Making Sense of a Complex Artistry: A Narrative Inquiry of TIE Actors’ Practice in Two Issue-based, Interactive Theatre-in-Education Works

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Statement of Originality

This work has not been previously 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.

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Abstract

Despite growing research focusing on the application of Theatre-in-Education (TIE) in various educational and community settings, limited exploration has been completed on the practice of actors who engage in TIE works. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to the complex demands this form places on TIE actors and as such, the artistry required of them. This thesis addresses these gaps by exploring the experiences of nine TIE actors engaged in two issue-based, interactive TIE works presented in Hong Kong. The research was conducted to investigate how these actors understood, described and explained their practices and to determine how past influences impacted on these.

Using a narrative inquiry research approach incorporating components of autoethnography, the study made use of collaborative conversations and continuous storying to privilege the participants’ voices and enable them to articulate their practices. The participants’ narratives were then analysed along with TIE literature and contemporary theories about acting to understand the nine actors’ practices both broadly and more specifically in terms of their understanding of acting.

The study was situated within the context of the Oxfam Interactive Education Centre, where the two TIE works were presented. Designed to promote young people’s engagement with poverty issues, the TIE works required its actors to adopt a range of acting styles in performance, facilitate learning in and out of role, as well as construct experiences for the learners by managing content, form and purpose. The nine TIE actors in this study came from a range of backgrounds, including drama practitioners, NGO workers, school teachers and social workers. Their diverse backgrounds gave rise
to a mixture of responses to the practice of TIE.

The first set of findings was generated through a narrative analysis approach. It was presented as nine individual biographical narratives, and identified a range of educational, artistic, occupational, personal and socio-political influences, variously providing resources or inducing constraints on the actors. Through this analysis, it was revealed that the real life experiences of the actors were inextricably linked with their experiences within the fiction of the plays they performed, the setting of the works and the medium of TIE.

Thematic narrative analysis was then applied to the data relating to the participants’ practices to formulate the second set of findings, presented as a collective narrative. This narrative expounded the complexity of the actors’ practice in issue-based, interactive TIE works, as they managed the social issues, the pedagogics, the artistic form, as well as the diverse needs of students, working partners and themselves. A range of acting approaches were adopted in their practices, with the participants constantly managing the relationship between fiction and reality, and different dimensions of their experiences. Notions about acting in contemporary theories were keenly applied to their practices.

Together, these two sets of findings suggest that issue-based, interactive TIE requires complex artistry, making sophisticated demands on its actors artistically, pedagogically and ethically. The participants’ narratives indicate that such demands are intensified when there are strong social justice agendas in their work, and when there is a juxtaposition of fiction and reality created when actors are required to portray real people in poverty.
The findings also extend upon notions of acting explained in acting theories. They suggest that acting in TIE involves a complex artistry requiring the management of multiple forms of existence arising from different dimensions of the actors’ experiences – including those of actor and teacher, of self and character, and of the real world and the fictional representation of this world.

The thesis proposes that in the discourses about TIE, the notion of TIE practice as the art of managing multiple existences may serve as a useful theoretical concept, while this concept may also help to inform theoretical discussions about the broader field of acting, enhance professional practices in the field of TIE, and provide a useful concept for future research. The thesis also proposes a range of systems that may support actors to handle issue-based, interactive TIE, related to the need to expand the design of drama training programmes, structure rehearsals systematically, and incorporate ongoing and systematic reflections within the TIE teams.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This PhD study is about the lived experiences of myself and eight actors who were involved in devising, facilitating and performing in two issue-based, interactive Theatre-in-Education (TIE) works in Hong Kong. The study aimed to develop an understanding about the practice of this group of actors, and the past influences that had impacted on their practice. By locating the grounded experiences of the nine actors within literature in the field of TIE and contemporary theatre, I endeavoured to inform a broader understanding about TIE practice.

In this thesis, I use the term “Theatre-in-Education” to refer to a form of theatre that is devised, age specific, issue-based, participatory, and contains not only a production but also activities before, during and/or after the performance.

The research questions explored in this study are:

1. How do actors, participating in two Hong Kong issue-based, interactive Theatre-in-Education works, understand, describe and explain their practices?

2. How do past influences (artistic, educational, occupational and personal) impact on the practices and understanding of devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works?

Through exploring these two research questions, I reflect on the broader questions related to the potential significance these practices and influences offer to the field of TIE, both in terms of theory and training. These reflections emerge from my consideration of the research participants’ narratives as presented in the research
findings (Chapters 5 and 6) and are expounded in the discussions of these findings (Chapter 7) in this thesis.

Narrative inquiry was adopted as the methodology for this study where narratives were seen as both method (the inquiry tool) and phenomenon (the experience studied). Narrative inquiry draws on Dewey’s notion of knowledge as embodied experience, and suggests that storytelling is a powerful tool for people to understand lived experiences (Clandinin, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Drama experience and narrative inquiries have many common characteristics as in both of them, we understand that “identity is situational and narratives of the self are embodied” (Zatzman, 2006, p. 111). I regarded narrative inquiry as a suitable methodology for this study as it addresses the fluid and tacit nature of acting, which often entails “thinking on the feet, spontaneous, tacit and largely unconscious reasoning” (Courtney, 1990, p. 90). Through narrating the stories of the informants and myself, I hoped to make explicit the meaning of our embodied experiences and situate these experiences within the unique practice of Theatre-in-Education.

This narrative inquiry incorporated autoethnographic components in which I examined my own experiences together with those of the other research participants. My deep involvement in the TIE works made me an insider of the research phenomenon and as such I positioned myself as a co-participant in the study. The autoethnographic components provided me with a way to engage in self-observation and reflexive investigation of my own TIE practice. Holding the dual position of a researcher and the researched, I sought to “describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand a cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 273) as I lived through the TIE works with my participants.
1.1 Research Motivation

Initial engagement with a research topic occurs with the discovery of an intense interest, a passionate concern that is not only personally meaningful but has broader social implications. (Wall, 2006, p. 150)

My research interest in the topic of this study started with the experience of teaching within a Master of Drama Education programme run by Griffith University in Hong Kong. In teaching the programme, I had come across situations in which people’s different beliefs about theatre, especially those related to acting, caused conflicting understanding of TIE practice. For instance, during a discussion on reflective practice, one student pointed out to me that the notion of reflection-in-action contradicted his prior training in acting. He noted, “As an actor I should act but not think. My job is to fully immerse myself in the character without jumping out to think.” I challenged his views, “But actors engaging in interactive educational theatre always need to think, moment by moment, about how to deal with the audience’s spontaneous response. It would be hard to achieve one’s educational goals without thinking.” “That’s different, I think,” he said. “Wouldn’t you regard acting in interactive theatre acting?” I further posed. Then came a long pondering silence.

Conversations like this made me realise how people hold different understandings about acting and how these understandings could be incompatible with established practices in educational theatre. These understandings might, for example, mislead people into regarding educational theatre practices as being outside the realms of the artistry of theatre.
Intrigued by how my students’ understanding of acting changed as a result of studying courses related to educational theatre, I initially conducted a small-scale research project that involved interviewing four students of different backgrounds – including those who had been previously trained as actors and those who had not (Chan, 2007a). The interview data revealed that the participants held different understandings of acting according to their varied backgrounds, and as they came across theories and practices related to educational theatre, they began to develop new understandings about acting, including the notions that:

- Naturalism or realism is just one style, amongst others like stylised or non-realist styles of acting.
- Actors are not totally immersed in the characters – there is also a reflective process occurring while one is acting.
- The distinction between audience and actors is not so clear-cut.
- Meaning is not merely conveyed to an audience, but is negotiated between the actors and the audience.

This small-scale research kindled my interest in how people understand the approach to acting as it is enacted across the various genres, including TIE, within the broad field of educational theatre. The interviewees’ new understanding of acting pointed to the recognition of notions of dualism in acting, in terms of how actors were both engaged and distanced from their characters, and how they relate to the audience while they were acting. I was interested in exploring how these notions of acting may manifest themselves in the actor’s practice within interactive educational theatre works. Based on my experience as a practitioner in educational theatre, I understand that the actor’s practice in such works often also covers the broader tasks of facilitating audience participation.
Sometimes the actors are also involved in devising the theatre works.

I therefore became interested in broadening my research interest to explore the practice of TIE actors beyond acting. Would the above notions of dualism apply to their practice, and if so, how does it work? Furthermore, how are the actors’ understandings of their practices formed, and what kinds of influences have informed these understandings? I started to look for a research site that would usefully help me address these questions.

Over the last decade, I have been involved in two Theatre-in-Education works for Oxfam Hong Kong exploring poverty issues with teenagers. My involvement in these works aroused deep reflections on the practice of actors in this kind of issue-based, interactive theatre. I regarded it a useful space for my research as I would be able to account for these reflections and dig deeper into my own thinking. At the same time it would allow me to extend the exploration of the topic to my fellow actors’ experiences. The temporal feature of narrative inquiry would make it possible for me to see how past, present and future intertwine in the sharing of stories: “The past conveys significance, the present conveys value, and the future conveys intention” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 9). I envisaged that the research journey would bring me to examine the participants’ and my own understandings of our practices as TIE actors (present values), how these understandings have been shaped by our past experiences and backgrounds (significance of the past), and how these would lead to changes in our future practice (intention for the future).

1.2 Terminologies

In his seminal writing *Theatre in Education* (1976) O’Toole highlighted three
characteristics of this form of theatre. Firstly, the productions are usually devised, tailor-made to the needs of specific audience groups and the strengths of the team. Secondly, audience members are endowed with roles to learn skills, make decisions, solve problems, and as such the works are flexibly structured to respond to the audience’s contribution. Thirdly, the production teams are aware of the teaching context and prepare suggestions for activities built within and around a performance. These descriptions foreground the context and audience specific nature of TIE, its incorporation of theatrical and non-theatrical activities that are carefully structured to involve the audience as participants rather than mere spectators, and processes of theatre making that consider specific purposes of the work beyond entertainment.

There are other theatre approaches that are often discussed in association with TIE. These sibling approaches bear similarities to TIE but may vary in form, purpose and/or target audience. For example, Children’s Theatre, Young People’s Theatre (or Theatre for Young People/Theatre for Young Audiences) and Educational Theatre all refer to theatre specifically created for young audiences like TIE. However, there are refined differences between TIE and these approaches. The Standing Conference of Young People’s Theatre (SCYPT) in Britain offered the following definitions:

- **Children’s Theatre.** Work done by professional actors whose primary aim is to entertain children or to increase their appreciation of theatre as an art form.

- **Young People’s Theatre (YPT).** The umbrella heading for all work done by professional actors for young people and children with an educational purpose. There are two kinds of YPT:

- **Educational Theatre.** Theatre done by professional actor/teachers in school, youth clubs or similar venues. Its primary aim is educational, but it generally
takes the form of a play for a large number of young people – up to two hundred. For work in schools, the companies usually provide teachers’ packs or other follow-up materials.

- **Theatre-in-Education (TIE).** Work done by professional actor/teachers in schools. Its primary aim is to use theatre and drama for educational purposes – to teach about something other than theatre or theatre skills. Typically, it is done with one class or a maximum of forty pupils, for at least half a day. In addition to a play, a TIE programme includes some degree of active participation by the pupils, e.g. work in role, drama workshops or “arguing” with the characters.

( SCYPT cited in Hennessy, 2004, p. 6-7)

These definitions are by no means exclusive, and clearly the concept of TIE would have evolved since SCYPT set the above definitions in 1985. For instance, this theatre approach is now applied to wider social and cultural contexts outside Britain. In this thesis, I use the term “Theatre-in-Education” to denote a form of theatre which embodies the devised, age-specific and participatory features mentioned in the first paragraph in this section (more elaborate discussions about its characteristics will be offered in Section 2.1 in the literature review). Meanwhile, I use the term “Educational Theatre” as an umbrella term to refer to works that happen mainly in schools and other educational contexts. Some other authors use “Applied Theatre” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Taylor, 2003; Thompson, 2003) or “Applied Drama” (Nicholson, 2005) to refer to works of similar nature, with a slightly different focus on the wider scope of application unrestricted to schools and formal educational settings.

Another drama approach closely related to Theatre-in-Education is Drama-in-Education (DIE), or Process Drama – the latter term is coined by O’Neill
who affirms it as almost synonymous with the term Drama-in-Education. Both TIE and DIE are concerned with engaging participants in make-believe worlds co-created by the facilitator and participants, and both approaches aim at bringing about change of understanding in the participants. (Bolton, 1993) TIE and DIE both adopt a range of similar strategies like hotseating, conscience alley, freeze frames… to name a few, to engage participants in the actions of the drama. The fundamental difference between the two approaches is that TIE involves a professional team of actors who prepare a play presented to the audience, with interactive elements built within, before and after the performance. On the contrary, DIE does not necessarily centre around a performance, and is usually, but not exclusively, led by a drama teacher instead of a team of actors.

The actors in TIE works are often referred to in the literature as “actor-teachers” – a term that highlights the pedagogical role of the actors, differentiating it from the role of actors in mainstream theatre. Williams (1993) and Hennessy (1998, 2004), however, prefer the term “TIE actors”, seeing the practice of TIE actors as located neither just in a teaching context nor a performance context, but within the unique art form of Theatre-in-Education. They find the term “TIE actor” aligns more closely to the artistic nature of TIE. I concur with their views and will use the term “TIE actors” in this thesis to highlight the artistry in their work. The term is used, however, synonymously with “actor-teacher” in other literature.

1.3 The Research Site

This study was conducted at the Interactive Education Centre (IEC) of Oxfam Hong Kong, where two TIE programmes on global citizenship education, titled The Other Side
of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, were conducted. I devised, performed and facilitated both of the programmes. The other eight actors in this study were involved in the TIE works variously as devising actors (two of them) or non-devising actors (six). Some of them took part in both TIE works. (A detailed description of the two TIE works is provided in Chapter 4. The involvement of respective participants is detailed in Chapter 5.)

The participants and I collaborated to develop, deliver and refine the two TIE works, over time frames varying between two and eleven years. The programmes were still running at IEC at the time when this thesis was submitted. The longevity of the TIE projects was a unique quality of this research. Not only is it unusual for a TIE project to continue over a number of years, but indeed the long-term practice in the works made the research site particularly suited to narrative inquiry. For one thing, the accumulated experience over the years provided the participants with rich stories to share. For the other, the fact that the works were being run concurrently during the research enabled me to continuously collect data as the works were carried out, giving rise to stories solidly grounded in experience. The diverse background of the actors was another useful factor for generating rich stories. The nine participants involved in the study comprised actors from a range of background occupations, including drama practitioners, NGO workers, school teachers and social workers. They also had different prior experiences in theatre performance, from novices to actors performing in professional companies and amateur theatre groups, including mainstage theatre as well as community and applied theatre. Their backgrounds in drama training also varied – some were formally trained as actors, some went through applied theatre training, and some had never received training of any kind. These different backgrounds provided the research with a useful array of experiences, past influences and views for an
understanding of the practice of TIE. Three of the actors were involved in devising the TIE works. The majority were not. As such, the research also enabled me to examine the experiences of the two groups of actors. However, my focus for this research remained on experiences of rehearsing and implementing the works, not on the devising process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research endeavours to expand the understanding of TIE actors’ practice by providing thick descriptions of a group of actors’ experiences in practicing TIE and their understanding of acting. Over the years, a growing body of research relating to TIE has been published, including an increasing number of studies in the Asian context. Many of these studies focus on evaluating student responses (e.g. Hull & Readman, 2009; Kim, 2009; Law, 2016) but comparatively fewer studies have been conducted focusing on the processes the actors go through to bring about such responses. There are also case studies about how TIE companies and practitioners understand the principles and implement the methods of TIE (e.g. Chan, 2010; Hsu, 2010; Jung, 2008), but those that specifically include the TIE actors’ own narratives, exploring how they understand their practice and acting, are still limited (see below for a discussion of relevant research works in this area). The experiences of TIE actors remain a relatively under-researched area, receiving less attention than those of school teachers who employ drama as pedagogy, especially in view of the fast-growing body of literature on the latter (e.g. M. Anderson, 2002; Chou, 2007; Shu, 2006; M. Stinson, 2009; Tam, 2010). My research tries to fill this gap in the research field by examining the TIE actors’ experiences and their own understandings of their practice through their personal narratives.
This research also contributes to a growing body of literature that deals with the artistic dimension of educational theatre. Jackson (2005, 1993) points out that the discourse in the field of educational theatre often frames theatre that stimulates reflection, argument and action as alternatives to “good theatre”. Theatre that teaches is wrongly seen as a compromise of the quality of artistic experience with dubious and extrinsic social or education objectives. He suggests that such a dichotomy is unhelpful to understanding the field, and proposes that writers and practitioners of educational theatre need to be clearer and more assertive about the aesthetic dimension of the work, for “a more open embrace of the artistic may actually contribute to the very goals of interventional and provide a means by which audiences can be reached in nondidactic and empowering ways” (Jackson, 2005, p.108).

To inform an understanding of the artistry in TIE actors’ practice in this study, I draw on both contemporary acting theories and TIE literature to explain the practice of TIE actors. As such, this study has the potential to enrich discussions about acting practices by positioning issue-based, interactive TIE works within the discourses relating to contemporary theatre. Actors in the 21st Century are expected to perform in various types of theatre. Mazeikiene (2006) stresses that in contemporary acting practice, the actors need to step over traditional limits and be able to offer plural, open-ended work that engages the spectators collaboratively in creating meanings. Zarrilli (2002) contends that the contemporary actor needs to negotiate competing paradigms and discourses about acting in order to broaden the understanding of acting as a complex, ongoing set of intellectual and psychophysiological negotiations. Actor’s practice in issue-based, interactive TIE works can contribute to the discussions related to contemporary notions of acting processes.
Reviewing related empirical studies helps to provide a clearer idea about the research that already exists in the field and the gaps yet to be filled. Significantly, literature search did not yield much research directly related to the TIE actor’s practice. There are however research studies focusing on the actors’ own understanding of their acting practice in interactive theatre (McCoy, 2006; Stern, 1997), but these works are focused on the more general practice of Theatre for Young Audiences rather than the more specific genre of TIE. Sz. Palllai’s (2005) PhD study is one of the few academic works that addresses contemporary notions of acting within the literature of TIE and thus provides useful foregrounding to my study. The author pointed out that the participatory nature of TIE calls for a practice of acting larger than merely portraying a character in a play. She identifies a range of demands on TIE actors in handling interactive theatre, and the need to manage “the balance of fiction and reality for the actor, so unambiguously separated in conventional theatre” (p. 94). Informants in her study suggested that actors in TIE need an intellectual capacity and analytical skills in interacting with the audience, as well as in examining the issues explored in the plays. As such, “thinking” and “control” were seen as something as important as “feeling” and “being” in TIE actors’ work. What Sz. Palllai’s study has been short of, however, is the actors’ own voices. The data she collected mainly consisted of views of directors and artistic directors, because the TIE companies she studied relied on project-based guest actors. These actors were either too busy to respond to the research while rehearsing and performing for the companies, or too difficult to engage once the TIE projects had completed.

The TIE actors’ own voices are presented in Hennessy’s (2004) PhD study, in which he interviewed fourteen TIE actors in the UK who have practised TIE for different
periods of time. The focus of his research is related to how TIE actors evaluate their praxis. He used the term *praxis* to denote the dialectic work of TIE actors, which deals with “the dynamic interrelationship between the creative will and imagination, and the creative action and practice of those involved [in theatre]” (p. 10). He applies contemporary acting theories to support his discussions, and suggests that the praxis of the TIE actor operates within notions involving modern, presentational styles of acting. He also asserts that the interplay between “critical thinking *in* and *through* action… nurtures the development of the actor’s *praxis*” (p. 17). These assertions again usefully inform my research. Hennessy’s thesis focuses on the TIE actor’s practice. My intention for this research is to expand the understanding of TIE actor’s practice by examining their past influences. Moreover, in Hennessy’s thesis, the actors’ voices are presented as one collective narrative, a chronicle, in order to portray the experiences and processes in different stages of TIE practice over the years. My concern is not related to the temporal dimension of TIE actors’ practices, but the uniqueness of individual actor’s past influences, as well as the collective voices from a group of actors approaching two specific TIE works as teammates.

The Masters study conducted by Kuo (2007) is the closest to the intention of my research. Examining the training experiences of three TIE actors in Taiwan and their understanding about the role of TIE actors, her case study locates a number of “cross-boundary” beings of the TIE actor as both actor and teacher. Her informants expressed that they were required to balance between emotions (of the fictional role) and the rational (in maintaining the educational goal). They also needed to emotionally engage the audience with their performance, yet possess good questioning and facilitation skills when handling audience participation activities. The phrase “debating
empathetically”（帶著情感地辯論）\(^1\) (p. 67) was used by one of the actors to describe the state in which both emotions and the rational co-exist in the work of TIE actors.

The informants also pointed out other dualities in TIE practice which they must concurrently address, including “making the audience believe in the drama”（讓觀眾相信）/“acting real”（有現實感） but “being objective”（客觀）/“having an awareness of the audience”（意識觀眾的層面）/“de-emotionalise and staying rational”（去情緒化·保持理性）(p. 69). Kuo’s study also correlates elements of the actors’ real selves (personal traits, background, educational beliefs and previous drama experiences) with their TIE practice. The findings of this thesis usefully foreground my research by suggesting the complex experiences TIE actors go through, particularly in pointing out how the actors need to both feel and be rational in practicing TIE. In addition, the study acknowledges how past experiences play a part in influencing TIE actors’ practice.

Kuo’s research is also culturally relevant to my study as it presents the experiences of a group of Chinese actors in Taiwan, where the socio-cultural context is similar though not entirely the same as Hong Kong’s. However, limited by the scope and requirements of a Masters thesis, there are methodological shortcomings in her work. For example, rather than opening up opportunities for the interviewees to identify past influences on their own practice, the researcher imposed a set of prescribed personality traits which she assumed to be relevant to the informant’s TIE practice. She then drew a direct correlation between such personality traits and the actor’s practice. In my study, adopting narrative inquiry as methodology, I intend to provide the space for my research participants to interpret their own experiences from their own perspectives.

