laying claim to or even refuting any ‘truth’ either about the classroom, or myself because I believe it is all changing all the time anyway. These are simply moments in my life, which I am trying to use to the greatest benefit. There is no point in “fooling myself”. I do make an active and conscious attempt to be self-critical both to avoid “fooling myself” and to maximise my own growth and learning. If others gain from it, all the better.

So here I am in the water, the wave approaching me is a big one, I can see I am in a good position and the men around me are paddling away. I have small suspicion they are a bit more scared of this one than I am. It is big and growing in size – a hill forming in front of me that starts to curve inwards, sucking its belly in. As I paddle harder to catch enough speed and the right direction, the fear and adrenalin motivate and propel me. I can do it, I know I can. It could be an unbelievably inspiring ride, maybe even a barrel of crystal clear blue water with light shining in and an open door at the end leading on to more....

I am still scared but it is so exciting.

Chapter 4 Control and Self

4.1 Learning to surf

We all learn (to surf), to a large extent, in our own way. Some paddle deep into the impact zone, not realising (nor caring?) just how hurt or scared they can get, being dumped, held under, smashed against the bottom, dragged across the rocks or washed around until they either learn some respect for the ocean (in the form of fear?) or learn how to do it without severe ocean punishment. Others start with a fair dose of respect. They tend to take it a bit slower by paddling far around the edges of breaking waves, watching, keeping a safe distance, building confidence until they feel as if they can control the board enough to turn it, catch and ride a wave without too much damage to themselves or anyone in the vicinity. With too much fear, however, there is no progress because one cannot catch a wave from the edges. One needs to be in the scary zone. Being willing to step out of the comfort zone is the only way to learn how to control fear and do the experimenting which is required for learning.

In aiming to learn to teach using drama, I had no fear and would have paddled straight into the impact zone. But I had a supervisor instructing me who, with experience, knew fear and tried to prevent me getting caught in the zone. This chapter is written chronologically with regard to the first issues to emerge. Through looking at how I tried to learn the skill much is revealed about myself, about teaching and learning.

4.2 I Was Inspired

Our Drama in Education course started with Liz demonstrating a lesson and then a discussion about it afterwards. With the children standing (barefoot) in a circle, Liz started the lesson by doing some name games and physical warm-up exercises such as...

She then told the story of the Sad Kinag and then the children acted out the story the gifts they brought were... She ended with a review of the lesson.

We also had one practice lesson a week later, where the other students pretended to be learners, before teaching real children the following week. Being an unusual extra on the course I was not informed about the demonstration but managed to catch up with the discussion. When I arrived late to find a class of students that all knew each other, I became intent on quietly observing before jumping in and making any waves. These were Drama Honours students and I had never studied drama, so I quietly took notes and made few enquiries. In this first group discussion about the 'nitty gritty' of starting to teach a group of "unwilling" children, Liz told us that we should begin with a story that we, preferably, had made up. The lesson should be based around this story. We would then let the children act out a part of the story.

I was feeling inspired by my reading about educational drama as practised by the best⁵, to attempt to facilitate my first group of children in creating their own drama. I wanted them to take over the reins of control while I learnt how to direct the dramatic activity from 'within'⁶ to be able to lead them to a point of growth or new vision. I imagined setting up a situation and then letting the children develop it as they chose (or needed). As a result when I sat down to plan my practice lesson I kept finding that what I was trying to do was different from what we had been told to do.

"It seemed a bit incongruous to imagine going on a picnic and letting things happen when I was supposed to be telling a story." (Journal 27 Feb)

⁵ Notably Heathcote

⁶ Directing a drama from within implies that a teacher, possibly in a role pertinent to the dramatic action, is working alongside the children within the experience. S/he is not simply observing the children's dramatic activity. This is a favourite strategy of Heathcote. It allows the teacher to guide the dramatic activity without seeming to do so.

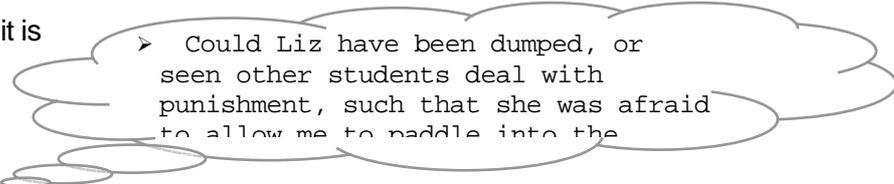
I decided to defy – but just a little – I guess to test the water. In our practice class, I told the initial part of a story, took the students (drama students pretending to be six-year-old learners) on a journey that led to a dramatic change of events and left them to improvise.

"They responded with silence and open mouths when the expected story changed, disappointment at the end of the expected fun, but they carried on the drama almost exactly as I had hoped for and expected"

(Journal Mar 5)

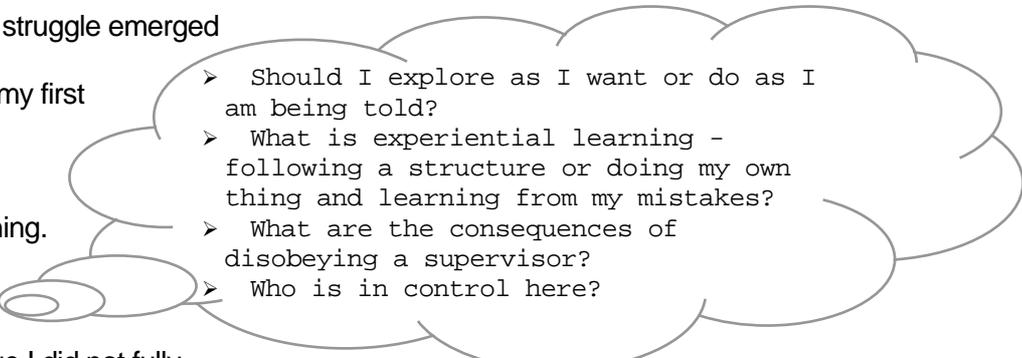
I felt happy with what had happened but was instructed not to do the same thing with my first grade children, especially as they had not done drama before. Liz said,

"Once you lose them it is very difficult to bring them back."

- 
- Could Liz have been dumped, or seen other students deal with punishment, such that she was afraid to allow me to nuddle into the

"Where you are going in teaching is not to the end of a story but through a story to an experience that modifies the children" (Wagner 1979, p.50). I could not imagine how giving them a story which they would simply act out, would allow for much modification. What Liz was asking us to do seemed too much like going to the end of the story without the opportunity for any growth or change to happen in the children.

So my first struggle emerged and with it my first questions about learning.

- 
- Should I explore as I want or do as I am being told?
 - What is experiential learning - following a structure or doing my own thing and learning from my mistakes?
 - What are the consequences of disobeying a supervisor?
 - Who is in control here?

At that stage I did not fully realise the difference between my goals and Liz's / the course goals. Or if I did, I could not tease out the implications or significance. I did not know how to deal with

these issues or even whether they needed to be dealt with at all. I now imagine that Liz was assuming the children had no drama skills and would not simply slide into the imaginary: we would have to create a situation to “warm them up” by doing “pretend” drama (a bit more like stage drama). Even more likely, she was just trying to “warm-up” her students to help them become drama teachers without them developing a fear of the ocean.

4.2.1 Reproduction vs. Transformation

Liz’s reason was not enough for me; I was not sure that pushing them to create their own drama necessarily meant “losing them”. I wondered if this was a situation of a teacher imposing on learners what s/he believes they are capable of, hence restricting them by not giving them the space to see what they can do. Perhaps it was a case of Liz making us do what she always makes student drama teachers do. My frustration grew. I found, however, that this is a common issue in learning to teach.

“Teacher education programs that emphasize practice are participating in the reproduction – rather than the transformation – of school settings in which both students and teachers find learning to be disconnected from their past, present and projected worlds of experience. The issue of “learning” in “learning to teach” has been eclipsed by concerns about fitting into, coping with, and copying existing practices.” (Davis and Sumara 1997, p.106)

I felt as if I was being forced to do what Liz wanted and not being allowed to experiment, to try and see if what I had read about and imagined could work. The issue here was very much about transformation as opposed to reproduction, firstly of the school setting and secondly of teaching methods and practices. Essentially I wanted to learn by reproducing a Heathcote setting and method (although for me it was an experiment with a new teaching method), which would have been a transformation of Liz’s aims. Liz seemed to have something in mind, which appeared to me to be more like making us learn established techniques by reproducing them. This required a transformation of my aims without understanding why I should do so. We were pushing in opposite directions for things to be done the way we wanted

them done, neither of us wanted to transform our ideas or expectations to accommodate the other or even learn something new.

4.2.2 Avoiding Confrontation

My approach was to subtly try doing what I was wanting to do while at the same time appearing to be doing what Liz suggested. I resolved that it was not something I wanted to spend energy on. I was trying to learn to use drama in my teaching and how I went about it did not seem that important. I can accept that there are many roads to Rome and was willing to try following someone who obviously had more experience.

➤ Then why did I not (want to) do it her way?

4.2.3 Imposing capabilities

The problem of imposing what we believe, learners are (not) capable of, and Liz imposing what she believed we were capable of, is probably a fault of most or almost all of us. It is something I try to work against on a daily basis. I do believe that by thinking someone is not capable of something, we are less likely to give him or her the space or opportunity to show his or her capability. In general, my aim with teaching is to be open to the abilities of the learners in my care. I tend to err on the side of expecting too much of them with its own consequences.

