

**Shouts & Whispers: Re-engaging Disaffected Girls through Peer-Teaching Drama**

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# SHOUTS & WHISPERS:

## Re- engaging disaffected girls through peer- teaching Drama

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by

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requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

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Truancy, disruptive behaviour and general disaffection from school are an on-going challenge in schools across the world, and it seems little headway has been made in developing effective strategies to support re-engagement. Many capable young people feel alienated from their schooling and seek affirmation and recognition via other avenues – avenues which do not always serve them well. Internationally, adolescent transgression and disenchantment remain intractable, with some evidence even suggesting negative behaviour is on the rise.

This study spans research across two secondary schools in two countries, Australia and the United Kingdom, and explores how peer teaching Drama may help re-engage disengaged or disaffected adolescents, and documents two separate but related projects in each country. In the course of research for the first project i.e. how Drama might be used to teach Conflict management, it was noted that peer teaching as a strategy in itself seemed to have a marked impact on several young women who had hitherto seemed reserved or vaguely dissatisfied and disengaged in the classroom. Although my first project had its genesis as part of a large Action Research study, as I began to focus on the experiences of these three Year 11 girls, it became apparent that a closer analysis of the personal impact of peer teaching through Case Study might yield deeper understanding. Thus the second project was designed as a Case Study from the outset – an exploration into how peer teaching might support the reengagement of two disaffected Year 9 girls.

The five young women who are the focus of my research ranged in attitude from being quietly disenchanted to actively challenging and disruptive in their behaviour within the school context; none would have put themselves forward for responsibility or, in the case of the challenging pupils, would have been trusted with responsibility by their teachers. There

was however one area of the curriculum all the girls enjoyed, Drama, and this interest was able to be utilised in peer teaching.

Both projects were designed to involve participants as collaborators, and encouraged these students to take responsibility for shaping, delivering and reflecting on their experiences as teachers. They were stakeholders in the learning of others, and this responsibility provided profound personal learning experiences for participants, and rich insight for me into some of the reasons that might lie behind the girls becoming disengaged and disaffected in school.

The study suggests there is a strong link between democratic teaching and learning processes, risk and emotional engagement, and the contribution that constructive challenge can make. My findings indicate that the combination of these factors can generate the self-esteem and confidence necessary to transform the attitudes and behaviour of disaffected and disengaged female students.

The research also clearly demonstrates that peer teaching is a potentially powerful strategy to utilise in support of positive change and, in wider terms, possibly one way the challenge of adolescent truancy and disaffection might be addressed.

## CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

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Morrison, M. (2004). Risk and responsibility: the potential of peer teaching to address negative leadership in *Improving Schools* Vol.7 No.3. pp 217-226. Sage.

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Morrison, M. (2005). "I was like Listened to and it made me feel proud" In Finney, J., Hickman, R., Morrison, M., Nicholl, B., and Rudduck, J. *Rebuilding Engagement through the Arts: Responding to disaffected students*. Cambridge. Pearson. pp.8-24

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Morrison, M., Trowsdale, J. and McNamara C. Risky Business - creative collaboration when the stakes are high. (Co-written with Trowsdale & McNamara)

Paper from International Drama and Education Conference, Ottawa 2004. Submitted for peer reviewed conference publication "Selected Papers" IDEA Publications.

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*“Laugh at yourself, but don't ever aim your doubt at yourself. Be bold. When you embark for strange places, don't leave any of yourself safely on shore. Have the nerve to go into unexplored territory.”*

*Alan Alda*

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 A JOURNEY BEGINS

This study consists of two separate, but related, research projects – the first based in Australia, the second in the United Kingdom. The overarching focus of these closely connected projects was an exploration of peer teaching as a means of re-engaging adolescents in learning. The content being taught shifted across the two projects, but what remained constant was the use of peer teaching as the principal pedagogical approach, with Drama as the crucial experiential learning strategy. As such, my research journey covered a great deal of ground, both in time and distance, spanning two distinct contexts and student cohorts, with each investigation being unique in its initial aims and in its structure. At the time the First Project began, there was no definitive plan for the exact nature of the second, though it was always hoped this project would stimulate a second phase; part of the evolution process of the research as a whole was recognising opportunities to explore emergent themes and issues from the First Project in a second one.

The First Project, situated in Australia, emerged as a result of my involvement within a large internationally funded project entitled DRACON (Drama and Conflict Management) which had as its overall goal an exploration of the impact of learning about conflict management through the peer teaching of Drama. Here the participants were a group of Year 11 Drama students and a group of Year 9 English pupils, whilst the DRACON research team was made up of Griffith University academics. At the time this project began, I was a Drama teacher responsible for the Year 11 Drama students and was supporting the broader project as a co-

researcher – an insider to the school, with a keen understanding of the school context and its students.

Given the brief of the DRACON project, our combined efforts were focused on conflict management and how this might be taught through Drama. However, it was only after the research was underway that my particular research focus emerged, with the realisation that the broader project was having an impact not only on student understanding of conflict management but also, and most significantly for me, an impact on the engagement of the young people who were conducting the peer teaching sessions. As a result, three young women emerged as the focus of my research into peer teaching – three young women for whom the process of the research seemed to be more significant than the content, offering them pathways to re-engagement with schooling.

In the United Kingdom, the second study was again part of a broader, funded project - this time supported by the Wallenberg Foundation. Here the overarching project was aimed at exploring the impact peer teaching might have on students whom the project co-ordinator, Professor Rudduck, referred to as “Negative Leaders” (Finney et al 2005, p.1). I immediately saw this project as an opportunity to extend the understandings developed in my Australian study, applying these to a new context and group of participants. As such, I developed a research project that would be one part of the overall Wallenberg work and began by identifying a school and two young women with whom I might be able to work. In this study, the peer-teachers were Drama students in Year 9 at Secondary school and their ‘pupils’ were in Year 6 at Primary school. The goal of this Second Project was, from the outset, an exploration of how students who were labelled as ‘dis-engaged’ or ‘disaffected’ by the school system might be re-engaged in school through peer teaching Drama, and this was to be researched by working closely with the two students. My role as researcher in this context was as an outsider who had no prior relationship with the key participants.

Although there are clear differences between my first and second projects, there is also a profound link between them - and a number of key similarities. The First Project was set in Australia in a State Secondary High School, the second in the United Kingdom, also in a Secondary school; both were part of larger funded projects that had clear goals in terms of their desire to have a positive impact on adolescent behaviour by enabling empowerment through teaching and learning; each used the peer teaching of Drama as a central strategy; both projects sought the collaboration of participants as stakeholders in the research, and provided opportunities for participants to offer their own insights as co-researchers in the process. The projects that were the springboards for my own research also inspired other investigations, and have influenced a range of on-going research projects over a number of

years: DRACON: Lofgren and Malm (2005); O'Toole, Burton and Plunkett (2005); Morrison, Burton and O'Toole (2006); and Wallenberg: Finney & Tymoczko (2003); Flutter and Rudduck (2004); Finney et al (2005). However each project within my study was unique in many ways.

Interestingly, although both projects have adolescent women as key protagonists, this was not intentional. In both projects, young women were the focus because either they emerged during the course of the research as most affected by a project, as in the DRACON project, or were identified by others as students who, potentially, could most benefit from being involved, as in the Wallenberg project. Although serendipitous to a degree, it must also be acknowledged that this female focus was no doubt also influenced by my own personal interest in exploring teaching and learning issues for adolescent girls. As I began to look more closely at what seemed to be emerging within my research, it became clear that the gender of my participants could not be ignored; and ultimately the gender 'lens' became significant as I considered key issues.

The terrain of each research context was therefore similar in many respects, but also individually distinctive. Each project offered its own particular insights and, when considered together, an even richer terrain was available for exploration.

## **Researcher Background**

All research, they say, is personal - and this journey was no exception. As a Secondary Drama teacher of many years' standing, I was well aware of the transformative potential of Drama for my pupils. Informing this further was my own experience at high school. In the late seventies, when I was a vaguely discontented and actively disengaged adolescent, I was asked by a desperate casting agent, my English teacher, to audition for a role in the school production, the ubiquitous musical which was, at the time, the only dramatic activity available to pupils in most schools. Although it could be argued the production gave little real indication of what engagement through Drama (education) could be, my involvement in the process was none-the-less memorable and certainly important for me. No doubt similar personal stories could be repeated by just about every Drama teacher, though what possibly sets my story apart is the precarious educational position I was in until my involvement in the school musical.

The enjoyment and sense of worth so engendered reinvigorated my interest in school, and in education in general. This very personal interest in the transformative potential of the arts has constantly shaped my goals as a teacher - i.e. to foster that same engagement through

the arts in my own pupils, and particularly in those seen to be in similarly precarious positions to myself at the same stage of life.

Although at the outset of the research I would not have consciously acknowledged the importance of this personal angle, it did become very significant in the latter phases and was possibly what had sparked my interest in the stories of the three girls in the initial research project. This First Project had a very concrete and specific learning objective - that of how to teach students to understand conflict. However, it was the realisation that peer teaching of the arts could possibly develop an understanding of how disengaged students, particularly girls, might be re-engaged more broadly in education in general, that led me to the most significant aspect of my study, at least from my point of view.

### **The Research Question: different paths to a destination**

The First Project was an action research study that sought to explore an issue of significance for teachers and learners in order that professional practice and therefore learning could be potentially changed and improved. As an action research study, emergent findings influenced subsequent directions and served to further refine the initial research question and in this way the research process could be described as appropriately reflexive and dialectic (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000).

As this First Project was part of the international DRACON project - an exploration into how Drama and peer teaching could educate adolescents in managing conflict more constructively – the research was driven by a question generated by a team of academics. Specifically it asked: How can educational Drama and peer teaching be used to help students manage conflict situations, particularly those conflicts that emerge in school?

However, as a co-researcher in this broader project, what soon became obvious was the powerful role peer teaching could have in engaging students who had been identified as isolated or somewhat disengaged from learning. As a result, I began to focus my personal research on this aspect, identifying three girls whose participation in the DRACON project as peer teachers appeared to be having a distinct impact on their engagement, using a series of interviews to discover more about their experiences and the role peer teaching was playing in their response to school.

From this research, a series of tentative findings emerged, but I felt that these needed to be applied in some other setting in order to determine if they were of any value to the broader education community. Fortuitously, while working at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom some time later, I became involved in research funded by the Wallenberg

Foundation which has for several years been supporting research into democratic learning and Pupil Voice - Finney & Tymoczko (2003); Rudduck & Flutter (2004); Finney et al (2005). This became an excellent opportunity to extend and deepen the research I had undertaken earlier and here the research question was far more targeted, becoming: How might the peer teaching of Drama re-engage disengaged adolescent girls in school?

Impacting on the evolution of these questions was both the context in which each project was situated and my shifting role as a researcher. My study therefore acknowledges the relationship between my particular research interests - the externally perceived/intended goals of each research phase - and the perceptions of participants themselves in refining the aims of the research.

## **Background Literature**

Disengagement in school can be identified in a number of ways, ranging from behaviour that represents a lack of motivation, boredom or general disinterest in learning, to active disruption and challenge within the school system and truancy. A range of studies have identified many of these behaviours in research which has sought to discover what might lie behind such negative and disaffected engagement (Osler et al. 2002; Bigger 2006; Jackson 2006; Kendall & Kinder 2008).

In some cases, challenging pupils can become leaders within their school context and their negative behaviour a source of admiration or inspiration for other pupils harbouring a desire to 'buck the system' (Finney et al 2005). These 'negative leaders' often do have the respect of their peers, though their teachers struggle to positively engage them in the classroom context. Disaffected pupils are not always disruptive, some are passively disinterested and do not challenge the system but move through it silently, never really articulating their lack of connection, exhibiting behaviour best described as 'dispirited' (Bigger 2006). In all cases it would seem that these pupils do not find that school is stimulating their interest or meeting their needs. I needed to find out why these pupils might have become disengaged in school, in order to see how both passive and negative attitudes and behaviour could be changed.

Throughout the developed world, the task of supporting students in the process of change is a major issue in education (Collins 1992. p.216) and my research, I hoped, might shed some fresh light on how engagement could be viewed within this process. I was aware that disengaged pupils do not necessarily give voice to their dissatisfaction (Shultz & Cook-Sather 2001; Osler et al. 2002). The voices of negative leaders are sometimes misheard or ignored (Brown 2005 p.60). In current school systems, disaffected and disruptive students find it hard to break free of negative stereotypes (Finney & Tymoczko. 2003 , Finney et al.

2005) , whilst more passively disengaged pupils can simply slip through the system unnoticed and unvalued (Gilligan 1992, p.6). As the research evolved, it increasingly focused on this issue, seeking to discover what might lie behind disengagement and what strategies might help re-engage these kinds of pupils. Adolescent girls became my particular focus within this group. I wanted to discover what strategies might be needed to establish more meaningful and positive roles in school, and peer teaching was one strategy that needed to be explored.

Peer teaching, or peer-tutoring as it is also called, requires pupils to undertake responsibilities which usually reside with the teacher (Flutter & Rudduck 2004, p.188). Generally, schemes in schools have tended to focus on how effective peer teaching is for the acquisition of skills for tutees, e.g. how younger pupils might be supported in Literacy and Maths by older pupils. In my study peer teaching was to be considered in terms of its impact on the tutors - the peer teachers themselves. As Drama education is the field in which I work, peer teaching in and through Drama was a natural focus.

Peer teaching could be considered as one strategy that might offer young people an authentic opportunity to take responsibility. Current research suggests that effective teaching and learning may need to involve risk-taking, and for both teachers and young people to feel comfortable with risk a more democratic educational environment is vital – one where students are empowered, through the offer of real opportunities, to take responsibility. I needed to consider how classrooms might become more democratic places, and identify what problems and possibilities might emerge through looking closely at contemporary classrooms. Thus my background reading was shaped by three key areas of interest - adolescent girls and disaffection from school; democratic teaching and learning strategies for empowerment and, specifically, peer teaching Drama as one potential way of re-engaging disaffected students.

Just as each project was unique, so too was the methodological approach I needed to employ in each context. Whilst my overarching approach utilised qualitative research principles, a form of both Action Research and Case Study evolved as most appropriate. I employed a range of Data collection tools, including surveys, interviews, observation notes and primary source materials from participants, e.g. diaries, summative academic reports and participant journals.

## Structure of the Thesis

My thesis is organized in the following way:

- 5 Introduction
- 6 Literature review
- 7 Methodology
- 8 Research Contexts
- 9 Findings and Analysis and
- 10 Conclusions.

This thesis tells the story of a journey that allowed the destination to evolve. New questions emerged as new insights were revealed and each discovery was the signpost to a new direction. The goal in the first phase of the research, Project One, was to explore how educational Drama might be used to help students to manage conflict situations, particularly those conflicts that emerge in school. However, a question that naturally emerged from the structure of the project was what effect peer teaching might have on learning. This organic nature of the research began to have an impact on refining the focus of subsequent questions and in shaping further action. The development of this second question emerged as extremely significant, both in terms of how it influenced the direction of the research and through the impact it had on methodology itself. Thus, when entering into the second research cycle, i.e. considering how peer teaching Drama itself might re-engage disengaged adolescent girls in school, the experiences of two disaffected Year 9 girls provided a focus through which to consider issues related to engagement and empowerment.

The journey discussed here was a long one, but one I had to take. I did not 'leave myself on the shore', but took my own experiences with me in the hope that I might find some insight into my own disengagement from school, and in doing this, as a teacher and teacher educator, also discover something I could bring back to inform my practice and the practice of others; and the journey continues.



*“In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but how many get through to you.”*

*Jerome Adler*

# 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As with the nature of the research journey itself, my literature search evolved over time and has been shaped and guided by issues that emerged as important along the way. Some fields that I had thought would be central to the study soon became marginal; however more critical areas of research emerged. This occurred most notably within the field of Conflict Management. The overarching focus of the DRACON project was to explore possible relationships between the way in which adolescents might be able to learn about conflict management through Drama and the use of peer teaching of central concepts in this field to other students. What emerged by the end of the first cycle of this project study was that the actual process of *teaching itself* was having a marked impact on the adolescent peer teachers. The evidence clearly indicated that the concepts and practice of conflict management, which my students were teaching to younger pupils, were being effectively understood and applied by the peer learners and also by the peer teachers themselves, and this finding is consistent with the outcomes of the whole DRACON research program. (Lofgren & Malm, 2005; O'Toole, Burton & Plunkett, 2005; Morrison, Burton & O'Toole, 2006.)

At the same time, it became evident from my research data that, for my students, the actual *process* of teaching was a very rich learning opportunity, and for three particular girls this was a critical experience in terms of examining their own identities and sense of worth. Because of these particular findings, the impact of peer teaching itself became the central focus of my research, rather than what was being taught, and the fact that the three students were girls, signalled that gender issues also would need to be considered.

Another field of enquiry that emerged as crucial was that of girls as negative leaders; those girls who were popular and highly visible in their school, but disengaged or disruptive in their behaviour. Because the second case study set out to explore if it might be possible to re-engage disengaged pupils through peer teaching, I made the decision to focus on disruptive girls, further reinforcing the need to examine the literature in the area of gender and school experience. This field is the first explored in the review of the literature.

The particularities of each case, the individuals involved, and the contexts in which my research was set, further shaped my reading. The first school setting was in a middle-class area, the second involved girls from more challenging working-class backgrounds. It is impossible to ignore the impact that class, gender and culture have upon the educational experiences of pupils (Walker & Barton 1983; Grady 2000; Plummer 2000; Fine & Weis 2005; Lloyd 2005). These issues needed to be considered as they informed approaches taken in the research to addressing the problem of disengagement. Unsurprisingly, this further influenced the research structure, with democratic learning principles being employed in shaping experiences that I hoped would empower the pupils involved. Democratic learning and pupil 'voice' thus became the second theme in the literature.

Whilst the impact of peer teaching for re-engagement is the third focus of the literature review, woven into this area is an exploration of key ideas from Drama education. In both phases of the research, Drama had a role to play. In the first, it was Drama strategies that were employed by the Year 11 peer teachers to teach Conflict management to Year 9s; in the second, performance skills were what were being taught by the 'problem' Year 9 girls to their Year 6 pupils. As stated earlier, the *process* of peer teaching rather than the *content* of the teaching episodes emerged as most important. However, although Drama is not a central focus of the study, there are some interesting issues to be drawn from Drama education theory which resonate strongly with democratic learning principles, and thus some attention also needed to be directed at reading in this area in order that the unique nature of Drama pedagogy might be acknowledged for the role it might play in re-engagement. Drama education is therefore woven into the examination of both democratic learning and peer teaching.

Three broad fields framed my exploration of the literature relevant to my research:

- 1 Adolescent girls and their disengagement and disaffection from school.
- 2 Democratic learning and empowerment.
- 3 Peer teaching drama for re-engagement.

Each of these areas is further refined and defined as I considered the scope of research in each area. It should be stated that in some areas, the literature available was minimal. As is often the case with new areas of research, I had to read around the field, and there are very few reported research studies that are directly relevant to mine. Where appropriate, I have drawn on materials that, whilst not necessarily sharing the same focus, raise issues that resonate with central themes in my research. Theoretical discussion in key areas has been drawn from a range of perspectives including Cultural and Gender Studies, Psychology and Sociology.

## 2.2 FIELD ONE: ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THEIR DISENGAGEMENT AND DISAFFECTION FROM SCHOOL

*“ We must ask which voice was actually attempting to make itself heard and saw no other possibility of gaining a hearing.”*

*Ulrich Beck*

This field of literature relates to three areas which needed to be explored – each intrinsically interwoven and complex - and I frame these here as questions. Firstly, what constitutes disengagement and disenchantment – and how is this manifest in girls’ transgressive behaviour? Secondly, what role does gender, class and culture have to play in the understanding of disengagement? Finally, what roles do current educational imperatives play in creating or reinforcing disengagement? Threaded through discussion of all these is the question of how identity and self-concept are shaped and expressed, and the notion of ‘voice’ from sociological and psychological perspectives.

### **Disengagement and Transgressive Behaviour**

Disengagement from school can manifest itself in a number of ways but perhaps the most obvious is in the form of transgressive or disruptive behaviour. Kendall and Kinder (2008) suggest that disengagement triggers one of two reactions – fight or flight; this is a simple model, but it does serve to describe two of the most visible aspects of disengagement: Pupils who take ‘flight’ are those who absent themselves from school, whilst those who stay to ‘fight’ challenge the system and actively rail against their teachers and authority. However, this picture of disengagement does not tell the whole story, nor does it consider some of the less visible signs of disengagement that would appear to be influenced by gender.

If problem behaviour and absenteeism are indicators of disengagement and dissatisfaction, then statistical information on school exclusion (formal action taken by schools whereby pupils are removed from school for a fixed period of time) indicate that this is a far bigger problem with males. Key findings from Kendall and Kinder’s research for the NFER (National Federation of Educational Research) established that between 2004 and 2006 boys outnumbered girls 5 to 1 in terms of school exclusion, and continue to account for between 79 and 80% of all exclusions across the United Kingdom (2006.) Unsurprisingly, most government policy initiatives have focused on boys (Osler, Street, Lall & Vincent, 2002), and similarly, with research into academic achievement, the particular needs of problem girls has

been largely overlooked. One study however, undertaken by Osler et al (2002), does have girls and their exclusion as its focus. Supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, this independent qualitative research study for the National Children's Bureau raised questions regarding girls' disaffection through focused interviews with young women between 13 and 16 years of age, and teaching staff in six areas of England. The study established a number of issues in regard to institutional shortcomings in provision of services for girls and raised the pertinent issue of *perceptions* when it comes to how teachers and schools see girls generally. Throughout the study, a typical response was that girls were 'not a problem' and only by exploring a little deeper did widespread concerns start to emerge. However, even these were often over-shadowed by the difficulties of managing the greater number of boys presenting overtly challenging behaviour (p.2).

It would seem that unless girls exhibit the 'overly' aggressive or risk-taking behaviour of boys, their disengagement is likely to be overlooked. Ostler et al (2002) describe the 'hidden nature' of girls' problems and suggest that the low number of girls excluded from school does not reveal a very accurate picture of just how many girls may actually have opted out of learning. They suggest that 'internalised responses' such as anxiety, eating disorders, depression and self-harming can be overlooked, or attributed to problems that lie beyond school (p.37). One of the most important elements that this study highlights is the differences between girls and boys when it comes not only to *how* disengagement is expressed, but also to *why*. As other researchers have also pointed out (Prettyman, 1991; Raey & Arnot, 2002; Jackson, 2006), girls define their learner identity and experience with school through social interactions. Therefore, 'fitting in', 'peer acceptance' and 'friendship' are likely to have big impacts on how positive, or otherwise, girls feel about school. Despite the fact that teachers may not recognise school-ground friendship disagreements or peer exclusion as a major issue in comparison to a physical 'brawl' that may need more immediate attention, problems for girls in status and peer relationships in school can be just as harmful, though the damage remains unseen.

At the same time, adolescence is viewed as a time when challenges to authority are to be expected, by females as well as males. The transition from child to adult is not always easy and interpersonal conflict is an issue. A crucial feature of adolescent development, according to Collins (1992), is that in the process of defining themselves as separate from their parents, teenagers will seek to assert themselves as individuals: "Conflicts, defined as oppositional interactions, are seen as natural interpersonal sequelae of shifts in role expectations associated with age-graded transitions and maturational change" (p.216).

However, although this is a time when turbulent attitudes and behaviours are most evident, it is also a time when they are, according to Collins (1992 p.216) likely to be ineffectually managed. Students who don't feel that they matter, and/or who are denied a voice, may express their frustration in negative action. Students quoted in Shultz & Cook-Sather (2001) speak of feeling intimidated and unheard when speaking; disregarded and excluded. A disenfranchised student within Judon's (2001) research relating to troubled teenage girls, speaks of a turning point for her having arrived when she finally felt a teacher looked beyond her behaviour as a truant and bully, really listened to her concerns and saw beyond her behaviour: "*The hurt was hidden behind my fist*" ( Judon, 2001, p.43).

Of course when girls do exhibit negative or aggressive behaviour it is a cause for great concern socially. Indeed, while girls may in reality be under-represented in formal exclusion figures, misbehaviour by girls is proportionally over-represented in the media. Currently, a good deal of media interest is being focused on girls who have been labelled 'ladettes'. By definition, these 'ladettes' are girls who exhibit behaviour more commonly associated with boys - i.e they act like 'lads'. Ladettes fight, swear, drink to excess and are generally unruly in public.

Andrew Levy, for the The Daily Mail (Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007), had this to say:

Drunkenly dancing on tables or collapsing in the street used to be a source of acute embarrassment for young women the morning after the night before. Today, they are more likely to boast about it – to the world.

Although the term 'ladette' is more commonly associated with post-school age young women, it is now emerging as a term used to label some secondary school girls; young women whom teachers describe as loud, disruptive and rude to teachers; girls who frequently swear, act 'hard' and are aggressive with other pupils (Jackson, 2006a, p.12). Jackson undertook a large-scale research project in six Secondary schools in northern England, exploring the phenomena of 'lad' and 'ladette' culture in school. Questionnaires and interviews were undertaken with 158 pupils, girls and boys. Teachers were also interviewed as Jackson sought to get the most complete picture she could on both how this behaviour manifests itself in school and its causes. Jackson contends that laddish behaviour can result from both social and academic concerns. Social status within school and the need to appear 'cool' and 'popular' is a contributing factor - also fear of academic failure (p.124).

Jackson also points out that 'laddish' behaviour can act as a protective barrier for a young person – shielding them from revealing their real sense of self-worth (p.123). This suggests that academic insecurity is being masked by a persona which appears not to care about

such goals. Jackson quotes the work of Urdan & Midgley (2001), cited in Jackson (2006a), who describe pupils who behave in this way as 'self-handicapping' – i.e. undertaking the kinds of activities more likely to further exclude them from the learning mainstream.

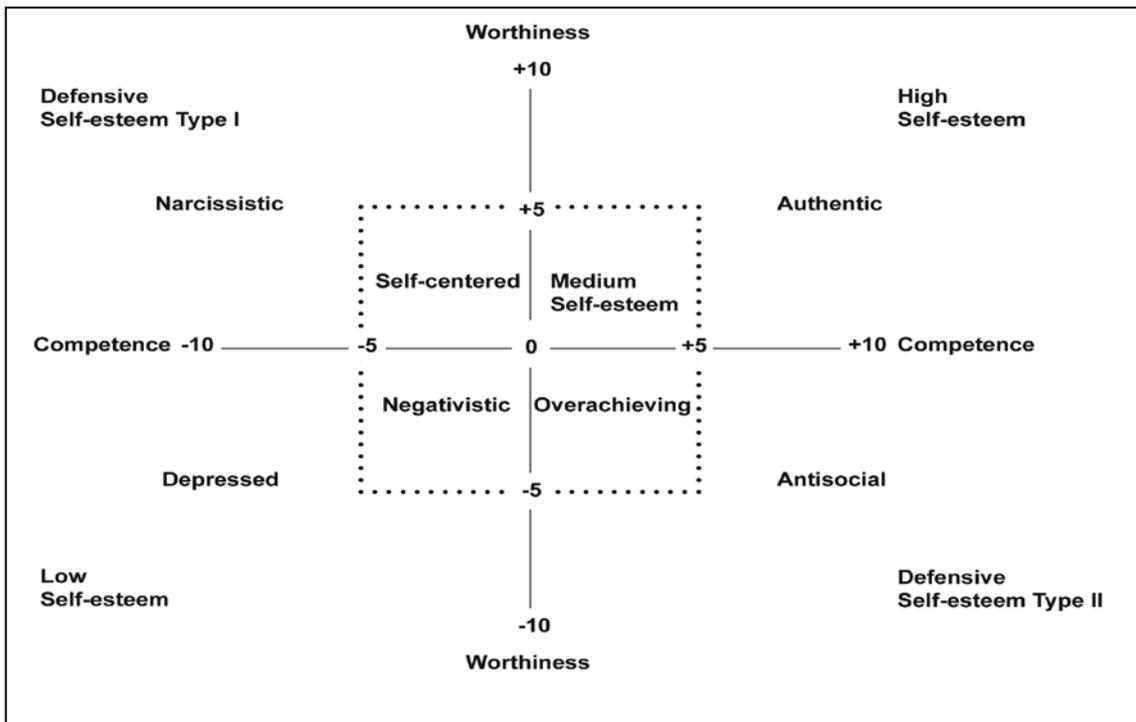
Jackson's ladette research (2006a), as a large-scale study, is useful in terms of what it reveals in regard to general perspectives on experience from pupils and teachers. However the *generalising* that is a feature of the study has some shortcomings. All data analysed was in the form of questionnaires and interviews. Responses were coded and then, it appears, analysed using a quantitative approach. As a result, the description of the lads and ladettes is as a homogenous group, defined solely by their behaviour and academic aspirations, or lack thereof. Because breadth has been chosen over depth in terms of the subject, it is not possible for conclusions to be anything but quite broad. Whilst the analysis contains a large number of quotes from the data, ultimately it is hard, in that study, to connect with individuals or see some of the more subtle influences that might impact on disengaged, disruptive pupils. In my own research, I realized I needed to seek out a more inclusive model of engagement - one that could illuminate experiences of less overtly disengaged students and move beyond simple behavioural indicators.

Psychologists, such as Jimerson, Campos & Grief (2003) do offer a model that refines engagement, and thus disengagement, more completely. Their model identifies three areas to consider - Behavioural, Affective and Cognitive. The *Behavioural* component acknowledges classroom interactions and responses; the *Affective*, emotional responses such as feelings of enjoyment, fun and attachment; whilst the *Cognitive* dimension relates to the thinking and evaluative element in pupils' perceptions of themselves in relation to academic goals and self-efficacy (p.7). This model is useful because it acknowledges aspects of engagement that are of most relevance in terms of my research and, (perhaps least explored to date), emotional responses to school and related issues of self-perception and self-worth. The writers suggest that each dimension has a role to play in pupil engagement and, whilst they do overlap, individual responses can be ascribed to one or another of these areas. However, they make a central and very critical point in highlighting that most studies seeking to measure school engagement have traditionally used observable behaviour related to academic achievement as their guide, e.g. Finne & Rock (1997); Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder (2001); and Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo & Hurley (1998) as cited in Jimerson et al (2003, p.8). The authors suggest it is time more focus was given to considering how affective and cognitive elements might be incorporated into a definition of engagement. Whilst I agree with these writers, I think the process of separating cognitive and affective response is difficult and my research indicates that the line between the two elements, as they describe them, is blurred - e.g. perceptions of academic self-efficacy

(identified by these writers as lying in the realm of cognition) could just as easily be placed within the affective dimension. However, what I did draw from these writers was reinforcement for my own ideas that there is more to engagement than what is merely observable, or measurable in terms of academic achievement; there is more to pupil engagement than 'meets the eye'.

Taking the focus away from behavioural indicators of disengagement allows a more inclusive view of the problem that includes more subtle manifestations of the issue. In the case of the three Australian students who participated in this study, disruptive behaviour was not an issue. However their sense of 'enjoyment' in school, their 'goal orientation', i.e. their interest in achievement, and 'academic self-concept' (Furlong et al, 2003, p.103) were evident in a general sense of disenchantment and dissatisfaction, leading to them "slipping under the radar" in schools. They did not pose a problem in the classroom, were generally compliant when faced with authority, and academically did enough, but no more, to get by. They caused no grief, and attracted no attention. Nevertheless, these pupils were potentially just as disengaged, and just as much in need of focus and attention – but invisible. Ostler et al (2002), in their research, focused specifically on 'problem' girls, describe how coping strategies of girls in stressful school situations may include withdrawal as well as escape (p.2). Different kinds of classroom behaviour might have a base in similar personal perspectives of self-worth and esteem.

Bigger (2006) explored the experiences of what he called 'dispirited pupils', concluding that there is a strong link between competence and esteem, and that the relationship between these two elements drives behaviour. He uses a model, shown below, as developed by Mruk (1999 in Bigger, 2006, p.5), to illustrate how 'authentic' self-esteem may be distinguished from other forms of self-esteem such as 'narcissistic', 'depressed' and 'antisocial'.



**Fig. 1 (Mruk)**

Bigger (2006) makes the point that self-esteem is not static and pupils' perceptions of themselves may move within this framework (p.5). What is interesting to take from Mruk's table is how we, as teachers, can often misinterpret behaviour. In the table above, it can be seen that a pupil might exhibit quite anti-social behaviour as a defensive mechanism despite having a high level of competence. Arguably, negative behaviour can get in the way of effective learning, and achievement. In my Second Project, this was particularly true of one of the participants, who was described by her teachers as a young woman who had intelligence and ability, but who chose not to direct her energy toward learning.

### **Issues of Gender, Class and Culture**

Following considerable research during the 1970s and 1980s on inequalities in the classroom impacting on the performance of girls (Spender, 1982 and Stanworth, 1981), contemporary concerns have turned to the under-performance of boys in today's classrooms (Francis in Lloyd, 2005, p.9-35). In the United Kingdom the performance of boys at GCSE has led to considerable resources and research directed at exploring the 'gender gap' in terms of the underachievement of boys (Younger & Warrington, 2000). Whilst this might seem to imply that the battles of the 1980s have been won for girls, is this really the case? Francis (2005, p.9) suggests that other types of evidence indicate more continuity in the experiences of girls than change. She refers back to feminist research from the 70s and 80s

that highlighted the way in which girls were often marginalized in the mixed-sex schools and disadvantaged by curriculum and education policy that impacted on their self-esteem and school experience. Francis also suggests that, whilst more contemporary research has acknowledged the role class and 'race' have to play in shaping experience, findings continue to support that the 'gendered behaviours' identified in previous studies are still evident today. To support this contention, she points to the work of Spender (1982) and Stanworth (1981), which identified that teachers spent proportionally a greater amount of time addressing boys' needs compared to girls' needs in the same classroom (cited by Francis in Lloyd, 2005, p.10). More recent research (Younger, Warrington & Williams, 1999; Moss, 2000) has continued to find this the case. Later research, (Jackson, 2006; Lloyd, 2005; Younger et al, 2005), indicates that the whole debate regarding the 'gender gap' is highly problematic and that issues of class and ethnicity are more critical predictors of achievement than gender. However, as Francis (2005) asks, is academic achievement the whole story, or even the most important story, when it comes to girls' experience of school?

One important point to make is that the two sets of girls in my research do not represent two oppositional categories of girls, i.e. 'good' girls and 'bad' girls. Media images all too readily stereotype young women as either passive victims or delinquents (Brown, 2005, p.63). As Brown points out, categorising young women in this way masks important common experiences (p.66). At this point, it is useful to look back to Kendall & Kinder's (2008) narrow representation of disengagement defined by the behaviours of 'fight or flight'. However, a more complex description of experience is needed. Ostler et al (2002) acknowledge an additional affective response in terms of engagement – withdrawal. I suggest this response includes *emotional* as well as *physical* withdrawal, and would argue that this *affective* response is probably one of the most common strategies employed by the less overtly disengaged girls.

Indeed it is in identifying the shared experiences and common feelings the girls had about themselves and school that holds the key to understanding the problem of disengagement. What does the literature suggest about how girls generally experience school and how does this shape identity and self-concept?

Whilst it is important to acknowledge the individual differences of each girl in my study, there is no denying that I found, as have others, common threads of experience that can be attributed to gender. The physical experience of moving from childhood to adulthood should not be underestimated in terms of the impact it can have on the creation of self-concept in young women. This is relevant to school identity in terms of issues of exclusion and inclusion. As numerous writers have pointed out, social relationships and how girls perceive

themselves as being viewed by others is vitally important (Brown & Gillian, 1993; Hey, 1997; Raey & Arnot, 2002; Jackson, 2006b). As McLaughlin (2005) points out, the body is a source of distress, power and control in terms of the female experience (p. 51). There is no denying that girls' self-concept is influenced by how they see themselves in relation to others and social relations. Brown & Gilligan (1992) highlight the importance of understanding how identity is created during adolescence, and how complex this process can be for girls as they negotiate their desire for acceptance and their wish to meet the expectations of others. They argue that adolescence is often a time of disassociation and repression and link this to the social construction of gender, where expectations are for girls to be calm, controlled and not aggressive. Brown and Gilligan use 'voice' as a metaphor for power and argue that women are silenced during adolescence.

Research by Brown (2005) offers a very interesting exploration of the role which social class has to play in how adolescent girls fit into the school system. Brown's study compared two groups of white, 11-14 year-old girls in two different schools - Mansfield, a challenging working-class school and Arcadia, a school in a more middle-class, affluent area. This study was extremely interesting for me as her descriptions of the girls' behaviour in each setting matched those of the girls I worked with very closely. Brown spent a year talking to girls in both schools about their experiences at school, their opinions and desires, and found that there were great similarities in terms of how disenchanted they were with school. Both sets of girls were frustrated and annoyed with some of the injustices they saw within their classrooms and both felt angry at the lack of recognition and visibility they felt they had at school (p.160). However, how this frustration was manifested was different in each school. The Mansfield girls were more likely to voice their discontent and anger at teachers, administrators and classmates whilst the Arcadia girls appeared to be outwardly compliant, only expressing their dissatisfaction within the research process.

Brown (2005) gives a cultural explanation for the aggressive behaviour of the Mansfield girls. Their refusal to be contained or disciplined, she suggests, is an implicit critique of type of schooling which rewards the 'good girl', the traditional middle-class behaviour, and denies the legitimacy of working-class femininity and an image of women as hard-working, responsible caregivers (p.149-150). This does seem to resonate strongly with my argument that pupils today often have very important and responsible roles to play within the home, yet are expected at school to behave as children, and offered little in the way of power or control (Morrison 2004, p.218). Pupils who challenge this expectation are a threat and Brown highlights this as a particular issue in terms of girls and quotes Walkerdine's description of the working-class girl:

The little working-class girl presents, especially to education, an image which threatens the safety of discourse of the innocent and natural child. She is too precocious, too sexual...she is deeply threatening to a civilization process understood in terms of natural rationality and nurturant femininity" (Walkerdine, 2006, p.78).

Brown & Gilligan (1992) discuss the importance of authorising and listening to young women, and taking seriously their experiences, thoughts and feelings. They say that when adolescent girls feel they are not valued and listened to, they may seek out 'inauthentic' kinds of relationship that generally do not support either academic learning or, ultimately, personal happiness (p. 6).

At the heart of these scenarios of disengagement and negative leadership are issues of power. Whilst it should perhaps be celebrated that young women have the confidence to be vocal and assertive, their transgressive behaviour works against their ever being able to realise any constructive power within the school system. Jackson (2006) identifies this behaviour as 'self-handicapping' and asserts that individuals often behave in ways likely to jeopardize their performance in exams as a way of providing an excuse for failure (p.86).

There seems to be a close and complex relationship between academic performance and engagement in the classroom and engagement appears to be strongly influenced by social and emotional factors, yet I found, like Jennings (2003 p.43), that much research on academic performance seems to neglect the influence of social and emotional variables and how pupils themselves feel about school (Baines & Kent, 2003). In my research, both sets of young women were disengaged from school and, whilst their academic performance and success at school varied to a degree, only one of the five young women with whom I worked ultimately took the decision to continue studies beyond school. No matter what outward appearances suggested – whether compliance or resistance, confidence or self-consciousness - all five girls seemed to share similar negative views about their self-worth and identity. However, before really being able to address the problem of disengagement and disenchantment, it seemed important to understand what role school experience might have had to play in creating these negative self views, and if there could be a connection between an individual's sense of worth and their engagement and performance.

Siccone (1995) considers the role schools have played in actually creating low self-esteem in children. Poor self-concept, he argues, is the result of policies and practices that respect and affirm some groups while devaluing or rejecting others (Siccone 1995, p.27).

Unsurprisingly, behaviour that does not meet acceptable standards is labelled 'naughtiness' and leads to rejection and/or control. However, there are many reasons why students

misbehave. One reason often cited is boredom; another, especially for students who struggle with academic work, is fear of failure and ridicule. Such students may opt to “drop out”, withdrawing themselves from the system so that negative demands and negative judgements cannot be made of them. Another avenue is to seek some sense of self-worth among peers in non-academic arenas or through various forms of attention-seeking behaviours that disrupt the learning of others, as identified by Jackson (2004a). Negative leaders, though they may not have the affirmation of teachers, can gain the respect of their peers, albeit sometimes through their manipulation of fear. As their voices often remain unheard within the sanctioned power structure of the school, they create their own power structures in which they feel a greater sense of status. Unfortunately, these power constructions do not really model the social relationships they will need to form outside school – i.e. relationships which require authentic respect and trust.

School engagement requires a sense of autonomy, dignity, control and ownership, and belonging, the goals of a social, motivating school community. (Jennings, 2003 quotes Osterman, p. 45)

These central notions of ‘autonomy’, ‘dignity’ and ‘control’ are crucial, as is how they might be shaped by school experience for girls. Understanding the pedagogic terrain of power in schools, Giroux (1997) provided insight into the gendered experiences of the five young women in my studies.

## **Current Educational Imperatives and Engagement**

So – what are the implications of negative behaviour and disengagement from school and how does the current educational climate impact on disengagement?

Here it is useful to return to a psychological explanation of how meaningful participation in school might be shaped. Jennings (2003) states that students are motivated to learn because of a drive to satisfy core needs: “competence, autonomy, and relatedness” (p.44). I would argue that current educational imperatives mean little attention has been given to fostering either autonomy or relatedness. In fact, I would agree with Jackson (2005) and Warrington & Younger (1999) who suggest that the education system is actually exacerbating the problem of disengagement by putting enormous amounts of pressure on pupils and teachers in the form of standardized national testing. Such testing values a narrow range of skills and those who cannot achieve may easily seek self-affirmation through other means. If a young person is not academically gifted but has other strengths, which are either not noticed or not prized in the school, they may easily be neglected or

rejected within the academic culture of a school. Particularly for those adolescents who already have low self-esteem, this is a real issue.

Sociologist Robert Emery (1992) suggests that, to these young people, even negative signals of affective involvement are better than no attention at all (p. 281). Power struggles may be, at a deeper level, struggles for intimacy and it is interesting to consider this in the light of disaffected adolescents and difficult adolescent girls in particular. However, this behaviour may well be defensive rather than aggressive. Girls generally, and most certainly within the school context, are particularly conscious of the power others have to look at them, spread rumours about them, compare them to others: "Girls are as mean as boys, sometimes worse. Girls were all I knew. They taught me to be ugly and alone." (Magee, 2001, p.157). They are walking a tightrope, and to protect themselves girls may remove their deeper feelings and thoughts from public scrutiny to avoid leaving themselves open to ridicule (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.6). Schools can be hostile places and in an environment where there is risk of ridicule, pupils can find it more comfortable to remain silent.

Clearly, working in an environment where power relationships are fraught is not emotionally healthy for anyone - neither the pupils nor the teachers who have to deal with the behavioural fallout. Schools in the United Kingdom are under enormous pressure to ensure pupils achieve well in standardized tests, and from the early years of primary school, ability and success is measured by academic performance. It would seem this issue may be a global one as Jimerson (2003) makes this point in relation to the education system within the United States.

Amidst an era emphasizing 'standards and accountability' in education it is important to recognize the interplay between socio-emotional, behavioural, and cognitive development as they influence academic success and learning. (Jimerson 2003, p.3).

Jimerson's argument is, at its heart, one that is concerned with maximizing academic performance. Whilst I acknowledge the importance of the cognitive dimension of school experience in regard to learning, I believe schools have a wider responsibility. In the current educational climate there seems little recognition of the complex role that schools can play in emotionally empowering all young people.

'Education, education, education' was how Britain's then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, set out priorities for his first term in office 11 years ago - putting major financial investment into schools. On the back of this, social commentary in the British media demanded that schools strive for academic excellence and, to a degree, they have been rewarded. In Primary

School tests of 11 year- olds, Maths, English and Science exam results do reflect a healthy improvement over the last 10 years. However, the media also reflect growing social concern with the increase in Great Britain of youth anti-social behaviour. On a daily basis, there are articles reporting everything from the serious outcomes of gang culture, knife crime and substance abuse to the alcohol-fuelled antics of the 'lads and ladettes' referred to in Jackson's (2005) study. It would appear that in schools also, antisocial behaviour has not improved, despite celebrated test scores.

Truancy was going to be cut by a third, promised the social exclusion unit. In fact, despite threats of jailing parents and numerous ways of counting absences, the problem has refused to go away. Bad behaviour and aggression in the classroom also show no sign of significant change - despite numerous initiatives, crackdowns and promises of "zero tolerance". (Coghlan 2007, p.1)

Clearly there are important social and emotional issues to address if young people are to respect others, and themselves. There needs to be some way to harness and redirect youth energy currently engaged in personally and socially destructive behaviours. Perhaps developing healthier power relationships in schools could be a starting point.

The challenge for my research was how to provide a framework that could give students authentic power and influence in an otherwise disempowering system or, to put it a different way, was it possible to give voice to silent, disengaged girls and remove the negative label from girls described as negative leaders? The search for an answer to this question took me into the field of democratic learning and empowerment in education.

## 2.3 FIELD TWO: DEMOCRATIC LEARNING AND EMPOWERMENT

*“Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand”*

*Chinese proverb.*

It is important to acknowledge that the broad context shared in both projects was the environment of the school. Whatever outside influences may have contributed to these projects, my focus could only be on the contributing factors played out and observed in school. Simply stated, I needed to consider how the very nature of the current education system - its structures and priorities - might have influenced the way these young women felt about both school and themselves. As stated earlier, I identified that at the heart of the problem of disengagement lay issues of ‘autonomy’, ‘dignity’ and ‘control’, played out in observable power struggles, and an understanding of the current pedagogic terrain of power in schools (Giroux 1997) was needed.

Three key questions informed my reading in this field: What is democratic learning and does it currently exist in schools? What is the relationship between democratic pedagogy, engagement, learning and empowerment? How might democratic principles redraw relationships between pupils and teachers in school?

### **Current Challenges: Pupil identity and the Neo- conservative agenda**

Pupils’ identities in school are as much governed by the political and social climate governing the system in which they are being educated as by the individual school they attend. Whilst each of the pupils in my study may have had individual skills, aspirations and desires, these were mediated by the schooling system. Along with whatever individual labels may have been attached to them in terms of their behaviour, their experiences of school needed to be looked at also as part of a bigger educational picture.

MacBeath & Moos (2004) highlight the new demands and challenges made on education, particularly the concern now focussed on efficiency, output and measurement in schools (p.4). The authors argue that economic and commercial drives have recast schools as ‘service agencies’ and transformed pupils into ‘consumers’ - and that in this new model of schooling, policy- makers expect an unambiguous link between intention and result (p.5). Clear evidence of MacBeath & Moos’ concerns can be seen in the management of

curriculum in the United Kingdom. The National Curriculum prescribes a set of very clear targets to be reached in a number of key subject areas; teachers are held very accountable for how many of their pupils meet these targets; and pupils are defined by where they fall within a range of possible 'levels' related to these targets. Whilst I do not wish to explore in any detail the notion of inclusive education, or argue the merits or otherwise of teaching pupils in mixed ability or 'set level' classes, it is important to mention that schools in the U.K. have progressively adopted the latter approach. Perhaps cynically, I would argue that this approach is to ensure efficiency of delivery and measurement.

Just as pupils are ranked and organized according to their 'level', other labels define their identity. Poduska (1996) identifies the way schools mould expectations of students in predetermined ways, labelling them as 'gifted, disabled, attention-deficit disorder, and so forth' (p.113). She raises the issue of pupil 'voice' as one which includes 'a complex expression of interests, hopes, fears, questions and refusals' and suggests that fixed labels work against finding the individual in the classroom (p.114). It has increasingly worried me as a teacher-educator how quickly my trainee teachers seem to pick up a common habit in schools of referring to students by the shorthand of labels. John Smith and Susan Jones quickly become 'My ADD pupil' and 'One of my level 3 girls'. It is unsurprising that pupils see themselves defined by a narrow range of prescribed skills and aptitudes, yet also unsurprising that teachers slip into this mode. It would be unfair not to acknowledge the challenges teachers face, and MacBeath & Moos (2004) highlight the way relationships between teachers and pupils can be strained by the school system. Teachers feel under pressure to deliver results and in crowded classrooms, this is not easy. Riley (2004) identified how teachers can feel in the firing line outside the classroom as they are caught between the competing demands of stakeholders. On the one hand, pupils and parents are increasingly challenging the role of teacher as authority figure, far more so than in the past, whilst on the other hand, government is demanding that teachers deliver higher standards and have greater accountability (p.58).

Critics of the recent models of schooling (e.g. Giroux 1993, 1997; Fletcher, 2000; Abbs, 2003; MacBeath & Moos 2004) suggest that systems of education across the western world seem dominated by economic rationalism. Abbs (2003) highlights a current lexicon of education which uses the language of business and management, and speaks of 'training and investment', the delivery of 'measurable skills' and 'ranking' (p.24). Fletcher (2000) identifies the way this neo-conservative approach to education runs counter to more emancipatory theories and argues that this is because conservative views on the curriculum and pedagogy constrain students from engaging in "meaningful decision-making about their identities and life plans" (p.1). However, whilst recognizing the differences that each

approach may see as the goal of education, he warns that it is inappropriate to articulate educational theory in terms of binary opposites, or 'either/or' debates (p.2). The concept of 'democratic schools' cannot simply be attached to one theory or another because perspectives on the notion of democracy itself vary. Most western countries implementing a neo-conservative approach to education would assert that they have a democratic system of schooling in place, even though the current system may look very different from the democratic model posed by emancipatory theorists. Seashore-Louis (2004) offers three alternative theories of democracy that are useful to consider in the light of varying approaches. These are: Democracy as individual opportunity (liberal democracy); democracy as social opportunity (democratic socialism); and participatory democracy (p.79-81). I do not intend to elaborate on the differences between each here, but it is important to acknowledge, before exploring emancipatory theories more specifically, that the notion of democracy is complex. Fletcher (2000) argues that although there may be some differences of opinion between emancipatory theorists, it is important that attention be focused on what is shared (p.1). He makes his position very clear on why this should be the case:

Divisiveness has diverted energy that might be better spent overcoming the barriers between theory and practice that continue to represent a significant weakness among emancipatory perspectives. In relation to the educational agenda that has been successfully promoted by neo-conservative perspectives, much more unites emancipatory theories than divides them. (Fletcher, 2000, p.2)

I agree with Fletcher's position, and intend to explore shared concepts of democratic learning by deconstructing the perspectives of a number of key emancipatory theorists. Central to my research was the goal of action for change, and so finding how a link might be made between theory and practice was also centrally important.

## **Emancipatory Education: seeking the democratic classroom.**

As stated above, numerous definitions of Democracy could be offered, but the following is a valid starting point for exploring the concept at work in education:

A democratic society, or a participative democracy is one in which its members are empowered to make decisions and policies concerning themselves and their society, but where decisions are constrained by principles of non-repression and non-discrimination.

(Pearson,1992 cited in MacBeath, 2004, p.19).

If we replace the word 'society' with *school* in the above definition, we get a clear indication of what may be some of the key principles of democratic education – empowerment, participation, freedom and inclusion. Seeking the democratic classroom will involve deconstructing these concepts and exploring the work of key educational theorists in the field. An overview of the Progressive educational theories that informed the development of educational philosophy and practice throughout the twentieth century is directly relevant to the context of my research.

Following the Industrial Revolution, education was accepted as the right of all. However, as John Dewey points out in *The School and Society; The Child and The Curriculum*, originally published in 1900, whilst society may have changed as a result of this revolution, schools had not. To address this he offers this challenge to schools:

The introduction of active occupations, of nature study, of elementary science, of art, of history, the relegation of the merely symbolic and formal to a secondary position; the change in the moral school atmosphere, in the relation of pupils and teachers- of discipline; the introduction of more active, expressive and self-directing factors - all these are not mere accidents, they are necessities to the wider revolution.

(Dewey 1990 ed., p.29)

Although written over a century ago, much of Dewey's vision is still pertinent. He suggests, subject studies aside, a number of key points that resonate strongly with my research. The importance of pupil/teacher relationships, seeking to change the 'moral school atmosphere' and supporting self-direction, are all just as relevant today in seeking a democratic classroom.

In the early twentieth century, Dewey makes the observation that schoolrooms were unexciting places, set out to accommodate a 'mass' of pupils all sitting in set places at rows

of desks. This he suggested illustrated the expectation that material would be delivered uniformly to a passive group of listeners. Indeed, he held that classrooms were places of 'listening' rather than for action (1990 ed. p.33). This Dewey saw as acting against what should be a more natural approach to learning – that of dialogue and social exchange.

Similarly to the social constructivist theories of psychologist Vygotsky (1987), Dewey (1990 ed.) holds that knowledge was best developed through a continuous exchange of current experience and active engagement with new experiences (p.189). Dewey described 'traditional' education as a process of passive acquisition, and criticised rote learning methods that required little interactivity or critical engagement. Here he calls on schools to consider a more holistic view of how learning might be approached:

Abandon the notion of subject-matter as fixed and ready-made in itself, outside a child's experience; cease thinking of a child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process (p. 189).

Dewey also points out that schools had developed into strangely formal institutions, divorced from other parts of children's experience, e.g. their life at home and social context (Dewey, 1990 ed.). He believes these outside experiences should actually be acknowledged and utilized within educational contexts. There is no doubt that Dewey's writing had a major influence on the Progressive Education movement that was to follow mid-century, when educationalists picked up on key ideas to inform what have come to be described as 'experiential' learning techniques in the course of more 'child-centred' approaches to education. Dewey's influence on educational thinking can be seen in the work of American educational psychologists such as Carl Rogers (1961, 1983 ed, 1994 ed) and Jerome Bruner (1962, 1990 ed); and also in the research of British educational theorist Lawrence Stenhouse (1967, 1983).

## **Legacy of the Progressives**

Originally writing in the 1960s, the American psychologist Carl Rogers (1961, 1980 ed., 1983 ed.) builds on his research into 'person-centred' therapy, and develops a series of principles which can be strongly linked to Dewey's recognition of the importance of participatory experience in learning. Rogers' conclusions regarding students' educational needs became synonymous with what has come to be known as 'student-centred' and 'experiential' learning, concepts which had a marked impact on the progressive education movement. True to his principles, he bases his conclusions directly on feedback from pupils in a range

of settings, across six states. His theories detail a number of important issues for teachers who wished to shape more active and supportive classrooms. The following summary represents a consolidated overview of what Rogers (1994 ed., p.5-7) identified as key desires from a pupil's perspective:

- Students wish to be *trusted and respected*. They want teachers who can communicate that they care about them, wish to help them, and want to see them succeed rather than fail.
- Students want to feel as if they are *part of a family*. They wish schools to be more like communities where all participants from the principal down can work in collaboration.
- Students wish to have *freedom*, not *licence* - freedom of expression directed toward a purpose.
- Students want *opportunities to be responsible*; to be trusted enough to be active participants in learning decisions.
- Students want to *have choices*. They wish to have some control over what they learn.

Rogers' belief that students should be "stakeholders in their learning communities" (1994ed, p.8) resonates strongly with humanist notions of democratic education. Looking closely at the five key points above it is interesting to see which ideas can now be identified in the progressive movement and, ultimately, how they were played out. Certainly notions of care for the learner, freedom of expression and choice were held as vitally important in the progressive movement; unfortunately, how some of these ideas looked in practice often reflected a less than complete picture of Rogers' ideas.

Historical critiques of the progressive movement suggest freedom became licence, self-expression often lacked real purpose, and choice led to a loss of key skills. I would argue that the neo-conservative backlash in education, reacting as it did to a perceived loss of control, meant democratic concepts such as 'freedom', 'choice' and 'collaboration' have come to be equated with licence, purposelessness and time-wasting; and much of the substance of Rogers' ideas have never really been fully realized. Rogers himself had anticipated a backlash, but saw this as a "danger from the right" (1983 p.12) and identified the religious right of America as the main threat to progressive ideals. Whilst there is no doubt that this group did have a great deal of influence in America, ultimately the progressive movement lost bureaucratic support, and therefore momentum, in both the US and other

western countries. Key casualties were, as Rogers had predicted, free discussion and less formal teacher-pupil relationships (1983).