\(^1\) Kuo’s thesis was written in Chinese. Quotations from her work in this thesis are my translations. The original Chinese terms used in her thesis are listed in the brackets following each term in this paragraph.
The above empirical studies usefully inform my awareness of existing research interests in the practice of TIE actors. They all point to different notions of duality in understanding TIE actor's practice, and a call for more contemporary approaches to acting beyond traditional realism. The actors' own voices are included to different degrees in these studies. Epistemologically, some of these research works tend to see the actors' understanding of their practice and past influences as set and pre-determined, rather than fluid ideas emerging as the actors narrate their own experiences. Also, the research designs do not address how dialogue amongst the research participants can become a useful way for meaning construction. These epistemological questions are central in this study, and will be explained in Chapter 3 on methodology.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

In this chapter I have given an overview of the study by accounting for my research motivation and the research questions. Key terminologies have been explained and a brief introduction to the research site provided. The chapter also explicates the significance of the research to the broader field of educational theatre and considers the gaps in existing research.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will review the literature that informs this study. This literature is focused on understanding TIE practice and the specific demands it places on the TIE actors, as well as the notions of acting involved in TIE practice relating to the relationship between the self and the character. This literature will be used to support the discussion of the findings in the later chapters.

Chapter 3 explains the rationale behind choosing narrative inquiry as the methodology
for this research, and how and why autoethnographic components were incorporated. It accounts for the specific research approach adopted in this study, and discusses the issues arising from the research process.

Chapter 4 provides the necessary contextual information to inform the readers’ understanding of the narratives in this study. The purposes, forms and styles of the two TIE works involved in this study are described, and placed within a broader picture of the social and cultural contexts within which the selected TIE works are situated.

The findings of this research are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 comprises biographical narratives of the nine research participants, in which their backgrounds are introduced and the past influences impacting on their practice in the two TIE works are discussed. In Chapter 6, a collective narrative presenting the nine participants’ experiences of devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works is shared, with the key themes emerging from the data amalgamated. In these chapters, the theories explored in the literature review are used to frame the discussion of the participants’ narratives.

In Chapter 7, I discuss the major findings across the biographical and collective narratives, and the insights I gained. The discussions focus on the implications of the findings to current theories and professional practice of TIE. The limitations of the study are also discussed, and suggestions for further research offered.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I will review a body of literature to understand the features of TIE and the knowledge and skills which are demanded of the TIE actor. Specifically, the notions of acting involved in TIE practice will be discussed with regard to the relationship between the actor’s self and the character one plays. The discussion will be grounded in TIE literature as well as contemporary acting theories.

2.1 Theatre-in-Education and the Specific Demands it Places on its Actors

It is generally acknowledged that Theatre-in-Education as a form of theatre began in England in 1965 when the Belgrade TIE Company was formed (Chambers, 2002; Jackson, 1993; O'Toole, 1976; Wooster, 2007). Regarded as a new “movement” in UK theatre (Jackson, 1993, p. 1), TIE originated as an initiative of the professional theatre in reaction to changing assumptions about theatre and education. TIE in the UK had faced many challenges including the economic imperative of the British government in the 1970s that had impacted on TIE’s development. However, the focus of this thesis is not to discuss such historical development in detail, but rather the specific demands TIE places on its actors in relation to its art form and the educational and social beliefs underpinning this approach.

Wooster (2007) stated that TIE emerged at a time when the British theatre was experimenting with non-traditional and creative forms, when there was “a seminal change in social and personal liberty and many theatre practitioners preferred to work outside the confines of the traditional artistic and financial data structures” (p. 1). Unlike traditional mainstream theatre, TIE was underpinned by “a socio-political belief that theatre needed to be democratised and made relevant to all social groups” (Wooster,
The 1960s was also an era when liberal, progressive education paradigms made strong impacts on the educational field in the UK. Such a paradigm shift informed the TIE movement with notions of “child-centred education” and “learning by doing” (Pammenter, 1993). O’Toole (2009) asserts that TIE arose at a time of educational re-evaluation, and underpinning the practice of TIE is a “volatile mix of progressive and constructivist educational philosophies, and Marxist and liberatory ones” (p. 482). Under such influences in the thinking about theatre and education, TIE was born as “a unique hybrid” of theatre that “combines the skills and techniques of traditional theatre with modern educational philosophy and practice” (Jackson, 1980, p. 25). With its social roots in the community, TIE searched for a useful and effective societal role both as an educational medium and as a force for social change (Jackson, 1993). These new roles and purposes of theatre drove practitioners to devise a new form of theatre with specific characteristics, entailing a high level of audience involvement and keen exploration of human and social issues.

The TIE movement that started in the UK influenced work in other places. In the US, where there already existed a long history of Children’s Theatre and Theatre for Young Audiences (theatre produced for children or young people as audience), some companies adopted the British TIE model in their works. Theatre workers and educators in Australia also took on aspects of the participatory forms of TIE in their Theatre for Young People works, with a generally stronger emphasis on scripted plays than devised works (O’Toole & Bundy, 1993). The notion of TIE arrived in Hong Kong in the late 1970s when a group of British actors came to establish the Chung Ying Theatre Company with Chinese actors. However, the British model of TIE was barely implemented in the company’s practice due to many societal and organisational factors (Chan, 2007b). It was not until the recent decade that some practitioners who had
studied drama education in the UK revived the British model with integral participation and highly social themes in Hong Kong, which is the TIE model adopted in this study.

The key features of TIE were laid out in seminal writings by O'Toole (1976) and Jackson (1980), who noted that:

1. TIE works are structured as “TIE programmes” which do not contain a stand-alone performance, but incorporate other workshops and activities carefully planned and integrated with the performance. Jackson asserts that the concept of the “TIE programme” is what distinguishes TIE most obviously from other kinds of children’s theatre and young people’s theatre; and for which he is mainly focusing his discussion on TIE works within school contexts. O’Toole, also placing his discussion of TIE within schools, suggests that TIE programmes are frequently split into two or three parts to allow school teachers to build a large-scale project on the stimulus of the performance. He further puts forward possible activities that can be built around the performance, like preliminary workshops for the class teacher and follow-up work on the performance, designed by TIE companies with an awareness of the teaching context.

2. The second feature of TIE highlighted by the two authors is related to the content of the works, in which topics and materials are selected according to their relevance to specific age groups and the school curriculum. As such, both authors remark that TIE works are usually devised and researched by the company, tailor-made to the needs of the audience, the teaching context, as well as the strengths of the TIE team.

3. The third feature of TIE is related to form, in which audience participation is incorporated into the TIE programmes, before, during and/or after the performance. The kinds of participation may take many forms. For example,
Jackson suggests that audience participation in TIE may include in or out of role drama improvisations, or highly structured role-play and decision making within dramatic situations. O’Toole further contends that in order to respond to the audience’s contribution, the programmes’ structures have to be flexible while keeping the fiction intact. Also, he proposes that a small audience size, usually one or two classes, will enhance an involvement deep enough to be a significant aid to the learning process.

These key writings point to characteristics of TIE that suggest greater demands on the actor than acting in conventional theatre requires, both pedagogically and artistically. Coined by Williams (1993) as “a new breed of actor” (p. 91), the TIE actor should be able to acquire knowledge and skills other than those required in performing a character in a play. These knowledge and skills, as the above literature illustrates, include those required in devising play texts and activities within the TIE programmes, as well as facilitating processes of learning in which direct involvement of the audience is entailed. In the following sub-sections, I will discuss the specific demands required of the TIE actors in relation to their roles as devisers and facilitators in TIE works.

2.1.1 Demands on the TIE Actor as Deviser

Pammenter (1993) sees devising as a central process in creating TIE works that respond to the needs of learners and the society, and he asserts that:

…as long as [TIE] attempts to make the issues that face our society, of which our children are part, accessible to children; as long as it seeks to liberate understanding and not impose order; as long as it seeks to make
sense of the chaos of the real worlds and by doing so allow children to perceive and understand the changes and contradictions going on around them, and of which they are a part, then TIE must go on changing too, and, as a consequence, go on generating its own material. (p. 54)

Such a view indicates the importance for TIE companies to devise their own works, and is supported by other authors who also regard devising as a key process in TIE. These authors assert that TIE practice requires its actors to have research skills and strong understanding of the themes and issues being explored in their works. For example, Hennessy (1998) maintains that TIE distinguishes itself from traditional theatre with “the ways and means of its creation [and] that the central activity of most TIE companies has been devising” (p. 87). He comments that the purpose of TIE devising is to “understand, as fully as possible, the issue or theme which has been chosen” (p. 88). The importance for the TIE actors to develop critical understanding of the themes explored in their works is also stressed by other authors. Jackson (2013), acknowledging that the TIE actors are those who “inform, educate and, frequently, challenge preconceptions their audience may have”, emphasises that the TIE actors are required to have “detailed knowledge of the subject matter and its wider social implications” (p. 121). Similarly, Williams (1993) stresses the place of research in the TIE devising process, declaring that “an actor who is hostile to research will not be content in TIE” (p. 98). She holds that the TIE actors must be able to diffuse research into drama by producing characters that provide a vehicle to express the drama’s idea, clothed with the findings of their research.

According to the above literature, the TIE actors meet additional demands when they perform the dual role as devisers. Their readiness and capacity for researching, understanding and interrogating the subject matter of their TIE works becomes
significant. Such an idea is of particular relevance to this study since the research participants are involved in issue-based TIE programmes.

TIE works are not one-off performance events but consist of carefully structured activities built around and within a performance. As such the demand on their actors is further heightened with the need to devise and construct participatory elements in the TIE programmes. Pammenter (1993) regards the TIE devising process as one that “concern[s] itself consciously with critical analysis, both of the material to be performed and the effect of the performance, of the ideas that it may stimulate and is intended to stimulate, and of the relationship between what is intended and what actually takes place” (p. 63). He thus emphasises the need for the devising TIE team to have a clear perspective of the purpose and function of their work, and have a “genuine commitment to the subject area they choose and the questions they raise if the mechanics of the programme, the structure, the words, actions and characters are to be of any value to the children” (p. 56).

Likewise, Williams (1993) proposes that the devising process is an important experience for TIE actors, providing them with opportunities to creatively explore different ideas and artistic decisions. Asserting that TIE works should set out to lead the audience into an educative experience that brings them puzzles rather than provide full answers, she argues that the art form of TIE should aim to “entice the audience into engagement with the theatre event” (p. 101). She asserts that in devising and rehearsing for their works, the TIE actors must be able to “see with [their] mind’s eye the audience at all times” (p. 102) so that they can envisage how the audience might interact with them during the programme. She goes on to suggest that the TIE actors should abandon the idea of “well-rounded theatre” but adopt the notion of “rough theatre” (Brook, 1968),
which is incomplete theatre that “invites and needs the audience to perfect it” (Williams, 1993, p. 102). Williams further advocates that the art form of TIE “rejects the notion of complete, well-rounded characters; instead it sets out to puzzle and disorientate its audience, for their emotional journey with the characters is the essence of the educative experience” and as such in rehearsing for TIE the actors should prepare to “entice the audience into engagement with the theatre event” (p. 101).

Pammenter and Williams’ assertions suggest several demands on TIE actors that are relevant to this study. Firstly, TIE actors must be able to maneuver content and form effectively in devising their works, to achieve the purpose and function of their TIE programmes. Furthermore, an understanding of a heuristic rather than transmissive approach to learning is required in order to formulate TIE programmes that are open and stimulating. Lastly, they need to be able to adopt new notions of theatre in which audience participation is deemed integral to the dramatic form. These ideas will become useful as I inquire into the practice of the TIE actors in this study, by understanding whether and how such artistic and pedagogical demands influence their experiences.

To sum up the key points in the literature presented in this section, there are multiple demands on the actors as they engage as devisers of TIE works. Besides the capacities for devising and acting that are required in approaching general theatre works, the specific genre of TIE calls for the extra demands of comprehending the subject matters explored in the works, understanding the pedagogical principles underlying TIE, and managing the artistic form to achieve the purpose of their works. The actors are required to devise not stand-alone plays, but TIE programmes enticing audience participation activities and employing various dramatic or
non-dramatic forms. The tasks require them to conceive their works with a dual
awareness of both the work they present to the audience, and the audience’s possible
responses to the work. They are required to consider a notion of acting that is not
just concerned about maintaining their characters within fictional plays, but also how
to achieve the purposes of their works through the characters.

2.1.2 Demands on the TIE Actor as Facilitator

According to the key writers in the field of TIE (Gillham, 1994; Jackson, 1980, 1993,
of the audience is a distinct feature of TIE that gives it its unique artistic and
educational power. The types of interactive activities range from out-of-role
participation outside the dramatic action, to in-role engagement within the dramatic
action. At these times, the actors may be in character or out of character while they
interact with the audience.

The capacities required of the TIE actors to be effective facilitators are variously
addressed by different writers, each focusing on different sets of skills, knowledge and
capacities. Sz. Pallai (2005) summarises in her research key skills and qualities that a
range of TIE companies in the UK would look for in candidates applying for the job of
an actor, namely:

- Acting skills: The actors must be able to combine improvisation with acting in
  character, and be able to conduct in-role facilitation and to do it in a way that is
  consistent with their characterisation.

- Teaching skills: The actors must be able to manage group dynamics and engage
  students mentally, emotionally and physically in workshop activities. They must
possess both good workshop planning skills and questioning skills in order to do so.

- Personal and interpersonal qualities: TIE actors are required to have intellectual capacities for analysing and understanding the audience, and the attitudes of being open and non-judgmental, child-centred and willing to work with young people.

Downey (2007), asserting that actors in TIE must be effective teachers, stresses four key teaching skills TIE actors should possess, including: (1) the ability to synthesise information so as to make connection between the students’ responses and the theme and events of the programme; (2) flexibility in responding to unexpected student needs; (3) listening accurately to what the students are saying, and (4) questioning skills to stimulate a range of student responses.

Hoare (2013) highlights the role of the actors as facilitators for dialogues in interactive theatre. She suggests that the actors’ tasks in such kinds of works require them to manage continually shifting responsibilities and skills different from those needed to facilitate general group workshops or classroom lessons. They need to constantly negotiate the theatrical and participatory frames of their works to help the audience understand when they are in role and what is expected of them in different frames. Furthermore, the facilitator is responsible for inviting participation, encouraging diverse viewpoints, soliciting problem-solving, building rapport with the audience, and employing a range of teaching skills including active listening, effective questioning and management of group dynamics. According to Hoare, facilitating interactive theatre, when embedded with an acting role, requires the actor’s proficiency in translating the character, context and frame of the theatrical event and making clear transition between actor and character, in and out of theatrical frames. She proposes that for the actors to perform the above tasks effectively, they must be clear about the programme content,
the purpose of audience interaction and the facilitator’s function in different frames within a programme.

Sz. Pallai’s (2005) research offers a refined classification of four main types of process that TIE actors undergo as they transit in and out of role while facilitating audience participation, which are:

1. **Out-of-role facilitation:** The actors work out-of-role to facilitate workshop activities or discussions in the TIE programme.

2. **Character-student encounters:** Actors in-character interact with students who do not take on any roles, with a separate facilitator (out-of-role) conducting participation.

3. **Character-role encounters:** Actors in-character interact with students who take on roles, with a separate facilitator (out-of-role) facilitating the interactions.

4. **In-character facilitation:** Actors improvise in character as in (2) and (3) to interact with students, at the same time taking on the additional function as facilitator of the activity. No separate facilitators are involved. (p. 49-50)

Although these different authors, depending on their specific concerns and focii, highlight different aspects of facilitation, there are some common characteristics in their assertions regarding the skills and knowledge the actors require. Firstly, there is an emphasis on the pedagogical understanding about how to engage learners effectively. The facilitators need to understand TIE as an open, dialogic approach to education in which the learners’ needs and experiences are always of key concern. Along with these pedagogical understandings, teaching skills are also required. They must be able to activate learning processes by adopting heuristic teaching approaches and staying highly sensitive to class rapport and diverse audience response. Equally importantly, they need
to handle the artistic form skillfully, including the management of both the characters they play and their position as teachers. Not only do they need to switch between acting and teaching effectively, but they must also be able to manage both tasks simultaneously when they are facilitating in role. These different requirements suggest an approach to acting different from those required in non-interactive theatre.

2.2 Approaches to Acting in TIE

In the above section, the demands on the TIE actor are addressed and the need for broadening the actors’ concepts of acting is regarded as useful for understanding the actors’ practice in TIE. Such understanding recognises that the actor’s approach to acting does not only influence how they perform characters in a play but also the way they devise and facilitate TIE works. In this section, literature related to approaches to acting in TIE is discussed. In this literature, various authors suggest that the TIE actors need to consider non-realistic and presentational styles of acting, and address the relationship between self and characters in their works.

Though not specifically writing about actors in TIE, O’Neill (1995) suggests the useful concept of “liminal servant” in describing the role practitioners adopt as they teach through the medium of drama. According to her, liminality defines a time and space “betwixt and between” one context of meaning and action and another. The drama practitioner, as a liminal servant, works in role to lead students across the threshold into the imagined world of drama in which the participants can play with the elements of reality and explore alternate existences. When the participants return across the threshold, they are changed in some way. In order for a practitioner to perform the role of a liminal servant, O’Neill suggests that one must be able to “engage in a kind of pedagogical
surrealism that disturbs commonplace perceptions” (p. 66). The drama practitioner adopts the Brechtian notion of defamiliarization to impede perception, to induce others to notice and to see anew, and to promote novel perspectives on the world. Such practice as liminal servants requires a different understanding and approach to acting beyond traditional notions of realism. The following paragraphs offer different authors’ views on how they consider the approaches to acting adopted in TIE works.

Downey (2007) asserts that TIE requires unique skills and qualities from its actors and deems four acting skills as fundamental to their practice. Firstly, they must be able to maintain character, concentrating in their work and remain undistracted by interruptions that are prone to occur while performing in non-theatre settings. Secondly, they need to be able to play multiple roles believably and move into and out of role with ease and clarity. Thirdly, they must be able to take suggestions from the director and realise them in a scene. Fourthly, they must be equipped with improvisational skills, in devising the TIE works and within their performance. Finally, they need to possess the ability to act in close proximity to the audience so that the “fourth wall” can both appear and disappear. These assertions reveal the highly flexible skills required of TIE actors and acting styles beyond naturalism.

A number of other writers have remarked that TIE practice asks its actor to embrace approaches to acting different from those adopted in conventional theatre training. For example, Gillham (1994) regards a key feature of TIE as its operation on the notion of distancing. He contends that distancing allows the audience to physically manipulate the real world in the fictional world, and the management of this kind of distance challenges the actor’s notion of a psychologically motivated realistic character. Rosenberg and Prendergast (1983) also suggest that a presentational style of acting rather than
naturalistic approaches to creating characters is most suited to educational theatre as it helps focus on the subject matter by factoring out complex character motivations. IIsaas and Kjølner (1993) also see the challenge for TIE actors as one that questions character-based acting techniques. They propose that actors in TIE use four levels of communication during the TIE programme:

1. The “I am me” level, before and after performance, including attitudes towards children in general;
2. A story-telling level, used during the programme to further the story, and as a translational level mediating to level (3);
3. The role level, where the improvisations with children take place;
4. The character level, which more or less is restricted to the theatre presentations in the TIE programme.

IIsaas and Kjølner further discuss the different “energies” the TIE actors use as they change across the four modes of communication within a TIE programme. For example, “the role level necessarily puts the educational concept at the forefront; at the character level acting techniques rule the energy” (p. 203).

In Jackson’s (2013) recent writing, he conceptualises the acting practice in TIE based on States’ (2002) theory on acting. In this theory, States suggests that there are three modes of operation in an actor as s/he performs:

1. The self-expressive mode, in which the focus is on the actor’s virtuosity as a performer, placing the chief concern on “I”, the actor’s self;
2. The collaborative mode, in which the focus is on how the actor relates to the audience, where the concern is mainly on “you”, the audience;
3. The representational mode, in which the focus is on how the actor communicates the
world of the play through the character one plays, and the chief concern here is on “he/she”, the character being played.

Jackson (2013) applies States’ theory to explain acting practice in TIE, suggesting that actors in TIE operate in these three modes at different points within a TIE programme, but they may also operate in more than one mode at any one time. An example Jackson cited in his book chapter is useful in illustrating this idea. In this example, an actor was answering questions in character from the audience, following the narrative section of a play. Jackson explained how the three modes were operating simultaneously during this activity: In representational mode, the actor remained wholly and believably in role, answering questions from the necessarily limited perspective of the character. In collaborative mode, the actor listened with care and responded to the audience’s questions to help them appreciate the complexity and importance of the issues at stake. In the self-expressive mode, the actor employed one’s skills to retain character and to respond to questions in ways that help move the debate forward. Jackson suggests that TIE demands its actors to operate effectively in these three modes, and argues that in TIE the simultaneity of these modes “is not just a common occurrence but actually fundamental to this kind of performance” (p. 123).

Jackson’s explanation for acting in TIE leads us to see the different orders of experience that may co-exist when an actor takes up a character, suggesting an ambiguous relationship between character and self in the practice in TIE. Indeed, the relationship between role and self has been an important subject in the discourse of educational theatre, and in the broader field of drama education, through the examination of a construct called metaxis. The word metaxis is possibly derived from writings of Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato to describe an in-between-ness, a state of betwixt and
between. In drama, this refers to the state of being in two worlds simultaneously – the world of the drama and the real world of existence. Bolton (1985), seeing metaxis mainly as a mental construct, refers to it as a state in which a person holds the real world and the fictional worlds in mind simultaneously. Boal (1995), defining the term more with a sense of material existence, explains metaxis as “the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds” (p. 43). O’Toole (1992) further asserts that a drama participant may sometimes experience a “tension of metaxis” caused by the “dissonance of the fictional event within the real context” (p. 169) giving rise to strong emotional response and intensified engagement in the drama.