4.3 It is all about Control

My first drama class at School A involved about 35 first grade children with an almost perfect reflection of our rainbow nation. Their grasp of English was not good enough for all of them to understand most of the lesson. I would be relying on many children copying what others were doing. In my plan I subordinated my goal to give the children creative space to see what they were capable of. I told them most of the story before allowing them to explore within the context I had very clearly set up and therefore controlled to a great degree. My inclination was to try the big waves first but, being new to teaching with drama and a guest in the course, (as well as being

trained since youngest days to obey my elders and perceived superiors) I found myself reluctant to make too many waves, to blatantly do my own thing and make a noise about it. I thought the class went well and afterwards the other students, Liz and I sat down to talk about the lesson. The discussion stirred my memory of one moment in particular:

School A First Grade Children, Lesson 1 Mar 8

After explaining how the wonderful park had burnt down I asked the children what we could do. A few suggested rebuilding the place. I nodded and went on to get ideas from other children.

Liz's comments after my lesson had to do with me not listening to the children's ideas; they had wanted to rebuild the park. I remember this happening. I hoped for something the children were unlikely to give and expected what they gave - but never planned on using it. I had always planned to steer them where I wanted them to go...control, control, control.

Am I trying to fit them into my plan although I am struggling so much to fit into Liz's story plan?

(Journal March 9)

Suddenly I seemed to be the one doing the controlling as opposed to feeling restricted by control imposed upon me. I wanted the children to explore the park to find what had caused the fire and lead it to a discussion on preventing fires. I had thought that there was a chance that they may want to rebuild the park but at the time of my planning I did not see much point in doing that. When they did suggest it I had no plan for letting them. Varela (1999, p.11) writes:

"The key to autonomy is that a living system finds its way into the next moment by acting appropriately out of its own resources."

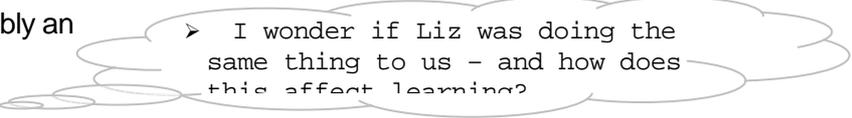
My resources as far as drama, acting and especially believing in what I am acting are simply undeveloped. The children and I are in the same position.

(Journal Mar 8)

My resources in terms of how to use drama, how to believe in what I am doing, and hence model it for the children, were almost non-existent. Having read about the aims, skills and techniques did not seem to mean I could use them, but by doing drama I was learning how to do so. My insecurity and inability fuelled my immediate need to control the situation. I could not let go of my plan. I was stuck in my past (plan) and the future (acting out my plan) and could not be in the moment. I would not hear other ideas that were presented. My ability to let go of control was restricted because I did not have confidence either in myself in this situation or in the process of using drama to teach.

4.3.1 How Experience Counts

If this controlling tendency was due to a lack of confidence and experience, then my trying to control the children's behaviour and the drama, through only accepting certain responses, was possibly an unconscious method of



➤ I wonder if Liz was doing the same thing to us - and how does this affect learning?

limiting the number of variables I was working with, in order to manage those of which I was more aware. I was only riding waves I had planned and which I could therefore predict. As the ability to manage bigger and more unpredictable waves grows, so I can try riding them. I also believe that having been a teacher and having internalised a need to establish the role of *the one in control* right at the beginning with a new group of learners also fuelled the control mechanism.

As I wandered round the house preparing dinner and thinking about my lesson the next day, my prime concern seemed to be memorising the story (of the

Pied Piper) and not really thinking about possible areas of learning in the drama. My priorities have taken a back seat to Liz's. Although in a discussion with a friend I had decided to do what I wanted to do, I did not. I was still following the story guidelines Liz had set out. Whether it was a desire to please, a need to do what I was told, or an unyielding belief in the teacher, my needs and desires were being subordinated, to the detriment of my goals. (As I slammed the last keys into the keyboard.) I am not taking these children to any new level of understanding, which is my primary goal with drama. (Journal Mar 13)

At this stage I was very clear about my goal with drama: to bring the children to a new level of understanding through letting them direct the drama. Other issues, however, were emerging; a struggle to avoid subordinating my goals to a blind faith in the teacher and my frustration at being controlled that was reflected in how I was dominating a number of variables. I was controlling the lesson structure and direction through the drama. I was controlling the children's behaviour through directing their attention and discussion. This became clearer in the following lesson when I attempted to tell a long story that would form the basis for a few lessons.

School A First Grade Children Lesson 2 Mar 14 - Out of control
As I told the story, the children started fidgeting. I paused and more started moving around on the floor, pushing and complaining about each other, whispering, moving back and spinning around on the seat of their pants and finding things on the floor to play with or to point out to me. I asked / ordered them to quieten and I carried on with the story. Most of them stopped what they were doing and listened. When I got to the

part where the Pied Piper knocks on the door, I knocked on the floor and a few of them started knocking on the floor. Again I paused and asked / told them to stop knocking. One little girl said, "It's Dillan, stop it Dillan." I tried to carry on with the story as more started knocking.

A friend who had been observing my class commented,

"When the kids started knocking just let them all knock once and then they get it out of their system. 'OK everyone knock.'... Let it go a bit more, the kids can go – Don't worry about control."

4.3.2 Mirrors All Around

Although my reason for enforcing control had a clear aim as I stated above, there was a definite reflection appearing in the children of something I was struggling with. I knew that it was difficult for the children to do what I was asking (sit and listen to a story for a long time) but my goal (their freedom to make up their own end to the story later) required that they struggle through. This, I now imagine and hope, was Liz's goal in insisting we start with a story. I do not however believe it was necessary to control their behaviour to the extent that I did, as it would not have affected my primary goal, and I wonder whether it was necessary for Liz to do the same. It seemed that although I wanted the children to make up the story, I was still following Liz's guidelines and then, when the children did present an opportunity for them to enact their own idea, I still did not let them.

These instances were a wonderful example of how beautifully teaching and learning interlink and reflect each other. Liz was reflecting my need to control and the children echoed my frustration at being controlled. The extent of it was even greater, with more implication for drama.

The next aspect of me letting go of control cropped up again and again in slightly different ways. By not getting into role (my next struggle), by not becoming another character, I remained the teacher, dominating and controlling the class from the

position of power I set up from our first lesson together. One of the aims of drama is to be able to control from within, a bit more like directing the action but from the position of another character. It results in learners having more power to challenge and question the teacher, as they are not directly challenging him/her; they are challenging the teacher's character. It also helps the drama; in that learners become more involved in their roles when the teacher takes one on completely and models how to do it. This method of controlling the drama has been criticized for being a more insidious and hence more dangerous form of control as it reinforces patterns in a very subtle way.

4.3.3 Control - but with a goal

As I became more aware of the issue of control in my teaching, I started using it to finer degree with more conscious aims. I was more aware of what aspects of the lesson I was controlling and why.

School B Grade 4 Girls Lesson 4 June 6

The girls came in and I explained the options as we warmed up. As expected, some wanted to make their own story and others to follow mine - I told them that if we made up a story, we would spend too much time talking about it, trying to agree and we did not have much time. One girl suggested we vote but I said that I preferred everyone to come to an agreement and that takes time.

I suggested they listen to my story and then we decide.

I told them the introduction and then asked if they would like to be the people in the village and see what happens. A few said yes and I immediately accepted their answer (as it suited me) and proceeded.

Here I am controlling the overall structure rather than allowing discussion and agreement due to time

constraints and other aims.

*One aim is taking precedence over another. (Journal
June 6)*

In this situation I was completely aware of how I was controlling the situation but aware that I was forsaking the development of one skill (group negotiation and agreement, which I had already worked with, with a previous group of children) for another (role development), which needed a certain situation to be set up within a limited time frame. This shows me a development in that I was aware, even before going into the class, that I would need to control the situation carefully in order to achieve my objectives for the girls and myself. This is vastly different to controlling a situation out of insecurity without realising it or being able to stop myself. Certain constraints, particularly time, led to a situation where strict control was needed to achieve the learning I wanted for them and myself. I still feel, however, that a teacher with great skill or perhaps experience will need to control less and will still be able to reach intended goals. An experienced surfer can deal with unexpected events while riding a wave and still try for maximum creativity, learning and fun.

4.3.4 Trust diminishes control

My control was initially spread over a variety of teaching phenomena: behaviour and attention, drama and discussion, lesson structure and themes. I noticed how my need to control each moment of the girls' behaviour and attention diminished in the following lesson:

School B, Grade 4 Girls, Lesson 2, June 13. Without
silent attention

At the start of the lesson, I told the girls what I
wanted them to think about as they moved into the
drama, as well as how they would move into it.

Immediately there were questions and as I started
answering them the circle broke into groups and the
girls started talking to each other and asking me

many questions. I noticed that where I would usually have demanded silence and that they listen to each other's questions, I just let them sort out problems in what was not a quiet and orderly way. I then loudly asked them to go into the next phase that I had explained and they flowed smoothly into the drama.

This moment certainly stirred a feeling, a strange awareness without an immediate understanding of what was happening. I felt vaguely uncomfortable with the noise and apparent chaos which, I realise with hindsight, was very structured as the girls were organizing themselves. What is interesting is how and why I resisted the urge to silence them, to overtly dominate and control the proceedings.

Gay commented that I seemed much calmer and she probed asking me whether it was because I was breathing, had practiced or was beginning to trust the text, to trust drama. I thought it might be because, firstly, I had already established some control and authority in the first few lessons. Second I felt that the drama was moving, that each step did not have to be controlled by me, that the girls knew what to do next. I now feel that they were sorting things out for themselves - as they needed to. Perhaps in a strange subconscious way, I knew this and was happy to let it go as a result.

(Journal June 14)

I had given clear instructions as to how we were about to proceed. Perhaps I realized the girls needed to communicate to organize themselves and did not need that to be slowed down by doing it in a whole class forum with each question going through me. Mostly I think that having become more familiar with the girls, having set up my authority at the start and perhaps trusting their desire to do drama, to co-

operate, I did not need to ensure that they remain focused. Perhaps I trusted the drama more. A story was set up, I knew where it was going and the girls had a good idea of what to do too. I do not believe that practising my roles influenced this moment although it did have a great influence later in that lesson.