The current 'test and accountability' driven climate in schools means even caring teachers are nervous about handing over too much freedom, such is their fear of jeopardizing individual test scores and results. It seems 'person-centred' learning has come to be seen as at odds with intellectual development and 'testable' academic success. Rogers (1983) argued that self-initiated learning, and learning that engages the whole person - feelings as well as intellect - produces the most lasting and pervasive learning. Somehow this concept is now deemed too risky.

Jerome Bruner, cognitive psychologist and learning theorist, writing also in the 1960s brought to the progressive movement the idea of 'experiential' or 'discovery' learning. This added an important new dimension to Dewey's notion of how pupil experience should be utilized in the classroom. Bruner suggests that it is impossible to separate the *process* of learning from the *subject* of learning (1962.) The study of Poetry is used as an example to illustrate his point: i.e. if understanding the special qualities of poetry is the objective of learning, then a learner needs to actively use those qualities in writing poetry to understand how they operate (p.77). Tied to this is the role of the teacher in shaping learning. In the light of 20<sup>th</sup> Century experience, Bruner critiques Dewey's idealistic and, he felt, too 'virtuous' (p.115) principles of learning embedded in the individual interests of the child, stating that "it is not good enough to say education must be embedded in the interests of the child, interests must be created and stimulated" (p117). The teacher has a very important role to play in fostering this vitality, and in this Bruner offers some very concrete guidance for developing meaningful learning experiences.

Integral to Bruner's theory, is the notion of *discovery* and the "powerful effects that come from permitting the student to put things together for himself (sic), to be his own discoverer" (1962, p.82). The benefits of this type of learning were seen as four-fold: Firstly, through an increase in intellectual potency; secondly, through a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic reward; thirdly, through the heuristics of discovery and finally, through the power of such learning, to aid memory. Bruner described teaching through this mode as offering a more "hypothetical" approach, distinguishing it from more traditional "expository" modes (p.83). The notion of 'learning through doing'; learning through 'trial and error' and 'discovery', had a powerful influence on the progressive movement. Whilst elements of this approach remain in effective contemporary teaching, the current educational climate, I would argue, offers less room for teachers to allow their pupils the inherent risks involved in this kind of method, and more tightly scaffolded approaches to learning are seen as safer.

As a Drama teacher, connections to Bruner's concepts of understanding through experience are clear, to me, in the use of functional role-play. Drama Education theorists have written extensively on the affective and intellectual power of subject learning through working in role (Courtney 1988, Burton 1991, O'Toole 1992 p.59), and I would identify working in role as a form of 'experiential' learning, a mode which fosters empathetic connections to the human experiences of others. However, it is not in this connection where I see an analysis of Bruner's concepts as most relevant to my own research; rather it is in his concept of hypothetical understanding through the process of trial and error - discovery learning. Inherent in this concept is the notion of risk, i.e. the trial and potential for *error* when exploring an idea. I would argue that all students in my study had to move out of their comfort zones as passive learners; they were asked to become the teachers of others, and this involved responsibility and considerable risk. There were indeed moments when errors were made and when things did not go well, but risks were real and meaningful. The experience of being 'in the moment' was powerful and in the process of reflection that followed these episodes, unique insights were possible. In Bruner's terms, the heuristics of discovery did provide learning benefits (1962, p.83).

The work of British educational thinker, Lawrence Stenhouse, was also influential throughout the 1960s and 70s. Unlike Rogers and Bruner, Stenhouse's background was in teaching and pedagogy rather than psychology, and his theories are drawn directly from research with teachers and pupils in schools, mainly secondary schools (Stenhouse, 1967,1983; Rudduck (ed) 1995). Indeed the process of research itself is very important to Stenhouse, as he believes democratic education was only possible if embedded in the research of teaching...

In teaching there is always a retaining as well as conferring of power. Research based teaching, conceived as enquiry based teaching, shifts the balance of power toward the student. It is his (sic) own research or enquiring which gives the teacher strength to do this. (Stenhouse 1983 p.185).

Stenhouse was interested in creating more democratic schools, and his theories were embedded, as were Dewey's, in how a relationship between authority, education and emancipation might operate (1966). He recognizes that in formal education the processes of socialization and individual development were closely married but, as both depend on an induction into culture, there could be tension between conformity and individual development (1967). Stenhouse believed the culture of school should offer rich possibilities for individual development, otherwise the process of induction might trap rather than liberate (p.29). In big picture terms, he argued that society is best served by individuals "who are educated, rather

than merely moulded, by the generation before them. In short, education should serve the individual by increasing his freedom to create and develop ideas” (1971, p.81). Thus, similarly to Rogers, Stenhouse saw the need for more freedom in classroom interaction and believed this was essential if schools were to become more democratic places for meaningful learning. Where Stenhouse made a departure from more child-centred theories of education (Bruner 1962, 1990 and Rogers 1967, 1983, 1994 ed.) was in his focus on freedom for teachers. He recognised that teachers were just as constrained by traditional cultures in schools as were pupils, and his research throughout the 1970s and early 1980s included explorations of the art of teaching, teacher-training and curriculum development (1983). Stenhouse believed both teachers and pupils could benefit from more collaborative exchanges and, similarly to Dewey, held a vision for education based on dialogic learning, which he believed should “enrich experience through reflection and exciting and fruitful communication with others” (1967, p.122).

Also similarly to Dewey, Stenhouse hopes that an emancipated and democratic education system could create a more harmonious, just and democratic society. This might seem idealistic, and Stenhouse recognises that a project of social improvement through education is ambitious, but he also claims it is important to consider what education has been able to achieve, and the marked changes that have taken place socially when looked at over a span of generations (1967, p.123). He also recognises, some 20 years before the explosion of the internet and ‘global’ culture, the importance of ensuring education was at least as important as mass communication in shaping the culture of the future - arguably a goal still to be realized.

It is important to consider some of the key progressive concepts of Rogers, Bruner and Stenhouse in the light of contemporary education. By the end of the 1980s, the progressive education movement had all but been abandoned in most western countries. In the United Kingdom, the new concerns were for an instrumental education that was more accountable and measurable. The introduction of a National Curriculum in 1989 ensured that more control could be placed in the hands of central government – and less with schools and teachers. While there were grounds for criticism of some of the extremes of the progressive approach to education, I would argue the ensuing neo-conservative backlash meant some of the most positive and meaningful goals of child-centred education were also lost, and in abandoning some of Progressive Education’s valuable ideas, education reverted to a system not dissimilar to that which Dewey critiqued at the turn of the century. It is indeed chilling to recognise his descriptions of classrooms in 1915 in classrooms today!

Silver (1980) pointed out over twenty years ago that, despite the attempted innovations of the progressive movement, education in Great Britain had changed little half a century after Dewey (p.52). He argues that structures in the education system and schools continued to organize curriculum and examinations that assumed a static concept of the child in school and the child in society, and had not allowed for any changing definition of education based on cultural shifts (p.51). Sadly, Silver's observations still hold true; just as there has been little acknowledgement of how culture, and as a result young people, have changed, curriculum continues to be shaped and assessed in ways which seem unresponsive to what might be a changing role for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As teachers struggle in overcrowded classrooms to deliver and assess a standardised curriculum, it is hard to see many real differences from Dewey's classroom of 1915 or Silver's of 1980. Contemporary challenges seem to have fostered a return to the passive, 'listening' classroom, as the most conducive environment for knowledge delivery. Traditional conceptions that education is mainly about the *delivery* of knowledge remain essentially unchallenged. The *technology* used to convey knowledge may have changed (blackboards have become electronic whiteboards etc.) but the structure of the knowledge base itself, dependent upon the acquisition and recall of large units of information, as well as roles and expectations of teachers and young people have, to a large degree, changed very little. This is particularly important to consider in relation to working with disengaged young people.

If cultural shifts and the changing needs of young people remain unacknowledged within the curriculum, tension is inevitable. Unsurprisingly, many pupils struggle to engage with a curriculum that they see as irrelevant to them, and as a result teachers have to struggle to find ways of engaging their interest. Again, this is not a new issue, and relates to Dewey's notion of the importance of acknowledging the world of the 'child' that is brought in to the classroom. The school, unable to utilize this experience, will have to set 'painfully to work, on another tack and by a variety of means, to arouse in the child an interest in school studies" (Dewey, 1997 ed. p.75). When adolescents walk into a classroom they become pupils and, as such, are asked to leave behind activities and interests that dominate their culture outside. Unfortunately, it is only a narrow range of skills and experiences that are valued in schools, and I would argue that these are predominantly ones which can be expressed in writing, because that is the medium of assessment. Macbeath & Moos (2004) link this learning issue to wider questions of power:

While young people live much of their lives in a rich visual environment and are often expert in that form of communication, they are required to learn in situations where the linear written and spoken word is the predominant register. It is the medium in which teachers are most comfortable and one

in which they can exert the most control. It is exemplification of 'power over' as against 'power with', the latter a sharing of power which may be realized when pupils and teachers view their school experience through a different lens. (Moos & MacBeath 2004.p.191).

The disengaged women in my study had very rich experiences outside school. In the case of the UK students, both had considerable authority and responsibility at home as carers for younger siblings and some of the subtle skills of communication and negotiation required of them in that role were extremely valuable in the context of the peer teaching task they undertook during the course of the research study. This only serves to highlight the extent of frustration that must exist for many young people in the classroom when they are expected to discard any notions of personal authority and defer to their teachers: "Children and young people exist in a school world which depreciates their experience, tolerating it as long as it does not interfere with adult values" (MacBeath & Moos 2004 p.191).

In their general school context, these two girls were unhappy with their lack of power and, as the skills they had acquired outside remained unutilized in the classroom, they directed their frustration by challenging the authority of many of their teachers. Just as Dewey (1990 ed.) had pointed out the lack of fit between schools and society at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, MacBeath (2004) identifies that schools of today need to acknowledge a new social shift and seek an 'alliance of what is taught and the milieu in which it is taught' (p.40). Moos & MacBeath (2004) point out that adolescents of today have a cultural life that is very different from the life of young people of the past:

Young people feel the need to push the boundaries of their schools and of their societies. The more compliant and socially conservative their teachers, parents and leaders, the less young people themselves are likely to accept those strictures. They are less likely to defer to authority or offer unconditional respect to elders. They are suspicious of them as 'betters'.  
(p.191)

When considered in the light of this view of youth, the power struggles at school experienced by the girls in my study are understandable. The challenge for schools remains in trying to balance the need young people have for autonomy, freedom and power with the imperatives of an education system which seems to rein in the freedom and control of both teachers and pupils. It is here that the role of the teacher becomes central.

Moos & MacBeath (2004) suggest that it would be easy to see the increases in teachers' workloads and the demands of bureaucracy as a sort of 'conspiracy' - a political distraction

keeping them too busy to see the bigger picture and ask subversive questions (p.193). However, the authors also maintain that teachers themselves are part of the problem and need to take back control through informed understanding of where global forces are moving education. Teachers have to decide between holding on or letting go. There are strong reminders here of Dewey's challenge made so many years ago, that the teacher should be concerned "to have the long look ahead" (1997 ed., p.75).

Though the challenges in the larger landscape of education generally might be overwhelming, it is important to look at how pedagogy may, on a more intimate level, foster the democratic classroom.

### **Democratic pedagogy – the role of the teacher.**

The work and writing of Brazilian educational reformer, Paulo Friere (2001 ed., 2007 ed), has had a considerable influence on contemporary theory in regard to teaching and pedagogy. Friere originally developed his theories whilst working with illiterate peasants in Brazil, ultimately developing a theory of education based on the belief that every human being is capable of critically engaging in the learning process and in a dialogical encounter with others (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p.2). His influence has extended now into the realms of social work, economics and critical pedagogy.

Writing initially in the 1970s, Friere acknowledges that the traditional curriculum was divorced from life and needed to consider how more 'critical consciousness' could be built into teaching and learning; an issue he explored throughout his academic career (Friere, 2007 ed., p.33). Similarly to Dewey some decades earlier, Friere was uneasy with 'rote' learning and one-way exchanges between pupils and teachers. At the heart of his vision for a democratic classroom lies a belief that it was only through 'concrete participation' and critical reflection that meaningful experiences could take place (2001 ed., 2007ed.). Like Stenhouse (1967), Shor (1993) suggests that Friere recognised the politics that exists in the discourse of the classroom and that all teaching is ideological. He summarises what Friere proposes as a re-evaluation of power relationships, from inequality and authoritarianism to "a democratic and transformative relationship between students and teacher, students and learning, and students and society" (p.27). What is particularly relevant to my research in Friere's theory is the recognition of the importance and transformative power of that most grounded and intimate of educational relationships - that of teacher and pupil. Giroux (1997), greatly influenced by Friere, uses the term 'pedagogy of possibility' to encapsulate the positive energy embedded in this approach. Where an education 'system' may seem

monolithic and overwhelming in terms of possibilities for change, Frierean concepts offer a sense of hope and a number of key principles that can be directly considered.

An overview of Friere's "agenda of values" is offered by Shor (1993), and several of the most pertinent in terms of democratic learning, empowerment, and my own research, are worth presenting here. Connections to the theories of Stenhouse (1967, 1983) can clearly be seen. Frierean pedagogy holds that education should be:

- 1 Participatory - interactive and co-operative.
- 2 Critical - self-reflective and socially reflective.
- 3 Democratic - constructed mutually by the teacher and pupils
- 4 Dialogic - centred on problems that are explored through dialogue.
- 5 Research oriented - teachers and pupils will be researchers inquiring into problems posed about experience, society and academic material.
- 6 Affective – compassionate and interested in the development of feeling as well as social enquiry.

(Shor, 1993, p.33-35).

All of these elements are, of course, closely interwoven and interrelated, and in articulating my research journey, all will resonate at some stage, and I shall return to look more closely at some concepts later. Most of these concepts are not particularly original, nor are they unique to Freire; indeed connections to the ideas of earlier educationalists from Socrates to Dewey can clearly be seen. However, I would argue that Friere does add another layer of understanding to some of these concepts when they are considered more closely - eg. the notion of dialogic teaching.

Friere considers that the role of the teacher is to enter into *dialogue* with pupils, to enter into conversations that will reveal and develop knowledge, not from the top down, but from within (2007 ed., p.43). This is not, of itself, a revolutionary notion - Vygotsky proposed that dialogue was central to new learning, and his notion of the "zone of proximal development" and Socrates' "elenchus" (cited in Abbs 2003, p.15), both offer theories of knowledge acquisition that suggest dialogue can open up the 'gaps' between what is known and unknown, certain and uncertain, and in this process create room for revelation. Where I think Friere's notion of dialogue differs, or perhaps adds another dimension to this kind of learning, is in its recognition of the power relationship between the speakers - pupil and teacher; and in the purpose of such dialogue. Frierean dialogue is as much about the teacher learning and listening, as it is about guiding pupils...

Education in the Friere mode is the practice of liberty because it frees the educator no less than the educated from the twin thralldom of silence and monologue. Both partners are liberated as they begin to learn, the one to know self as a being of worth - not withstanding the stigma of illiteracy, poverty, or technological ignorance - and the other as capable of dialogue in spite of the straightjacket imposed as one who knows. (Goulet in Friere, 2007, p.ix).

Inherent in this statement is the notion that effective, *personal* learning is as possible through dialogue as knowledge acquisition, and it is in this connection that two very important issues emerge for consideration in terms of my own research. Firstly, that a *teacher* can potentially learn a great deal through dialogue and the liberating potential this has for shared responsibility in learning and secondly, as a result of the first, the power that dialogue has to build *self-worth* in pupils. Earlier in my reading, I recognized that one of the problems faced by disengaged and disenchanting girls may be their lack of 'voice' in the classroom and, whilst for some this means silence, in other cases personal expression was in the form of attention-seeking through negative behaviour. In both cases, *authentic selves* remained unexpressed, and as a result both teachers and pupils were disempowered. Why this problem had developed, and how it might be overcome, needed to be explored, and Freire offered further insight.

At the time Friere developed his theories, he was working with illiterate peasants in Brazil who, in a traditional sense of education, were those in *need* of knowledge; yet he saw the importance of valuing the personal cultural knowledge they had to offer, and he was able to acknowledge that they, as much as any human being, had both the capacity for, and right to, critical reflection. Despite the difference in age, culture and social context between Friere's pupils and my own, the same observations could be made. "I was concerned to rid our education of its 'wordiness', its lack of faith in the student and his (sic) power to discuss, to work and to create" (Friere 2007 ed., p.33). In this statement there are echoes of Dewey's concern with the 'listening' classroom, but also a very important observation that implies *why* such passive classrooms may have developed. Inherent in Friere's statement is the notion that teacher *trust* is crucial. Before authentic dialogue can even begin, it seems, both parties need to 'have faith' in each other.

Of all pupil groups, it is the disaffected and disengaged who are the least likely to be trusted by teachers. Understandably, the challenging behaviour of these pupils is not seen to set a good example to others. Dialogue that does take place in the classroom between these pupils and their teachers often falls into a cyclical pattern of antagonism and reprimand; arguably,

not a lot of *listening* is happening on either side. I would suggest this might indeed be all the more reason why it is important to listen to disaffected young people in particular when it comes to understanding the importance of teacher/pupil relationships in school.

Riley (2004) suggests there is much to be learnt from working with disaffected young people. She cites material from a two-year collaborative project undertaken with disenfranchised young people in the north of England (Riley, 2004). Alongside these young people, local policy makers, teachers, head teachers and parents were interviewed. While definitive reference is not made in that text to the scale of the study, she does outline conclusions, and offer some very interesting quotes from pupils regarding their relationships with teachers. Pupils were perhaps illustrating the pressure their teachers were under to achieve results where the former comment in their critical observations that the latter were sometimes too 'rigid' and determined that 'everything must be right' (p.64). However, they also acknowledged that their teachers were often 'stressed out by teaching', and that their jobs were 'not easy' (p.65). Pupil /teacher relationships are important, and recognizing each other as an individual is important. Pupils defined some of the qualities they felt made a 'good' or 'bad' teacher and, of the eight key points on each side, only two were related directly to teaching skills and knowledge of subject matter. All other qualities, good and bad, were to do with personal expectations - e.g. issues of respect, friendliness and support. Resonating with my own views on how easily pupils become labelled due to ability, was one particular key point - pupils felt a good teacher should be 'fair and have equal standards and expectations for pupils, regardless of their test score' (p.65).

Shor (1993) reminds us that politics resides in the 'discourse of the classroom' (p.27). The way teachers and pupils speak to each other, pose questions, express opinions, feel free to make statements, express opinions and honestly reveal themselves in these exchanges does reflect how democratic a classroom might be. As stated earlier, *authenticity* in classroom interaction is important, and for disaffected pupils this seems particularly critical. The importance of teachers and students being able to respect and acknowledge each other as individuals is identified here by Friere:

Why not establish an 'intimate' connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals? (Friere, 2001 p.36)

## **Power Relationships in the contemporary classroom: listening to pupils**

In her research, Riley (2004) highlights a number of the common requests made by disaffected pupils in their study. Among these are the need for teachers to listen *to* pupils rather than talk *at* them; to be more aware of the problems they face outside school; to give encouragement for teachers and pupils to respect each other; and the need for more informal ways of learning to be offered both inside and outside the classroom (p.67). A recurrent theme in Riley's argument is that relationships matter, and that disengaged young people recognize a need for mutual respect – pupil for teacher and teacher for pupil. She concludes that this may mean rethinking the nature of teaching and learning and recognizing “the fragmented nature of schooling, rather than focusing too narrowly on policies which aim to deal with poor student behaviour.” She observes that, for many pupils, school was a “joyless experience” (p.67). Riley acknowledges that changing the status quo will not be easy and outlines what will be needed if power relationships are to change in school:

The evidence from our study is that practitioners need to be given the opportunity to experiment with radical ways of organizing teaching and learning. Some of these may test the boundaries of the school day, or week, or even our concept of what school looks like. There also needs to be an attitudinal shift on the part of governments and a recognition of the ways in which teachers can help shape policy, rather than always being shaped by it. Trust is needed to help bring about a shift in power relationships between government and schools, between teachers, pupils and parents. (Riley, 2004, p.68)

Friere, (cited in McLaren and Leonard, 1993), states that those considered ‘marginals’ are not living ‘outside’ society, but ‘inside’ a structure that made them into ‘being for others’ (p.13). Friere suggests that rather than trying to ‘integrate’ them into the system, what is needed is a transformation of the system itself (p.13). Although Friere is speaking of the socially oppressed in larger terms, this notion could easily be applied to disenfranchised young people in school. Riley (2004 p.68) calls teachers to look at how they may be able to change the system from within, echoing Friere's position that it is only through this transformation that power relationships can more equal. It is clear that teachers are charged with a great deal of responsibility to steer change, and how they might do this needs articulation. Giroux (1997) offers a useful starting point:

It is necessary for teachers to incorporate into their pedagogies a theoretical understanding of how the production of meaning and pleasure become mutually constitutive of who

students are, how they see themselves, and how they construct a particular vision of their future...the nature of how students make semantic and emotional investments needs to be theorized within a number of important pedagogical considerations. (Giroux, 1997 p.150).

A number of key ideas are embedded in Giroux's challenge, but what I find most pertinent in terms of approaching the re-engagement of disenfranchised young people, is how *meaningful* activity also supports positive constructions of identity. The notion of '*emotional investment*' is also interesting in terms of how this might inform teaching and learning decisions. My research indicates that planning the kind of meaningful activity that will encourage emotional investment is only possible if there is a base of trust and respect in pupil/teacher relationships. Friere identifies the democratic classroom as *active and participatory* (Shor 1993 p.33) and I would argue that *risk* and *responsibility* are key elements of learning experiences that are likely to be meaningful. It is more likely that both parties, teachers and pupils, will accept the possibility of taking greater risks and challenges in the learning process if power is shared more equally and if there is trust.

Unfortunately, mainstream secondary schooling, and indeed schooling in general, offers little real responsibility or opportunities for pupils to take leadership roles. In secondary schools this is particularly paradoxical. Adolescents of today reach maturity earlier and often have considerable economic and personal responsibility outside school, yet spend a larger proportion of their youth than previous generations in school - an environment which still fosters a culture of dependency (Atweh et al, 1998). Schools remain to a large degree influenced by outdated views of child/adult relationships: e.g. teachers seek to nurture, protect and control rather than encourage risk-taking or responsibility. Despite the fact that lip service is paid to the value of independent thinking, autonomy and initiative, there is often little room for students to have a voice. Atweh et al, 1998 (quoting Cole) says: "the student role is not a role of taking action and experiencing consequences...It is a passive role, always in preparation for action, but never action" (p. 56).

In offering pupils real opportunities for leadership and challenge there are risks, but also great potential for learning. I would suggest that *emotional investment* in learning (Giroux, 1997) results when challenges are *meaningful* for pupils. Friere reinforces how important action and challenge is to critical understanding:

It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man (sic) perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognises the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of understanding. Critical understanding leads to critical action. (Friere, 2007 p.41)

Returning to where I started, Dewey (1997 ed.) defines freedom as that which is the “intelligent observation and judgement by which purpose is developed” (p.71), and argues that teachers have a role to play in guiding pupils to exercise their intelligence as an aid to freedom. He states that the office of educator is to select those things from a range of experience that have the promise and potential to present new problems and stimulate new ways of looking and observing, fostering further experience (p.75). Dewey argues that experience should not be fixed, but ever-changing, building on what has gone before and opening up the potential for further growth. He reminds us that teachers, more than any other professionals, are concerned with looking ahead.

## 2.4 FIELD THREE: PEER TEACHING DRAMA

*“The world of knowledge takes a crazy turn when teachers themselves are taught to learn.”*

*Bertolt Brecht*

### **Old Challenges, new possibilities**

In seeking to address the key problems of disengagement and disaffection for the students involved in my study, I needed to acknowledge democratic learning issues and formulate an approach that would offer the greatest potential to build more authentic and positive relationships for the girls in each school context. The proponents of democratic education, from Dewey to Friere, argue that the role of the teacher is to marry freedom and purpose, and to offer opportunities for meaningful experiences which will satisfy personal desire and build social and intellectual judgment. My challenge as a researcher was to devise and explore strategies that might offer meaningful challenges for the disengaged young women I wished to work with. I needed to find ways of fostering the democratic processes of collaboration, reflection, risk and responsibility that might offer my pupils the freedom and empowerment to build the confidence and self-esteem needed to find their authentic voices.

Encouraging my participants to take a journey with me was my very first challenge, and so it is worth reflecting briefly on the notion of motivation, and what may foster engagement. Firstly I needed to acknowledge that the social worlds of school are a pervasive and influential part of children’s lives and their academic and social development is closely interlocked (Juvonene & Wentzel 1996). As stated previously, although behaviour varied between all the young women in my study, it would be true to say that, for all involved, issues of self-esteem were strongly linked to attitudes to school. Harter (1996) states that most students lose their intrinsic motivation as they move through the school system and that self-esteem suffers, particularly for girls in early adolescence, and at that point their ‘voices go underground’ (p.11). Peer support in the form of approval is critical to self-esteem. Harter also makes some interesting connections between teacher and parental approval and self-esteem. It would seem that students who perceived they had less support from parents, found teacher approval could have a significant impact on how they felt about themselves—suggesting a compensatory process. Pupils with lowest levels of esteem were those who had both low levels of teacher support and low parental support. It should be stated that the very process of being asked if they wanted to be involved in the research did shine the

spotlight of attention on the pupils involved in my projects and thus, of itself, would have communicated some form of support. However there needed to be goals they saw as meaningful if motivation was to be sustained.

Ford & Nichols (Ford, 1996) undertook research into adolescent motivation based on MST (Motivational Systems Theory) – a psychological theory which, simply defined, proposes that effective functioning and competence can best be described in terms of the attainment of personally and/or socially valued goals (p.128). It is a detailed quantitative study based on lengthy measurement of responses to a ‘Youth decision-making’ questionnaire. It should be stated that the study relies on self-reporting from young people, rather than, it would seem, observed behaviours. However, despite this, Ford is able to draw some very interesting conclusions - conclusions very pertinent to my study in terms of considering how and why students might be motivated to become engaged in more socially responsible behaviour. MST predicts that social responsibility and caring behaviour is a function of the degree to which ‘compelling emotions inhibiting selfish or hurtful behaviour is aroused’ in the pursuit of pro-social goals, and the degree to which an individual’s ‘skills and the surrounding context’ will enable them to behave in a helpful and responsible manner’ (p.130). Ford arrives at a very simple and insightful formula: “Motivation = Goals x emotions x personal agency” (p.130).

What is extremely useful about using this formula as a starting point for discussion is the way it links critical elements and developmental goals. In my translation of this formula I offer the following perspective: If an activity is to motivate it needs to have a tangible and meaningful *goal*; it needs to engage affectively (engage *emotions*); and it needs to offer the participant a sense of ownership, responsibility and *agency*.

Further to this Ford suggests the power and lasting impact of activities which foster more emotional engagement:

Experiences that explicitly attempt to link caring behaviour (e.g. the intrinsic pleasure of helping others; positive feelings about one’s self; a sense of connectedness with other people; a sense of task accomplishment) are likely to produce more initial and enduring interest and more meaningful engagement in pro-social activities than programmes that fail to make these connection (p.149).

Clearly, the type of guidance is critical here - what teacher does not want to produce initial and enduring interest? Hoffman (2000) reinforces Ford’s conclusions with his exploration of the role of empathy in moral development, and its implications in the context of issues of

justice. Psychology thus offers a recognition of the importance of emotional engagement and, echoing educational theorists from Dewey to Stenhouse, reinforces the importance of personal agency as part of this.

### **First steps: Motivating Collaboration: listening and trusting**

As the first step, I wanted to involve the girls as collaborators in the research process itself. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) suggest that the way to look at problems in schools - schools under a constant barrage of reform from outside – is to actually ask those most closely involved inside, the pupils and teachers, to “learn through the eyes of those most closely involved” (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, p.2). In the first project, pupils were involved from the earliest stages in a process of consultation as we explored together issues related to interpersonal conflict. Collaboration was taken a step further in the second project where the two students were involved from the outset in directly formulating research questions for their younger peers and decision- making regarding the approach and content of their peer teaching. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) found clear evidence that consulting young learners enhances self-esteem and confidence and promotes stronger engagement and motivation to learn (p.70). Moos (2004) believes democratic principles are built into schools through maintaining curiosity, initiative and participation, and in order to expand participation it is important that pupils are involved in decision making processes (p. 9). He observes that teachers ask pupils to ‘sit down and be quiet’ from an early age for fear that they are not responsible enough to manage any power they might be given - and yet this is counter-productive. Moos makes a direct link between democratic approaches to education and the development of personal responsibility in young people; suggesting that it is only through giving pupils real power that participation and responsibility will increase.

In the second phase of my research, both Ashley and Kayleigh provide clear examples of the kind of student least likely to be trusted with power because of their perceived lack of responsibility. These young women needed to feel valued and powerful - indeed their general off-task and disruptive behaviour were clear signs of this. A particular challenge with these kinds of pupils is finding a way of engaging them as collaborators in the first place, as they are often reluctant participants in most mainstream classroom activities, as well as distrustful of teachers and those they see as in power generally. In offering these young women the opportunity to be collaborators in the research process their interest was aroused and they agreed to take part. I do not doubt that in this early stage their interest was as much based in the freedom they hoped to enjoy by being released from mainstream classes, as it was about helping me with my research! However, armed with knowledge from the first project, I suspected that once the pupils began to see themselves as peer teachers, their

commitment could deepen. Identifying why this might be the case, i.e. why peer teaching might be a powerful and *engaging* activity for these girls, led me back once again to seeking a more in-depth understanding of their *negative engagement*. Understanding the reasons behind these pupils' behaviour offers valuable insight into what might constitute engaging and meaningful classroom activity for them. One simple question to ask first: 'What is it that pupils are getting out of disruptive behaviour in the classroom?' It would seem the simple answer is power and recognition, but what is behind this need?

### **One step further: engaging the emotions**

Cooper (2003) comments on the important role of the teacher in fostering trust through engagement, and makes the point that students are more likely to engage in off-task behaviour, which gives them a sense of community and a feeling of being liked, than 'task related' behaviour, which does not generate an affective response (p.6). Cooper's paper focusses on the role teachers play as moral leaders and thereby formulates her conclusions underpinned by theory drawn from traditional literature on teacher pupil interaction and recent findings in neuroscience. She maintains that the role of emotional engagement is often overlooked in learning and, similarly to Best (1998), argues that emotions have been largely ignored in British mainstream education through an increasingly mechanistic approach to education. Cooper draws on Vygotsky to reinforce the importance of bringing together cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Central to Cooper's (2003) argument is the role of empathy, which she defines as follows:

A quality shown by individuals which enables them to accept others for who they are, to feel and perceive situations from their perspective and to take a constructive and long-term attitude towards the advancement of their situation by searching for solutions to meet their needs (p.6).

Cooper maintains that empathy is closely associated with moral development, self-esteem and positive classroom relationships and that empathetic teachers are 'highly moral individuals who attach mentally and emotionally to their pupils, generating similar responses in turn' (2003 p.4).

Cooper identifies two different levels of empathy most obvious in classroom interactions and defined the qualities of each. Firstly she cites *profound* empathy, which needs high levels of care, time and one to one interaction between pupil and teacher. The second form is *functional* empathy, which operates through the teacher creating a mental representation of a group rather than of individuals. In this latter form, stereotyping is more likely - i.e. the teacher making blanket assumptions and decisions based on generalized needs. Cooper

saw this latter form as more prevalent in secondary schools as the result of a more fragmented curriculum and varying levels of attainment and motivation (p.1). Cooper's conclusions provide a number of angles from which to view my own research questions. Firstly, they offer insight into the affective motivations behind negative engagement; secondly they highlight the role empathy might have to play in building self-esteem and positive engagement; and finally they warn me, as a reader, teacher and a researcher, that pupils should not be typecast. If I wished to generate more positive social responses in pupils I would need to find a way of engaging them emotionally in the task.

As discussed earlier, in the current cultural climate there is great social concern about the growth of anti-social behaviour in young people, and it seems timely to look at what we can do as teachers within schools to build more emotionally literate young people. Rudduck (1996) highlights the importance of human relationships in education and directly links these to effective learning through the role such relationships play in motivating and reassuring pupils.

As Vygotsky says, "thought itself is gendered (sic) by motivation, i.e. by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective- volitional tendency which holds the answer to the last 'why' in the analysis of a thing" (Vygotsky, 1962 Ed., p.150). Thus the key to learning in general, and the development of affective and emotional literacy specifically, lies in fostering the kinds of authentic and meaningful relationships that will motivate and engage pupils.

Central to both research projects was the strategy of peer teaching, a strategy requiring very direct social engagement. In their roles as teachers, the pupils engaged in my research had dual opportunities. Firstly, they were given practical responsibility for organizing and structuring the learning of others, and secondly, as teachers in a classroom, they had to communicate empathy to their own pupils if they wished to maximize the engagement of their learners. There is no doubt they rose to the challenge of each task, endorsing Damasio's (2003) claim that good feelings come from both the learning itself and the context. As theorists such as Dewey (1966), Vygotsky (1962 Ed.), and Goleman (1994) all recognized, intense engagement with the world helps young people process and understand the world. Although peer teaching has traditionally been a strategy more commonly used in primary schools to support the subject learning of tutees, in both of my studies the process of 'being a teacher' offered my secondary school pupils the opportunity for intense and immediate engagement with the world – the opportunity to teach others and in the process learn a great deal, on a number of levels, about themselves.

## **Peer teaching: fostering trust and responsibility**

Generally, peer teaching schemes have been focussed on the development of tutees and, as previously stated, more commonly used in the primary school where projects have traditionally been concentrated on developing reading and computation skills. Schemes have also been developed in secondary schools that have had a counselling and bullying focus: {Flutter and Rudduck, (2004), Morrison et al (2000)}, and more recently 'conflict management' schemes have also been explored {Burton, O'Toole and Plunkett (2001); Morrison (2004); Finney et al (2005)}. In all these cases one fundamental and important element remains constant – peer-tutoring involves 'a commitment to giving young people responsibilities which have traditionally resided exclusively with the teacher' (Flutter and Rudduck 2004, p.188).

Morrison et al (2000) report on a cross-age tutoring project undertaken in two different settings – a primary and a secondary school. In the primary school, Year 4 pupils helped the students in younger reception classes and in the secondary school Year 9 (13-14 year olds) helped Year 7 pupils (11-12). The project was aimed at supporting pupils' language development and although the outcomes indicated no clear improvement in the language skills of either group of tutees, there were two very interesting results of the peer teaching process for tutees and tutors: Tutees felt more positive about reading and developed positive relationships with their older tutors; and even the youngest tutors appeared to have a sound grasp of what the tutoring process entailed (p.187). The fact that the study did not appear to indicate that academic development could be fostered through peer teaching is not surprising. The limited scale and duration of the project worked against the ability of the researchers to formulate any meaningful conclusions in this regard. However, what is significant from this study – and relevant to my research – are insights made into the more effective development of participants, particularly the research's impact on the tutors. The tutors developed self-esteem through the role of teacher and seemed to have an inherent understanding of what was needed to be a good teacher, "they were interested in the task, had appropriate skills and had relevant knowledge"; they also "enjoyed the companionship of the tutoring relationship" (p.196).

As pupils are the recipients of teaching, it is perhaps unsurprising that they have insight into what is, for them, effective teaching. Flutter (1999) reinforces the notion that, once given trust and responsibility pupils can act in socially responsible and mature ways. Hargreaves (2004) supports this view, adding that evidence suggests that even disengaged and alienated young people, when asked to play a role in school, can offer very constructive insights that can benefit teachers considerably (p.5). Rudduck (2001) argues that young

people are insightful and observant and, if listened to, school leaders may find their voices constructive rather than oppositional. She considers that consulting with pupils should be a priority if any meaningful insights into school are to be gained. Similarly MacBeath (2003) suggests that feedback from pupils is important in the interest of school effectiveness.

Hargreaves (2004), in his exploration of school reform considers that personalized learning holds the key to moving practice in schools away from hierarchical models originally established in the 19th Century to serve the needs of mass education to more democratic models that acknowledge pupil voice. He further reinforces the value of pupil voice in his research on life-long learning, including 'student voice' as one of nine gateways into the process of personalized learning and acknowledging that it is 'the most recent in its development, but potentially most powerful of all for personalized learning' (p.5.) Noddings (2007) challenges the notion of 'teacher knows best' and advises that caring teachers must listen to pupils if they want to help them acquire the knowledge and attitudes needed to achieve positive goals (p.3).

Although not a new concept by any means, contemporary research, following decades of focus on school curriculum and effective delivery methods, is returning to look at more effective elements at work in the classroom. Sarason (1999) warned teachers they would need to try to foster closer connections with pupils if they wished to better engage them as learners. Recent insights by Grossman et al (2007) in their cross-professional research into preparation programs in teaching and clinical psychology, considered how practice is affected by the quality of human relationships in each professional context. They state that one of the challenges faced by teachers is their need to connect with students who may be resistant or challenging. This can be difficult, as teachers need to manage resistance constructively and ensure they negotiate their response without resorting to either uncompassionate rigidity or unproductive permissiveness (p.113). The ability to listen to pupils and make sense of their contributions is seen as a vital skill, and teachers able to do this are seen as more likely to have the kinds of positive relationships in the classroom which motivate students to invest in their learning (p.114). In terms of my own research, the author's final conclusions resonate very powerfully when he says: "The capacity to nurture relationships has become an even more necessary component of practice for professionals whose work focuses on human growth and transformation." (Grossman et al 2007 p.122).

One of the aims of my research was to explore how disengaged learners could be re-engaged more constructively in school. Rudduck (2001), Hargreaves (2004) and MacBeath (2003) highlight how listening to pupil voice can provide insight for leaders into how schools can be improved, and thus support pupil engagement on the basis that more constructive

partnerships lead to more successful schools. Noddings (2007) and Grossman et al (2007) acknowledge and build on this, raising the notion that positive classroom relationships fostered through listening to pupils - even those pupils who offer opposition - can be transformational on a personal level for the learner. Both these opinions underpin my research, the latter offering an important insight into one of the reasons I believe the structure of the research process, and strategies employed in the context of each project, had such powerful personal impacts on the girls involved. The young women involved in my studies were encouraged to consider themselves as collaborators in the research process. This, coupled with the responsibility they had as peer teachers, gave them a sense of agency. Agency, as Bruner (2002) describes it, is “the sense that one can carry out activities on one’s own” (p.20). In both research projects, participants were given a good deal of autonomy in terms of decision-making processes related to how they would structure their teaching episodes.

Goodlad and Hirst (1998 p.73) suggest that peer teaching is an effective way of engaging students in their learning and that it can have strong educational benefits for both the peer tutors and their tutees. Most significant for my studies is their claim that peer teaching can offer social and personal benefits for those involved, particularly for peer tutors. Studies frequently suggest that self-confidence and self-image are improved among pupils who have been peer tutors {Goodlad and Hirst (1998); Morrison et al (2000); Flutter and Rudduck (2004) and Finney et al (2005)}. Given that negative leaders often lack self-esteem and the experience of constructive engagement in learning, peer-tutoring is a potentially worthwhile strategy to try out in frameworks that are designed to support positive change among young people. The benefits for difficult or at-risk students are two-fold. First, at a simple level, teaching is an activity which requires listening and being listened to. Thus in a simple power relationship, negative leaders can expect to have a voice and for that voice to be heard. Second, there is the expectation that, as teachers, they will have something valuable to offer.

This raises the important issue of taking a more positive approach, and valuing pupils for what they can achieve, rather than what they cannot achieve. In the current educational climate, I would argue that we follow a deficit model of engaging with pupils – i.e. schools concentrate on what pupils *need*, rather than what they *give*. They focus attention on what pupils *cannot* do rather than what they *can*. However, it is important that students are given the opportunity to be valued for what they are good at; for what they *can* do. In a narrow academic curriculum, there is often little opportunity for some students to share the kinds of things they can do, as opposed to what they struggle with. In the case of negative leaders, all too often it is more likely to be their bad behaviour that is noticed, yet if we wish to raise

self-esteem and with a hope for any kind productive engagement, it is important to find something these students can share, whether it is break-dancing, photography or stand-up comedy. Students need to be able to express what they are good at, to draw themselves in different roles and receive affirming comments from others (Leibmann 1999, p.301). Goodlad and Hirst (1998) cite an experiment in which poorly motivated and “high risk” pupils were given a chance to take part in a cross-age peer tutoring programme: *“they found they could do something good, felt needed: found they could be strong with their minds - not their fists; experienced success”* (p. 73). Klein (1999) reinforced this notion in his study of disaffected youth, citing peer mentoring and teaching as a particularly powerful tool for re-engaging disaffected learners, stating that “Conferring responsibility and status to children whose self-esteems are battered is giving them the unequivocal message that they are valued and important” (p.43). Finney (2005) cites research based on a cross-arts peer teaching project which asked disengaged students to share with others through teaching the skills and talents they exercised outside the classroom, e.g. break dancing, graffiti art and rap: “our students possess talents largely unrecognized by their schools, talents that form crucial aspects of their identity and potential” (p.81). Peer teaching can be viewed as an activity which not only might allow negative leaders to engage in school in a way that is meaningful and constructive, but also help build in them a sense of their own worth and potential.

### **Motivation and challenge: a path to self- esteem**

Carol Dweck (2000, 2006) brings an interesting psychological angle to how self-esteem is derived, and an analysis of key ideas from her writing perhaps offers an explanation of why peer teaching might be a tool for fostering self-worth. Dweck has looked closely at notions that link student self-esteem and confidence in their ability to what she calls “mastery-oriented” qualities (2000 p.2). She identifies two views of self-esteem based on different theories of intelligence. In the first is the belief that intelligence is fixed and cannot be changed and thus may be seen as an entity within us, an entity that has a finite boundary for each individual. The second theory holds that intelligence is malleable and can be cultivated through learning and thus may be seen as dynamic - the product of an on-going process, incremental rather than fixed (p.2-3). These differing views of intelligence, based on either ‘entity’ or ‘incremental theory’, influence how motivation and achievement is measured. Dweck would suggest that entity theorists foster anxiety in students who must prove they have enough intelligence; they are encouraged to be competitive and avoid any unnecessary challenge that could pose any risk of failure. She suggests this fosters an approach to learning based on a series of easy successes, where self-esteem is boosted

through praise, therefore implying that rewards are externally achieved through a process of 'measurement'. Alternatively, incremental theorists foster the view that, as intelligence can be increased, effort and challenge can support mastery...

What makes students with an incremental view feel smart? Engaging fully with new tasks, exerting effort to master something, stretching their skills, and putting their knowledge to good use, for example to help others learn better. Dweck (2000, p.4)

Dweck's theory seems to shake the long-held view that there have to be 'winners and losers', and that praise and reward are vital in bolstering esteem, i.e. that self-esteem comes through winning and therefore must be externally given. Learning approaches underpinned by incremental theory, it would seem, can foster self-esteem derived through a different dynamic - i.e. through relationships with others – "within this framework, rather than being rivals for self-esteem, peers can gain self-esteem by co-operating and facilitating the learning of "others" (Dweck 2000, p.131). Breaking with the notion that success can only be defined when one is measured against others, has important implications for motivation. Learning can be more personally rewarding "facing challenges, working hard, stretching abilities, and using their skills and knowledge to help others makes students feel good about themselves" (p131). Peer teaching, as a route to 'feeling good', is thus a perfect vehicle for fostering engagement and motivation. To begin the process however, it is important to identify something that students will feel confident to offer others.

## **Risk and Resiliency**

In my second study, participants were selected on two grounds – firstly as students who were perceived as being disengaged from school, and secondly as students who, according to their teachers, appeared to have something to offer in a particular field that did interest them. In the case of these UK students, their talent lay in acting, and they enjoyed this aspect of their subject studies in Drama. I hoped that, through sharing performance skills, these pupils might become more constructively engaged in school. However, as stated earlier, and reinforced by Finney and Tymoczko (2003), it does need to be acknowledged that handing on responsibility to these pupils did pose a level of risk. Although I will discuss the relationship between Drama, peer- teaching and engagement later, it is important to explore the reasons why the risk taken in offering power to these pupils through peer teaching was a risk worth taking, and why risk can in fact be constructive.

Before discussing how risk might potentially be a positive factor in education, it is worth deconstructing the notion of risk, and differentiating between *risk* and *risk factors*.

Psychologists Masten and Powell (2003), describe risk factors as the social and personal factors likely to contribute to adolescent behaviour and impact negatively on well-being. They suggest that a complex web of bi-directional relationships, including family, peers, school, neighbourhood and wider society, influences behaviour and self-concept. They highlight the fact that whilst it is still important to consider how risk factors impact on the individual, we need also to consider what research into resiliency has uncovered - i.e. that some individuals are able to develop strengths to cope and adapt to risk, and that all individuals do have a natural capacity for successful adaptation (p.1). Similarly to Masten and Powell, I acknowledge that external factors do play a role in behaviour – however too much emphasis on external factors can lead to negative stereotyping and encourage a sense of inevitable failure when it comes to youth from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Because I wished to focus on the more positive aspects of what students may be able to achieve, I found this concept of resiliency useful because it offered a refreshing angle from which to view the problem of disengagement. Indeed it seems obvious that, rather than looking at students from difficult backgrounds who do not successfully adapt, we should look at those who, despite the disadvantages of their context, *do* achieve and go on to lead happy lives. We need to find out what has helped create their resilience. Masten and Powell state that resiliency research indicates what it is that would seem to build resilience and protect some adolescents from negative outcomes - feeling valued and capable. These young people felt they were valued and respected for what they could do rather than what they could not, and their experiences were marked by influences within relationship networks that set high, rather than low, expectations of what they might be able to achieve (p.2). The implications of this are that we need to focus on positive relationships which foster and nurture strengths, as this will give young people a greater sense of self-worth and thus better coping strategies for dealing with disadvantaged or difficult life contexts. Returning again to the notions of trust and respect, we need to find opportunities for young people to show what they are capable of achieving. Rogers and Freiberg (1994) state that:

Young human beings are intrinsically motivated to a high degree. They are curious, eager to discover, eager to know, eager to solve problems. A sad part of education is that by the time our children have spent a number of years in school, this intrinsic motivation is pretty well dampened. Yet the motivation is there, and it is our task as facilitators of learning to tap that motivation, to discover what challenges are real for young people, and to improve the opportunity for them to meet those challenges (p.186).

I would equate this ‘dampening’ with the need for teachers to mitigate risk, yet it would seem risk is something that teenagers actually crave. Rogers (1983) says students are ‘insulated

from dilemmas' and we must be willing to let them experience/confront problems or they will never understand how to do this: "It is possible to set up circumstances that can involve students and confront each one with a problem that becomes very real" (p.186).

In both projects relating to this thesis, students confronted problems through the risks posed by peer teaching. However, I would argue that these experiences offered meaningful challenges and more authentic learning. Taylor (2000) defines the experience of authenticity as a commitment to self-reflection and exploration, a view that identity can be constructed rather than given and where recognition is given to the personal as well as the social identity (p.120-121). Taylor argues that school practices have tended to constrain the individual and seek conformity (p.121) and yet, just as with Giroux (1997) and Lather (1991), he sees the importance of acknowledging dissident voices and offering emancipatory learning experiences that can contribute to a sense of responsibility and agency. For me, part of what motivated the students in each of my projects was that experiences were based outside standard curriculum structures, i.e. outside the structures they felt did not meet their needs or fit their interests and skills. Their roles as collaborative researchers and peer-teachers possibly offered a greater sense of personal autonomy and agency than they had hitherto experienced in a school context.

Bruner (2002) believes agency plays an important role in developing selfhood. He maintains that schools have a role to play in the construction of 'agentive encounters' that have the potential to build the 'possible self' in young people i.e., a self which has a sense of confidence, optimism and aspiration (p.20). Bruner (1986) suggests that culture is a forum constantly in a state of forming and reforming, negotiating and renegotiating meaning - "The storyteller, theatre, science and even the law are all techniques of intensifying this function - ways of exploring possible worlds out of context with immediate need" (p.123). Education, he states, is (or should be) one of the principal forums for performing this function - though it is often timid (p.123).

It is this FORUM mode that gives people their *active role* as participants rather than as spectators in culture. Arguably, from a contemporary vantage point, Bruner's critique of the timidity of schools is somewhat harsh. In the current climate, schools are charged with limiting risk and, as suggested previously, conferring responsibility on pupils, whether they are deemed cooperative or not, can be very risky in terms of ensuring required standards.

My challenge was to arrive at the activities that would offer pupils the opportunity to actively engage in activities that would foster more positive engagement with school, utilize skills they did have and build opportunities to enhance their sense of worth. The nature and

substance of peer teaching Drama, I think, offered the strongest context in which to achieve these goals.

### **Peer teaching as personal development and imaginative activity**

The power of educational drama to enhance learning, modify student behaviour and develop motivation, self esteem and skills of self-presentation in adolescents has been widely documented over the past four decades e.g. by Bruner (1986); Burton (1991); O'Toole (1992) and Heathcote and Bolton (1995). These documents show that Drama education has been particularly effective in dealing with the effective domain and motivating the learning of alienated students. In countries where drama education is a specific school subject, current curriculum documents recognise (and indeed specify) learning outcomes related to self-esteem, communication, emotional intelligence and social and self-awareness as part of the learning process.

Similarly, as indicated by some of the work referred to later in this paragraph, peer and cross-age mentoring have increasingly been shown to provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to take an active role in their learning through teaching others, and the benefits to personal and social development have also been recognised. Formal peer teaching, where older students teach classes or groups of younger ones in specific subject areas were relatively uncommon until fairly recently, judging by the lack of published work on this subject. However, contemporary research and practice – e.g. Rubin and Herbert (1998); Goodlad and Hirst (1998); O'Toole, Burton and Plunkett (2006) - indicate that the self-reflective opportunities offered through formal peer teaching is a particularly potent learning strategy – especially for the peer teachers themselves.

The use of drama and peer teaching as an integrated combination of discipline and pedagogy can empower students through creative engagement. While the most obvious links to creativity would seem to be through the process of Drama, it is worth reflecting on how peer teaching is, of itself, a creative activity and how schools have a role to play in developing experience through creative processes.

Eisner (2002) argues that the way schools are organized and the way relationships are fostered among adults and children matter because they shape experience. Experience is central to growth and experience is the medium of education:

Education is the process of learning to create ourselves, and it is what the arts, both as process and as the fruits of that process promote. Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it's a way of

creating our lives through expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions and, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture” (Eisner 2000, p.3).

Eisner describes concepts as ‘distilled images’ that represent the particulars of an experience. The importance of humans being able to formulate concepts is in the opportunity they offer for imagining, i.e. our ability to imagine ‘what if’ scenarios – or as Eisner describes it, our ability to “imagine possibilities we have not yet encountered” (p.3). Thus the imagination plays a central role in offering concrete possibilities for understanding and experience – and for problem solving. The power of the imagination is acknowledged by Greene (1995) as a source of personal agency, where an individual can “break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real” (p.19). Imagining offers the opportunity to look at things from multiple perspectives which can lead to what Greene calls ‘intensified realisation’ (p.19). Although both Eisner and Greene are particularly considering the role of the arts in fostering imagination, the concepts they describe can, I believe, be seen in any approach to teaching and learning that seeks empowerment and change. In my research, peer teaching offered students the opportunity to operate from a different vantage point - that of teacher. Peer teaching also offered risk, and this expanded students’ experience through demands made on their ability to ‘imagine possibilities’.

Eisner (2002) talks of a dialogic process through which a child generates new ideas and aims as they interact with the material of their artistic medium (p.111). This reinforces the importance of dialogic learning embedded in the emancipatory educational practice and opening the concept further could, I would argue, embrace the process of peer teaching as an imaginative activity. Of course the role Drama played as both the medium and subject-focus of teaching cannot be overlooked.

### **Drama: old challenges and new possibilities – many roles to play**

I have stated earlier that the students in both my studies were Drama students and both had strong links to this particular Arts subject - but in very different ways. In the first project, students were peer teaching using Drama education strategies whilst in the second, students were teaching performance skills. It is important to acknowledge that while I will be exploring elements of each approach, Drama as a ‘subject’ is not central to issues in my study. I will be considering it mainly in terms of the opportunities it offered as a ‘medium’, rather than exploring the Drama learning of the students involved.

One important point to acknowledge is the distinction to be made between learning ‘in’ and learning ‘through’ drama. In the broader context of arts education, Abbs (1987,1989,1994 )

has long held the view that progressive education developed an approach to arts education which focussed too heavily on the 'through' and criticized teachers (2003) who supported self-expression at the expense of more meaningful introductions to the cultural significance of art and artistic form. For Abbs, there was an expressed concern that arts teachers can too easily slip into the role of 'therapist' if particular areas of the arts are only used as a medium for personal development (p.55).

As discussed at the outset of this thesis (see Chapter One), within this research I was not using Drama as a medium for personal development, nor educating my students about Drama as a subject. What I was doing was picking up on some of the underlying principles of imaginative learning, and using these to inform how experiences could be shaped.

However Drama, as a discipline, played a significant role in the peer teaching projects in question, and it is important to look closely at the nature of the subject of Drama for two reasons. Firstly, it was a subject that all the girls in my study were undertaking and in the case of two students in particular, it was one of the few in which they were achieving. In understanding the reasons for this, there are implications for how we might understand the nature of 'effective' learning more generally. Secondly, Drama was used by the young peer teachers as a teaching pedagogy. In the first project, the participants explored conflict issues with their pupils using Drama strategies, while those in the second project utilized such strategies to introduce their students to Drama skills. For the duration of each project, all participants had the 'real-life role' of a teacher. They also utilized the strategy of 'role play' when working with their pupils. Deconstructing the nature of role and role-play, and how these operate as learning experiences in Drama, has implications for how we might understand the nature of effective *teaching* more broadly.

Sarason (1999) explores teaching as a Performing Art and aligns the role of teacher with that of actor and curriculum with script. While Ackroyd (2004) explores this notion of teacher as performer in her research on the use of teacher-in-role in the classroom, Sarason holds all teaching as performance. While I have some strong reservations regarding how far he takes this comparison - "teacher is chief actor, the 'star', the actor that gets top billing" (p.3) - he does offer a useful definition of how role might operate: "Becoming and sustaining a role is an artistic process of identification and imagination" (p.4). Certainly in both projects participants had to use their imaginations as they entered into the 'what if ' context of their own classroom and took on the role of teacher. What was interesting in the Second Project, in the UK, was the insight that this situation offered the girls who had not been supportive of many of their teachers and had little respect for most. The process of peer teaching resulted in their acknowledgement of how difficult the job of teaching could be – clearly they could

now identify with a role previously unfathomable. O'Hanlon, quoted in Ackroyd (2004), states that the act of teaching 'confers professional identity' (p.9). I would suggest that the act of teaching did allow the young women I worked with an insight into the professional challenges of teaching.

Philip Taylor (2000) reminds us that transformation does not happen in a vacuum, and needs the careful structuring of strategies to facilitate a "wide-awakeness" in participants (p.8). He refers to the work of arts philosopher Maxine Greene and democratic theorist and educator Paolo Freire in defining this concept as a heightened consciousness wherein young people can consciously reflect on their actions and change as a result of their discoveries: " Such transformation is a praxis: action - reflection - transformation" (p.9).

Although Taylor is exploring the nature of Applied Theatre in this discussion, I believe some of the key issues he raises in terms of transformational processes can be applied more broadly. Although students in my projects were using drama strategies in their teaching, the process of peer teaching was, of itself, a 'carefully structured strategy' that offered students positive experiences outside their lived experience. Maxine Greene (1995) for example, discusses the nature and potential of aesthetic experience to release the imagination and offer young people new possibilities through dialogues that stir them to "reach out on their own initiatives" so that apathy and indifference can give way to "images of what might be" (p.5).

## **Final reflections**

Some very significant insights emerged from considering literature across a range of fields, and finding connections between areas. Writing in the area of education, Goodlad and Hirst (1998) noted that peer teachers particularly value the feeling of 'being needed', and Dweck (2000, 2006) reinforces the notion that self-esteem can be derived from facilitating the learning of others. All areas seem to highlight the active nature of any kind of personal learning that leads to deeper understanding and positive change. Ultimately the process of learning itself is key.