Incorporating the concept of metaxis in discussing TIE practice deepens the understanding of the phenomenon by looking at the relationship between the fiction of the play and the reality in which the actor dwells. O’Toole (1992) furthers the understanding of the notion of metaxis by introducing four contextual layers that exist in the actor’s experience, with each layer simultaneously operating on each of the others (Figure 1).

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Figure 1: O’Toole’s Model of the Contextual Layers in a Dramatic Event (summarised based on his original diagram in O’Toole (1992, p. 6))
First of all, O’Toole regards any participant in drama, including actors and audience in TIE, as engaging simultaneously in the fictional world of the drama (the Fictional Context) and their real lives (the Real Context). The Fictional Context is a pretend world “comprising situations embodying characters who interact with each other, and their physical, social and cultural environment as presented in the fiction” (p. 14). In this dramatic world, “[o]ur real selves may be forgotten, but they do not disappear” (p. 13). So the theatre event takes place with its participants involved in a dual consciousness of both the fiction and what is real for them, the Real Context. O’Toole uses the term Real Context to refer to “what we bring to the drama in terms of our cultural background, experience, and attitudes” (p. 13). He further defines two contexts between the real and fictional contexts that are crucial to the operation of participatory theatre, namely the Context of the Medium and the Context of the Setting. The Context of the Medium refers to the “medium by which the elements of dramatic form are made manifest” (p. 49). For example, in TIE, this would refer to the interactive form of theatre where members of the audience do not passively watch a performance but are endowed with roles, invited to participate in activities before, during and/or after the performance. The fourth context, the Context of the Setting, refers to the specific participant group, the space where the theatre event takes place, and the specific purpose of the theatre event. For example, in TIE, the audience attending the event are “prepared, and had come specifically to a space which they expected to be transformed” (p. 36).

O’Toole asserts that these contextual layers of a theatre event are interdependent, and their interplay induces complex human behaviours within the theatre event. His theoretical model provides a useful framework for understanding the TIE actors’
practice in relation to the multiple layers of contexts that exist in their work. In acting out the fictional stories and characters of the play, the TIE actors are simultaneously operating in the Context of the Medium, mediating audience’s learning and manipulating the artistic form of the work as actors and teachers. Meanwhile, they are also responding to the Context of the Setting, negotiating the work according to the specific educational and artistic purposes of the work and the specific circumstances in which the TIE works take place, including the adjustment of their work according to the characteristics of different audience groups participating in the TIE works each time. Encompassing the other layers of contexts is the Real Context – the actors as themselves bring to the TIE work their own cultural background and educational beliefs, artistic beliefs, as well as values and attitudes towards the subject matter being explored in the works.

O’Toole’s framework provides a useful premise for understanding the practice of the participants in this research as I explore how past influences (their Real Contexts) have impacted on their response to the given circumstances in which the TIE works are conducted (the Context of the Setting), how they address the demands set forth by TIE as a specific genre of educational theatre (the Context of the Medium), and how they act the characters and the play of their TIE works (the Fictional Context).

The complex relationship between reality and fiction is also considered by Cooper (2013), who employs Edward Bond’s theories to discuss acting in TIE. He suggests that TIE

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2 Cooper explains that Bond prefers to use the term “enactment” to “acting” as he sees enactment as a more enabling process while acting tends to close down meaning. Nevertheless, in Cooper’s book chapter cited here, he refers to the Bondian concept as an explanation for an “approach to acting” (p. 131).
requires an approach to acting that creates what Bond calls a “site” and a “gap” (p. 132). The site refers to the dramatic logic of the situation which illuminates the social reality, forging the direct connection between the play and the experience of the audience. Cooper suggests that in TIE four dialectically interconnected sites are present:

1. The social site which refers to the real social context in which the TIE work is situated;
2. The specific site of the play which refers to the fictional context of the story;
3. The dramatic action, images and objects that activate the above two sites in the audience imagination, which is the fourth site;
4. The audience as the site of imagination for meaning making.

The other concept proposed by Bond was that of the gap. Cooper explains it as the space for the audience's self-creation. It exists in order to be filled, imaginatively inhabited or brought to life by the audience. In creating such a gap, the actor shifts from a transmission-based paradigm of education to using the dramatic art of theatre to explore human conditions. The task for the TIE actor, according to Cooper, is to “stay in the logic of the situation (the site) and create the gap for the audience to inhabit” (p. 134). In doing so, the actor becomes a “mediator through which the play needs to speak and through which the audience speaks to the play” (p. 136).

This concept of mediation, together with the notion of metaxis and the ideas about duality in acting cited earlier in this literature review, all suggest that there exists a liminal relationship between the play and the audience, fiction and reality, within the practice of the TIE actor. These ideas usefully inform this study by addressing the notions of duality and the dialectic within the approaches to acting in TIE. Indeed, similar notions of acting have been variously discussed within contemporary theatre
discourses. Examining the related literature will provide theoretical support to understanding the actor’s practice within TIE works. In the next part of this literature review I will consider discussions by contemporary dramatists who address the notions of duality and the dialectic in acting.

2.3 Relationship of Self and Character in Contemporary Discourses about Acting

In the previous parts of this chapter, I have established a view towards acting in TIE that addresses the interaction between the actor’s self and character, fiction and reality. Such acting approaches apply to various aspects of the TIE actor’s practice including those of devising the TIE works, performing characters, and facilitating audience participation. Indeed, the relationship between self and character has long been an issue of debate in contemporary discourses of acting. In this part of the literature review, I will examine the works of key authors who have offered insights into the self-character relationship in acting. Stanislavsky and Brecht are arguably the most often cited dramatists in the general literature about acting due to their influential contributions to the field, and they are major sources of influence on the theatre scene in Hong Kong. As such, their concepts are discussed in some detail in this literature review. Their ideas are discussed alongside those of Diderot and modern theorists who address the self-character relationship in acting. In discussing the various concepts I will also explain how they inform the specific practice in TIE.
2.3.1 The Actor’s Paradox

Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot (1713-1784) is a well-known earlier theorist who discusses the extent of the actor’s identification with the character. In *The Paradox of Acting* he discusses the relationship between the actor’s emotions and the emotions of the character s/he plays, and contends that it is undesirable for an actor to immerse him/herself in the feelings of his/her character. For him, a good actor should be guided by the intellect and should maintain self-control in order to create coherent roles and ensure that his/her playing is consistent from performance to performance. He asserts that the actor must have in him/herself “an unmoved and disinterested onlooker” (Diderot cited in Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005, p. 29) so as to reproduce the external signs of an emotion precisely. In doing so, “The actor is… not his [sic] character; he pretends to be and does this so well that you mistake him for his character” (Diderot cited in Konijn, 2000, p. 23).

Diderot’s contention has been criticised as unnecessarily placing feeling and rationality as simplistic oppositions, failing to acknowledge that acting could be an interplay between technical judgment and an inner sense of truth, with the actor both feeling and being in control (Benedetti, 2005). Regardless of such criticism, his assertion of the rational “onlooker” in the actor is a useful concept for understanding the acting process of TIE actors, who embody the characters’ feelings while they perform yet at the same time facilitate a learning experience of the audience.
2.3.2 Stanislavsky’s Notion of Double Consciousness and Double Existence in Acting

Common descriptions of Stanislavsky’s ideas place him in the realms of realism where “[a]cting is seen as becoming immersed in a character” (Ackroyd, 2004, p. 100) to create illusions of “truthfulness” or “reality”, that “the performer should be unseen within his character” (Kirby, 1987, p. 7). Researchers on Stanislavsky’s theories (Benedetti, 2005; Carnicke, 2009; Krasner, 2000), however, have pointed out that the view of seeing Stanislavsky’s acting approach as mere realism suffer from over-simplicity and even misinterpretation.

Benedetti (2005) comments that many people only know Stanislavsky’s ideas in part. He asserts that although Stanislavsky developed his system of acting over a long period of experimentation and continually modified his thinking over the course of his career, it was mainly his earlier ideas that were popularised outside Russia, particularly in the United States in what became known as Method Acting through his student Lee Strasberg. Benedetti criticises what Strasberg taught as being only versions of Stanislavsky’s ideas, and points out that while Strasberg developed the Method, Stanislavsky had already moved from a subjective approach of acting based on emotional memory to a more objective approach, the Method of Physical Action. Carnicke (2009) also asserts that Lee Strasberg’s Method Acting deviated from Stanislavsky’s approach with deliberate selective emphasis on emotion memory, total immersion in the character, and the claim that actors should only create but not analyse at the same time. Carnicke (2009) remarks that Stanislavsky’s thinking has often been misinterpreted due to issues with translation. Comparing the English translation of Stanislavsky’s books with his original writings, she notes that the English translations are excessively summarised,
inconsistent, and sometimes too prone to commercial appeal. For example, she commented that the word *perezhivanie*, originally meaning “experiencing” or “living through” in Russian, was given the extra dimension of “emotions” and “sensations” when American translator Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood translated it as “the capacity to feel” or “emotional experience” in various early translations of Stanislavsky’s texts like *An Actor Prepares* and *Creating a Role*. Benedetti (2005) also concurs that the mistranslation of *perezhivanie* into “emotional identification” (p. 147) has brought about a widespread misunderstanding of Stanislavsky’s theories and reduced his system to “a kind of naïve subjectivity” (p. 127).

Both Benedetti (2005) and Carnicke (2009) contend that an often overlooked idea in Stanislavsky’s thinking is his notion of “double consciousness” in acting. Benedetti (2005) explains this as an actor performing two functions at the same time:

> On the one hand there is the player, who acts from moment to moment…
>
> On the other hand, he [sic] is an artist, who controls and shapes and then decides what he is going to do, decides just how each scene should be played, [and] at what level of intensity… (p. 126)

This idea of an actor witnessing the process of acting of oneself resembles Diderot’s call for an emotionally uninvolved onlooking actor, but furthers the notion by placing the paradox within the actor, as explained by Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2005): “In the case of Stanislavsky, the paradox exists… within the actor: his capacity to be both deeply emotionally involved – down to the level of the unconscious – and yet still in conscious control of the acting through his ability to watch” (p. 43). Stanislavsky sees the actor’s “sense of self” as “comprising two equally important perspectives – being on stage and
being within the role” (Carnicke, 2009, p. 119), occurring in a “double existence” while one is acting:

An actor is split into two parts when he [sic] is acting. You recall how

Tommaso Salvini put it: “An actor lives, weeps, laughs on the stage, but as
he weeps and laughs he observes his own tears and mirth. It is this double
existence, this balance between life and acting that makes for art”.  
(Stanislavsky, 1981, p. 167)

While Diderot sees a split in the actor’s sense of self during acting, Stanislavsky
conflates actor and character in a double existence in which the self is involved in the
character. Stanislavsky’s System invokes the actor’s recall of personal experiences in the
creation of the characters. In doing so, he actively involves the actor’s unique person in
the characters and mediates the experiences of both to attain authentic acting. He
asserts that an actor should “always act in your person… The moment you lose
yourself on the stage marks the departure from truly living your part and the beginning
of exaggerated, false, acting” (Stanislavsky, 1963, p. 91). Stanislavsky’s stress of such
double existence is reflected in his terminological yoking of “human being” with the
“actor” (chelovek-akter) and the “actor” with the “character” (artisto-rol’), thus
“typographically connecting the experience of the performing actor with that of the
person and role” (Carnicke, 2009, p. 119).

Stanislavsky’s notion of double consciousness offers us insights into how actors create
characters with the engagement of the self. This idea provides me with a lens for
analysing the TIE actors’ practice in this study by examining how they embody aspects
of their selves in playing their characters, and in how they approach devising and
facilitating in TIE works. Since the research participants are performing the dual role as actors and teachers in issue-based TIE works, the “selves” engaged in their acting may entail their personal, artistic and educational beliefs as well as their thinking about the social issues explored in the TIE works.

2.3.3 Brecht's Notion of the Divided Actor

Brecht’s notion of acting is grounded in his ideological belief in the purpose of theatre. Taking a Marxist stance he believes that theatre is a means for social change, and he criticises naturalistic theatre as a static reproduction of reality that tacitly confirms the status quo. In finding an alternative to naturalistic theatre, he needs a kind of actor who can provoke social change. The main goal of the Brechtian actor is therefore “not to give the audience an emotional experience, but provoke critical thoughts to make decisions concerning the meaning of the events” (Benedetti, 2005, p. 187).

Brecht developed the idea of “the divided actor”, where the character and the actor’s own personality exist side-by-side and never merge (Benedetti, 2005, p. 190). He maintains that a distance between the actor and the character is needed so that the actor can hold a critical attitude towards the character. In proposing the concept of Verfremdung (defamiliarisation) Brecht (1964) suggests that the actor should refrain from complete transformation into the character.

The actor does not allow himself [sic] to become completely transformed on the stage into the character he is portraying. He is not Lear, Harpagon, Schweik; he shows them. He reproduces their remarks as authentically as he can; he puts forward their way of behaving to the best of his abilities
and knowledge of them but he never tried to persuade himself (and thereby others) that this amounts to a complete transformation. (p. 137)

The deliberate abandoning of total transformation brings about a state of the being which Brecht (1964) terms as “quotation” (p. 138). It is a state in which the actor somewhat acts as if s/he is reporting the person s/he is playing, like the person presenting his/her memory. In this state, the actor has “the full substance of a human gesture even though it now represents a copy” (p. 138). The actor is at the same time being the character and forming an opinion of this person.

Brecht was concerned about how actors in his plays were able to adopt a socially critical attitude towards their characters’ behaviours, and more importantly, their socio-political circumstances. For him, what mattered was the characters in his plays were “not [related] to the psychological but the sociological” (Brecht cited in Rouse, 2002, p. 258). For Brecht then, it was important for his actors to approach their characters as social beings rather than individual psyches, arguing:

In [the actor’s] exposition of the incidents and in his [sic] characterisation of the person he tries to bring out those features which comes from society’s sphere. In this way, his performance becomes a discussion (about social conditions) with the audience he is addressing. (Brecht, 1964, p. 139)

The acting style proposed by Brecht is directly related to his desired effects on the audience. The actor’s self-alienation aims to prevent the audience from empathising with the characters in order to criticise the social causes of their problems, as Brecht (1964) explains:
The performer's self-observation, and artful and artistic act of self-alienation, stopped the spectator from losing himself [sic] in the character completely, i.e. to the point of giving up his own identity, and lent a splendid remoteness to the events. (p. 93)

In order to do so, the Brechtian actor must be able to play in a way that assumes that the fourth wall does not exist, so that the audience would not be coerced into feeling or brought to an illusion of seeing the stage actions as what happens in reality (Brecht, 1964). This is not to say, however, that the actors’ empathy with the character should be renounced. On the contrary, Brecht sees the actors’ emotional identification with their characters as something needed in his theatre works, both in the rehearsal and the performance.

In his discussion of Brecht’s practical work with the Berliner Ensemble during the post-war years, Rouse (2002) described the actors as being involved in three phases of work:

1. The actors were actively involved in the pre-rehearsal stage where the background of the text and its author were “painstakingly researched in order to identify both the historical character of the social life being illustrated and the determinants that influence it” (p. 251).

2. The actors engaged in the rehearsal and made full use of their psychological faculties to leap into and unite with the final character. In this phase of the work, they engaged in a process of “identification with the character, the search for the character’s truth in a subjective sense… [in order to] explore [the] character in all the details demanded by the most naturalistic director” (p. 257).
3. Having come to terms with knowing the character from the inside, the actors examined it once again from outside, from the point of view of society and “using the insights won from a critical re-examination of the social behaviour of the characters they have come to know intimately, structure out the final composition of gestures and positions that will elaborate the fable concretely in performance” (p. 258).

The approach to work proposed by Brecht recognises emotional identification as necessary in ensuring a certain kind of authenticity in acting. The actor lives the character inwardly, but does not indulge in empathy. Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2005) compares Brecht’s notion of actor-character relationship with those of Diderot and Stanislavsky and contends that:

In different times, Brecht’s stance resembles Diderot’s aims for an actor who is not “carried away” – subjected to empathy, in Brecht’s terms. It also mirrors Stanislavsky’s ideal of the actor: he [sic] inwardly lives the character, and yet there is the paradoxical second aspect of the actor's consciousness that serves as an uninvolved witness to all emotional involvement, plus ensuring that the actor is not carried away by his emotions. (p. 65)

This differentiation suggests that the involvement of the self within character can be a conscious, controlled act of the actor. In this act, “playing and experience”, “demonstration and identification” are co-existing and united processes. For Brecht, such an approach to acting aims to achieve the ultimate goal of “dialectical unity between the gestural presentation of the character in his social relationships and a
realistic emotional foundation won through identification” (Rouse, 2002, p. 258).

The literature regarding Brecht’s notion of acting has much to offer the kind of TIE practice explored in this study. First of all, the idea of demolishing the fourth wall to bring the audience to critically comment on the characters usefully informs the TIE actors’ work regarding how they devise TIE programmes that take into account possible audience response. Then, during the implementation of the TIE works, such a notion of acting may also apply to how they interact with the audience to invoke critical thinking. Furthermore, the idea of the character as embodiment of social concepts is a useful premise for TIE actors approaching issue-based theatre. Lastly, the suggestion that the actors consciously manage the self-character relationship to give rise to socially critical yet emotionally authentic portrayal of characters is relevant to handling issue-based TIE works.

2.3.4 Modern Theories on Self-character Relationship in Acting

Diderot, Stanislavsky and Brecht’s theories about self-character relationship in acting widened views about the actor’s practice and advanced the discussion about acting in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Some dramatists no longer see the question in debate as related to whether the actor should merge with the character, but instead regard it as a matter of the degree of involvement. For example, performance theorist Kirby (2002) examines the relationship between acting and performances of everyday life, and creates a continuum from non-acting to acting according to “the amount of representation, personification” (p. 44) of a character that is involved in the performer’s behaviour. A summary explanation of this continuum by Schechner (2006, p. 174-175) is provided below:
NOT-ACTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonmatrixed Performing</th>
<th>Symbolized Matrix</th>
<th>Received Acting</th>
<th>Simple Acting</th>
<th>Complex Acting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(doing something onstage other than playing a character)</td>
<td>(performing actions that can be seen as “belonging” to a character even though the performer always behaves “as him/herself”)</td>
<td>(a performer is read as part of the situation of a scene, but does very little “character acting”)</td>
<td>(simulation and impersonation with some emotional work done by the actor)</td>
<td>(the whole being of the performer is called on at a high level of commitment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this continuum, acting is seen as a sub-category of performing, and the behaviour of acting is seen to start with the actor behaving as the character. The level of commitment of the actor determines the degree of complexity in acting, from “received acting”, “simple acting” to “complex acting”. Schechner (2006) also suggests that acting comprises a broad range of behaviours from “minimal acting” to “total acting”, defined by the degree of portrayal of an “other”:

At one extreme is the minimal acting or even not acting of some performance art. At the other extreme is the total acting of shamans and the trance-possessed. Acting consists of focused, clearly marked and framed behaviours specifically designed for showing. At the non-acting end of the spectrum, there is no portrayal of another or of a character. The minimalist actor simply performs certain actions that are received as acting by spectators because of context. By contrast, in total acting, the “other” is so powerful that it takes over or possesses the performer. (p. 174)
Kirby and Schechner’s consideration of the degree of commitment and impersonation of a character in acting illuminates our understanding of the TIE actors’ practice in terms of how they work within the genre of participatory theatre. As the discussion in Section 2.1 notes, the TIE actors facilitate audience participation, in character, out of character, and at times betwixt and between the self and character. How such practice may call for different degrees of commitment to the character and the way actors devise and facilitate TIE works will be noteworthy to explore in this study.

The state of being betwixt and between self and character is also addressed by modern dramatists who are interested in examining the actor’s state of being in acting. Notions of transparency, heightened consciousness and liminality are variously addressed in the related literature.

Grotowski regards “trance” as the ideal state of an actor in performance. For him, trance exists when a “transparent consciousness” appears (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2007, p. 61), in which the actor is highly awake and aware of oneself and one’s surroundings. Grotowski renders such a state important for an actor to reveal one’s inner self to the audience, asserting the use of character as “an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask – the innermost core of our personality” (Grotowski, 1968, p. 37). Grotowski calls this a state of “transillumination” (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2007, p. 61), a radiant, lucid and inspiring state of being in which the actors penetrate their inner selves through performance to make it possible “for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration” (Grotowski, 1968, p. 34). A trance-like state of being is also sought after by other contemporary dramatists who are more inclined to similar self-expressive styles of acting. Barba talks about a heightened consciousness, a state of “presence” that the actor is “being fully in the immediate moment which owes something
to concentration and the control of the actor’s energy” (Hodge, 2000, p. 7). Brook (1987) talks about the “transparency” of the actor – a state of being “open, responsive and unified in all [the body’s] responses” (p. 232-233). He sees that when an actor is in such a state, s/he is able to transmit truths “which otherwise would have remained out of sight. These truths can appear from sources deep within ourselves and far outside ourselves” (Brook, 1998, p. 186).

Schechner also talks about a similar notion when he refers to the “liminality” of the actor. His concept of liminality is developed from Turner’s (1969) notion of a person being “betwixt and between” social categories or personal identities in rites and rituals, and the notion of “liminoid” which refers to similar states of being in leisure, including recreational activities like the arts. Schechner (2004) explains the terms this way: “Basically liminal rites are obligatory while liminoid arts and entertainments are voluntary” (p. 189). He refers to the actor’s liminality as an in-between stage where “the actor is not quite him or herself and, at the same time, not quite the character in the play… you aren’t really yourself or the person in the role, but are both and neither at the same time” (Schechner in cited Brown, 2003, p. 249). He further suggests that actors in theatre have “three halves” (Schechner, 2004, p. 316): the “feeling half” who becomes the character itself, the “knowing half” who is aware of acting the character and using his performance skills to do so, and the “I” who stands outside this experience, observing and controlling the feeler and the knower.