The idea that I was breathing is also interesting although it is obvious that I was always breathing. Breathing brings with it an image of an ebb and flow, control and release. By controlling initially, I could release later. In my first classes at School B we worked through a series of exercises that were linked although not flowing, and with strong time constraints. Stopping and starting them, directing the girls' attention to the outcomes of each exercise, was very much in my hands and my control. I rarely released either my breath or control. The story was set up and I was aiming at directing from within the story as a character. I was no longer the teacher with constraints and objectives, having to make sure they were being achieved every step of the way by ensuring that everything went via me. Finally I was able to allow the girls to go where I always wanted them to go – to be able to discuss the lesson amongst themselves. Trust in myself, in the girls and in the process of drama along with increased confidence seemed to minimise my need for overt control of every step. I exhaled at last.

4.4 One Wave Surfed

After School B we stopped for the winter holiday (about a month) and I was given the option of doing more research with another group of learners, or stopping and concluding my dissertation. I could see how much I had learnt and was feeling good about the progress I had made. Liz watched a lesson having not watched any for a month. Afterwards she told me how impressed she was with the progress she saw: I had taken on a role and managed to put the drama into the learner's hands; I had let go of my iron grip on learner's attention; and I was managing the structure of the class without overtly controlling it. I had learnt and achieved a number of goals. I felt

good about my progress and was not so sure that I needed to continue researching. With a number of other distractions around me, I decided to teach another group, to keep my focus as well as do more research.

4.5 Three To Duckdive

I had finally ridden a wave that I felt good about. I turned to paddle back out, only to see a huge set approaching in the form of six feet of churning white water: my first class at School C with a group of prepubescent Grade 6s was a wave that took me by surprise. I planned to do a few warm-up and group exercises to get to know them, establish trust and some sort of group working spirit, while building the exercises into a group (class) thunderstorm, both visually and vocally. It took 10 minutes to get their shoes off. I had to repeatedly remind many scholars to take off their shoes. There was an extreme reluctance to co-operate and a tendency to ignore requests.

School C Grade 6 Scholars **Lesson 1** Aug 5

It took about 10 minutes of coaxing and instructing to get their shoes off, as many did nothing when I told them to remove their socks and shoes while some objected saying it was cold and others tried to keep their socks on.

We eventually started by stretching and touching toes, I introduced the shaker⁷ and then tried to get them to freeze by asking them what it meant to freeze (they knew) but every time we tried the talking and murmuring, on the other side of where I was looking and often right in front of me, would not stop. I got them to sit (as the 'freeze') and made the talkers stand. It got quieter.

We started 'name echo', which was fairly successful as most seemed to listen and repeat. I stopped them a few times to get them to listen and respond

⁷ A tool I used to get students attention by having them freeze when I shake it.

accurately, imitating the tone and pitch of the voice of the person saying his or her name. I described how to do the next activity and asked volunteers to give an adjective with their name e.g. "Strong Sibongile, Clever Candice," then proceeded to the next person. For those that could not or would not do it - I asked the group to help or made a suggestion myself. The class became more and more noisy as people on the other side of the group talked and laughed about suggestions or who knows what else ... so I did not proceed around the circle, but jumped around a bit usually moving to where the disruption seemed greatest. I became more unsettled.

The secretary came in asking us to be quiet as the principal was in a meeting, then a teacher returned with the same request and then Gay reiterated it. I had little success in asking them to reduce the noise levels. They were noisy and I did not see how I was going to give a quiet drama lesson, let alone a quiet storm. I asked them to walk around introducing themselves and to try and be the adjective describing their name. Most simply walked around, some introduced themselves without taking on any character. I was "crazy Kendal" and some were too scared to even shake hands with me.

I went up to Gay half way and she said there was no way I could do a storm with them - I had already given up on that idea.

I did not resort to shouting or becoming angry with this group. My tactics were simple methods to focus the class' attention where there seemed to be a disruption.

In my experience, learners (especially primary school age) are quite timid and generally co-operative in the first class with a new teacher, as they come to know you - not so with this class.

4.5.1 Thresholds

Heathcote writes about how “teachers require to understand their own security and practise in order that they may gradually push back these security needs and accept more tenuous positions in order that eventually they may teach from positions of more calculated risk” (Heathcote 1971, p.45). She calls these security needs ‘thresholds’. I initially concluded that my noise threshold (which influences my need to be in control and assert my authority) drops as I get to know and trust the learners in my care and the teaching process I am working with. The noise level and quality at School C was definitely beyond my threshold, and my inclination would have been to try and establish some sort of control. However, as they were not showing the usual level of respect and co-operation, I guessed that they were subjected to severe control, which could explain their extreme ebullience. Therefore, believing that trying to enforce control in traditional ways would not work, I tried to become more comfortable with them and their expression. Furthermore, having discovered what an issue control was for me, I was determined to work with it in a more sensitive way rather than assert control forcefully. I have to wonder how they would have reacted if I tried to control their behaviour had they been my first class on this course.

4.5.2 Responding to needs in the moment

The fact that they were not co-operating as I expected they would led me to believe that something was wrong for this group of scholars. In Drama, when something is amiss, when things are not clear, when pupils are not learning / do not understand, when they are bored, there is no way a teacher will miss it. When we teach through doing, through acting and interacting, it is clear from the reactions of learners when it is not happening for them. When learners have to sit listening to a teacher drone on, the line between attending, or not attending is not clear, the line between understanding or not understanding does not easily show, often until it is too late. Suddenly using another method (drama), where feedback from learners is very quick and clear, is very unsettling for a teacher used to “chalk and talk” or for any teacher

not accustomed to direct feedback on the lesson. When a class gets out of hand – talking amongst themselves, not listening to either the teacher or each other, spinning on the seats of their pants, pushing each other around, skulking in corners – something is obviously not working for them. The traditional solution for many a teacher would be to get them separated from their friends, sitting in desks – QUIETLY - listening to the teacher or doing work. In drama this is not an option; it destroys the point but at the same time co-operation is needed and that starts with listening.

I have to wonder how Heathcote would handle a group so reluctant to listen to either the teacher or each other. (I imagine she would have quickly assessed where their interests were and used that to gain their co-operation.) I tried to not lose my composure nor let them unsettle me. I felt an urgent need to be able to respond appropriately to the messages these scholars were sending, but in the moment I found myself struggling to just stay calm and carry on teaching. After trying everything I could with little success, I began to consider some of the opinions about this class that I had heard. The resident drama teacher had offered this class ahead of all others. I arrived for my third lesson to hear a teacher saying she wished she could have strangled the scholars in this class as other teachers joined in to complain about them. On another occasion I was told by a different teacher that I was very brave coming back to teach them each week. A teacher whose daughter was in the class told me that they did not like drama, that girls often left the class in tears. I therefore tried a variety of tactics that I thought would establish some sort of order and co-operation without alienating them by using stern discipline. Gay suggested a few tactics: firstly get them enjoying and interested in drama, and secondly sell myself to them such (I imagine) that they would want to do what I suggested. The issue that arose had come up before this class, but now predominated: one of acting appropriately out of my resources, and more specifically, (re)acting in the moment – reading the class and responding

immediately. My resources for establishing control and gaining co-operation that had appeared adequate with Schools A and B now were to prove hopelessly inadequate at School C. There was a certain amount I found I could feel out for myself and experiment with, but without experience, guidance, without suggestions or pressure to continue, I have to wonder why a teacher would bother struggling with these issues, especially with a difficult class.

4.5.3 Subject Matters

Heathcote (1971 p.45) talks about three realities a teacher needs to take account of in learning to teach drama. The first is your own condition, with regard to areas in which every teacher has thresholds of tolerance. Then the condition of the class and thirdly, the nature of the material or subject matter need also be considered. My own condition was something I was not only coming to know, but also a changing reality I was constantly aware of and working with. The condition of the class was also such a big issue here that the subject matter (being unconstrained) was something I did not consider. Had I spent more time with this I may have found the hook I was looking for. I was consumed by the need to assess the learners' needs, the condition of the class and how to respond appropriately. I did not know how to get their attention, interest and co-operation let alone what they needed. I had some ideas of how to gain some interest and how to appeal to them but I was only experimenting. For every class I consulted an extensive array of material for ideas on what to do. This was a great help in finding interesting ideas for things to do in class, but material to help me assess the needs of the class was not at hand. I was trying to learn about this as I went about it.

The next seven lessons at School C proceeded with me trying different tactics to get co-operation. After working in groups and having some success, I would try something as a class and leave ready to give up. There were some small successes, especially with group work, but I never managed to get them co-

operating as a class, not even listening to each other. In our final class I saw that this inability to listen was the fundamental problem with which drama could probably really help them.

Gay commented at the end of my 8 weeks there that I had changed from the strict disciplinarian to one who could tolerate noise. Perhaps I had to some extent, but I also felt that with this group, trying to discipline and control them would be a pointless exercise and waste of energy as it had probably been done in so many ways over and over again that they were pretty much immune to orders. The above example was only my first experience of them simply ignoring requests, orders or instructions. I think I realised I would have to find another way to get them all involved and co-operating, although I never I managed to do this. Whether it was me who changed or whether it was just a different situation is difficult to decide and impossible to measure which had more of an influence. It was a new group of learners and I was reacting differently, allowing much more noise.