Wisdom can be defined as the achievement of a sense of unity and purpose in the multiplicity of decisions and acts which constitute a human life. Education is a process which not only inducts into structures of knowledge, but brings those structures into play with the problems of living, thereby utilizing them in the service of wisdom. Elliot (1991, p.67)

Elliot is considering education in its broadest sense and defining wisdom not as the acquisition of a body of knowledge, but as a process, a process that intrinsically develops an individual's ability to learn how to meaningfully engage with the challenges of life. Contained in this quote is the heart of what I hoped to do – to offer opportunities for autonomous decision-making – offering a problem that needed to be solved and the opportunity to work through a 'multiplicity of decisions and acts' which might lead to deeper level of understanding. What I needed to do first was take action of my own toward deeper understanding; I needed to explore this theoretical terrain in a concrete way through research.

*“...Run, walk, stumble, drive or fly, but never lose sight of the reason for the journey, or miss a chance to see a rainbow on the way.”*

*Gloria Gaither.*

# 3

## **METHODOLOGY**

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### **3.1 THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE**

My research is a qualitative study that seeks to explore an issue of significance for teachers and learners. It examines the real and concrete practices of particular people in particular places (Sagor, 2000). The ‘particular’ described in this study is embedded in two peer teaching projects, each set in a different educational context - Australia and the United Kingdom - and each involving different participants, approaches and practices. The overarching objective of both projects, however, was to explore how democratic learning strategies, including the peer teaching of Drama, may be able to engage adolescents in learning. Central to both the design and implementation of all phases of the research was the desire to foster democratic learning and pupil voice through improving educational practice.

Both research projects relate to teaching and learning in relation to the individual, and both use peer teaching as their central strategy. Questions for the DRACON project were focussed on a very concrete goal related to learning a specific concept, i.e Conflict Management. Questions for the Wallenberg Project however were less concrete in some ways as, although in this project personal learning was still a major goal, questions related to how individuals actually engage in the learning process itself, rather than how they learn a specific concept.

The initial research phases spanned one year for the First Project with follow-up interviews made a year and then 18 months after completion. Initial research phases for the Second Project spanned two terms (12 weeks) with follow-up interviews and discussion continuing into the following term, after which key participants were invited the following year to talk to trainee teachers about their experiences. Although each project may be considered as a distinct phase in this exploration, insights developed and deepened from one to the other as I attempted to build contextually sensitive insights into practice.

In this qualitative research, I employed a number of interpretive practices in the hope that each might render subtly different perspectives and insights on the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The perspectives and views of the participants themselves have been extremely important, and throughout the study I progressively endeavoured to include more collaboration with participants in my approach to the research and to increasingly privilege the participants in their insights and reflections on practice when formulating theory and offering conclusions.

### **Constraints and Opportunities:**

A number of significant circumstances posed both opportunities and challenges for the researcher. The total research study (the two projects considered together) spanned a number of years and the context of each project was different, as was my position as a researcher in the two different places. During the first, I was the classroom teacher of the students involved, an insider; in the second, a “stranger” (Agar, 1996) on the outside. Experiencing the research from these differing positions offered a heightened awareness of the constraints and opportunities available within each context and also the limitations and possibilities of the roles and relationships which could be built up in each situation.

Each phase of the total study was funded, the Australian research, the DRACON (Drama and Conflict) project through a small grant from the Australian Research Council to explore how educational Drama may be used to help students manage conflict situations, particularly those conflicts that emerge in school. The second phase of the research, in the United Kingdom, was one of a raft of projects, all informed by a loosely expressed set of democratic values focussing on the role of education in social and cultural transformation, and funded by the Wallenberg Foundation in Sweden.

It is important to acknowledge that, although there were externally perceived and intended goals for each research project, both were structured to ensure they were reflexive and dialectic (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 2000). In the Second Project particularly, this important

feature of the research offered participants themselves the opportunity of refining the aims of the research.

### **The unique structure of the study**

Although clearly a qualitative study, this research does not fit neatly under the umbrella of any one particular methodology and crosses definitions of both Case Study and Action Research. The methodological approaches and research strategies contain elements of both as part of the natural development of the research process. I would argue that it is, in fact, a strength of the study that it evolved organically; evolved through being responsive to the opportunities that arose in each context and to the shifts of approach that were necessary as a result of both individual and collaborative reflection. This organic development of the study reflects a naturalistic paradigm, and acknowledges that realities are multiple and shifting, and are mutually shaped by participants in any social process (Ely 1991, p.2).

Having said this, I would also argue my approach had to do more than just acknowledge social processes at work in the contexts I was observing. If one of the central aims of the research was to understand how young people might be re-engaged in school, then my participants, who were in a variety of ways marginalised from the social 'reality' of school, had to be actively offered the opportunity for power within the research process itself. In the Second Project, the two girls became, from the outset, co-researchers with me. Here I agree with Lather (1991), that there should be more reciprocity in our interactions with students; more negotiation in terms of meaning-making.

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest that one element of any definition of qualitative research should be that it uses a wide range of interpretive practices. They compare the work of a qualitative researcher to that of a filmmaker, such as Eisenstein, who assembles a series of brief images into a montage. Each image is not meant to be viewed sequentially, as it is only when projected simultaneously that they create meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.4). In many ways, my two-project research study reflects this concept. Each small snapshot taken at points along the two journeys contains its own story and meaning, but when the snapshots are viewed as a whole, there is also richer meaning and complexity. My study utilised the goals and objectives of both Case Study and Action Research, and the research and data analyses are strongly aligned with both these paradigms.

The first project began with a clear objective and a plan to trial a number of strategies. Following each phase of action, the researchers involved, along with myself, reflected and planned further strategies to achieve our goals using a traditional Action Research cycle. A whole class of Year 11 and 12 students were participants, working with 4 classes of Year 9s.

As noted in the introduction, it was during one of the later cycles of action that interesting issues emerged which led me to focus my attention far more narrowly. I wanted to find out more about the experiences of three particular girls and they thus became a 'case'. In this latter phase of the first project I then identified issues that warranted further exploration. In order to explore these further issues, it seemed the best approach would be to begin by identifying a similar 'case' that might reveal further insight through participation in a subsequent action. Thus the nature and particular needs of the two young women I worked with in the Second Project influenced the action research cycle in this study; in a way, the reverse of the first project.

I have chosen, therefore, to describe each project in terms of its unique nature in relationship to both methodological approaches – Case Study and Action Research – with Project One being described as an “Action cycle based Case” and Project Two a “Case based Action cycle” (See Fig.1.p.6). These descriptions will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Furthermore, my position as a researcher and the methods I employed in my approach were influenced by ethnography, and much of the terminology I use to describe the research is drawn from that field. In essence, my methodology was 'Action Research embedded in Case Study' and the strategies and methods I used can be justified in terms of the opportunities they provided for both focussed reflection and critical action. The dynamic, multi-method nature of the study ensured no single set of methodological practice was privileged and allowed me to be responsive to the contexts in which I found myself as a researcher. This approach was valuable in the field and later supported analysis of the social texts I observed. As Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest, I acknowledged the blurred line between context and text.

## **The research design**

The following diagram (Fig. 2.) serves to illustrate the path of this research journey. It illustrates, in brief, each phase of both projects and the connection between both. Indicated for each phase are the participants, the action (what was going on) and, importantly, who was leading the action at each point.

A central component of the research design for both studies was to have older students teach young pupils, utilizing the same Drama strategies through which they themselves had learned. It is significant that both projects involved Drama students. Drama was the teaching pedagogy used in the First Project, and it was Drama as a subject that was being taught to younger pupils by their older peers in the Second Project. Issues relating to this fact will of

course be explored in further discussion; however it is worth mentioning here that the study, taken as whole, reveals some interesting insights for teaching and learning in the Arts - and beyond.

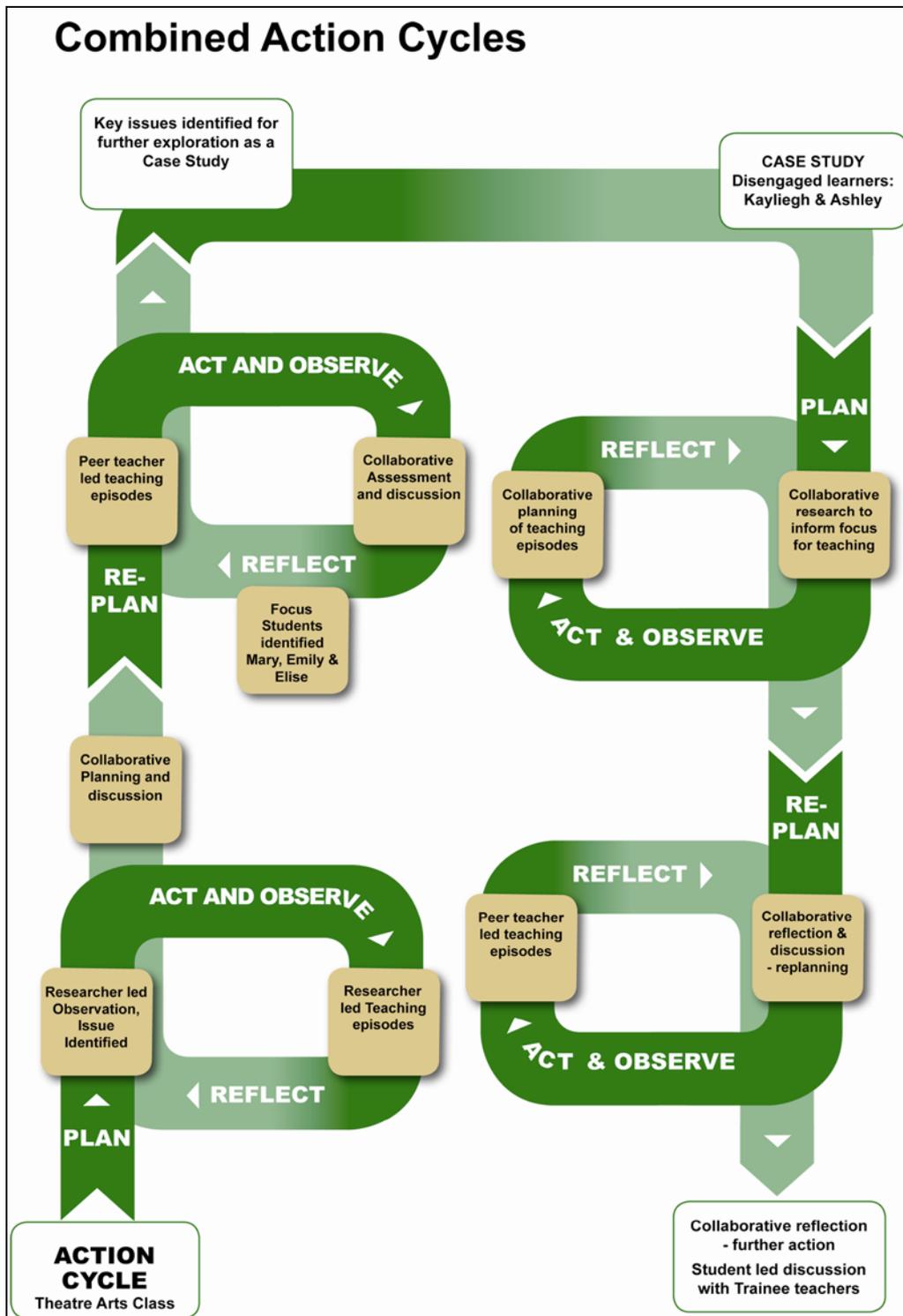


Fig. 2

## Action Research and Case Study – mixed methodology

As stated earlier, this study, taken as a whole, incorporating both projects, does not fit neatly under the umbrella of either Case Study or Action Research for it combines elements of both. I make no apology for this, as I see the interweaving of approaches as an inevitable outcome of the research journey. In terms of a post-structuralist approach to research, it seems possible that there can be an interplay between methods and methodology. As Crotty (1998, p12) suggests, a theoretical perspective might make use of any methodology, and any methodology can make use of any method that best serves its purpose. As my research evolved I found it more meaningful to follow whatever strategies and approaches served best to illuminate issues. As Crotty points out:

We plan our research in terms of (that) issue or problem or question. What, we go to ask, are the further issues, problems or questions implicit in the one we start with? What, then, is the aim and what are the objectives of our research? What strategy seems likely to provide what we are looking for? What does the strategy direct us to do to achieve our aims and objectives? In this way our research question, incorporating the purposes of our research, leads us to methodology and methods.” (Crotty 1998, p.13)

Although I would argue that both projects were strongly action-based, the fact that understanding was embedded by either the emergence of a case (as in the case of the First Project, the impact of the action cycle on the three Australian participants), or began as an enquiry into a case (the disengagement of the two UK participants in the Second Project), is significant. Thus I was engaged in an approach to methodology Stake would call an “instrumental case study” - examining a particular case closely, to provide insights into issues from which broader conclusions might be drawn (Stake 2000 p.437). Certainly the elements of the research design most closely aligned to ‘case study’ were used as starting points for action. I see the term ‘instrumental case study’ as most descriptive of the nature of the analysis process at this stage - although in the case of both projects, ‘broader conclusions’ served to stimulate further research; thus, it can equally be argued that each case formed part of what would traditionally be identified as an “Action Research’ cycle. As there are strong connections to both methodologies, it is worth teasing these out further to see the connections.

## Elements of Action Research

This approach was particularly relevant because its emphasis on action supports research which works toward empowerment and change. Whilst there are differing methodological approaches to Action research, Costello (2003) identifies a number of common (themes), and these provided an effective set of guidelines for my overall research approach. Costello (2003 p.5) states that in educational research, Action Research:

- 1 Has a practical, problem-solving emphasis
- 2 Has a flexible, spiral process of enquiry
- 3 Is undertaken by individuals, professionals and educator
- 4 Involved research; systemic, critical reflection and action
- 5 Aims to improve educational practice
- 6 Is undertaken to understand, evaluate and change
- 7 Involves gathering and interpreting data on teaching and learning; and
- 8 Involves reviewing actions undertaken and planning of future action

This type of research seemed particularly suitable for the kind of investigation I wished to undertake, as it supports a systematic, critical and reflective way in which to consider how educational practice could be improved.

The investigation sought to explore an issue of significance for teachers and learners in order that professional practice (and thus learning) could be potentially changed and improved. Throughout each phase of this research, ideas and teaching innovations were trialled with a view to establishing what might have the most positive impact on the learners involved. Although each project can be viewed as having two separate cycles of action and reflection, when the study is viewed as a whole (refer to diagram 1, p. 6) it becomes clear that there is a strong connection between them. It can be argued that, just as the results of Project One informed Project Two, so also they could equally be viewed as one larger Action Research cycle. What separates the projects is the changing context - although both are based in secondary schools, the age of the participants and their cultural context was markedly different. However, taking Costello's definition above as a guide, the study as a whole contained all the elements described and it would seem this contextual factor, in terms of this particular definition at least, already qualifies it as Action Research.

As an action research study, emergent findings influenced subsequent directions and served to further refine the initial research question. The evolution of the question itself reflects conclusions drawn along the way. Although initially the first project set out to discover how

adolescents could be taught to understand conflict, the power of democratic learning processes in fostering pupil voice came to the fore as a central issue, and this informed the second project as part of this cycle of research. Also impacting on the evolution of the question was the context in which each cycle was situated and my shifting role as a researcher. It is worth considering the relationship between my particular research interests; the externally perceived goals of each research project; and perceptions of the participants themselves in refining the aims of the research. It is here that the elements of more traditional Case Study can be identified.

## **Elements of Case Study**

In educational research, 'case study' is the term used for a research strategy that focuses enquiry around the detailed study of a particular teaching and/or learning phenomenon within a particular context. There are several definitions in the literature, spanning a range of different emphases and approaches, but for the purposes of my study the following brief definition provided by Yin served as an appropriate starting-point:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin 2003, p.13)

With this in mind, my research did look at two different, but related, 'contemporary phenomena', i.e. the experiences of two sets of largely disengaged young women in a school context. The boundaries were indeed blurred between phenomena and context as I attempted to unravel the processes of teaching and learning that may have impacted upon their experiences in each particular school. Although Case Study research is more commonly bounded in one particular context, the fact that I researched in two different situations is not problematic. Yin (2003 p.14) claims that Case Study research can include both single and multiple case studies. My approach to the process itself is what is significant.

As stated earlier, Instrumental Case study (Stake 2000, p. 437), aims to look very closely at an instance in order that broader conclusions might be drawn. All classroom contexts have subtle differences and certainly no two adolescent girls are the same. It was important to acknowledge this; however, there were many similarities to other classrooms, and to the experiences of young women in general. The research did reveal common experiences and thus issues for consideration in wider contexts. My method of Case Research might be considered more theory-building than theory-testing (Layder, cited in Denscombe, 2002, p.33), for new insights were generated as a result of the research.

Case studies attempt to identify interactive processes, so that when these were considered in the light of wider knowledge, more general conclusions could be drawn. The notion of 'conclusions' however is where my study starts to depart from a standard Case Study approach. Although I was able to identify some very clear issues that could be considered important, in themselves, to consider in the light of supporting effective learning and teaching, I needed to go further. I wished to intervene in the context; something that would be at odds with more conventional approaches to Case Study methodology. Denscombe (2002, p.37) states that without some notion of a boundary for a case study there can be no end point. He suggests a "case" needs to be a "self contained entity" with "distinct boundaries" (Denscombe 2002, p.38). However, this was not to be the shape of my research process.

### **Instrumental Case Study and Case motivated Action.**

As stated above, a standard model of Action Research would show a sequential cycle of activity, generally set within one context. Each activity would be based on reflection on what came before and would seek 'actively' to motivate change. A standard Case Study would also be set within one context, though it would focus on the close observation of action already in play and consider the forces at work within the context impacting upon that action. I see reflection in Case Study as primarily motivated to 'explain' in order to illuminate, while in Action Research, reflection seeks to 'shape' action itself in order to illuminate. These definitions are broad, and I acknowledge they simplify what are in fact more complex methodological approaches. However, I feel my research model really contains elements of both approaches, and thus does not fit neatly into either classification if the definitions of each are drawn too narrowly.

Each study in each context holds elements of both Action Research and Case Study. It could be argued, in simple terms, that the First Project started as a classic piece of Action research, but what emerged from reflection was a 'Case Study', i.e. issues related to the experiences of three particular young women - experiences which needed to be more closely considered and explained. The Second Project began almost as a reverse of this. The experiences of two young women formed a 'case' to be considered and explained, though it was through a series of 'actions/interventions' that it was hoped new understanding would come.



## Data overview: Project Two

DATA SET	REFERENCED AS...
<p><b>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</b></p> <p><b>Key Participants- Ashley, Kayleigh</b> x3 (One to one, group*)</p> <p><b>Ellen</b> (Drama teacher) x 2 (One to one, group*)</p> <p><b>Year 6 Drama class</b> x1 (Group*)</p> <p><b>Rachel</b> (Trainee teacher ) x 1.</p>	<p><b>Name + SS.</b> Int 1*, 2 or 3</p> <p><b>Ellen +SS.</b> Int 1 or 2</p> <p><b>Name + Yr 6 Int*</b></p> <p><b>Rachel + Int.</b> 1.</p>
<p><b>UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</b></p> <p><b>Teachers – Anna, Linda</b> x 2 (One to one, group*)</p> <p><b>Ellen</b> (Drama teacher) x 3 (One to one, group*)</p>	<p><b>Name + US.</b> Int.1 or 2*</p> <p><b>Ellen + US.</b> Int 1, 2 or 3*</p>
<p><b>OBSERVATION NOTES</b></p> <p>Self</p>	<p><b>Morag</b> Obs Nts</p>
<p><b>SCHOOL REPORTS</b></p> <p><b>End of Year 8</b> x 1</p> <p><b>End of Year 9</b> x 1</p>	<p><b>Name + Yr 8.</b> S.Reprt.</p> <p><b>Name + Yr 9</b> S.Reprt.</p>
<p><b>REFLECTIVE JOURNAL</b></p> <p>Self</p>	<p><b>Morag</b> Ref Journ</p>
<p><b>QUESTIONNAIRES</b></p> <p><b>Year 6</b> (Developed by Ashley and Kayleigh for whole class)</p>	<p><b>Yr 6.</b> Questionnaire.</p>
<p><b>VIDEOS (*TRANSCRIBED)</b></p> <p><b>Year 6 Drama Lesson</b></p> <p><b>Interview with Ashley*</b></p> <p><b>Question and Answer session*</b> (Ashley and Kayleigh with trainee teachers.)</p>	<p><b>Support for Observation notes</b></p> <p><b>Ashley V Int.</b>4</p> <p><b>Name + Q&amp;A</b></p>

Fig. 4

## 3.2 METHODS

*'Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I can remember and remember more than I have seen.'*

*Benjamin Disraeli*

### Observation Notes

#### My notes: inside observer

Observation notes were written throughout all 'action phases' of each project, i.e. during classroom activities in both Projects One and Two and, as my role was different in each context, this did have an impact on the both the logistics of taking field notes in each case and the perspective brought to observations in each study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009) point out that there are "degrees of participation" in observation (p.404) and this is particularly true of my role in Project One. Whilst during the first phase of the project, as the class teacher, I was a participant, an inside observer, when my class became the peer teachers of others I moved to a position similar to that of my co-researchers and research assistants as I watched action in the field from the outside.

In both projects I used a "naturalistic" approach to observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009). In this way, my observation notes generated "thick description" (p.405) as a record of social processes and interaction. I did not employ a structured schedule of pre-determined categories as a checklist, or systematically record events against a scale for future numerical assessment. Although this type of more structured observation may have some advantages when a research question requires a finding of consistency or pattern, it would not have supported my research, for as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009) point out, "there are times when reliability as consistency in observation is not always necessary" (p.404). More important was acknowledging "critical incidents" (Booth, 1998: Bell, 2002: Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009); that is, noting particular events and moments that seem to "typify or illuminate very starkly" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009, p.404) a particular behaviour or issue, observing individual response and reflecting, in the moment, on the significance of this in relation to the research question. Of course, sometimes an incident emerges as being critical only upon later reflection; i.e. at the time a particular event is happening, it might not seem particularly significant, but later, on returning to the data, it may provide an insight originally missed. This is the reason why it is desirable that this kind of data be dense and observations as detailed as possible.

Ideally, a researcher should “strive to write the most complete and comprehensive field notes as possible. This requires self-discipline if not compulsiveness” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.66). This process was attempted in both projects, but was not always achieved. Due to opportunity, competing priorities and different levels of impetus, at varying points during some phases of both research projects my notes are not as comprehensive as they could have been. This said, some early recording of events, though reasonably comprehensive, did not seem particularly useful when reviewed later. As I worked longer in each research context and became more secure as a researcher, I became more assured in terms of what to look for; it did take time in each getting to know just what was important (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.67).

In Project Two, all observation notes were taken only by myself over the 6 peer teaching episodes. I remained very much on the outside of the classroom context in this project and, apart from the two lessons when I was behind a video camera, I was able to watch the peer teaching episodes and record the dynamics, as I saw it, between each of the peer teachers and their pupils. I was more confident in this project with field work and as the focus of this project, in terms of my own research aims, was more tightly focussed, I had a clearer sense of what would and would not be relevant.

## **Observation Notes**

### **Co- researchers and research assistants: Outside observers**

In Project One, funding allowed the employment of a small number of research assistants. I was the classroom teacher of the Year 11 Theatre Arts group for this project; so most observation notes during the initial teaching stages were taken by co-researchers and a group of research assistants. Access to these notes was available to me and so I have been able to draw on them as part of my data for this thesis, alongside post-teaching notes from my Reflective journal.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009) point out that multiple observers can be a problem as each brings a different perspective and interpretation to events witnessed, and suggest this can lead to inconsistency in results (p.410). I would however disagree, for while it is true that there were differences in what each researcher recorded, and each did have their own style of reflection, these differences, I felt, enriched the data and offered multiple perspectives. When there were common things that were noted by observers this generally meant an issue was significant and needed to be considered more closely. Like Silverman (1993), I would argue then that multiple witnesses create a form of “Investigator triangulation” (p.99). I

found that many of their observations were extremely valuable, in particular, their ability in the first phase of the project to observe me as a teacher from a non-participant perspective. From their observations I gained some valuable insights from the 'outside'.

## **Reflective Journals**

### **Project One and Two**

I kept a reflective journal over all phases for both projects. The reflective journal was different in substance from observation notes; being written after classroom activity, it had a different function. This reflective record offered my thoughts about what I had observed with the benefit of hindsight. I tried to write up my reflections as soon after events as possible. However, the amount of detail in each entry varied. At times, other commitments and logistics worked against me in terms of writing up extensive notes soon after events. This was not always desirable, in terms of recalling some details of a lesson; however, more often than not, the 'distance' offered by this gave more time to process and reflect on key developments in the classroom and this did help my analysis (Creswell 2003, p.9). Some journal entries were quick jottings of things to think about. At other times, more significantly, they contained extra detail. Bell describes one method of recording events as a "critical incidents" approach, where rather than a detailed description of all events, the diarist notes selectively those events which stood out for some reason (Bell, 2002, p.151). This approach must of course acknowledge the unavoidable subjectivity involved in the process of note-taking and the particular 'eye glasses' we use when looking at an event (Ely, 1991, p.54). My notes seemed to evolve organically to take the form of a log of reflections on critical incidents and, though I had initially hoped to be as objective as possible in my recording, it soon became apparent that key incidents were often the most revealing sources of information.

I often felt the urge to talk about key incidents and share what had happened with others as I endeavoured to find meaning, and it is important to acknowledge that insights were often informed by conversations with others. Informal conversations with participants after the event and, in the case of Project One, discussions with co-researchers, did influence my reflection. In Project Two there were also occasions when I received feedback from the girls' class teacher about what they had said to her immediately after they had returned from teaching. Often full of either enthusiasm (or disappointment), the girls would return to school eager to tell their Drama teacher what had happened. These post-lesson discussions were relayed back to me by the teacher. She would often offer her own analysis of their stories as she retold them, and her insight, particularly at the beginning of the research, as someone

closer to the girls, did influence my own reflections. Reference will be made later in this thesis to one particularly significant conversation with the teacher that caused a major shift in how I thought about a particular incident, and flagged what would become an important finding.

Rather than compromising my research, I take the view of numerous theorists that research can be validated in dialogue with participants (Elliot, 1978; Grumet, 1998; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009). Action research engages participants in the reflective process and in both projects I see my own reflections as the result of informal dialogue with all participants - co-researchers, teachers and pupils alike.

## **Interviews**

The hallmark of in-depth qualitative interviewing is learning how people construct their realities - how they view, define, and experience the world (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 101).

### **Informal discussion and conversations ‘for the record’**

Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were used in the course of both projects. Over the course of my research, it was the latter two approaches that I began to employ more often and found most useful. There was a place for structured interviewing in the early phases of the first project because it was thought that a pre-determined list of questions would offer the best way of achieving consistency when a number of people were involved in conducting the interviews and where responses to standardised questions could provide a sound overview of general attitudes and opinions. This said, as Fontana & Frey (2003) suggest, no interview can really be a neutral or objective tool when every interview situation brings together two people in human interaction in a specific context, each exchange will be complex and unique (p.696).

Although it is relatively easy to define what is meant by a ‘structured’ interview, the latter two forms seem to me to have more fluid boundaries. On several occasions I found in my own research that what I had intended to do, e.g. conduct a semi-structured interview with a number of key ‘guide’ questions, turned into something more akin to an informal discussion as new issues were raised, or my own interest was piqued by a comment that led down another path. As Denscombe (2002) points out, semi-structured and non-structured interviews are really on a continuum and can slide back and forth along a scale (p.113).

The shifting focus of my research governed my decision that a less structured approach was necessary in the latter part of the research journey. I was interested in the thoughts and feelings of individual interviewees and thus I needed to be less obtrusive if I wanted to let my participants feel comfortable about offering their ideas and following their own trains of thought. Rather like Foley & Valenzuela (2003), I utilised a more conversational or “dialogic style” of interviewing which encouraged interviewees to share more of themselves (p.223). In the second project, my interviews were semi-structured from the outset and, at various points throughout, could more usefully be described as ‘guided conversations’ rather than interviews (Yin 2003, p.89).

The context in which interviews were conducted is another important issue to raise. Although, for the purposes of data analysis, I have identified each interview as one of the three forms, this is done more to give a sense of the context and tone of the exchange. Often the context I was in - for example, the staffroom after school, or sitting after lunch with my recorder and participants under a tree - impacted on the formality of interviews.

Both individual and group interviews were utilised and my decision to use either of these approaches at any particular point was influenced by what I hoped to achieve in each circumstance. Fontana and Frey (2003) describe a number of different kinds of group interview ranging from formally structured “Focus groups” through to groups that emerge spontaneously in the field, “Natural Field Groups” (p.705). I would describe my group interviews at the less formal end of this spectrum; though not ‘spontaneous’ in composition or occurrence, questions were only semi-structured and my role as researcher was relatively non-directive. I found that in Project One, group interviews, as well as interviews with individuals, could yield interesting insights. Participants’ interactions with each other in the group context offered the opportunity for richer responses as they listened to each others’ ideas, challenged and/or supported each other’s views and opinions (Lewis, 1992, cited in Denscombe, 2002, p.114). In Project One, after interviewing the three students individually, I got all three young women together and we had an informal discussion framed around questions introduced in the individual interviews. The girls were very animated and the very lively discussion that ensued offered some interesting insights. The young women were friends and knew each other well, so felt comfortable to feed into each other’s stories. If one person gave an example of something from their experience, another would often elaborate and give her own opinion on the situation. In a way this process offered a form of triangulation - stories told by the girls during individual interviews could be placed alongside the perspectives of their peers on the same situation.

Despite the fact that interviews can provide some of the least mediated data in terms of participants' opinions, thoughts and feelings, invariably there is some element of 'formality' as soon as a tape recorder appears. Here I would like to make a distinction between informal discussions with participants and interviews. A great deal of dialogue happened during the course of both projects and all of it has informed my research, in one way or another.

Interviewing, as a tool, was used differently in each project. The number and duration of interviews varied in each due to logistical issues and, within the projects themselves, formality varied according to who was being interviewed, when and by whom. [Quotes from Interviews will indicate speaker with the number of the interview indicating when it took place in relation to the project as a whole].

### **Project One**

A large number of interviews were carried out by co-researchers on the project (and later by myself). Initially, all the Year 11 Theatre Arts group were questioned at the beginning of the project and then, immediately following the peer teaching episodes, a number of them were selected to be interviewed again, as well a number of the Year 9 pupils they had taught. The Year 9 pupils were selected randomly and, although we tried to ensure a balance of males to females questioned, just who was interviewed was, to a large degree, governed by logistics - i.e. who was available to talk to co-researchers at any given time. These interviews were structured around a pre-determined set of questions.

These interviews were carried out by co-researchers and research assistants, then transcribed. It was following analysis of this particular data that I identified the three young women of particular interest. All three were Year 11 pupils in the Theatre Arts group. I interviewed them both separately and as a group 8 months after the project had been completed, and then again 12 months later – after they had left school. The shape of these interviews was more unstructured and less formal.

Although there is a great deal of interview data to draw on in this project, much of it was initially generated to answer questions that were related to wider issues significant for DRACON, e.g. questions related to understanding inter-racial conflict. Thus the structured interview form was employed – as it was anticipated this approach would yield a clearer overview of the opinions and attitudes of this group of adolescents as a whole. However, as I began to redirect my research toward more personal issues raised as a result of the project, I selected particular individuals from the group upon whom to focus. Later interviews with the three key informants were semi-formal.

For this study I will only draw on the earlier DRACON interviews where they provide reference for key issues related to what emerged as my major focus. It is the interviews which I conducted that are the most significant and provided the insights I needed to explore my ideas further in the second project.

## **Project Two**

I conducted all the interviews in this project and, compared with those in the earlier project, all were semi-formal in nature right from the outset. Although my initial discussion with the two UK students had some broad areas I wished to cover, questions were still very open-ended. Some interview contexts arose serendipitously and were thus even less formal. One example of this was when one of the girls' teachers unexpectedly offered to talk to me when I happened to be at the school. Although I had no specific questions prepared, it was a valuable opportunity - and I just happened to have my tape recorder!

It was intended that my focus students would be interviewed four times. First with their drama teacher at our initial meeting, twice during the planning and peer teaching phases of this project, and then finally following the final teaching episode. Although I was able to interview one of the girls the fourth time, the other was not at school. Two of the girls' other teachers were also interviewed, and following the final peer teaching episode, the Year 6 pupils were also interviewed, as a group.

Several months after the final phase of the project, the two girls were also invited to speak to my trainee teachers. A video was taken of this session, then transcribed. This was, in a way, an unstructured interview context. The questions that were posed came from the trainees and followed their interests and needs. The young peer teachers' answers would often refocus and redirect discussion, and new questions would emerge organically as a result of this. The questions posed by the trainees, and the girls' responses to these questions, offered some very valuable insights. Following this session, one of the teacher-trainees was also interviewed. Although this opportunity was really a 'post-script' following the last phase of the action cycle, this final activity did provide some very important insights and another valuable perspective on key issues.

In this Second Project, I actually began with a group interview, though my decision to take this approach had a very different motivation. In this project I was an outside participant. Apart from the Drama teacher at the school, I had not met any of the participants before the project began, and so one of the first things I needed to do was engender rapport and trust. I did not feel that the formality of a structured interview would be appropriate if I wanted to be perceived as someone with whom the girls could be open. The two selected participants

were regularly in trouble at school, and I was concerned that a formal interview might come across to them as rather similar to the 'cross-examinations' they experienced with authority figures on a rather regular basis! My previous experience with such students suggested trust might not easily be won; but they did respect and trust their Drama teacher, and I hoped that my introduction to them through her might work to my advantage. For this reason my very first interview with the two girls was conducted in a group with their Drama teacher.

My relationship with the two girls developed as the research progressed and I became much less of an outsider as we began to work together more closely. Although it was initially intended that their Drama teacher participate more fully in the research process, logistical constraints ultimately meant that this was not possible and it was soon just the three of us meeting regularly, the two girls and I. Because I wanted to be as collaborative as possible in my approach, I wanted to ensure that they felt they could trust me and so it was important we feel mutually comfortable without the teacher being present. In the end, perhaps the unanticipated change in their teacher's involvement was for the best, as in many ways it allowed me to build a less formal relationship with both girls; I sensed that a closer, more collaborative dynamic emerged than would have been possible had my contact continued to be mediated by their Drama teacher.

I met with the two girls several times before they taught their Drama classes. During these meetings they planned the questionnaire that was to be completed by the Year 6 group, considered the responses that came back from the pupils and refined the script they had decided would form the basis of their Drama lessons. There was a great deal of rich conversation during these meetings, as we became more comfortable with each other. As well as the practical issues we needed to discuss, we soon started to share stories outside the project. Glimpses of the personal stories from outside their lives at school provided invaluable insight into these girls as young women, rather than purely as students. These informal chats were invaluable in helping me to understand whom I was working with and gave me insights into their needs and desires, strengths and vulnerabilities. Half-way through the series of Drama lessons, the girls were invited to the university to have lunch. This was thank-you for the work they had done and also provided an opportunity for me to share my own working context with them. These opportunities were unstructured, informal and generated a spirit of fun and companionship in our collaboration. Not all the stories will be shared here 'for the record' as such, but it does need to be acknowledged that these stories did illustrate how they experienced their world, and provided me with insights that would not have been revealed in more formal interviews and observation contexts.

What should also be acknowledged is the fact that the insights gained from listening to personal narratives did create another lens through which I looked at more formally acquired data, and this invariably influenced my analysis. I found, as did Gallagher (2001, p.14), that the reflections and perceptions of participants in my research became part of the process by which meaning was negotiated. This said, however, my position as researcher always meant my own subjectivity dominated when it came to analysing data.

My distance as a researcher is critical in understanding the very substance of my data. As stated earlier, I see the position of the researcher in relation to participants as particularly significant when considering those research tools that have close personal and interpersonal qualities - such as Observation Notes, Reflective Journals, Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured Interviews. The data that these methods generated proved to be the most useful in my research process and for this reason it is worth considering the key issue of researcher distance at this point, before moving on to discuss other tools.

### **Looking from 'within' and 'without'**

As stated earlier, both within and between each project, my place in the research landscape was different at different points, and this had significant implications. A researcher's position in terms of their relationship to participants obviously does impact on what is able to be 'seen' and interpreted. As the teacher of the pupils for the first phase of the research in Project One, I had different insights as a participant observer than to when, in the second, peer teaching phase of the project, I became more of an 'outsider', i.e. one of a number of researchers watching the Theatre Arts pupils teach their Year 9 pupils. In the first phase of the research, being as I stated above, the teacher of the Theatre Arts class, I was deeply 'inside' the action in the classroom. I thus had a distinctive opportunity to perceive the reality of what was going on from this position and, arguably, this gave me a more accurate view of what was happening (Yin 2003, p.94). I was in the moment and reacting to classroom situations that were fluid, often unpredictable and dynamic (Pring, 2004, p. 121).

As a 'teacher researcher' in Project One, I had a unique relationship with my research 'participants' because of my knowledge of them as individuals and as learners. In terms of this knowledge, I had expectations based on experience, and a level of empathy and commitment to them that, from the outset of the research, would have been stronger than for those co-researchers who had only just begun to work with the group. I had an understanding of the complexities of interpersonal interactions in the classroom, or thought I did. (It is interesting to note that later, in interviews with individuals, there were important things pointed out to me that I had not seen.)

Of course there are disadvantages to being in the participant-observer position. Simply in terms of logistics, it is difficult to see everything that is going on in the classroom, and it is here that multiple observers can be very useful. However, in the first project, there were co-researchers and research assistants frequently watching me teach - and they were often able to notice critical things of which I was unaware. During group discussion, if I was not close to a group, they could often position themselves, subtly, where they could 'eavesdrop' and pick up on issues or misunderstandings that might need to be addressed in future sessions. As an experienced teacher, it also provided some interesting opportunities for me to reflect on my practice by seeing it through the eyes of others.

Some advantages for the insider researcher can also prove to be challenges. Empathy for participants is desirable but it does have implications in terms of the distance factor able to be brought to a situation. It is easy to fall into the role of advocate, and this can jeopardise objectivity (Yin, 2003, p.94). While I recognise complete objectivity is impossible, and no such thing as an omniscient researcher can exist, I did need to make a conscious effort to interrogate my subjectivity (Jones & Barron, 2007, p.87). I should acknowledge that, as the class teacher, I wanted the research to progress smoothly and I wanted my students to 'perform well'. One of my very earliest journal entries recognised this. During one of the teaching sessions conducted by a co-researcher, I had initially recorded that I thought the students' responses to questions showed they had changed their position on an issue as a result of an activity. Later, after they were asked directly about this I was less sure and made this comment in my journal:

I was surprised when students responded that they felt very little had changed in their opinion of their experience. At times I almost wonder whether the students are really giving honest responses to questions such as these - perhaps I am projecting my own desire for such activities to make a difference onto them. This is going to be something that will be very hard to gauge. (Reflective journal. Based on observations of first lesson with co-researcher teaching.)

I needed to accept my subjectivity in regard to the lens I would bring to the research as an inside observer. However, in Project One, I did have the advantage of access to sources of data that were produced by researchers who were 'outside observers', and this gave further opportunity for triangulation. At various points in the research there could have been up to four or five other people in the room taking observation notes as activities were taking place. However, as stated earlier, it is interesting to consider that in analysing the data produced from observation, common 'key moments' and 'key players' did seem to be recognised by

observers and these helped me identify broad issues that could be explored further through other methods.

## **Questionnaires**

A questionnaire was used in both projects, although they were administered at different points within the action cycles depending on their purpose. The questionnaires in each project helped direct the action components of the research, i.e. they assisted participants to understand more about who they would be working with in subsequent phases, and thus had an important role to play in planning. Questions were framed in a variety of ways in order to gather information that fell into two broad categories - fact or opinion. In the case of the former, this took the form of straightforward requests for information - honest information about the participants or their experiences. In the case of the latter type of information, questions needed to be worded carefully and/or framed in more subtle ways in order to gather opinions, attitudes, beliefs or preferences. In the case of the First Project, some questions asked directly about feelings on a topic, but other questions were posed less directly and, for example, asked pupils to rank-order issues in terms of their perceived importance. Another question was framed as a hypothetical scenario where pupils had to imagine themselves in a situation and select their most likely response to the situation from a set of options. It was hoped that through using a range of approaches to questioning we could gather information that required participants to engage on a number of levels with the topic. At times, they were required to make a judgment about issues as well as report facts. In developing and implementing questions, I needed, as a researcher, to apply discretion and exercise my own judgement on what would be appropriate to ask. As Denscombe (2002, p.87) suggests, I had no "golden formula" to ensure questions would be successful, nor can I now look at some of these questions and fend off criticism that some may not have been ideally worded. However, I did try to ensure they were planned carefully and administered sensitively - respecting the time I was asking participants to devote to completing them.

## **Project One**

This project utilised a questionnaire following the first cycle of action - that is, following the Year 11 Theatre Arts teaching episodes but before the peer teaching episodes with the Year 9s. The questionnaire was written collaboratively by the researchers and administered to the Year 9 classes who were the focus for peer teaching. The questionnaire was used to gain insight into attitudes and opinions on conflict. It was a lengthy questionnaire, issued to all four of the Year 9 English classes, and a significant amount of data was generated. The

Theatre Arts group, for their lesson planning, used information gleaned from the responses. Results were summarised for each class but were not tabulated for overall results. (It was deemed, at the time, that the information would be more useful to keep in class sets, so the Theatre Arts students could identify answers for the individual class with which they would be working.)

This questionnaire used a number of approaches to gather information. Some questions included a selection of responses from which to choose, others were ranking questions, whilst yet others gave the opportunity to write answers more fully. Questions of fact included, for example, "Have you personally been involved in any conflicts at school in the last 6 months?" Questions of opinion included asking pupils what they thought were the major cause of conflict at school. One question also hoped to elicit information about racial attitude: A hypothetical question was posed asking pupils to select, from a range of possible responses, how they would feel if they found out that they were of aboriginal descent.

## **Project Two**

The Project Two questionnaire requested mostly factual information in order to glean the interests of the group: for example, "What sort of things do you like to do after school?" and "What shows do you like to watch on television? One ranking question was also included which involved participants giving their opinions of themselves, where they were asked to use a scale on which to rate themselves in terms of confidence.

The questionnaire used in this second project was issued much earlier in the process than in the first project. The idea to use such a device actually came from the two young peer-teachers, and it was they who formulated the questions. The 'informal' questionnaire was used so they could find out more about the Year 6 pupils they were to work with. They used this information in two ways. Firstly, it was used to help them to select the students they thought would be interesting to work with as a Drama group and secondly, to help them select a theme for the teaching episodes that would chime with the interests of the Year 6 group. In terms of the first objective, the questions related to confidence and experience in working in Drama and helped the girls select the type of group they wished to work with - i.e. a mixed gender group with a range of experiences of Drama, and a range of confidence levels. (See Appendix B2.4.)

Copies of questionnaires from both projects are included in the Appendix.

[If particular responses from questionnaires are cited they will be identified by the project they relate to and the relevant question, if appropriate].

## Participant Diaries

In both projects students were asked to keep participant diaries, journals in which to record their journeys in the research and their reflections on activities. It was hoped that in both cases these diaries might reveal information that otherwise would not be revealed through either observation or interviews. How the diaries ended up being used by participants and ultimately how appropriate and successful or otherwise this tool was in providing my research with more information, does raise some interesting ethical questions. The research context in each case, and the nature of the participants in each situation, had considerable bearing on their use or otherwise of diaries.

Although there are particular points to make about the use of participant diaries in each project, some general observations can also be made. In both cases, although it was hoped the diaries would allow participants to record their feelings and opinions about activities (and they were encouraged to do this), they were ultimately used more descriptively and participants tended to record particular incidents and observations. Although it could be argued that what participants identified as noteworthy did, indirectly, provide insight into what they deemed important, there were many gaps as participants found it increasingly difficult to consistently record their journey. It would be fair to say that in both projects students probably felt the diaries were an imposition, and as a result felt obliged, rather than motivated, to complete them. As Bell suggests (2002), participants needed to see a purpose for completing this kind of task (p.150) and, though I had informed pupils I would be collecting their diaries, they were aware they would not be 'assessed' on them as such, and therefore probably they were not as committed to the task as I hoped they would be.

When participants, in both cases the focus students, were asked to keep diaries, it was made clear that I would request access to them at points during the research. At the time, I made the assumption that participants would not find this a difficult task, and even hoped they might enjoy the responsibility. I did not consider at the time that my request was, to a degree, an intrusion. This form of data recording does ask a lot of participants and probes further into their lives. I should have considered more carefully, as Bell (2002, p.153) suggests, how much extra information would be gathered at the expense of this intrusion and whether this was worth it. Ultimately, although there were some insights gained from journal entries, they did not live up to the expectations I had of their value, a fact that provides one very clear example of an important ethical issue - how a researcher's needs and desires can be at odds with those of participants!

## Project One

All of the Theatre Arts students were asked to keep a journal from the outset of the project. At the time this did not seem unreasonable. The group were used to keeping Theatre journals about their work on collaborative performance projects and so it was intended that this participant diary could replace the journal. I informed them I would collect the diaries at the end of the project and explained the very broad expectations I had for what they might like to write in them. I suggested that they might like to write about what happened following each session - anything that they found interesting and/or wished to reflect upon. I asked them to be honest in expressing their thoughts and opinions and assured them the journals would only be read by the researchers involved. When students were issued, at the beginning of the project, with a form requesting ethical clearance to be involved, we had discussed that any material generated in the course of the research would be kept secure and that all reporting would respect confidentiality. They were reminded that the same would be so for their diaries.

Although the Year 11 Theatre Arts students were reminded at several points over the weeks we worked, I suspect a number of diaries were not started until a day or so before I requested them to be handed in. Those students who did keep more consistent records did provide some interesting, and often amusing insights into what they thought of events – and of us as researchers! I was generally surprised that most students chose to write, in the main, descriptively. Most diaries focussed on recording key events and incidents, rather than offer any opinion or deeper reflection in terms of connections to themselves. This said, it was interesting to read about some events from the perspectives of the students, and there were several diary entries that made interestingly fresh observations - seeing things that had happened in the classroom not noted by researchers.

The diaries also had a role to play in shedding light on one very significant area of the research - peer teaching. It was interesting to note that it was only around about the time students were starting to plan lessons for the Year 9 pupils that they began to write more subjectively and began to comment on how they felt about becoming peer teachers.

Thus it is mainly in this phase of the process that I will refer to some of the reflections made by students in the participant diaries.

[Where participant diaries are referred to, they are identified in terms of the activity or teaching episode to which they refer and the writer.]

## **Project Two**

As indicated in the overview, diaries were also issued to the two UK girls at the beginning of Project Two in the hope they would record in writing their thoughts and feelings. The decision to do this was carefully considered, not least because I had been aware of the limitations of diaries from the first project, but also as I knew had a further hurdle to face in terms of how the students themselves might view the request. I knew their disengagement from school generally meant they would not be highly motivated or confident writers, and that their generally defensive nature would also make any personal revelation through this means highly unlikely. I discussed this with research colleagues and their class teacher. It was suggested that if I were to supply them with a 'fancy' diary or some kind of 'special looking' book this could help their motivation. I knew I would also have to make the request to keep a diary very informal and approach the issue in a way that would not make it seem any kind of onerous or compulsory 'task'.

I looked for several days for two colourful and appropriately 'cool-looking' journals. Both girls were pleased with their gifts when they appeared and seemed open to the idea of the diary at least. It was pointed out that the diaries would be confidentially treated, and that they should feel free to write whatever they wished to in terms of their reflections on events. Unfortunately, that was the last I saw of the diaries. Although I requested, gently, if I might see them at various points, they were always 'forgotten' on the day they were to bring them, or mislaid, and in the end it was obvious that this was one form of data that would be missing from the project.

## **Videotapes**

Some video recordings were taken of lessons in the Second Project and used to support my observation notes. It was intended that the first and then fifth lessons in the series of peer teaching episodes be recorded on video and although this was the case, due to a technical difficulty there is only a complete video recording of the fifth lesson (only the first 5 minutes of Lesson One was retrieved). Thus videotaping was not able to make a significant contribution to my data for this project. However, as indicated above, a video recording was made of the Question and Answer session between the two young peer teachers and my teacher trainees during the latter phase of Project Two. The transcription of this session offers some interesting insights, and is referred to in my thesis like an interview, i.e. more for what it reveals through verbal exchange and comment rather than visual evidence as such. (See Appendix B2.7.)

### 3.3 ANALYSING DATA

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning.”*

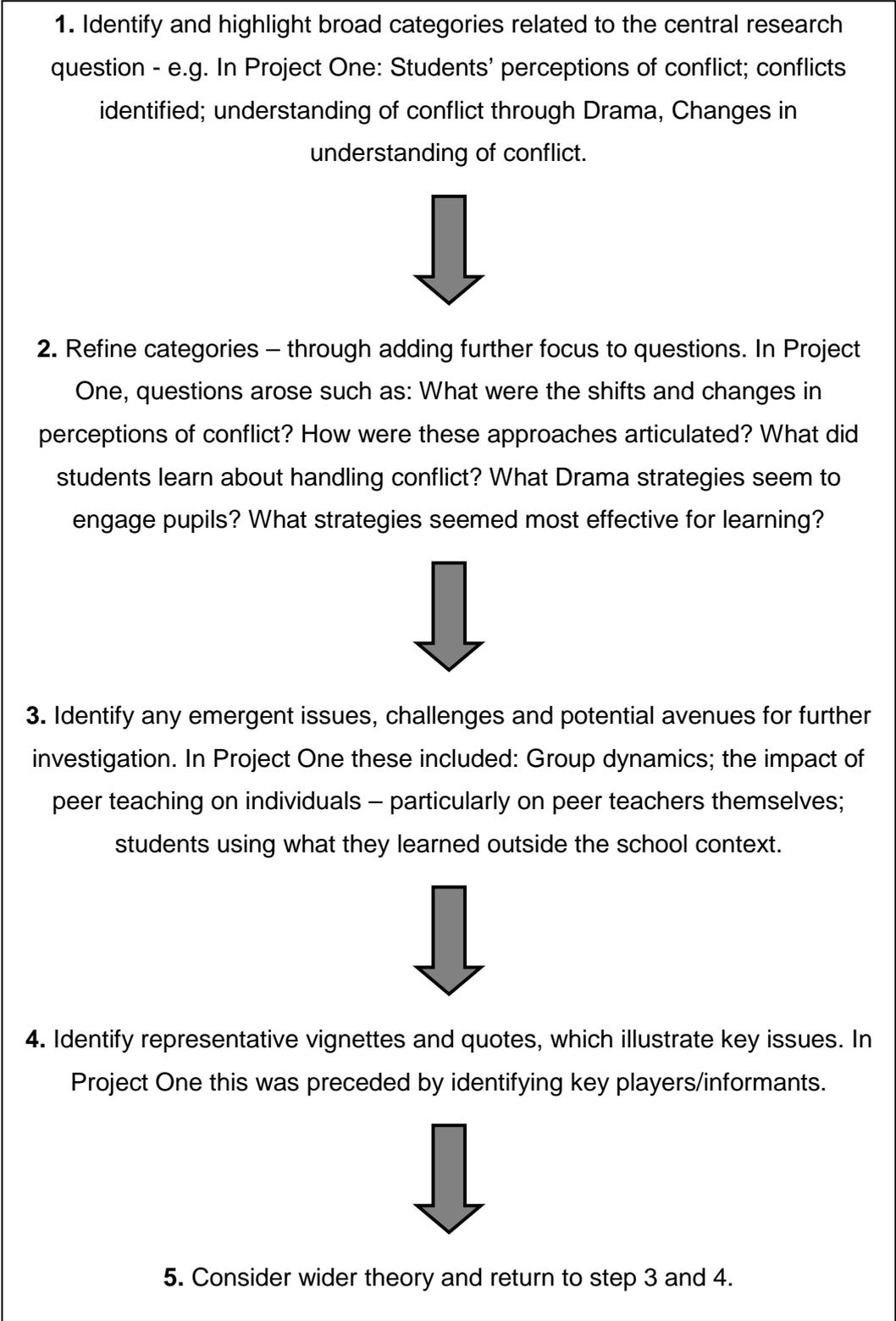
*Albert Einstein*

#### **Organising and Decoding the data**

In my research I could see that data needed to be considered temporally. As stated earlier, my approach used Action Research methodology, and thus some forms of data needed to be considered almost ‘in the moment’ as it were. For example, notes from classroom observation and responses from questionnaires needed to be considered immediately, because they could inform future planning. Reflection and discussion are key components of Action Research, and my description of the data analysis process should be looked at alongside the cycles of the research process as a whole. I considered data both at the time the research was taking place and when I returned to it later. While immediate reflection was necessary, so too was structured analysis of data after the research had concluded. Later reflection and analysis was used to draw out broader implications; implications that might be able to inform practice in more general ways. It is worth acknowledging from the outset that, as Denzin & Lincoln suggest, qualitative research is “endlessly creative and interpretive” and that by analysing my own data, my findings have been shaped by constructions of meaning, both artistic and political (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005. p.26).

A large amount of data was created during the course of both research projects. Particularly in the first project, as material was generated by a number of researchers, copious amounts of material needed to be reviewed by the end. Apart from the videos from Project Two, all data ended up in written form. Interviews were transcribed and the results of questionnaires collated and summarised. Data was created through a number of methods and thus it was hoped that this process of ‘triangulation’ would offer opportunities to find patterns and corroborating ‘evidence’ across different sources. Throughout the process of data analysis for each project, I looked for “converging lines of enquiry” (Yin 2003, p.98); that is, trends that could be identified across data that had been generated by different methods.

The raw data was read many times and each time considered with a more focussed lens. The pattern of analysis is described simply below. This somewhat crude description of the process belies what was in fact a lengthy and complex task - each step was followed by individual reflection and collaborative reflection with co-researchers and/or peers. Steps overlapped and information identified later often meant returning to earlier questions with fresh understanding.



## Analysing and making meaning

In approaching the data, I was hopeful but also realistic. I hoped I would be able to find some insight, if not provisional answers to some of the questions I had posed; I was realistic in terms of my expectations that it would not be possible to formulate definitive truths.

To avoid the 'masters position' of formulating totalizing discourse requires more self-consciousness about the particularity and provisionality of our sense-making efforts, more awareness of the multiplicity and fluidity of the objects of our knowing (Lather, 1999, p.3).

My research acknowledges a post-structural reading of processes on a number of levels: Firstly, in terms of the notion of *truth*; secondly in terms of the *non-linear* nature of the study; and thirdly in terms of its connections to the researcher as *ironist* - both discoverer and creator of contradictions and disjunctions.

The concept of 'a truth' or 'the truth' is considered problematic and like Rich (cited in Lather, 1991, p.51), I endorse the notion of "increasing complexity" as a result of multiple subjectivities. My participants themselves offered truths and I offer mine in understanding this research. This notion reflects both the self-reflective nature of my study and its emancipatory goal. As a reflective researcher I hoped to discover something for myself of student/teacher relationships and about teaching and learning more generally. As Fiene (2000, p.114) suggests, my study depended on the relationships I was able to build with participants and the attachment and engagement with the research process that I was able to foster.

Noffke and Somekh (2005) use the term "stories from the field" to describe how research unfolds. What happened in the field during my research does represent a number of small stories: My stories as a researcher; the stories of my participants; stories of what happened. In articulating these stories in my thesis, I hope to capture for the reader what I believe were key moments of significance. In terms of creating meaning from these stories; finding connections to theory and implications for practice, I acknowledge my understanding will, unavoidably, be influenced by the subjectivity of the storytellers, and at best, as in most qualitative research, any insights offered can only ever be suggestive rather than conclusive (Crotty 1998, p.13). Intrinsic to a story are roles, relationships, and setting; so too, in research. Throughout my research, my role shifted; contexts changed and different participants entered and took centre stage as others left, or played a more secondary role in the total story. This does mean my research journey is quite complex to explain. However, it

also means a very dynamic process was at work - and I hope an engaging story to be shared.