Similar discussions about the actor’s state of being and the relationship between self and character have been conducted by modern dramatists in China. For example, Gao Xing-Jian, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2000, proposes the notion of “the neutral actor” (Gao, 1996) – an intermediate stage between the actor in real life
and the actor who has transformed into his/her character. His main idea is that the conventional dual relationship between actor and character is insufficient to explain the actor’s state of being. He suggests that there exists a “neutral actor” in between the actor’s self and the character and thus proposes the theory of the “triplication of the actor”:

[The actor] is, first and foremost, his own person, a person who has his own individuality, temperament, educational background and particular life experience. Secondly, he is an actor, a neutral medium that does not bear a relationship to his own particular experiences. Finally he is the character that he creates. (Gao, 1987, p. 204)

Gao’s theory is based on ideas from both Chinese visual arts and Chinese opera art. Deeming it possible that the readers of this thesis may not be familiar with these ideas of Chinese arts, I explain them in detail before I go on to explain Gao’s notion of the “neutral actor”, and establish why this idea, together with the other modern theorists’, are relevant to this study.

Gao’s idea of the neutral actor functions on the premise of a xieyi（in Chinese, 寫意）theatre – a term first used by veteran Chinese dramatist Huang Zuo-Lin to describe “the non-realistic suggestive nature of Chinese theatre in contrast to the realistic representation of modern Western theatre” (Quah, 2004, p. 190). It is important to note that the Chinese theatre Huang refers to here is not xiqu (Chinese opera, 戲曲) but huaju (spoken drama, 話劇), which is the modern Western-style theatre imported to China in the early 20th Century. The term xieyi is borrowed from Chinese visual arts in describing traditional Chinese ink painting. Huang suggests that a major difference
between Western painting and xieyi painting is the former portrays what the eye sees; the latter portrays what the mind observes. Xieyi theatre is a term derived to denote a kind of theatre that aims to capture not the real matters but the “essence” of matters. The actor in xieyi theatre always clearly presents him/herself as acting and “denies the virtual nature of stage representation and disowns his or her self-identify when on stage… acknowledges the fact that he or she is a performer with the objective of moving the audience with his or her art [rather than the characters’ behaviours or the situations they face]” (Quah, 2004, p. 30).

Gao draws his notion of the neutral actor from his observation of the Chinese opera actor:

As a well trained and experienced xiqu [Chinese opera] actor prepares to put on his [sic] makeup, he begins to undergo a process of self-purification. He detaches himself from his personal daily life, entering the state of a neutral actor. When he has completed his face painting and dressed in his costume, his posture, tone, and mien [face] will be totally different from that of his usual being. As the gong and drum sound, ready in rapt attention and full energy, he goes on to the stage to perform his character.

(Gao cited in Quah, 2004, p. 133)

In this state of neutrality, the actor is kept in an “intermediary position between and separate from the two other worlds of reality, that is, the actor’s selfhood and the character’s identity” (Quah, 2004, p. 134). Gao proposes that in this neutral state of being the actor is able to demonstrate several points of view, entering “as many roles as is required, but also to maintain a substantial amount of objectivity in interpreting
characters” (Quah, 2004, p. 134). The actor is “at the same time the performer, the performed, and the neutral observer who tries to negotiate between both” (Zhao, 2000, p. 177).

Gao regards it important to make the tripllication of the actor apparent to the audience in order to provide them with the opportunity to reach enlightenment:

[Gao’s aesthetic reminds] the audience of their own interpretive powers above the performance, that is forcing them to bring into full play their own “spectating/speculating self”. In other words, the audience is encouraged to carry out self-examination when they watch the drama onstage, or self-criticism when facing the drama of the real world. (Zhao, 2000, p. 212)

As the above quote refers, Gao is concerned with a theatre that brings about metaphysical transformation in the audience. He sees the tripllication of the actor as a means to help the audience realise their ability to mediate between theatre and reality, and to be the ones in control of their own lives.

Gao’s theory, together with the modern theories cited above, address the liminal state between self and character. These ideas advance our understanding of the state of being an actor may go through. When applied to the practice of the TIE actors in this study, the notions of transparency, neutrality, liminality and heightened consciousness may become useful ideas for examining the experiences of the research participants as they juggle between artistic and educational goals in devising their works, performing their characters and facilitating audience participation in and/or out of character.
2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed a body of literature that informs my understanding of the TIE actor’s practice. From the ideas presented in this literature, I highlight the specific demands placed on the TIE actor as defined by the specific nature of TIE as a genre of theatre. To sum up, these demands require that the TIE actor has the capacities for:

- Devising play texts and designing TIE programme structures;
- Acting characters in a play;
- Facilitating processes of learning in and out of character;
- Researching and understanding the subject matter of their TIE works;
- Understanding and handling heuristic rather than transmissive approaches to teaching;
- Managing content and form effectively to achieve the purpose and function of their works;
- Understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing and non-naturalistic, presentational acting styles.

These different demands in many ways overlap with each other. For example, devising is a broad task encompassing all the other capacities, while acting skills are required in managing content and form in devising and facilitating. In addition, an understanding of subject matter is required in devising, facilitating and performing in TIE works. I list these demands separately in order to highlight the multiple capacities, skills and knowledge involved in the broad-ranging practice of TIE.
This chapter also offers a theoretical discussion regarding the relationship between self and character, reality and fiction, in TIE practice. This discussion foregrounds a liminal relationship that exists between the fictional play and the actor’s reality, with this reality encompassing multiple layers of contexts related to the actor’s actual life experiences and beliefs, the setting in which the TIE works are situated, and the specific nature of TIE as an artistic form and educational medium. Furthermore, I examined contemporary theatre literature concerned with acting theories that address the relationship between self and character. In this discussion, notions of double consciousness, double existence, heightened consciousness, liminality, transparency and neutrality are variously explored through a range of writings by both Western and Chinese dramatists. Altogether, the ideas in this literature review inform the specific viewpoints that I take in understanding the lived experiences of the research participants in this narrative inquiry study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This narrative study is focused on investigating the experiences of nine actors, including myself, involved in devising, facilitating and performing in two Theatre-in-Education programmes at the Interactive Education Centre of Oxfam Hong Kong. The TIE programmes, The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, were designed for secondary students in Hong Kong to explore issues of poverty and interrogate the mainstream discourse about social and economic development.

Through collecting and analysing narrative data presented by the nine actors, who came from a range of occupational, educational and artistic backgrounds, the research aims to explore the following questions:

1. How do the nine actors, participating in two Hong Kong issue-based, interactive Theatre-in-Education works, understand, describe and explain their practices?
2. How do past influences (artistic, educational, occupational and personal) impact on their understanding of devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works?

The research methodology employed in this study is narrative inquiry, incorporating autoethnographic components in the specific part related to myself as one of the research participants. In this chapter, I will outline a rationale for adopting this particular research methodology, as well as make clear the specific approaches to collecting the data, analysing this data and writing the narratives.

Before conducting the research, permission was obtained and approved by Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. I also sought consent from Oxfam
Hong Kong (Appendix A)\(^3\) and the research participants and explained the procedures related to confidentiality and ethics (Appendix B). Throughout the methodological account in this chapter, I will discuss specific ethical issues as they arise within the respective parts of the research process.

### 3.1 In Search of a Methodology

In choosing a methodology for my study, I engaged in a re-examination of my epistemological beliefs. I saw my research as ethnographical in nature for it involved the lived experience of a group of actors within the specific context of Oxfam’s Theatre-in-Education works. My continual field work with the research participants also put me in a good position as an ethnographer. I also envisaged the research containing thick descriptions of unique experiences as case studies do. At the same time I was aware of how I had always valued participant voices in my research work (e.g. Chan, 2009). I have always believed that everyone is their own expert when it comes to examining their own experiences.

With these values and experiences in mind, I started to look for a methodology that is ethnographic in nature, describing a phenomenon thickly and one that would allow me, as the researcher, to avoid using an expert voice in explaining other’s experiences, but instead to provide channels for people to make sense of their own experiences. I regarded narrative inquiry to be a suitable match to my epistemological beliefs in the sense that it explores and gives thick accounts of lived human experiences by highlighting participants’ voices.

\(^3\) The wording in the title of the research and the research questions in the consent forms are different from those used in this thesis. The wording was modified during the course of the research.
Narrative inquiry adopts storying as a means of understanding people’s experiences. It acknowledges narrative as a fundamental structure of human experience and sees its process as one for making sense of knowledge that is rooted in experience. It is founded on Bruner’s (1986) notion of narrative knowledge as a legitimate form of reasoned knowing, and Polkinghorne’s (1988) contention that narrative is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. Narrative inquirers see humans as “storytelling organisms” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 4046) and believe that people shape their lives by telling stories as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. I designed my research in a way that the participants were invited to join me on a journey of comprehending experiences, employing stories as “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375).

The choice of narrative inquiry as methodology also took into account the complexity and artistic nature of the participants’ lived experiences. As expounded in the literature review in Chapter 2, practice in TIE entails complex behaviours within multiple layers of contexts. Narratives work metaphorically and are able to account for human lives thickly and holistically. In addition to descriptions of what happened, stories also find their expressions in thoughts and emotions, making them suitable for investigation of experiences of art – ones that possess the quality of “felt-meaning” (Gendlin, 1962, p. 90) and “attentiveness and emotion [as] a part of the engagement” (Dewey, 1934, p. 133). The use of stories and concrete images, rather than abstract ideas, appealed to me as a useful means for expressing and understanding artistic experiences like those of the TIE actors in this study.
Participants in this study were engaged in a process of wakeful reflection, with careful examination and exploration of our stories helping each of us to “find new and more expansive ways to interpret [one’s] own and others’ experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71). This learning from experience produced critical reflections for enhancing our practice of TIE, facilitating a process of growth and change. The reflective journey was further enhanced through the process of collaborative storying. The study was set up in a way that the participants not only shared their own experiences but also listened and responded to other participants’ stories, resulting in a fluid form of inquiry as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000):

[Narrative inquiry] is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living in telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

In this narrative inquiry, I also incorporated autoethnographic components as I investigated my own experiences in TIE practice. Autoethnography aims to produce “highly personalised accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), the broad rubric of autoethnography covers those studies that have been referred to by a wide range of similarly situated terms, including but not limited to: personal narratives, personal ethnography, critical autobiography, self ethnography, ethnobiography, narrative ethnography and autobiographical ethnography.
My participation in the two TIE works as deviser and actor positioned me as an “insider” of the phenomenon being studied. As I collected and analysed the participants’ narratives I engaged myself in dialogues with the participants and self-reflection on my own practice. During this process, I also reviewed personal memories and artifacts, and made self-observation on myself as I conducted the TIE sessions. In doing so, I took part in a journey of “studying [my]self within a subculture and attempting to make meaning of all of the experiences in this setting” (A. B. Stinson, 2009, p. 36). Different autoethnographers have stressed the importance of connecting the researcher’s personal experience to the social (Ellis, 2004; Sparkes, 2000). I situated my research within this vein of belief, considering myself a co-constructor of knowledge with my participants for the purpose of extending broader sociocultural understanding of our shared practice.

In this chapter, I will account for the approach to this research by outlining my research journey. Craig (2009) refers to narrative inquiry as “a complex approach to enact and even more complicated method to explain” (p. 106). Since narrative inquiry is hard to define, Clandinin (2007) suggests that a more useful way to explain the methodology is to recount what narrative inquirers do. There are many different ways of doing narrative inquiry. The specific way I chose to conduct my research was informed by my epistemological belief and theoretical assumptions. In accounting for my research process in this chapter, I explain not only the procedures I adopted but equally importantly, the epistemological and theoretical thinking informing my research approach. The methodological and ethical issues I encountered in the research will also be discussed.
3.2 Research Approach

The three activities involved in this research were collection of narratives, analysis of narratives and narrative writing. These activities were interwoven as a holistic process rather than discrete and sequential. Analysis of the narratives began as the narratives were collected, as did the narrative writing process. I started the research by interviewing my fellow TIE actors. Then I analysed the interview data to write interim narratives about their experiences. Continuous data analysis during the writing process helped me to gain insight into the data, and come up with topics for further dialogue.

With the participants’ consent to share their data with fellow research participants without anonymising it (but keeping anonymity outside the participant group), the interim narratives of all the participants were presented to everyone to simulate further, ongoing dialogue. More data were generated as a result, and were analysed and incorporated into the written story.

While I was developing the other participants’ stories, my personal narratives were being developed concurrently. As part of this process, I engaged in communal and self dialogue to develop an understanding of my own TIE experiences. I continuously wrote interim texts throughout the research process, and collected other forms of data, like artifacts and past writings recording past incidents and memories, to account for my experiences as a TIE actor. These interim texts were integrated into the participants’ narratives and also presented to them to stimulate dialogue and further collection of narratives.

The end result of this continual storying and re-storying was a collective narrative of all the participants’ experiences, which was presented to the participants individually, in the
final stage of this research, for verification, feedback and modification. The story, originally written in Chinese, was then translated into English and shared with the readers of this thesis using pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

In conducting this narrative inquiry, I adopted a few key principles in collecting, analysing and writing the narratives. These principles applied to both the narratives of the other participants and my personal narratives.

Firstly, I regarded the knowledge generated from the inquiry as fluid and non-permanent. As the participants’ stories were told and shared, our understanding of the practice of TIE went through a changing process as a result of our interactions in the inquiry. Our different perspectives formed dialogues and led to new understandings as a result of collective storytelling. McCormack (2001) claims that knowledge constructed through the process of narrative research is situated, transient, partial and provisional; characterised by multiple voices, perspectives, truths and meanings. The nature of narrative inquiry allowed construction and reconstruction of meaning to take place throughout my research process.

Secondly, I adopted a phenomenological worldview, seeing, as Husserl (cited in Valle, 1998) suggests, that “the world appears to us through our stream of consciousness as a configuration of meaning” (p. 8). I believe that we understand reality through the meanings we give to reality. As such, the participants’ stories were collected, analysed and written with an understanding that knowledge emerges through the way we perceive and interpret our experiences, rather than seeing these stories as “a” truth out there to be explored. As such, the research sought to present the participants’ experiences as they understood, interpreted and storied them. (see also Section 3.6 for a
more elaborate discussion on the methodological issues related to voice).

Thirdly, I worked with an understanding that the human mind and body are inseparable, that the “perceiving mind is an incarnated mind” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 3). In sharing our stories, our perceptions played a vital role in making sense of our embodied experiences within specific contexts and situations. As I collected, analysed and wrote our narratives, I paid attention to concrete and detailed examples, recall of feelings and emotions, in accounting for ideas and experiences. This helped me capture the richness and nuances of meaning in human affairs that “cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact, or abstract propositions” (Carter, 1993, p. 6).

Holding these principles, I embarked on a journey of reflective exploration which is detailed in the rest of this chapter. The processes of collecting, analysing and writing the narratives are documented in the following sections. Although the three processes were highly interwoven, presenting them one after another allows me to explain them more clearly. In accounting for these processes, the underlying rationales are presented and the methodological issues I encountered in the research journey are also discussed. These rationales are informed by a body of literature related to narrative inquiry and autoethnography which will be elaborated in the sections that follow. Other research works in the related area also provided me with inspiration and possible models for approaching the collection, analysis and writing of narratives. For example, a project that particularly resonated with my study was McCormack’s (2001) narrative inquiry exploring the experiences of women who are undertaking postgraduate studies. Her approach of collecting stories as she wrote them, and seeking stories while generating stories, usefully informed my research approach regarding how I collected the participants’ stories and gave them back to generate further dialogue. McCormack
analysed narratives through a “multiple lens” approach, suggesting to me the need to keep in mind broad and multiple perspectives in analysing narratives. As she puts it, “Viewing interview transcripts through multiple lenses recognised that no one lens can reveal both the individuality and the complexity of life. Multiple realities suggest multiple perspectives” (p. 105). Hollingsworth’s (1992; Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007) conversational approach to narrative research helped me to formulate strategies to create nonevaluative conversations while I collected data. I also brought forward Anderson’s (M. Anderson, 2002) idea of notating each individual participant’s narratives with a different colour so as to enhance the presence of individual voices. All these previous studies usefully informed the research approach adopted in this study.

3.3 Collecting the Participants’ Stories

The research started with a series of semi-structured individual interviews with my research participants where they were asked to talk about their practice as actors in the two TIE works at Oxfam: The Other Side of the Fairy and Fifty Square Feet. The central questions discussed in these interviews were:

1. How do you describe and explain your practice within the two TIE works?

2. What kinds of past influences have impacted on your practice and understanding of these practices?

The participants were invited to my school to attend these one-to-one interviews, which took place in an enclosed classroom to avoid distractions or disturbances. The interviews were arranged near the end of the school year, when schools were preparing for examinations and the participants were less busy with their school-related work. It was also during the time when we had just finished one school year of the two TIE
performances. Each interview lasted for around one and a half hours on average, and all were audio recorded. I started each interview by verbally going through the content of a consent letter (Appendix B) that I had sent the participants in writing prior to the interview. I explained to them the purpose of the research and the research activities in which they would be involved. I also highlighted the confidentiality arrangements, with specific emphasis on the point that the participants could decide which parts of their stories would be shared with the other participants and the readers of the thesis, and also noting that their real names would be used in the interim texts but that pseudonyms would apply to writings for outside readers. These arrangements were made to facilitate the later research processes of having the participants read and reflect upon the narratives of one another. Using their real names in the narratives about their experiences would, I believed, keep a better sense of genuineness. The arrangement also took into account the fact that this was a closed group of participants who could easily identify their fellow actors in the narratives anyway. Before the interviews started, I invited each participant to choose a pseudonym to be used later when their real names were taken out from the narratives for presentation in this thesis.

The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, the participants’ mother language, and took the form of casual, collaborative conversations. Since I had known and worked with the participants for many years, a friendly atmosphere was readily present. This collaborative conversational approach to collecting narratives was grounded in a Vygotskian (1978) philosophy that sees meaning and knowledge as socially constructed, shaped and evolved through people’s interactions with others. Conducting the interviews this way I endeavoured to set up a situation in which the informants and I “see ourselves as in the middle of the nested set of [each other’s] stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63). The interviews were not merely the means for gathering data,
but also “an occasion to reflect with the partner of the conversational relation on the topic at hand” (van Manen, 1997, p. 63). Therefore, during the interviews the participants did not just answer my questions as if I was an uninvolved interviewer. I also shared my own experiences echoing or contrasting theirs. This often resulted in stimulating the recall of more stories and generating deeper views about our experiences. The conversational style of the interviews also fostered a more natural discourse, resembling daily exchanges, to cultivate a friendlier atmosphere and more equal relationship.

Adams (2008) suggests that interactive interviews are situated within the context of well-established relationships among participants and interviewers. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also consider trust building and constant negotiation of relationship between the researcher and the researched important during the whole course of a narrative inquiry. The long-term relationship I had built with the participants was an advantage to the research. The participants were ready to share deep and rich narratives from the first conversations, including intimate accounts of personal struggles and negative experiences such as experiencing depression following ill-treatment by some directors. In addition, my engagement in the TIE works under study also meant that “I was there” in the experiences being recounted, helping me understand those stories more holistically. The shared understanding of experiences also enabled deeper discussion of those stories.

My close relationship with the participants also had shortcomings. Firstly, being so close to the phenomenon under study, I had to stay very alert to guard against appropriating the participants’ stories with my subjective feelings and understandings. I endeavoured to choose assumption-free wordings in my response to the participants’
stories, and reminded myself of the need to seek clarifications with the participants when the meaning of their words was vague or unclear. Another complication came with my position as some of the participants’ former teacher, implying an unequal power relation that had to be addressed. For instance, I noticed that one participant was particularly anxious in sharing her views about acting, seemingly worried about making mistakes in front of me, her teacher. Noting this, I clarified that her personal views were more helpful to my research instead of a “correct definition of acting”, if it ever exists. I also intentionally gave out more signals of assurance, verbally (with words of encouragement like “This is a highly relevant point indeed!”) and non-verbally (like nodding and looking inspired), until the participant finally became more at ease with sharing her views.

Throughout the study I was highly aware of the power relationship within the research. I kept in mind suggestions made by other narrative inquirers with regard to maintaining an open and natural atmosphere for dialogue (Hollingsworth, 1992) and making explicit the attitude of curiosity (Paley, 1986). A variety of strategies were employed to achieve these. For example, I often stayed patient when the participants’ side-tracked to other experiences in our friendship not directly related to the research questions. It made the interviews more like conversations between friends than those between an interviewer and an interviewee. Explicit inviting remarks also helped me to convey my curiosity, like saying “This is something I had never thought of. Can you tell me more about it?” Sometimes I would find it easier to elicit views by echoing the participants’ stories with my own. Sometimes it was more effective asking questions than sharing my stories. Sometimes I simply needed to stay an open and quiet listener. Different responses worked for different participants and at different times. I stayed sensitive to the participants’ verbal and non-verbal responses, paid attention to different storytelling
styles, and made spontaneous and intuitive choices during the interviews. The judgment was based on observing whether my responses were useful in eliciting rich stories at the participants’ will. I also made explicit to the participants my intention of creating a community for sharing and reflection so that they were aware that the discussions were not just between myself and them, but amongst all the participants. I was conscious of the need to help the participants understand that the research was serving as a channel for making collaborative dialogue in which everyone had his/her own voice.

Upon the completion of each interview, I wrote up a summary report, thinking through its content to see how the research questions had been addressed. I located gaps in the discussions and drew up questions for further conversation. In these summary reports I also recorded contextual details of the interviews like non-verbal expressions, styles and patterns of conversation and other details possibly relevant to the subsequent narrative analysis.

The participants were informed, as they signed the consent letter, that they would be invited to engage in continuous dialogue with me as the TIE works were being implemented over the course of data collection. The ongoing dialogue was important for it engaged the participants in “both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect[ed] upon life and explain[ed] themselves to others” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). I kept field texts of these dialogues containing records of reflective discussions after conducting the TIE sessions, observation notes I took during visits to other actors’ TIE sessions, as well as relevant exchanges between the participants and me via emails and Facebook dialogues. These field texts served to provide detailed recordings of formal or informal exchanges with the participants, helping me to excavate memory and shape the inquiry as it progressed.
As Zatzman (2006) observes, details of memory tend to smooth out with time, and field texts help narrative inquirers to “spend time inside another’s stories and re-tell about that research landscape, even months or years later” (p.121).