4.6 Ups and Downs of Learning

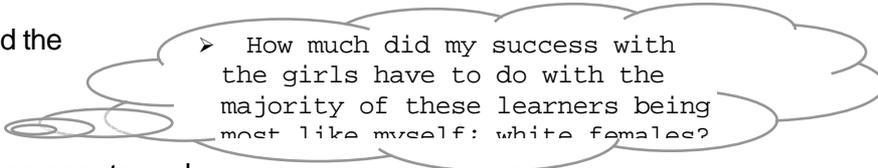
At School A, I was so keen to jump in head first and, perhaps as I was working with younger children, I had no fear but still controlled their behaviour strongly while I tried to come to terms with teaching using drama. At School B, I felt the need and the space to work with elements of drama, perhaps more for my own learning of the skill, to build my confidence (because my fear had grown) but as I came to know the skills, process and girls better, so I let go of control. With School C and scholars who were less willing to co-operate, my fears were greatest and yet I let go of control of behaviour more so than in either of the first two schools. Just by becoming aware of control, I let go a bit more.

I trusted the scholars and drama less and controlled the drama more. I was less willing to do drama with the whole class, finding them more manageable when they

were working in groups. I think I was less sure of stepping into the imaginary, of using role, as it had to be done with the whole group.

4.6.1 Context

I found that my learning was not a straight forward progression. It was extremely dependant on the context in which I was teaching because of my thresholds, the children I was working with and the level of skill I had acheived.



➤ How much did my success with the girls have to do with the majority of these learners being most like myself: white females?

With a group of children that was easy to work

with, it was easy to make and see my gains. With a more difficult group, it was harder to make gains, either in my own learning or theirs. More experience did result in less need to control behaviour, but had the third group been one I could control, I may have repeated that pattern of establishing control before moving on to riding bigger waves with drama. With controlled behaviour came trust (in myself and in drama) and co-operation; this seemed to be a key ingredient for making the most gains with both drama skills and the social aims with which I had initially set out.

4.6.2 How Fear Confounds

Those social aims were confounded by Liz's aims, which were different to mine – teaching drama students to be teachers as opposed to a teacher learning how to use drama. Then my initial lack of fear against her having probably witnessed disasters, her need to establish control and the context we were working in all resulted in me approaching my learning and intentions differently from how I had set out. The need to learn the basic skills in teaching drama eclipsed initial aims of bringing the children to new understandings. This I believe contributed to the reproduction of methods Liz was more accustomed to rather than a transformation of either her ideas or mine. Through acting appropriately out of the resources we had, the scope for learning was limited. Fear of taking that bigger wave that was so threatening and different it prevented us both from learning about something we were unwilling to try. Through these experiences I also clearly saw in myself an avoidance of confrontation with

perceived authorities. I learnt that the need to explain reasons for teaching methods is vital for co-operation and learner understanding because, if any of them are like me, it is unlikely that they will ask when frustrated and more likely that they will rebel confounding both their aims and mine.

4.6.3 Learning or Teaching ?

The greatest experience for me was encountering the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning. Problems I was experiencing were reflected through the learners. Noticing their struggles and attempting to solve them as a teacher would help me resolve a similar problem I was having as a learner. This emphasised the interconnectedness of teaching, learning and life in general. Being aware of others, and learners in particular, I learnt about myself. I became more aware of my tendency to control and used it to more conscious effect, which helped me understand my learning and focus my teaching.

I am sorry I never got to paddle deep into the impact zone while my fear had not yet emerged. Surfers I know who have learnt the skill quickest, have done it this way. But regret is no way to learn, rather take my experiences and use them to the best possible effect.

“...the question of imagining resembles the question of being in that both relate to something so obvious as to be overlooked and so elusive as to be unnameable. A paradoxical phenomenon... ‘more distant than the stars and nearer than the eye’”

Richard Kearney (1991, p.5)

5.1 Introduction

In the absence of fear (and sometimes alongside fear) courage can be found to abandon old ideas; courage to admit there is something I know nothing about, something I cannot do; courage to risk failure in a new endeavour; and courage to try something new. This is where learning thrives. The need for courage is very clear in the sea when trying to catch waves, especially when they are big or have steep faces. Trying to learn, since finding fear, I tend to stay on the sidelines, well clear of the take-off zone, and try to catch waves from the safety of the edges. Unfortunately it is very difficult to do that, and I end up splashing and paddling as I try to catch the waves ending up frustrated, watching them go by. The problem is my imagination: if I am imagining that the waves are bigger or more dangerous than they are, I play them too safely and do not take the risks needed to catch a ride. My imagination creates fear, which can protect but also cripples my ability to act. What is needed is an accurate imagination, able to predict what the wave is likely to do so that I can best position myself for the action. Experience helps to grow an accurate imagination. This increases my courage for the adrenalin pumping rides from which come more experience and learning.

In this chapter I look at moments that emerged from different lessons, through the lenses of my beliefs about imagination in the context of life in general and teaching with drama in particular. I go on to find possible solutions (both imagined and experienced) to problems emerging from my teaching experiences.

5.2 To (be) Educate(d in) Imagination

With drama I wanted to create situations for learners in which they would confront an issue through an imagined situation. They, therefore, had to be able to imagine the situation first. While Kearney sees the question of imagining as illusive, I have come to see imagination not as a gift, but more like a faculty we use every day. The extent to which we can and do use it greatly influences our lives, those of the people around us, and the world. Perhaps the most important function of the imagination is to predict future outcomes of present behaviour and act on those predictions. Hughes (1988 p.35) stresses the importance of this aspect of the imagination when he writes about how a person (who we say has no imagination) "simply cannot think what will happen if they do such and such a thing ... they have to work on principles, on orders, or by precedent and they will always be marked by extreme rigidity." Greene (1995 p.23) calls them "the fearsome ones." On the other hand, people with a vivid but inaccurate imagination may be as destructive as the previous type because "they will be full of confident schemes and proof which will simply be false" (Hughes 1988 p.36). Hughes believes that, "Imagination that is both accurate and strong is so rare that somebody who appears in possession of it is regarded as something more than human." He sees imagination, "with its delicate wiring of perceptions, (as) our most valuable piece of practical equipment.... It ought to be education's first concern" (ibid.p.36). I see drama as an excellent tool for developing imagination.

Traditionally since the start of mass education, children have been educated for the work place. In a world changing as fast as ours is now, I will venture that a turn towards developing the imagination of future adults is essential to equip children for their future. Teachers of today really have no idea what kinds of work their learners will be doing in twenty years time. Educating them to use their imagination will facilitate healthy and creative survival in any future environment as well as enhance their ability to adapt to a variety of different jobs, to interact well and possibly be creators of new and better ways. Failing to educate the imagination will tie future

adults to routine, mindless jobs. But more than this, an education emphasizing imagination must surely result in stronger, more caring communities and thinking individuals that can predict consequences more accurately and act on better predictions.

5.3 (Not) Believing

Although the first step in my aims with drama was to get the children imagining, I found that I was the one really struggling to do so. As I analysed the events of my first drama with the first grade children, I found that they were able to imagine the things they found (within the situation I had set up), but I was not:

I realise now how when they were looking around the burnt out park to see what could have started the fire and found an imaginary lighter, matches, cigarette butts - I did not really believe enough to make the objects real. What I could have done was ritualise the finding of these crucial items - carefully take them from the children and lay them out on the ground on a mat or a table to discuss later. I practically held them and dropped them in the same moment in following what I was planning rather than letting the children bring their ideas to me and then USING them like valuable clues. (Journal Mar 8)

Then when we did the story of the Pied Piper, I attempted to take on his role but I did not believe that I was the Pied Piper enough to be able to discipline from within that dramatic context.

School A First Grade Children Lesson 3 April 25

As the Pied Piper, leading the children away, I continued narrating the story. When the children started running ahead of me, I stopped the drama and told them off for running ahead into the dark rather than following me because of my pipe.

I continued by directing them through the mountain (tunnel).

If I was narrating the story, I obviously was not a character in the drama but more like a teacher telling a story. Instead of directing them, I could have guided them.

I could have sat and listened inside the dark passages and given the children time to believe. I could have closed my eyes, stopped and looked back as the cave closed (dramatic moment). (Journal April 28)

The following is another example of the effect of my struggle with my own imagination.

School A First Grade Children Lesson 7 May 2
When Liz came over and started banging (as if on a door). The children asked what that was, I said I did not know and suggested we go and see. The children and I started moving across to where Liz was. One of the girls ran back to me, grabbed my hand and said she was scared.

I smiled inwardly, held her hand tightly and carried on towards Liz. I now wish I had turned to her and said, "Me too!" I am having a huge problem getting into role. (Journal May 7)

At the time, I saw the problem as one of getting in to role, but I think the root of the problem is deeper in that I was unable to believe in the imaginary situations I had created that would have enabled me to get into role. I have discussed how this has to do with control and not wanting to let go, but the implications extend into not

allowing me (or me not allowing myself) to believe in the event I was expecting the children to believe in. I was obviously struggling with it far more than, or at least as much as, the children. Although there is the possibility that the little girl was scared of Liz (and not necessarily believing in the drama), the problem is exacerbated in that I did not believe enough to be able to enter into her world and find out.

5.4 Aiming for Solutions

One of the main reasons I wanted to learn to use drama in educating was for the opportunities for my students and myself to learn through the metaphorical: through pretending to be someone else, somewhere else, we can learn another perspective. The imagined situation created through drama also creates a space for thinking beyond the concrete contingencies of the present. Piaget claims young children can only think concretely. Drama makes the 'ship' and the 'sailors' concrete and the storm, a concrete hazard to deal with. Warnock highlights a related aspect of what Mill calls the 'imaginative emotion', which we can experience when we vividly create an idea. Warnock claims that the pleasure of this feeling will not wear out. "Children cannot be taught to feel deeply; but they can be taught to look and listen in such a way that the imaginative emotion follows" (Warnock 1976, p.206). To help the children enter these imaginary situations, I needed to be able to do so myself in order to model it and encourage them. Through believing and immersing myself in the drama, I help the learners to do the same. I allow myself into another world, with them, through which we can learn from the metaphorical, but I can only guide their learning if I am there with them. If not, I have little idea of what, if anything, has been learnt.