I also need to acknowledge that there is personal subjectivity as a result of the emotional connections I developed with participants in both phases of the study. This would seem to be an unavoidable element of qualitative research and yet I would also argue that “compassionate analysis” (Glazer, 1980) is both a natural and positive phenomena. Likewise, it would seem to be important that research participants feel as if they have a positive role to play in research if they are to feel some connection to its goals. Kincheloe asserts that education should prepare students as researchers who can “read the world” in order that they may be able to change it (Steinberg & Kincheloe 1998, p.2). It was a particularly strong feature of the Second Phase of the study that students also became co-researchers. The two students were to become reflective practitioners, able to discover what could be through discovering what is. (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998, p.2). This reinforces the emancipatory goals of the research. Through illuminating the ‘taken for granted’ of their everyday experiences in school, students gained insight into the forces that shaped those experiences; Berry (in Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998, p.3) calls this “reclaiming the wonder”. While I accept ‘wondering’ is important, I think there is a step beyond this that needs to be acknowledged - the possibility that, through reflection, participants will not only see more clearly the forces *outside* that shape their experiences, but may discover things about *themselves* that will empower change.

I would argue that the non-linear development of this research also encourages a post-structural reading, agreeing with Reason (2003, p.1) that Action Research is best described as an “emergent form”. Events in my study unfolded over time, but my position in relation to the research shifted within and between the two phases of the research. I have to acknowledge that this shifting role meant fluidity in my reading of events. I would argue that this was a positive opportunity for I was able to reflect both in the moment, from close by, and also at a distance from the context. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, p.596) would identify this as part of the self-reflective spiral of the action researcher.

Finally, it is interesting to consider the post-structuralist notion of irony as it relates to this research. Reason (20003, p.1) makes an interesting connection between the concept of irony and the work of the reflective practitioner in research. Throughout the research I had to be open to the unexpected and the seemingly incongruous. I did a great deal of talking to the participants, to their teachers, and to the pupils (the participants with whom they worked as peer teachers). I heard different points of view of events and discovered alternative explanations and thus had to acknowledge that convergence, inconsistency and

contradiction are all part of the process of triangulation (Ely, 1991, p.95). A strong theme in this study is the dynamics of the student/teacher relationship and the way it enabled more discoveries about how roles could be reversed through peer teaching. This reversal offered fresh insights into both roles by revealing the conflicting aims and desires often at play in this relationship. Students learnt much about teachers through being teachers; teachers learnt about students by being pupils – revelations in role at times were surprising in their simplicity and frightening in their complexity.

A researcher's prolonged engagement in a study and a close relationship with participants is a double-edged sword. On the one hand this level of involvement can risk researcher bias, but on the other hand it can also mean respondents will be more likely to offer honest opinions and perspectives (Costello, 2003). I would suggest that the candour and honesty I was able to elicit from pupils, was a result of the close relationship we were able to build over time. This enabled me to gain a more complete picture of important issues. The young women themselves were able to offer some unique perspectives on events and this was extremely valuable to the overall study. It became very clear, as each study progressed, that the more comfortable and open I could become with pupils, the more giving they would be in return. At the very heart of action research is the notion of collaboration (Ely, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Costello 2003). I would argue that this level of engagement developed a more collaborative spirit, which in turn fostered more democratic, discursive and inclusive practice. My collaborators, in this case the young women and teachers I worked with, were able to offer their views on the investigation, and discussions with them helped support my decision-making and planning (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998, p. 62).

What was also important however, was acknowledging both the "eyeglasses" I used when analysing data, and the political and creative act of interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005. p.320) There were a number of subjectivities at play in the research process - my subjectivity and that of participants. It was important therefore that a process of triangulation be at work, to ensure clarity and accuracy in the representations to be offered in my research (Freebody, 2003.)

To achieve this I used a variety of data collection methods and gained different perspectives on events as they unfolded, from different participants with the process. In the first phase of the research, as noted earlier, I was fortunate to have a number of research assistants who were observing action and taking notes, often simultaneously. I kept an "audit trail" (Costello, 2003, p.45) as I carried out the research, keeping records of completed questionnaires, interview transcripts, field notes, research diaries (both mine and that of participants) and videotapes of activity where available. At points throughout the research I would seek the

perspectives of others on the evidence I gathered. Not all raw data was shared but when possible, I offered transcripts of interviews to participants to read and shared the results of questionnaires. I also watched video footage with my collaborators. I faced the same dilemmas as most insider researchers. As (Elliot, 1991) points out, issues of “authority”, “territoriality” and “privacy” came into play, and often just the difficult logistics of working in a school, (with regard to access to and time with participants), impacted on how much sharing and co-reflection was possible. However, despite this, I took every opportunity to interact with participants, formally and informally. I talked to as many people as possible, both inside the research itself, such as the participants and their teachers, and also on the edge of the research, such as other teachers of the young women. I also reflected with colleagues on proceedings.

I talked to colleagues both formally and informally, with two central purposes in mind. The first purpose, as would be expected, was to gain the opinions of others on issues and events, but the second purpose was also critically important: I needed to sound out my own ideas for others and get their opinions on my conclusions. Some of the most illuminating moments came when a participant surprised me with an unexpected response, or when someone disagreed with my perspective on an issue. I observed and talked to participants, but as Ely (1991) suggests, I also needed to “listen, listen and listen more”. Also as part of the process of triangulation, I needed to acknowledge when things did not fit with my evolving theories. There were instances where unexpected developments ran counter to my hopes and expectations and I have needed to devote some time to “negative case analysis” (Costello 2003) for reasons both of honesty and validity. As Freebody points out, “disconfirming evidence is important, and its analysis and explanation are indices of reliability and validity for the reader” (2003, p.77). Again, the relationships I was able to build in each context were vital in ensuring the openness necessary for participants to feel they could disagree and offer counter opinions on events.

### **Bringing Insider/Outsider perspectives to analysis**

One of my challenges as a researcher was to try to ensure that the political processes at work in my research were as democratic as possible. I have discovered schools are not always the most democratic of places, nor are they very empowering places for most pupils (Morrison, 2004; Finney et al, 2005). Therefore, I tried to ensure that the students who were the participants in these projects were collaborators. O’Hanlon (2003, p.28) states that the research process itself should model democratic procedures that give a voice to all research participants, especially to marginalised pupils. This advice is extremely pertinent, as at the heart of the Case Studies and Action Research addressed herein are five young women

who, either through their own eyes or the eyes of others, were seen as marginalised. In the research, I identify a number of labels that have been applied to these young women and define these positions – ‘outsider’, ‘troublesome’, ‘naughty’, ‘disinterested’. One of my participants refers to herself as a “shadow girl”. As stated earlier, in the second phase of the research, Project Two, pupils became collaborators and so had a strong voice in decision-making. In my report on both studies I have attempted to honour the thoughts and reflections of all the young women through the direct references I have selected of their words and I hope their voices are clearly heard in this thesis.

“Any research investigation should be critical of, and concerned with, deconstructing authoritative voices, those who speak for and on behalf of others” (O’Hanlon 2003, p.12). I have tried to tread carefully to ensure I do not become just another of those “authoritative voices”, even though interpretive subjectivity is both a natural and unavoidable component of any qualitative study. Perhaps, in consciously acknowledging my interpretive role, this study “celebrates subjectivity” (Guba, 1990, p.18) and so at this point it is worth considering how my shifting position as a researcher may have shaped subjectivity.

## **Project One**

My role changed between the two phases of the research. In the First Project, I was a participant observer (Ely, 1991), deeply involved in the context as a teacher within the school and as the classroom teacher of the pupils involved. When directly teaching the class myself, I was a ‘reflective practitioner’; I was able to consider what was happening in the classroom ‘from the inside’ and respond ‘in the moment’, both shaping and responding to shifts and flows in classroom action. As I taught, I was observed by other researchers who took notes on what was happening in the classroom and the impact of action on teacher and pupils. However, only my students and I had the unique opportunity of *experiencing* what was happening first hand. As the class teacher I was able to analyse what was happening in the classroom through what Schon (in Gallagher 2001) would call “reflection-in-action”. There were times during the research project, however, where I was not directly teaching, but watching either peers teach, or my own pupils as peer teachers. At these points my role, and thus perspective on the action in the classroom, was intrinsically different.

As the key teacher involved in that First Project, I was also a “gate-keeper” (Ely, 1991; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2009), as I was responsible for the access which a number of other co-researchers had to the “field”, i.e. to my students and to the school. Although I began my research with a large number of pupils, as the study evolved I focussed my attention on just three young women and our relationship changed over time. They left the

school, and so did I, but the distance we all now had from the original school context actually served to deepen our relationship, and as a result I did discover different “truths”.

## **Project Two**

In the Second Project I was much further outside. Now a university lecturer, I was working with two young girls who had never met me before. I had expected this distance to inhibit the openness with which they might speak; however it seemed to be the opposite. My role as outsider offered the young women more freedom to express their true perceptions of school. The fact that I was not one of their teachers or a member of the school administration gave them more licence to express their views. Identified by their teachers as “disengaged learners” and “disruptive pupils”, they were very familiar with the consequences of speaking their minds in most schools contexts. I am under no illusions that, in the initial stages, my role, to a degree, was that of a welcome sounding-board for their grievances - someone they could tell their side of the story to without fear that their opinions would get them into trouble! However, I do think this subtly changed as the project progressed. Both young women had personal challenges to face as they took on more responsible roles as peer teachers. Stronger collaboration meant closer alignment in terms of our roles – understanding and empathy is never more necessary than when a challenge has to be faced, and a qualitative shift emerged in our relationship. Bonds deepened; testimony perhaps to what Ely (1991, p.1) calls the “intensely personal process of doing research”.

## **Ethics**

Related to these issues are important ethical concerns and, from the outset of the research process in both contexts, I needed to consider the ethical implications for the participants of the research being undertaken. It was of paramount importance that I “respect the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities” (Costello 2003 p.129) of both the teachers I worked with and the young women at the centre of my study. I also needed to consider the integrity of the institutions I was working in and, as well as being open with the participants directly involved in the study, I needed to ensure senior management in each school was fully informed of what was taking place in that school. I was not working in a vacuum and had to consider that the activities taking place in the school as a result of the research process were likely to have “some knock-on effect for others who operate closely in organisational terms” (Denscombe 2002, p.63).

I ensured that basic ethical standards were maintained through gaining written permission from participants, or their guardians, for them to be involved in the research. I also ensured

personal identities were protected (Denscombe, 2002). All participants were made aware of the fact that they were part of a research project and thus were able to give 'informed consent' to what was being proposed (Costello, 2003). I have changed the names of participants and the institutions in which the research took place to ensure anonymity. I have included some photographs from the second project and I gained written consent from both the girls and their parents to use these images in this thesis. (A copy of this document is included in the Appendix). It had been planned that the images would be used in a Wallenberg joint publication on student engagement (Finney et al, 2005) and I made a point of asking them if they minded my using their images in my chapter. An interesting situation emerged when the editor of the publication decided to manipulate all images to be used in the book into line drawings, which made features somewhat less identifiable. Ashleigh and Kayleigh were, in fact, disappointed when shown this, commenting that it 'didn't look like' them and I made an undertaking that they would be more 'visible' next time! Unfortunately, as there were no images available of participants in the first project, I had a decision to make as to whether it would be appropriate to include images of Ashleigh and Kayleigh in this thesis. I decided, given that there was more focussed detail in my report of the Second Project, and that 'visibility' and celebration of the achievement of pupils is one of the platforms of my argument, these photographs would make the participants more real for the reader. Should I publish any of this material to a wider audience, I might reconsider this decision. (See Appendix A1.1, A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4).

Unlike in Project One, where I have chosen the pseudonyms for all participants mentioned, in Project Two, I offered my key participants 'Ashley' and 'Kayleigh' the opportunity to give me the names they would like me to use when I was reporting on the research. They welcomed this opportunity, and the participants chose those names themselves. I recognised that in the spirit of a democratic approach to the research, I was entering an area where, as Stake (2000) suggests, "something of a contract exists between researcher and researched, a closing and protective covenant, usually informal, but best not silent – a moral obligation" (p.447).

I had a moral responsibility to ensure my research respected both the individuals and the institutions in which I worked. As mentioned previously, the girls in the second research project already wore a number of negative labels; unfortunately, this was also true of their school. Ridgefield had variously been labelled "challenging", "difficult" and, as a result of an external inspection, a "failing" school. I realised I would need to be careful not to reinforce these opinions with research that could be read by others in a negative light. I wanted to be honest, but I did not wish to work in the school with a 'deficit model' in mind of what I was likely to see, i.e. 'problems' that needed to be fixed, things that needed to be 'improved' - in

other words, patronisingly suggest “something is wrong, so do this to make it better” (Costello, 2003).

There were, in fact, many positive things going on in the school, one of which was the fact that the senior management did give me the opportunity to work with them in the first place, and gave me considerable freedom and access to teachers and pupils! This positive aspect of the school’s approach was reinforced for me when they asked to use my report. This willingness to acknowledge innovation did not, however, save them from “Special Measures” and ultimately the school was forced to see their priorities elsewhere.

There were a number of other important ethical responsibilities I needed to address to support the collaborative process. Firstly, I needed to ensure all participants were fully informed of the structure of the research process and the role they would play within it. Participants involved in the project would be asked to take a number of personal risks and it was therefore vital for me to inform them of this and be able to reassure them that they would be ‘protected’ and supported throughout the process. The pupils, in particular, were asked to face a considerable challenge - to become peer teachers. Central to both projects were peer teaching episodes, particularly ‘high risk’ tasks, and I needed to ensure participants were aware of the risks to which I was exposing them. I would argue that collaborative processes established at the outset of the research not only developed the necessary level of commitment and engagement needed to enable pupils to *accept* the responsibility of peer teaching, but also allowed them to *use* the insights gained from this challenge for personal empowerment.

It should also be acknowledged that I felt some ethical discomfort in one of the goals of the second phase of the research. I hoped that, through peer teaching, the two disengaged young women in my study might become re-engaged in their schooling. In a sense it could be argued that I was trying to manipulate circumstances to channel negative behaviour into something more constructive, namely to “socialise pupils into the accepted norms of the institution” (Hickman p.89 in Finney et al 2005). My concern was that this could suggest a rather biased view of who and what needed to change. These concerns are also explored by Helen Colley’s book *“Mentoring for School Inclusion”* (2003) and she poses an interesting question about peer mentoring - i.e. does mentoring offer “a form of empowerment” or is it another “process of control”? (p.135). She also expresses a similar uneasiness (p.28) with strategies designed to enable “young people to reinvent themselves” so that they can fit into the institutions they are in. Ultimately the research structure did address this issue. The two pupils involved were asked to teach in an area in which they felt they each had a strength. It offered the opportunity for the school to see these negative pupils in a new light. Through a

process of “mutual adaptation” (Finney et al, 2005) I hoped the pupils might be able to see something they could offer the school, and the school would see how they could build on the talents of pupils who were not finding it easy to work to their strengths in the mainstream curriculum (Finney et al, 2005).

*“The great difference between voyages rests not with the ships, but with the people you meet on them.”*

*Amelia Barr*

# 4

## THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

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### 4.1 CONTEXT ONE: The DRACON Project

#### Background

The research described here was part of the Australian component of what has become a much bigger international project – the DRACON (DRAMA~CONFLICT) Research Project. This project was initially funded by a United Nations grant which established the Peace and Development Research Institute in Sweden. The project expanded to include research teams in Malaysia, Australia, Sweden and the Philippines, and originally it was hoped research might be able to reveal strategies and approaches that could address the issue of adolescent conflict and the possibility that drama education strategies could be effectively used to address cultural conflict in schools in a range of cultures.

The Australian component of the study was based within the purview of the aims of Griffith University’s Centre for Applied Research. Since this initial study was completed, a number of spin-off research cycles have followed: e.g. one cycle was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage grant, extensively trialling relevant teaching materials in secondary schools throughout New South Wales as a result of similar research there, and a further collaborative research project has been planned to include a research cycle in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Australia. Though my research has evolved in a different direction, more recent DRACON research in Australia has made a considerable contribution to school anti-racism and anti-bullying programmes.

When the DRACON project commenced, I was the Head of a Performing Arts Department in a large State secondary school in Brisbane. The year before the project outlined here, a

smaller scale pilot project had been undertaken with my Year 11 Drama class. The study was originally set to focus on educating adolescents about racial conflict. However it soon became obvious that, in the process of introducing the young people to the language of conflict and conflict resolution, they were taking the knowledge taught through Drama and applying it to a broader range of personal contexts. I was particularly interested in this aspect of the study and was keen to become more involved and take what we had learned even further. The school in which I was based provided a very appropriate context in which to shape the new study.

### **Familiar Terrain**

Lawson, the High School in which I taught at this time, is a large Metropolitan State High School in Brisbane, Queensland. At the time the school was first approached to become involved in the DRACON project, it had an enrolment of just under 2000 pupils, making it one of the largest High Schools in the State. The school had a rich curriculum and a reputation for good academic results. Its population, though ethnically mixed, was predominantly white, reflecting the middle-class demographic of the surrounding suburban area. During the period of the research, however, this demographic changed as the area began to attract a large number of South-East Asian business immigrants. First and second-generation Chinese and Taiwanese students, the sons and daughters of these immigrants, began attending the school, and this ethnic population has continued to grow in that school.

The size of the school allowed it to support a rich and diverse curriculum and thus, as well as local students, the school attracted pupils from further afield through a number of specialist extension programmes. One such programme was based in the Performing Arts Department. The CAD (Centre for Artistic Development) programme allowed students entering Year 11 to undertake a package of subjects focussed on Performing Arts. These students were enrolled in standard Music, Dance and Drama subjects, but, as 'CAD Students', they were also part of a specialist group, picking up two additional Performing Arts subjects, either Dance Studies or Theatre Arts. These latter extension subjects combined Year 11 and Year 12 students and, as well as studying in each discipline area, CAD students would be involved in projects where they worked as a whole group.

### **Research foundations in the school curriculum**

Theatre Arts and Dance Studies areas of study do not count toward tertiary entrance in Queensland and therefore they are not shaped by standardised state syllabi as are other Performing Arts subjects. Teachers of both subjects have considerable freedom to follow the

interests and expertise of students and staff in developing and extending Performing Arts skills. The combined CAD group also worked together on a variety of 'projects', each with a specific focus. Sometimes these projects could take the form of a series of extension workshops on a particular text or genre. Sometimes projects would culminate in a student-devised performance. Provided such work extended and enriched students' Performing Arts experiences, the focus of these projects could be flexible and responsive to opportunities.

One such opportunity emerged through participation in the DRACON research. The CAD course provided an excellent springboard for this particular research and the school welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with Griffith University to explore, through the Performing Arts, an area of broad educational interest for most schools - conflict management. This seemed a natural way to go, as it broadened the research from cultural conflict to overall, more extensive areas of conflict.

'Conflict Resolution' was in fact an area already recognised within the State syllabus for 'Human Relationships Education' (HRE). At this particular High School, HRE was integrated into a variety of curriculum areas, rather than taught as a separate subject. Sex education was taught as part of the Science programme and various aspects of personal 'health' and 'hygiene' were covered in the Physical Education curriculum. 'Conflict Resolution' as a topic was considered to be most appropriately explored through English at Year 9. This offered a valuable opportunity for the research work to tap into what was already a standard part of the curriculum, in that the landscape of that curriculum provided a most appropriate environment in which to base the research.

### **The structure of the project**

It was decided from the outset that the DRACON study would be as collaborative as possible, both in design and implementation. As the Head of the Performing Arts Department in which this research would be based, I was, in this project, a "gate-keeper" (Ely, 1991; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2009); this means that I provided the link between the Griffith team and school management that would allow access to research participants – pupils and other teachers. A number of meetings were therefore set up by the Griffith research team with the Principal of the school, the Heads of Performing Arts and of English, and with the Year 9 English teachers who were to be involved. These meetings aimed to outline the shape of the project and the role that would be played by all participants from the relevant areas. The Theatre Arts students (my class) would initially be inducted, through Drama, to Conflict Management strategies, and following this they would become the peer teachers of a particular Year Nine English class. As Head of the Department for Performing Arts, I had a

dual role at this point, being both the research gate-keeper within the school and an insider researcher.

Throughout each stage, observation notes were compiled by a number of research assistants and the Year 11 students were asked to keep a participant diary reflecting on their experiences through the process. At least 5 pupils from each group of Theatre Arts students were interviewed, at both the beginning and end of the project. Similarly, a number of Year 9 students from each English class were interviewed – initially just before their first lesson with the Year 11s and subsequently after the lesson series concluded.

### **Stage One**

During this first stage, my Year 11/12 Theatre Arts class learnt Conflict Management Theory through a series of Drama workshops led either by myself or by one of the University research team. These workshops introduced the students to key Conflict issues and provided them with an introduction to the language of conflict theory, e.g. the notion of Latent, Emergent and Manifest conflict. The workshops also provided models of effective Drama teaching. As future peer ‘teachers’, they needed to understand a variety of strategies to enable them to shape effective lessons for their ‘pupils’. ‘Process Drama’ strategies such as hot-seating and other improvised techniques, including Forum Theatre, were introduced with this imperative in mind.

### **Stage Two**

During the second stage, students formed groups and each was attached to a Year 9 ‘focus’ class. Students initially met their Year 9 class and its Year 9 teacher through administering a written ‘Conflict Survey’. This survey provided them with a useful profile of their class: e.g. the ethnic background of the group, conflict issues and attitudinal information. The surveys enabled each group to get a clear picture of whom they would be working with, and this, it was hoped, would help inform their Drama lesson planning.

Next, the Theatre Arts class, in groups, used information from the Year 9 class surveys to prepare a series of lessons that explored, through Drama, the conflict issues that seemed most pertinent to their focus class, e.g. bullying, cultural conflict, friendship disputes and family conflict.

## Stage Three

Peer teaching began in stage three, with the Year 11 class teaching a series of five lessons over three weeks. Unfortunately, due to timetable and issues of logistics, these lessons could not be taught consecutively. This meant the Year 11 students had not only to plan the lessons they would be teaching, but had also to plan, to a degree, what work the Year 9s would cover in between these times. This provided a considerable challenge, for it meant the Year 11 students had responsibility for advising teachers – the ‘normal’ teachers of their Year 9 class. They offered ideas and suggestions to their link teachers about what activities might be useful for ‘their’ class to have explored before their next lesson. Both the Performing Arts curriculum in the school and the focus for HRE in the English programme for that year meant that valuable opportunities emerged to form a link between what the Theatre Arts students might do in their Drama-based project on Conflict Management, and what the Year 9 students might like to explore in their HRE unit on Conflict Resolution.

Peer teaching had seemed to be an appropriate strategy to employ, and so the teachers of Year 9 English classes were approached to see if they would be interested, and willing, to allow their classes to be taught by the older students. At the time, the significance for me of the decision to use peer teaching was not obvious, but it proved to be a watershed decision in the geography of my research journey. The research focus was on finding the most effective means of communicating key issues in regard to Conflict Management. At this point, the resultant impact of the actual peer teaching process *itself* was not recognised.4.2

## The Travellers

### Teachers – Viv, Jean & Moira

Three teachers were involved in Project One - Viv, Jean and Moira - and although support from these Year 9 teachers was initially tentative, they were willing to see how the idea might work. All three were offered the opportunity of a workshop, led by researchers, on how the project would be organised and the central concepts which they could expect the older students to be teaching the Year 9 groups. The workshop they attended used a number of drama strategies to introduce key concepts, and thus also illustrated how the Year 11/12 peer teachers might approach teaching these ideas with their classes.

The response of these Year 9 teachers was, initially, very worrying. Most of the teachers expressed concern about how issues of classroom management would be handled by the peer teachers. The teachers admitted later how they had felt:

I was keen but I must admit when we had the first meeting I was a little concerned because there were a lot of classroom management ramifications that I was quite concerned about, simply that I knew my students so I was a little concerned about that. (Jean)

I had mixed feelings on that day because it did [pause] of course when you start discussing it you bring up some things that are going to be problems in the future and I could not see quite how it was going to come together at that point. (Vivian)

The Year 9 teachers were also somewhat cynical about how responsive the Year 9s would be to learning concepts through drama. They needed considerable reassurance that lessons would be well-structured on the part of the peer-teachers, and that there would also be adult support from the research team in each of their classes, as there was no question about their own attendance. Here I should state that, although we had always presumed the teachers would be in the classroom, and hoped they would wish to be present as supportive observers, it was clear from that workshop that several had anticipated that their role was more likely to include 'crowd control'. These teachers felt their expertise in behaviour management would probably be more valuable to the peer teachers than anything else!

I did breathe a huge sigh a relief I have to admit, because I had a few students that I was really concerned with and how they would deal with it and if they were in fine form they could really spoil the whole thing, but I was very pleased that they obviously realised very quickly that everyone else wanted to be involved. (Moir)

One of the most satisfying outcomes of the project was the way the Year 11 groups were able to shift the perceptions of their Year 9 English teachers regarding the potential of peer teaching drama. The longer the peer teaching went on, the more committed and supportive the teachers became. In fact, one of the most vocal sceptics at the workshop, Jean, later became a strong advocate for peer teaching, and was one of three teachers who, in the following year, said she had used some of the Drama ideas that the Year 11/12 peer teachers had introduced. Jean became a key informant for me, and her 'turnaround' should have provided me with an early clue about just how important this aspect of the project would be. My focus at this point still being embedded in how well the Theatre Arts group could teach Conflict Management to her pupils, I asked Jean how successful she thought the group had been:

There are lots of pluses and I think it goes beyond being an English project; I think it (peer teaching) goes to a point where it is valuable to all students, certainly those doing anything that has anything to do with leadership; they all need that. (**Jean**)

In returning to this interview later with a new lens, i.e. more focussed on the individual impact of peer teaching for the peer *teachers*, I realised that Jean may well have also recognised that facilitating a sense of 'leadership' for all students is valuable, and peer teaching had been a vehicle for this.

### **The CAD Theatre Arts Students**

Potential CAD students at Lawson High auditioned and were also interviewed before taking a place on the course at the beginning of Year 11. The programme was designed for students who were particularly interested in and/or showed an aptitude for either Music or Drama. Students who chose Drama as their specialisation enrolled in Theatre Arts as an extension subject and could look forward to a range of opportunities beyond what was possible in the standard Drama curriculum, such as special projects where they would work as a mixed year group - Year 11s and 12s together. The CAD programme attracted a range of individuals, but it would be fair to say that the majority were confident and outgoing. Personalities were, however, diverse and ranged from the seriously committed Drama students who hoped to take their interest further after school, to those who found the programme offered a type of sanctuary, a place where they could feel at home with like-minded peers. The CAD programme had a reputation for attracting some of the more 'bohemian' elements in the school as well as other students who did not necessarily find the standard curriculum to be a good 'fit' for them. It would be fair to say that most quite enjoyed the idea of being part of a group that was considered by the general school population and many teachers as 'different'. One student spoke dismissively of some of the different social groups and cliques she observed in the school and commented proudly that she did not fit into any of these factions because she was one of the "CAD freaks"!

In the year the project began, the CAD group was comprised of twenty-five Year 11 and Year 12 students – 6 boys and 19 girls. The Theatre Arts class itself contained all of the boys on the programme and 11 of the girls, a total of 17 students. It is interesting to note that, although the school as a whole had an ethnically mixed population, the CAD group contained only three students who were not of Anglo-Celtic cultural background; one Year 11 Serbian boy, Nick; a Taiwanese girl in Year 12, Mai; and another Year 12 girl, Nadia, who had a Croatian background. Mai's membership of the class was particularly significant as,

despite the large number of ethnic Chinese and Taiwanese students in the school, very few, traditionally, enrolled in Drama or Dance classes. Mai had worked hard to persuade her parents in Year 10 that she should be allowed to take Drama rather than Advanced Maths in Year 11. Her desire not only to do Drama, but also to audition for the CAD extension programme went against the flow culturally and, though she excelled throughout the two years she was on the course, she struggled to convince her parents of the worth of what she was doing.

The CAD students' ages ranged between 16 and 18. Along with the flexibility that was possible in working with this group, the age range of the group was also useful. The DRACON project originally identified this age group as a target for research because prior studies had revealed that 15-18 year olds were the most racist group in society (Office of Cultural Affairs, 1991). However this particular group of adolescents also seemed very open about a wide variety of interpersonal conflicts.

As a mixed year-level group, there were sometimes tensions between students in the two different grades. The group also contained a larger percentage of strong and confident personalities than would have been present in other subjects and this also fuelled interpersonal conflict at times. However, although this situation was typical of the extension classes, over the years I taught on this course I had found that, whilst there might exist tensions *within* CAD groups on occasions, students readily defended their peers, and the programme, against any criticism originating from *outside* the group.

The DRACON project needed to be as relevant as possible for the Theatre Arts group to extend their Drama skills, but it also needed to be collaborative, to address the dynamics of the group. Both these objectives were also, of course, sound research practice. It was decided that the Year 11/12 group would become co-researchers as well as teachers, collecting information and feedback from the Year 9 groups before they began planning lessons for them.

A small grant from Griffith University allowed the opportunity for a number of post-graduate students to work with us as observers and a considerable amount of valuable data was generated throughout the project through the help of these research assistants. As the group's class teacher, I had believed I had a considerable amount of in-depth knowledge of my students, so the fresh information about them that surfaced throughout the project came as a surprise. Indeed, the three students who emerged as key informants in the project were one such surprise.

Emily, Mary and Elise, all in Year 11 at the time of the project were, to a certain degree, unremarkable students. Mary was quite a strong actor, and Emily had moments in class when she could have been described as somewhat opinionated, whilst Elise tended to merge into the background of the class. However, all three, in a class of many strong personalities, did not particularly stand out.

### **The Key Participants – No ‘rah rah girls’**

*“Be yourself no matter what they say.”*

#### *Sting*

Prior to working closely with my key informants, I felt, as their teacher, that I had a reasonably good understanding of who they were as learners and school community members. I should state that these were impressions based on my knowledge of them as a teacher, rather than researcher, at this point. They seemed to be good friends who preferred to work together, but they did their work to a reasonable standard only and did not stand out particularly from the group, either in terms of their general behaviour or through the quality of their work in the subject. Based on my ‘teacher’ knowledge of the girls, I had no particular reason, as a researcher, to choose them as key informants at that time. However, it was a single recorded comment from one of the girls, Elise, about the way her role as peer teacher made her feel that led me to identify the friends as students who could provide a valuable focus for exploring some of the interesting issues that seemed to be emerging in the research investigation.

I interviewed the girls several times over a number of years, the last time being after they had been out of school for a year and nearly three years after the conclusion of the project (which they had been involved in as Year 11 students). I now recognise that it was only after the girls left school that I really came to know them.

“Like I couldn’t have said half the things I’ve said to you now even last year. I mean it’s taken me, what, three years to get over the fact that you were once my teacher.” **(Emily)**

Elise, Emily and Mary were able to communicate to me with greater openness and depth when I was no longer their teacher, and several years later I was reminded of this when I embarked on the Second Project: I was a complete stranger to the young women I worked with on the Wallenberg project in the U.K and it was reassuring to remember that there were some advantages as a researcher when one became more of an ‘outsider’.

Emily, Mary and Elise had been friends at secondary school from when they were in Year 9, and remained so after they left school. When I began the project they were what might have been termed 'outsiders' to the rest of their peer group. They liked to work together and, although they generally seemed to get along well with their peers in Theatre Arts, they also liked to see themselves as a little apart from the group. Mary and Emily particularly seemed to revel in being different from other students in the school and dressed in as 'avant-garde' a fashion as they could get away with, given the school's strict uniform policy. Though each was from an economically comfortable suburban background, they liked to draw distinctions between themselves and what Elise described as the "Prissy rah, rah girls", the girls from the "popular group". The group they referred to was not in CAD and they seemed to be referring to other girls in Year 11 at the school, "Cos at school you have all the different social groups and we weren't really in the up-market social group." (**Emily**.)

The three girls felt the school was totally constructed of groups and cliques, and that it was hard not to be a member of some group. They saw themselves as a sort of 'anti-group':

"We were the clique for people who didn't have a clique." (**Emily**)

"We were the sanctuary for people in younger grades who thought they did not fit in anywhere." (**Mary**)

All the girls were interested in drama, but with varying degrees of personal commitment to the subject. Following the project, they shared more about their personal circumstances and this insight was valuable when analysing their responses to tasks within the DRACON project.

## **Emily**

My perspective on Emily, as her teacher, was that she enjoyed Drama; this was further supported by the fact that I was aware she had private tuition in Speech and Drama outside school. She was a solid, occasionally compliant student who worked reasonably hard when in class, but she was not always reliable as a group member. In Theatre Arts lessons, Emily was keen to be listened to, and to have a role in decision-making. Problems arose, however, because she tended to take a considerable amount of time off school. There always seemed to be a reason each time, though these reasons ranged from bouts of illness to vague family responsibilities, the validity of these excuses could not always be proven.

My teacher's opinion of Emily was that she could be forthright and 'bossily' assertive in some respects and, although she could 'talk the talk' so to speak, she did not always follow through with consistent commitment to tasks. She was considerably more interested in

relationships and issues in the school ground than in subject studies in class. She was often at odds with others, though it seemed these were girls outside the CAD group. A confident young woman, Emily could be blunt, and even in the Theatre Arts class where she felt most at home, it appeared that she could sometimes rub her peers up the wrong way through presenting her opinions and ideas as the only 'right' way.

Apart from Elise and Mary, Emily's firmest friendship group appeared to be a number of students in younger grades. It seemed all three had taken a number of younger students 'under their wing', and Emily enjoyed the role of being their champion. She obviously enjoyed playing the role of confidante and mature advisor to a number of young pupils in the school who found it hard to fit in with their own peer group. It is interesting to note that Emily's attendance improved throughout the DRACON project, suggesting she enjoyed peer teaching the Year 9 pupils; perhaps she felt competent in this role.

After the project, in my role as researcher, I discovered more about Emily. She had a volatile relationship with her parents - though this had not been obvious to me when she was a student. In discussions after she left school, Emily mentioned numerous arguments at home with her parents. She felt they were not allowing her enough freedom or really listening to her: "My parents think I'm like 8 years old." (Emily)

Emily insisted she had tried many times to repair the relationship, and had even tried to use some of the strategies she had learnt in Conflict management. However, things seemed to get progressively worse after she left school. In our final meeting, after she had left school, Emily revealed she had left home when she turned 17 and moved in with Mary.

Emily was very open about her experiences on the project and this openness provided me with a number of valuable insights into how participants in the project might have been using what they learnt. Although she was not able to use her understanding of Conflict Management to resolve issues with her parents, she did think it helped her understanding of other relationships in her life.

## **Mary**

From my perspective as a teacher, Mary was the most confident and mature of the three students. Although her performance work illustrated she had considerable talent, Mary did not push herself particularly hard. I felt at the time that she could have been a very strong Theatre Arts student but seemed content merely to do 'well'. She could be quite vocal in class, did not 'suffer fools gladly', and was quick to make her feelings known if she disagreed with a decision or idea. She did, however, generally have the ability to back up her point of

view with insight and understanding, and she offered ideas as well as critique when interacting with her peers. Mary's maturity often tempered her friend Emily's more impulsive and hasty approach to tasks.

Mary seemed to befriend students from younger grades who did not appear to fit in with the social cliques she herself so disliked. Along with the other two girls, the friends she shared lunch with seemed to be a small number of pupils in the younger grades who were, she seemed to think, misfits within their peer group.

Mary lived with her mother and stepfather. She rarely mentioned her stepfather in interviews, but mentioned her mother on numerous occasions and, though she admitted they disagreed at times, thought their relationship was basically very good. This mother/daughter relationship, so different from many others, was envied by both her friends, and at one point Emily commented about how lucky Mary was to have a 'wonderful' mother. Mary's reply reflects her honesty and maturity:

Yes, Mum and I used to have a normal Mum/daughter relationship - but now it is more like she's my best friend. We've got this mutual respect that comes from being completely honest with each other -but you know, we still argue over who is going to do the dishes. **(Mary)**

This notion of her mother as a 'best friend', appeared to support the sense I had of Mary at school; a sense that she was her own person and very independent for her years. This was reaffirmed in the first meeting I had with Mary after she left school. The meeting held some surprises. Mary arrived sporting an all but completely shaven head and numerous body piercings. When asked what she was doing now, Mary informed me that she had dropped out of her psychology course for a while. She was not sure yet what she wanted to do, but while she thought about this she was enjoying earning some extra cash as a life model.

One of the most valuable things that Mary was able to bring to the study was her honesty and forthright views on experiences. Mary was also very supportive of her peers and, in group situations, was reassuring if somewhat blunt. When Elise confessed she feared making mistakes in her life because she did not want to disappoint her parents, Mary offered this simple observation: "Everyone screws up - all the time" **(Mary)**.

Mary was particularly astute in her observations of peers and analytical about relationships. In terms of the impact of the project, Mary identified issues mainly related to what she had learnt of Conflict Management through the study, and she discussed these issues in the context of her relationships outside school.

## Elise

Elise was the quietest of the three girls. As her teacher, in a class of loud and demanding personalities Elise, I noted, seemed to slip into the background. Always polite and well-prepared, she got on with her work in Drama and seemed happy not to draw too much attention to herself. Elise was the kind of student who often surprised on stage. She did not appear to be a particularly confident young woman but enjoyed performing and could be very convincing in role.

As her class teacher, I would have said Elise offered little to make herself stand out either for positive or negative reasons. She was a sound but unremarkable Theatre Arts student, happy enough to go where the bigger personalities of Emily and Mary led her. Although the same age as the other two girls, Elise seemed to have less life experience and confidence. After she left school, one of the possible reasons for this was revealed: Elise lived with both parents and described them as over-protective and dominating. Her brother had apparently greatly disappointed his parents and she felt a great deal of pressure to succeed:

He was their big hope, now I'm it. They put me on a pedestal and they don't let me go out. They don't understand that I just want to live and they say "But don't you understand what it's like out there in the real world?" and I go 'But I want to find out' - but they won't let me. **(Elise)**

Unlike Emily, who seemed to argue with her parents and rebel, Elise stayed at home and tried to keep the peace. Although Elise had learned to understand Conflict Management in theory, she appeared resigned to the fact it might not help in her relationship with her parents: "There are some conflicts you cannot fix. And I know me and my parents. They'll never get fixed. They'll be controlling me until I die." **(Elise)**

The most significant aspect of the project for Elise was the opportunity to peer-teach and her contribution to this study is therefore probably the most significant of all three. It was Elise's observations on the empowering role of the peer-teacher that fuelled an initial hunch that this strategy, of itself, would be most important. Elise had described herself in one of the interviews after the project as a "shadow girl", in reference to how she felt she fitted in with her peers, but the project it seemed may have offered her the opportunity to emerge from this shade.

## 4.2 CONTEXT TWO: The Wallenberg Project

Two years after the DRACON project was completed I moved to the United Kingdom to take up a university teaching post in initial teacher education, and came to lecture on the PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) course in Drama. Although the DRACON research was, at this point, the focus of my doctoral studies, the opportunity emerged to work with a group of Education Faculty colleagues on an Arts focussed project associated with a larger, nationally funded, research project into Pupil Voice, headed by our University's head of Research at the time, Professor Jean Rudduck.

The Wallenberg Foundation is a private organisation, based in Sweden, which funds research in the fields of Science and Education. In 1997 the foundation funded a Research Centre within the Education faculty with the following stated mission:

- to conduct research and evaluation studies for the improvement of education
- to formulate dynamic learning systems based upon its research
- to promote good practice in education on the basis of its own research and that of others
- to create a framework for products to be developed and published on the basis of its research, and in the longer term
- to build assessment programmes to be used by teachers for the assessment of individual pupils and as a 'bridge' to those in traditional school systems and
- to facilitate through its systems and products the development of UK educational communities and Foundations, such as Carpe Vitam, Sweden.

(Wallenberg Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge)

A particular research interest of Professor Rudduck was Peer Teaching, and she was keen to gather together a team of colleagues from the Arts areas within our Faculty to look at the impact peer teaching of the Arts might have on what she called, as noted earlier, 'Negative Leaders', i.e. those students in school who are confident, though disruptive in class, and appear to have power and respect within their peer group – though this power may not be directed toward positive learning goals. These students might variously be called disaffected, disruptive or disengaged; students dissatisfied with school to the point where they 'buck the system', either removing themselves from it entirely (through absenteeism) or challenging it (through disruption.) My academic interest in becoming involved in the

Wallenberg research was immediately sparked because my DRACON research was indicating that peer teaching might have a significant role to play in affective learning, and my personal interest also, as one who had been a disengaged student and who, as a teacher, had spent considerable time, early in my career, in a very challenging school working with a range of disaffected and disruptive adolescents. Involvement in the Wallenberg project offered me the opportunity to extend my research into possible links between peer teaching and personal, transformative learning.

The first phase of this project involved my selecting a school with a Drama teacher who would be interested in working with me as a research partner. Contact was made with the Drama co-ordinator of a local urban Secondary school, Ridgefield - a school which had for some time been struggling to improve its profile locally. The Drama Department, however, had enjoyed, for a sustained period, a very positive reputation and its long-serving Drama teacher, Ellen, had considerable experience of working with challenging adolescent pupils. Ellen came to have a pivotal role in selecting the students and in interpreting and monitoring the impact of the project on the two girls involved.

### **Unfamiliar Terrain**

Ridgefield Community College was one of the partnership schools used by the Faculty of Education in my university for teacher training. Although both Lawson State High School and Ridgefield College were government- supported mixed comprehensive schools, the differences between the two was marked. Unlike the cosmopolitan, predominantly middle-class catchment area drawn on by Lawson for its pupils, Ridgefield was set in an area where there is a significant density of social housing which, in the United Kingdom, tends to mean a less affluent, less socially advantaged community. Again, unlike Lawson, Ridgefield was relatively small (under 1,000 pupils at the time of my research), and also had the reputation of being a very challenging school in which to work because of the poor behaviour and attendance records of many of its pupils. This said, the school had a core of very committed staff, and a number of its teachers had worked there for a considerable time. Some years before my research commenced in the school, Ridgefield was threatened with closure by the local government authority because of falling standards and enrolment. The local community and its teachers battled hard to ensure this did not happen and, until very recently when the school was amalgamated with another small local secondary school, it maintained its own very proud identity.

Although I had visited Ridgefield on numerous occasions in my role as a PGCE lecturer to watch trainees teach, the school was obviously not as familiar to me as Lawson had been. In

the Ridgefield context I was not an insider, nor was I a gate-keeper in terms of having any power in establishing contact with participants and school management. I did however have a good working relationship with the school's Head of Drama, Ellen, and she did act as the gate-keeper in this context. Ellen ensured school management were informed of the project; set up a meeting for me to discuss the work with the school's Deputy Principal; put systems into place in terms of release time for participants, and ensured other teachers in the school were aware of the research. In effect, Ellen took on the role I had had at Lawson - as an insider she oversaw the logistics of access within the school.

There were advantages and disadvantages to being an outsider working in relatively unfamiliar terrain. On the one hand, I welcomed the fact that Ellen could take responsibility for a number of the logistic and communication issues which needed to be addressed to 'smooth the way' for the research, but on the other hand, I did feel I was handing over some power and responsibility, and so experienced a mixture of feelings. I wished to involve Ellen as a collaborator in the research, but at the same time, feared that I might be expecting too much of her time, or being unrealistic in my expectations of her own commitment to the research goals. It was only when working in Ridgefield that I reflected on how significant the differences between 'insider' and 'outsider' could be. As well as issues of power and responsibility, I realise research insight is also affected by the different perspectives 'outsider' and 'insider' researchers bring to their context. It took me more time to become familiar with participants at Ridgefield, and more time to earn their trust. This had not been an issue for me with participants at Lawson, but I did bring a different perspective to each context as I viewed participants, because of my comparative distance from them in each role (Cresswell 2007 p.141). I suspect that my insider knowledge of participants at Lawson made my perspective somewhat more biased, as I had pre-formed opinions of participants (particularly at the beginning of the research), whereas at Ridgefield I had to listen more closely and I sense that this meant my opinions were more open from the outset because I was not as familiar.

## **The Travellers**

### **Teachers – Ellen (Linda and Anna)**

As stated previously, Ridgefield was a challenging school, but like many such schools, it had a small core of teachers who were very committed to its pupils. Whilst this type of school often has very transitory staffing, in my experience I have found there are usually a number of teachers who find working with challenging pupils satisfying and vocationally rewarding. These teachers often find that the role of subject teacher is secondary to the important

pastoral role they can play. Of course the longer they stay in the school, the more background and experience they gain of local families too. Pupils value continuity, and the fact that they might end up with same teacher as their older brother or sister had for a particular subject does, I think, communicate that certain teachers do have a commitment to their school. Ellen, Anna and Linda were three such teachers at Ridgefield, and a comment by Anna reflected what I detected that all three felt about their pupils and the context in which they worked, “you have to look at outside influences in their life as well. All the work we do here will definitely make a difference but it is forever being pushed back.” (Anna)

I should state from the outset that I was not familiar with Anna and Linda before the project and, as my contact with them was limited to two informal discussions, my knowledge of them does not have the same depth as was the case with Ellen. I did however gain some insight into their involvement with the school from these discussions.

Linda was Ashley and Kayleigh’s English teacher and she had taught at Ridgefield for a number of years. She was particularly familiar with Ashley because she had also taught her in Year 7 but, as Form Tutor for both the girls, she had a perspective on their progress and behaviour that extended more broadly across the school. Similarly, Anna also had a very strong background history to draw upon in her opinion of both girls. Anna had not only taught both girls Science in Year 8, but as Head of Year for Year 9, she also was aware their wider reputation in the school. Anna, it seemed, also had a good deal of background knowledge of Ashley’s family and she had taught both an older sister and a brother. She seemed to have considerable knowledge of Ashley’s home situation and, although sympathetic rather than judgemental, she did inform me that one of Ashley’s brothers was in gaol and an older sister had recently become a teenage mother. Although she acknowledged that Ashley could be difficult, she was also quick to point out the challenges Ashley faced: “she’s got, there’s a lot of chaos you know, it’s a chaotic home.” (Anna).

The overarching sense I had of both Anna and Linda was that they wanted Ashley and Kayleigh to succeed and saw that the project could be valuable, but they were also sceptical about change. Linda reflected on the value placed on academic achievement within a narrow range of subjects and, as this jaded view of the system suggests, held little hope: “I wish it didn’t matter because, as I have said to you before, in an ideal world we could develop whatever skills they have and not just judge them by a written exam.” (Linda)

## **Ellen**

I knew Ellen reasonably well through the contact I had had with her as a mentor involved in helping train Drama subject specialist teachers. Trainees, though realistic about the

challenges they faced in Ridgefield, were generous in their praise of Ellen's teaching, and felt they had learnt a great deal from seeing how she interacted with pupils and gained their respect. Ellen's success as a teacher must have had some impact on her own daughter who, a year before the research project, had completed her post-graduate teacher training with me.

Ellen's 'no nonsense' approach and down-to-earth manner appealed to students. She was firm, but scrupulously fair, allowing students to speak as well as listen; respecting her pupils and expecting respect in return. It was clear that she liked Ashley and Kayleigh as young women and had faith in their ability in Drama; in return they seemed to want to please her. Ellen had established a very warm and personal rapport with the girls which I saw very clearly in our first meeting together in the school when, as I was setting up my tape recorder, Ellen, Ashleigh and Kayleigh were generally chatting. The girls seemed aware that Ellen was about to move home and asked about her new place; proudly Ellen showed them a photo of her new thatched cottage.

All three teachers offered invaluable insights, both in terms of feedback and comment on my own research and in terms of their own reflections on how best to manage challenging pupils generally.

They get along with teachers who will still listen to them and treat them with respect, and that's common for all kids in this school. Some (teachers) will just stand up at the front and think, you know, it's my right to teach you, you sit there and shut up. You know that not going to work with kids, not with these kids. (**Anna**)

I was confident that Ridgefield was the type of school I needed for my study and Ellen had confirmed from the outset that she was confident she could find some suitable students – I had come to the right place it seemed!

## Key participants: Two 'Naughty Girls'

*"Who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it."*

*Woodrow Wilson*

The criteria for selecting the pupil teachers was straightforward. The Wallenberg research goal required that we work with between one and four pupils who were not consistently committed to the school's learning process; who were perhaps disruptive or disaffected from school, but who were nonetheless 'negative leaders' in the sense that they had the respect of peers. Though these pupils might not be positively engaged with most aspects of schooling, we did want there to be at least one area where they were working and motivated - i.e. in the Arts (Finney et al 2005). In my case, as it would be Drama the students would be teaching, I hoped Ellen would find some students who enjoyed, and were working effectively in, her subject.

Ellen quickly identified two pupils in Year 9 who seemed very appropriate, Ashley and Kayleigh. Though they worked well in Drama, these two girls were disengaged and uncommitted to school generally and often disruptive in other subjects. However, both were looked up to by their peers and were socially confident and popular. Both enjoyed Drama and were generally strong in performance components of the course as they particularly enjoyed acting. Kayleigh was often absent from school, and Ashley's disengagement often took the form of aggressive and disrespectful behaviour in class. Both were in Ellen's Year 9 Drama class, and also good friends: this was a bonus, and I hoped it would mean they would be able to work compatibly and collaboratively as co-tutors. Anna confirmed for me that both girls were clearly negative leaders:

They are both quite different, but they have a very big sort of face in the classroom if you like and will often lead quite disruptive behaviour, because the other kids look up to them. They're well respected. **(Anna)**

Both girls, when approached by Ellen and asked if they would like to teach acting skills to a group of younger pupils, were pleased and keen to help. It is worth noting that this very first step, asking the girls if they would share something that they were good at, seemed to have a very positive impact. They were keen to be involved from the outset.

## Ashley

Ellen had given me a very sketchy picture of Ashley's behavioural history, though numerous references both in conversation with teachers and with Ashley herself throughout the project, reinforced perspectives that she was a disruptive pupil and a challenging individual in many of her classes outside Drama, and in the school ground. In my interview with Linda, Ashley's English teacher, the latter made the following observation,

Ashley is well respected I think because she is scary. You know, she can scare kids and she is from a family that can scare people and you know, its better to get on with Ashley than not get on with Ashley. She was involved in fights, and she wouldn't be able to talk her way out of anything, or reason with anybody. It would be fight first, talk later. **(Linda)**

It seemed Ashley could also be "argumentative and verbally aggressive" with teachers (Anna). Ashley admitted this herself when she reflected after the project on how she had treated some teachers. One of my trainee teachers had asked her what sort of things she had got into trouble for at school:

Walking out of the classroom, not aggressive as in like I'd punch the teacher, but my tone of voice and stuff. But I'm not being horrible, but teachers can wind you up. Certain things can trigger you off and set your hormones going. **(Ashley)**

Comments by teachers in her Year Eight reports suggested Ashley was not very engaged in classroom learning: "Ashley must maintain focus and attention in class"; "Ashley needs to always come to class ready to work and with a positive attitude"; "Ashley's target is not to let silly pupils drag her into arguments." (Year 8 Reports).

Ashley's school attendance record was generally good and, though she did not seem to be very productively engaged in many of her classes, she was at least committed enough to come. She also enjoyed Drama and was working in this subject, and this seemed in large part due to her respect for Ellen. Ashley described the difference between this teacher and others she was misbehaving for:

With the Drama teacher, when she talks to you, like other teachers, if you're not listening to them they'll shout. But she'll just stop. She just looks at you and you know. She's not strict. She says, "If you don't want to be here then you know where the door is" and you don't want to go so you just sit there, and go all quiet. **(Ashley)**.



**Illustration 1:** Ashley and Kayleigh reading their reports

It is hard to say whether Ashley enjoyed Drama because she respected Ellen and so worked for her, or if her enjoyment of the subject came first and thus she wanted to please her teacher. I suspect both in combination. Whatever reputation Ashley had in school, at our first meeting I found her to be polite, even a little reserved. However she working out the sort of person I might be and, as she was keen to be involved in the project, this also helped ensure her positive attitude.

It did not take long, however, before she became more comfortable and confident and, at subsequent meetings, Ashley was certainly not afraid to be very open and honest whenever she disagreed with a decision, or wanted her ideas to be used.

As a teacher, I had a sense that Ashley's initial interest in being involved in the project might have had quite a lot to do with the attraction of being released from some of her other classes; (a joke was made in our first meeting about what a 'shame' it would be if they had to miss Geography!) However, as a researcher, I did ultimately need to re-evaluate this motivation. Ashley, as is the case with many challenging students, was aware she had a reputation and had acquired various labels and she was also aware that teachers, and other pupils, had certain expectations of her behaviour as a result: "Like when someone is loud and mouthy, they go "Oh, that's just Ashley" (Ashley). However validly or invalidly earned, what was clear was that Ashley did not like having this negative label, "I've like this reputation hanging over me and I don't really want it" (Ashley). It remained to be seen whether the project would offer Ashley the opportunity to shed this label and maintain the respect of her peers.

## Kayleigh

Kayleigh's teachers seemed unified in their opinion that she was a bright girl, but hampered by a lack of commitment in class. Although not as volatile as Ashley, it seemed she was also very selective in who she respected within the school. Anna described her in the following way,

"Kayleigh is funny because she is very bright, so you can have a good conversation with her. She can get rude though. I mean there are certain teachers that she will be rude to." (Anna)

Kayleigh, it seemed, was recognised as a young woman who had potential but was not pushing herself. The well-worn phrase “can do better” appeared regularly on her reports and comments included, “making satisfactory progress, but could work harder to achieve her potential”; “Has the ability to do better”. Teachers also commented on her lack of focus: “Kayleigh is a lively if chatty student who generally produces good quality work, but she needs to focus more clearly on her work to develop her ability in English”

and “Kayleigh must maintain a good attitude and put effort in lessons.” It seemed teachers recognised in Kayleigh a student who could be, and should be, achieving more highly. In comparing the girls, Linda made the following observation.

Kayleigh’s not really as aggressive, they’re quite different that way, but they both can be quite disruptive. I think she’s a very attractive girl, they’re both attractive, but you know, she’s got a lot going for, Kayleigh. But she is, you know, kicking the system a little bit, or she was anyway. Never as much as Ashley. Ashley’s been the one most difficult to manage. **(Linda)**

It is interesting that Linda commented on Kayleigh’s appearance; it had indeed been one of the first things that struck me when I first met her. Though only 13, Kayleigh looked older - her hair, make-up, and liberal interpretation of the school uniform, suggested she was concerned with her appearance, and worked hard to look more mature. Kayleigh’s teachers had commented that she was well liked by her peers, and her physical ease suggested to me she also may have been admired for her appearance. I sensed Linda’s comment, “She’s got a lot going for her”, was suggesting that she hoped Kayleigh would make as much of her personal ability as her physical appearance.

Aswell as Kayleigh’s lack of wholehearted commitment in lessons, her disengagement from school was also manifest in chronic absenteeism. Numerous reports commented that one of Kayleigh’s targets should be to “improve attendance”. Although Anna had commented that Kayleigh’s home life was stable and secure, she suggested to me that education was not a high priority in the family, evidenced in the fact that her parents seemed to sanction the numerous days she had away. Family holidays or extended weekends were often planned with little regard to school term time or assessment commitments. Kayleigh’s absences from school cannot have helped support her academic performance, though it did strike me that she seemed unconcerned as, similarly to Ashley, the social aspect of school – relationships, good or bad, with peers and teachers - was of more importance.

Just as with Ashley, my first impression of Kayleigh was very positive. Although in that initial meeting she was the quieter of the two, Kayleigh none-the-less seemed more physically at

ease, and when she did contribute, was direct and honest. Her contribution of ideas showed she was thoughtful and realistic, and the easy confidence I saw in her demeanour from the outset, suggested she would indeed be 'up' for a challenge!

### **The Drama class – Year 6 pupils**

For Ashley and Kayleigh, Meadowbank Primary School was the obvious choice in which to work. The school was next door to Ridgefield so, logistically, travel would be very easy. As Ridgefield's closest feeder school, there was an established partnership between senior management in both schools. Meadowbank is only a small school, and at the time the research was undertaken there was only one cohort of pupils in each year level though each was in excess of 30 children. When Ashley and Kayleigh developed a survey for all students in Year 6 this was, in effect, delivered to just one class.

The students were selected on the basis of their responses to a questionnaire their peer-teachers hoped would reveal some insights into personalities and interests. They selected eight pupils – four boys and four girls. Although not all pupils proved to be as Ashley and Kayleigh had anticipated - e.g. one pupil who had described himself as 'shy' ended up a great deal more lively than expected; they did, none-the-less, have quite a representative sample. There were equal numbers of each gender; three of the pupils, one girl and two of the boys, were from non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds; and pupils had a mixture of Drama experience that ranged from very little to one girl who was attending Drama classes outside school.