The depth and frequency of ongoing dialogue following the first round of interviews varied amongst different participants. First of all, their readiness to respond to the research differed. Secondly some circumstances changed during the research process. Three participants left the TIE teams during the course of the study. As for the remaining ones, three actors performed in the same TIE programme with me. Naturally I had more and deeper exchanges with them due to our closer working relationship. As such, two of the participants had no further dialogue with me after the first interview, and no further data were collected from them. Three of them had responded with emails or engaged in informal chats with me regarding the research, when their stories were written up and sent back to them, or when we came across each other at Oxfam. More and deeper data were collected from the three participants who worked together with me in Fifty Square Feet. After each TIE session, we would get together for a brief discussion of the day’s work. Further group interviews were also lined up to talk about their experiences after some significant changes had been made to Fifty Square Feet.

Despite the different amount of data collected from respective participants, I still kept all the nine participants’ narratives in the findings rather than selecting the few richer cases only. I had two reasons for making this decision. First, I regarded the variety of themes stemming from the diversity of experiences useful in providing a multi-faceted view about the research phenomenon. Secondly, the stories collected, even without a lot of follow up conversations, were rich enough to generate rigorous discussions about the research questions.
3.4 Documenting My Experiences

Throughout the study, I collected materials about my own TIE experience in the two Oxfam works by several methods. I documented the stories I shared with the participants during the interviews, and wrote reflective accounts about the participants’ narratives. I also recorded stories in a journal, with vignettes, artefacts like relevant writings in the past, letters, emails and informal dialogues with the participants during the course of the study. These field notes and documents were organised and put together as interim narratives about my experiences as a TIE actor.

In Appendix C, an example of this kind of interim text is presented. (The text was originally written in Chinese, and translated into English in this appendix.) It was written after one of the interviews, in which a participant shared a long chronological account of her educational and artistic background when I asked her what past influences had impacted on her practice. Hearing her account, I started to ponder, “How would I account for my past influences?” I tried to outline my story of past influences and what emerged in my mind was a web-shaped diagram instead of a chronological table. I composed this interim text drawing upon artefacts like previous Facebook postings, artworks and written articles. The dialogue with the participant triggered a personal narrative of mine and an understanding of how different people see their past influences in different ways. The interim text, originally written in Chinese, was then shared with the other participants in the study, and it stimulated more stories related to our past influences. Interim texts of such kind were generated throughout the course of this study to analyse and document understanding of the research phenomenon.
Autoethnographical in nature, the storying process in this part of the research was intended to be both reflexive and dialogic. Reflexivity and the dialogic are stressed by many authors as being central to autoethnography (L. Anderson, 2006; Davies, 1999; Goodall, 2000), to ensure stories of oneself do not become self-absorbed accounts of personal experiences but rather critical analysis of the research phenomenon to inform social knowledge. Reflexivity “expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it” (Davies, 1999, p. 7). My relationship with the participants was transactional. Our mutual dialogue and exchange of stories cultivated a reciprocal relationship, providing me with the opportunity to understand myself in deeper ways and “with understanding yourself comes understanding others (Ellis, 2004, p. xviii). Besides dialoguing with others I also kept making self-dialogues and constant referral to discussion in the literature review, engaging myself in “self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one’s actions and perceptions” (L. Anderson, 2006, p. 382).

3.5 Analysing the Stories

The analysis of the stories collected, as I stated earlier in this chapter, occurred concurrently while I was collecting them, and as I was writing the narratives. The analysis started with grouping data according to those related to (1) the participants’ personal background and past influences, and (2) descriptions of their practice in the two TIE works. I adopted two different approaches to analysing data – “narrative analysis” (1995) for the participants’ biographical data and past influences (topic1), and “thematic narrative analysis” (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Speedy, 2007) for the participants’ practices in TIE (topic 2).
**Narrative Analysis**

“Narrative analysis” aims to produce explanatory notes on human experiences rather than classifying experiences as categories or taxonomies (Polkinghorne, 1995). I opted for this approach for analysing the participants’ narratives related to their biographical background and past influences, so that each person’s story was presented as a unique experience. I rendered past journeys and influences on practice as highly personalised and non-generalisable, and as such I created individual biographical narratives (Chapter 5) to elucidate the participants’ specific backgrounds and the past influences pertinent to their TIE practice.

**Thematic Narrative Analysis**

In analysing the stories about the participants’ practices in TIE, I adopted thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Speedy, 2007) as an approach to interpreting the texts. Here the emphasis was put on the content of the narratives to identify common elements, informed by prior and emergent theories, in order to theorise across cases. Despite propositions of some narrative inquirers (e.g. Chase, 2005; McCormack, 2001) who disapprove of the thematic approach for its tendency towards reduction and de-contextualisation of individual narratives, I deemed this approach suitable for handling this part of the data. The decision was based on the chief purpose of my research, which was to understand the practice in the two TIE works as a social phenomenon by drawing on a group of actors’ personal experiences. In doing so, I adopted Anderson’s (2006) view towards social science research, seeing “the defining characteristic of analytic social science [as using] empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (p. 387). Analysing the stories thematically enabled me to gain an overall understanding of our
experiences as TIE actors, which is presented as a collective narrative in Chapter 6.

The issues of reduction and de-contextualisation, however, were still of valid concern. So in coding the data thematically I rendered it important that the participants’ ways of constructing meaning must be preserved. In order to do so, the data supporting the emerging themes were kept in longer blocks of texts in order to keep the stories as intact as possible. Furthermore, in writing the thematic narratives I used different colour fonts to differentiate different participants’ narratives, so that a sense of their individuality was still kept, and the threads of individual narratives could be traced relatively easily within the larger narrative. Thirdly and most importantly, I opted to write thematic statements (rather than thematic phrases) (van Manen, 1997) to retain the richness of the core ideas in our stories and avoid over-simplification. I then organised themes emerging out of these thematic statements.

Although my intent was to use personal stories to shed light on a broader phenomenon, I was at the same time fully aware that these themes were not to be understood as “objects or generalisations [but] more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (van Manen, 1997, p. 90). Ellis and Bochner (2006) usefully remind us that in analysing narratives,

[the] ideal is to get over this assumption that we could somehow reach a God’s-eye view of nature and instead merely see what we do in the social sciences as continuing a conversation and thus to encourage multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, and plural voices. (p. 438)
After coming up with the themes, I assembled different participants’ stories under each theme to let them dialogue with one another with their similarities and differences, highlighting the multiple interpretations of the phenomenon of TIE practice.

McCormack (2001) asserts that “Narrative knowing is the knowing of multiple realities, all of which are ‘true’ in some sense, that is, at some particular time, in some particular place” (p. 38). The multiplicity of perspectives arising from the varied background and experiences of the participants provided a useful way of developing a more complex understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.6 Writing and Translating the Stories

Interim narratives, including the individual biographical accounts and a collective account for our experiences, were created as a result of the data analysis processes, and were presented to the participants for feedback and verification. (An interim version of the collective story, written in Chinese, is included in Appendix D as an example.) I stressed to the participants, “My concern is not about whether the story accurately documents what you said in the interview, but whether it truly captures your experiences in the TIE works” (my email to the participants). In so doing I invited the participants to clarify whether the assembled text was understood to reflect their life world, so as to “reduce the distance between life as lived, experienced and told by the participants” (McCormack, 2001, p. 53).

The sharing of narratives also provided the chance for the participants to read each other’s stories. I invited them to “share further reflections or supplement my writing with experiences you now recall upon reading the others stories” (my email to the participants). Such a process of storytelling engaged the participants in collective
narrative theorising in which they might further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories. The feedback of the participants was used to modify and further enrich the interim texts until they were finalised and translated for presentation in this thesis.

Richardson (1994) purported that writing is a method of inquiry, a way of knowing, a method of discovery and analysis, during which “we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it” (p. 516). As I collected and analysed the narratives, the process of writing enabled me to make sense of the narrative data along the research journey. Some ideas became clearer to me in the writing process as well as when I was translating the text into English, leading me to seek further clarifications with the research participants and reworded some of the texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) regard the writing of narrative texts as a tension-filled task. They remind narrative inquirers that the process of narrative writing involves challenging issues of voice, representation and audience. In this study, an extra tension arose from translation when multi-lingual data were handled. The issues I encountered in relation to voice, representation and translation are discussed in the following sections.

**Issues related to Voice**

The issue of voice is an important aspect of research that aims to discover personal experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) contend that the freedom of researchers to speak as a player in a narrative research project and to mingle their experience with the experience of those studied is precisely what is needed to move inquiry and knowledge further along. Narrative writing becomes more accountable when researchers’ ways of knowing are made transparent so that the readers are “informed about the ethical considerations and strategies employed in [the] narratives – including the extent to
which [the researcher] actively took ownership of [the] interpretive presentations” (Mahoney, 2007, p. 583). The inclusion of my voice in this narrative inquiry allows the readers to understand my presence in relation to the other voices presented and validate my interpretation of others’ experiences.

The inclusion of my voice in this study was therefore integral, as I was part of the phenomenon under study. However, I was fully aware of the need to avoid becoming “colonisers of the subjects through re-telling their stories” (Garrick, 1999, p. 152). Positioning myself as one of the participants, I wrote my stories in parallel with the participants’ voices, trying to manifest the collaborative nature of storytelling that we went through. By addressing the similarities and differences of the experiences amongst the research participants, I also endeavoured to ensure the multiplicity of participant voices was heard. Our collective narrative was understood to be a co-narrated one.

**Issues related to Representation and Audience**

Another tension in narrative writing relates to how we write our research texts in order that they speak to the readers. Expressive approaches of writing have been valued by narrative inquirers for communicating “the vitality and immediacy of experience” (Willis, 1999, p. 93). However, how do we make sure that language captures lived experiences as they have been lived? Life itself is incoherent, consisting of “confusion, contradictions, and ironies, and of indecisiveness, repetition, and reversion” (Bourdieu cited in Wolcott, 2002, p. 491). The construction of narratives, by smoothing out the story’s flow and organising ideas into presentable forms, inevitably erases part of the lived human life for the sake of effective communication with the readers. Furthermore, the quality of narrative writing is governed by the stories collected. Good stories of lived experiences require a language capable of capturing the richness and
complexity of life, which may pose a challenge for some storytellers. Polkinghorne (2007) cautions that sometimes the language descriptions given by the participants themselves hardly form a mirrored reflection of their lived experiences.

The challenges for me as the inquirer of this study were multifold, and I used different ways to deal with them, going as far back as when the stories were initially collected. Firstly, taking the suggestion by Polkinghorne (2007), I encouraged the participants to use figurative expressions in the storytelling so as to reduce the gap between words and their lived experiences. Secondly, when the stories constructed were returned for participants’ feedback and modification, rather than asking them to suggest how the account resembled what they had said, I invited them to clarify whether the assembled text was understood to reflect their life world. Thirdly, in writing the stories, I attended to contextual details so as to develop more holistic understanding of the stories, trying to “reduce the distance between life as lived, experienced and told by the participants, and life as received by the researcher and the reader” (McCormack, 2001, p. 53). Some narrative inquirers would experiment with more postmodern approaches to written texts (e.g. poems) to reflect the dynamic, multiple meanings embedded in language. I did not adopt this approach due to my limited command of English as a second language and the complications that would arise from translation of the text. The issue of translation was the third tension I encountered in writing the narratives for this inquiry, and this will be discussed fully in the next section.

**Issues related to Multi-lingual Texts and Translation**

This study was conducted in the multi-lingual context of Hong Kong. Participants in this research speak Cantonese, a Chinese dialect, in their daily life. However, like most Hong Kong people, they also know English, and commonly mix English words into
daily Cantonese conversations. As such, the spoken language of my participants was a special hybrid of Cantonese-English mix. In terms of writing, the standard written Chinese language in Hong Kong is Mandarin, but a form of written Cantonese has been developed for informal communication. The standard written Chinese (Mandarin) is used in formal settings, but many people adopt a mixed form of Cantonese-Mandarin in casual tabloids like emails and social networking platforms.

Most of my research participants feel comfortable writing in English as well. Set against this complex background, the participants’ written language was dependent on a number of factors, including their mood, mode of thinking (e.g. after reading a book in English it feels more natural to respond to it in English writing), or even the availability of Chinese input methods in the electronic device one is using.

This complex cultural context therefore brought along with it the need to use multiple languages in the study. In Table 1, I list the various languages used in different stages of the research. The rationale behind the choice of languages is explained with examples in the paragraphs following the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data and texts</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The interviews and conversations</td>
<td>Cantonese-English (spoken)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Transcription of dialogues and conversations</td>
<td>Cantonese-Mandarin (written), with English terms kept in their original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My journal; the field texts composed by me and the participants</td>
<td>English, Cantonese-Mandarin, Mandarin or a mix of them (the original language they were written); some translated into English for my PhD supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interview summaries</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The interim narrative texts presented to the participants</td>
<td>Mandarin (written); some translated into English for my PhD supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The narratives presented in this thesis</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The interviews and conversations

The interviews and conversations between the participants and myself were conducted in the spoken Cantonese-English hybrid of language used in our everyday life. It allowed us to express ourselves most freely and vividly in our mother language to generate deep and rich stories.

2. Transcription of dialogues and conversations

When the above dialogues were transcribed into writing, the Cantonese-Mandarin form was used, with the English terms used in the dialogues kept in their original. The purpose was to capture the most original flavour of the conversational data so that I would not lose the meaning of the texts when I was analysing them. The example below, extracted from the transcript of one of the first-round interviews, shows the Cantonese-Mandarin language and how English terms are embedded in these writings.

我自己排戲同埋學做《(另)一部份的童話》呢個過程，我覺得……學習真係可以唔靠腦先架，係靠佢個身體先架，或者係靠啲好神秘嘅嘢呢……即係啲 connection 呀、人與人之間嘅嘢呢……咁你喺際時幫我哋排戲呢，係開始令我真係多啲從喺個體驗去了解……呀，通過戲劇呢個模式去學一啲嘢，係一回咩事呢？我哋未做其實已經睇咗十次《(另)一部份的童話》加嘛，係係已經 conceptually 有個概念，但係我哋從來冇參加過《(另)一部份的童話》作為玩嗮一個人，即係我嘅啲從來都係咁係旁邊 observe，聽啲細路仔講，係直至到排戲呢……即係可以想像到嘅參加個工作坊嘅學生，其實可能經歷緊啲咩事……因為我哋之前純粹 observe 係好 cognitive 去理解件事加嘛……

3. My journal and the field texts composed by me and the participants

My journal and the field texts (created by the participants and me) were sometimes written in English, sometimes in Chinese, and sometimes in mixed language, depending on the context in which these texts were generated. They were recorded in their original form to keep their meaning closest to original. Some of these texts were translated into
English for communication with my PhD supervisors so that they could comment on the data I collected. The following example is a journal entry I created during the research. The style was free-flowing, with the language jumping from one to another as ideas appeared in my mind.

Today we encountered a group of audience who were poor people in real.

Actors • characters • audience

During the interview, one of the female audience emphasized to me that she did not understand her daughter. I suddenly decided to do a hotseat and let her talk directly to her daughter.

The dialogue was about her experiences as a parent, and she expressed her feelings of frustration and confusion. She wanted to know how her daughter felt about her. I told her that I was also feeling frustrated and uncertain about what to do.

Dialogue:

The female audience said that she understood me, and that she felt the same way. She also expressed her concern about the distance between her daughter and her. She believed that her daughter was not truly understanding her.

Their reality is so real that it becomes very difficult for them to fictionalise it or imagine otherwise.

A very special encounter with the characters. Knowing that they are the real people, I found it hard to relate to them by simply seeing them as “audience”.

4. Interview Summaries

The interview summaries were written in English, for ease of communication with my PhD supervisors. The following summary is based on the interview segment in (2) above.

Regarding her experience in rehearsing for the TIE works, Mary said:

I realised that learning doesn’t need to start with the brain. It could start with the body or something immaterial – like the connection between human beings… In the rehearsal process, I was led to look at the work from a different angle. It helped me look at what it really means when we say students learn experientially through the work. I had watched The Other Side of the Fairy Tale for more than 10 times already, before I joined the acting team. Conceptually I had an idea of what the work was trying to achieve. However I had never participated in it as an audience; I was only there as an observer… The rehearsal process helped me understand what the students might be experiencing in the workshop. Before that, as an observer, I only understood it cognitively.
The interim narrative texts presented to the participants

The interim texts created in this study were presented to the research participants in Chinese. Although all of the participants can read English, texts written in their mother language were more reader-friendly and more inviting in terms of getting participant feedback. The Mandarin written form was used instead of Cantonese-Mandarin for ease of reading, since long chunks of writing entirely in Cantonese-Mandarin usually appears cumbersome to the readers. Full or summary accounts of these texts were translated into English for my PhD supervisors’ comments and understanding of the data I was collecting. The example below is extracted from one of the interim texts, based on the interview segment quoted above.

Mary 提到綵排的經驗同時予她更深入去思考學習是什麼一回事。「學習真的不能只靠腦袋，要靠身體，靠一些很微妙的東西，即是人與人之間的連繫之類……」 綵排後期，我們也設計了一些活動去讓演教員掌握帶演後活動和討論的技巧，請他們輪流嘗試帶領，也輪流嘗試扮學生。「那幫助我去想像來參加工作坊的學生在經歷什麼，這比起之前自己純粹從旁觀察工作坊，很知性地去理解這件事，是很不同的經驗。」

The narratives presented in this thesis

The finalised narratives were translated into English for presentation in this thesis. The example below is a segment of the narratives presented in Chapter 6. It is an English version of the interim text in (5) above, which was revised after the participants had commented on it. Some wording was modified to include more contextual detail for a more general readership.

Mary recalled strongly the activities designed to help her lead the post-performance activities and discussions. In those activities, the actors took turns to lead and also took turns to act as students participating in the activities. “It helped me imagine what the students would be experiencing in the programme,” she said. “Before that, I simply looked at it from an outsider’s point of view. I was only trying to understand the process cognitively. It was rather different when I got to experience it first hand, from the students’ perspective.” Mary regarded this kind of embodied experiences useful to
develop a deeper understanding of what learning is about. “You got to realise that learning is not merely a brain activity. You have to use your body, and to employ something rather immaterial.”

The use of multiple languages throughout the research brought about issues related to interpretation as one language was translated into another. The involvement of research assistants in transcribing the interviews also added another layer of interpretation. To minimise distortion of meanings, I verified all the transcripts myself by checking them against the original sound recordings. The research assistants were also invited to observe the TIE works to enhance a more immediate understanding of the transcripts they were transcribing. As I wrote the narratives and the thesis, I made frequent referral to the original transcripts and sound recordings to make sure that the narratives reflected the original meanings as closely as possible. The verification of the narrative texts by the research participants also helped to ensure the texts were reflective of their lived experiences. Furthermore, being an experienced translator, I did all the translation myself to avoid additional layers of interpretation caused by an external translator.

Despite all these arrangements, complications that arose from the multi-lingual context were still unavoidable, since translation is, as suggested by Halai (2007), a “process of cultural decoding” and thus an act of “boundary crossing between two cultures”:

Language is context-based; some words carry a world of meaning with them and cannot be easily conveyed in another language, and to another culture. (p. 351-352)

The process of dealing with language and translation in this study was laborious and challenging, as I juggled to maintain the academic rigour of my study while being
culturally sensitive to the needs of my research participants. However, it also offered an exciting opportunity for me to examine the narratives closely. Each time I translated the narrative texts from one language to another, a thorough interrogation of the closest meaning of the spoken and written texts occurred.

3.7 Navigating a Complex Methodology Reflexively

Doing narrative research is ethically complex but necessary. (McCormack, 2001, p. 58)

When I was preparing for my research proposal, this quote from McCormack brought my awareness to the complexity of the methodology I had chosen. However, it was not until I had gone through this research process that I fully comprehended the meaning of this simple sentence. In engaging myself as both a researcher and a participant in this research I was constantly balancing the roles of an observer, storyteller, listener, analyst and writer as I recorded, documented and reflected on my own ideas and practices, along with those of my participants. Managing these multiple tasks called for a high degree of reflexivity.

Reflexivity, understood in general terms as a self-aware and thoughtful manner in conducting research, is stressed by narrative inquirers as a central aspect to assessing the extent to which a narrative study is trustworthy (Wells, 2011). Finlay identifies different variants of reflexivity, of which I regarded four as more relevant to this study: reflexivity as introspection, reflexivity as intersubjective reflection, reflexivity as mutual collaboration and reflexivity as social critique (Finlay, 2002; Finlay & Gough, 2003). Reflexivity as introspection requires researchers to make critical reflection on how their
position, assumptions and background impact on the research process, and to use personal revelations not as an end in itself but as a springboard for interpretations and more general insights. Reflexivity as intersubjective reflection calls for an examination of the mutual meanings emerging within a research relationship, focusing on the situated, emergent and negotiated nature of the research encounter. It requires researchers to look both inward for personal meanings and outward into the realm of shared meanings, interaction and discourse. Reflexivity as mutual collaboration highlights the involvement of research participants in reflexive dialogues, offering the opportunity to take into account multiple voices and conflicting positions. Reflexivity as social critique calls for the attention to power relations between the researcher and the researched during the course of a study.

The detailed methodological account in this chapter is an endeavour to make clear how I employed these different forms of reflexivity to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency and ethics of this study. Connelly and Clandinin’s notion of “wakefulness” (2000) was a key tenet I upheld – being wakeful in every decision I made as I navigated my way through this research journey. Such wakefulness, informed by the key principles I deliberated in the beginning of the chapter – those of seeing knowledge as fluid and non-permanent, understanding that knowledge emerges through people’s subjective perception and interpretation, and acknowledging the human mind and embodied experiences as inseparable – guided me through a fascinating maze of finding out about myself, my participants and our practice.