5.4.1 Solution One: Pivot around the Real and into Role

Liz had been advising me to go into role, and in the last lesson quoted above, she spontaneously came into the drama in role. It forced me to cope with an unpredictable situation, but mostly it demonstrated the effectiveness of the teacher in

role. Even so, seeing and knowing how effective it was, was only one step towards having the courage to try and do the same – to imagine and believe such that I could take on a role and try successfully to be someone else.

Again it comes down to fear and a lack of dramatic resources. Having done something many times, I believe I can lose fear of doing it. Having done something badly once or twice (as in the Pied Piper story mentioned above) increased my fear and led to more elaborate skirting of the issue. Getting into role and believing in the situation only happened successfully with the first grade children after nine lessons. It involved the use of a pivot⁸, which both Gay and Liz had been suggesting I try to use. Vygotsky (1985 p.546) writes about how a child needs a pivot to sever thought from an object in order to imagine that object as other than it is. A pivot was needed here to imagine a situation other than the real one.

I had tried using a pivot in an earlier lesson, a photograph of some children that we tried to create an orphanage for. I was trying to get the children to talk and think about what orphans need – I believed they would be experts on what children need – but the results were less than inspirational.

School A First Grade Children Lesson 6 May 9
The others started coming up with ideas like a TV, a treasure chest, a bottle of Coca Cola, a piece of paper, all of which I tried to discuss and see if it was important for children. Paper was needed to draw on, a chest to put toys in, TV to watch, then not, because it was bad for your eyes, Coke to drink and wash your food down with.

⁸ An object that helps sever real meaning and enable something imaginary.

Perhaps if I had shown more concern for these orphans who were going to be in my care, if I had problematised the concern, we could have gone further and deeper. Tanya Miller, a friend and an exceptional international teacher presently working with three-year-olds in Prague, said that when working with children, especially when spoken language is not very well understood, it is important that my feeling is right, that it matches what I am saying or trying to do. Feelings are given away in body language, which children can usually understand better than words. I believe that I was not feeling what I was trying to communicate. If I want meaningful responses from my learners, I need to be even more involved in my own stories; I need to believe them on more levels than I did here. I am sure experience will help here too and I am eager to try this drama again.

The first time my taking a role did work was in The Sad King story⁹ (O'Neil, C. Lambert, A. & Linnel, R. 1977) which I converted to The Sad Queen and used a change of clothes as the pivot. The children, presented with the task of visiting the queen, journey to the castle with me in role as a villager. When they arrived at the castle, I went to find the queen and returned in a gold cape with a crown (as the queen). Afterwards Liz's comments read, "Use of costume was very effective. Use of voice as the queen, also good.... You're getting it – questions, stance etc." I certainly noticed some awe amongst the children

May 23 School A First Grade Children Lesson 9
...a few of them giggled and I glared at them, then slowly one or two started with a bow or a curtsy and the rest quickly followed suit.

⁹ The Sad King lives in a castle above a village where the people are poor but happy. The king orders the people all to present him with a gift of their most precious belonging that brings them the most happiness. A poor woman in the village only has a child and the children are confronted with the problem of the king wanting to take the child from this woman who has nothing else.

It took them a while to remember to curtsy and bow as we had practised. The change of clothes had as dramatic an effect on me as it did on the learners. Their language changed, they were very quiet and all completely focused on me. The change of clothes helped build my belief as well as theirs.

Unfortunately my success in taking on a role in this lesson did not make a change that was to last.

5.4.2 Solution Two - Slowly build belief (using the senses)

Our instructions for our first class at the second school involved preparing a lesson that flowed, thematically, from some starting exercises and developed towards a drama. I watched some of the other students first to get some idea of what Liz meant. I felt very comfortable with this idea. It was a chance for me to explore drama with the girls and get to know (and perhaps trust) drama as I got to know them. It seemed like a very safe and comfortable place to start. The following week (May 2nd) I started the series of exercises that I had planned but never had enough time to finish, as the girls had arrived late and my timing was not right.

... The other students started their dramas by bringing in mystery objects to create a character. I have been hesitating all week about what to do with them, whether to move into a drama or to finish the exercise I had planned. Now, I think I will finish what I planned.

I wonder if my hesitating is due to a lack of ideas or insecurity about my drama skills especially working with an older group with members who have done drama before. (Perhaps I should discuss drama with them this week.) Perhaps my initial plan did

have some continuity in a direction and path I would like to follow, or there is more security in just doing exercises. My gut feel and lack of ideas say follow what I have started. (Journal May 7)

Certainly, working with older girls challenged me in different ways. Their expectations seemed greater, and that some of them had done drama before intimidated me. Also, watching the other drama students move right into imaginative dramatic activities involving role-playing increased the pressure I felt. Fortunately I took it slowly. I did follow what I had started by repeating a few of the exercises, then bringing the lesson to what we had not had time for the week before. It involved building a machine using bodies, sounds and movements.

School B Grade 4 Girls Lesson 2 May 16
... Then I explained the group machine, and let one girl start, while the others watched and then slowly let them join in one-by-one until they were all part of the machine, moving and making noises. As I stopped them Gay came over to tell me to turn it on and off, which I then did, turning it on again, then off, then on and off, on again then I told the machine to go faster, then slower, then stop.

Gay commented afterwards that she had thought I was going too slowly (letting only one girl at a time join in from a group of about 34). She later decided that this had given the girls time to come to believe in the machine, to want to be part of it, and that this is what helped it work so well.

I believe one of the big reasons this drama worked was because of the slow (over 2 lessons) step-by-step progress and development towards creating the machine. We started with a warm up and name game to get to know each other. After the trust exercises (which heightened sensory awareness, especially touch) we moved into making sounds of machines and copying one another's sounds which helped focus

the girls and get them working together. The movement exercise was also visual the girls watched each other move like a machine, which I believe both challenged and inspired them. This was then linked to a machine sound, combining the senses before bringing everyone and all the elements together in the one big machine. The slow and steady build-up using different senses, mostly in relation to machines, proved to be a crucial aspect of building belief in the drama.

This step by step procedure helped build my belief and that of the learners' but it was something I did better and was more focused on while working with the younger learners in the first two schools (which also happened to be the lessons I taught after watching the other students' classes). There are a few possible reasons for this. Firstly working with younger learners I made fewer assumptions about their abilities and would probably lead them in slower than with the older scholars who I expected to catch on and become involved quicker and easier but with whom the opposite proved true (because of my assumptions?). Secondly, I was watching the other students and had time to consolidate my plans while observing their mistakes and learning from them as well as not wanting to have any disasters while being watched. Peer pressure and a fear of failure helped my teaching and learning succeed.

Although taking small steps is a possible gambit for building belief, Gay believes small steps can be taken if the learners are willing; otherwise gross steps are needed to show them that something is happening. Doing things step by step is a tactic that has worked well in the classroom for me before ever coming to use drama. The drama context only serves to reinforce it as a general principle in teaching. It builds confidence in ability and minimizes fear – both theirs and mine. And yet doing it right this time did not mean I had learnt the skill. Later with the scholars in School C, my first role-drama had only moderate success for a variety of reasons but

fundamentally (I believe) because I was not clear about the steps to lead them or myself into the drama.

5.4.3 Solution Three – In planning

By the time I got to my penultimate lesson at School C, I was beginning to feel some pressure, having not managed to do a group drama with the learners nor take on any role myself. Gay suggested an idea she had previously seen work very well with a difficult group. It involved going straight into role and introducing an intriguing and complex situation that the learners would have to solve. It was about a girl their age who had killed her brother in a fit of temper while their parents were out, and who then feigned innocence.

School C Grade 6 Scholars Lesson 7 Sept 16
I had about 30 minutes to finish preparing. I quickly drew the map and tried to get things clear in my head. I knew I did not have it clear in terms of order of events, clarity of story, my role or what I wanted to emerge.

There were a number of reasons for the problems with this lesson. Firstly, I did not do a warm-up. They were so difficult to work with as a group, I underestimated the importance of these build up exercises and I was worried about having enough time to finish what I had planned. Secondly, I rushed the introduction, not explaining clearly nor leading them step-by-step into what had happened to set the scene (no frame). Also, I was not clear about my role, (who was I actually?) nor did I give them time to decide who they were. This was not the first time that not being clear about a lesson, its overall flow, direction, steps and reasons as well as outcomes led to a hazy and messy lesson. It is a basic principle in teaching: good preparation results in good classes and good preparation takes time. This brings me back to wondering how a teacher with a full schedule would find the time needed to learn to use drama successfully.

(NOTE how character of the queen was the easiest)

Lessons that I had enough time to imagine and for which I had developed very clear steps that I took the learners through, to help them imagine, generally resulted in success. The first grade children had the opportunity to listen to a story and identify with someone before being asked to choose who they wanted to be. We also practised aspects of being who they were to become (bowing and curtseying to the queen as villagers). The grade four girls had the opportunity to practise a range of aspects of being machines (sound and movement). In the Sad Queen (which was used again but in much more detail over three lessons at School B) the girls discussed what different people in a village did before deciding who they were and what they did in the village. They got to imagine doing it as I walked around asking them questions about their character, helping them to move further into role. I practised my role at home, gave it some thought, imagined doing it, how I would speak, what I would do, who I was, how I looked, walked and felt. Both my learners and I were far more able to believe in the drama when we knew and built belief in who we were.

Although I had managed to build roles well in Schools A and B, I had not learnt how to use this skill so it would be accessible when it was needed in a more difficult situation. I therefore find myself asking, "How useful is learning through doing?" I had managed to imagine and believe, to convey that belief (through a variety of drama tactics) enough to draw my learners into the situation and their roles such that they could believe, and yet with the third group it failed. Not that you would be able to tell from the learners' reaction.