The Year 6 pupils who were selected by Ashley and Kayleigh were approached by their class teacher and asked if they were happy to be involved; they were then provided with a permission letter to take home. Fortunately all those initially selected agreed, though Ashley and Kayleigh did have several other names, just in case.

As Ashley and Kayleigh were the focus of this study, I did not seek any further background knowledge of the Year 6 group beyond their questionnaire responses. Personalities did, of course, emerge during the lessons but this is best revealed in the context of discussing the lessons themselves; suffice to say that once the drama class became familiar with their teachers, they were a lively group of eleven year olds who provided plenty of challenge! The 'Drama class' were interviewed, as a group, after the final lesson. I do not mention individual names here as not all are referred to directly in my data.

## 4.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

The exact structure of the project was not pre-determined beyond the fact that it would involve participants engaging in some form of peer teaching of Drama. The reason for this was that the project was designed to give the pupil teachers some sense of responsibility and power in shaping their experience. For instance, Ashley and Kayleigh were directly involved in selecting the students they would work with, in planning the material they would teach and then of course in actually doing the teaching. The demands on them were considerable, and with limited background knowledge of their class, it was unclear how much time they would both need with, and be able to request of, their group. There were effectively three key phases.

### **Background Research and Decision making**

In this phase we needed to decide exactly what aspect of Drama the peer teachers would like to teach, and which group they felt they would like to work with to share their skills. Along with Ellen, in our first meeting together, it was decided that, as acting was a strength Ashley and Kayleigh shared, they could teach acting skills. The peer teachers also decided they would like to work with a younger age group, Year Six (pupils in their last year of Primary school in the U.K), and that they would like to select from this a small group of some 6 to 8 pupils to make up their 'Drama class.' The local Primary school, Meadowbank, was approached and it was agreed that a group of pupils could be withdrawn from a regular class twice a week for three weeks to work with their peer teachers and then for one final lesson to perform for the rest of their Year 6 peers.

Ashley and Kayleigh needed background information on their pupils in order to help decide specifically what they would teach, and how. They decided to design a questionnaire which would go to all the Year 6 students at Meadowbank Primary School. They anticipated the questionnaire returns would give them information about the interests of Year 6 pupils so that they could select what to teach. The questionnaires would also help identify the degree of confidence that the Year 6 pupils had in acting, and thus help inform the selection of pupils for their Drama class.

### **Planning the Teaching Episodes**

Using the data gathered from the questionnaires, a number of decisions were made. Firstly, as noted above, Ashley and Kayleigh said that they would like to work with a group of up to eight pupils, four boys and four girls. They wanted to have pupils who were variously more and less confident in Drama, as they wanted to work with a mixed group. They hoped their

teaching might make a difference, particularly to those pupils who had started out feeling less confident about acting.

The peer teachers decided acting skills could be taught through preparing their Drama class for the performance of a play. It was decided, based on the interests expressed in Year 6 questionnaires, that this play would have a 'spooky' theme. The play could not be too lengthy and would have to have equal parts for each member of the group. Ashley and Kayleigh decided they would need to write their own play to ensure it met these needs and that two weeks' planning would be required before going into the Primary school. To ensure as little disruption to other subjects as possible, meetings were consolidated into two one-and-a-half hour planning meetings per week with me, but times rotated. Although Ashley and Kayleigh would be released from two of their Drama classes each week, the day was rotated so the adjoining lesson would be from two different subjects. The script would also need to be written outside these times, as well as refined within them.

Six lessons needed to be planned for Meadowbank, plus one lesson allocated for the performance. The peer teachers decided the first two lessons would be skills lessons, with some time for the group to become familiar with the script, and the final four lessons devoted to rehearsal, with the peer teachers acting as directors to develop Drama skills. Planning would also have to be on-going; Ashley and Kayleigh might need to make some adjustments in response to the needs of their pupils and logistics once they started in the school.

### **The Teaching Episodes**

Six lessons, each of one-and-a-quarter hours, two mornings per week for three weeks were to be conducted, with the first lesson shaped around getting to know the group and distributing scripts, and the second lesson devoted to selecting the cast and reading through the play. The following four lessons would be rehearsals, each to begin with a 'warm up' and a short introduction to a 'target' skill (e.g. characterisation, focus etc.). Following each lesson we would have a short amount of time over morning break to discuss how things went and make any decisions needed for the subsequent lesson. Ashley and Kayleigh would also be able to discuss ideas with Ellen during the week between their teaching periods.



*“To hear one voice clearly, we must have freedom to hear them all.”*

*Kerry Brock*

# 5

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

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### **5.1 HEARING SILENT VOICES AND EMPOWERING NEGATIVE LEADERS**

The overarching focus of both research projects was an exploration of the role that the peer teaching of drama and democratic learning strategies might play in engaging adolescents in learning. In each research cycle there was an underlying desire to foster democratic learning and pupil voice through improving educational practice. However, it should be remembered that the two projects were undertaken in different contexts and thus had, at the outset, separate goals. It is useful to briefly revisit these goals, and look again at the questions that informed each of them before deconstructing the projects individually. Understanding both the similarities and differences between these projects is necessary in order to analyse both what happened in the classrooms, and the issues that emerged as each progressed; issues that hold the key to understanding the broader implications for teaching and learning.

Although the Wallenberg work, the Second Research Project, was heavily influenced by findings from the DRACON project, the questions that inspired it were subtly different. As qualitative educational research, at the heart of both was the goal of understanding for positive change. The funded DRACON project had the specific goal of educating adolescents for change through Drama. In that study, it was hoped that drama would provide a vehicle through which adolescents might learn about conflict and, as a result of this learning, effect change in how they managed conflict situations in their own lives. In terms of my own research, this goal was refined further as my interest became more focussed on the

role that particular teaching strategies, peer teaching in particular, had played in personally empowering three specific young women.

The Wallenberg project also sought to effect change. Utilising what I had learnt from the first project, in this study it was hoped that, through peer-teaching Drama, two specific, disengaged young persons might be re-engaged in school. Drama was not the learning medium but the content that the young women would be teaching. Change was the goal, but this goal was to be achieved through the process of teaching itself.

In both studies, democratic learning principles were fostered by enabling young people involved to be active participants in the research process. This enabling process is important to keep in mind when studying my analysis of each project because, not only did it influence the shape and structure of the projects (the logistics of events, as it were), but it had, I believe, a critical part to play in how the participants saw their role; how they learned as a result thereof; and the personal impact of their participation.

Each project was analysed separately and will be discussed separately here. What did emerge across both studies, however, were some very strong common themes and issues: These common threads are what inform the conclusions, to be outlined later, regarding the wider implications of both studies. Three broad issues emerged common to both projects – each sequentially developmental, but also closely interwoven. Firstly, the importance of collaboration through involving pupils as partners in the research process and how democratic learning processes might foster responsibility and engagement. Secondly, the role peer teaching might play in deepening personal engagement through offering the challenges and risks necessary for authentic empathy and commitment. Finally, the possibility of personal empowerment offered through the affective learning outcomes developed throughout the process of peer teaching others.

In terms of the structure of this chapter, I will describe what happened over the course of each project in loosely chronologically order, elaborating on significant moments and then reflecting in detail on how specific observations and feedback from participants informed further action and exploration.

## 5.2 PROJECT ONE: DRACON Research (Australia)

*“They listened to me...” (Elise)*

### Hearing Silenced Voices

#### The Data analysis challenge: A new- for- old lens

In both projects it can clearly be seen in the data that unpredicted events and participant responses raised issues which later emerged as important critical themes, though often these issues were not recognised at the time as potentially significant. This situation is particularly relevant in terms of the DRACON project. Here strategies and approaches had been structured to develop pupils' understanding of conflict management and the data generated had originally been shaped by questions framed to indicate success or otherwise in this learning area. As a result, a large amount of the original data generated during this project was of limited value. However, although initially fearful this would be a problem in terms of substantiating emergent ideas, something interesting happened when I returned to early data with a set of new lenses. My interest was piqued by certain responses in interviews with three particular students - Mary, Emily and Elise. These responses suggested that peer teaching had been particularly significant in shaping what they personally felt they had learned from involvement in the project. Looking back over the data, aside from what may have been learnt of *conflict theory*, pupil responses throughout the project did indeed provide clear signs that, in itself, peer teaching as an *approach* had a strong personal impact on participants. One example of this can be seen in an early interview with Mary, before she became identified as a key participant. Although the initial question for DRACON was very focussed - “How can cross-age peer teaching utilise drama pedagogy to successfully teach young people about conflict management?” - it quickly became apparent that the research process was yielding responses that opened up other areas for reflection. Issues that emerged later as very significant were not always obvious ‘in the moment’. In fact, as the following exchange illustrates, sometimes the ‘content’ learning focus of the initial question drove the agenda, to a point where insights were almost lost. Note that this following interview with Mary was conducted by one of the assistant researchers directly after the conclusion of the peer-teaching episodes, towards the end of the project.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel the research project was useful and worthwhile?

**Mary:** To them or to me?

**Interviewer:** Worthwhile for you?

**Mary:** Yeah. Because getting up in front of a class was not easy at all and the first class you're really nervous and don't say anything and then you get used to it and you start to interact well with the kids and the kids start to know you. Yeah, it's good for the self-confidence.

**Interviewer:** So, worthwhile for them?

**Mary:** Yeah. Because a lot of them aren't Drama students and it gives them a chance to experience drama.

**Interviewer:** Have you learnt anything about conflict that is useful to you?

**Mary:** Yeah, I know there are 2 layers. I can identify them and try to stop them from getting to the manifest stage - like with my mother and stuff.

**Interviewer:** Do you understand what mediating in conflict means?

**(Mary. S.Int. 2 TAS.)**

The interviewer was clearly keen to establish what Mary had learnt of Conflict Management, and this was established. It was also clear that Mary was using what she had learnt about conflict management in her personal life. However, there is another interesting issue that emerges from her response to the worth of the project – the impact of peer-teaching on her self-esteem. The process of teaching itself was offering important personal learning, alongside explicit learning related to Conflict Management. Interviews, such as the one above, observation notes and surveys suggested areas which needed to be explored further, and emergent issues shaped the direction of questions I later asked, after key participants were identified. It was interesting then to return to some of the very early interviews and see clues of important personal issues and, as Ely (1991) suggests, accept that my interpretation of data could be multiple and shifting (p.2). In this, the very first interview with Mary following a series of lessons focussed on teaching her own class about Conflict, before the peer teaching episodes, she is asked how she enjoyed working with the research assistants in the context of her expectations of the project.

At first I thought that these Griffith people were going to come in and they were going to tell us what to do and then we would just have to do it. But they let us be a part of it and ... our opinions counted. (Mary. TAS S.Int 1.)

Later it emerged that Mary did not often feel 'listened to' or really part of things at school – so this first response regarding the importance of feeling like a collaborator became significant. I interviewed Mary 18 months after the project, after she had, in fact, left school, and she reflected on the significance of the opportunity the project had offered for *her* to be heard. Prompted by this later reflection, I returned to look again at her first interview and also the diary she had kept during the project – both originally analysed in terms of what they might reveal of her understanding of conflict management. In her diary I found an interesting reference to one of the stories used by her group to explore conflict - Mary's own story - perhaps offering some clues to her negative self-perception and disenchantment with school

My group chose my story, from when I had been pushed by a teacher to go for a lead role, and was assured that I would get it, but I actually got a minor chorus role. (Mary. Diary)

In terms of the new frames for my research, I could see that the personal impact of the project had gone beyond developing pupils understanding of conflict and into areas that could provide insight for learning and personal empowerment more generally. I had returned to look at the data with a more compassionate analysis (Glazer, 1980) and in doing this could see that how we *shaped* student experiences had as much, if not more, impact on how they saw themselves. A considerable time after the conclusion of the project, in my final interview with Elise, there was one particular thing that remained very strongly in her memory – how it felt to be a teacher.

Someone actually listened to me - someone actually listened. I got to stand up and have my way. I don't know.. my day in the limelight? When it was not on stage doing something as someone else, it was me doing it.  
(Elise. SS Int. 3)

I began to see that I needed to return to the beginning of the project and analyse each step of the journey and employ a 'wide angle lens' (Mc Cormick 1991.p.43) and in the process of theory building, an overarching theme began to emerge – the notion of authentic voice – the lost voice, the silenced voice and the voice unheard. Thus, as well as looking at the data again closely, I needed to listen again very carefully to find meaning in the silences and voices of my pupils.

The diagram (Fig.5), shows the shape of the research journey for the DRACON project, and illustrates where along the action continuum I actually first identified the three girls who became the focus of my study.

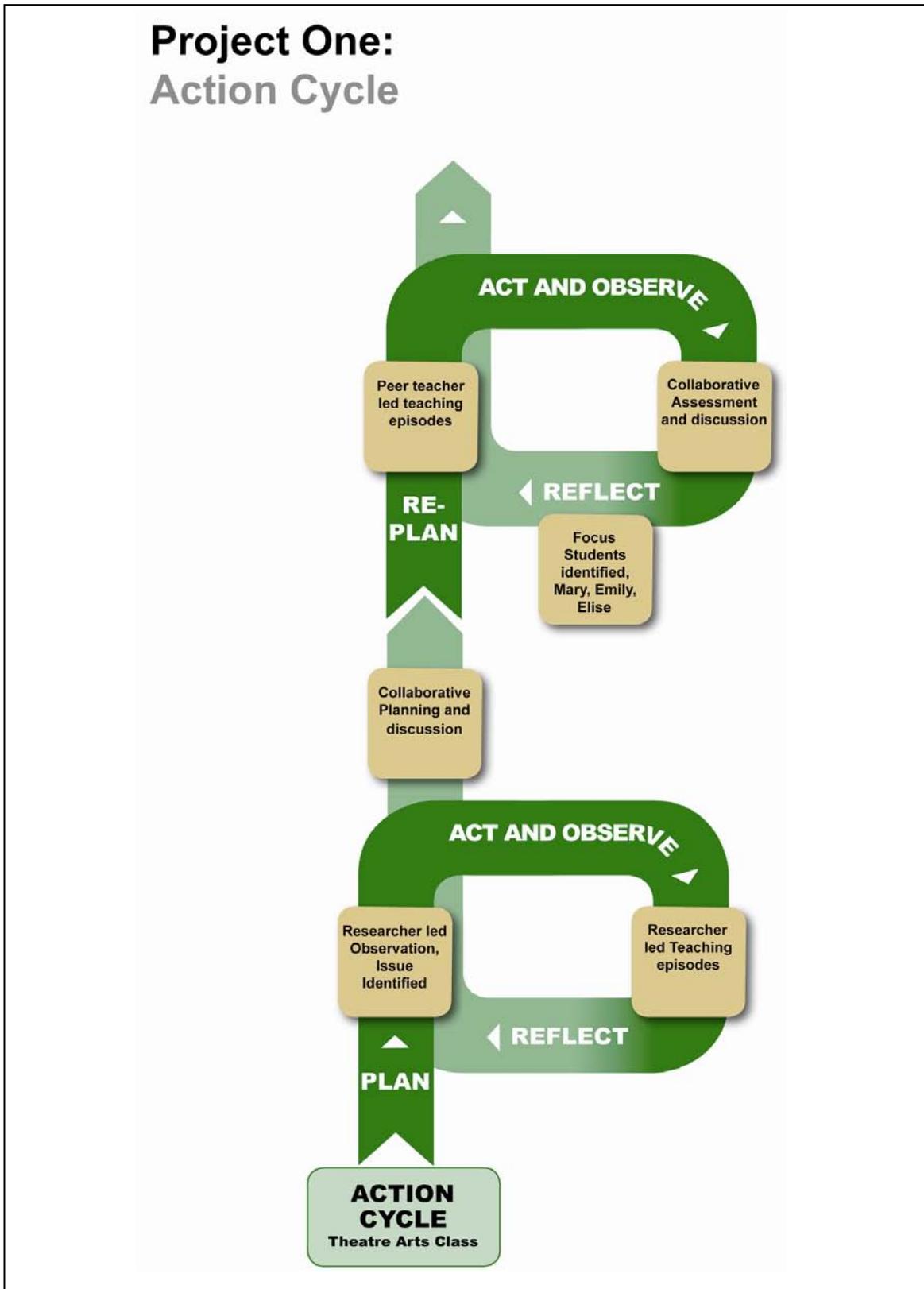


Fig.5

Three broad fields frame my exploration of the literature relevant to my research:

- 1 Adolescent girls and their disengagement and disaffection from school
- 2 Democratic learning and empowerment
- 3 Peer teaching drama for reengagement

Each of these areas is further refined and defined as I consider the scope of research in each area. It should be stated that in some areas, the literature available was minimal. As is often the case with new areas of research, I had to read around the field, and there are very few reported research studies that are directly relevant to mine. Where appropriate I have drawn on materials that, while not necessarily sharing the same focus, raise issues that resonate with central themes in my research. Theoretical discussion in key areas has been drawn from a range of perspectives including Cultural and Gender Studies, Psychology and Sociology.

### 5.3 COLLABORATION – FIRST STEPS TO ENGAGEMENT

When the Theatre Arts class was approached about becoming involved in the DRACON project there was considerable enthusiasm. It was a completely new kind of project for them and they seemed to be looking forward to working with the team from Griffith, intrigued also, it seemed, by the idea of becoming co-researchers. It should be stated here that at the beginning of the research, although the fact was mentioned that the students would become the peer teachers of a younger group, perhaps because this was some weeks off, the 'key class' (Year 11/12 Theatre Arts group) did not appear to be concerned about taking on this role. As I will discuss later, developing their roles as teachers did not ultimately come without some challenge. However from the outset, their response to being offered an active partnership role in the research was positive.

At the end of the project, students were asked if they had enjoyed working with the Griffith researchers.

Yes. We did. Yes, I did, I mean personally. It was like they wrote down everything we said and it was like they were learning off us rather than us learning off them. It was sort of even, and I liked that. (**Pippa**. S.Int.2. TAS)

Three inter-related points are made in these comments. Firstly, that students felt listened to and that their opinions were valued; secondly that they could recognise democracy in the relationship and finally, closely allied to both these points, they experienced a sense of pride in being able to offer as well as receive learning. Following a question on what they felt were the most effective teaching strategies they employed, one student's response included a reference to the reassurance she felt in being able to develop ideas in collaboration:

I feel like I was a partner, because we weren't just directed in how to deal with the Year 9 classes, we were observed just doing our own thing – It was good to always have someone there who we could turn to for advice or criticism at the end, or praise, and to know what we've done right or wrong. (**Pippa**. S.Int.2. TAS)

Collaboration and partnership were recognised as very important elements in the project and the fact that pupils commented so positively on this aspect of the process suggests they valued more democratic teacher/student relationships both because they helped support content learning and because this approach engendered a personal sense of their value and worth. Giroux (1997) suggests that autonomy, dignity and control lie at the heart of power relationships in school, and opportunities to hand power to students underpin decisions. As

students took on more responsibility at each stage, the depth of their engagement was influenced by their commitment to the research partnership.

### **Engaging Empathy and developing commitment to task**

Before turning attention to where my research focus centred i.e. the peer teaching episodes, it is worth contextualising how this section of work fitted into the overall project because the nature and depth of engagement did, I believe, change between the two key stages - when the Theatre Arts students were introduced to Conflict Theory themselves, and when they had the responsibility of teaching it to others. The first stage of the project focussed on introducing the Theatre Arts group to the language of Conflict Management through Drama and the first few lessons trialled a number of drama approaches to explore the concept which the students would need to teach their younger peers. These concepts relate to how conflict emerges and include the Latent, Brewing and Manifest stages of conflict (Lofgren & Malm ed. 2005)).

To achieve this learning, a series of relatively short activities were combined within workshops that encouraged students to dramatise these concepts through improvisation. Students responded well to most of these activities and seemed to readily understand concepts. In these lessons fictional conflicts were explored and learning was focussed on developing a theoretical understanding of conflict. In the fourth lesson, a subtle shift occurred when students began to explore conflict that was nearer to home. One short activity involved pairs telling a personal story of unresolved conflict to another, then swapping roles in order to have the story told back to them by their partner as if it was the partner's story. The activity seemed to work well and helped to deepen understanding. Mary in her journal for that day makes the following comment:

It was really strange hearing my own conflict from someone else's mouth, but it gave me a new perspective on the situation. I saw new ways to resolve the argument that I hadn't really thought of before. (**Mary**. Diary)

These initial activities served to engage pupils through drama in a way that stimulated their interest, and through the use of their own stories they had a sense of ownership of the content. MacBeath & Moos (2004) highlight the importance of appreciating pupil experience and in these activities the fact that they were transforming real stories into dramatic action was also stimulating. Both elements came together to pique their interest and, as Drama students, they were generally on familiar, enjoyable ground - exploring ideas through Drama. In this first phase students were, to a degree, in their comfort zone, although they were being introduced to some new drama forms. For example within Forum Theatre, they were

negotiating ideas with each other, improvising and presenting ideas through performance and in this process of dialogue, they were opening up avenues for new insight and understanding (Abbs, 2003, p.15). Drama is a collaborative art form and so this form of collaboration and partnership were not new. The researchers' roles were generally familiar too – as teachers they led pupils step by step through each strategy. The only difference, during this initial phase was the number of people in the room (three researcher /teachers and up to four research assistants in any given lesson). At times some of my research colleagues (co-researchers) would lead activities, and at other times I myself would introduce my class to particular strategies. Initially, pupils were very much aware they were being observed through this process; however, upon reflection, they recalled their initial reactions with some humour, and as the weeks progressed the fact they were being observed was soon forgotten.

Sometimes when they were looking at us that was a bit disconcerting - like they were listening to what we were saying and they were writing down everything we were saying, and we thought “Oh no, they're going to get a laugh out of that! (Lauren. S. Int.2.)

## **Key Incident**

It seemed clear that students both enjoyed sharing their stories and were finding it valuable to explore concepts through them. During this phase, exploratory strategies did become progressively more complex and thus challenging. For example, it was decided to push the exploration of personal stories further through the use of Boal's “Rainbow of Desire” technique (1995). This technique uses personal stories as a starting point to explore how a more positive outcome to a troubling story might be achieved through deeper understanding of internalised oppressions. Partially due to the dynamics of the class on the day, (there were a number of interpersonal conflicts resulting in off-task behaviour), and partially because I did not describe the activity as well as I could have, there was a lack of response from students. Most seemed to find the task too complex and only one group worked consistently and handled it effectively. It seemed that the task may have been one step too far in terms of what it was asking of students, and the research team acknowledged that the deeply personal nature of the strategy might have been threatening. My reflective notes and notes made by a co-researcher during the lesson reveal these concerns:

Today's session did not go well. I really did not explain the initial instructions for this activity clearly enough and what I was asking them to

do was, I feel, just too abstract, or perhaps just too exposing?

(**Morag**. Ref.Journal)

Morag discussed Boal's notion of internal conflict: frustration of desire - students into groups, to disclose (if willing) a personal frustration of desire, then use the group to create symbolic image. From that, the protagonist was to take the role of antagonist, with other members of the group acting as protagonist. This proved very difficult and problematic. Some students clearly did not get the hang of the exercise. (**Co-resrch**. Obs. Nts)

Post-lesson discussion seemed to identify a lack of proper drama control/ protection mechanism in the exercise, which may have set up unclear intentions for outcomes. Reflecting on this activity it was clear that students had not felt comfortable and moving forward would need to be sensitively handled. The activity had not worked well and somehow students needed to be drawn back on board. The following observation is quoted at length because it contains a number of key insights into our interpretation of events at the time, and the key role that collaboration played in helping reengagement. In this project, as the class teacher, I was inside the moment, so it is extremely fortunate that a co-researcher was able to make such detailed observation of the dynamics in my classroom:

Morag started by letting the students know of our concerns, and our perception that not only were they confused, but she understood that her explanation had been not very clear, and some of the students might be feeling threatened or exposed (both words used) because the material was going into the personal and not giving them Drama protection. Would they like to continue, or would they prefer to move on to something entirely different? Awkward - and revealing - pause, broken with student with tangential and humorous question (not sure whom). Nobody else game to say anything, so Morag reinforced her explanation of what we were trying to do, and her genuine willingness not to continue. A couple of students admitted they did not really understand the exercise especially at first, and the beginnings of a ripple. Picking up quickly on this, Morag phrased the question as "Is there a consensus that we should leave it there?" Some vehement nods and a bigger ripple of relief. (**Co-resrch**. Obs.Nts)

Perhaps this activity was too much too soon, or perhaps just ill-constructed and delivered on the day. It is interesting to consider that this activity did ask students to tap into their own concerns and yet this personal licence was not welcomed but rather seemed a source of fear. In retrospect, it was interesting to note that pupils did open up and use a lot of their own

personal experiences, fears and anxieties in the context of exploring conflict in other activities later in the project. The difference is that students did this when they were ready and without concrete 'direction' to 'reveal'. This opens up the important issue of being sensitive to when pupils are ready to emotionally engage - and offer them some power over the pace of engagement. O'Toole reminds us that it is unrealistic to ask participants, no matter how motivated, to engage empathetically in a short space of time, and that roles need to be fostered initially rather tentatively and with sensitivity (1992, p.119-120). Likewise, it was important to allow students some power over the decision making process and, as the above example illustrates, it was important to ensure democratic learning principles were upheld through giving pupils some control over the next step in the research journey. Before any deeper levels of engagement could be realised, students, it seemed, needed to feel a sense of partnership and collaboration.

Engagement through making personal connections to conflict theory was nonetheless something that did develop over time. Initially, observations recorded that there was some apprehension and resistance to sharing, and the "Rainbow of Desire" session illustrates one example of this. As the project progressed however, it became apparent that students became increasingly comfortable in sharing their own experiences and later, in the context of teaching the Year 9 students, provided examples of conflict from their own lives to encourage the younger pupils to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. As stated above, the collaborative process was central to the commitment made by Theatre Arts students to the project and their engagement seemed to deepen as they took on increasing responsibility. Reflecting on their earlier reluctance within their peer group with me, it is interesting to note that in their role as teachers later in the project, they appeared comfortable and willing to share more of themselves. Taking on the role of peer teachers was pivotal, it seemed, in deepening students' engagement and commitment. In this sense, as acknowledged by Stenhouse (1967), Shor (1993), Giroux (1997) and Hoffman (2000), teaching involves an intimate relationship between teacher and pupil, and in such pedagogy we find the affective role of empathy and compassion.

Key to the connection Year 11 pupils felt with their younger peers was the sense of responsibility that came with their teacher role. In Emily's last interview, 18 months after the conclusion of the project, I opened with a very broad question asking her to recall anything that stood out in her memory from any of the projects which she was engaged in over her two years on the course.

**M.M.:** What event, experience or moment stands out in your mind from all the things we did in Theatre Arts?

**Emily:** Right now, the teaching of the Grade 9 English classes. Teaching was a real challenge, it was really good- just the way that you had to earn their respect and you also had to - it was like you were in charge - it was really your own project, it was your responsibility. Yeah, it was real good - to actually have to really, I don't know the word, really important responsibility. (**Emily.** SS Int 2.)

Emily does not mention what she taught or what she learnt in terms of subject content; she is focussed on how she felt as a result of what she was asked to do - her enjoyment of having an important role, of being given responsibility. The 'project' (teaching the Year 9s) was her project. There is a real sense of ownership in her statement, and in accordance with Friere's notions of educational democracy, Emily's classroom is 'mutually constructed' (Shor, 1993, p.33). She also recognises the importance of earning the respect of her peers, and in this she is acknowledging the need to make a connection with her pupils. One of the Year 9 pupils, in commenting on his enjoyment in working with the Theatre Arts students, reveals why he thought they were able to make a closer connection to his age group than is usual for a class teacher - clearly their ability to empathise with their younger peers was key.

They are young and modern and know what goes on these days, they can understand. (**Carl.** S.Int.2 Yr.9.)

Mary, in an interview immediately after the project, commented on this issue from her perspective as a senior student, reflecting on the realisation that they did share experiences. The 'we' referred to here is the Theatre Arts group she was teaching with. Clearly Mary also has changed her opinion about what the younger pupils were in fact capable of - so respect was developing both ways.

I mean we're all high school students. It's not that much of a big difference. We were sitting around thinking of simple things they would understand, but we didn't need to do that. (**Mary.** S.Int.2 TAS)

One of the unexpected outcomes of the project was the fact that the dynamics of the interaction in the playground between the younger and older pupils changed. Both groups commented on this – it was raised in one of the Year 9 interviews, and also referred to by one of the Year 9 teachers.

It's hard to get to know seniors, you know, and it's good to know what they're doing, and to learn about drama and everything.(Ingrid. S.Int.2 Yr 9.)

That was good. I remember the Year 11 students made the comment that those students recognised them in the playground after that, and stopped and had a chat and that. So yes, it was very welcoming and very accepting of them being in control too. It was very, very good. (**Viv** SS.Int.2)

This would appear to reinforce the strong link that exists between empathy and engagement; through working with others it would appear pupils were able to identify with the needs of their younger peers and offer guidance and support through sharing their own experiences. In this way they had made an emotional investment in learning (Giroux, 1997).

However, the path leading to the ultimate confidence and rapport that the Theatre Arts class had with their Year 9 pupils was not always a smooth one. Although generally very positive about becoming peer teachers, students had initially faced this role with some trepidation, and there were challenges. An exploration of these fears and challenges reveals the importance of risk in creating meaningful and authentic learning.

### **Risk and responsibility – facing the challenges**

I'm really excited about working with the year nines, but I must admit, I'm a bit nervous too (**Mary**. Diary).

As stated earlier, responsibility was a key factor in engaging the pupils, and with responsibility comes risk. It is worth contextualising events leading up to the peer teaching episodes in order to illustrate just how risky the business of peer teaching was for the Theatre Arts students.

The peer teaching sessions were to be conducted in three groups, that is, between 5 and 6 Theatre Arts students would form a group to work with each one of the three Year Nine English classes. Each group met their allocated Year 9 class two weeks before they were to begin teaching. At this meeting they delivered a questionnaire to the Year 9s designed to garner responses to a variety of issues related to conflict. The object of this was to find out what issues were particularly important to the Year 9s, their general attitude to conflict, and how they responded to it. They were asked to think of examples of conflict; what they felt caused conflict; and if they had been directly involved in any serious conflicts at school. Armed with this information about their class, each group hoped to plan teaching sessions that would tap into the particular interests and concerns of that class, recognising - as acknowledged by Flutter & Rudduck (2004) - that listening to what pupils have to offer is important. The groups looked forward to meeting their classes and, at this point at least, were full of enthusiasm and optimism.

We met our Year Nines today! All we really had time for was introducing ourselves, talking a bit about what we would be doing and giving them the survey to fill out. I'm really looking forward to working with these kids, and I hope that we can teach them something that they'll enjoy and find useful.

(Mary. Diary)

Several days later, when the groups received back the questionnaires from their classes, the first signs that there may be some challenges ahead began to surface:

Today we got the surveys back. Some of our observations are that there are extreme views. Many opinions expressed were shocking in their violence and racism, but as well as these views, there were many that were shocking in their maturity and intelligence and open-mindedness, I can only wait and see what kind of challenges this diversity of opinions will pose. (Mary. Diary)

It could only be hoped that in acknowledging the challenge, Mary and her peers would see possibilities for action. As stated by Friere (2007, p.41), "Once man [sic] perceives a challenge, understands it and recognises possibilities of response, he acts."

### **Challenges of the collaborative process**

As the questionnaires had yielded a wide variety of directions, the focus of their sessions could be based around any of these, from exploring racism in the playground to teacher/pupil conflicts. The peer teachers had differences of opinions on not only what they should select as their focus, but also which Drama strategies they should utilize to explore ideas. One of the first challenges facing the group was being able to work with each other in order to plan the sessions they were to teach. As a mixed year level group there were in fact some power struggles between the Year 11 and Year 12 cohorts. There were also some strong personalities in each year level who tended to overshadow their peers during sessions where they were planning teaching. Interviewed directly after the project Mary recalled how frustrating it had been as a Year 11 student to feel overshadowed by what she felt was one particularly forceful personality in the Year 12 group:

There was a huge amount of conflict in our group, and "Becky" – she just didn't know and it was like frustrating, it was really frustrating and I know this may sound conceited, but we (the Year 11s in the group) did know what we were doing better than she did because we'd been working

together for ages. She refused to listen to other points of view. (**Mary.TAS S.Int.**)

Emily in her first interview also commented on how the group dynamics made planning slow:

It was so hard, because it was - we had so many different opinions on everything. We hardly ever got things done on time. It was really difficult getting it all together. (**Emily SS.Int.1.**)

One of the research assistant's observation notes also highlights how fraught some of these initial planning sessions were:

Dynamics within the class and the groups are complex, with evidence of off-task behaviour and inter-personal conflicts clearly evident. Group 4 was very unfocussed and aware of being observed. "Sally" withdrew from her group and sat alone with her back to them, obviously upset. (**Resrch Ass. Obs Nts.**)

Things progressed from bad to worse and in some groups initial enthusiasm for the task had all but evaporated as individuals struggled to pin down a direction. One of the Year 12s comments in her diary on her frustration:

There were some interesting responses. The questionnaires gave us some ideas of what we could do but we're not really sure. I feel really stuck for ideas and no-one else seems to be generating any. I'm starting to get a little pissed off, I feel like we just don't have any motivation and direction" (**Kerrie. Diary**)

The same student, Kerrie, expressed the increasing anxiety faced by many of the groups as the reality of actually walking into the Year 9 classrooms to teach, with little planned, loomed:

All we really did was talk and fight all lesson and then the bell went and I stormed off. I am really worried we only have one lesson planned. (**Kerrie. Diary.**)

In this situation the collaborative process was not without risk. Interpersonal differences meant that there were competing voices. There were also voices unheard. There was considerable friction, particularly among the girls, and some of this dated back beyond the project. As Brown & Gillian (1992), Hay (1997) and Reay & Arnot (2002) acknowledge, girls can find negotiating social relationships complex during adolescence and this had clearly been the case in the Theatre Arts class. Elise, the most reserved of the three girls in my

study, was asked about conflict in her group and reflected historically on one of her relationships with another group member and the most common role in which she was cast in previous encounters with her:

I have been in the same class with 'Jody' and the others since Year Nine and I know that she didn't like me. I know 'cause every time we did something in Year 9 or 10 and I was in her group, I got beat up by everyone else. Seriously, they'd make up a drama and I was always the one that got beat up! But, by Year 12 it was cool. (**Elise**. SS Int.1.).

Elise described herself in a later interview as being the 'shadow girl' in relation to her more confident friend Mary. It is worth mentioning this self-evaluation here in terms of why Elise may have been one of those more reticent to contribute; though it is also significant to consider the description later when the impact of the peer-teaching project is discussed. Raey and Arnot (2002) and Jackson (2006) suggest girls define their identity through social and peer relationships in school, and it cannot be underestimated how important this is. Elise saw herself as a 'shadow' among her peers, suggesting she struggled to define an individual identity for herself.

### **The challenge of 'keeping up appearances' – Gender issues**

The three young women who became my focus, Elise, Mary and Emily, were friends, although Mary had ended up in a different group for the peer teaching sessions. In a group interview with the three girls after the project had finished some interesting issues emerged that resonated with my perception that gender was an issue in terms of the specific experiences of these young women and the impact of the project. In terms of some of the challenges they faced, their perception of themselves as outsiders would appear to have contributed to some of the initial difficulties they had in terms of collaboration with other group members. In the final interview with all three girls, after they had left school, I asked them to reflect on how they saw themselves at the time of the project.

We were just this bunch of people who sat under D block. This probably sounds... the thing is, you see at school everyone was so judgemental and stereotypical. With the students if you're this type of person you can hang out with us but if you're not you can't. There were the 'Rah Rah Girls' and the "Jocks" and they all had these ideals and if you didn't live up to them then you weren't good enough. (**Emily**. S.S.Int.3.)

What was interesting to find in an earlier interview with Emily was her observation that some of the conflicts between the girls in her group were based on insecurities over their image, and what they were and were not prepared to do with their Year Nines because of their fear of looking foolish in front of their own peers - it is the previously mentioned difficult 'Becky' who is used again as the example:

That image thing played a big part in the conflict with Becky because she - there's a whole heap of stuff that she refused to do because she was afraid of looking like a fool - 'Oh I can't do that because its uncool'. Cos at school you have all the different social groups and that sticked (sic) whatever sort of class you were in - and we weren't the really upmarket social group.  
(Emily. S.S.Int 1.)

Two issues are actually alluded to in Emily's statement – the self-consciousness girls have of being observed and their awareness of class and gender in terms of what is deemed desirable. Numerous authors, among them (Hey, 1997; Francis, 2005; McLaughlin, 2005; Jackson, 2006a) have highlighted that how girls perceive they are viewed by others is vitally important. The young women in this study were very much aware of themselves as outsiders, though their solidarity as friends meant they were happy not to draw attention to themselves or attempt to fit into one of the stereotypes. One worrying thing is that such voices may go unheard under the shouts of others; however Mary's comment here offers clear consolation that, despite the interpersonal challenges of collaboration, very rich learning can emerge of as a result of facing this risk and finding one's voice.

What I learnt is that you have to be open to someone else's point of view. You have to be willing to make compromises if you want a resolution, its always easier to run away in the short term, but if you want a long term resolution, then you've got to compromise, you've got to talk about it, you've got to work at it until its resolved." (Mary. TAS. Int. 2 )

In Mary's opinion dialogue was critically important and, as many theorists from Socrates through to Vygotsky (1987), Abbs (2003) and Alexander (2008) have proposed, knowledge acquisition through dialogue opens up possibilities for new insight and understandings. In this case dialogue between the peer teachers, as well as between teachers and pupils, was crucial.

## The challenge of teaching

The challenge was met and students did ultimately plan some very effective lessons for the Year 9s, but before exploring this it needs to be acknowledged that there was one other challenge that indeed underpinned some of the difficulties and insecurities students had when planning their lessons – they were not trained teachers. Despite the fact that we had modelled a number of teaching strategies, we as facilitators had failed to take into account that they would need support in structuring and shaping lessons, and to a degree would need some basic classroom management - the latter being one of the biggest fears of the Year Nine teachers.

I was keen but I must admit when we had the first meeting I was a little concerned because there were a lot of classroom management ramifications that I was quite concerned about simply that I knew my students so I was a little concerned about that. (**Jean**. SS.Int 1.)

It soon became apparent that the peer teachers would need support in terms of shaping the lessons they wished to teach and the Theatre Arts students expressed some insecurity very early with just how to actually begin a class:

I just feel lost and like there's no answers that can answer my questions. I know that sounds silly, but I'm so confused. I am not sure if others in the group are as lost as me and that is why they just sit there or I don't know. (**Kerrie**. Diary)

Observing all the groups over several days, research assistant observations revealed that groups needed the intervention of either myself or one of the other assistants to keep them on task and help them shape their ideas. The following observation sums up this role.

It has been a consistent thread in the working process that the presence of one of the researchers with a group has given them focus and encouragement, and at times it has needed the actual intervention of a researcher to get the group on task. My acting as an assistant for Group 1 at the beginning of the session gave them a focus. My group required both my encouragement to begin work, and also the task I gave them of planning the second week of Forum Theatre. (**Co-resrch**. Obs.Nts)

Thus the important role of the teacher in supporting learning should not be overlooked. As Taylor (2000) reminds us, transformation does not happen in a vacuum, but needs careful structuring to facilitate action and reflection (p.9).

The students themselves acknowledged that they had needed more guidance and this is illustrated in an interview with one of the year 11 students immediately following the teaching episodes, where she reveals the importance of support in the planning stages,

I think we needed more guidance. Our group was constantly stuck. We needed to have clear stages to follow to make the Drama successful.

(**Pippa** S.Int 2.TAS)

Interestingly, Emily revealed in a later group interview how, during the sessions themselves the peer teachers, supported each other and in the true style of reflective practitioners, developed their ideas as a result of what happened in the course of teaching:

I mean we had a lot of time in the classroom...we'd go into class, we'd do it and we'd come out and talk about it, and talk about what happened in the classroom and what we would do in the next lesson. We'd talk at lunchtimes and stuff. It's like everything we'd organised we just went in and 'no' - we've got a better idea and we'd change ideas then. That's why we'd have a little huddle up. We huddled a lot! (**Emily**. SS Int. 2)

An entry in Mary's diary during the project is also revealing in terms of the collaborative process at work. Not all lessons went smoothly and some experiments with 'flexibility' in terms of planning did not always run smoothly either:

Our first lesson with grade 9 went really well, they had fun, but we didn't stick to our plan. (**Mary**. Diary)

Her entry after the following lesson:

My god! What a shocker. We didn't know what we were doing, therefore the Year 9s didn't know what they were doing. We definitely need to work on sticking to the lesson plan and working together as a group.

(**Mary**. Diary).

Despite the fact that some initial lessons faltered, once the project was underway there was a great deal of willingness on the part of all participants to make it work.

The Year 9 teachers, though originally supportive if occasionally a little anxious, recognised the challenges faced by the peer teachers and generally entered into the spirit of collaboration and, as Moira suggests below, took on a role that was supportive rather than dominant.

I ended up frequently in the beginning acting as a sort of teacher's aide to the students. So I'd say, "Look what do you want me to do? Do you want me to help organise this group?" Just by putting myself in an assistant role, I was able to make suggestions without them being aware of it and that seemed to help. But I had particularly good students as I recall, so it wasn't a major problem." (**Moira**. SS Int.2)

Despite Moira's assertion that this may have been because she had a 'particularly good group of students', all the Theatre Arts peer teaching groups won the respect of both their students and teachers. As another one of the teachers comments, the respect her pupils had for their peer teachers was reassuring and happened very quickly:

After the first 10 minutes of the students actually coming in on their first teaching day, not the day they did the research, the survey, but the day they actually came in and we shifted the desks around and they actually got in to what they were going to do with them, within 10 minutes I could see that the students actually were responding to it and they were interested enough to do the right thing - that became obvious very quickly that they were very interested. I did breath a huge sigh a relief I have to admit because I had a few students that I was really concerned with and how they would deal with it and if they were in fine form they could really spoil the whole thing, but I was very pleased that they obviously realised very quickly that everyone else wanted to be involved. (**Jean**. SS.Int 2.)

Jean's comments reflect some of the initial reservations teachers have in handing over power to pupils. Rudduck & Flutter (2004) and Morrison (2004) suggest it is often difficult for teachers to risk giving pupils responsibility because they fear learning may be compromised and the pupils placed in jeopardy. Yet, in the spirit of collaboration and democracy, once the teaching sessions actually got underway it seemed there was a willingness from all sides to make it work. That is not to say that every lesson went smoothly or was always a perfect success, but the energy and dynamics of the groups changed almost instantly when they walked into their Year 9 classrooms, and the group became cohesive as they faced up to their common responsibility. Even the anxious Kerrie was able to report something positive in her journal...

"Well today was the first day and I tell you what: 'It was great"! They loved us, I'm sure of it. I think we did well. I enjoyed myself and I think we worked well as a group and helped each other out." (**Kerrie**. Diary.)

In this statement, Kerrie encapsulates some of the key aspects of the peer teaching experience in terms of what it came to offer students - meaningful and more engaging opportunities for collaboration, empowerment and democratic learning. In considering the data generated during the peer teaching episodes it became apparent that for some members of the Theatre Arts class the opportunity of peer teaching fostered more active engagement than had been seen in other activities.

However it was not just a number of the peer teachers who seemed to respond differently; Year 9 teachers commented that a number of their quieter and more reticent pupils seemed to act very differently when taught by the Theatre Arts students. Although it is the impact of leading the teaching sessions on these older students that is my focus, it is worth acknowledging what one of the Year 9 teachers said of how involved some members of her class had become:

I think I have 6 or 7 that can be quiet and some were more active and really involved in their groups. When they (the Theatre Arts students) were working with them and setting them up the kids were disappointed when their student wasn't there on a day - some of the senior students were absent on days.... I think it was very valuable that relationships were built between the senior and junior school students; I was really pleased to see that. (**Viv. SS.Int2.**)

The relationships that were built between peer teachers and their pupils had an impact on both parties. Ford (1996) suggests that a 'sense of connectedness' is more likely to produce initial and enduring interest and contribute to meaningful engagement (p.149), and in the observation above Viv has clearly observed this at work in her own classroom. The peer teaching stage of the project had been developed to offer the Year 9 pupils the opportunity to learn about conflict management from their older peers and engaging their interest and commitment was crucial in order that they learn. However, the older students, it seemed were learning something subtly different in the process of teaching itself. As the challenges and rewards of peer teaching emerged, some students in particular seemed to draw strong personal power through their engagement as the teachers and 'connectedness' to others. These peer teachers acknowledged the role they had to play came with responsibility, and they respected the importance of ensuring their pupils were co-collaborators. As Emily stated when asked if she found peer teaching challenging:

"Yes, because to them you're a peer, you don't command the same respect as a teacher would. You have to make them want do what you

want them to. You can't just make them do it because you want them to.  
Does that make sense?" (**Emily** SS Int.1)

Emily's simple statement is interesting in that it reveals a very intrinsic understanding of what, ideally, an effective teacher should do. As Goodlad and Hirst (1998), Rudduck (2004), and Finney, Hickman & Morrison (2005) have pointed out, it is not surprising that pupils have deep insight into effective teaching – they have years of experience as beneficiaries of various teaching approaches.

The benefits for the recipients of peer teaching, in this case the Year 9s, revealed that pupils enjoyed and learnt a great deal. It is not my intention to focus on this group, so I will not discuss this issue in depth, however it should be stated that the Theatre Arts group achieved no small success as teachers. What is more important to my exploration however, is the impact teaching had on the peer teachers themselves – and on Emily, Elise and Mary in particular.

During an interview with Elise there was evidence that after the teaching episodes were completed she was able to acknowledge, with some surprise, just how powerfully she had learned through teaching others.

It was so unexpected. You went there not sure about how it was going to go and when it went well you started to learn more, because they're learning more, so it's a sort of cycle that goes on. You're learning because they are. (**Elise**. SS.Int. 2.)

In an early interview with Mary she struggles to articulate exactly what it is about the process that she found so valuable, though clearly the significance of the experience is recognised.

Teaching was a real challenge, it was really good - just the way you had to earn their respect and you had to - it was your own project, it was your responsibility. Yeah, it was real good - to actually have a really, I don't know the word...really important responsibility (**Mary**. S.Int.2. TAS)

Mary saw teaching as a challenge, but found reward in the unique opportunity this kind of engagement offered - responsibility. Arguably this is something that students are all too often shielded from and yet, as Flutter et al (1999), Rudduck (1996) and Morrison (2004) remind us, offering pupils responsibility is central to developing engagement and a sense of agency and commitment.

The fact that the project seemed to have a personal impact on pupils in terms of their engagement, confidence and self-esteem emerged strongly from the data and warranted closer examination.

### **The impact of the project - lost voices found.**

One of the first signs that the project had implications beyond conflict learning was in the behaviour of some members of the Theatre Arts class. In some of the initial planning stages of the project, a number of students who were ordinarily disengaged or off-task seemed to be drawn in and developing commitment. One of the co-researchers made these notes as she watched one group at work:

They then discussed the possibilities for the second piece of Forum Theatre with some focus and intensity, and Matthew was actually vocal and took leadership for the first time. Johnny also appeared to be more interested and on-task than in previous lessons and Vanessa took notes and contributed. Only Elise was uninvolved. (**Co-Resrch** Obs.Nts.)

It is interesting that the co-researcher noted at this point that one of the students who was to become my focus as a result of the impact of peer teaching, Elise, is at this stage in the process still seemingly disinterested and disengaged. In my own reflective journal I observed it took time for some of the Year 11 students to warm to the project, though I initially put this down to the presence of researchers in the room:

‘The Year 11 group seemed very quiet today in the initial stages; I guess partly because they are still coming to grips with the fact that they have three different people in the room, myself included.’ (**Morag**. Ref Journal)

However, it seemed that when the peer teaching began there were some real shifts in behaviour as otherwise disruptive pupils became more focussed and some of those who were quieter and/or disinterested became more vocal and involved. Elise began to feature in a number of observations when the teaching episodes began; normally a quiet, almost reticent student, her involvement was noted in terms that expressed a marked change; in observation notes I identified - “even Elise is talking and showing animation”; “surprisingly, it was Elise who introduced the next activity” (Resrch Ass Obs nts). In addition, one of the co-researchers who had been observing Elise’s group during the peer teaching episodes also identified the transformative effect peer teaching seemed to have on her, and other pupils too:

The key group members telling stories about their own experience of teacher/pupil conflict situations appeared to stimulate spontaneous and enthusiastic responses from the Year 9 class. This observation saw the emergence of a major new item of interest – the active involvement and commitment for the first time of key class students who had previously been passive or disruptive. Elise and Matt had previously made only a minimal contribution to the group’s work, whilst Cherie and Johnny had frequently been off task and occasionally disruptive. The task of teaching the focus class appears to have stimulated a real commitment to the work in each of them. (**Co-resrch.** Obs Nts.)

Not only did it seem peer teaching was emboldening passive and less vocal pupils, at the other end of the spectrum it seemed to have a positive impact on more disruptive pupils too. What became apparent was that peer teaching seemed to be an extremely enjoyable way of learning, whilst also having a personal impact on the peer teachers. In the first set of interviews the personal satisfaction the Theatre Arts class felt in their new role was a consistent theme. Here one of the year 11 boys describes his feelings following the completion of the peer teaching sessions.

“I just did really, really enjoy being with the year 9s. It felt great. We did all the exercises - I felt proud - it was cool. I felt like a Drama teacher. It was a good feeling.” (**Tyler** TAS.SInt.2)

Mary expressed in her diary at the end of the teaching that...

“I actually feel sorry that today is our last day with the Year 9s. I’ve really enjoyed working with them. They’ve enjoyed it too.” (**Mary.** Diary)

The relationship the peer teachers built with their pupils was based on empathy and understanding and they took pride in the achievements of their ‘class’ and in the role they played in helping them achieve:

“When they pulled it off I could feel really proud that I could get up and get other students to do things they had never done before.” (**Mary.** SS.Int 2.)

These statements all seem to support Goodlad and Hirst’s (1998) contention that one of the most satisfying elements of peer teaching for the teachers is the sense they have of being needed.

As stated previously, it was in returning to data with the new lens of considering the personal impact of peer-teaching, that I noted how rich the experience had been for three particular

young women and the transformative shifts that seemed to be illustrated in their perceptions of themselves as a result of having been a teacher of others. Teaching offered them a voice and a chance to redraw themselves in more positive and or confident ways. Elise, the quietest of the three, gives an insight into her own experience as a student and reveals here her empathetic commitment to the task of teaching the conflict management strategies to the Year 9s, "I've been in the situation where you're scared to come to school and, I'd hate to think of other people in the same situation. I'd love to cut it out." (Elise, Int 1). This statement clearly supports Morrison, Burton and O'Toole's (2006) position regarding the importance of empathy in fostering productive engagement in peer teaching (p.148). Yet the challenge of teaching went beyond developing social understanding. Deep personal learning also emerged. Elise in her first interview described how she saw herself in relation to her peers, "I was in the shadow. I was the shadow girl, following Emily and Mary around." (Elise. SS Int 3). One of the earliest clues I found as to how powerful taking on the role of teacher could be was also in this first interview with Elise following the completion of the project:

Someone actually listened to me. For the first time ever, I got to stand up and say 'do this, do this, do this' and someone actually listened. I got to stand up and have my, I don't know, my day in the limelight? Where I was not on stage doing something as someone else, it was me, Elise, doing it. (Elise. TAS. S Int. 2)

As a Drama teacher, I found the distinction Elise made here between a real life role, that of teacher, and playing a role as an actor interesting. The role of teacher would seem to have given her a unique opportunity to experience a positive sense of self, and an identity she saw as more authentic. Goodlad and Hirst (1995,1998), Dweck (2000) and Morrison (2004) all acknowledge the personal power of peer teaching to foster self-esteem in those who are the teachers of others. What is significant in Elise's statement is the fact that she chooses to highlight the difference between her experience as a teacher and that of performer, and clearly she felt a deeper satisfaction with what she could achieve, in terms of her interactions with others, as a teacher.

In the last interview I did with Elise some time after the project was completed, the process of peer teaching was still one of the things she recognised as having a strong personal impact. Elise was asked what she had taken away from being involved in the peer teaching project, and whether there were any lasting skills she continued to use:

I think it was probably teaching the Grade 9s. Teaching them helped to teach myself. You learn things better when you teach others because you have a deeper understanding of it. (Elise. SS Int.3.)

Through the process of teaching, on a practical level, Elise also acknowledged that her understanding of conflict, through peer teaching, gave her more confidence to confront and talk through misunderstandings with her parents.

Now what happens is that we sit down and talk and we try to come to an understanding, but it never works. But at least we're sitting and talking, and everything comes out. **(Elise SSInt.3.)**

Just as for Elise and Emily, Mary also found a stronger voice as a result of the project. For Mary, it seemed the most significant aspect was the learning that took place through the collaborative process of planning her teaching sessions with others. As stated earlier, all three girls had considered themselves outsiders. In performance projects to that date they had found interpersonal relationships with some of their peers difficult. However, peer teaching had required them to work far more closely with others. The same question asked of Mary in terms of what she had taken away from the project revealed this response:

We learnt how to work as a group. We'd never really done anything that involved together. We'd often been ostracised from the rest of the Drama community, so it was good to get in and all work together and I think it did sort out some of the conflicts that were going on in class - just personal ones - because they were forced to get in and work with each other.  
**(Mary. SS Int.3)**

In some ways, Elise, Mary thought the project offered a chance for others to gain another perspective of her, in this case the peers in her Drama group from whom she'd been estranged:

But like they were all the popular group, but they bugged me, but by the end of it I'd had conversations with them and been invited to a few parties, like it really changed. Well I hope it changed their perception of me, or I'm assuming it did, and I had to admit to myself they really weren't so bad once I got to know them. **(Mary. SS Int.3.)**

In my reflective journal following the final interviews with the girls, I made the following note.

Mary's statement in that first interview that teaching had been 'good for self esteem' would seem one of the MOST critical things that students took with them beyond the classroom. The self-esteem that was built from being responsible for others has stayed with them and something that has changed them in some way. **(Morag. Ref journ.)**

The DRACON research journey, at that stage, was complete in terms of what my co-researchers had hoped to discover in terms of our initial focus, the role peer teaching could play in fostering an understanding of Conflict theory. I now realise, however, that my own journey, had only just begun. Ford (1996) suggests that experiences linked to caring behaviour are likely to foster more initial and enduring interest (p.149), and feedback from three of my pupils directly after the project and then at some distance on from its conclusion, referred to their experiences as teachers. As a participant observer (Ely 1991) on the DRACON the research, I had seen and heard from three of my pupils how deep an impact peer teaching had on them personally, and realised this could be explored further. It seemed there could be implications for understanding how engagement and ultimately self-esteem might be fostered through peer teaching; as Dweck (2000) stated, 'peers can gain self-esteem by co-operating and facilitating the learning of others' (p.131).

When given the opportunity to explore this further through a funded project based in the U.K, I was keen. The DRACON project had revealed some very interesting implications for democratic learning and pupil engagement, and the Wallenberg project, to be focussed on how negative leaders might be re-engaged in school, offered the opportunity to explore further some of the interesting issues that had emerged from the structure of the Australian project. The value of including pupils as collaborators in research, and the power of peer teaching to foster pupil voice and effective learning, had opened up rich seams for exploration in the first project and I looked forward to mining them further.

## 5.4 PROJECT TWO: Wallenberg Research (U.K)

*“I wanted to prove them wrong.” (Ashley)*

### **Empowering Negative Leaders**

#### **Data analysis – Connections and departures**

The second research project in which I became involved grew from the first, and as a result was more sharply focused from the outset. In the DRACON study my research focus grew in the process of exploring the impact of a set of research questions to do with teaching Conflict Management through Drama – peer-teaching being just one of the strategies utilised to this end. The Wallenberg project had peer teaching itself, from the outset, as a focus and through employing a case study approach, it sought to explore how this strategy might work to re-engage a specific group of pre-selected students. Clearly, a focus on peer teaching is a strong link between these projects, but other elements also resonate in both. In terms of structure and approach both DRACON and Wallenberg sought to offer students decision-making opportunities within the research process as collaborators, and encourage further collaboration with their own ‘peer pupils’. Both projects valued what participants could offer as research partners, though there was possibly even more autonomy offered in the Wallenberg project. Whereas the DRACON project had pre-selected the group the peer teachers were to work with, even this decision was left up to the Wallenberg peer-teachers.