The result of this journey was meaningful not just to myself but also my research participants. They expressed to me how they found taking part in the research a rewarding experience of self-reflection, sharing of practice and deepened
understanding about their practice. Upon reading the collective narrative, many wrote back to me and described the story as a gift. For example, one of the participants said:

I am very touched by the story. Besides knowing that you have genuinely cited my words, it is very meaningful for me to see how our different stories shine upon each other. It gives me a telescopic view on the meaning and impact of our TIE works as a result of the different background and values of our colleagues. I love “encountering” them this way. Your subtle observation, impartial thoughts, introspection into drama education and the integrity towards narrative inquiry deftly draw us together (and it is much more meaningful than a Chinese New Year gathering!) Reading our collective story makes me think of the power of journalists – like a journalist, you know how to use words to enhance and refresh understandings of your fellow drama facilitators. (original text in Chinese)

If the interim narrative was seen as a gift to the research participants, in this thesis I would like to present our narratives as a gift to the readers, and to those who share the interest of understanding the practice of TIE. As readers go through this story, I invite them to take our narratives as a ground for creating new meanings with multiple reader interpretations. It is also of utmost importance that our narratives are not seen as grand knowledge to prescribe applications, but rather a space to “imagine [one’s] own uses and applications” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43). Van Manen (1997) asserts that research writing about lived experiences aims to animate the readers in their own experiences “in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (p. 36). In this spirit, I invite the readers to ponder the narratives in relation to my research questions, considering what
the narratives tell them about the practice of TIE actors and how past influences might have played a part in such practice.
Chapter Four: Introducing the Two TIE Works

This chapter provides contextual information for understanding the participants’ stories documented in Chapters 5 and 6. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose that any particular narrative inquiry is defined by a three-dimensional space entailing the aspects of:

- Interaction: the relationship between personal experiences and the existential conditions in the social environment;
- Continuity: the temporal relationship between past, present and future; and
- Situation: the specific time and place situated in a physical landscape in which individual experiences occur.

The background information provided in this chapter places this particular inquiry within its unique three-dimensional narrative space. Firstly, I will introduce the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which the selected TIE works were situated. The changing cultural policies and drama training scene in Hong Kong are also explained to offer a historical perspective for understanding the participants’ personal experiences. In the second part of this chapter, Oxfam’s Interactive Education Centre and the purposes of its educational initiatives are introduced. Furthermore, the content, structures and styles of the two TIE works are detailed to give the readers an informed understanding of how the TIE works were structured, how audience participation was incorporated, and what kinds of theatrical forms and styles were called for. To further facilitate this understanding, the fictional stories and the characters the actors played are also introduced. Altogether the descriptions in this chapter provide necessary contextual information for the readers so that the participants’ experiences in this study are understood in relation to specific situational circumstances.
4.1 The Socio-economic and Cultural Contexts

This study was conducted at the Interactive Education Centre (IEC) of Oxfam Hong Kong, where two TIE programmes on poverty issues were conducted. This micro-context of IEC is situated within the larger social and cultural context of Hong Kong society. Here we live in a city where the Gini coefficient\(^4\) is high standing, representing a wide disparity between the rich and the poor. Our city was rated by the United Nations as the “number one unequal city in Asia in 2008 and amongst developed economies worldwide in 2009” (Chan, Cheung, & Lai, 2014, p. 71). There is a general assumption that poverty is caused by personal misfortune or incapability rather than social injustice, and discourses about social development rest upon a plural atmosphere that privileges economic growth over social justice (Chan, 2013). The Interactive Education Centre was set up in 2005 to “nurture young people with the knowledge, ability and value as global citizens to combat poverty and injustice” (Oxfam Hong Kong). The centre employs participatory, emancipatory pedagogies for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and widely adopts drama as an intervention, for GCE and drama education hold common core values of “emphasising participatory and empowering learning processes, valuing connectedness, critical examination of the world and responding to the society through actions” (Chan, 2012, p. 16).

The TIE works in this study were also situated in a cultural sphere in which changing arts education policies shifted from “a relatively simplistic agenda of audience-building

\(^4\) The Gini coefficient is a measure of the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country and is used to indicate the wealth gap between the rich and the poor. It is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 corresponds to perfect inequality. In Hong Kong, the coefficient rose to 0.537 in 2011 from 0.476 in 1991, indicating a worsening gap between the rich and poor over the decades.
and popularising the arts to an educational agenda” (Chan & Shu, 2006, p. 78). The increasing attention given to drama as pedagogy gave rise to a proliferation of new drama approaches, including the interactive TIE described in this study. Yet the deep integration of global citizenship education issues and close collaboration with an NGO as seen in the works in this study were uncommon at the time when the participants in this study started collaborating with Oxfam. For most of them the two TIE works were their first encounter with issue-based, participatory TIE.

Over the past decade drama training in Hong Kong has also gone through radical changes. Formal drama training used to be provided solely by one tertiary institution, where the main focus was on practical skills in making theatre. Method Acting and psychological realism approaches to scripted, character-based plays formed the main focus of its actor training at the time when two of my research participants studied at this institution. As a practitioner in the Hong Kong theatre scene for over twenty years, I observe that the approaches to theatre taught by this institution remain a dominant influence in the field amongst other training programmes that emerged after it. New drama training initiatives have been developed in Hong Kong in recent years, with an expansion to more diverse community theatre and applied theatre training provided by a variety of organisations, ranging from short-term training workshops to formal academic programmes. In 2004 the first formal training in drama education was inaugurated through a Master of Drama Education programme. I was a core teaching staff member of this programme. Out of the other eight participants in this study, four were graduates from this programme. The other participants had not received any formal training in drama.
It was out of this broader social and cultural landscape that the two TIE works in this study, The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, were born. In the following section, the purposes, styles and structure of the two TIE works are explained in detail.

4.2 The Interactive Education Centre and the Two Theatre-in-Education Works

Oxfam’s Interactive Education Centre was established in 2005 out of the concern to inspire young people to think about their roles and responsibilities as citizens in the globalised world. Seeing drama as an effective teaching approach that matches its philosophy of education, Oxfam presents a number of drama programmes at the centre, including The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, the two TIE programmes in this study. Most of the centre’s programmes target primary and secondary school students, and are formulated to meet the learning objectives of school subjects related to social studies. Designed as a black box theatre, the centre provides a different learning environment from ordinary classrooms with the provision of physical settings to elicit imagination and sensory/bodily learning experiences.

The centre engages artists as working partners to design and conduct their drama programmes, including the two TIE works in this study. The nine participants in this study were either partnering artists or Oxfam staff members. The six partnering artists were recruited based on their previous experiences in educational theatre. The three Oxfam staff members joined the acting teams mainly because their jobs required it, but for some because of a personal interest in performance. No prior training specific to issue-based, interactive TIE was provided by Oxfam to the nine actors. The partnering artists were expected to have pre-entry experiences related to the TIE works. The
Oxfam staff members were expected to possess sufficient subject knowledge related to global citizenship education. Training for the nine actors was on-the-job in nature, built within the rehearsal processes of the two TIE works. The rehearsal sessions included both rehearsing for the plays and practising to conduct the participatory activities involved in the programmes. Understanding of the subject matter relied on the actors’ own prior knowledge and self-study by reading material provided by Oxfam. The more experienced actors worked collaboratively as a team without the position of a director. For the novice TIE actors, the rehearsal sessions were more structured and were led by the more experienced actors who sometimes served the dual role as directors.

_The Other Side of the Fairy Tale_ and _Fifty Square Feet_ were both designed for secondary students (aged 12-19 in general) for the exploration of poverty issues. Both programmes adopted forms and approaches characteristic to TIE as explained earlier in Chapter 2. These forms and approaches manifested themselves in the two TIE programmes in the following ways:

1. Both programmes entailed a live performance together with interactive activities structured with the performance to deepen young people’s understanding of poverty issues.

2. The programmes were devised by the actors (the original cast when the programme was first launched), considering specific learning needs of teenagers in Hong Kong and based upon thorough research about poverty issues and the civic education curriculum in Hong Kong schools.

3. The audience participated in activities before, during and after the performances that were carefully structured within the programmes, including in some parts, engagement of the audience in role interacting with the actors within the dramatic action.
Both *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet* were one-off, three-hour programmes. Each TIE session accommodated 40 students at most (the size of one class) to maximise opportunities for active participation.

### 4.2.1 *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*

*The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* explored poverty issues from a global perspective. The programme consisted of a pre-performance activity, a 45-minute performance, and a series of post-performance activities. The play centred around the stories of seven characters in different corners of the world, which were played by a cast of three:

- Nieo, a child labourer in Sri Lanka;
- her boss, a factory owner;
- Sanna and Shelly, youngsters in the Town of Loeika (a fictional place) in a developing country;
- a government official in Loeika;
- Mr Dolly, an entrepreneur in a multinational corporation;
- a character called Everyman – a non-gender specific character representing an ordinary person in the developed world; a consumer, who is ignorant and indifferent about global social issues.

The play was structured in an episodic style, in which the different characters’ stories juxtaposed, firstly in a seemingly unrelated manner, but as the play unfolded the audience was brought to see the interconnectedness of their lives. In realising such connection the audience was led to reflect on, in the post-performance activities, how different stakeholders in the global world played a part in the issue of poverty.
*The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* employed a range of acting styles from naturalism to highly stylised movement. Its moods varied from episode to episode. As the title of the play suggested, the work aimed to reveal how the grand narratives about economic development (presented in a fairy tale like mood in the play) fall short-sighted on the sufferings and sacrifices of people in developing countries – the reality behind the fairy tale – presented mostly in a realistic and down-to-earth manner in the play.

In Table 2, the structure and content of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* is presented with specific interactive strategies explained and the mood and styles of each episode illustrated. Photos of the work are included to provide visual understanding of the performance style. A short video documentary of the work (11 mins, English and Chinese subtitled) is also available online (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2007) for those readers of this thesis who would like to get a multimedia understanding of the work (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeyHpgKs9bw).

**Table 2: Structure of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-performance activity</th>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The participants explore the two parts of the set by posing themselves as possible characters in these places and miming their movements.</td>
<td>Strategies: Postcarding, Miming, Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Eliciting imagination about the set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Initiating ideas about the relationship between the rich world and the poor world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Warming the participants up for moving around the theatre space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 Consent has been gained from the participants for showing these photos.
2. A brief discussion about what people's lives are like in the two different places, and what the grey wall between these two worlds might symbolise.

The performance
Episode 1: In and Out the Wardrobe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyman appears from inside the wardrobe. S/he acts like a puppet and different clothing items are put on him/her. Everyman starts to explore his/her surroundings for the first time, including the audience whom s/he greets. Everyman finally discovers Nieo who is sitting behind a sewing machine, and notices that the fabric Nieo sews is the same as that of Everyman's clothing.</td>
<td>Mood: light-hearted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Clownish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Movement and sound with no speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Direct interaction with the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Episode 2: Four Dollar’s Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Content</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A commentator enters and interviews Nieo, a 13-year-old factory worker in Sri Lanka. Nieo talks about how she came to the city from a farming village to look for a job to support her family, first making a living as a scavenger in a dumpsite, and later working in a factory but was abused by her boss. Nieo fled, and joined the garment factory that she now works in. She is satisfied with her present job in the factory and the $2 daily salary she earns. Her boss has told her that she will get $4 a day when she becomes more skillful. This becomes her highest goal and motivation. Nieo’s boss enters and Nieo’s work life as an illegal child labourer is shown, with ever increasing workload and working hours, restricted freedom, and punishment when she becomes too exhausted from work. Despite all these hardships, Nieo continues to work hard, longing for the $4 salary that she will get one day. | Mood: serious but hopeful  
**Style:**  
- Generally naturalistic, with some symbolic movements to show the passing of time  
- No direct interaction with the audience |

### Episode 3: Festival Gifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Content</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyman shops for festival gifts and gives them out to the audience. On buying each gift, s/he hums a song signifying a specific festival, including those festivals in</td>
<td>Mood: joyful and humorous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which gift-giving is by no means needed. His/her excitement grows as s/he buys one gift after another, gradually turning into a frantic shopaholic state.

**Episode 4: The Fairy Tale of Mr Dolly**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Content</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sanna and Shelly are young school leavers in the Town of Loeika. It is the first day they are joining Dolly Department Store as junior salesladies. They are proud of the identity as members of the world renowned enterprise, which is opening its 1000th department store in Loeika. Sanna and Shelly, like many townspeople in Loeika, have always hoped that their country will become as advanced as the more developed countries. The opening of Dolly Department Store represents a hopeful future for them. Propaganda and advertisement have instilled in them the idea that a promising future is all about wealth and economic growth. Sanna works in a down-to-earth manner and takes courses after work to equip herself with better knowledge and skills. Shelly is more interested in making quick money with her side-job of selling second hand designer handbags. Both look forward to a brighter future in different ways. | Mood: fable like
Style:  
- Stylised, with chorus work  
- The chorus jump in and out of character to become narrators, and they take up different characters within the episode  
- Some direct interaction with the audience, for the narrators and for the government official as he makes his speech, addressing the audience as participants in the opening ceremony |
Soon, another new development project is launched in Loeika. Mr Dolly comes to officiate the opening ceremony. A government official of Loeika makes a speech to thank Mr Dolly for supporting the economic development of the town by bringing in more job opportunities. In the cocktail reception following the ceremony, the government official congratulates Mr Dolly for being elected as one of the “Top Ten Charitable Entrepreneurs” in the world.

**Episode 5: Dolly's Charitable Foundation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In a video projection, a TV commercial on “Dolly's Charitable Foundation to Make Children's Dreams Come True” is shown. The video features interviews of young children who talk about their dreams if they are granted a wish by Mr Dolly. All the wishes are materialistic. The video ends and Nieo enters as the last interviewee, expressing her wish for her family to lead a better life and afford her brother's medical fees. | Mood: fable like turning to serious at the end of the episode
Style: Naturalistic (video); the actors do not perform in this episode except the last segment of Nieo |

**Episode 6: Conditions in the Factory**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nieo narrates her inner voices. The narration is juxtaposed with flashbacks of Nieo's past experiences at home and in her previous jobs. The inner voices describe the deteriorating conditions in the factory. There is no freedom. Everyone works mechanically. The dye in the fabrics causes Nieo to experience an allergic skin reaction. Her eyes become | Mood: dark and serious
Style: - The first half is highly stylised, using movements to accompany the inner voices of Nieo; the language is heightened; three actors act as |
sore and her arms are stiff, but all she can do is push herself to sew faster and faster. She misses home and wishes to pay her family a visit, but she refrains from allowing herself such thoughts and reminds herself to be grateful for having a job. Her body is getting so used to the exhaustion that she feels that she has become a sewing machine.

The inner voice segment ends and the scene proceeds to a naturalistic one upon the entrance of Nieo’s boss. Nieo asks about the salary raise and taking leave to pay her family a visit. The boss explains that the factory is facing keen competition and Nieo has to wait until the situation improves.

Nieo exits. The boss receives a call from a subordinate who tells him about a client who is forcing the price down once again. The boss is also told that the ceiling of the factory needs repair, but he decides to delay the repairing work as he cannot afford to stop the production line at this time.

**Episode 7: Changes in Loeika**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A narrator talks about the changes in Loeika, where more land is developed into commercial areas. More infra-structures are built and old buildings are demolished to give way to new ones. People generally have more jobs, higher income and more contact with other countries. Sanna’s work situation is juxtaposed with a lecture in a commerce course which she is taking. While the lecturer stresses that the principals of running a business are</td>
<td>Mood: serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The narrator speaks while she portrays movements of the changes in the cityscape in Loeika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sanna and Shelly’s scene is mostly naturalistic, with a few movement motifs inserted at the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
about cost-effectiveness and maximising profits, the audience see Sanna being changed from a full-time staff to one who is paid hourly; her working hours are reduced, and finally she is forced to agree with a salary cut in order to keep the company competitive in the market.

It is Sanna’s birthday and she gets together with Shelly for a meal. Shelly now works as a real estate agent, spending more money than she earns and living on credit card loans. Shelly gives Sanna a designer doll as a birthday gift. It reminds Sanna of her youthful dream of becoming a fashion designer, but she is now getting more and more confused about her future.

The scene ends with the two friends in a movement sequence of chasing up with the city’s rhythm but getting more and more confused.

### Episode 8: Breaking News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyman is playing computer games at home. The TV news is heard in the background: The roof of a factory in Sri Lanka has collapsed, causing severe casualties. Most victims are child labourers. The factory owner has been arrested. Everyman could not care less, switches off the TV and continues to play computer games.</td>
<td>Mood: ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Naturalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No direct interaction with the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Episode 9: The Trial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nieo’s boss, held responsible for the accident in the factory, is called into court. While waiting to enter the courtroom, he undergoes a trial in his conscience: Have I been wrong just trying to keep up with business in the extremely competitive market, with the clients pressing down the price day by day and the government doing nothing to ensure fair deals in the market? Am I exploiting the child labourers, with the salary and shelter I am providing? Without the job opportunities I gave them would the children end up becoming scavengers and risk themselves as targets of trafficking? Do these reasons, however, justify the child labourers’ death? Living in a place like this, do we have choice? The boss is called into the courtroom at the end of the scene. | Mood: serious  
Style:  
- Monologic  
- Two actors stand beside the audience, acting as the boss’ conscience and pose him questions  
- No direct interaction with the audience                                                                                                      |

Episode 10: Epilogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mood &amp; Style of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nieo, injured in the factory accident, is now a lame child. She has become the first recipient of the “Dolly’s Charitable Foundation to Make Children’s Dreams Come True”. She tells the audience that she originally asked the organisers to improve her family’s living and pay for her brother’s medical fees, but her dreams were regarded as too ordinary. She was offered prosthesis instead. She also received a doll as a gift, being told that it is the most popular product in Dolly’s Department Store. Nieo is shocked to find that the doll’s jacket is | Mood: serious and ironic  
Style:  
- Monologic  
- Direct interaction with the audience as the actors speak                                                                                           |
what she has been sewing in the factory earlier. Everyman, now wearing a new jacket, takes out another doll and changes its clothes to one that looks the same as his/her own. Sanna brings in the same doll and promotes it as a highly demanded collectable. She tells the audience that the doll costs as much as what she earns in a month. She then announces that this is the last day of her job, and is yet to decide what she will do next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-performance activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. The participants write down questions that they would like to ask the main characters in the play. The actors use these questions as a basis to lead small group discussions about the characters and their situations. | Strategies: Role-on-the-wall, Discussion, Objects and symbols

Purpose:
Responding to the story verbally and symbolically to reflect on issues about poverty and social development, as well as the parts played by different stakeholders. |
| 2. The students use objects and symbols to represent, spatially and graphically, the characters’ relationships and their roles in the globalised world with regard to the issue of poverty. |
In some parts of the narratives in Chapter 6, the research participants cited their specific experience in playing the character Everyman in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* to explain their views towards the non-realist, clown-like acting style of playing the character in relation to the character’s function (Section 6.4.2). In Table 3 below, an excerpt from the script depicting Everyman is shown to help the readers understand the specific style of acting involved.

**Table 3: An Excerpt from the Script of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* featuring Everyman**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene 1: Inside and Outside the Wardrobe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A merry-go-round-like music fades in.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The door on the back wall opens, symbolising a wardrobe.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Someone takes Everyman out from the wardrobe. Everyman appears like a puppet. Different clothing items and accessories are put on Everyman.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The other person leaves. The wardrobe closes.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Everyman comes alive as the wardrobe closes. S/he explores the surroundings. Everything is like a new discovery for him/her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S/he explores the space.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S/he discovers the audience, and greets them.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S/he discovers his/her new clothing.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(S/he explores the different items in his/her bag – a mobile phone, a game player, and a fashion magazine.)

(She mimics the fashion models in the magazine.)

(The sound of a sewing machine is heard.)

(S/he explores the source of the sound, and finally finds a child labourer in the factory area of the set who is sitting behind a sewing machine.)

(Everyman explores Nieo’s space. S/he discovers that the fabric on the sewing machine is the same fabric of the jacket s/he is wearing.)

(Everyman exits. Nieo starts to sew. A narrator enters for the next scene.)

4.2.2 *Fifty Square Feet*

*Fifty Square Feet* was designed to offer young people an opportunity to engage deeply in exploring the situation of poverty and social exclusion faced by poor people in Hong Kong, especially the working poor⁶. It portrayed the life of a family of three living in a 50-square-foot cubicle room in a sub-divided apartment. The TIE was presented in three parts, each with a performed scene followed by audience participation activities that focused on the exploration of ideas emerging from that particular scene. The first

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⁶ The use of the terms “poor people” and “working poor” may seem to be incompatible with the international sociological discourse, but are intentionally adopted in this context. These are the terminologies used by Oxfam Hong Kong, deeming them more appropriate in reflecting the poverty situation in the Hong Kong. For example, while “people living below the poverty line” may seem more acceptable in international discourse, the Hong Kong government had refused to establish a poverty line despite an ongoing urge by the society. When the first poverty line was finally set in 2013 (8 years after our TIE works were first implemented), it was criticised for failing to truly reflect the poverty situation in Hong Kong. By the same token, while the terms like “under-employed” or “under-educated” may be more commonly used internationally, “working poor” is adopted by Oxfam to refer to the common situation in which workers are adequately educated, sufficiently employed but still live in poverty due to insufficient wage protection policies and the high-standing housing cost in Hong Kong.
part of the work related to the background of the family, their overall living conditions and the father’s life as a working poor. The second part focused on the social exclusion faced by the teenage daughter in the family. The third part concentrated on the work conditions of the mother as a low-wage worker. A three-member cast played the three main characters. The actors also doubled as other minor characters.

A naturalistic performance style was chosen to give the audience a sense of “this is a story happening around us”. The participation activities in between and within the performance scenes adopted a range of drama strategies including hotseating, teacher-in-role, forum theatre and role-play to engage the audience in understanding the characters physically and empathetically, and in reflecting upon policies and social norms that have led to poverty and social exclusion.