The scholars were enthralled with Warda¹⁰, completely believing that she was Mary, the teenager who tried to kill her brother. The drama had worked for some of

¹⁰ A drama student who had come in to role play a character in the story of the girl who killed her brother.

them, they had entered into the imaginary, they had believed but I had not. I felt no magic tingling of success or excitement that something special had happened - perhaps because not all of them had become involved or believed and those who did not seem to had been disruptive. (Journal 17 Sept)

5.4.4 Solution Four - Build Trust

The scholars in School C challenged me in ways I had never experienced. I could never trust them to carry a drama – especially not as a class. I worked hard to establish a liking for drama and for me as their drama teacher, trust in each other and some degree of interpersonal communication – to listen to each other. I am sure I had some success in these areas, as by the end of our eight weeks together, many students expressed dismay that I would no longer be teaching them. However, the class as a whole still could not successfully participate in a drama. Group work was the only way I could get 80 – 90 percent of them involved in what was happening. Class work could only sustain the group's attention for about five minutes before half became distracted and rowdy to the extent that those who were participating could not hear what was being said. As I did not trust them to carry their share of a process that was scary for me, I did not allow myself to step into that space with a group of children for whom the energy may be wasted. On the other hand, if drama was scary for them, how could they be expected to step into the imaginary if they did not trust their classmates or teacher?

This need for trust was reinforced through my experiences as a student this year. (I was learning about learning as a student and as a teacher.) In working with my supervisor, the greater gains occurred once a relationship had been built, once trust had grown.

*It seems like only after all this time have I learnt
how to get the best from our meetings.
(Journal Nov 11)*

I had spent our time together listening and taking notes, with interactions becoming more and more beneficial as the year progressed. It brings to mind theories on language learning and how children spend time observing and listening before attempting to speak. For learning to be maximized, I needed to build my belief and trust not only in drama, but in the learners I was teaching and in the supervisors I was learning from. Trust is a belief that is rarely immediately assumed. It usually takes time to grow and the more it is nurtured, the greater the potential for learning.

People have an innate tendency towards habits and ruts or "inertia" believing that things are as they are and cannot be changed. The courage and the belief that things can be different, can be better, more healthy, rests on the ability to imagine another way, which is the foundation of change and a better order. This is similar to Greene's thoughts on how imagination enlarges experience, it is "essential to the feeling that life is more than a futile, repetitive consuming exercise." (Greene 1995 p.48)

In order to build trust, co-operation is needed. The noise I tolerated in School C did not allow for this. A complex set of circumstances led to my greater tolerance of their noise; I was over-sensitive to my tendency to control as they were to being controlled. This greater tolerance of noise was not beneficial to me learning about drama in the long run although I did learn about myself. It was an experiment and a mistake (lesson) that I learnt from. I now believe that if behaviour is controlled it allows me to hand over control of the drama in the lesson.

5.5 In conclusion,

The difficulty of working with the scholars in School C resulted in my forgetting, or not feeling confident enough, to use much of what I had learnt. It is not that learning through doing is unsuccessful¹¹, since I was learning (and did learn) from my

¹¹ Note how we learn from doing things over and over, doing it once or twice does not mean we have successfully learnt something, it is through doing it again and again that it becomes part of our automatic behaviour. Often people will spend a whole lifetime making the same mistake again and again.

experiences; the group was different – in their experiences with drama and with each other. The situation highlighted the aspect of thresholds that Heathcote describes. Much like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there seems to be a hierarchy of needs as a teacher. If the base needs are not met, it is impossible to move on to develop and work with higher needs, either those of the learners or the teacher. The noise level and general show of disinterest exceeded my threshold levels such that I was unable to go into areas (such as believing in the imaginary) where I did not feel entirely comfortable, and ended up learning about other things, particularly my thresholds.

Through accurately imagining situations we are more eager to tackle those we think we can succeed in and less eager with those in which we think we will fail. Although one of my goals in drama was to develop the imagination of my learners, I had to learn to develop and work with mine in order to help them work with theirs. To step into the imaginary, I had to believe, and taking on a role was suggested. Using a pivot helped me and my learners with this, as did building our belief slowly through the senses in a well planned step-by-step manner. Good planning involves spending time trying to accurately imagine possible scenarios and ways of dealing with them. And finally only with mutual trust could we step into the scary spaces in which learning happens.

6.1 The Moment of a Mistake

The challenging thing about learning how to do something while doing it, is handling mistakes. Flying along the glassy curve of a wave, on the edge of my board, I am in awe of the beauty and smooth speed, when I get the feeling I am slipping too far down the slope. As I realise and try to adjust (if there is time) by holding the edge of my board up higher, things seem to slow down and then flash by as, in a split second, the wave hits the edge of my board. SMASH – and I am tumbling and somersaulting in a roar of churning white water. I hold my breath ,
r - e - l a x and wait

for the wave to let me u^p for some air. If the wave is a big b^{ar} r^el^er, I may be lucky enough to come up for a ^{gasp} as I get sucked _{down} again waiting for the motion to pass, starting to panic. But I have always come up again, and quickly looked to see that there was not another wave about to crash on my head, in which case I usually suck as much air as I can and dive deep. Otherwise, grab my board, hop on and start paddling out, making a note of what not to do next time while savouring the pleasure of the part that worked well. The paddle back out gives me the chance to think about what went wrong and usually, if I am lucky, to try again on another wave that day.

With a drama class – a chance to slow down and reflect on what is going wrong and how to fix it is quite rare, or a skill I have not yet developed. I may see what is going wrong as it happens but the wave will not let me out. Often I am not sure what went wrong. All I can do is make a mental note to do it differently next time, but the problem with waves, as with classes of learners is that they are different every time. In this chapter I meditate on some waves where things went wrong and how I learnt from them.

6.2 To (be) Watch(ed)

In my first lesson (at School A) I had expected certain responses, but had no plan for dealing with them. I had planned only for what I intended doing. In opening myself to the whims of my classes, as one does with drama, I thought there could be no predicting what would emerge, and thus no preparation for how to deal with it.¹² I realised the need to plan for all possibilities in order to increase available resources, especially in the early stages, although I know that finding the time for this is often impossible. As such, with the vast possibilities in teaching (drama in particular), much learning happens on the job (rather than in the imaginative planning, behind the books or in the lecture theatre) and this is where experience makes such a difference. A vast amount is learnt from every lesson. With experience comes a range of options for various (although not all) situations. Without experience in either drama or teaching with drama, I went through some struggles alongside some wonderful lessons.

6.2.1 *The Outside Perspective*

School A First Grade Children Lesson 3 April 11

I told the story of how the Pied Piper, angry at not being paid, had gone back into the town square and played another tune which had brought all the children out, to the sound of feet tapping, hands clapping and fingers clicking, and led them away from the village. We then had a brief discussion about what roles they would like to play, majority wanting to be the parents (although I had planned on them being the children). After some more discussion, we agreed that they would first play the children being led away and then the parents. I stood up, put on my Pied Piper hat and lifted the pipe to my mouth. I saw one little boy start to rise as he glanced at the

¹² I see the contradiction here although I did not notice it at the time.

others who followed suit. I turned and started moving off, still playing the flute.

In this situation, I believe I (re)acted appropriately out of my own resources in the moment. In our discussion afterwards, Liz pointed out the 'dramatic moment' as the first boy got to his feet, and told me that I should have held on to it, paused in the moment, created some dramatic tension, before turning and walking. I realised something I had not seen. At that point, I had thought in my excitement that turning and walking was just the right thing to keep the drama going (well). I did not even recognise it as a dramatic moment until talking about it afterwards when the warm excitement of the moment was an easy feeling to recall. To have someone with experience point out the value, the dramatic potential, opened a door I did not see. This was a big step in my learning about teaching with drama. Perhaps with some serious reflection on the events of that class, I may have come to that realisation on my own – but I believe the chances are slim.

The following example of learning about elements of drama also reveals the amount of knowledge needed to teach using drama.

School C Grade 6 Scholars Lesson 6 Sept 9

After a countdown and freeze, I told all groups to come around Group 1 to look at their picture. I gave Group 1 a countdown and they froze. The grade 6s said what they saw and I then told them they could ask people in the picture questions, which they did. Gay wanted to know why the robots were facing each other and not the car. I asked if the girl was running straight towards the car - to which they replied that she was running to the robot where she would turn and cross the road.

Group 3 did their demonstration, which proceeded very similarly to the first one, with guesses then a few questions. Gay commented afterwards that there was a

very nice feeling of movement in their picture. As Group 4 started Gay commented on the use of facial expression as well as the very nice movement that created some mystery that we wanted to know about – there was something extra in the story (three people, from the crashed car, running away with the money). One boy in the group asked the lamppost why he was bent (if the driver had not hit him yet)?

Learning to teach using drama, in the moment when we (the class, Gay and I) were assessing scholars' work, I continually had difficulty recognising good techniques. Having Gay point them out started me wondering how I could learn to know all the elements of drama such that I can point them out for learners. I think that getting caught up in the teaching of the lesson prevents me from being able to assess the dramatic value of certain moments. Perhaps if I can take my time and breathe and sense (look, listen, feel) where the dramatic potential lies, I may, with some reading, come to learn how to highlight these elements and use them better. On the other hand, without an external catalyst such as Gay or Liz, I wonder what chance I would have? I believe their expertise has been crucial to my learning.