As well as similarities, there are key differences between the projects that impact on the way data emerged and how it is presented here. Centrally my role in the First Project was as insider researcher; in the Wallenberg project, from the beginning, I was very much an outsider. As stated previously, the key participants I would be working with were identified before the process commenced and, whilst the research focus required that these participants be acknowledged ‘negative leaders’, someone other than myself selected Ashley and Kayleigh. They were selected by the school’s Drama teacher. Other differences include the fact that I was the sole researcher working with participants, and the timescale of the Wallenberg project was much shorter than the previous one and activities within this time frame more consolidated. These differences do have an impact on how data is reported here for the Second Project.

In the DRACON project questions emerged as cycles of action proceeded, and focus students emerged during the research. Emily, Elise and Mary became a focus of interest because of the impact the research journey seemed to have on them whereas Ashley and

Kayleigh were my focus from the beginning. In the Wallenberg research, I did not have to return to early data sources with a new lens; data collection was focused on exploring a specific issue from the outset, and each stage of research journey built a more complete picture. The Second Project was a more chronological journey as a result, and my reporting of it will also unfold in this way. The diagram presented below of the Wallenberg research structure illustrates how the journey developed.

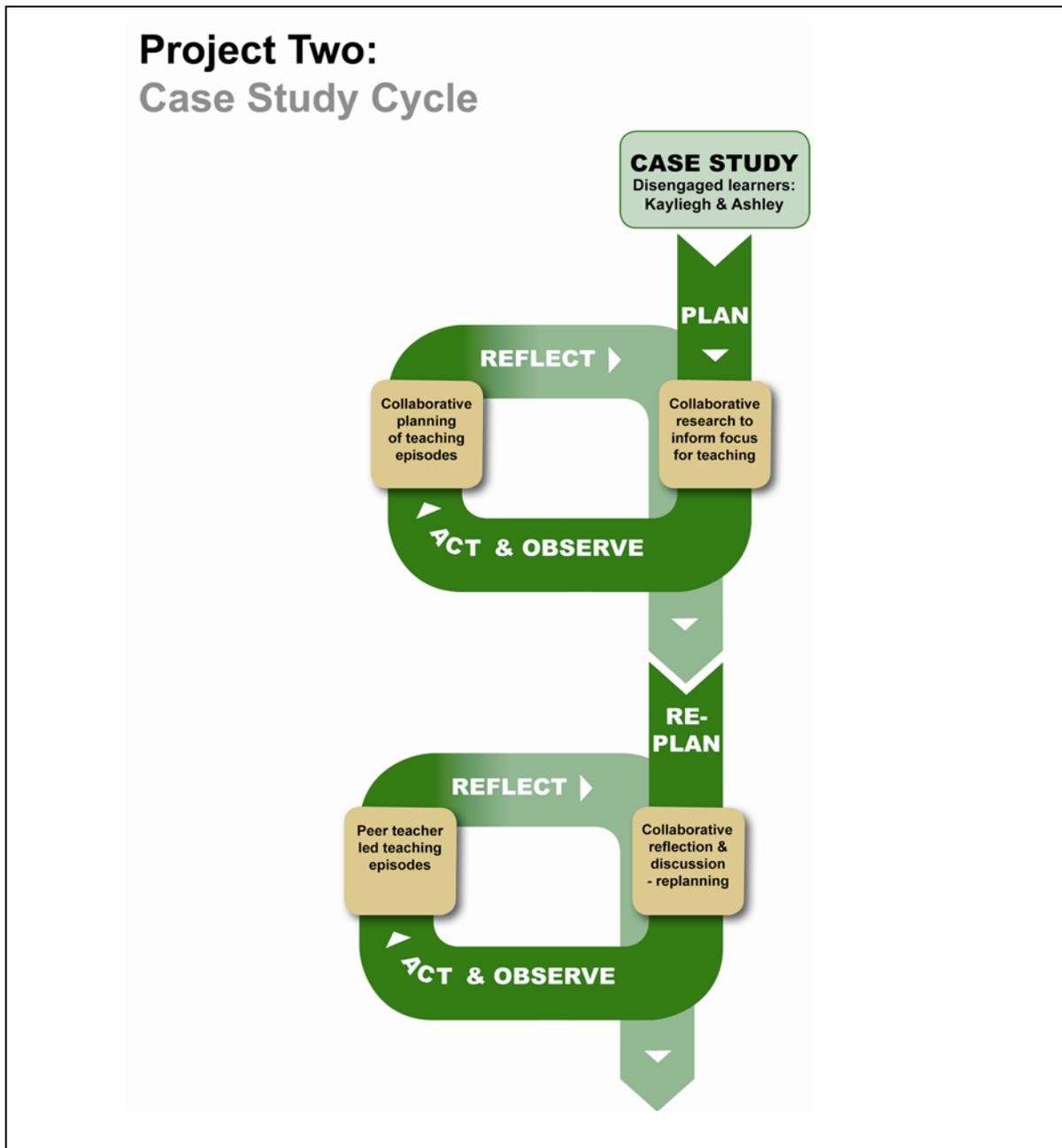


Fig. 6

Despite the fact that differences exist between the two projects it is possible to discuss similar key stages in the evolution of the Wallenberg project. Just as my DRACON reflections identified the importance of collaboration, engaging empathy, the role of risk and the challenges of peer teaching as significant issues, these areas also provide an appropriate framework for analysis of the Wallenberg data. It is perhaps unsurprising that these common threads are shared, as successful features of the First Project informed the evolution of the Second.

### **First steps to engagement – acknowledging interests and creating collaborative partnerships.**

The Wallenberg research was funded to explore whether disengaged or ‘negative leaders’ may be re-engaged in school through peer teaching the Arts. Although other studies were going on in different schools in terms of Visual Art, Music and Design, my focus at Ridgefield would be to work with Drama students. It was established from the outset that the students we would work with would be those who, despite skill and interest in a particular Arts subject, were not engaging productively in other areas of their school experience. These ‘negative leaders’ were to be the kinds of students who misbehave, are disruptive, yet who appear to have confidence and some power within their immediate peer group. I made the following reflection after contacting one of our local secondary schools and asking to speak to their head of Drama, Ellen, a teacher I knew well through her mentorship of trainees on the post graduate course on which I teach:

I spoke to Ellen this afternoon and caught her in the staffroom. I said I was interested in working with some of her students and I used the phrase ‘Negative leaders’ and then tried to explain what I meant; ‘kids who are difficult, perhaps working in Drama but not really behaving or productively participating in other subjects...’ I was going to try to explain myself further when she interrupted... “Naughty kids. You want to work with some naughty kids?” Before I could answer she took the phone away from her ear and addressed others in the staffroom. “She wonders if we have some problem kids she can work with.” I could hear general hilarity in the background as she then asked me “How many do you want?” I have obviously come to the right place! (**Morag**. Ref. journ.)

Despite what could have been interpreted as a flippant response, I trusted Ellen would want to collaborate and support the project. She is a very experienced teacher and, as a long-serving staff member in this challenging school, had developed a reputation as a committed and extremely supportive champion of some of its most difficult pupils. Ellen selected two pupils she thought it would be good to work with. She did not hold back when describing any of the detail that defined Ashley and Kayleigh as disruptive and indeed 'naughty', yet it was with real warmth and concern that she also identified them as young women who really should be given an opportunity to show what they could do, and a chance to redefine themselves. Ashley and Kayleigh were two of her Year 9 Drama students who enjoyed Drama, and were able to do well in the subject. Despite that fact that Ashley and Kayleigh were challenging, disengaged and disruptive in other subjects, and regularly the recipients of school sanctions due to misbehaviour both in class and in the playground, they did work for Ellen in Drama. Ellen suggested, as they were close friends, they would want to work together - if one agreed it would likely be that the other would also be keen to be involved. The following day I got a call that they were interested and so a meeting was set up for the following week.

This first meeting was very revealing on a number of levels. It set the tone of the project and established us as a partnership. I did not want Ashley and Kayleigh to feel I was coming into the school to put them under a microscope with a view to finding out how to 'fix' them. In this, I had the support of the school and Ellen. I had an opportunity to discuss my proposal with the Deputy Principal and he agreed to release Ashley and Kayleigh from a number of classes in order to work on the project with me. (I was under no illusions that getting out of Geography and Maths occasionally played a role in the girls' interest in being involved, but sensed it was unlikely their teachers would be too disappointed in their absence from class either!) These factors considered, it did mean there was a considerable amount of logistical freedom possible. Support also came in the form of the school's making available to us their 'special Conference Room' for, although seemingly a small thing, the use of this room was, I believe, was symbolic. It suggested that our meetings were important and it did lend gravity to role I hoped the girls would see for themselves. I hoped it would help establish us all as a partnership of collaborators rather than as pupils/teacher. Giroux (1997), Lather (1991), Rudduck (1995) and Finney et al (2005) all suggest that there should be more reciprocity in our interaction with students towards mutual negotiation of meaningful power; even this small decision, of where we were to meet, seemed to influence our power dynamic as partners. I recognized in my journal entry for that day, the impact of the room on Ashley and Kayleigh at our first meeting:

We have been invited to have our planning sessions in the school's special Conference Room. Ashley and Kayleigh have never been in the room before and are obviously impressed by their surroundings. They giggle as they sit close together on one side of the large teak table. They seemed pleased to be selected to work on this peer teaching project – I sense that it makes them feel rather special. They gradually began to look more at home in the room as I started to ask them some questions and they began to talk. (**Morag** Ref journ.)

Once things had become a little more relaxed, I had asked if the group minded my recording the session. This agreed, the first questions I asked Ashley and Kayleigh were not directly related to the project. As well as wanting to put them at ease, I wanted to establish that the reason they had been selected to work with me was because I was interested in their skills in Drama, i.e. something they could do well, rather than what they were not doing productively in school. My focus was letting them talk to me about what it was that they enjoyed about the subject:

“Its relaxing if you don't like a lot of writing and you like express yourself, not like you don't have to be quiet all the time, but you do if you know what I mean. You have to express everything. I just like it. Its because I am quite good at it... that I like doing stuff that I know can do fairly well at and I like acting and I like to show I have got confidence and stuff”. (**Ashley**. SS Int.1)

“I like it when you don't have a script, you just act when it's going along. So like one time I might ask to be the Dad and tell my daughter off and like...I like to be different people and play different roles of people.” (**Kayleigh** SS Int. 1.)

In both girls' responses they do put emphasis on subtly different things. Ashley seems to suggest it is the freedom she has in the subject to 'express herself' that she enjoys. A clue to Ashley's definition of 'expressing' seems to lie in what she suggests as its opposite, i.e. 'being quiet'. Drama offers her the opportunity to speak and, as she elaborates further, acting is a vehicle for this. It is obvious Ashley enjoys speaking and feels it is something she does do well. (Ellen suggested her teachers would agree with this, although some would not recognize it as a positive attribute when exercised in some classroom contexts!) Drama offered Ashley a constructive avenue for behaviour that in other contexts would be defined as attention-seeking and disruptive. The unique nature of the drama experience as an arts subject did have a role to play in motivating Ashley. Harland et al (2000), Morrison (2004)

Finney et al (2005) suggest that students sense fulfilment in their own achievements when working through the arts and experience greater levels of self-esteem.

Ashley's answer offers broader educational insights too, namely that students like to do what they enjoy and share what they feel they can do well. These are obvious desires and, while it can't be said they are totally ignored in schools, they are constrained. Perhaps, in a crowded neo-conservative curriculum, teachers' definitions of valuable skills are too narrowly defined and opportunities to share too constrained. The insight I gained through Ashley's answer to why she enjoyed Drama offered me a clear indication that peer teaching might offer her further opportunity to share her skill and hopefully enjoy doing this. Her response also suggested it could well be the passivity required of Ashley in some of her other classes that could be the root of her disaffection with them. Maxine Greene (1995) reminds us that we need to acknowledge young people as active learners rather than passive receivers of digested information. Ashley was certainly not a 'passive' receiver in her other classes, (therein lay some of her problems), however nor was she an active learner.

In Kayleigh's answer there was a reminder for me of the pleasure young people experience in exploring experience through role ( Burton, 1991; O'Toole, 1992 and O'Neill, 1995). There was obviously something Kayleigh gained from the opportunity to 'play different roles of people' yet, unlike Ashley, her response did not highlight any performative angle to her pleasure. Perhaps a clearer clue to what it is that engaged and motivated Kayleigh lies in the earlier part of her response; the fact that she enjoyed working without a script and the freedom of being able to 'act when it goes along'. The process, the 'in the moment' experience, gave her the greatest satisfaction.

I would seem, from her response above, that Kayleigh does not necessarily need the affirmation of an audience to experience fulfilment; it is the aesthetic experience itself that provides meaning. Identifying that it is aesthetic experience which is so valued by Kayleigh, also has implications for education more broadly. Dewey states that one of the unique features of an aesthetic experience was that it fused self and object, and this fusion offered deeper opportunities to find meaning and transformation (1988 ed., p.245). Again, in a curriculum driven by the need to be able to measure and test, standardize and define, perhaps there is too little value placed on intrinsic pleasure or personal meaning. Galton and MacBeath (2002) suggested standardization and testing of work against valuable learning offered through spontaneity and creativity - again emphasizing the value of immediate experience. Kayleigh is unlikely to be alone as a pupil more motivated by intrinsic pleasure than external reward. In a different way to Ashley, I hoped peer teaching might also have

something to offer Kayleigh. Although sharing a skill through teaching might not be as important to her, perhaps the actual role of 'being a teacher' could engage and motivate her.

Following our discussion of their interests, I outlined to Ashley and Kayleigh my proposal that they become peer teachers. It had been decided that they should have as much responsibility as possible in decision making and planning, and they seemed excited by the idea of teaching others and, initially, quite confident. Kayleigh pointed out that she thought she could 'organise a group' and would be 'good at motivating'. They were, however, both quick to point out that they would rather not work with their immediate peers but with pupils who were younger. It is interesting to note that, up to this point, although Ashley and Kayleigh may have been well aware I would have been briefed on their reputation as challenging pupils, issues related to this were not raised, but they did seem keen to work outside their current school context, and even at this very early stage, I noted two factors that later became significant:

Both have a reputation within the school - working outside it might give them an opportunity to reinvent themselves in a different context. It is interesting that, despite their own behaviour patterns, Ashley and Kayleigh feel it is important that their students behave. They decide it might be easier to teach a small group of younger pupils, no more than ten students, and they want to team teach. 'Crowd control!' they said. They need the support of each other- perhaps not as confident as they appear? (Morag. Ref journ.)

In this statement, I recognized that working in a different environment might offer the girls an opportunity to be seen without the negative labels they carried in their own school context and that this could be an opportunity to re-draw themselves (Morrison, 2004). I also noted that already they were seeing themselves as teachers, and this came with certain preconceived expectations of pupil/teacher behaviour and relationships based on their own experience. Ashley and Kayleigh were often in conflict with their teachers, so it is understandable that they wished to try and avoid this situation in their classroom. Ultimately, as Ashley and Kayleigh had decided they would like to work with younger students, it was decided that I might approach the local Primary school to see if it might be possible to work with a group of Year 6 pupils (Year 6 being the final year of Primary school in the U.K.) In the discussion that followed, their enthusiasm grew as we began to talk about what kinds of pupils they thought they would like to work with. It was within this kind of discussion that their commitment and sense of ownership grew.

## Engaging Empathy and developing commitment

I begin this section of analysis with a lengthy extract from the transcript of our recorded conversation at our first meeting. In revealing whom Ashley and Kayleigh would like to work with, much is revealed, not only about how engagement in the task was built, but how important the girls saw personal and individual dynamics within a classroom. After deciding that they would like to work in the local Primary school if possible, and that they felt most confident teaching 'acting skills', conversation turned to what kinds of Year 6 pupil might benefit from learning these skills, and how they might find out about their interests.

**Kayleigh:** Perhaps if we spent a little time with that group of people to see what they are into and their hobbies and hang around.

**Ashley:** Like their lifestyle. Background, but not too personal. Find out stuff about them and don't do a touchy subject when you are trying to teach them.

**Kayleigh:** What they do after school and everything.

**Ashley:** Also that would boost confidence and everything in Drama, and help them learn different techniques that you – like they haven't paid much attention to and when you try to think and you could learn more about it.

**M.M:** Are there any particular type of kids that you think you would like to work with?

**Kayleigh:** Happy.

**MM:** Happy kids!?

( laughter)

**Kayleigh:** I would like confident ones. That are not going to be too shy to stand up and show their expressions. But the quiet ones, because the quiet ones would be a challenge as well. It would be good to mix them in so you could like...the quiet ones could learn from the confident ones and influence them.

**Ashley:** Yes. I mean place the confident ones with the quiet ones to help them to work together.

**Kayleigh:** One of the things that I wouldn't really like is, like a big group of friends that are coming from the same class because in a big group they

won't be willing to act with other people, because they would always stick together all the time and not like... (Laughter)... We would have to deal with that.

In recognizing that it would be useful to know something about their pupils, Ashley and Kayleigh were already taking the first steps toward engaged pedagogy (Hooks, 1994) by acknowledging that the lives of their students beyond the classroom was relevant and important for them to understand as teachers. They also recognized the importance of inclusivity through wishing to work with a mixture of confident and less confident pupils, highlighting that geographies of difference between their pupils could add richness to their drama classroom (O'Grady, 2000). Kayleigh saw the educational value of this in pointing out that 'the quiet ones could learn from the confident ones and influence them.' Interestingly, Ashley picks up on this point but clarifies her interpretation in using the term 'work together' rather than 'influence'. As well as their sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics in the classroom, both girls are also aware of individual sensitivities. Along with acknowledging how important it was to get to know their pupils, Ashley recognized they might need to avoid 'touchy' subjects in terms of the content they may teach. Although they wanted to ensure they had tapped into the interests of their pupils in terms of the kinds of issues they might explore through Drama, they did understand that they needed to have some responsibility in choosing material appropriate for the age group of their class. Later in the discussion, when considering what they might explore with their pupils, Ellen also pointed out they would need to ensure the roles they chose were appropriate for the age group. The girls commented: "Yeah, they could be too old for them... like pregnancy" (Ashley), and "Yeah, you couldn't do that" (Kayleigh). Although they had not yet met their class, both young women were starting to see that teaching came with responsibility, and in recognizing that establishing a meaningful dialogue with their pupils was important they were, as Maxine Greene suggests, seeing this step as part of the process of creative pedagogy (1995).

Following our first meeting, I sought confirmation from Meadowbank Primary School that they might have some Year Six pupils available with whom we could work. Unfortunately, time constraints would have made it difficult for Ashley and Kayleigh to spend informal time with a class, so it was decided that a short questionnaire could be developed that might reveal information about a Year 6 class in the school and I discussed this at our next meeting. Rather than being disappointed they would not be able to meet the Year 6 pupils straight away, Ashley and Kayleigh were excited by the idea of developing a questionnaire, and their commitment to the project deepened through the sense of gravitas this task engendered. They were immediately keen to come up with some questions. I noted how

much they seemed to enjoy the process and the way such an opportunity resonates a more democratic notion of teaching and learning.

Ashley and Kayleigh take the preparation of the little survey very seriously and debate in detail the wording of the questions. Even though they have yet to meet their students, this initial activity is engaging them and giving them a sense of responsibility. They are looking forward to getting the responses back. Although they themselves have been on the receiving end of questions and tests many times, this will be the first time they have had any say in the creation of such a thing. (**Morag**. Ref Journ.)

The girls recognized that their questions could serve two purposes. Ashley proposed 'we could find out stuff about them' and Kayleigh suggested there should be questions that would reveal their interests, 'what they do after school and all that'. They acknowledged that the questionnaire might help them identify a range of personalities in the class and that this could guide their selection of the Drama group. Finding out their pupils' interests would also be helpful in providing ideas for the focus of their teaching. They did need to be able to identify their respondents in order to select the group, but as Denscombe (2002) suggests, a questionnaire provides a way of gathering straightforward uncontroversial information (p.88) and this was all they really needed to give them information about pupils in the Year 6 class.

Ashley and Kayleigh came up with a range of questions for a short questionnaire to be dropped off at Meadowbank the following week. A number of questions asked Year 6 pupils about their interests, 'What sorts of things do you do on the weekend and after school?'; 'Do you read any books or magazines?'; 'What do you like to read?'; 'What do you want to watch on television'; 'What sort of movies do you like to watch? - action adventure, scary, romantic, comedy (circle)'. There were also questions that asked the pupils to reflect on how they saw themselves, 'Do you like working with other people on things? Why/why not?'; 'How confident do you think you are? (circle a response from Very Confident to Very shy.)' Questions were simply worded and, for the most part, only required a phrase or short comment. Even without any background in research, Ashley and Kayleigh recognized it was important for their questions to be jargon-free and not require too much of their respondents' time (Bell, 2002, p.122.) I promised to type up their questionnaire and deliver it to the Meadowbank Year 6 teacher later in the week, with a view to collecting responses in time for our next meeting. The meeting concluded with expectation and enthusiasm high, both girls were now on a path to take some ownership of the challenge.

## **Responsibility – developing ownership**

Our third meeting in the conference room was a busy one. Questionnaires had been returned and Ashley and Kayleigh were very excited to see what had been written. Ellen was again able to join us in this session and so I was able to jot down a few notes as I watched them go through responses, it was a lively meeting, full of laughter and energy:

Ashley and Kayleigh enjoy reading aloud any responses that amuse them, “You get a real sense of the Year 6 mind don’t you?!” (**Ellen**)

Task of sorting and deciding is handled expertly. The girls look for information about individuals and information that gives a general idea of the interests of most Y6 students. Kayleigh jots down notes about which movies and books are most frequently mentioned. They pick up also on gender differences in responses and this prompts Ashley to comment that there should be an equal number of boys and girls in the group. The responses re-read, re-sorted, and a short list of girls and boys is placed in the middle of the table. (**Morag**. Obs Nts.)

True to their word they selected a mixed group of eight, four boys and four girls who, from what they could identify in the questionnaires, would be a combination of confident and less confident pupils. I noted again how empowering the process of selection seemed to be:

They are not afraid to disagree with each other or with Ellen. They listen and justify their own ideas and interpretations. There is a real spirit of collaboration in the process. (**Morag**. Obs Nts.)

Also true to their word Ashley and Kayleigh listened to their pupils and decided, from the responses, that their pupils seemed most interested in themes of mystery and ‘spooky stories’. Although in our first meeting Ashley and Kayleigh had expressed they were more fond of playing roles in Drama based on ‘real life’, they agree to explore fantasy with their Drama group. Both girls enjoyed performing, and what had emerged over the last two meetings was their interest in teaching their Drama group acting skills. Ellen had supported their confidence in being able to do this by telling me in an earlier meeting with them:

I think in any class you often are looking for students who can act as role models for other student. Because Ashley and Kayleigh are good, particularly in role-play, they are quite happy to show what they can do. They quite often get chosen. (**Ellen**. SS Int 1.)

What emerged in the third meeting was the idea that the best way to teach their group acting skills would be through working on a performance with them; conducting a series of lessons that would culminate in a short play that could be performed for the rest of the Year 6 group. This seemed a good idea, given Ashley and Kayleigh's eagerness to pass on their acting skills, but they also were keen to write the play themselves. They were adamant that it would be easier for them to write a script tailor-made for their group than try to find something already written that could accommodate 4 girls and 4 boys and have a spooky theme. While not wanting to dampen their enthusiasm, I did draw to their attention this would be a big task on top of planning their lesson activities. But my scepticism was tempered by Ellen's comment outside the room after they had left, "Do you know how hard it is to get any written work out of these girls?!" The fact that the girls had actually volunteered to write was significant: It was something they wanted to do; it was writing that had a real purpose, thus providing an 'authentic and motivating context' (Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth, 2005 p.101). It was a huge risk however, and with the pressure of only one more planning meeting before we were due to go back into Meadowbank to begin teaching, it seemed an impossible task.

Despite our fears, Ashley and Kayleigh did begin writing a script and reported to Ellen over their next few Drama lessons on how it was developing. Ellen reported back to me when I rang to confirm our next meeting that, to her amazement, Kayleigh had asked to use the Drama staffroom computer at lunchtime to type up her scenes. Completely independently, they had decided that the most efficient way to complete the script was for each of them to take a scene. They had apparently met on a couple of evenings and had also talked on the phone to make sure scenes would fit together. It was a haunted house mystery, reminiscent of storylines from 'Scooby-Doo' (a popular Disney cartoon about a group of teenage detectives). In Ashley and Kayleigh's script, a group of children defy their parents and plot to stay a night in a spooky house that is, in the end, discovered only to be 'haunted' by one of their friends. The script was not a sophisticated piece of writing and was quite long, but it did contain all the ingredients Kayleigh and Ashley had identified as likely to appeal to their Year 6 pupils. The real achievement was that they had been writing, a clear sign that they had begun to feel a sense of commitment and responsibility. Adding to this awareness of responsibility was the fact that they had also started talking about which of their pupils would be most appropriate for various roles. They also tried to ensure that all the roles had equal speaking time. At the time I acknowledged their effort but had some reservations; as I wrote in my reference journal at the time: "All these considerations show a sensitive concern about inclusion, though I am concerned that, in their zeal, the play will be too long." Although the length of their play did create a challenge, the fact that they had put pen to paper at all was a milestone. As Rogers (1994) suggests, students value being offered a 'purpose and

responsibility' and their engagement is deepened by this process, and the freedom they have in directing their energies. (Rogers, 1994, p.8).

Although the planning process was lengthy, I now acknowledge it was vitally important. Before Ashley and Kayleigh had even begun their teaching, they were given responsibility, trust and autonomy. They enjoyed these earlier tasks and committed themselves to the project; their deepening engagement had a personal impact. I noted at the time "They are growing enormously in confidence and taking their roles as teachers very seriously". (**Morag Ref Journ.**)

Although I had sought permission for the girls to work with me, through an earlier letter home to their parents, it was suggested to me by a colleague that another letter, updating their parents on what they were doing and praising their efforts to this point, would be a good idea. Apparently few letters went home to their parents that were not reports on misbehaviour or some new disciplinary sanction. I didn't tell Ashley and Kayleigh I intended to send these letters, so one of the first questions I asked when I recorded our final planning meeting was whether they had been received, there was much laughter as they reported their mothers' responses. "Mum goes like, 'What have you done wrong, Ashley?' and then she reads it out properly. So funny." (Ashley). Although secretly pleased, neither girl was used to receiving praise so they were also quite embarrassed. Kayleigh recounted what happened when her mother opened the letter: "My Mum was like, all happy and that. Then she started showing it to all my family and that, and I'm like ....(groans)" (**Ashley and Kayleigh SS Int.2.**).

While my report on this planning stage has been quite lengthy, I feel it is necessary to put into perspective how important the initial planning stages of the project were in building the responsibility and trust necessary for Ashley and Kayleigh to feel like teachers and to believe they had something valuable to offer others. In this way their negative engagement with school could be redirected toward more positive goals. Jennings (2003) suggests young people struggle for autonomy, dignity, control, ownership and belonging, and that supporting these needs should be the goal of a social, motivating school community (p.45). I suspect Ashley and Kayleigh's challenging behaviour in many of their subjects reflected their struggle to meet these needs in contexts that do not provide opportunities for pupils to have autonomy or ownership. Autonomy, dignity and control crucially shape the experiences of girls in school (Brown & Gilligan 1992) and the 'pedagogic terrain of power' (Giroux 1997) in today's schools offers little opportunity for genuine pupil power and leadership. Ashley and Kayleigh, labelled 'negative leaders' in their school, were given the opportunity to direct their leadership skills toward a more collaborative and nurturing role, that of peer teacher.

These central notions of ‘autonomy’, ‘dignity’ and ‘control’ are crucial, as is how they might be shaped by school experience for girls. Understanding the pedagogic terrain of power in schools (Giroux 1997) provided insight into the gendered experiences of the five young women in my studies.

Before they had even met their pupils they had established a sense of empathy and responsibility through gathering information on them and planning for their needs.

### **The lessons – The challenges of risk and responsibility**

Thus, with high hopes, and after several weeks of planning, we arrived to meet the Year 6 students in the local Primary school. Ashley and Kayleigh, though a little nervous, were looking forward at last to putting faces to the names of the pupils they had chosen. When I had arrived to take the girls across to Meadowbank on the morning of their first lesson I had found them already waiting, excitedly clutching the scripts and scribbled notes about the shape of the lesson on clipboards (the clipboards I suspect were a ‘teacherly’ touch as well as security!) The play was complete, typed and copied. We tracked down a white-board marker so that they could jot down the learning “targets”, and all was now ready to begin.

We had previously discussed together the shape of this first lesson – they had some ideas about some warm-up games they could play with the pupils to break the ice, and then planned talk to them about the script they had prepared and allocate roles. The lessons would be taking place in the school gym and when we arrived, before their class, the girls noted the highly polished floors and the vaulting horse. I was impressed to note that they recognized these instantly as potential hazards (no doubt well aware of the ‘fun’ that can be had in socks on such a surface; and the temptation of the vaulting horse for climbing.) On a very practical level Ashley and Kayleigh were recognizing their responsibilities as teachers.

### **In the classroom: Lesson one – First steps**

A commotion in the hallway heralded the arrival of seven giggling Year 6 students (it appeared one of their 8 was absent). After I introduced their new ‘teachers’ and myself they went to sit at the side of the room. I had discussed with Ashley and Kayleigh earlier that once the lessons began I would just be an observer - they were to be totally in control in this context. In my observation notes I recorded the girls’ tentative first steps as teachers:

Ashley and Kayleigh bring them in to sit in a circle. The girls introduce themselves whilst the Year 6 group seem on their best behaviour - sit quietly. Pupils a bit bemused by the whole arrangement but each replies

shyly when asked their name. Kayleigh tells them she hopes they will all like learning about Drama so they can perform for their class, there is a ripple of mock dissent from the boys, so she addresses one of them directly: 'You really don't have to do this if you don't want to.'(K). Blushing red, the boy mumbles that it might be 'orright' and that he does want to stay. **(Morag. Obs Nts.)**

As experienced drama students, Ashley and Kayleigh have identified the routine of sitting in a circle as useful, but more than this have recognized the need to listen, respond, and collaborate with their pupils. Rather than either ignore or reassure the boys they will enjoy the experience, Kayleigh offers them some control. In a gentle but focussed manner she has offered a genuine choice, reinforcing they have ownership - a vitally important element to establish real collaborative learning (Moos, 2004).

The lesson started slowly. The pupils had been warned to be on their 'best behaviour' as their teacher left, and they were initially subdued. Ashley and Kayleigh recognized they needed to move on to something active. A Drama game changed this tone and the Year 6 pupils became more lively. As the group became excited, the girls needed to ensure they were listening and Kayleigh reminded them they needed to be quiet or they would miss instructions. I was surprised at how confident Kayleigh was; although informal in her delivery of instructions - 'Listen up guys, everyone needs to sit back into the circle or we won't be able to give you your scripts' - she was firm and focused in her expectations. The fact that it was Kayleigh who seemed to take the lead was interesting, as I noted at the time:

End of game, Year 6 is more lively. Kayleigh, quieter of the two, takes control, Ashley standing at her side smiling supportively but nervously - she does not seem so comfortable now class are not so docile.

**(Morag. Obs Nts)**

In the planning stages, although engaged, Kayleigh had been the less vocal of the two girls, while Ashley had come across as extremely confident and assured. It was interesting to note this change in the classroom, giving me the first indication that for all of Ashley's outward bravado in her familiar school context, there were insecurities to be tested in this new environment. School is a place where identities are formed and reinforced, and social dynamics within this context play a major role in how students view themselves (Juvonene & Wentzel, 1996, Harter, 1996) It seemed that Ashley was finding leadership as a teacher difficult and I noticed that she was increasingly deferring to Kayleigh during this lesson - "The girls had been planning to take turns in explaining each character, but Ashley looks to Kayleigh, she is struggling to articulate ideas" (Observation notes).

One interesting development was that either Kayleigh, or Ashley herself, must have recognized her limitations with speaking to the group as a whole. There was a pause after the scripts were distributed and, while the class were flipping through pages to see their characters, the girls huddled for a brief conversation. Following this Kayleigh informed the class that the two characters not in the first scene would join Ashley at the back of the room to talk about their characters. This seemed a far more comfortable option, at this point, for Ashley. It is worth quoting at further length what happened during this period when the two girls worked separately:

... she (Ashley) more confident with this smaller group, less self-conscious. She works very sensitively with them, encouraging them as they struggle with lines.

Kayleigh - setting a cracking pace, already improvising the action in a playground scene with her group. Sophisticated level of questioning  
Kayleigh - impressive. Before suggesting her own ideas, asks the group for theirs, and seeks explanation from them where appropriate - defers to their opinion. Kayleigh highlights concepts she wants them to learn - reinforces understanding with reminders - uses the language of Drama; 'Don't forget to look at who you are speaking to'. 'Use eye contact.' 'Try to focus and stay in role', she directs. Kayleigh encouraging and supportive - aware of the need to think ahead. Two of the boys joking and fidgeting as they wait for their line, she has recognised a potential floor wrestle - called one boy up to enter the scene a little earlier than his line requires - now occupied and out of temptation's way! (**Morag**. Obs Nts.)

This observation contains a wealth of insight into how the peer teaching process was operating for Ashley and Kayleigh. While it raises some interesting issues in relation to Ashley's confidence, it is also very revealing of Kayleigh's skill as a teacher, and how both young women have internalized the process of teaching from their experience as pupils; they would seem to be 'Intuitive practitioners' (Finney and Morrison, 2005). When planning the lesson, they had shaped its structure around what was familiar. They had also recognized when they needed to move on to a new activity by 'reading' the energy of their class. I found Kayleigh's teaching skill remarkable (and a little worrying as someone whose career is training teachers); but as the recipients of a variety of teaching strategies every day it is perhaps not surprising that Kayleigh has a finely tuned awareness of what is effective. What is surprising is how little use as teachers we make of such a valuable resource - the skilled peer teacher (Rudduck, 2001; Finney et al, 2005).

In a way the section of this first lesson, where the girls separated, provided some key insights for my research as a whole. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009) describe a 'critical incident' as that which stimulates reflection (p.404). Similarly to Stenhouse (1967), who suggested that all reflection on classroom practice should have at its centre a consideration of the political and ethical, Francis contends a 'critical incident' is that which stimulates us to reflect on our assumptions, values and embodied beliefs, 'the notion of "critical" demands being willing to challenge embodied assumptions.' (p.169).

Two of my own key assumptions were called into question as I reflected on my observation of this phase of the lesson. Firstly, my view that the loud and self-professed 'mouthy' Ashley was as confident and self-assured as I had assumed and secondly, my assumption that effective teaching would be difficult for students whose challenging behaviour in their own classrooms suggested little commitment to fostering positive teacher/pupil relationships. Ashley was seen in a new light when she worked in a small group situation – her sensitivity with the younger pupils revealed empathy and understanding. She was able to work in a more collaborative mode in this small group context (Flutter & Rudduck 2004). Kayleigh, while more confident and 'leader like' in the whole class situation also, intuitively, utilized the kind of democratic approach in her negotiations with pupils that Flutter and Rudduck (2004.p.188) highlight as often being a hallmark of peer teaching interactions. Kayleigh also, very convincingly, proved she could use the language of a Drama teacher to support pupil learning.



**Illustration 2:** Reading the script through

I had hoped the experience of being a teacher would offer both Ashley and Kayleigh the opportunity to redefine themselves as leaders, and anticipated it might impact on their personal engagement and development as students. I had not anticipated I would learn so much about the act of teaching itself through watching these young women and listening to their reflections on the practice of teaching. As

MacBeath (2003) suggests, there is much to be learned from pupils about teaching effectiveness.

When the class regrouped and Ashley returned with her two pupils she looked more relaxed. While still deferring to Kayleigh when something needed further explanation, she did seem more confident and able to help Kayleigh describe where they wished to go in the next

lesson. Right to the very end of the lesson Kayleigh reinforced learning, reminding the year 6 group as she concluded the lesson that they must try not to laugh when working in role, 'That is called 'focus' she says, and points to one of the targets written on the whiteboard'.

**(Morag. Obs. Nts.)** I also recorded the energy this first lesson generated for the peer teachers and their pupils,

...group are praised for how hard they have worked, told to look after their scripts. Beaming Year 6 students leave. Ashley and Kayleigh - melodramatic sighs of relief - obvious they have enjoyed themselves.

**(Morag Obs.Nts.)**

It had been amazing to see how maturely and expertly the girls handled the class and I told them this. Ellen came over from the high school to hear how their first lesson went and they were full of information. They excitedly told her about their class and what they already thought of some of the Year 6 personalities. The girls identified a couple of the boys that they thought may make trouble and agreed they needed to make sure they were firm with them. Ashley and Kayleigh were also surprised that a couple of the personalities who had identified themselves as 'shy' in their questionnaires, had not seemed to be so in reality. The little questionnaires they had formulated to inform their teaching had only been able to provide a snapshot of the group and their interests; it had been used for convenience because there had not been the time to meet the class personally beforehand. Denscombe (2002) suggests it is reasonable to assume there is always an element of convenience in any sampling procedure and one has to accept that any one source of information is unlikely to give a full picture (p.17); the peer teachers had learnt a great deal about individuals in their Drama class in their first 50- minute lesson!

There was a good deal of honesty in the girls' report on the lesson. Ashley admitted to Ellen she had been more nervous than she thought she would be, but that she did enjoy the lesson. Ashley and Kayleigh decided they would start with the class together but divide up the scenes so that each could take a group for the rehearsal section, and bring them together again at the end. My reflective notes made after the lesson record the significance I saw in this brief interaction with Ellen after the lesson had finished:

The girls are being very reflective. They make pertinent observations and speak as if they are teachers themselves. They have developed a different relationship with their teacher and talk freely on an equal level. They have taken an adult risk and have had responsibility as teachers -they seem to have relished this opportunity. (Morag. Ref Nts)

Ashley and Kayleigh were already re-drawing a new dynamic for themselves in relation to their teacher. They were teaching peers, and in sharing their classroom stories they could move from private experience to shared understanding. Kushner (2006) advocates reflective practice as a form of political action, suggesting that when the critical gaze is shared, new understandings can emerge and change is possible. Ashley and Kayleigh sharing their experiences of teaching did offer pedagogic insight, but I suggest the politics of sharing in this context ran deeper. The very act of engaging with their teacher as a peer was a move toward more collaborative and democratic relationship. As numerous writers have pointed out, there is transformative power for social (Sarason 1999, Hardgreaves 2004, Noddings 2007) and psychological (Cooper 2003, Grossman 2007) change when relationships are constructive and supportive.

### **Classroom challenges – testing boundaries**

Two days later, ready for their second lesson, Ashley and Kayleigh were waiting for me to arrive in the car park of the Primary school. I was impressed by their eagerness. They were still talking about their first lesson and how interesting the personalities in their Drama group were. As we waited for the class to arrive, they informed me of their plans for the lesson and the fact they had decided to do a small discussion with the whole group first about acting skills, then divide them into smaller groups once again to rehearse different scenes. It seemed that both girls had acknowledged what worked well in the previous lesson. Kayleigh asked about using the white board in the room and we tracked down a pen so she could write some 'Targets' on the board. Copying the format of their own Drama lessons, where learning objectives for the lesson are written up and discussed before moving into practical work, Ashley and Kayleigh had decided that, for that day's lesson, pupils would be introduced to the idea of 'focus' and 'staying in role', so these concepts were written up.

The Year 6 pupils arrived and were good deal livelier than they had been at the start of their first lesson. They knew what to expect and this time interacted with Ashley and Kayleigh as they came into the room, asking them questions about the play, who would be invited to watch, would they have costumes, props? Their teachers remained vague about these details as they herded the group toward the other side of the room and invited them to sit on the benches they had drawn up into a semicircle around the white board. Once again Kayleigh took the lead in explaining ideas, although Ashley did join in with examples – whether these were very helpful or not is debatable, "Like when you are playing a mother you act as a mother all the time, you can't be you and like giggle" (Morag. Obs Nts). The Year 6 group were restless while listening and seemed keen to just get up and start

practising. I noted at the time that they were starting to test the boundaries of their relationship with Ashley and Kayleigh as teachers.

The pupils and their two Year 9 teachers are comfortable enough with each other to engage in some playful chat. Forgetting there is another adult in the room (myself) one of the boys starts fooling around – giving a bit of cheek to his “teachers” and encouraging his mates to join in. Kayleigh, pulls him gently but firmly into line, reminding him of the boundaries, his responsibility to the group and the ultimate performance. ‘You need to listen or we won’t get the play finished... don’t let the others down. (**Morag**. Obs Nts.)

Watching Kayleigh at the board it is clear she has internalized some very subtle teaching skills, such as questioning. While Ashley is inclined to try to give an answer to their questions, often struggling when she is unsure, Kayleigh turns questions back onto her pupils. One of the year 6 pupils asked where one of the scenes might be set, I not:

Kayleigh has a more negotiating style. “Where do you think the kids all want to meet? In the park?”

Kayleigh seems in tune with when students are not engaged - one of the boys has been quiet and said nothing – she singles him out:

“Where do you think they should meet Tommy?” (**Morag**. Obs Nts.)

In that brief exchange there is evidence not only of Kayleigh’s ability as a ‘dialogic’ teacher (Shor, 1993; Eisner, 2002), but also of her ability to be sensitive to the individual needs of her pupils. Her ability to see her class as individuals and support their engagement in learning suggests she has developed empathy and a sense of responsibility. As Grossman et al (2007) point out, the capacity to nurture illustrates personal investment (p.113) and, here Kayleigh is illustrating a commitment to the needs of another individual.

The second half of Lesson 2 and all of Lesson 3 the following week are devoted to getting the pupils moving through each scene. Unfortunately, the girls’ plans to actually teach some acting skills were left behind as the pressure to produce a performance took over.

Challenges began to emerge for the peer teachers:

The desire to have a performance ready in the allotted time is undermining other important objectives and, in an effort to move more quickly, Ashley and Kayleigh have had to take a more “directorial” approach. The Year 6 drama class are enjoying themselves but also seizing opportunities to

misbehave when they are not in a scene. They are also very concerned about the lack of props and find it difficult to “imagine” them into being. It is impossible for one girl to imagine a newspaper if she does not actually have one. (Morag. Obs Nts)

There are two things to note about the challenges of democratic teaching revealed in this observation; firstly, the constraints of time. The processes of negotiation and collaboration do take time. bell hooks (sic) (1994) reminds us that, while engaged pedagogy is an ideal, many teachers remain unwilling to be involved in practices that emphasise mutual participation because more time and effort are required to work in this way (p.204). While Flutter & Rudduck (2004) and Moos (2004) highlight the importance of directly consulting pupils as key stakeholders in learning, in practice this is not easy. Mainstream teachers are under pressure to focus on covering as much curriculum ground as possible toward having their pupils prepared for external tests. Similarly, Ashley and Kayleigh had to decide how much time could be devoted to introducing acting skills whilst still ensuring that a performance was ready for the final lesson; their ‘directorial’ approach was certainly influenced by the pressure of time. However, it should also be stated that the Year 6 pupils themselves were very keen to perform, and thus it would be unfair to say the peer teachers were not taking the desires of their class into consideration. Herein lies the second challenge of democratic teaching – negotiating power relationships.

The Year 6 pupils had begun to test Ashley and Kayleigh, and started to influence teaching decisions in a more active way. At this point both girls had to decide how much freedom they would allow their class. It seemed particularly difficult for Ashley to navigate her role as teacher in the classroom. It was clear she wanted the pupils to like her, and this meant being patient with their antics and responding to their demand for props, yet she was frustrated when they failed to listen to her and challenged her role as a teacher. As Brown and Gilligan (1992) have highlighted, girls can find the development of identity a complex process as they negotiate their desire for acceptance and the expectations of others. Both Ashley and Kayleigh needed to navigate a terrain of power in their classroom (Giroux 1997) and acknowledge that, ‘In teaching there is always the retaining as well as conferring of power’ (Stenhouse, 1983, p.185). At the end of the second lesson Ashley and Kayleigh talked through their experience as they packed away benches and tables used in the lesson. They decided on their approach for the next session, and walked through where they might position themselves in the next lesson. This observation reveals the girls’ ability to acknowledge their pupils’ ideas, and yet also foster the behaviour necessary for constructive engagement.

They are united in their frustration with the naughty behaviour, but circumspect in any criticism. They discuss strategies and decide props might be good idea after all. They also think it may be helpful if Ashley is positioned off-stage, so that she can keep an eye on potential troublemaker'. (**Morag**. Obs Nts)

In the third lesson props were introduced and, as might be expected, this was very exciting for the group, I noted that: "Two of the boys have decided that wriggling across the floor in the sleeping bags is more fun than pretending to be asleep in them" (**Morag**. Obs Nts).

Although Ashley and Kayleigh could no doubt be pleased the class was enjoying their lesson, high spirits did need to be dampened and they needed to remind their pupils of a key term introduced in an earlier lesson, 'focus'.

When there is too much general misbehaviour the group is brought together – a serious talk is needed.

"Do you want to do this performance?" Kayleigh, very seriously, "Well, read my lips, everyone has to focus!" ('Read my lips' - one of Ellen's favourite expressions!) (**Morag**. Obs Nts)

I was amused to hear Kayleigh using one of their Drama teacher's favourite phrases, thus illustrating how much she was modelling her own style of teaching on Ellen, a teacher she did respect and work hard for. I noted that the serious talk did seem to work and by the end of the third lesson, some progress was being made. Ashley and Kayleigh were happy to exchange friendly banter with the group; they were having fun and there was much laughter, but the peer teachers were also focussed and firm. There was a mutual sense of respect developing between the peer teachers and their class. Between Lessons 3 and 4, some of



the Year 6 pupils came to the High School to attend the Orientation Day. Ashley told me how pleased she was when one came up to her with their peers, said 'hello' and introduced her to one of the other Year 6 pupils as 'my Drama teacher'. This was evidence, it seemed, that an authentic relationship based on mutual respect had been established.

**Illustration 3:** Ashley and Tom

## Outside the classroom – personal change and recognition

As well as what happened in the classroom, what was happening outside it fed into my view of how Ashley and Kayleigh's engagement was developing. I had asked Ellen to report back to me any informal feedback she may have from other teachers of the girls' behaviour in their other classes throughout the process. Sometimes, Ashley and Kayleigh offered me these insights themselves as we chatted on the way back to the High School, and in an effort not to lose any of the valuable things they were saying, I decided to interview them together briefly when we returned to school after Lesson 4. I was keen to establish their thoughts on the process so far and to find out, from their perspective, how things were going back in school. I began by asking whether teaching had been what they had expected:

**Ashley:** I thought that it was going to be...I thought it was a good experience to like, know that we can go and do something that...and like it's really put my personality to like the test, to see if I've got the ability to do it.

**M.M:** Got any thoughts, Kayleigh?

**Kayleigh:** First of all, it's just exciting, but I am getting a bit worried.

(Morag. Obs.Notes)

I had initially assumed Kayleigh's response, as it was to a question about teaching, suggested she might not be as confident in the classroom as she looked. However, following the interview, she suggested it was not that she worried about teaching so much as finishing the play in time for the performance. On a very practical level, Kayleigh wanted her students to succeed and her response comes from that perspective. However, looking more closely at this motivation there is more to be found. Ford (1996) would describe this kind of desire as 'pro-social', i.e. Kayleigh's motivation to help pupils achieve a performance goal illustrating that her sense of self is defined by her ability to help others. Ashley's response, more obviously personal, appears based on what she feels the experience is asking of her, i.e. 'putting my personality to the test.' Her motivation and engagement is developed through facing this personal challenge. Thus, both Ashley and Kayleigh's responses would seem, in different ways, to support Ford and Nichol's views on how engagement can be achieved - i.e. through both a sense of connectedness to others and a sense of task accomplishment: The authors argue that more initial, enduring interest, and meaningful engagement is possible when activities tap into these desires (1996.p.149). In terms of personal development, Dweck (2000) emphasises the link between self-esteem and social relationships, suggesting that facilitating the success of others can offer individuals a sense

of value as powerful as personal achievement. This is interesting to consider in cases where pupils may not be achieving goals set within the standard curriculum; students like Ashley and Kayleigh may not have the extrinsic rewards of good grades to foster a positive sense of self, however their ability to help others might offer an alternative avenue to develop self-esteem.

It was hoped that participation in peer teaching would provide the opportunity for Ashley and Kayleigh to redefine themselves in school and lose the adjective 'negative' from their label as leaders. Pleasingly, it seemed this was beginning to happen. I had been made aware by Ellen that Ashley and Kayleigh's work was being discussed by their teachers back at school, and the girls were enjoying the positive attention. I asked them about this:

**Ashley:** Everybody keeps saying, 'Yeah, you behaved very well; we're all pleased that you are getting on really well' and like Miss McNamara keeps saying 'How is it going?'" (**Ashley**. SS Int. 2.)

Teachers, it seemed, were showing an interest in what they were doing and giving them encouragement. The positive informal feedback coming to Ellen about their behaviour in other classes, suggested both girls seemed more focused and settled. Their English teacher, for example, made a point of saying to Ellen that he had particularly noticed a difference in Ashley's 'attitude'. While it cannot be stated this feedback indicated, at this point, any radical or consistent transformation, it was heartening. What was as interesting to note was the response Ashley and Kayleigh had to the praise they were getting from their teachers. While they seemed genuinely pleased to be getting positive feedback, it was a novel experience that also seemed to generate some discomfort, as I noted in a journal entry:

'Interestingly the girls are keeping very low key about the project with their peers, they seem embarrassed about the positive attention they are getting'. (**Morag**. Ref Journ)

It would seem that there was some tension between wanting to do well with the project and maintaining their established reputation as school rebels within their peer group. Raey and Arnot (2002) and Jackson (2006) reinforce the view that personal identity is established through peer interactions. Jackson (2006a) suggests that social status and the need to appear 'cool' and 'popular' within the peer group is very important for girls (p.124). A contradiction therefore appeared to lie at the heart of Ashley and Kayleigh's reticence to share their experiences with their peer group; while they were pleased to be gaining positive recognition from their teachers, and redrawing the dynamics of those relationships, it seemed they felt less easy about having their peer group aware of what they were doing. I

asked the girls directly, in the second interview, what they had told their friends of what they were doing:

'We've spoken to like a couple of people that we can trust and they're just like going to keep it quiet, 'cos you don't want the whole school knowing about it and like going "Did you hear about Ashley and Kayleigh?"

(**Ashley**. SS Int.2.)

Ashley's response indicates that they were uncomfortable with too much attention from their peers; it illustrates an uneasiness about being a source of school gossip. Jackson (2006a) suggests negative behaviour in girls is often a shield for insecurity (p.123) and it seemed this might well be the case for Ashley and Kayleigh. Perhaps sharing their commitment to the project was, at this point, just too risky – it might have left them too vulnerable.

#### **Lesson 4: Under pressure – Commitment and personal risk**

Because of the mid-term break, there was a week's gap between Lesson 3 and this one - Lesson 4, of the 6-week project. When I arrived in the car park on this occasion, I was concerned to see only Ashley waiting. Kayleigh had been in school that morning and Ashley had tried to contact her but there was no answer at home or on her mobile. It appeared this lesson would have to be conducted solo. Ashley appeared a little nervous, but also keen to go ahead. She suggested the Year 6 pupils would be disappointed if we cancelled. Ashley said that it was Kayleigh who had the notes about what they would be doing in the lesson. Although planning was meant to be a joint activity, I had suspected that Ashley relied considerably on Kayleigh and, sensing her insecurity, I offered to help. The tough, independent Ashley emerged at this point; it seemed her pride was at stake: 'I'll be fine on my own.'

The class arrived and seemed pleased to see us. Following a question about Kayleigh's whereabouts, Ashley informed them she would be taking the group on her own. I noted how the tone of the lesson developed:

A quick, active, warm-up activity is conducted and Ashley, then calls them into a circle. Over the break some students have mislaid their scripts - there is a hiatus in proceedings as we try to locate spare copies. Confusion about what point had been reached in the play by the end of the last lesson – Ashley is becoming flustered. She is not decisive and the group are detecting this. (**Morag** Obs Nts)

As the lesson progressed further it became clear that Ashley was struggling; the situation that consequently developed is clearly another critical incident in Ashley's journey, and in my research. The following notes record what happened and my ethical dilemma.

Ashley pauses to think about what she should do next – in a spirit of desperation asks the group: “err.. well., what should we do now? I can't think...” - cut short by one of the boys: “Well, you're the teacher!”

The Drama group has sensed her insecurity and are testing her. She has not looked to me for help or intervention. She is going to battle on. She takes some pupils to the other end of the room to rehearse one of the scenes. Most can't remember their stage directions. Students not in this scene are fooling around... The rehearsal is becoming disorganised - she is struggling to gain control. Ashley is becoming increasingly flustered. The boys' off-task behaviour is escalating. Ashley makes a half-hearted attempt to get them back to work - is ignored. One student asks “Will Kayleigh be back next lesson?” This is painful to watch. (**Morag**. Obs Nts)

I very clearly recall how uncomfortable I was at the time, and how ethically torn. As a teacher myself I felt responsible for Ashley and I wanted to protect her from further humiliation. I wanted to leave my notebook, get up and help her. Yet I was aware, as a researcher, that I had given an undertaking to remain as 'outside' the process as possible; were I to intervene I would have disrupted the 'naturalness' of the setting I was observing (Denscombe, 2002, p.140). I had to acknowledge that what I was seeing was one of the very great risks involved in peer teaching in action, and if I intervened I would make an impact on the process that would invariably compromise what I could say about how it worked. However, Stake (2000) suggests there is a 'protective covenant' between researcher and participant (p.447) and, although his use of this term is to do with protecting participant interests and providing anonymity I felt, at this point in the research, this term could equally have been applied to the



**Illustration 4:** Ashley teaching

sense of responsibility I felt to protect Ashley. As a teacher did I not have an unwritten contract to mitigate risk? But, as a researcher, was there something to be learned from letting this situation take its course? As I watched Ashley struggle I battled a moral dilemma. I did not intervene, but I genuinely think I would have if Ashley had just once looked toward me for help.

'Ashley is struggling through. She appears so vulnerable in front of the Year 6 group. Her pride, such an important thing for her, must be hurt.' (Obs. Nts. Morag)

The lesson had not gone well. Ashley did look shaken; she was well aware that she had not been well prepared, and had lost control. The Year 6 pupils had not listened to her, and one had pointedly asked when Kayleigh was coming back. She must have felt wretched. Immediately after the lesson Ashley did not seem to want to talk about what had happened, she seemed keen to get back to school as soon as possible so she did not miss her Drama class with Ellen. It was clear that she was shaken but the only observation offered at this point was that the lesson 'went rubbish'. In a later interview Ashley did reveal how she had felt at the time...

**Ashley:** "I was all nervous and I didn't feel very much in control of them. I felt sort of like an idiot. All these questions were racing through my head and I didn't know what to say. I was a bit frightened as well because I didn't want to muck up, but I did. So I felt gutted after Tuesday's lesson"

**(Ashley. SS Int.3)**

I had tried to reassure her that with more planning the next lesson would be fine. However, though I offered to discuss ideas with her, she seemed overly keen to just get back to school – no doubt wishing to put as much distance as possible between herself and the scene of her indignity. At this point I felt the process had completely disempowered Ashley and it was hard to see how she could have received any 'positive affirmation of worth' (Liebman, 1996, p.301) from the experience. I felt very badly about this and was desperate to talk through what had happened. I decided to ring Ellen that afternoon after school.