Since its inauguration in 2006, the programme structure of Fifty Square Feet has undergone considerable revisions, both in light of changes in learners’ needs brought about by curriculum reform and the larger social climates. Table 4 outlines a few versions related to the narratives shared by the research participants. Photos of the work are inserted into the table to give the readers some visual ideas about the performance style7. A trailer of the work (4.5 mins, Chinese subtitled) is available online (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2008) for those who would like to get a multimedia understanding of the programme (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVp1Ruf-2o0).

7 In these pictures, faces of the people not involved in the research are blurred. Where their facial expressions need to be shown, the pictures are captured from a YouTube video for which consent was sought from the participants for public showing.
### Table 4: Structure of *Fifty Square Feet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-performance activity</th>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The participants consider the size of 50 square feet, mark it out on the floor, and</td>
<td>Strategies: Marking an area, Acting out audience's ideas, Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss what place it might be and who may live there. The actors mime the human</td>
<td>Purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities in the space according to the audience's suggestions.</td>
<td>- Eliciting imagination about the fictional place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Brainstorming on what ideas the words “Hong Kong” bring to the audience.</td>
<td>- Initiating the idea that this is a story that happens in Hong Kong, the place we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dwell in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Warming the participants up for dialogue and interactions with the actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance

**Scene 1: The Family**

The story takes place in a 50-square-feet cubicle room in a sub-divided apartment. The father, Ah Sang, is a construction site worker. Ah Har, the mother, is a housewife who came from Mainland China a few years ago with her daughter to re-unify with her husband\(^8\). Their daughter, Ah Yee, is studying at Primary One. The scene portrays an overview of the family's living conditions. Ah Yee is deprived of

---

\(^8\) Ah Sang and Ah Har’s marriage is typical of many low-income families in Hong Kong, in which Hong Kong grooms of generally lower educational and occupational status would marry women in Mainland China. The phenomenon arises as a result of increased economic connections between Hong Kong and Mainland since the 1990s, and the marriage squeeze in Hong Kong that slightly favours women of marrying age (Ma, Lin, & Zhang, 2010). The Hong Kong government restricts Mainland brides from immediately settling in Hong Kong, and many of these women have to wait a long time before they are permitted to reside in Hong Kong and re-unify with their husbands.
opportunities and support for her educational and psychological needs (e.g. no private tuition, supplementary exercises, computer facilities or interest classes).

Ah Har wishes to support the family's income but she does not have any relevant skills. She used to be a factory worker in Mainland China, but factories in Hong Kong have all been moved to the Mainland. She can only take up occasional labour jobs.

Ah Sang works hard to provide for the family, but as a freelance worker his income becomes highly susceptible to an economic downturn. He takes up many different jobs to make ends meet, but unfortunately dies in an accident at work. No compensation was given to his family since he did not work full-time for the company and he was not formally registered for the job on the day of the accident.

### Activities following Scene 1 (version 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies: Group Discussion, Newspaper Headline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eliciting personal responses to the story as the basis for discussion of poverty issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consolidating ideas from the discussion through the headline-writing activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The participants take turns to share their views on something in the story about which they feel most strongly. The actors then use these ideas as the basis of a facilitated discussion on the social forces that lead to poverty in Hong Kong.

2. The participants write newspaper headlines to consolidate their views on the play up to this point. The headlines are then read aloud to the whole class by the actors.

### Activities following Scene 1 (version 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies: Group Discussion, Teacher-in-role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eliciting personal responses to the story as the basis for discussion of poverty issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Considering changes that need to be made to improve the poverty...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. The participants identify aspects of the family's life that need to be changed. The actors respectively take on the role of a government official, an NGO worker and a millionaire. Each group of participants talks to one of these people to suggest what s/he can do to improve the poverty situation in Hong Kong. The actors report back to the whole class what suggestions have been made in each group.

**Performance**

**Scene 2: The Daughter at School**

Ah Yee is now 16 years old and studying in Secondary Four.

The scene starts with Ah Yee's monologue in which she expresses her yearning for having private space at home. She also shares her uneasy feelings about the second-hand stuff that fills her home, some of which her mother scrap-picked in her job as a cleaner.

Ah Yee, at the dinner table with her mother, expresses her wish to participate in a birthday party which she cannot afford. In a plea to her mother for borrowing the money, she finds it hard to make her mother understand that she needs to take part in social activities to get acquainted with her friends.

A short monologue by Ah Yee, revealing that she is concerned about how her classmates see her. So she never talks about her family at school. Even her best friend knows nothing about her family's situation.

Flashback to what happened at school when Ah Yee was informed about the birthday party. Her classmates are planning for an extravagant party. Ah Yee tries to convince them to scale down the party but fails, since their concept of spending money and what makes a decent party are very different. The classmates then suggest to go shopping together. Ah Yee makes up a lie
to excuse herself, but the lie is exposed. Her best friend gets angry with her.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities following Scene 2</th>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Forum Theatre is conducted for the school scene. The participants replace the characters and act out possible ways of helping Ah Yee and her classmates deal with the situation.</td>
<td>Strategies: Forum Theatre, Thought-tracking, Freeze Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Embodying the role of Ah Yee to understand her feelings and struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Embodying other characters to understand how social exclusion is formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Finding ways of dealing with the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Discussing and reflecting upon social norms that cause prejudice and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the activity, the facilitators spontaneously build in, as needed, thought-tracking of characters in the play and/or Freeze Frame of dramatic actions outside the scene.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance
Scene 3: The Mother at Work (version 1)

After the father died, Ah Har, the mother, becomes the breadwinner in the family. She does different laborious and low-paid jobs, and ends up becoming a cleaner in a housing estate. Faced with all kinds of unfair employment terms, Ah Har loses her temper and shouts to the Foreman, “I’ll quit!” She soon regrets it, realising that she cannot afford to lose the job. She decides to put her dignity aside, to apologise to the Foreman and beg him to let her stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities following Scene 3 (version 1)</th>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The participants hotseat Ah Har to understand the problems faced by the working poor. They then hotseat the Foreman to understand why the cleaning companies are making conditions so harsh for their workers.</td>
<td>Strategy: Hotseating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the situations faced by the working poor, including problems with employment terms, out-sourcing policies, the pressure poor people face in applying for government allowance, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Performance/Activity
**Scene 3: The Mother at Work (version 2)**

Before the scene is played, the participants prepare for three characters, all working poor, who will compete with Ah Har in job interviews.

Three interview scenes are then played. One representative from each group takes up the acting task, while the rest become that person’s ‘brains trust’ as s/he goes through the interview.

### Strategies & Purposes
- **Strategy:** Role-play
- **Purpose:** Understanding the constraints of the working poor in applying for jobs (e.g., lack of qualifications and relevant experience, limitations of a single mother) and unfair situations in the job market (e.g., discrimination on middle-aged women and new immigrants from Mainland China).

### Post-performance Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies &amp; Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Discussion on the constraints faced by the poor in work situations, and how some values, norms and attitudes in the society often go unquestioned, contributing to marginalising the poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> The whole programme finishes. The participants are invited to share their views and reflections with two persons who have not attended the TIE programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy:</strong> Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reflecting on the theme of social exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inviting participants to take action by sharing views with others so as to arouse concern on poverty issues in people around them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the socio-economic and cultural contexts giving rise to the two TIE works are outlined in order to develop an understanding of the shared landscape in which the research participants’ lived experiences are situated. The specific content, forms and styles of the TIE works are also detailed to contextualise the narratives.
about the participants’ practice in these works. The information will guide the readers’ understanding of the findings in the next two chapters related to the research participants’ experiences as actors in the two TIE works. Chapter 5 focuses on individual experiences and explores the past influences that have impacted on the participants’ TIE practice. Chapter 6 considers the participants’ experiences collectively and examines how they understand, describe and explain their practices.
Chapter Five: Biographical Narratives of the Nine TIE Actors

The findings of this research are presented in two separate chapters according to different topics and data analysis methods. In this chapter, nine biographical narratives are presented to discuss the background of the research participants and past influences that have impacted on their TIE practice. These narratives have been constructed using a “narrative analysis” approach (Polkinghorne, 1995) to maintain individuality and highlight the uniqueness of the stories of individuals. The approach to storytelling differs from the one adopted in the next chapter where a “thematic narrative analysis” approach (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Speedy, 2007) is used to present the collective experiences of the nine actors in devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works.

The biographical narratives in this chapter focus on the first of the two research questions examined in this thesis:

How do past influences (artistic, educational, occupational and personal) impact on the practices and understanding of devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works at Oxfam?

Polkinghorne (1995) asserts that the purpose of narrative analysis is to produce stories as the outcome of the research so as to “reveal uniqueness of the individual case or bounded system and provide an understanding of its idiosyncrasy and particular complexity” (p. 15). Narrative analysis seeks to find out how and why a particular experience has come about, through organising data elements into a coherent account. I regard experiences of past influences as highly individual, and as such, I am
presenting the nine participants’ biographical accounts to reveal the uniqueness of their experiences rather than seeing these experiences as instances of general notions or concepts.

The narratives start with an autoethnographic account about myself. This narrative was constructed using the methodological approach explained in Chapter 3, which included: documenting stories I recorded during the whole research journey, through dialogues with my research participants; journal writing; documentation of field notes and artefacts. Following my narrative, the narratives of the other participants are offered in chronological order according to the time they joined the TIE teams. These narratives are based upon interview and other conversational or written data including informal discussions and email exchanges. The other participants’ narratives are written in third person. Other narrative inquirers prefer to use the monologue form to privilege the participants’ voices and give the readers a more direct sense of the participants’ experiences. However, due to the nature of this research in which I am a co-participant deeply involved in the phenomenon under study, my narratives are highly mingled with those of the other participants’. As such, I included my voice (in first person) in the other participants’ narratives (in third person), rendering it a more transparent approach which allows the readers to be aware of my presence in relation to the other voices.

Interim versions of all these narratives were written in Chinese and then presented to the participants for comment and modification, before being translated and presented in this thesis in English. Different coloured fonts are used in presenting the participants’ narratives and the next chapter will employ the same colour codes so that the readers can trace through each individual’s experiences. In Table 5 below, summary information about the participants’ background is provided.
Table 5: Summary Information of the Nine Participants in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Involvement in the two TIE works</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Post-secondary Education</th>
<th>Drama training</th>
<th>Previous Experience in acting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phoebe (me)</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Fairy Tale: devising actor (2005-2006) Fifty Square Feet: devising actor (2006-2016)</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in drama education Previous occupations: freelance actor and drama educator, full-time arts administrator</td>
<td>Business Administration Drama Education</td>
<td>Informal training as actor, with a strong focus on physical theatre &amp; experimental theatre styles Master of Drama in Education (UK)</td>
<td>Actor with professional/semi-professional/amateur theatre groups/community theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>Fifty Square Feet: devising actor (2006-2016)</td>
<td>Freelance actor and drama educator Previous occupations: graphic designer, product and toy designer, school drama teacher</td>
<td>Graphic Design Theatre (Acting) Drama Education</td>
<td>BFA, Drama, acting major (HK) Master of Drama Education (HK)</td>
<td>Actor with professional/semi-professional theatre groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 In Hong Kong professional theatre groups refer to those in which the director, designers, actors and backstage personnel are paid. Some theatre groups employ paid directors to lead a group of unpaid (and usually less experienced) actors, and these theatre groups are referred to as “semi-professional theatre groups” in this study.

10 Throughout this thesis, pseudonyms are used for the eight other participants in the study. These names were chosen by the participants themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>The Other Side of the Fairy Tale: non-devising actor (2006-2011)</th>
<th>Previous occupations:</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Drama training initiatives, Oxfam Hong Kong</th>
<th>School drama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Fifty Square Feet: non-devising actor, understudy (2010-2011)</td>
<td>Oxfam staff member (Education Unit)</td>
<td>Geography Education Development Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Previous occupation: school teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sour Plum</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Fairy Tale: non-devising actor (2006-2016)</td>
<td>Part-time lecturer at post-secondary institutes</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Community theatre workshops and performances</td>
<td>Actor in community theatre projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Fairy Tale: non-devising actor (2007-2015)</td>
<td>Freelance drama educator Previous occupation: school teacher</td>
<td>Physical Education (major) Sociology (minor) Drama Education</td>
<td>Informal training as actor Master of Drama Education (HK)</td>
<td>Actor with semi-professional / amateur theatre groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Fairy Tale: non-devising actor (2010-2012)</td>
<td>Freelance actor and drama educator Previous occupation: actor in professional theatre groups, school drama teacher</td>
<td>Theatre (Acting) Drama Education</td>
<td>BFA, Drama, acting major (HK) École Phillipe Gaulier (Paris) Master of Drama Education (HK)</td>
<td>Actor with professional theatre groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>Fifty Square Feet: non-devising actor, understudy (2010-2012)</td>
<td>Oxfam staff member (Education Unit)</td>
<td>Geography (major) Communications (minor)</td>
<td>Drama training initiatives, Oxfam Hong Kong</td>
<td>School drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Fifty Square Feet: non-devising actor, understudy (2010-2013)</td>
<td>Oxfam staff member (Education Unit)</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>Drama training initiatives, Oxfam Hong Kong</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Linkage with the Literature

In presenting the biographical narratives, the participants’ past influences and the impact of these influences on their TIE practice are considered in relation to the ideas discussed in the literature in Chapter 2. In this literature a range of authors have variously addressed different pedagogical and artistic demands on the TIE actors, presented on page 51 in this thesis and repeated here as a reminder to the readers:

- Devising play texts and designing TIE programme structures (devising);
- Acting characters in a play (acting);
- Facilitating processes of learning in and out of character (facilitating);
- Researching and understanding the subject matter of their TIE works (subject matter);
- Understanding and handling heuristic rather than transmissive approaches to teaching (pedagogy);
- Managing content and form effectively to achieve the purpose and function of their works (managing content, form and purpose);
- Understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing and non-naturalistic, presentational acting styles (theatrical approach).

The narratives in this chapter relate to this literature by presenting how the nine research participants’ past influences impacted on their experiences in meeting the specific demands placed on them as TIE actors. Furthermore, they look at how the actors bring into their TIE works aspects of their real lives and how these real life experiences impact on their TIE practice. Polkinghorne (1995) suggests:
Human action is the outcome of the interaction of a person’s previous learning and experiences… and proposed goals and purposes… Storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it.

(p. 11)

In understanding the participants’ experiences, I found O’Toole’s (1992) framework consisting of different contextual layers a useful device for considering the data. In this framework, which was introduced in the literature review, O’Toole suggests the existence of four layers of experience relevant to drama and theatre work and below I have specifically applied these to the practices of the nine TIE actors whose narratives are shared in this chapter (Figure 2):

1. The “Real Context”: related to the educational, occupational, artistic and personal backgrounds of the actors, as well as their attitudes and beliefs towards theatre, education and the society;

2. The “Context of the Setting”: related to the actors’ response to the setting of Oxfam’s Interactive Education Centre, the scope and purposes of global citizenship education as defined by Oxfam, and the needs of the teenage audience groups;

3. The “Context of the Medium”: related to the actors’ management of the medium of TIE during the research, planning and implementation phases of their work;

4. The “Fictional Context”: related to the actors’ experiences as they lived through the stories and characters in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet.*
I made use of O’Toole’s framework in examining my research data to support a more thorough consideration of the participants’ experiences. As I reviewed the past influences (Real Context) that had impacted on their practice, I was guided by the framework to consider the different dimensions of their experiences in the two Oxfam TIE works (Setting, Medium and Fiction).

5.2 Structure of the Chapter

In each of the biographical narratives, an overall background of each participant is first introduced. This description outlines the participant’s involvement in the two TIE works, his/her educational and occupational background, and the motivation for joining the two TIE programmes. Following these descriptions, the past influences identified by each participant as relevant to their TIE practice are shared.

**Figure 2: Application of O’Toole’s (1992) Framework to the Experiences in the Nine Actors’ Narratives**

- **The Real Context:** educational, occupational, artistic & personal backgrounds attitudes & beliefs towards theatre, education & the society

- **The Context of the Setting:**
  - responses to the setting of Oxfam’s Interactive Education Centre,
  - the scope & purposes of Oxfam’s global citizenship education,
  - the needs of the teenage audience groups

- **The Context of the Medium:**
  - management of the medium of TIE

- **The Fictional Context:**
  - experiences in living through the stories & characters in the TIE works
These narratives were structured in different styles according to how individual stories were told. The length of these stories also varied, due to different storytelling styles and the different amount of data each participant shared. Some participants were more used to giving concrete examples while some were better at presenting ideas generally. Some of them had richer experiences, and/or more insights on the topic of past influences, while some had less. By avoiding the imposition of too much rigid structure to these narratives, I tried to honour the way the stories were told and maximise their authenticity. In composing these personal narratives, I adhered to the methodological principles explained in the methodology chapter, including the belief that:

- People understand reality through the meanings they give to reality;
- Knowledge is formed through the way people perceive and interpret their experiences.

These principles directed the way I constructed and presented the narratives, in an endeavour to keep the writing as close as possible to the personal experiences as understood by the participants. In order to develop a more holistic understanding of the experiences, I attended to contextual details to capture the depth and richness of the narratives, trying to minimise the distance between the lives as lived by the participants and the stories as received by the readers.

After presenting each narrative, I provide a summary examining the different types of past influence and their impacts. Overall, six types of influence emerged from the nine biographical narratives, namely:

1. Educational influences: referring to previous educational experiences non-specific to drama training, including learning experiences as school or university students,
and non-drama related subject major at university;

2. Artistic influences: referring to theatre experiences at school, university or in professional or semi-professional theatre;

3. Artistic and educational influences: referring to experiences as drama students (in acting, drama education and educational theatre), including formal degrees or informal workshops or training initiatives;

4. Occupational influences: referring to previous or current occupations;

5. Personal influences: referring to personal and family backgrounds, personality, personal beliefs, attitudes and life goals;

6. Socio-political influences: referring to beliefs, attitudes and experiences brought about by the larger socio-political context.

The summary following each narrative also considers how these different types of influence impacted on the participants’ experiences as they managed the different demands placed on them as TIE actors (i.e. devising; acting; facilitation; subject matter; pedagogy; managing content, form and purpose; theatrical approach). It also summarises how each participant’s real life experiences (the Real Context) impacted on his/her response within the Context of the Setting, the Context of the Medium and the Fictional Context.

At the end of the chapter, I offer an overall summary of the influences and impacts emerging from the all the narratives. Following that I discuss the insights I gained from reflecting on the narratives, and relate these discussions to the literature. These findings, together with the key findings in the collective narrative in the next chapter, will be considered in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7) for an overall discussion of their broader implications to TIE practice.
5.3 Phoebe

I began collaborating with Oxfam in 2004 when they were planning to establish an Interactive Education Centre (IEC) on global citizenship education. Referencing some overseas examples, the Oxfam staff learned that drama could be employed as an interactive learning approach, but they did not have much idea as to how they operated and who could help them design such programmes. They approached me as I was one of the few Hong Kong people who had formally studied drama education at that time. The encounter resulted in over a decade’s collaboration with Oxfam. I proposed the TIE programmes at IEC, designed their structure and content, and helped Oxfam put together the first TIE teams. I also took part in devising and performing in the works myself.

I devised both The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet when they were first created, and performed in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale during the first year of its run (2005-2006) and in Fifty Square Feet ever since it started (2006-now). Both TIE teams worked collaboratively without the official position of a director. However, I had often been given a relatively stronger leadership role, for the other actors saw me as a more experienced practitioner who had been a teacher of most of them. When new members joined the casts of the two TIE works, I also took up a director’s role for the others.

My fondness for the performing arts started when I was a child. At school I took part in different kinds of performance-based activities including choral speaking, singing, folk dance and drama. I studied business administration at university, and graduated to
become an administrator in a theatre company. A few years later, I left the company and became a freelance actor and drama tutor. During this period I went to England to do a Masters degree in drama education. When I graduated, a new Master of Drama Education programme was about to be offered in Hong Kong and I began lecturing within it. I also continued to run drama programmes for schools and communities, similar to the TIE programmes in this research.

My motivation for joining Oxfam’s TIE works was related to my ongoing concern about exploring social issues with young people. Furthermore, although I had had some experience in interactive educational theatre before, my previous practice seldom allowed me to experiment with the full potential of participatory TIE. Oxfam’s invitation was therefore appealing as it provided me with the platform to experiment with theatre entailing deep audience participation and the exploration of social themes.

5.3.1 Past Influences

When I examined the past experiences that had impacted on my practice as a TIE actor at Oxfam, a web of stories came up in my mind. I documented these stories in the interim texts of this study (narrative texts I wrote during the process of this research, see Chapter 3, p. 58), based on memories, personal reflections, as well as related artefacts like my past written works. I saw these stories as “a web of influences” (Figure 2) since I did not find any causal relationship between the different experiences. I reflected on the question of “what has made me the TIE actor I am today?”, and documented nine themes in the interim texts. When I further reflected on these and organised them for presentation in this thesis, I crystallised three most important themes related to: (1) the meaning of doing drama to me; (2) my political stance; and (3)
The idea of choosing the performing arts as a career never came to my mind when I was young. It was not the kind of career path that teachers and parents would encourage, especially for a youngster like me who had always excelled academically and in conduct. Like many students of this kind, I was expected to pursue a “successful” life path by taking up professional future careers. In the Hong Kong culture this referred to jobs of high salary and social status. Artist was obviously not one of them. I followed such expectations and opted to study business administration in the university. It was not until my university days, when I encountered people who would choose the road less travelled, that I realised that I had all along been living under others’ expectations without questioning if that was really what I wanted. I came to understand that I had never really aspired to become a “smart businesswoman”. Instead, drama was...
what I truly loved at heart. When I took up a low-wage administrative job in a theatre company upon graduation, I took many people by surprise.

I recounted this story when I pondered on the influences on my TIE practice because it showed that my drama career was driven by an urge to seek meaning in life. This motivation for seeking meaning caused me to adopt practices not just to fulfill my desire to perform, but also to search for broader meanings for the society. However, this idea was not so clear when I first started my career. It only took shape when I began to study drama education in the UK years later.