6.2.2 It is Called a Cool Strip

In most teaching contexts an outside observer can pinpoint things a teacher is not conscious of, and can help point one in the direction of new areas of growth. Heathcote talks about this as the “cool strip” that someone outside drama will have, just by virtue of them being outside. She also suggests teachers work at developing their own “cool strip” for learning as well as coping in the moment. This is similar to the little bird (a separate part of your consciousness) sitting on your shoulder observing your actions that John Mason talks about in the Discipline of Noticing. It is an awareness that enables noticing: what is a problem in the class and with my teaching; what is good; what works and then (crucially) why did it work. If I notice or realise with hindsight – I can turn to an expert either in the form of literature, other experienced people, who may be prepared to sit and observe, or I can try to analyse

it until I find some illumination on my own. Discussions with peers are another possible avenue of learning. If, however, I do not notice, if I am not aware, little or no improvement can come about unless someone watching not only notices, but can also point out the problems without me defensively shutting myself off.

6.2.3 Finding My Cool Strip

What I am aiming for is noticing while it is happening so that I can attempt to change what is happening and gain the full benefit at once. To do this involves weighing up the feasible options and their possible versus desired outcomes in the moment. This takes quick thinking and assessment, which must improve with practice. It also requires having a few possible solutions on hand. So with the moments I have noticed, I work at gathering gambits for better and more possible (re)actions in future situations.

6.3 Watching MySelf

6.3.1 Just Do It

The following is an example of how I reacted in a moment when unsure of myself:

School C Grade 6 Scholars Lesson 5 Sept 2

I started explaining Alibi, a game in which one scholar is a detective and the others in the group all pretend to be one person as the detective questions them about a crime and they try to keep the story consistent and plausible.

Gay suggested we demonstrate, with me as the detective and her role-playing the scholars.

Me : Where were you on Friday night?

Gay : At home

Me : Who else was there?

Gay : (as she moved position saying learner two) My parents.

Me : And what were you doing?

Gay : (as learner three) Watching TV.

Me : Was anyone else there?

Gay : (as learner four) Simon.

Me : Can Simon verify the story?

Gay : (as learner 5) Yes. I am Simon.

I paused a bit confused and the scholars sat quietly, one or two said, "Oh!"

I knew something was wrong, but could not put my finger on it - nor did I know what to do next. I turned to the scholars hoping they had got what we had tried to demonstrate regardless of my confusion and asked them to continue. However I would usually advise student teachers to hand it back to the learners at this point: let many minds help you but in the moment I could not follow my own advice.

I find it interesting that I ignored my confusion in the moment and continued with the class regardless. I sensed the mistake, but being unable to identify it whilst busy teaching, I moved on. Gay had surprised me by suggesting a demonstration and I was a little nervous, feeling like I was on the spot – a threat to my dominance, my aura of control / superiority? What if I did it wrong, what if I could not do it? Amazing how the effect of surprise put me under pressure. I think my brain is like a muscle and that quick mental reflexes are not only a talent, but also something I can develop, although I feel like my muscles are stiff and inflexible. In that moment, however, there was little space for negative thoughts; I had to 'just do it', and did, feeling pressure to come up with another good question after each answer. Then when something felt wrong, again there was that nervous confused feeling from the pressure of everyone watching.

6.3.2 Or Admit Fault

I think that ideally I would be able to see what wasn't working and discuss it – but I do not expect to be superhuman and even Gay got it wrong without realising it

83 > I have embraced mistakes as the best way to learn in my surfing but why do I avoid it at all costs in my teaching?

initially. With hindsight though I realise I could have handed it to the scholars by admitting to them that I thought something was not right, THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT IT WAS, and I needed their help. This would also have given Gay and me the time to work out what was wrong. Gay had suggested earlier in the same class that I admit to them that I did not think what we were doing was working. At the time I found reasons not to do this: I did not see a need for 'such drastic action' which I felt would interrupt the direction and flow. I still wonder, though, if it is related to a strong reluctance to admit to learners what I perceive as my failure. There is a whiff of the dominance and control issue here again. I wonder if it also has to do with my image of powerful people never being at fault or admitting to fault? I wonder if I have absorbed this at a subconscious level and find myself responding to a hidden belief that I should not admit fault? It could also be about trust. I may need to trust people before I can admit any fault? The need to be the "All-knowing" teacher always in control emerges in insidious ways. Learning to let go of this – especially in the moment when something feels wrong - will surely allow for a greater range of responses to challenges in teaching and better learning.

6.3.3 Relax

Not trying to be 'all-knowing' seems to be about a flexibility that should go hand-in-hand with letting go of a determination to enforce my will (authority). This flexibility to go-with-the-flow demands a relaxation, an allowing of feeling, time for breathing, even admitting to needing time to think (by simply doing it) which is not something I often do mid-class, unless learners' attention is focused elsewhere. This ability is necessary in drama to gain the perspective needed to be able to "make a situation meaningful from within for the participants rather than just outwardly *seeming* to be of meaning" (Heathcote in Johnson and O'Neil 1984, p.36). It is like being able to use the particular to reveal the general and thereby illuminate the significance for learners. I don't seem to be able to do this on the spot at the moment and look to relaxing to help me learn.

6.4 Take Note and Gather Gambits

Control was the first issue I noticed and starting working with. Knowing control is an issue for me presents a few possible areas for work to make it less of an issue and more a point of growth. What becomes interesting is when I notice myself controlling or wanting to control a moment. How should I react? How do I change tack mid-stream? How do I avoid over-correcting as I may have been doing at School C? If the only certain place to stand is with myself, then perhaps I was not over-correcting. Utilising what I know I assessed the condition of the class in relation to a dominant teacher asserting control and realised that was not the way to follow here. I responded to the clues they gave, such as not following, not even acknowledging and blatantly disobeying my requests, pleas, orders. I was sure of my assessment and happy to pursue my goals although not sure of how to do so. I found ways to tackle most issues encountered in my research, but this one still has unanswered questions. With hindsight I thought that finding the right subject matter by asking the learners was a possible approach but more time was needed. Carrying this question forward in my mind will hopefully lead to future solutions.

The main gambits in improving my coping in the moment involved consulting available literature in planning, and reflecting to gather gambits for future action. Reading relevant literature has helped with issues I had already taken note of, for example, language teaching – when and how to correct mistakes. Having read and been impressed at how Heathcote¹³ handled a certain situation, I (re)acted in the following way with the first grade children.

School A First Grade Children Lesson 8 May 23
We then walked around greeting each other as if
greeting, first - a friend, second - a parent, then -

¹³ A young boy reports finding 'a never-ending hall'; "A never-ending hall?' Heathcote repeats slowly. 'That sounds marvellous for an orphanage.' Then musingly, she upgrades the language: 'Hmmm, a never-ending corridor.'" (Wagner 1979 p. 102)

a dog, lastly - a king or queen. For many children each greeting was the same as the previous one. I watched them greeting the king until I saw one little girl curtsying and I stopped the group to compliment her and ask her to show them how well she greeted the queen. Many laughed when she curtsyed but I praised her and asked if they knew what that was called. One boy said, "Cursy." That is right I said, "Curtsey"

I told the boy his answer was right, although I repeated what he had said with the correct pronunciation. I could have asked him to repeat it, but I think that having the whole class repeat it would have done the same thing and more. In this situation I had a good idea of how to fulfil the moment having internalised a gambit that I thought was good. Heathcote's tactic impressed me as I was already searching for a solution to this type of situation. I doubt whether my reading about it would have hit home were I not already sensitive to this issue. Based on this experience I conclude that the effectiveness of reading about how others solve problems is most effective and lasts longest when one is already aware and enquiring about a similar problem. I believe that I have read of many ways to deal with other drama issues that come up, but having never dealt with them, clever options pass me by and do not become part of my resources until I search for a solution. Even then I may still have to use a tactic a few times before it becomes a resource.

In another situation –

School A First Grade Children Lesson 7 May 16

I asked for some ideas of what mummies and daddies do for you. The children responded with; love you, buy you clothes, spoil you with treats, fix your bike, and make you porridge. Then we acted some of them out.

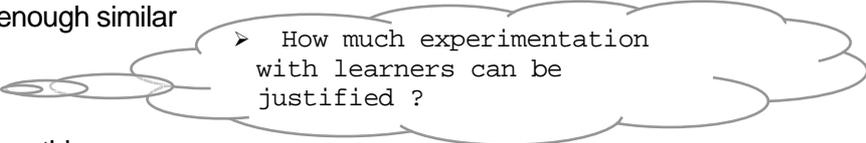
One boy said, "Toys" and so I asked him what about toys, one of the others called out, "They can buy you

toys." I ignored him and gave the first boy some time to explain himself. He seemed to shrink a bit in to his body and said, "Have toys." I thought that that must be the extent of his English ability and left him with an "Okay".

In the second example I left the boy without correcting or pressuring him any further. I am sure he was very uncomfortable and I would hate to increase his fear of speaking English. I had no idea how to deal with this situation and had to leave it there, hoping to find a possible option later, by keeping it in mind.

6.5 Perspective

With surfing I have experienced frustration trying to learn through experimentation alone. There have not been enough similar waves to experiment with.



➤ How much experimentation with learners can be justified ?

Often when trying to learn something, perspective in the form of some else's 'cool strip' was what was needed. But, again the question arises, as teachers alone in classrooms with little time for extra reading, how do we find solutions when problems arise and drift away almost as quickly, only to be repeated again and again? Talking to colleagues is one option that I have used with recurring problems. Reading or having someone watch you can help with issues that arise at that time. Certainly noticing and recording events will help maintain sensitivity to finding a solution. Teaching should never be a solitary occupation; otherwise we are left with experimenting and gut instinct. Simply seeing learners as valuable contributors to lessons, lesson structure and direction will bring other perspectives into a class. This involves occasionally admitting fault, regularly recognising learners' abilities and viewpoints and then asking them for help.