When I rang Ellen she was already well aware of what had happened. Ashley had returned to school and told her all about it, and she informed me: "Ashley feels dreadful about it and is blaming herself for what went wrong." This confirmed what I feared and I launched into an apology – communicating how badly I felt that this had happened, and my concern for Ashley as a result. I was deeply disappointed, and at this point, felt the project was failing; it was certainly not my intention to put the emotional well-being of my research participants at risk. When I finally finished expressing all this to Ellen she gave her own perspective on events. It cannot be understated how important this response ultimately became to my analysis of what had really happened in the classroom that day; Ellen's insight became pivotal not only to my understanding of this individual event, but of the relationship between engagement, risk and personal development. My reflection on this phone conversation reveals its significance:

Ellen said Ashley feels dreadful and is blaming herself for what went wrong. I started to apologise, but couldn't believe it when she completely contradicted my view of events. "It isn't a disaster, it's actually a good thing". I was totally mystified. How could Ashley feeling dreadful possibly be 'a good thing'?! Ellen explained: "Ashley cares that it went wrong. Ashley cares about something; the project must matter to her". I hadn't looked at it this way at all. (**Morag**. Ref Journ.)

This observation is critical to understanding that the project had indeed been successful on a deep level; it had engaged Ashley to the point that she felt a sense of responsibility for the task, and her emotional engagement is evident in her feelings of disappointment. Empathy and engagement are inextricably linked and Ashley is illustrating the qualities of a 'carer' (Hoffman, 2000). Ellen's insight came from her understanding of Ashley's general attitude to school up to this point. Ashley did not have a reputation for being committed or particularly caring about academic achievement, or school in general. More important to her, seemingly, was her reputation as 'tough' or 'cool' among her peers. Jackson (2006a) points out that negative behaviour can act as a protective barrier for a young person – shielding them from revealing their real sense of self-worth (p.123); I suspect this applied to Ashley. Similarly to many disengaged and challenging students, her insecurity was masked by a persona which appeared not to care about conventional goals. In a later interview Ellen, when reflecting further on this notion of caring, had this to say:

If you start to care about something, that's actually quite dangerous. Because if you start to care how well you do, say at school, then if you fail it matters. Whereas if you spend all your time saying "I don't care", then if you fail it doesn't matter. (**Ellen**. SS.Int 3.)

Here Ellen links the notion of caring to risk; peer teaching would seem to have provided for Ashley some dangerous ground in terms of potential failure. Gilligan (1993), in her research on how women cope with real life crises, argues that, in dealing with a crisis, it is issues of responsibility and care that ultimately shape individual response and self-development (p.26). There is nothing intrinsically new in the idea that 'crisis can build character', but Gilligan takes this a step further by suggesting it is how a young woman sees herself in connection to others that develops self: "The truths of relationship return in the rediscovery of connection, in the realization that self and other are interdependent and that life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships" (p.127). Ashley had experienced a crisis; how she would ultimately handle this situation would reveal something

of the depth of care she had for her pupils and how this might impact on her own sense of self.

My concern, immediately following the failed lesson, was whether Ashley would come to the next class. It had been established that Kayleigh would be absent for the next lesson also, so Ashley was aware she would have to take the next lesson on her own as well. I feared she might not want to put herself in the firing line again; past records suggested Ashley was not averse to absenting herself from school if there were something required of her. I wondered if 'fight' or 'flight' (Kendel and Kinder, 2008) might be her reaction to this particular danger. I came prepared to take the class myself for Lesson 5, just in case.

### **Lesson 5: Commitment – Authentic risk and personal learning**

The following morning, contrary to fears that Ashley would not be in the car park as usual to meet me, she was there, already waiting. I said that it was very good to see her after the tough time she had experienced in the last lesson; all I received was a shrug (a quick glimpse of the old Ashley nonchalance). She had come with spare scripts and it seemed some notes. We re-entered the lion's den.

Ashley is totally prepared today and has planned step by step what she wants to do. The Year 6 group arrive in high spirits Ashley does not smile or giggle - sets out the goals for today's lesson in a business-like fashion. The group is given no time to waste, so move quickly from the drama warm-up game into the rehearsal process. Ashley is totally in control, she makes it clear "You have a lot of work to do if you want to be ready for a performance next week". (**Morag. Obs Nts**)

The rehearsal went well. If someone forgot a line, they laughed together, but Ashley ensured the group went straight back on task...

If any of the boys even look like they are planning to misbehave, Ashley reminds them of what they have learned about focus and about responsibility to the group. (**Morag. Obs. Nts**)

At the end of the lesson Ashley seemed genuinely proud of what she had achieved. I was incredibly pleased she had decided to fight her fears and use what she had learned in the last lesson to turn this one around. It was like watching a different student. She remained focussed and clear in her instructions to the Year 6s and as they responded positively, she seemed to grow in confidence. Peer teaching was giving Ashley an opportunity to be

listened to and she seemed to have found an authentic voice. The failed lesson seemed to have been a turning point.

The significance of what had happened in Lesson 4 and Ashley's subsequent response cannot be underestimated in terms of what it reveals of the relationship between authenticity, learning and personal empowerment. Through Ashley's engagement in peer teaching, she had developed a sense of commitment and empathy; however the responsibility this 'care' engendered came with a personal risk. Finney and Tymoczko (2003) argue that handing students responsibility through peer teaching does pose a risk. Ashley was in fact opening herself to 'failure' through this responsibility – failure defined in terms of breaking down the powerful 'negative leader' image she had developed as her protective barrier. Arguably, had the risk not been real (and what happened in Lesson 4 proved this), then there may not have been evidence that Ashley had developed personal responsibility and care. In turn, it would seem this responsibility developed in Ashley a different sense of herself. It also proved, as Masten and Powell (2005) suggest, that we need insight into how troubled adolescents develop resiliency in the face of challenges to their self-esteem. I would argue Ashley's resiliency, her ability to go back into the classroom after her humiliation, was born of the commitment she felt to the task. Following Lesson 5, I had the opportunity to conduct a videotaped interview with Ashley; what I discovered when I asked her to reflect back on Lesson 4, was how the experience had empowered her to reveal a more authentic view of herself, "I was all nervous... I was frightened as well." These were big admissions for Ashley. Likewise her statement that she, "didn't want to muck up" and "felt gutted" when things had not gone well, revealed that she did care about the project.

### **Final lessons – Feeling like teachers**

The following week Kayleigh was back from holiday and she and Ashley conducted the final rehearsal with the Year 6 Drama class. It was not certain whether Ashley had told Kayleigh much about what happened the week before, but Kayleigh was, as usual, quite calm. I noted that this lesson was very lively:

The Year 6 group in a state of excited panic - one final run-through before the audience arrives. Ashley is more up to date with where the group is and with what scenes need the most urgent work, so she is sharing more leadership with Kayleigh. Ashley and Kayleigh stress firmly that the group must remain "focussed and professional" (**Morag.Obs.Notes**)

The Year 6 Drama group did perform for other members of their class and, although it was not the most polished performance ever staged, the audience seemed to like watching their

peers perform. All things considered, the performance was a success and Ashley and Kayleigh left Meadowbank for the last time looking happy and relieved. I stayed behind to have a few words with the Year 6 group about how they had felt about the project and their teachers. The following extract from this informal interview reveals not only how the Year 6 class felt about Ashley and Kayleigh, but their view of teachers in general:

**MM:** The sessions you had with Ashley and Kayleigh, does anybody want to tell me about what they thought of them as teachers?

**Zoe:** I enjoyed it because if we done anything wrong they didn't shout at us.

**MM:** Do you think they were good teachers?

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah.

(Malik put his hand up)

**MM:** Malik, did you want to say something?

**Malik:** It was to start, it was all the way through it because they were easy to learn off of. It was easy to learn from them, because they were like helping us with how to do things and that.

**MM:** How did they help you?

**Lara:** I don't know, but they were like normal teachers that help you and everything. They knew how to tell you to do drama.

**MM:** How were they different from teachers?

**Malik:** Teachers don't usually laugh so much.

**MM:** Anything else? Ashley and Kayleigh are only in Year 9, what did you think of being taught by Year 9 Pupils?

**Nick:** I think it was all right, because it's kind of different. Well it kind of feels better because, I don't know, it just feels quite a lot better somehow.

**Sally:** I don't know how, but it made it feel like they were real teachers teaching and I don't know why.

(Year 6. SS.Int)

The Year 6 pupils all agreed they had enjoyed the project and working with Ashley and Kayleigh, but they found it difficult to articulate exactly what it was that had helped them to respond to the girls as teachers. What they did seem to keep coming back to was the role that fun and laughter had played in the girls' teaching.

**Zoe:** Its different with a teacher. You can't have a laugh, and you can't have fun about doing it. But with Ashley and Kayleigh you could have a

laugh, and you can mess about with them and it was more fun than being with a teacher.

**Jack:** Teachers don't laugh that much.

**MM:** Do you think you still learned about Drama when you were laughing?

**Jack:** Oh yeah.

**Sev:** Yeah, they was still teaching us kind of thing, new games and eye contact. And teachers might not have taught us that as well.

(Year 6. SS.Int )

The Year 6 group agreed that it was enjoyable being taught by Ashley and Kayleigh. They talked about the element of 'fun' that the two girls had brought to learning. Their responses also suggest that working with peer teachers fostered a sense of partnership – they were more like collaborators within this kind of process. “they were like helping us with how to show..” , “you can mess about with them” (Year 6. SS.Int). Although it was hard to get detail from the Year 6 group, there was a general consensus that they had enjoyed the process and had learned something about Drama. When I asked them what kinds of things they had learned, the first response was a chorus of “Focus!” with much laughter. This was followed by a couple mentioning different Drama terms the girls had introduced e.g. ‘eye contact’ and ‘facial expression.’ Rachel identified one term and could explain why it was important: “Levels, they taught us like different sorts of like levels: So not all on the same level. So it can look more interesting than all just, say, sitting down” (SS.Int. Year 6). Clearly Ashley and Kayleigh had, helped others to learn and this ‘incremental’ learning opportunity might have helped them experience feeling ‘smart’ (Dweck 2000, p.131). Despite the fun and laughter, Ashley and Kayleigh had successfully taught their Year 6 Drama group some key performance concepts.

I interviewed Ashley and Kayleigh several days after their last lesson and got feedback from them on what they felt as peer teachers. Despite Kayleigh's calm exterior throughout the sessions, she reveals in this response she may not have been as totally confident as she first appear:

It's not as easy as I thought. Like at the beginning of it I just think they thought it was messing about; they thought it were just a laugh. But they got real into it and most of them in the end went home and they learnt their words and that, you know what I mean. (**Kayleigh.** SS Int 3.)

In this statement Kayleigh has also picked up on the fact that the Year 6 pupils were most interested in the 'fun' aspect of their learning but she also recognized, with some pride, that they had been able to laugh with their pupils and yet motivate them to learn; they had entered into a more democratic relationship with their pupils that they could see was able to foster learning. (Stenhouse, 1971; Rogers, 1994). Both girls also commented on the perspective they now had of what a teacher has to do and Ashley remarked: "I've started to appreciate more sort of (pause) the teachers really." We all recognised the irony in this and laughed. Kayleigh added: "Some of them have got the patience of a saint – no, they have!" (Ashley and Kayleigh SS Int.3.)

The peer teaching process appeared to have given these challenging pupils an insight into what it was like, in effect, from 'the other side of fence'. There is no doubt this was a sobering experience, yet taking on the responsibility of teaching would seem to have given these negative leaders something even more than this: genuine empathy for their pupils, and an authentic sense of being valued. I asked the girls how being a teacher felt:

**Ashley:** It makes you feel good. It makes you feel like you've gave something to someone and you haven't received nothing back, besides like proudness and that.

**Kayleigh:** I don't know, I felt more mature after I had done it, because I think it was the fact that I was teaching people. I don't know, it was weird.

(SS Int. 3. **Ashley and Kayleigh**)

It seemed clear that it was a positive experience. As negative leaders, both girls had, in one sense, been assertive and powerful; they had certainly found plenty to say, very audibly, in class – hence many reprimands from teachers. However, were they really heard? The following comment from Ashley suggests a different sense of power through peer teaching: "I was like, listened to, and it made me feel proud" (SS Int 4. **Ashley**). This echoes Elise's comment from the First Project : "Some-one listened to me" (**Elise S Int.3**).

The opportunity to peer-teach can clearly play a role in developing pupil voice, and as Goodlad and Hirst (1998), Klien (1999) and Finney et al (2005) all suggest, this is a powerful way of building self-esteem. In exploring this further and looking at the impact of the project overall, it is worth first returning again to Lesson 4 and Ashley's reflections in the video interview following her successful teaching in Lesson 5.

## Impact of the Project – Finding an Authentic voice

Ashley: “I was a bit frightened as well because I didn’t want to muck up, but I did. So I felt gutted after Tuesday’s lesson.” (**Ashley** Int. 4)

Ellen was had been right in her interpretation of Ashley’s response; she did care about her performance; it did matter. This was directly affirmed when I praised Ashley for returning for Lesson 5:

**M.M:** I was so pleased to see you back today Ashley, I have to say I didn’t know if you would want to see the Drama group on your own after what happened last week.

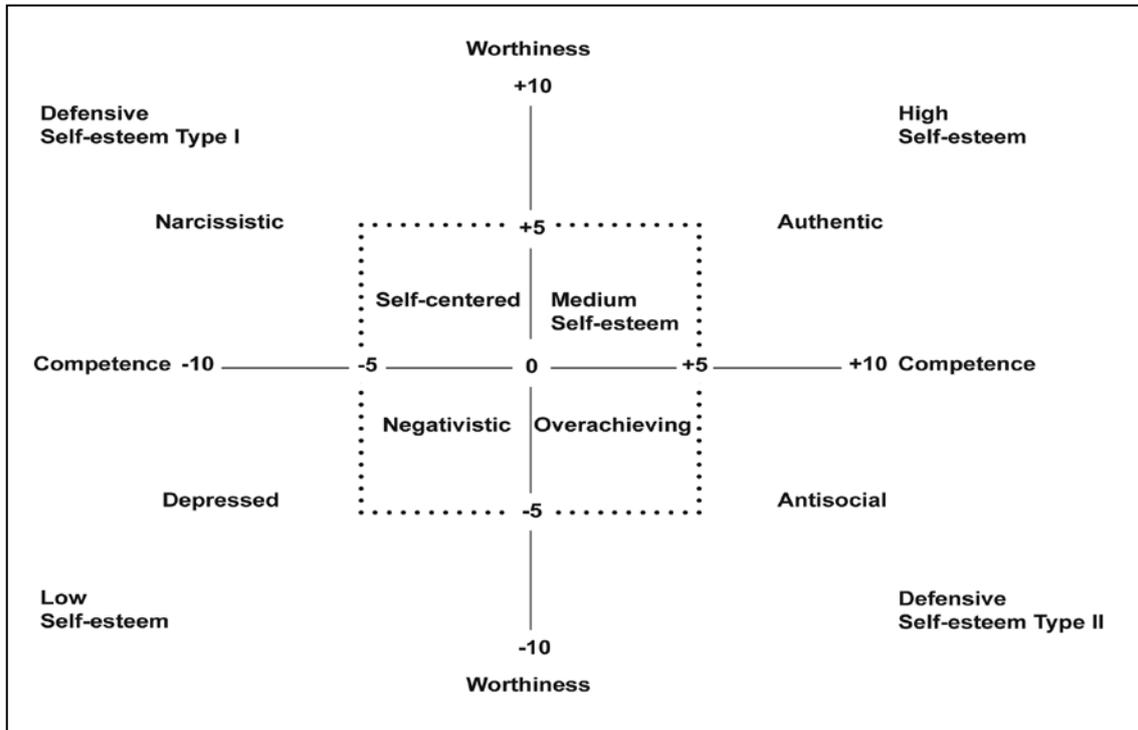
**Ashley:** The project means a lot to me. I felt like I’d mucked up and I wanted to put it right and sort of prove myself. I wanted to prove something to myself, that I can do this all by myself. It gives me the confidence I knew I had inside me. Today I thought I’m going to... show what I can do. So I did. I felt so proud, I like sort of thought to myself “You’ve done well, you’ve proved everyone wrong. It made me so happy.” (**Ashley**. S.S. Int 3)

Clearly the incident had been a major turning point for Ashley. Certainly there had been a sense of responsibility – “I wanted to put it right” - but more than this, Ashley had a very personal stake in returning: “I wanted to prove something to myself, that I can do this all by myself”. Ashley needed to go back into the classroom to face a challenge and be successful. Bigger (2006) draws a link between competence and self-esteem and argues this is particularly vital to think about when considering dispirited pupils (p.5). Returning to the scene of her humiliation and teaching a successful lesson gave Ashley an enormous boost. The more active role she took in team-teaching the final lesson was also evidence of this. However, as well as needing to prove something to herself, she seemed aware that there was a bigger battle – proving herself to others, “You’ve done well, you’ve proved everyone wrong.” One of the clearest indications I had that the project had made an impact on Ashley in terms of re-engagement and a desire to change her negative label came when I asked her to clarify what she meant by ‘proving everyone wrong’:

...like when someone is loud and mouthy, they go “Oh, that’s just Ashley” and I’ve like this reputation hanging over me and I don’t really want it. I want to be looked at as me, not just my reputation. (**Ashley** S.S Int 4)

This was a big admission for Ashley - the capable and caring Ashley. What she needed was the freedom to reveal a different side of herself and the peer- teaching project had given her

that opportunity. Just as it had for Elise in the First Project, the peer-teaching project would appear to have provided Ashley with an opportunity to speak and be heard, an opportunity to exercise competence and be "looked at" in a different way. It is useful to return to Mruk's diagram (Mruk 1999 in Bigger 2006) to consider how this shift developed:



**Fig. 7 (Mruk, 1999)**

I would suggest that, prior to the project, Ashley's behaviour might have indicated a sense of self, in terms of the above diagram, somewhere on the left-hand side. Her competence, in terms of standardized tests was not strong though her sense of 'worthiness', it could be argued, moved vertically between self-centred defensiveness (disruptive classroom behaviour and negative leadership of others) and negativistic low self-esteem (disengagement and non-participation.) Peer teaching offered a different kind of platform to exercise competence outside the standard curriculum. In walking back into the classroom in Lesson 5 and successfully teaching her pupils, Ashley moved along the horizontal axis of competence to the more positive right-hand quadrant. Interestingly, Mruk uses the term 'authentic' in this quadrant to suggest high self-esteem is product of genuine competence and worthiness. I would argue peer teaching did represent an authentic avenue to illustrate these qualities – a different kind of avenue to that generally open to disengaged students, i.e. standardized tests and exams. In Ashley's statement that she 'proved them wrong', the 'them' are those who normally have the power to judge competence and worthiness – her teachers.

Ashley's sense of her own competence directly impacted on her confidence and motivation. In the final interview with both girls we discussed things we might have changed about the project were we to repeat it. One of the issues was the logistics of what we had tried to do and how pressed we had been for time, but one of my comments led to a different response than the one I had expected:

**MM:** We really didn't have a lot of time to chat after each lesson did we? I thought it would have been useful for you to have someone you could have talked to and helped you more with that. Would you agree?

**Kayleigh:** Sort of, in a way.

**Ashley:** In a way. But, like major things.

**MM:** Oh. I am really interested that you don't think that that's really important because that means there must be some reason you like doing it on your own. That's interesting.

**Ashley:** That's right, it gives you a kind of buzz to think, no-one's helped. And if you, because when I was doing it I had a target, so you can succeed and feel like really good about yourself. Sort of doing it yourself kind of made you think, yeah, I just did it, and it was like, it gives you that certain buzz.

**MM:** You'd still be in a room by yourself, but do you mean even planning it was important to do by yourself?

**Ashley:** I just felt more independent.

**Kayleigh:** Yeah.

(Ashley and Kayleigh. S. S. Int 3)

In this extract, it is significant to note that it was Ashley, who had had the challenging experience, who articulated the reason why they value 'doing it on their own', and how good it felt to be independent - i.e. 'that certain buzz.' It should not have been a surprise that girls like Ashley and Kayleigh value independence; in their lives outside school they often had a great deal more responsibility than they were offered at school. Atweh et al (1998) noted how paradoxical it is that adolescents of today reach maturity earlier, often have considerable economic and personal responsibility outside school, and yet spend a larger portion of their youth than any generation before in school - an environment that still fosters a culture of dependency. Ashley offered the following observation:

**Ashley:** The fact is I was brought up being independent, I'm just so used to doing things for myself, its weird isn't it?

**MM:** Where are you used to doing things for yourself? Do you mean outside school?

**Ashley:** Everywhere really. Like with my other friends. I'm not saying Mum doesn't cook for me or nothing, but just like other things. I'm used to doing things for myself

(Ashley. S.S. Int. 3.)

Adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, often have considerable responsibility outside school (Walkerdine, V, Lucy, H, & Melody J, 2001). However, the skills they utilise in effectively operating socially outside the school context, are not always exercised within.

### **Wider implications**

The Project had taken two full terms to complete and over this period of time Ashley and Kayleigh would have matured and may well have modified their behaviour anyway as a result of moving further toward adulthood. There was no doubt that the project had an impact on both Ashley and Kayleigh during the process and immediately following its completion, but whether this might have translated into re-engagement in school, or could be sustained, needed further exploration.

Some initial evidence of a shift in Ashley and Kayleigh's attitude toward and engagement in school did emerge. During one of my meetings with the girls after the project, Ellen found us in the Drama room and said she had just picked up their latest reports. Her smile revealed that she thought they would be pleased. She provided me with copies. Comments from other teachers suggested there had been an improvement in their attitude and behaviour and, as reports were based on the previous term's performance, this change coincided with their involvement in the peer-teaching project. Comments on Ashley's reports included "...sound progress... particularly pleased with the improvement I have seen in her behaviour" (Science), "... a lot more settled" (English), "...improved attitude to work" (Maths). Teachers also reported a visible improvement in Kayleigh's behaviour and, although attendance was still an issue, her reports seemed to indicate more engagement in school: "...good attitude and effort" (Maths), "...marked improvement in skills" (Science), "Kayleigh has worked on some tasks with great enthusiasm" (History).

There was evidence that the project did have a positive impact on the academic motivation of both girls, but the influence it had on their emotional development is also important to consider. Kayleigh tried to explain how the teaching made her feel in our final interview:

I don't know, I felt more mature after I had done it, because I think it was the fact that I was teaching people. I don't know, it was weird.

**(Kayleigh S.S. Int.4)**

Within the statements made by both girls there is clear evidence that it is the interaction, doing something for others, that gives them a sense of reward; Ashley had said she felt "proud" and Kayleigh felt "more mature" as a result of peer teaching. These responses reinforce Dweck's (2003) theory that self-esteem does not have to be derived as a result of comparing oneself to others, but can be fostered through co-operation and giving rather than competition. Dweck stated that "...facing challenges, working hard, stretching abilities, and using their skills and knowledge to help others makes students feel good about themselves" (p.131). Therefore, it would seem that the risk and challenge of peer-teaching, through the demands it made of each young woman to be responsible for the learning of others, had a clear effective impact. There was also evidence provided by teachers that, specifically in terms of Ashley's behaviour, the project may have had an impact on her ability to empathise, and perhaps reveal a more authentic self to her peers. This was communicated when one of her teachers shared a classroom anecdote as quoted in the following paragraph.

The week after the project finished, I went back into the school to have a final interview with Ellen. As it turned out the girls' English teacher, Linda, was also available and happy to talk – so what was to be an interview did develop more into an informal group discussion, though this was recorded. In the context of general observations made of the girls' most recent behaviour, Linda described a recent lesson where she overheard Ashley talking to her peers about a book she was reading; 'A Child Called 'It':

She was reading bits of it out to others and she was talking about how emotional it made her feel, which I don't think she would have talked about before. I think she has made a huge journey in a short time. **(Linda U S Int.1.)**

While the very fact that Ashley was reading outside the classroom was, of itself, a pleasing development, this anecdote does, of course, reveal a great deal more. It illustrates that a new, 'braver' side to Ashley had emerged; in sharing that she felt emotional she was exposing herself to judgement by her peers and undermining her image as cynical and strong. Ashley obviously felt more confident to reveal herself honestly to others.

Peer teaching is challenging because it requires responsibility and confidence. The project fostered emotional engagement and gave Ashley and Kayleigh the opportunity to stretch themselves as leaders. Teaching others requires active problem solving and risk-taking – skills not generally called on in mainstream curricula. Ashley and Kayleigh faced personal challenges, but took on the responsibility and met them. It was to be hoped that they would now have the confidence to redraw their roles in school and redefine their reputations. These young women clearly had something valuable they could offer.

## **Lasting impact**

Whilst it would be wonderful to report that the project did have a substantial and lasting impact on Ashley and Kayleigh, this would be too grand a claim. While initial indications had been promising, I had the opportunity to interview one of their teachers six months later. Anna, their Head of Year, knew both girls well. She had taught Ashley's older siblings, had previously been a form teacher to both the girls, and had detailed historical and contemporary knowledge of their family circumstances. I had heard informally from Ellen that Kayleigh was not attending school regularly and Ashley's behaviour had slipped back a little in Year 10. I asked Anna about this. It seemed their engagement in class and attendance had improved for a while but, attendance particularly, was again beginning to become a problem... "Their attendance is weak, both of them. I'm very aware this last term, their attendance has not been great, particularly Kayleigh." Anna, whilst reassuring me that neither girl had completely reverted to their earlier selves, commented "I can't say there has been no improvement. I mean Ashley hasn't completely gone back to being a wild child or anything like that, but I think she has found it difficult". She did communicate that Ashley particularly, had been "getting in a bit of trouble lately" and that she was, once again, very argumentative with some staff. In the following statement Anna offered some insight into why she felt this had happened:

I think for a while she was definitely more focussed and more patient and understanding, and prepared to listen to someone else's point of view. I think outside influences in her life are very strong. I mean her 17 year old sister has just delivered a baby and brought it home... she's got, there's a lot of chaos, you know, it's a chaotic home. So all the work we do here will definitely make a difference but it is forever being pushed back I think by outside influences. (**Anna. US Int 1**)

Anna's frustration was clear. She thought both girls had potential that would not be fulfilled and that there were factors both in school and outside that were contributing to this.

Although she acknowledged Ashley's home life was not easy, she did not offer this as any simple explanation of why Ashley was again challenging the system:

I would like, it would be nice to have some continuing programme for Ashley, but it doesn't look that way...It would be great to give them responsibility again. (**Anna**. US Int 1)

Anna recognized that the project had offered Ashley and Kayleigh a different kind of opportunity to illustrate what they were capable of, and she was keenly aware the standard educational system was not serving all students well:

...it's just sad that we judge kids by, you know, the written exam, and not by the things they can do. I'm in the system that says they have to pass exams, I mean, we have to prove they can read by writing, which is ridiculous... I think they are (disadvantaged) the kids that are not academic, but they're just as intelligent, they just have different skills. Ashley has learning difficulties; although she's incredibly intelligent and bright she can't articulate very well on paper, so she could end up with a level 'E' or something, so that will determine her future. (**Anna**.US Int 1.)

As the 'system' offers a very narrow range of what is valued, girls like Ashley can easily get a sense that they have little to offer at school that will be respected. Collins and Johnson-Wilder (2005) offer an insight into the relationship between engagement in school and self-perception, "An individual's perceived ability to become an active learner will depend in no small part on their perception of themselves, their relationship with others and the demands of the situation in which they are working" (p.150). It is perhaps not surprising that Ashley might prefer to spend time at home where she could feel she has a role and responsibility.

Schools currently offer little real opportunity for active learning or what Cruddas and Haddock (2005) refer to as 'transitivity' - i.e. democratic learning principles which value what students have to offer and the importance of learning as a transmission process. They argue that schools have become more concerned with what is transmitted, the curriculum content, and less interested in how to maximize participation in learning that will value diversity of experience. "If we can encourage quieter girls to contribute, or 'problem' girls with dominant voices to channel their contributions into more positive learning interactions, we will begin to bring about change in the culture of classrooms" (p.167). Anna had commented that she wished there could be some 'continuing programme' for girls like Ashley. She recognized that experiences offered through peer teaching had, while the project was in train, offered Ashley something that did encourage her to feel more focussed and created a context in

which to channel her ability into more positive learning interactions. Kayleigh's attendance improved when she was involved in the project, but fell back once it was over; similarly she had seen some value in what she had to contribute by being at school. It is a shame that back at school both girls saw little incentive or opportunity to remain engaged. I had asked Ashley in the final interview after the project how she enjoyed it: "I'd like to do it all again" was her response. This echoes her teachers' wish that there was some 'ongoing project'. It does indeed seem a shame that such goodwill and interest shown by teachers while the project was happening could not be rekindled in some form in the classroom. Lather (1991) and Giroux (1997) challenge teachers to provide emancipatory experiences for students; however this is difficult. In a climate where schools and teachers are under considerable pressure to deliver a National standardized curriculum, there is little room for approaches that may be perceived as taking time away from teaching and learning directed toward achieving Literacy and Numeracy targets; this is just too risky.

Peer teaching was the strategy used in my project - the risk (the context that was provided to utilize skills Ashley and Kayleigh did have) offered a more democratic context for interaction – one where their voices mattered and were valued. Peer teaching does not have to be the only way this is done, but the risk must be real and authentic and responsibility for teaching and learning must be shared. Why is it so difficult for schools to offer this? The problem is a complex one, highlighting what is valued culturally and educationally in schools, i.e. normative standards in literacy and numeracy, where achievement in even these narrow areas is assessed through writing. Teachers in the United Kingdom are under an enormous amount of pressure to ensure standards in these areas are high; a school's, and a teacher's, reputation hinges on these kinds of academic results. This kind of environment does not encourage risk-taking or allow time for experiment.

BBC News education reporter, Sean Coughlan (2008) recently reviewed the achievements of the Labour government since 1997 to raise literacy and numeracy standards. In the context of praising what appear to be strong increases in achievement in Maths, English and Science, he pointedly made the following comment "and teachers complain about the creativity of the Primary classroom being lost to an obsession with testing and league tables." (p.2). Whilst championing the success of national strategies and testing regimes (at the expense of creativity), he also acknowledged some issues remain unchanged, or even worse, in schools. Truancy continues to be a problem, and bad behaviour and aggression also has not improved. Of course, little connection is made between what teachers might be able to do with more freedom in the classroom; the current 'obsession' with standards; and pupils' emotional, moral and social development! "Standards not structures", Coughlan

suggests (p.2), continues to be the mantra and while this is the case it is unlikely schools will see any real encouragement to address wider issues of pupil development.

## 5.5 POST SCRIPT

### **Extending possibilities: Pupils as teachers of teachers**

*“Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner; put yourself in his place so that you may understand...”*

*Soren Kierkegaard*

### **Sharing Learning**

Whilst short-term effects of the project were positive and encouraging, sustaining them proved difficult on a wider scale within the school. Soon after the project was completed an unfavourable Ofsted report placed Ridgefield in ‘Special Measures’ (a national inspection label applied to schools deemed to be failing). The school was asked to address standards in a number of curriculum areas and so energies needed to be focussed elsewhere. Despite this, I felt a strong sense of responsibility toward Ashley and Kayleigh - the project had appeared to have a strong personal impact on them; it had fostered a strong sense of responsibility in both young women and had strengthened their confidence. Both girls had rich insights to offer on the social dynamics of a classroom, now from both sides of the fence. It seemed a natural progression to try to take advantage of these insights and, as a teacher educator, I wanted to offer my trainee teachers the opportunity to learn from Ashley and Kayleigh – these ‘peer-teachers’ could become ‘student-teachers’. I contacted the school and got back in touch with Ellen to see if she could ask the girls if they were interested. The answer came back very quickly. They were extremely keen, a little fearful, but “up for it” Ellen assured me.

Ashley and Kayleigh were invited to talk, in a question and answer format, with two groups of trainee teachers. This would have been a daunting task for anyone, but both girls welcomed the opportunity. Although there was some self-consciousness on both sides at first, both parties settled quickly into new roles. The trainees soon forgot they were speaking to students and opened up questions, which included more individual professional concerns and issues. Ashley and Kayleigh, now teaching trainee teachers, confidently managed these questions and offered practical advice. The sessions were recorded and the dialogues transcribed.

## Students teach teachers

Approximately twenty trainee teachers attended each session, sitting in a circle and with Ashley and Kayleigh positioned prominently at the front of the room (a rather exposed and potentially frightening arrangement for them). Although nervous at first, the two student teachers quickly got into the swing of things and were confident enough by the end of the first session to present alternative suggestions for dealing with really difficult situations in classrooms.

The trainee teachers sought the student teachers' advice, taking them seriously and regarding them as "expert witnesses" (Finney et al, 2005) on issues of classroom management (p. 73). The trainees asked Ashley and Kayleigh a series of questions which they felt were important, focussing first on the girls' experiences as 'naughty pupils' before moving on to their experiences as 'peer teachers'. It became increasingly obvious that the trainee teachers were quite ready to both seek advice from the girls and to respect the latter's responses. Some of the questions put to the girls were:

- What sorts of things did you do that got you into trouble?
- What are things that teachers do that 'wind you up'?
- What consequences (disciplinary responses) to your behaviour really bother you as students?
- What motivates you? What makes you want to work?
- How did you feel about working out strategies to deal with the behaviour of Year 6s or to get them to work, because as you have said before, they were 'mouthy' and sometimes just unwilling to work?
- How can a teacher make a good impression, given you may never have met before – if you have no relationship?
- Can you tell us something about the emotional side of teaching: how can you show that you're a real person without showing weaknesses? Is there anything you would advise a teacher to do in this regard?
- If there are three individuals who are completely ruining things for everyone else, what advice would you give me as to what I can do with them? Do I make the whole class suffer or send the offenders out – speak to them? Or give them written work to do?

(Trainee Teachers. Q&A)

These questions reflected increasing depth as the trainees began to confer greater levels of respect and trust on their young teachers.

Ashley and Kayleigh were honest, and did not hesitate in their responses about their own troublesome behaviour, nor were they brash or boastful, but gave straightforward accounts. In response to the first question regarding the sorts of behaviour that had landed them in trouble, Ashley had this to say... "Walking out the classroom, not aggressive as in like I'd punch the teacher, but my tone of voice and stuff. And you don't think about it" ( Q&A Ashley). Both girls offered insights into what lay behind their actions; without denying responsibility for their own actions, they acknowledged that certain things could act as triggers and gave examples:

- Teachers shouting at them or talking in 'that horrible tone'.
- Having to sit for 'about seven minutes' with a hand up while teachers always went to someone else for an answer anyway.
- Teachers not being prepared to listen to their side of the story when they were excluded from the classroom.
- Teachers going on 'shooting questions' at them "to show everyone you are not paying attention".
- "Getting picked on because of your reputation – when everyone is guilty of mucking about at some stage".
- They also disliked it when they heard teachers blaming their behaviour on their background:
- I hate it when people say to you "it's their home life", "it's their upbringing". It's not. It's your own, it's the way you're doing things.

(Ashley. Q&A)

### **Role reversals: two sides of the teacher's desk**

Both girls referred to the peer teaching project as a significant turning point in their understanding of teachers. Engagement through the project required self-reflection and empathy. The challenges they faced in playing the real-life role of a teacher had required confronting their own insecurities and provided insight into themselves. By 'standing in the shoes' of their teachers they were also able to gain an insight into life in the classroom from

a teacher's perspective. They considered they had changed and when asked what led to such changes, they did not hesitate...

I become a teacher and I respect teachers more. And I respect their feelings and stuff as well. (**Ashley**. Q&A)

Both girls spoke of how teaching their own group had helped them see things from a teacher's perspective. Before, they "didn't think about teachers' feelings" and just did what they wanted to anyway, but now they would think twice about behaving badly:

Because you know what it's like and how far you can push teachers. And then you think, oh but when I (was teaching) look at when they done it to me; look how stressed I got. Then you feel quite guilty, don't you.  
(**Ashley**. Q&A)

I felt now I'd been teaching, I felt quite disgusted with myself that I'd given them not that much respect. (**Kayleigh**. Q&A)

The girls exhibited their ability to analyse classroom interactions and explained how disruption could easily escalate and how students could quickly work together, mercilessly sometimes, to destabilize a teacher who appeared nervous:

If they show to you that they're not that strong, then you can climb all over them. You know their weak point, you find out what that is and you'll keep doing it. (**Ashley**. Q&A)

However, there were signs of the girls' own recent experiences having engendered a new empathy:

And then, sometimes, you feel quite sorry because they look like they're just there on their own and you look at them and you think, "aah..."  
(**Ashley**. Q&A)

In offering sensible advice on how to defuse tense situations, the girls were clear that a teacher should not shout, e.g.:

I think the worst thing you can do to somebody, and you will not get their attention, is shouting at them. I know it's real hard for you not to shout at somebody. You get so stressed, but I don't think shouting does anything.  
(**Kayleigh**. Q&A)

By the same token, the girls felt teachers should try not to argue with students in front of a class, because others might join in “and then the group will get bigger and the battle will become worse and worse”. Instead, they suggested asking to see the student at the end of the day, somewhere private. Neither girl had any time for detention, which was not seen as a constructive response at all, “You get took out of a lesson and you’ll be sitting there for an hour doing nothing” (**Kayleigh**).

Alternatively, they favoured teachers’ talking through things with students to find WHY they were making trouble and discussing what could be done to avoid these situations in the future. They also suggested that teachers who lose control and shout should explain what made them do so:

When they don’t explain why they just shouted at you, you get really angry (and then) you’ll want to wind them up for the rest of the day.  
(**Ashley**. Q&A)

Being able to have a dialogue was good because each of you could see where the other was coming from (...) and when you’re both working together things get sorted out easier. (**Kayleigh**. Q&A)

The trainee teachers became increasingly comfortable in describing situations they might find difficult to respond to – such as when two students were being energetically disruptive. The two girls disagreed in this instance, one suggesting the miscreants be separated and the other taking a different line – however, the importance was that the logic of alternative responses was brought out and discussed. The two girls reminded their audience that no single strategy would work for every situation faced – good advice, rooted in the reality of their own experience:

There’s not just one way you can handle all kids because everyone’s different and different personalities. Like you can’t be soft with all the children and you can’t be hard with all the children. It’s because some children have different personalities and you have to treat them in different ways. (**Kayleigh**. Q&A)

Although most questions were about how teachers might respond to difficulties, some trainee teachers wanted to know more about what helped the girls to focus positively on learning. The latter agreed that they preferred a climate in which they felt trusted and were praised:

Praise does get me. I feel happy and I'm like, yeah, and I'll do more. It makes me feel happy about what I've done and I'm happy to work.

(Ashley Q&A)

I think the best reward is somebody telling you you've done well.

(Ashley Q&A)

Both girls said they wanted content that meant something to them, like 'real life things' and they liked teachers to be relaxed...

...because when you know that a teacher's happy, they're cheerful and they're not moody, they're not stressy. (Ashley Q&A)

They want teachers to show that they care about students and ask them how they feel about this:

... that puts me in gear and makes me think, "oh, I actually had better start putting my head down and sorting it out" (Kayleigh. Q&A)

Over the two sessions with the trainee teachers, which ended with spontaneous applause, the girls had given memorable advice, not from textbooks but from their experiences on both sides of the teacher's desk!

### **Empowering teachers and students through peer teaching**

However risky the situation, teaching mattered on some level for both Ashley and Kayleigh; they took their responsibilities as teachers personally. For education to be an enriching experience, meanings must become personal for only then will they be incorporated into experience and tried out in everyday living. For the young women involved in this project, the positive experience of giving and of being accepted filtered back into their general sense of self-worth and their attitude to other areas of the curriculum. This would seem to support Dweck's view of 'incremental' motivation i.e. that self-esteem could be just as powerfully built through supporting others as through than external reward (Dweck 2000.) Ashleigh and Kayleigh were able to reflect on the transformation in their behaviour as a result of their experience as peer-teachers, and to recognize the increase in both self-esteem and self-awareness that occurred for them. On the other hand, the trainee teachers who listened to their stories were able to empathise and engage with two 'naughty' students in a very different context. They were able to see these students in a new light, and learn something for themselves of the role teaching plays in shaping behaviour. The role reversal offered an opportunity to consider that a more democratic relationship between pupil and student might

be possible. Following Ashley and Kayleigh's visit, one trainee was asked what she had learnt from listening to their stories and advice; it suggests the very crucial reason she sees for taking risks if teachers genuinely wish to develop responsibility in their pupils.

The fact is, I really believe this, you know, if you do trust someone, they very, very rarely let you down. Because, it's just sort of implicit that, you know, you've made a deal. (**Rachel**. SS Int. 1)

Rachel's words highlight two crucial insights about how teachers might make more democratic classrooms and foster more meaningful engagement. Though it seems risky, they must learn to trust pupils and they must look at teaching and learning as a more collaborative process - a 'deal' to be respected and nurtured. But providing a supportive context where risks can be taken is difficult in the current educational climate, as Maxine Greene (2000) suggests,

Young people are seldom looked upon as capable of imagining, or choosing... Instead, they are subjected to outside pressures, manipulations and predictions. The supporting structures that exist are not used to sustain a sense of agency among those they shelter: instead, they legitimate treatment, remediation, control – anything but difference and release. (p.41)

Perhaps it is a matter of looking at how 'supporting structures' can be made truly supportive, and offer agency for all students – on this possibility perhaps my research journey might have shed a little light.

*“If we value independence, if we are disturbed by the growing conformity of knowledge, of values, of attitudes, which our present system induces, then we may wish to set up conditions of learning which make for uniqueness, for self-direction, and for self-initiated learning”*

*Carl R. Rogers*

# 6

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## 6.1 ON THE OTHER SHORE

Now at the end of my research journey, I can consider what was revealed as I worked alongside the young people involved in this study. The research, which was conducted in two distinct contexts, was shaped by two questions, with the first one leading me towards the second, and ultimately most important, one: How might the peer teaching of Drama re-engage disengaged adolescent girls?

It is worth acknowledging that, because of a shift in the research focus for Project One, explicit data relating to peer teaching by three girls who became the focus of my study, was limited. Although considerable documentation was made in the interests of exploring conflict management in Project One, little was directly recorded relating to my participants as peer teachers; thus my report on the DRACON project is not quite as lengthy as that of the Wallenberg project report.

In attempting to outline my findings, I have designed a model (see Figure below) that illustrates the relational links I have uncovered as a result of my analysis of the various forms of data, whilst also visually rendering the external and internal factors, which I now see as having an impact on engagement and personal learning. The model is entitled “Motivating Re-engagement” and is made up of three frames, with the outermost frame suggesting that a key condition for achieving re-engagement might be the existence of a democratic classroom where the student might be able to experience collaboration, participation, empowerment, leadership, and self-direction (the middle frame). Finally, the innermost frame

encapsulates my new understanding of the relationship between pedagogy and deep personal learning, with effective teaching and affective learning being aspects of what I now see as a cyclical process.

Like all models however, it cannot hope to encapsulate all aspects of what is, in fact, a very complex process and as such does not reveal all the subtleties of what is a quite multifaceted story. Of course, many more frames could have surrounded my model to illustrate the multiple and competing personal, social and cultural contexts that impact on the classroom environment, but in creating it I have stripped back my conclusions to focus on what emerged as key issues with my research participants. In addition, it needs to be viewed alongside the intimate classroom stories of this research, for they hold the key to understanding how, in the current educational climate and within the present system, we might create more democratic and empowering classrooms for all pupils.

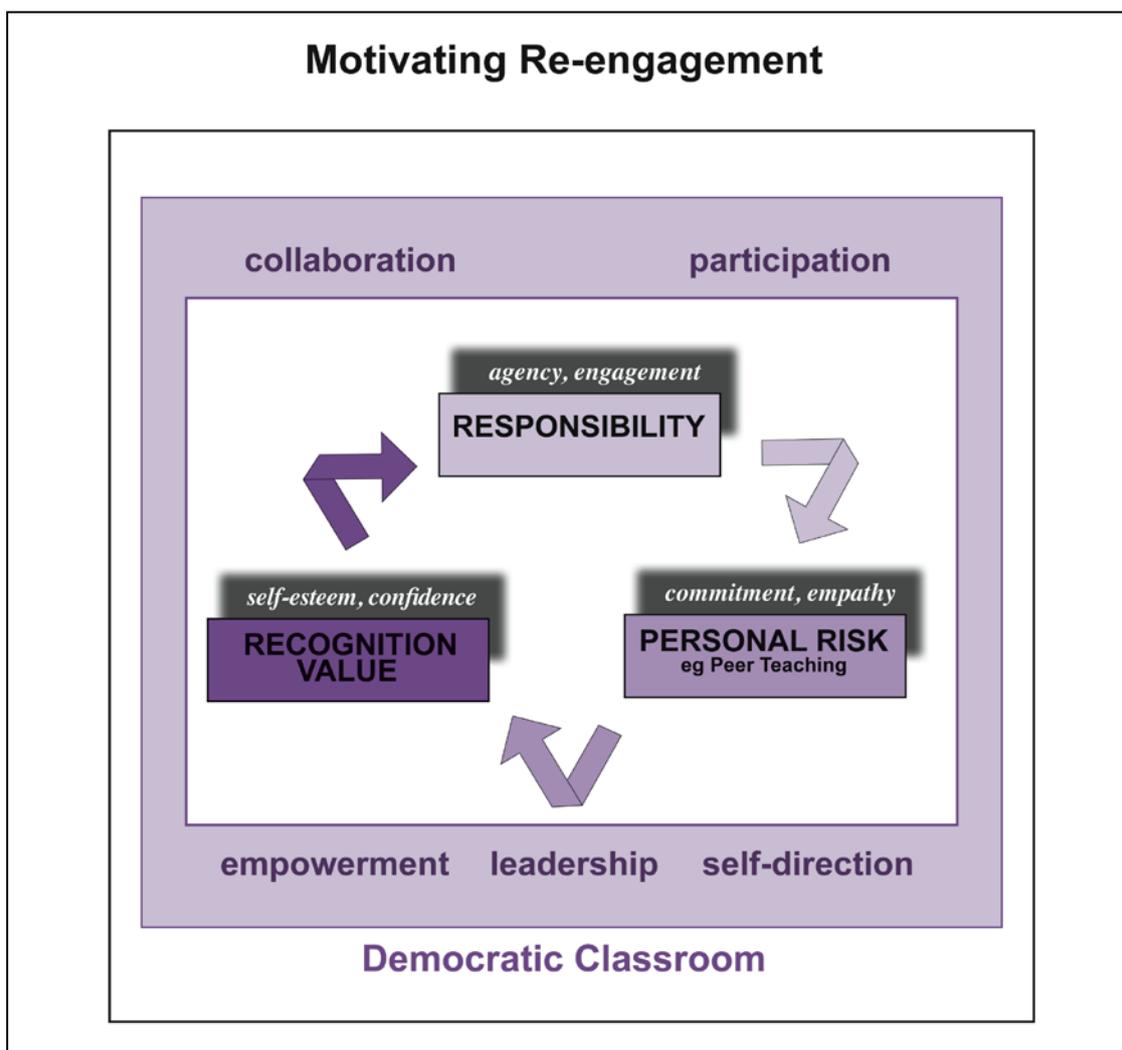


Fig. 8

There were 'conditions of learning' that made self-direction and agency possible in both projects and, though it is clear the democratic strategies explored in my study were challenging to initiate and sustain, it is worth looking very closely at what was discovered about effective teaching and affective learning. As I viewed my findings across both projects, a pattern began to emerge of a cyclical relationship between pedagogy and deep personal learning.

I have designed this model to illustrate relational links and visually render the external and internal factors which impact on engagement and personal learning. The boxes that are shaded behind others signify possible affective outcomes of concrete, planned activity. The three clearly outlined boxes at the centre of the model (Responsibility; Personal Risk; Recognition and Value) are those things controlled by the teacher, and the shadowed concepts behind each are a resultant student response.

### **Deconstructing the model: Inner frame**

Applying the model to summarise my research findings, I have deconstructed each phase sequentially, commencing with the inner-most frame, for it was the understanding developed at this deep level that supported my later understanding of the conditions outlined in the outer frames.

To explore these concepts in detail, I intend to move through each phase of the cycle sequentially, considering each in the order they appeared to come within the overall process of each project, i.e. beginning with the conferring of 'responsibility' and moving clockwise through to 'recognition and value'. Given the cyclical nature of this process, it should be understood that the phases continuously flow and move into each other, developing stronger potential for transformative learning with each revolution. In addition, although presented as defined phases in the model, there is some overlap between each phase and edges are blurred.

### **Responsibility – pathway to engagement and agency**

The first step to engagement appears to come when responsibility is conferred on young people. In my study, the young women involved were asked to participate in a research project where they were required to take an active role as research collaborators and independently plan and deliver a series of teaching episodes. They were given a level of autonomy to make their own decisions, and progressively greater levels of freedom were offered as their confidence grew. Bruner (2002ed.) suggests self-hood and autonomy is only possible through agency, and my research revealed that conferring responsibility

engendered motivation. The participants in my study did not receive academic accolades and extrinsic motivation in the form of good grades or prizes. The literature clearly indicates that young people who find little of initial or enduring interest in the classroom do become disengaged. Girls, particularly those who take a more passive attitude in their disengagement, become invisible and unheard in the classroom. When this occurs, some form of intrinsic motivation is needed. In the case of my study, the young women involved were offered the opportunity to be responsible for the learning of others. This appears to have been intrinsically motivating and fostered positive engagement.

The terrain of power (Giroux, 1997) which currently exists in schools disadvantages both teachers and pupils; responsibility is not democratically shared. Paradoxically, while adolescents may often have considerable responsibility in their lives outside school, little is offered within it; and teachers carry a considerable burden in attempting to ensure all young people succeed in a narrow range of skills. As Carl Rogers (1983) stated above, there is indeed a disturbing 'conformity of knowledge, values and attitudes' (p.163). When the young women in my studies were offered the opportunity to participate in research and plan learning experiences for others, they welcomed this chance. They worked effectively in collaboration with teachers and their peers, and proved that they did have much to offer in a more democratic classroom.

In the case of Elise from the first project, responsibility allowed her the opportunity to develop a sense of personal agency - agency she did not sense she had before as a 'shadow girl'. Kayleigh and Ashley, negative leaders in the second project, would appear to have already secured power and agency for themselves in their classrooms, but responsibility for the teaching of others redirected this agency toward a more positive goal - a goal that allowed them to exercise qualities of leadership that was constructive both for themselves and their pupils.

Rachel, one of my trainee teachers, observed that young people rarely do disappoint if they are given opportunities to be trusted. However, challenging pupils are the least likely to be trusted when conferring responsibility. Even with the very best of intentions, it is difficult for teachers to relinquish total responsibility in the classroom. However, the outcomes of my research suggest that if we want all young people, not just those motivated by academic success, to be engaged and interested, then we need to ensure opportunities which offer authentic agency and control. Although a great deal was asked of the young people involved in my study, there seems little question that engagement deepened as each new challenge emerged - and there were challenges, not least of which was the risk of not succeeding.

## **Personal Risk: Peer- teaching – building commitment and empathy**

The narrow range of skills valued in school means that many students face risk of failure. Teachers try to mitigate this risk by providing as much support as possible, often at the expense of pupil agency. But is risk necessarily a negative thing? Perhaps this depends on the type of risk to be taken. The young women in my study did have valuable, closely connected skills - Drama skills and interpersonal skills. Elise, Mary and Emily had talked about their friendships with younger pupils, providing a 'group' for those who did not have a group; Ashley and Kayleigh's teacher had commented on what good actors the girls were and how they enjoyed exploring characters and dilemmas through role play. All these young women had something valuable they could offer others, and peer teaching provided an avenue for exercising their skills.

Teaching others is a significant responsibility and personally very risky, as Ashley found out when one of her classes did not go to plan. Standing up in front of others, without the actor's mask, does make an individual vulnerable. Where examinations provide one form of risk, peer teaching in this case provided another. However, for the girls in my study, their engagement, sense of responsibility and commitment to the task was such that they were prepared to take this very personal risk. Ashley even came back to face one challenge again when, in the past, she might have walked away. What was peer teaching offering, and why did these young women expose themselves to such personal risk, and in fact seem to enjoy the opportunity to do so?

I would argue peer teaching tapped into and fostered a sense of connectedness with others that these young women valued. Ashley and Kayleigh had been labelled negative leaders, but their leadership skills were utilised in this case to help others. What developed was a sense of commitment to and empathy for their pupils. These young women identified and understood their pupils – they brought to their teaching their own understanding as pupils themselves. They cared about their pupils' success and supported them as individuals. Their classroom experience also offered them insight from the 'other side of the desk' as it were, and empathy also developed for their own teachers.

Collins (2005) suggests that there are two levels of empathy, 'Functional' and 'Profound'. Functional empathy is a form of understanding others based on stereotyping and blanket assumptions; profound empathy requires high levels of care, time and one-to-one interaction in order to appreciate individuals (p.4–6). Good teachers develop profound empathy with their pupils and this insight and understanding ensures diversity is valued and individual needs recognised and addressed. The pupils in this study, I believe, developed the latter kind of empathy and took something very positive back as a result. As well as developing a

sense of interconnectedness with others themselves, their pupils and their own teachers also recognised and valued their skills as teachers.

I would argue that this risk phase of the model is critical in understanding what might provide the most meaningful challenges and powerful learning experiences for disengaged young people, indeed all young people. Peer teaching is an example of a risk that provides an authentic learning experience, and an opportunity to develop, as Friere puts it, 'knowledge that is the fruit of lived experience' (Friere 2001 ed. p.36). Unfortunately this kind of authentic learning experience is difficult to provide in the standard school curriculum. My research observations revealed that when Ashley struggled most with her role as teacher it proved to be a turning point, for it forced her to be self-critical and reflective and, because she wanted to succeed, she had to analyse what went wrong and learn from it. Ashley learnt from this 'lived experience' without my intervention.

Deep personal learning resulted from the experiences the young women in my study had as peer teachers, and this learning made change possible. Peer teaching offered an avenue for the girls to see themselves in a new light and to have their skills recognised and valued by their teachers. The transformative potential of peer teaching Drama offered them visibility and voice.

### **Recognition, Value: Building self- esteem and confidence**

The last major research outcome discussed here represents final outcomes in terms of one cycle of this model, but also a strong starting point for a new cycle of experience. This final phase is significant also in that it was, in some ways, the point where my research journey actually began. At the very beginning it was a comment by Elise that sparked my interest and set me on a path, in a way backwards, to understand how she had developed a new perception of herself: "Someone actually listened to me; I was not on stage doing something as someone else, it was me, Elise, doing it." Elise felt acknowledged, and the novelty of this experience was clear.

The young women in both projects enjoyed the positive recognition they received from their teachers and peers. What they had done was seen as valuable, and this fed their confidence and esteem. Recognition can be considered in two ways; one way is recognition in terms of apprehension, simply identifying the individual, or as in Elise's case finding someone had "actually listened". The second way recognition can be considered is in terms of credit and appreciation. The girls' achievements as peer teachers were valued and praised by their teachers.

There is no doubt that being recognised and valued contributes to self-esteem, but I have argued that intrinsic motivation had the greater role to play in fostering initial engagement, and I suggest that my research reveals it was more than teacher praise or accolades that built self-esteem. In this regard I found, as Dweck (2000), that self-esteem was derived through helping others. Bigger (2006) suggested there were different forms of self-esteem and drew distinctions between authentic, narcissistic, or anti-social forms. In my second case study, that sense of worth as negative leaders, no doubt acquired through negative power over others and as originally evidenced in the two girls, appeared to be replaced by authentic self-esteem achieved by meaningful, positive connection with others.

There are significant implications in this for education. To be truly inclusive and engage all young people in school positively, we need to foster authentic engagement through meaningful tasks; and to do this it may be necessary to break with traditional systems, which work against collaboration, and confer value based on individual success achieved through competition.

Crucial to recognition for the subjects of my research was 'self-esteem' and beside this category in the model I have placed 'confidence'. I would see that, as a direct result of increasing an individual's confidence, the first step in the next cycle is easier; this was clearly illustrated at the end of my second project. Ashley and Kayleigh had completed their peer teaching and were asked if they would like to come and talk to my trainee teachers. Speaking to two groups of thirty adults would have been an incredibly daunting task for two fourteen-year-olds, and I have no doubt the girls would not have felt comfortable doing this before they had been peer teachers

## **Deconstructing the Model: The Outer Frame**

The literature indicates that a classroom that offers full participation, and where dialogic teaching fosters a more collaborative relationship between teachers and pupils, will invariably provide a more conducive context for re-engagement and learning. Concepts in the outer frame of this model represent the conditions of learning that allowed the inner cycle to evolve. To begin with, each project required collaboration. The students involved were asked to collaborate as researchers, and as teachers. They collaborated with me in agreeing to participate in the research to begin with, and then planned and developed ideas in collaboration with teaching partners and the pupils they taught.

Participants were required to lead others, and they needed to employ leadership skills as the teachers of others. In the case of Ashley and Kayleigh, these skills were already in place, but directed toward the negative goal of disruption, a goal not productive or empowering for

them or their teachers. Giroux (1997) uses the term 'emancipatory authority' (p.106) to describe the kind of leadership that exercises power to develop learning that empowers others. The peer teachers in Project One explored with their pupils how conflict might be managed more effectively; Ashley and Kayleigh, in Project Two, hoped to teach their Year 7 group acting skills. In both cases the peer teachers were passing on skill and understanding.

Participants needed to be self-directed. In both projects, situations were established where students had to take genuine responsibility without a teacher guiding every step. They were given no formal plan or structure to follow and had to be proactive and reflective as they shaped learning experiences for others. What the peer teaching required was more meaningful leadership and self-direction. In an environment where students were listened to and valued for the skills they did possess, all participants could be empowered. I believe the peer teachers in both these projects needed to feel there was authenticity in what they were asked to do, otherwise they would not have committed to the task.

Viewed in its entirety, this model represents a more democratic classroom. The conditions established to foster empowerment and leadership represent a more democratic approach to teaching and learning, and the cycle of re-engagement was set in motion within the context of a more democratic classroom.

### **Explorer or surveyor: Future Research**

My research into student re-engagement has only scratched the surface of what might be found through further exploration. This study is bounded by contexts that have allowed a critical examination of a rich, but limited number of school experiences. Rather like a surveyor I have been able to map the terrain of one small area, and describe it in detail. An explorer travels to places previously unknown to discover and understand; while I have attempted to do this in my research, much remains to be investigated. In considering future research opportunities the limitations of this study are apparent.

The focus participants in my research were all girls. One obvious avenue for further study is to focus on disengaged boys to see if the model I have developed might support their re-engagement. Statistics do indicate that more boys than girls are excluded from school for misbehaviour, and truancy rates are also higher for this gender (Osler, Street, Lall & Vincent, 2002). It would be extremely valuable to find strategies that could address this.

Peer teaching could also be explored more deeply and widely. In my study it was employed to develop re-engagement, and as one form of risk used to foster commitment and empathy;

could there be wider applications? Underlying this question is of course the issue of how peer teaching might be able to be used in school in a more systemic way, raising further questions about how this strategy might develop pedagogy more generally.

Central to my study was the recognition and celebration, through sharing, of skills and knowledge. In Project One participants shared their knowledge of Conflict management through peer teaching; in Project Two, two disengaged girls shared their skill as actors through teaching this skill to younger peers. One important avenue for further exploration is how teachers might be able to identify and value in all pupils something they are good at - this knowledge or skills might lie outside narrow curriculum boundaries. Only through expanding definitions of knowledge and skill might this be possible. There are challenges in this for education generally, not least of which might be accepting that in order to discover what a pupil has to offer we may have to dig deep and recognise that not everything that is valuable in a young person can be quantified and measured.

## 6.2 FINAL REFLECTIONS

The young women in my study represent many students in today's schools who fear failure within current educational systems. While some silently disengage, withdraw or seek simply to avoid academic expectations through truancy, others rail against the system and become disruptive and challenging influences in the classroom. As well as providing opportunities for silent pupils to have a voice, teachers have to acknowledge those voices that are loud and challenging, and rather than suppress, truly listen and respond. A democratic classroom is a listening classroom: After-all, as Friere reminds us, 'whoever feels that she/he has something to say ought to accept, as a duty, the need to motivate and challenge listeners to speak and reply' (1998, p104).

Many disengaged young people would not be able to articulate what it is that makes them feel disenchanting, but on a deep level they feel that they don't quite fit. I felt this myself many years ago as a disengaged and challenging adolescent - i.e. a sense of invisibility that comes from failing to be 'the brightest', 'the sportiest', 'the most popular' or, as a girl, 'the prettiest'. This narrow range of definitions has a common base, that of competition, a hierarchy of value that works against uniqueness and diversity. It also works against connectedness and empathy. However, my research suggests that it is possible to offer students responsibility through agency and engagement, and through the chance to take personal risks requiring commitment and empathy that lead to recognition and self-esteem and confidence. When this happens, re-engagement emerges as a possible outcome. Change is difficult, and it does involve risk – but then, as Jerome Bruner told us:

“Education is risky, for it fuels the sense of possibility” (Bruner, 1997).





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## **APPENDICES**

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### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Project 1**

# A1.1 PERMISSION LETTER (THEATRE ARTS CLASS)

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY



1971-1996 **25**

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Chief Investigator

Associate Professor John O'Toole  
 Faculty of Education  
 Contact Number : 07 3875 5720  
 Telephone (07) 3875 7111 Fax (07) 3875 5910

QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
 Please Contact  
 Reference

1. As part of your Theatre Arts Studies in Semester one you are invited to take part in a research project conducted by researchers from Griffith University. The project will run throughout term two this year, from April until the end of June, and will take place during normal class time. The aim of the project is to use educational drama techniques to explore a range of conflict situations. You will then implement these techniques with selected year nine English classes as part of a unit they are studying on conflict resolution. As well as being involved in the educational drama work which will be a normal part of your Theatre Arts studies, you will be invited to provide information to the researchers through interviews, in journal and other written forms, and in some cases as the subject of a detailed case study. The purpose of this research is to explore ways of empowering the students themselves to take control of conflict handling in their school.

2. There are no extra, foreseeable risks involved in this research project different from your normal, everyday classroom activities. You will not be expected to complete extra work beyond the normal requirements of the subject.

3. Your involvement in this project should provide you with a range of effective learning in the area of educational drama and theatre as part of your Theatre Arts studies. It should also give you a greater understanding of the causes of conflict and effective strategies for mediating and resolving conflict situations.

4. All information obtained during this research project will be kept secure at Griffith University and in the recording and reporting of the research the identities of everyone involved will remain confidential.

5. If you have any concerns about this research project and your involvement in it, you can contact the Research Team of John O'Toole, Bruce Burton and Morag Morrison at any time, either through your classroom teacher or directly on the telephone number at the head of the page.

6. In this project, you will be treated as co-researchers whose skilled and informed work is essential to the success of the project. Both during the course of the research and at the conclusion you will be provided with feedback on the progress of the research and invited to provide further input.

Signatures

..... *John O'Toole* ..... Date  
 Chief Investigator

..... *S.M.K.P.* ..... Date  
 Participant

..... *[Signature]* ..... Date  
 Parent

..... *[Signature]* ..... Date  
 Witness

Nathan Campus Griffith University Queensland 4111 Australia  
 REPLY TO ► Mt Gravatt Campus Griffith University Queensland 4111 Australia  
 Gold Coast Campus Griffith University PMB 50 Gold Coast Mail Centre Queensland 4217 Australia  
 Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University PO Box 3428 South Brisbane Queensland 4101 Australia  
 Queensland College of Art Griffith University PO Box 84 Morningside Queensland 4170 Australia  
 Logan Campus Griffith University University Drive Meadowbrook Queensland 4131 Australia

## A1.2 PERMISSION LETTER (YEAR 9)

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
Mt Gravatt Campus Messines Ridge Road Mt Gravatt Brisbane  
Please Contact  
Telephone (07) 875 7111 Fax (07) 875 5910  
Reference

The Parent or Guardian  
Year 9 Students  
State High School

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's English class is engaged in a unit of work on "conflict resolution". As part of this unit, they have been working with Year 11 and 12 Theatre Arts Students, using drama techniques to explore what the nature of conflict is, how conflicts happen and how people can mediate in other people's conflicts.

The Theatre Arts students are themselves involved in a research project, 'DRACON', with Griffith University, investigating the role that drama can play in managing and resolving conflict in schools.

We would like permission to carry out a brief (5-7 minute) interview with your child to find out how he or she enjoyed the work with the older students, and what he or she gained from it. All responses from this interview will be kept confidential within the project, and any material that we use, directly or indirectly, in our findings, will be entirely anonymous. If you have any further questions, or would like to find out more about our project, please do not hesitate to call me on 3875 5720, or Ms Morag Morrison, the High School DRACON Project Coordinator.

Please sign this letter to indicate your agreement. Thank you for agreeing to let your child take part in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor John O'Toole  
DRACON Project Director

I am willing for my child to be interviewed for the DRACON project

signed ..... date.....

REPLY TO ► Griffith University Queensland 4111 Australia  
Griffith University Gold Coast Campus PMB 50 Gold Coast Mail Centre Queensland 4217 Australia  
Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University PO Box 28 Brisbane Albert Street Queensland 4002 Australia  
Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University PO Box 636 Mackay Queensland 4740 Australia  
Queensland College of Art Griffith University PO Box 34 Morningside Queensland 4170 Australia



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Project 2**

## A2.1 PERMISSION LETTER

### *Faculty of Education*

Head of Faculty: Tim Everton MA MSc  
Secretary of the Faculty: Gillian Morley MA



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

30<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Dear [redacted]

As you will know [redacted] has been involved in a research project with the Faculty of Education within the University of Cambridge over the last ten months. The work [redacted] has done as a peer teacher of Drama has proved to be extremely valuable in shedding light on how we may be able to develop and improve student leadership in schools through the arts.

I am very pleased to inform you that, as a result of the work carried out at [redacted] a report will be published on student engagement through the arts, and the story of [redacted] and [redacted] involvement in this research has been requested to form one chapter of a book on this issue. This book is designed to be a valuable source of information for teachers in the arts, trainee teachers, school management leaders and others involved in education.

I would like to be able to include a photograph of both girls in the book, and seek your permission to use a photograph of [redacted]. [redacted] has already been informed that her name will be changed in any published work and this anonymity will of course extend to any photographs published in which she appears. Be assured that any published material is for educational purposes only.

I look forward to continuing to work with [redacted] who I believe are now making such a valuable contribution to the school in terms of leadership and responsibility. I think the project at [redacted] deserves to be shared so other educational contexts can benefit from what we have learned, and I thank you in advance for your ongoing support of [redacted] involvement.

Please find following a permission request form allowing me, on behalf of the Faculty of Education, to use any photographs which may include [redacted].

Yours Sincerely,

Morag Morrison

Lecturer in Drama Education

---

Homerton Site, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 2PH

Telephone: 01223 507222 Fax: 01223 507140 Internet: <http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/>

## A2.2 PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH



Faculty of Education

### Permission to use material featuring.....

Permission sought by Morag Morrison,

Lecturer in Drama Education,

On behalf of the Faculty of Education

University of Cambridge.

I,.....give permission for a photograph of my daughter,

..... to be used in published work for educational purposes.

This permission is granted on the understanding that ..... 's personal identity will be protected and no information will be circulated in any context outside that which pertains to the improvement of education.

Signed.....(mother)

Date.....

I, ...(subject student)...., am aware the above permission has been sought  
and feel comfortable with this request.

Signed.....(subject student)

Date:.....

## A2.3 LETTER TO TEACHERS

# STUDENTS AS LEADERS

*The development of the 'student as leader' role in relation to learning in schools*

A Project funded by the Wallenberg Foundation in association with the Leadership for Learning Initiative

**To:**

Teachers of *Year 6*  
Community College

**From:**

Morag Morrison  
Faculty of Education  
University of Cambridge.

Dear Teachers,

Over the last few months *Jade* and *Hannah* have been participating in a research project on peer teaching and student leadership with *Sue* and myself. Very soon the project will be calling on them to begin teaching a group of Year 6 students at *Forest* School and over the coming weeks *Jade* and *Hannah* will be taking increasing responsibility for the learning of this group.

It would be very interesting for us to know if, while they have been part of the project, you have noted any differences in their behaviour, school attendance, or general focus and motivation.

Please pass on any feedback you may have either formally (something in writing) or informally (catch *Sue* for a chat) at anytime over the next few weeks. We would also be most grateful to receive any observations you may have made over the last few months and *Hannah* have been working with us since late April.

Many thanks for your support!

Morag Morrison.

---

Faculty of Education University of Cambridge  
Homerton College Hills Road Cambridge CB2 2PH

*Project co-directors:*

*John Finney, Richard Hickman, Morag Morrison, Bill Nicholl and Jean Rudduck*

## A2.4 TRANSCRIPT VERIFICATION



CommunityCollege

Principal, Mr Chris Meddle B.A. T. 01223 712300  
Radegund Road F. 01223 712301  
Cambridge E. office@coleridge.cambs-schools.net  
CB1 3RJ www.coleridge.cambs.sch.uk

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Dear Morag,

Just a note to let you know that I have read the copy of the chapter based on the work we did for students as leaders and am perfectly happy for publication to continue.

I am fully aware the names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of myself & the students involved

Yours sincerely

Chris Meddle

## A2.5 CERTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION



# UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

### WALLENBERG RESEARCH FOUNDATION PROJECT

#### “Students as Leaders”

This is to certify that

**Ashley Smith**

of **Ridgefield Community College**

was an active participant and invaluable assistant in the above research project conducted by the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.

(Whole Name) in her peer teaching of Drama to students at Ridge field’s Primary School, showed responsibility and commitment. (First name) was a great representative for her school and her peers and her enthusiastic participation is greatly valued.

Signed:.....

Morag Morrison

Lecturer in Drama Education

Researcher: Wallenberg “Student as Leaders” Project 2003

Signed:.....

Professor Jean Rudduck

Director of Research

Faculty of Education.



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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Project 1**

## B1.1 YEAR 9 QUESTIONNAIRE

### QUESTION C

Are you a person who

1. tries to avoid conflicts at all cost
2. doesn't look for conflicts but doesn't avoid them
3. Sometimes like to be involved in conflict.

Answer: 1      2      3  
           10     15     2

### QUESTION D

What do you think is the major cause of conflicts happening at school since you have been there?

Rank these in order (put the Number 1 in the box you think is THE major cause, and 7 as least true):

1. rivalries between groups
2. personal feuds
3. bullying
4. conflict between teachers and students
5. conflicts between girls and boys
6. some other cause
7. no serious conflicts

1	2	1	1	1	3	2	6	3	7	2	2	1	6	1	4	3	4	1	2	2	4	5	4	6	1
2	1	2	4	4	3	2	5	1	4	1	1	1	3	4	3	6	2	3	3	5	1	1	2	2	6
3	4	3	2	3	2	7	1	2	6	2	3	6	2	5	2	1	7	2	2	1	1	2	7	1	1
4	7	5	3	2	6	6	4	3	1	6	5	4	5	1	5	7	1	1	7	6	4	5	2	6	4
5	5	4	7	6	7	5	3	4	5	5	4	3	6	7	6	2	6	5	4	5	3	3	6	5	3
6	6	6	5	5	1	6	5	2	4	6	5	4	2	4	3	4	6	6	7	7	6	3	3	5	4
7	2	7	5	7	4	4	7	7	7	3	7	7	7	3	7	5	5	7	5	4	6	7	4	7	7

### QUESTION E

E1 Have you been personally involved in any serious conflicts at school IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS as a protagonist (one of the people in the conflict).

1.	Yes	2.	No
	9		18

E2 IF SO, was the conflict mainly between:

1. you and another individual student
2. your group of students and another group
3. you individually and another group
4. you and a teacher
5. you and somebody else – an outsider or parent
6. more than two people or groups

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6
	5	3		1		2

**QUESTION C**

Are you a person who

1. tries to avoid conflicts at all cost
2. doesn't look for conflicts but doesn't avoid them
3. Sometimes like to be involved in conflict.

Answer: 1      2      3  
           10     15     2

**QUESTION D**

What do you think is the major cause of conflicts happening at school since you have been there?

Rank these in order (put the Number 1 in the box you think is THE major cause, and 7 as least true):

1. rivalries between groups
2. personal feuds
3. bullying
4. conflict between teachers and students
5. conflicts between girls and boys
6. some other cause
7. no serious conflicts

1    2 1 1 1 1 3 2 6 3 7 2 2 1 6 1 4 3 4 1 2 2 4 5 4 6 1  
 2    1 2 4 4 3 2 5 1 4 1 1 1 3 4 3 6 2 3 3 3 5 1 1 2 2 6  
 3    4 3 2 3 2 7 1 2 6 2 3 6 2 5 2 1 7 2 2 1 1 2 7 1 1 2  
 4    7 5 3 2 6 6 4 3 1 6 5 4 5 1 5 7 1 1 7 6 4 5 2 6 4 5  
 5    5 4 7 6 7 5 3 4 5 5 4 3 6 7 6 2 6 5 4 5 3 3 6 5 3 3  
 6    6 6 6 5 5 1 6 5 2 4 6 5 4 2 4 3 4 6 6 7 7 6 3 3 5 4  
 7    2 7 5 7 4 4 7 7 7 3 7 7 7 3 7 5 5 7 5 4 6 7 4 7 7 7

**QUESTION E**

E1 Have you been personally involved in any serious conflicts at school IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS as a protagonist (one of the people in the conflict).

1. Yes                      2. No  
           9                              18

E2 IF SO, was the conflict mainly between:

1. you and another individual student
2. your group of students and another group
3. you individually and another group
4. you and a teacher
5. you and somebody else – an outsider or parent
6. more than two people or groups

Answer 1    2    3    4    5    6  
           5    3            1            2

E3 Was that conflict:

1. fully resolved (sorted out to everyone's satisfactory)
2. partly resolved
3. unresolved

Answer 1      2      3  
1      7      3

#### QUESTION F

Think of one conflict at school which you were NOT involved in personally, but as a friend or an interested bystander.

F1 Did you take sides in the conflict?

1. Yes 13
2. No 13

F2 Did you try and intervene (join in to sort it out)?

1. Yes 13
2. No 13

F3 Was the conflict resolved?

1. Yes 17
2. No 8
3. sometimes 1

#### QUESTION G

G1. Do you think boys or girls get into conflict more?

- |         |          |      |
|---------|----------|------|
| 1. Boys | 2. Girls | Both |
| 8       | 16       | 3    |

G2. What is the main kind of conflict boys get involved in?

**Racism, sport and girls are what guy's conflicts are about.**  
**They hate other people so they start to fight.**  
**Jealousy, misbehavior, bullying.**  
**Trying to be tough**  
**Fighting, bullying, swearing.**  
**Sport, girls.**  
**Boys argue over something but most times let their own stubborn ego get the better of them and it can become violent.**  
**Girls, basketball, boys acting like an idiot.**  
**About being tough**  
**If they're good at something or not.**  
**They get in argument such as who is better than the other.**  
**More fist fights over them or friends.**  
**Girls and sport**  
**Punch up fights**  
**They just try to be tough**  
**Girls and sporting events.**  
**About a girl or trying to be tough**  
**Group rival conflict**

## B.1.2 STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN DRACON PROJECT.

1.

What event, experience, moment stands out for you from the things that we did in this project?

2.

Why do you think that experience stood out for you? Why has it remained one you remember?

3. What were the things that you found the most enjoyable? Learning about conflict, learning about the drama strategies that could be used with the Year 9s, planning the drama for the Year 9s or working with Year 9s?

4.

What did you think was the most difficult thing to do?

5.

What do you remember most about the project, for whatever reason?

6.

What knowledge or skills about drama or about conflict do you think you took from the project?

7.

Have you taken any of the strategies that you learnt in any of the DRACON work into your outside life? What things were they and how have you used them?

8.

Can you give me an example of a time when you think you brought some of the knowledge gained from the DRACON project into your own approach to a conflict?

9.

Of all the strategies used, which do you feel, for you personally, have been the most useful?

## B1.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Title of Interview

Name

Date

Intro:

1. What were your initial reactions to the proposal of the Conflict Resolution project?

What expectations did you have at that point.

2. How were you selected to be part - did Geoff make you aware of this?

3. What did you feel about the proposal after that first in-service day? Did the in-service day help?

4. The first visit of Year 11/12 students with Year 9s - help or hinder?

5. What changes would you make to the initial setting up of the project in hindsight?

6. What aspects of the project worked do you think?

7. What aspects didn't work?

8. Did your expectations or opinions change at any point throughout the process?

9. Can you see drama having a role to play in future?

10. Where would you like to see this project head from here?

### B1.3 DRACON TEACHER INTERVIEW

**MM.**

It's really interesting you should say that because - about peers - one of the most impressive things we found was that keeps recurring is the peer teaching and power of the peer teaching, and so that's going to be certainly one of the central themes we're looking at....

**Moir.**

Look, I honestly think that that is the most memorable part of it, because it seemed that the message that came across was much more powerful because it came from their own age group, rather than necessarily being someone who's an authority figure or someone who's a different generation or whatever. They just don't seem to respond in the same manner. They take the suggestions on board, but it seemed that it was more powerful coming from someone their own age. It seemed to be that they could understand the problems and therefore the solutions they offered didn't have that generation gap, didn't have that sort of "that's their job to say that" - that sort of thing.

**MM.**

It just transplanted the teacher in a way.... a different dynamic...

**Moir.**

It did. Yes, and someone who was younger. I think that was just so important. I mean, it wasn't to say the Senior students didn't give suggestions that perhaps we wouldn't have given. In many cases the solutions would be same. It's just that the theory came from someone else, and someone younger and someone "our age who understands". People our age don't understand 15 years olds - or they'd have us believe that anyways.

**MM.**

One of the things that I remember we noticed was the way in which the students were quite forgiving of the year 11 and 12s - they gave them a go.

**Moira.**

They really did. And that was this idea that they were simpatico. Like "You're a student too". They knew they had an assessment based on this didn't they, and they knew that so they were very forgiving of that, because "well - they're not a teacher. They're only students too" you know.

**MM**

I was going to ask you too about the drama component. You alluded to that earlier. The way in which the following year it was different.

**Moira.**

Yes

**MM.**

Ah....in terms of the drama and the drama strategies.

**Moira**

I gave them a variety of role play situations . Actually gave every group something different because I sort of liked the sort of thing we'd done here. And previously what we'd done was everyone got basically the same scenario and we went through it 6 or 7 times or whatever it was, so of course everyone took ideas from each other, so we went through and created all these different scenarios, with the intent that we'd actually try and see how they'd solve them, and to some degree it was successful, but I think if they'd had a Year 11 or 12 there doing this it might have added a bit of realism in the sense that there was someone there who could give them some ideas or some guidance in terms of creating a role play.

## B.1.4 DRACON STUDENT INTERVIEWS (Mary 2)

INTERVIEW 1 (S)

KEY CLASS: Mary

Year 11 & 12 INTERVIEWS: Mary.

Int = Interviewer (Research Assistant).

Int.

Have you enjoyed the drama and conflict project?

Mary:

Yeah It's been really good. Like it wasn't what I thought it would be like.

Int.:

What did you think it would be?

Mary:

I don't know. I just thought it would be like teaching and games and stuff. And then when we added all the processes and spread it out.

Int:

Yep. So the processes and...

Mary:

Yeah. They were more in depth than I thought they would be. I don't know...t was really good.

Int:

Do you feel that R was useful and worthwhile?

Mary:

To them or to me?

Ant:

Worthwhile for you?

Mary:

For me?

Int:

Personally?

Mary:

Yeah. Because getting up in front of a class wasn't easy at all...and the first class you're really nervous and don't say anything and then you get used to it...and you start to interact well with the kids and the kids start to know you...yeah, it's good for the self-confidence.Int:

So. Worthwhile for them?

Mary:

Yeah. Because a lot of them aren't drama students and it gives them a chance to experience...drama that they don't do...things like...if you didn't do drama you don't do...they've never done anything like this...so it's given them a taste of...like...what else drama can be.

Int:

Did you enjoy working with the year 9 students?

Mary:

Ahh not to start with (laughs)

Int:

Why:

Mary:

Ohh...I don't know I just...

Int:

A bit daunting?

Mary;

Yes. Very daunting...they had this impression of us...that we were going to be big and mean, so they were really rude to start off with...and they...and they wouldn't talk...and when they don't talk it makes you feel that they're not enjoying this. But then they started to get used to us and they started to talk more and we started to feel like our activities were actually worthwhile.

## **B1. 5 KEY PARTICIPANT STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (group) 3**

**Q.**

When you were talking about the teaching, the Year 9s and how you were really surprised, I asked you what you thought the Year 9s learnt, if anything. One thing I didn't ask you, after you had taught or while you were teaching then, was how did teaching make you feel personally?

**Elise**

It was being able to be successful as a peer and a teacher was a really satisfying feeling, because it was like being able to do a better job than a teacher, because I could teach these kids and they'd still liked me! (Laughter)

It was good to know and it was something that maybe stuck with me. That you don't have to be authoritative, you don't have to be bossy, you don't have to be a teacher to get people to do what you want and to teach people. You can actually do it and still be you know, stay friendly and be on equal terms with them.

(Being a teacher and authority)

**Emily:**

I've totally forgotten what I wanted to say.

**Q.**

The question I asked was how did it make you feel teaching the Year 9s,.

**Elise**

When we finished teaching?

Someone actually listened to me. For the first time ever, I got to stand up and say "do this, do this, do this" and someone actually listened. As opposed to, okay, back then in a friendship group that consisted of Daryl Emily and myself. I was in the shadow. I was the shadow-girl, follow these two around. Too true. Anyway, I got to stand up and have my, I don't know, have my day in the limelight?

Where it was not on stage doing something as someone else, it was me doing it.

(Peer teaching and self esteem)

**Q.**

You were not playing a part you were actually being you being a teacher. That's the really interesting point.

**Mary**

What I remember about it when it finally ended was basically "well it's over now. Gotta go back to being a student". You know, can't teach people anything anymore. Cause it was fun being a teacher.

**Elise**

And now these guys won't listen to me because they don't have to anymore.

**Q.**

All of you have at some point this year and last year when I interviewed you, you saw yourselves as outsiders (agreement for girls 'yeh oh yeah') We've never really talked about that. We've talked about your relationship with different particular individuals and the conflict that you've had with different individuals, but you've never really told me about why you felt you were outsiders.

**Emily**

I hold to this very very firm belief. I believe that its all high schools. I believe this in Grad 8 and I did all the way through high school. It was divided between the Miss Popularities, the Derros and the Nerds (and the Macho Men). This is the thing. We started something new.

## **B1.6 YEAR 9 INTERVIEW (Summary)**

**(Peer teaching related responses from Research assistant notes)**

Interviews with Year 9s reflect they enjoyed working with Year 11s and did see them positively.

S.

"They were good...they were fun...they had um...younger views. Like rather than the teachers. They had really good examples of things they had done at school".

When asked perceptions on how they handled management...

S: "they were like no mucking around. No talking"

L. "They know what students think and that".

J. "You get other people's points of view"

H. "..found Year 12s scary at first"

"They could have done more preparation sometimes...kept waiting"

I. Older students are "...young and modern and know what goes on these days" (pertaining to students choosing conflict situations to explore he could relate to.

## B1.7 DRACON OBSERVATION NOTES (Self)

18th April

Have abandoned plan from yesterday- I will now watch John teach the 'Plan B' i.e. 'Jamie Drama.'.

Students were very reticent to discuss the exercise we did yesterday - Rainbow of Desire. After one student said 'no' the others became more animated in the negative.

It seemed that students were more concerned about the structure and difficulty in understanding the conflict. We decided to leave "Rainbow" stuff. S was the most vocal - "leave it" (I expected this - I really did not explain this activity well.)

### Lesson

(A) Pair Exercise - one student has done something wrong - parent tries to get the truth from them when they are sent home from school. (Students enjoyed this exercise and got straight into it).

(B) Role play - Pairs - guidance officer, Kerrie, recommended that school take "J" although he has a bad record; K is told Jamie has stabbed a teacher, Mrs Dark; Robbie (welfare officer) gets a phone call from K trying to find out information on J.

I was amazed at how quickly the students got into a persona - (K) elaborated on the story filling in further details.

All students seemed to have little trouble with this activity and talked animatedly - the Robbies were somewhat less talkative but possibly because they didn't have as much information on J as the school guidance officer.

(C) Working out questions to ask Mrs. D. C & K sat looking at each other for a moment.

Interview with Mrs. Dark - students listening very intently. Asked questions that showed sympathetic response.

### Hot Seat

Generally single questions - lots of single questions

M: "Look on his face? Fear, anger"

S: "Could he have been being teased and hidden under table in fear?"

C: "What sort of relationship did you have till now"

V: "Who was chanting - girls?"

B: "Did he have a close friend"

M: M picked up on the fact that the students were making Mothers Day Cards. (Drama question driven.)

K and A at end of hot seat were quite condemning of Mrs. D's irresponsibility?

Principal had been unwilling to take Jamie.

R's new role - Mr. or Mrs. M.

Kk has to tell K what has happened.

Very much got into this - some particular pairs. S & Sh were getting into a very heated exchange.

### Hot seat with Jamie.

Slower with number of questions but students who asked them had follow-up responses and thus drew more out of J. Y seemed a bit distracted. Unsure if he asked any questions earlier but he did finally put his hand up - too late - J had finished role play.

No-one except Y (who was very keen) wanted to be Jamie.

All the girls wanted to be B. Loved doing the reconstruction, all became pretty obnoxious to Jamie though S did say "Leave him alone" .....

## B.1.8 OBSERVATION NOTES

### Thursday 17 February

Morag to lead in exercises (suggested originally by Bruce) from Rainbow of Desire. Morag confessed she was uncertain but excited at the prospect, and was not sure entirely of her material. Morag introductory 'warm-up' - three symbolic moments of rejection "You're too late" asked students to explain or flesh out. The students seemed perplexed. With prompting, they worked towards literal reconstructions of the images - turning them into narrative-based problem of job-hunter. On to the main exercise - Morag discussed Boal's notion of internal conflict: frustration of desire - students into groups, to disclose (if willing) a personal frustration of desire, then use the group to create symbolic image. From that, the protagonist was to take the role of antagonist, with other members of the group acting as protagonist. This proved very difficult and problematic. Some students clearly did not get the hang of the exercise (rather unclearly explicated by Morag - I tried to remind them of the AB disclosure exercise, but it did not have much effect). One group appeared to be taking evasive action. One group had serious trouble - possibly instigated by me. Four student had disclosed appropriate conflicts, but they had been discussing whether the exercise might just mean 'reveal your fantasy desires'. Sabina chose to state "I wish I might never fail any exam". Sabina had slightly anxiously enquired of who a stranger was (sitting in the class, a lost student). After one further more appropriate disclosure, trying to clarify the exercise, I joined the group, and asked Sabina if she had ever failed an exam that she wanted to tell us about. Bad move, probably. She started with brittle brightness to confess she'd recently failed a Geography exam which she hated. A comment (unheard) by Sarah caused a fury. They went at each other, then Sabina withdrew from the group, in tears. She did not respond to my suggestion that she might rejoin the group when she felt better - "I don't want to do this". Students finished still in preparation, without having moved to stage of

Post- lesson discussion seemed to identify lack of proper drama control/ protection mechanism in the exercise, which may have been set up with unclear intentions and outcomes. We agreed to start the next lesson with discussion, to elicit whether the students wanted to continue. If they did, just to take it to performance and 1 antagonist stage. Then bail out (no protagonist monologues etc, which Morag had prepared.).

## B1.9 DRACON REFLECTION

### Week 9

#### CONFLICTS

More frustrations between Year 11 and 12s than with the Year 9 students

#### TEACHING STUDENTS TO TEACH

Importance of preparing the students to teach, as well as having an understanding of the concept being taught. Teach them as teachers as well as drama experts.

#### ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The active involvement and commitment for the first time of key class students who had previously been passive or disruptive.

...the task of teaching appears to have stimulated a real commitment to the work in each of them - process of teaching has seemed to empower them and developed their confidence and sense of self-esteem.

(Look at diaries again)

#### SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE TO TEACHER

"E" student who did not want to work alone with a group "too intimidated" by the idea of being alone. Teacher went with her but as group began to prepare their work requested to go outside. "E" agreed to go with them, though teacher could not. Ten minutes later, when checked, she had them sitting, listening, providing alternatives: the students were spontaneously putting up their hands to ask questions of her!

#### STUDENT DIARIES

General:

The reflections were very focussed on processes of teaching.

(Elise) reflected on success (limited) of one of the lessons and said..."We definitely need to work on

- . Explanations
- . Sticking to plan
- . Working together as a group" (Elise)

## EXPECTATIONS

(Mary) really looked forward to teaching but was nervous too.

"We met our year nines today!"

"...I'm really looking forward to working with these kids, and I hope that we can teach them something they'll enjoy and also find use ful".

## RESPONSE TO STUDENT SURVEYS

Many opinions expressed were shocking in their violence and racism but, as well as these views, there were many that were surprising in their maturity and intelligence and open-mindedness, and I can only wait and see what challenges this diversity of opinions will pose!



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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Project 2**

## B2.1 WALLENBERG INTERVIEW ONE (Semi Structured group)

Ellen, Ashley, Kayliegh

MM: O.K. One of the things I meant to ask you was, have you done anything like this before? **Have you ever worked with younger students? ... (no) You haven't done that?** So does it sound exciting? Do you think it is going to be...?

A: **It sounds exciting, a challenge.**

MM: What I was going to say to you, would it be a good idea if I wrote a letter to your parents to tell this exciting thing that you are doing just so that they know what you are doing? Would you like me to write something?

K: Yes.

MM: So actually, we have got a bit of a start here today haven't we, so we've got to get a little group of year 6s together to start with to have a chat to. So maybe next time we meet we can start coming up with some questions for them, and start thinking about what you want to teach.

A: **Also that would boost confidence and everything in drama and help you learn different techniques that you – haven't paid much attention to and you try to think and you would learn more about** it.

MM: Now, Miss Brown is probably going to talk to one of the year 6 teachers about a group of year 6s. **Is there any particular type of kids that you think you would like...?**

K: Happy.

MM: Happy kids – laughter.

K: I would like confident ones. That are not going to be shy and stand up and show their expressions. Also the quiet ones, because quiet ones would be a challenge as well. It would be good to mix them in so you could like ....the quiet ones could learn from the confident ones and influence them.

MM: So you would like a bit of a mixture then. Some quiet ones and some more confident ones.

A: Yes. I mean place the confident ones with the quiet ones to help them to work together.

MM: O.K. And then once you have got this little group – and so that little group forms our sort of research group where we are going to try to find out about the year 6s. We have got two ways we can go them probably. Maybe we can decide afterwards ..... we don't have to decide today. But we might start thinking about whether you want to just work with that group that you talked to, or whether you want to work with their whole class - that they come from one class – whether after talking to them you think, well I think I would like to work with all of that class, or whether you would rather just work with a smaller group.

A: One of the things that I wouldn't really like is, like a big group of friends that are coming from the same class because in a big group they won't be willing to act with other people, because they would always stick together all the time and not....Laughter. We would have to deal with that.

MM: O.K. Well we don't have to decide that today actually we can make that decision. I mean it might be after you have spoken to this group that you think Oh I think I would

like to work with just this group or something. But that might be something we can think about anyway. Well, that's excellent. You sound so positive and keen, that's really good actually. So what I will do is I'll get a little letter home, because I have reminded myself that I wanted to ask you that, and it will just say, it will just explain to your parents that it... what we are doing, and you know. Eventually we might actually have a more formal interview and I will write down the things that you say and then I will give you a copy and you can read it and say I didn't say that or whatever and just say what we are working on so that they know. You never know, we might even get some kind of a certificate or something that you might come away with to add to your progress file. Good. Brilliant. Well I think we have got a long way here.

K: Geography studies very popular if we have to miss class...Laughter.

## B2.2 OBSERVATION NOTES

### Lesson One

(Morag. Obs Nts.)

10.05

Ashley and Kayleigh bit nervous but excited.

Year 6 running little late - we can hear them down the corridor!

10.10

Have introduced ourselves. Girls have them settled (circle) - seem quiet now here - shy? Girls play name game - introduce each other (Ashley - lots of giggling)

#### Keeper of the Keys

Well explained by Kayleigh - Ashley reminds them "no peeking"! Group seem more lively now,

(Such a big space - little group seems lost in here)

Game seems to be enjoyed - a couple of the boys, I suspect, may not be as quiet as we first suspected.

10.30

Lots of laughter - Kayleigh seems ready to move on - pause - whispering to Ashley.

Class called back into circle.

(They have picked this up from Drama classes)

Kayleigh taking lead in explaining next step - "freeze as character" game. Ashley letting Kayleigh do all the talking. Kayleigh - setting a cracking pace, already improvising the action in a playground scene with her group.

Sophisticated level of questioning Kayleigh - impressive. Before suggesting her own ideas, asks the group for theirs, and seeks explanation from them where appropriate - defers to their opinion.

Kayleigh highlights concepts she wants them to learn - reinforces understanding with reminders - uses the language of Drama; 'Don't forget to look at who you are speaking to'. 'Use eye contact.' 'Try to

focus and stay in role', she directs. Kayleigh encouraging and supportive - aware of the need to think ahead. Two of the boys joking and fidgeting as they wait for their line, she has recognised a potential floor wrestle - called one boy up to enter the scene a little earlier than his line requires – now occupied and out of temptation's way!

10.50

These students not what we expected - can't see any who look to have experience with drama in games. Kayleigh talks about 'spooky story' they will be performing. Murmurs of approval and S's hand goes up. Already wants role name.

Lots of hands up now - wish we had complete scripts to give out today.

Time slipping fast - girls need to into character groups - once again Kayleigh explaining.

Lots of up and down sitting today!

Ashley sticking close to Kayleigh and looking to me a lot - nervous giggling.

I get the feeling, although in same class, this group do not know each other well - or have not worked together.

Two dark-haired boys (G & ?) seem like friends - others very separate.

Ashley really holding back - Kayleigh all the talking - character group - 4 parents, kids.

11.00

Girls huddle - Ashley is taking parents to one end of the room on her own (wonder whose idea this was - a good one.)

- Kayleigh has rest in circle again.

11.05

She is more confident with this smaller group, less self-conscious. She works very sensitively with them, encouraging them as they struggle with lines.

Ashley seems to be working more comfortable with smaller group on her own.

Everything seems to be taking longer than we have planned.

(teacher has come into space to collect - gym equipment? - pupils with Kayliegh a bit distracted.

She is surprisingly firm though "look this way or you won't know what to do".

11.10

Can hear classes moving, packing up, in adjacent rooms.

Will Kayleigh and Ashley realise? (point to watch!)\A bit of commotion as group realise time - Ashley and 'parents' return.

Kayleigh last words about number of lessons.

Attendance (!!) and scripts so far.

11.15

Bell. Year 6 seem to be happy - leave the room talking. ...group are praised for how hard they have worked, told to look after their scripts. Beaming Year 6 students leave. Ashley and Kayleigh - melodramatic sighs of relief - obvious they have enjoyed themselves.

Ashley - "harder than I thought"

Kayleigh - "that was really hard..I was nervous and that"

MM "Were they what you expected?"

Ashley "No way. That G is starting to look like trouble"

Girls both seemed excited and, despite rushed time, seem excited about next lesson.

Plan to meet next Monday before Tuesday's lesson.

Geography lesson!

## B2.3 REFLECTION PEER TEACHING LESSON ONE

### **Teaching**

Kayleigh set a cracking pace, already improvising the action in a playground scene with her group. The sophisticated level of questioning Kayleigh used impressed me. Before suggesting her own ideas, she asked the group for theirs, and sought an explanation from them where appropriate before deferring to their opinion. (collaboration) Kayleigh highlighted concepts she wanted them to learn and then reinforced understanding with reminders, using the language of Drama; “ Don’t forget to look at who you are speaking to, use eye contact;” “ Try to focus and stay in role”, she directed.

Ashley really held back in this lesson deferring to Kayleigh - interesting - outside her comfort zone with the younger pupils? Ashley was the most confident in interviews and yet least confident in front of the class. it was a good idea to have her take separate small group - she is better in this more intimate situation.(outward appearances v authentic confidence)

I am amazed at how maturely and expertly the girls handled the class. Ellen came over from the high school to see how their first lesson went and they are full of information. They told her about their class and what they already think of some of the Year 6 personalities. (Building relationships) The girls have already sussed out a couple of the boys and agree that they will need to make sure they are firm with them. Ashley admitted she was more nervous than she thought she would be, but that she did enjoy the lesson. She likes the little group she worked with and both girls decide that the structure of the lesson worked well. In future, they decide, they will start with the class together but divide up the scenes so each takes a group for the rehearsal section, bringing them together again at the end. (Building relationships)

### **Responsibilities.**

In listening to the girls speaking to Ellen , I can sense that they are being very reflective practitioners. They make pertinent observations and speak to us as if they are teachers themselves. They appear to feel they now have a different relationship with us and can talk freely on an equal level, for they have taken up adult risks and responsibilities – and seem to relish this opportunity to do so.

## B2.4 YEAR 6 QUESTIONNAIRE

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

**We are very interested in finding out about the sorts of things that year six students like to do inside and outside school. Following this we hope to devise some Drama work that will be of interest to people your age. If you could complete this survey for us we would be very grateful.**

1. Do you have any hobbies?

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2. What sorts of things do you like to do after school?

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3. What sorts of things do you most like to do on the weekend and holidays?

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4. Do you read any books or magazines? What are you reading at the moment - or what do you like to read?

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5. What shows do you like to watch on television?

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6. What sort of movies do you like best? e.g. *Action Adventure, scary, romantic, comedy.*

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7. What is your favourite subject at school? Why?

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8. What do you MOST like about school?

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9. What do you LEAST like about school?

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10. Have you ever done any Drama in school? If you did, what did you do and did you enjoy it?

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11. Do you like working with other people on things? Why/why not?

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-----  
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12. How confident do you think you are?

(please circle the one you think best describes you)

Very Confident      Confident      Confident most of the time      A Little Shy      Shy  
Very Shy

*THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HELPING US!*

## B2.5 SAMPLE YEAR 6 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

### YEAR 6 SURVEY

Name : Jack Parmenter

We are very interested in finding out about the sorts of things that year six students like to do inside and outside school. Following this we hope to devise some Drama work that will be of interest to people your age. If you could complete this survey for us we would be very grateful.

1. Do you have any hobbies?

Yes, skating and ~~playing~~ football.

2. What sorts of things do you like to do after school?

I ~~do~~ <sup>get</sup> my Home work done, and then i go out and do my hobbies.

3. What sorts of things do you most like to do on the weekend and holidays?

is skating ~~and then~~ and then going to skate shops.

4. Do you read any books or magazines? What are you reading at the moment – or what do you like to read?

Tiger Team investigations:

5. What shows do you like to watch on television?

King of skate, Eastenders, Have i got got news for you, my family.

6. What sort movies do you like best? eg: Action Adventure, scary, romantic, comedy.

scary and actions.

7. What is your favorite subject at school? Why?

~~It is~~ because I find it easy compared to all of the other subjects.

8. What do you MOST like about school?

playtime because you can relax.

9. What do you LEAST like about school?

English, because I am not very good at it.

10. Have you ever done any Drama in school? If you did, what did you do and did you enjoy it?

No, but if we did I think I would have enjoyed it.

11. Do you like working with other people on things? Why/ why not?

yes, because if you are not sure about an answer you can ask your partner for a second opinion.

12. How confident do you think you are?  
(please circle the one you think best describes you)

Very Confident

Confident

Confident most of the time

A Little Shy

Shy

Very shy

THANKYOU VERY MUCH FOR HELPING US!

## YEAR 6 SURVEY

Name: Rachel Anne

We are very interested in finding out about the sorts of things that year six students like to do inside and outside school. Following this we hope to devise some Drama work that will be of interest to people your age. If you could complete this survey for us we would be very grateful.

1. Do you have any hobbies?

Yes, my hobbies are going out with my friends, ~~and~~ combing my cat and going watch TV.

2. What sorts of things do you like to do after school?

Get my homework done so I can go out with my friends or invite my friends to my house, and say scary stories and get up to mischief with Lauren.

3. What sorts of things do you most like to do on the weekend and holidays?

Play with my friends especially Lauren. Sometimes I like to spend time with my mum, dad and brother if Matthew is not out.

4. Do you read any books or magazines? What are you reading at the moment – or what do you like to read?

I read books from Lucy Daniels, ~~Rod~~ Roald Dahl and Jacqueline Wilson. The mags I read are bliss, mizz and smash hit's.

5. What shows do you like to watch on television?

I like to watch Eastenders, Sabrina the teenage witch, and the best programme simpsons and mtv base also all the music channels.

6. What sort of movies do you like best? eg: Action Adventure, scary, romantic, comedy.

I like scary, Action, Adventure and Comedy movies. My favorite movies are is comedy.

7. What is your favorite subject at school? Why?

Art, because I get to do lots of fun stuff. Also P.E because there are lots of games to choose from.

8. What do you MOST like about school?

I like school mostly because I like to ~~learn~~ learn and see my friends.

9. What do you LEAST like about school?

I don't like it when people say things about my family.

10. Have you ever done any Drama in school? If you did, what did you do and did you enjoy it?

No but I would probley enjoy it if I was too do it.

11. Do you like working with other people on things? Why/ why not?

Sometimes because people can ~~help me~~ teach me new things.

12. How confident do you think you are?

(please circle the one you think best describes you)

Very Confident

Confident

Confident most of the time

A Little Shy

Shy

Very shy

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HELPING US!

## B2.6 EXTRACTION FROM PLAY SCRIPT (by Ashleigh and Kayleigh)

### Scene Four “The Haunted House”

Sam- This place is great , lets start exploring.

Carli (sneezes!) This dust makes me sneeze- its very dirty!

**Victoria: We could look around but we better be careful – this place doesn’t belong to us – there might be broken stairs or anything.**

**Callum: Well I’m not carrying this big bag around with me – has all my books in it, it weighs a ton.**

**Sam: Hey, we could leave our stuff in this room on the table.**

(Kids place all their bags on the table)

Tommy winks at Alex (without the others seeing)

**Tommy: Come on then lets start exploring- follow me**

(Alex stays behind when others begin to follow Tommy off stage, behind a screen)

When the kids have gone Alex starts moving their stuff from on top of the table to underneath it.

Kids walk back in and are all excitedly talking about what they saw upstairs (Alex slips in behind them as if she was with them all the time)

**Sam; Did you see that scarey mirror , I swear there was a shadow moving across it.**

**Victoria: Stop trying to scare everyone Sam, its your imagination again.**

(Carli notices bags have gone)

**Carli: Well, its not my imagination – our bags aren’t here anymore!!**

**Callum; They have to be here somewhere- bags don’t just move themselves.**

**Tommy: unless the place haunted.**

**Carli: Stop scaring everyone- this place is getting to me!**

(Victoria looks under table and finds them)

**Victoria: Hey, here they are! How did they get under here?**

(everyone looks at each other- and starts blaming and pointing the finger- a comic moment when there is total confusion)

**Alex: Don’t look at me. I have been behind you guys all the time.**

(Alex and Tommy share a gesture showing they are pleased they ticked the others!)

**Callum: Well, someone moved the stuff – lets forget it and get our sleeping bags out – I’m tired.**

(Kids all get out their sleeping bags and start to settle down for the night. When it looks like everyone is asleep- Tommy gets up and puts pillows in his sleeping bag to make it look as if he is still there- he leaves the room- after a moment some spooky music begins to play)

**Victoria: (Sitting up) Hey, wake up- can you hear that – music, I swear I can hear music.**

(The others all start to wake up and listen)

**Sam: This place IS creepy.**

**Carli: I’m starting to believe you – it is really weird here.**

(Callum notices that “Tommy” is still asleep)

**Callum: I can’t believe Tommy can sleep through all this – maybe I should wake him up.**

**Alex: (Alex looks nervous- she has to think of something quickly) No! Err..Don’t wake him up – whats the point of us all being frightened. Err.. anyway – the music has stopped now – maybe it was from down the road or something.**

Sam (Looks gobsmacked!- Barely able to speak he points in horror off stage- something the kids can see but the audience can’t yet!!!)

**It’s a Gggg GHOST!**

End of Scene (meanwhile- back at the home...)

### **Scene 5. “ The Parents find out**

Split Stage –

Sue (Tzvetlina- Carli and Callum’s mum)- is frozen on one side of the stage sitting as if she is reading the paper

Mary (Sally-Victoria and Sam’s Mum)is in her children’s bedroom sorting out their school bags and finds a note in Sam’s bag.

She reads it out loud ..

**Mary: (reading note) “Meet you tonight at Burke Street – don’t forget your sleeping bag – should be great fun..Tommy.”**

**That’s weird – Burke Street isn’t where Carli and Callum live – and why did Tommy leave this note? I think I better ring Sue .**

(Mary goes to the phone.)

Phone rings- Sue answers.

**Sue: Hello.**

**Mary: Sue, just wondering if the kids are behaving themselves.**

**Sue: Kids? They are all sleeping over at your house aren’t they?**

**Mary: Sam and Victoria told me they were staying with you.**

**Sue: Carli and Callum said they were staying at your place! I think we have been tricked.**

**Mary**: Umm..I have found a note – I think I have an idea of just where they might be. Grab your bag – I'll pick you up in five minutes- we are off to Burke street!

**Sue**: O.K – See you in 5 – wait til I get my hands on them!

End of scene

**Scene** “ The scare”

**Sam**: A Ghost!

Children all scream as from behind the screen comes a figure covered in a white sheet. Terrified they all run in the other direction – straight into their mothers! All start talking at once and pointing to the “ghost”.

**Mary** : Calm down you kids – there is a simple explanation for this.

**Sue**: Yes, like WHERE IS Tommy? (She goes over to the sleeping bag and pulls out the pillow)

**Mary**: (Walks over to the “ghost” and lifts up the sheet to reveal an embarrassed Tommy!)

Kids all talk at once blaming Tommy and getting angry.

**Tommy**: Wasn't just me – who do you think moved the bags – Alex!

**Sue**: Right you two – your coming home with me right now.

**Mary**: Victoria and Sam – in the car now!

(She turns to Tommy and Alex)

**This game has gone on long enough- I've called your parents – so pack up – they will be here soon.**

Everyone leaves the stage except Tommy and Alex.

**Alex**: What a bunch of babies – can't even handle a little joke.

**Tommy**: I thought I would burst out laughing when they told you to wake me up.

Suddenly creepy music starts up again...

**Alex**: Tommy – did you turn that tape recorder off.

**Tommy**: Yes, I pulled the plug out and everything...weird.. (Then tommy notices that Alex looks gobsmacked)

**Whats the matter – you look like you have seen a ghost.**

**Alex**: The others have gone..you're here..I'm here...so WHO is that!!!!

Another figure appears from behind the screen...but who is it!!

A door creaks open...

**Tommy and Alex** (at same time): Lets get out of here!!!

**Message for our actors:**

We think you are working really hard and we look forward to seeing you next week. The script is now finished. We are hoping you might be able to learn some of your lines before you see us because we have lots of to do. Please bring the whole script with you.

We'll have some new Drama games to play too!

Thankyou,  
(Ashley and Kayliegh)

## B2.7 ASHLEY AND KAYLEIGH TALK TO TRAINEES

(recorded video interview)

### PGCE STUDENTS WITH JADE AND HANNAH – GROUP 2

J/H Jade or Hannah (usually not possible to tell which is which)

FS Female student

MS Male student

MS. Is there anything in particular that annoys you about teachers or irritates you? Anything they do or say or their attitude.

J/H When they don't listen to you. The thing that annoys me [? 296] argument about something, when they're arguing with you, it's all right for them telling their side, but when you go and say your side, they just slam the door in your face

J/H I don't like it when, because most of the teachers say, "Don't talk when I'm talking." I don't like it when a teacher will repeat that. I already do that. But if you're not doing that, when a teacher sits there and she'll go, "Start your work," [? 074] and she'll go, "Do your work." Right, I am doing my work. [? 076] shout at the end. Just like, just chuck the work, I'm not doing it now, she's told me to do it so many times.

J/H But it depends, you won't really, with different kids it's different methods, how you come across in different situations. There's not just one way you can handle all kids because everyone's different and different personalities. Like you can't be soft with

all the children and you can't be hard with all the children. It's because some children have different personalities and you have to treat them in different ways.

Do you find the way your parents, or [? 085] child at home affects the way you react at school? So if your parents are really strict, that's the only kind of teacher you respond to.

J/H No. I hate it when people say to you it's like their home life, it's the way their upbringing. It's not. It's your own, it's the way you're doing things.

J/H It's not your mum that's telling you to talk in lessons.

J/H It's not [? 088] it's just the way you are, it's your personality. [? 089] completely different surroundings you're completely different. Like if teachers, [? 090] they wear snazzy shoes and stuff to school. When they get home they wear their joggers and stuff. It's like two different environments.

FS And what was it like for you, before you did the teaching thing? I mean how were things for you in Years 7, 8 and 9?

J/H Naughty. I didn't think about teachers' feelings. After [? 032] I didn't really think about what I was doing, I'd just do it anyway.

FS What kind of things?

J/H I don't know.

FS What did you get in the biggest trouble for?

J/H Walking out the classroom. [? 034]. Not aggressive as in like I'd punch the teacher, but my tone of voice and stuff. And you don't think about it. But I'm not being horrible, but teachers can wind you up. Certain things can trigger you off and set your hormones-

FS What are the things that teachers do that wind you up?

J/H When they shout at you, all the time. It's just-

J/H No, I think it's when they speak to you in that horrible tone of voice and you get moody with them. [? 039] what are you being moody with me for? [? 040]. And when you're trying to speak to them about a situation and they shut the door and don't listen to you. And like if you're arguing, not arguing, but asking the teacher about something. And then just slam the door, doesn't listen to what you've got to say but they're allowed to say what they want to say.

**B2.8 SCHOOL REPORTS**

**MUSIC**

Name: **Kayleigh Jones**

Tutor Group: **8 MG**

Date: **Jan 2003**

Report Statements.	Level
A Shows a positive attitude to the subject and approaches work with enthusiasm.	2
B a Enjoys groupwork, working co-operatively with other members. b Shows creativity and initiative. Is able to discuss, refine and rehearse musical composition work effectively.	2
C Has progressed with vocal work, singing confidently and being able to hold a part within the texture.	—
D Listens carefully and is able to analyse musical elements within a piece.	—
E Care is taken over written work, presentation is good and comments are detailed.	2
F Behaves in a mature and responsible manner in lessons and is able to work independently.	2

Levels :    1 = always                      2 = usually  
                   3 = sometimes                    4 = only with help.

Teacher Comment.

Well done. Has the ability to do better!

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE *Mrs. Anley*

COLERIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Kayleigh Jones** 9LF

ENGLISH

National Curriculum (NC) Levels

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exp	
Start of Year 9 Target Level					✓					
Current Levels	Abs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exp
Speaking and Listening						✓				
Reading					✓					
Writing					✓					
Overall NC Level					✓					

**Progress**

Effort	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of Work	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Behaviour	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Homework	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Teacher Comment(s)**

started the year well. However, as it wore on she seemed to lose some motivation. Her absence, regularly, has meant she is falling behind. It's not too late, she is very bright.

Targets:

To attend regularly. To complete all missed work.

Teacher's Signature: *M A Campbell*

Teacher's Name: *M A Campbell.*

Date: July 2003

# MUSIC

Name:.. **Ashley White** .....

Tutor Group:.. 8 MG .....

Date:.. Jan 2002 .....

Report Statements.	Level
A Shows a positive attitude to the subject and approaches work with enthusiasm.	3
B a Enjoys groupwork, working co- operatively with other members.	3
b Shows creativity and initiative. Is able to discuss, refine and rehearse musical composition work effectively.	
C Has progressed with vocal work, singing confidently and being able to hold a part within the texture.	/
D Listens carefully and is able to analyse musical elements within a piece.	/
E Care is taken over written work, presentation is good and comments are detailed.	3
F Behaves in a mature and responsible manner in lessons and is able to work independently.	3

Levels :      1 = always                      2 = usually  
                   3 = sometimes                    4 = only with help.

Teacher Comment.

needs to improve her  
attitude .

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE Mrs Penney .....

COLERIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ashley White 9LF

ART

National Curriculum (NC) Levels

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exp
Start of Year 9 Target Level					✓				

	Abs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Exp
Overall NC Level						✓				

Progress

Effort	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of Work	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Behaviour	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>
Homework	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Concern <input type="checkbox"/>

Teacher Comment(s)

has made sound progress this year.  
 I am particularly pleased with the improvement I have seen in her behaviour.  
 Target: target is to not let silly pupils drag her into arguments.

Teacher's Signature: 

Teacher's Name: MR J. MORTON. Date: July 2003