Chapter 7 Back on the Beach

At last I am back on the beach. This time the ocean is behind me and the electricity in my veins is not generated by apprehension. Now it is radiating outwards. There is less contained nervousness about it and more of the un-containable exhilaration of finishing something amazing. With the taste of salt on my skin, the soars and the tumbles still reverberate.

When I stood on the beach planning this venture into the ocean, I saw myself catching perfect waves. I imagined flying up and down huge peeling waves, sending spray flying as I carved beautiful arcs. I did not think about the paddle out, or having to duck dive big sets. I was not concerned about figuring out different types of waves and I certainly did not think I would have to do it the way someone else told me to. All I would have to do is be aware in the moment; observing while enjoying the ride.

My experience was different.

7.1 The Learning in Teaching

- **Context is crucial.**

While surfing is wonderfully solitary, teaching cannot be done without others. Surfing may be complex in its own right but classrooms are infinitely more so; they involve people, who are all complex individually and so much more in combination. Different learners bring different learning experiences. When my base needs are not met, when my thresholds are challenged, I cannot venture into areas I want to explore, either for myself or for the learners. It may be worth pausing all other aims until I can ensure my thresholds are met. However, I recognise that sometimes a different focus can achieve desired goals. Perhaps if I had found the right topic (one that would have sucked in all the learners) at School C, I would have been able to get

past struggling with my thresholds and into areas of learning for everyone.

- **I have to get to know my self in relation to others.**

Although waves can each be different, they do not affect one another nor do they change in response to me. So, while my influence in the water is minimal, in the classroom it is pivotal. My awareness while being exposed to control also helped me see how I react to authority. I realised my tendency to bow to superiors even to the detriment of my goals. My reluctance to question or even engage authorities is something in myself I would like to change and hence carry it forward for further work.

I need to be present in my experience but I also need to be able to tap into the outside perspective of experts (supervisors, peers, books, even learners), who provide not only different views but also mirrors in which I can see things about my self. Through being aware I noticed aspects I could work at to improve my teaching and accelerate my learning. Although becoming immersed in my learning and teaching experiences is all consuming and almost larger than life, by trying to keep a part of me separate and observing, wa(y)ves that I cannot see from the surface may be seen from above.

The co-emergence that happens in the interactional space between students and teacher and their environment through drama is the creation and realization of knowledge.
(Fels 1995)

- **My level of fitness mattered more than I thought**

I underestimated the skills needed to teach using drama. I assumed that I would be able to learn to surf from watching others do it well. But that was in my mind and as “Merleau-Ponty suggests the body is that which renders the mind and world inseparable” (Davis 1996, p.9). When I tried to connect the world with what was in my mind, through my body, I discovered the gaps. Although I imagined opening different perspectives on the world to help learners come to new understandings, I found that I had to focus on acquiring the skills needed to use drama in my teaching before I could get near this goal.

The most obvious need was for good planning, not only for what is to be taught, but for every foreseeable alternative that the learners may throw into the equation. I was also shown how important it is to believe in what I ask the learners to imagine.

Techniques to help this involve using a pivot, going slowly into the imaginary, taking small steps and using the senses to carefully build roles. In the surf, unless conditions are very difficult, you always spend time watching the ocean, looking for waves, feeling the sun, tasting the water, absorbing the day, breathing and waiting. Drama too is a sensory experience that takes time, and the steps should be honoured for the full rewards to be granted. I now see the value in those steps, having read what Linds sees as a need to unlearn mindlessness, to relearn sens(e)ation, "Theater requires us to be in the moment. In order to achieve this we need to resensitize, we need to awaken the memory of our senses, to reconnect with these senses, these muscles and this body. The body begins to speak through sound and movement" (Linds 2001, p.20). I believe the learners and I enjoyed touching our senses and it can quickly become a comfort zone.

The difficulties experienced in acquiring skills, and the energy spent on it meant that the possibilities that drama offers for which I was aiming could not easily be accessed. Miller and Saxton (2001), in talking about introducing teachers to Drama as a methodology and their method, found that after their initial reluctance to give a detailed lesson plan to students, they started doing so and saw that students responded very well to a support structure such that they could move away from it at a later stage as needed. The editors of *Unfolding Bodymind* discuss this issue (2001 pp.11-12); Linds asks, "Do we have to know how to work in a conventional structure ... before we can venture forth into new worlds of possibility?" Brent Hocking says, "We need to challenge conventional understanding of structure and see them as dynamic bodies of experience with fluid boundaries"; while Johnna Haskel ponders that "Maybe boundaries are sites of tension or interactions rather than things we must achieve or acquire." I believe that lacking such structure increased my need to

control learner's behaviour in order to limit the number of phenomena I was dealing with. I could not focus and cope adequately with everything I was confronted with. Limiting the behaviour I was dealing with helped me focus on other dramatic elements, so that I could move into areas of possibility. I had wanted to dive in and do my own thing initially, but I now wonder whether more structure would have helped. I know I would have had to understand the reasoning behind it in order to accept it. I would hope that as my drama skills grow so I will learn how to deal with (and better yet) sideline behaviour issues by drawing learners into the drama of the lesson and, where necessary, disciplining or calling learners' attention and behaviour to order through the drama.

7. The Use of Theory

While my board wasn't what motivated me to get in, I need to consider the board I was riding. The theories of enactivism and drama in education were what motivated me to take up this study. There is value in that alone.

- **Reading is not enough to learn**

Theories of enactivism were re-enforced by my having to learn, through doing, what I thought I already knew and could easily do. Learning was not achieved by thinking, and reading about drama in education - it had to be enacted. While I saw learning as a linear progression, from experience, it was more complex than that, like depending on context. While I did learn from experiences, different contexts that challenged other parts of my being and teaching could negate what I thought I had learnt. The influence of different aspects of my environment was a challenge and a benefit. My learning was diverted when my thresholds were not met, but accelerated when fresh insight was revealed. Aspects of myself I would never have believed existed were revealed through others in a co-emergence. The control tendency I can only explain as part of my history or biological constitution; as a result of how I was nurtured

(seeing nurturing as a natural phenomena). Even if the longest lasting effect of this research is my being more aware in the future, then I believe the theories I have looked through will have proved their use.

I liked the hermeneutic circle I found in my study for the circular and often serendipitous contributing factors, but the interweaving strands were confusing at times. It set the scene for my first challenge in this dissertation; clarifying my focus both practically and theoretically. This was complicated because the direction and goals emerged through the teaching, learning and research; in other words they could not be planned beforehand. The multitude of interpretations that hermeneutics brings out meant that I couldn't end with a cut and dried conclusion, but many possibilities for future action.

7.3 The Use of My Methodology

My methodology called for self-awareness but being in the water I sometimes struggled to see the waves for all the water. Raising my awareness by becoming more conscious in every moment paid off in the amount I learnt about myself through being aware of others but with embedded awareness of action I found it difficult to separate myself from events to gain some perspective, especially with writing it up. I initially set out to use the Discipline of Noticing alone but found so much going on in every lesson, I could not focus on a moment or two. This was also revealed in my recording of information, I sometimes found it difficult to separate and distinguish between moments, journal recordings and thoughts around my work. The DoN was particularly useful in providing a framework for the analysis of my research. The use of action research was underscored when group work and peer observation ended and I realised how much I had benefited while it was going on.

While doing a dissertation in a such a way that I could not find another one similar was a big step out of the comfort zone of others to follow and support me, studying

what I believed would be of the most benefit in a way that underscored my experience provided the most wondrous journey. I have been reluctant to end it particularly as it will end the pleasure I have gained from learning this way. I hold on to the fact that it has given me the skills to continue my learning although the dissertation ends.

The fabric of my understanding has changed and although I may not have definite answers, I do have a range of options for future situations and many questions I will be asking myself in similar situations. Hermeneutics allows a vast number of interpretations of experience, and simple lessons are sparse.

There is something unique about surfing; in fact there are many exceptional things about it. A friend once put it very aptly when he said, "I wish I could just put you on a board, on a wave, so that you could feel what it is like, because words are nothing in comparison to that feeling." And yet I can still compare it to teaching because there is something so unique about it. It is hard to put your finger on it, let alone explain it.

There is the hard work to get to the goodies. Many forget the goodies and give up because the work of finding good surf, donning the wetsuit, braving the water, getting fit are all barriers that make good excuses. And likewise with teaching, the barriers and difficulties sometimes become too much for a teacher. But it's the magic moments, the 'aha' moments of learning and teaching that sustain. With surfing, one of them is sitting on a board, out at the backline, looking around. The clarity of the water, coldness, colour, the sky, the mountains, the peace, freshness of the moment is so clear, here and now. There may be other surfers around but fundamentally it is you and nature. The challenge is all you make of it.

Surf Lingo

Backline	Point in the ocean where the bigger waves start breaking
Barreler	A wave that does not crumble onto itself, but curves around, making a hollow barrel.
Beach Break	Surf-able waves breaking on the sand of a beach
Duck-dive	To force your board and body (head –first) underneath an approaching wave.
Dumped	To be picked up and thrown down again by a wave.
Face	The smooth slope of a wave just in front of where it is breaking.
Glassy	Water that is smooth as glass.
Impact zone	An area where big waves are breaking and a surfer has to duck-dive many waves, leaving little time to paddle out of the zone.
Kook	An inexperienced surfer.
Lip	The tip of the wave that curves over and breaks the wave.
Paddle	The swimming motion done with arms on a board.
Reef	Rock under the ocean causing the waves to break.
Rip	A current flowing outwards from the shore.
Set	A group of waves, bigger than the average size, recurring regularly.
Sucking	A wave that becomes sharply concave before and while breaking.
Take-off (point)	The ideal spot to start riding a wave.
Wetsuit	A neoprene (rubber) suit worn to keep you warm in icy water.
White water	The foam of a breaking wave (not as good for surfing as the face of the wave)

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Further Reading

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