Studying drama education opened me up to realise the many possibilities that drama could offer to the society. Drama in the UK had a strong socialist imperative and it was modeled by how my teacher, David Davis, taught the programme. The social aspects of drama education were often stressed in our course works, like exploring how to approach characters in a play socially rather than using a psychological approach. Although it was years later when I began to make fuller sense of what I had learned, the notion of “drama as a social change agent” was planted in my mind at that time. It remained a strong influence in my drama practice and I saw that there was a larger social call in doing drama.

My Political Stance

When I was young I cared little for politics or social affairs. Every day at 6:30pm, when Dad switched the TV to watch the daily news, my siblings and I would disperse from the TV area where we had been enjoying our cartoon viewing. My political awakening came with the June Fourth Massacre in Tianmen Square, Beijing, in 1989. I once wrote in a book chapter (Chan, 2016) about my participation in the marches and
demonstrations in Hong Kong at that time, and how it subsequently made me a regular participant in social movements. Years later, when I started to develop my drama education practice, I was all the more concerned about exploring the socio-political role of drama. I found Oxfam’s TIE programmes relevant to my concerns.

I understand that social actions do not always substantiate in changing policies or the decisions of the authorities. Yet I still deem it important to take a stand, seeing it as a response to the call of social conscience. One time, upon returning home from a march, I posted a reply to my friend’s Facebook status when he doubted about the usefulness of such actions. This was my response:

More and more I refuse to use “usefulness” to look at the meaning of demonstrations. When faced with injustice, we have to voice out. This is what demonstrations mean to me. And what’s more important is that we know we don’t just go on marches, but we try to make changes in our everyday lives too. In your work as a journalist, in my work as a drama educator, and in other people’s positions in all walks of life, we all play a part in the joint efforts of planting seeds of change. The power comes from our persistence. (Facebook comment, 11 June 2012)

In this quote I articulated how I valued the process of social action more than the outcome, and how such a belief impacted on my work. In many drama programmes I run, I would construct dialogic processes to encourage young people to make reflections about the society and voice out their views. Such a belief had clearly influenced my approach to facilitating the two TIE works with Oxfam, as revealed in my dialogues with some of the other actors. For example, one of them shared his
observation on my practice and noted that I was always patient and provided lots of room for students to express their views:

You would ask questions and guide them into deep and authentic conversations. You let young people share their personal views, and helped them make sense of the meaning of what they were saying. Only after that would you begin to relate those views to the broader discourse about social development. (Patrick’s interview)

Hearing these comments, I explained to Patrick that I believed this was the way I should conduct the TIE works. One of the key aspects of global citizenship education was to foster young people’s willingness and capacity for making a difference. I believed that young people’s capacity and willingness for making changes would come as a result of gaining voice and agency through education.

My Understanding about Acting

I never attended any formal drama school classes in acting. My actor training was on-the-job in nature, as I performed with different theatre groups. I took part in many theatre productions that adopted physical theatre and experimental theatre styles, using devised theatre as an approach to creating plays. As such, I was quite used to devising and performing with a range of theatrical styles. This had brought about the very different styles of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*, which my devising teams selected to match the respective educational purposes of the works. For example, I created the character Everyman in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* which was highly stylised and clown-like to arouse audience reflections. On the other hand, I created the character Ah Yee in *Fifty Square Feet* and performed it in a highly naturalistic style to call
for the audience’s empathy.

One of the major influences on my acting practice came from a professional theatre company called Theatre du Pif. The company adopted a workshop-based devising approach to creating works orchestrating movement, text, music and visual images. Collaborating with the company during my formative years in the 1990s helped me understand more about what acting could be. To explain the influence, I documented in one of the interim texts my experience in a rehearsal session of our first production:

I was shown a classical painting of a woman seductively dressed in a red evening gown. The co-directors asked me to first copy the image by taking up the same posture, then to develop her walk and movements. Knowing that I could sing, they also asked me to sing a song in that character. A nostalgic Mandarin tune instinctively came to me. As I sang it, the image of a washed out veteran movie star emerged, as if she was in reminiscence of her long lost glory.

Work approaches like this inspired me about how one’s personal qualities could become a resource in acting. Rather than starting with a character “out there” to be embodied, I started with my own imagination, movement and singing skills to create a character that I owned. As such, very early on in my acting career I had developed a sense that the self and character were impossible to separate. Such an understanding influenced how I approached the characters in the two TIE works and how I facilitated learning processes in role.

Theatre du Pif’s people-centred approach to directing also had a big impact on me. I
was still a green actor at that time. The directors’ approach unleashed my potential and brought me huge satisfaction, assurance and ownership of the work. Such personal experiences affected the way I saw the relationship between self and character in theatre, and the two TIE works were no exception. In an interview, I shared this idea with a participant by explaining how I directed the less experienced actors in the two TIE works:

As a director I think it is really important to start from where the actors are. I don’t believe one should fit an actor into a character. People have different qualities. If I lock myself into a fixed interpretation and restrict the actors to follow my views, I will lose the chance to see the other fascinating possibilities that the actors could offer. That would bring the actors a lot of pressure too. Being an actor myself, I know how vulnerable an actor could be. There is no point focusing on what they could not do. I would rather start from what they can do, and develop the work from there onwards. (Sour Plum’s interview)

The acting experiences in my professional theatre practice also affected the way I created theatre. Most of my theatre works, including The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, were devised theatre. I believed that it was of paramount importance that the TIE actors took ownership of their work by selecting, researching and internalising materials through the devising process.

5.3.2 Summary

In this narrative, four types of influence emerged as having impact on my practice in
The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet. They are related to how I see the meaning of doing drama (personal influence), my participation in social movements and the worsening social climate in Hong Kong (socio-political influence), studying drama education in UK (artistic/educational influence), and my experience in professional theatre (artistic influence).

These past influences impacted on how I met the demands of a TIE actor in many ways. The social consciousness I developed as a result of seeking the meaning of doing drama, participating in social movements in light of Hong Kong’s political climate, and studying drama education in UK, contributed to my understanding of the social issues explored in the two TIE works and my readiness to handle them in my practice (subject matter). These past influences also supported me to formulate a view of education dedicated to helping young people gain agency (pedagogy), and with this view I developed a facilitating approach focusing on how to construct dialogic processes and reflective space for the youth (pedagogy, facilitation).

My artistic influences, mainly arising from my professional theatre experiences and also coming from my Masters studies, not only equipped me with the skills to perform characters in a play (acting) but also the ability to adopt non-naturalistic theatrical approaches and create characters by considering the broader social contexts (theatrical approach). These capacities were employed as I devised and performed in the two TIE works, which required me to manage a range of acting styles, and consider how to make use of various theatrical forms to achieve different purposes of the works (managing content, form & purpose). Furthermore, my professional theatre experiences equipped me with the knowledge and skills of devising theatre, and an understanding of how such an approach to making theatre would enhance the actors’
ownership of the works and understanding of the subject matter in the plays (devising).

Finally, my professional theatre experiences also brought me an understanding about how actors created characters by incorporating their own qualities (acting). These knowledge, skills and understandings were all applied to my practice in the two TIE works.

When I considered my past influences, I focused on the positive impacts my real life experiences had made on my response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam), the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE) and fiction (the plays and characters). My attitudes and beliefs about education and the society clearly contributed to my choice to work with Oxfam, since the goals and values in this setting fitted my ideologies. Meanwhile, my previous educational and artistic experiences also supported me to work in this setting. These experiences influenced my practice and understanding of devising, performing and facilitating within the medium of TIE. They also brought about an understanding related to how actors create characters by incorporating their own qualities.

5.4 Yuk-Ling

Yuk-Ling was a devising actor of both The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet. She started taking part in the TIE works in 2005 and was still part of the acting teams at the time this thesis was submitted. When new members joined the casts of the two TIE works, she also took up a trainer’s role for the others.

Yuk-Ling started participating in drama when she was a school student, taking part in drama performances of the church she attended. She studied theology after leaving
school and worked in the church, incorporating her interest in drama in her youth work
service. She also continued her hobby in drama by participating in different community
theatre projects, and came to realise the strong connection between theatre and the
community. Later on, she worked in a youth organisation, studied social work, and
became a registered social worker. All the while she continued to attend drama
workshops. She quit her job after a few years to become a freelance drama practitioner,
performing in theatre productions and facilitating drama in social-work related projects.
She underwent Playback Theatre training and was one of the earliest Playback Theatre
practitioners in Hong Kong who had received full systematic training. She was also in
the first cohort of graduates in the Master of Drama Education programme in Hong
Kong. While this research project was going on, she was doing a certificate in
Psychodrama.

I came to know Yuk-Ling when she enrolled in the Masters programme that I taught.
Later on when I was putting together the first TIE team for Oxfam, I was looking for
partners who had experience in acting, were knowledgeable about TIE and had a clear
sense of social issues. Yuk-Ling was one of the few people whom I knew to possess all
these qualities. The two of us began collaborating with Oxfam and were amongst the
earliest drama educators who were involved in Oxfam’s education programmes.
Yuk-Ling saw the TIE works as an opportunity to advance her drama education
practice. Furthermore, she had always had a keen concern about using drama to
respond to the society. Oxfam’s TIE was a good platform to develop her practice in
this respect. Besides the two TIE works, Yuk-Ling also designed and conducted other
drama programmes at Oxfam.
5.4.1 Past Influences

When Yuk-Ling referred to the past influences that had impacted on her practice in Oxfam’s TIE, she stressed that different experiences in the past worked holistically to make her the TIE actor today. There were no obvious turning points or particularly significant events, but as she walked along her path she collected a wide range of useful things. She described her journey this way:

It was like… I had been walking along this path… and I kept picking up many things. I didn’t know whether they would be useful or not, and I just put them in my bag. I wanted to take them out and use them, but I didn’t quite know how. So I just kept them in my bag. Then I walked and walked, and I picked up one thing after another… Then all of a sudden I found a place where I could take all these things out, and I started to put them in order…

Honouring the way Yuk-Ling told and understood her story, in the following I present her past influences in chronological order of the events that occurred in her life journey. These stories were related to her journey of becoming a drama educator and her acting experiences.

The Road to Becoming a Drama Educator

Yuk-Ling said that when she was young she mainly took drama as a hobby. Her commitment was more on church work. So she studied theology after leaving school and then worked in a church. The 1989 June Fourth Massacre in Beijing was a wake-up call to Yuk-Ling and she started to ask what she could do for the society. At that time,
she was working in a church situated in the same building where there were many
“one-woman brothels”\textsuperscript{11}. She noticed that her church people, being middle-class, would
never get in touch with those sex workers. She started to question, “We always say we
are helping people, but what help are we actually offering? How does our work relate to
the people around us?” She soon quit her job and went to work in another church
which focused more on community work. There she made use of her drama knowledge
to work with young people, staging plays about their expectations of the community,
and found drama a useful way of connecting people in the community.

Away from work, Yuk-Ling continued to participate in theatre projects. She joined two
of the pioneering community theatre projects in Hong Kong, which were a large scale
puppet show touring to different districts in Hong Kong, and “The 2nd People’s Theatre
Festival”. She also visited the world renowned community theatre, the Philippine
Education Theater Association (PETA). “These experiences showed me many
possibilities of theatre which were different from the theatre I used to know,” she said.
“The big puppet theatre amazed me with how a project could mobilise so many people
to talk about community issues. The People’s Theatre Festival opened my eye to theatre
practice in developing countries in response to the society. PETA impressed me with
how they combined the role of an artist with that of a social activist.” As a result of
these community theatre experiences, Yuk-Ling gained practical knowledge and skills in
interactive theatre and a larger vision about the social transformative power of theatre.

\textsuperscript{11} One-woman brothels (in Chinese, 一樓一鳳) are apartments in private buildings where one
woman receives customers. These women work alone because by Hong Kong law it is illegal
for two or more sex workers to work in the same premises.
Upon returning from the Philippines, Yuk-Ling started to look for a new job again as she wondered, “Is what I am doing in the church really meaningful?” She joined a Christian organisation to coordinate arts activities for young people. Professional dramatists were employed to teach drama workshops at this organisation, and Yuk-Ling observed that those workshops mainly focused on personal development, using theatre games to build confidence, communication and cooperation skills. Effective as those workshops were, Yuk-Ling soon realised that youth development was not merely concerned about individual growth but was largely influenced by social systems. She decided to take up a full-time degree in social work in order to enrich her understanding of how social systems impact on people’s lives.

It was clear in Yuk-Ling’s narrative that “Is what I am doing contributing to the society” was a question she kept asking as she switched from one job to another. Coming across drama practitioners with the different priorities also affirmed her own priority – she was more concerned about the impact of social structures over individual development. Such a priority was relevant to Oxfam’s TIE works that she later joined. Oxfam advocates that poverty is caused by structural causes rather than individual misfortune.

Upon graduation from social work and after a few years’ social worker practice, Yuk-Ling considered quitting her job again. She originally thought that the job of a social worker would give her many opportunities to use drama, but it turned out that her time and energy were mostly spent on administrative work. In order to get closer to drama, she became a freelance drama practitioner. “It was a bold decision,” she reflected, “for I had only experienced drama as a participant. I didn’t know how to facilitate drama!” Two experiences helped Yuk-Ling get through this stage of uncertainty. The first one was undergoing systematic training in Playback Theatre,
which had a clear structure for her to follow as a facilitator. The next one was studying in a Master of Drama Education programme, in which all her previous experiences were put in place. She said,

The two-year study helped me shape and reshape the road that I had always wanted to take. All my past experiences began to make sense… my social work background, my views towards the society, my drama endeavours… I realised that what I had always wanted to achieve, about drama as social intervention, was in line with the philosophy and practice I learned in the Masters programme… From this point onwards, I fully transformed from “a social worker who would use drama” into a drama educator.

Yuk-Ling’s experience of becoming a drama educator contributed to her practice in Oxfam’s TIE in a number of ways. In terms of skills and knowledge, she accumulated experiences related to different approaches to drama and many of those were participatory and interactive in nature. With her strong dedication to drama as social intervention and her social work background, she was ready to tackle the global citizenship education issues addressed in the TIE works.

*Experiences in Acting*

Yuk-Ling did not receive any formal training in acting. Instead, she gained different knowledge and skills through participating in drama workshops and performing in theatre productions. Yuk-Ling did not find any single experience bearing the strongest impact on her approach to acting, but she realised that the actor training she received in
her early days were not as important as that in Playback Theatre. In Playback Theatre, she found that who she really was had strong influence on how she took on a role. “As a Playbacker I had to embody other people’s stories spontaneously. I started to become more aware of my own feelings, state of being, and how my personal qualities influenced the way I played the others.” Yuk-Ling acknowledged that she had always found a clear relationship between her own self and the character she took on, even from an early age:

For me it is natural that my character contains me. I don’t know how this idea had come about, but since my school days I had already had such an idea. Some teachers of acting would tell me, “You have to empty yourself.” I was puzzled. There was a time when I thought this was what good acting should be about, but the fact is, I don’t think I have ever really emptied myself in playing any character. I used to wonder if this was a reflection of my lack of ability to become a good actor. But now, I tend to think that such an approach actually won’t work for me.

Such an understanding about acting influenced Yuk-Ling’s practice in Oxfam’s TIE. She was always sensitive about how her real self affected the way she played a character. “For example,” she said, “I noticed that when I was in role, the way I played the character was actually a reflection of how I felt about this person.” On the other hand, Yuk-Ling’s experience in doing the TIE works gave her the opportunity to examine her

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12 Playback Theatre, an interactive form of theatre, invites audience members to tell stories of their lives and a team of actors enact them on the spot. As different stories are told and shared, dialogue between different voices is promoted, and connection amongst the actors and audience members is created.
real life more deeply. She said, “When the issues involved are so close to life, as I leave the rehearsal room, I feel that I have become closer to the society.” While her real life experiences were having an impact on her TIE practice, the latter in turn impacted on her real life.

5.4.2 Summary

In this narrative, six types of influence emerged as having impact on Yuk-Ling’s practice in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*. They are related to her participation in church and school drama since she was young, and continuous participation in theatre performances when she grew up (artistic influence), her religious commitment (personal influence), her participation in social movements in Hong Kong (socio-political influence), her long journey of pursuing an ideal job that combines drama and her social concern (occupational influence), her social work study (educational influence), and her participation in community theatre, Playback Theatre as well as her Master studies in drama education (artistic/educational influences).

These past influences impacted on how Yuk-Ling met the demands of a TIE actor in different ways. Yuk-Ling’s early interest in drama, her religious commitment, and the encounter with a major social movement, motivated her to pursue a job which would combine her love for drama and her concern towards the society. In her years’ long pursuit of an ideal job, Yuk-Ling participated in a range of workshops, community theatre projects and theatre performances, underwent Playback Theatre training, and did a degree in social work and a Masters degree in drama education. These different experiences supported her practice in the two TIE works in many ways. She developed a clear concept about the transformative purpose of theatre (pedagogy), and a
readiness to understand the social issues explored in the TIE works (subject matter). One specific influence on this came from her social work studies which placed high concern about social systems over individual development. This idea was in line with Oxfam’s priority in global citizenship education and helped Yuk-Ling manage the social issues explored in the TIE works.

Yuk-Ling’s experiences in various forms of theatre equipped her with the practical knowledge and skills in acting (acting) and handling interactive theatre (facilitation). Her experiences in Playback Theatre and community theatre were particularly pertinent to this. Her Playback Theatre training also impacted on how she took on roles by embodying other people’s real stories (acting). Yuk-Ling also observed that she had a clear acknowledgement of the close relationship between self and character since her early experience in church and school drama, so that when she played a character she always understood that she was also presenting her views towards the character (acting).

According to Yuk-Ling’s narrative, her real life experiences made a number of impacts on her response to the requirement of the setting (Oxfam), the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE), and the fiction (the plays and characters). Her experiences in the two TIE works in turn impacted on her real life. Yuk-Ling’s past experiences and beliefs influenced why she worked at Oxfam since this setting enabled her to combine the two important aspects of her career – drama and concern about the society. Her previous experiences also supported her understanding of how drama would work within this setting, and equipped her with the required skills in handling the medium of TIE, especially in dealing with interactive theatre. Her past experiences also brought about an understanding that her personal views were incorporated in the fictional characters she acts. On the other hand, her experiences in the two TIE works in turn impacted on her
real life to make her see her reality differently and feel more closely connected to the society.

5.5 Wilson

Wilson was a devising actor of *Fifty Square Feet* who had been performing in the work since 2006. He also informally took up a trainer’s role for new members who joined our cast.

Wilson used to be a graphic designer and a product and toy designer before he did a degree in drama (majoring in acting). Upon graduation he became a freelance actor and drama tutor, and completed a Master of Drama Education programme. Wilson once worked in a primary school as a drama teacher, but he discovered that within the school system it was hard to practise meaningful and humanised education. He resigned to become a freelance drama practitioner again, taking up both acting in theatre and drama education practice.

Wilson joined Oxfam’s TIE team when Yuk-Ling and I were looking for a male actor for *Fifty Square Feet*. He was my Masters student at that time. Although he had the experience of doing school-touring performances, it was the first time that he participated in interactive TIE. He saw it as an opportunity to explore something new in his drama career. Furthermore, he regarded my invitation as an act of trust from someone he respected, his teacher, and he should take the opportunity to its full potential. Besides *Fifty Square Feet*, Wilson also facilitated other workshops at Oxfam.
5.5.1 Past Influences

In addressing the past influences that had impacted on Wilson’s TIE practice, his experience as a school student stood out as a significant one. In addition, he also shared how his experience as a formally trained actor influenced his understanding and approach to TIE acting.

The Low Academic Achiever Turned Educator

Wilson used to be a low-achiever at school, and such an experience influenced his educational belief when he became a TIE actor. He said in one of the interviews:

“In my upbringing, I had encountered many frustrations. I didn’t know how to study well. The teachers I met were unable to inspire me. I ended up taking a long and winding path to actualise myself… No one ever told me why I needed to study, say, science. My teachers didn’t explain to me that science is important because it is concerned about the greater good of the human kind, like building secure shelters for people. Most people only cared about academic results and finding good jobs. They never considered how we need to progress collectively in a society. I discovered that in my upbringing, no one had ever inspired me intellectually on these bigger questions.”

Such past experiences instilled in Wilson a firm belief that an educator carries great responsibilities. In the TIE work, he found himself particularly attentive to helping young people find the meaning of learning. “Maybe it was due to my background,” he said, “sometimes when I looked at the students, I could tell that they were unconfident.”
They were probably yet unaware of certain important things – like how I was like when I was young. If someone could point it out to them it might offer them a direction.” To be a responsible educator, Wilson also put high demands on himself in preparing for his teaching. In *Fifty Square Feet*, this involved the digestion of topics of poverty and social development. He admitted that he had to put in a lot of effort to understand those concepts, due to his underdeveloped academic ability at school and later in the actor training at the drama college.

Another significant experience Wilson referred to as impacting on his TIE practice was doing the Master of Drama Education programme. It brought him opportunities and confidence that he had never come across in the past:

My teachers in the past always told me that I was not competent. The education and examination systems kept telling me that I was incapable. Then when I studied acting in the drama college, the atmosphere was like… everyone tried hard to prove that they were good and that they knew a lot. The Masters programme stressed the opposite: you are here to learn because you don’t know! The programme offered an encouraging environment that made me unafraid of making mistakes.

Wilson regarded studying in the Masters programme as a big turning point in his life. It helped him review his past, reconstruct it, and develop educational beliefs important for his TIE practice.

*Differences between Acting in TIE and Other Theatre Works*

Wilson recalled that the approach to acting he learned in the drama college was rather
different from what he came across in Oxfam’s TIE works. In the drama college, more focus was put on the actor’s self. He noted:

We were quite self-centred. We approached the characters in a way that we could maximise our own achievement in a performance. I think this was in the nature of students in drama colleges. We were young and longed for the opportunity of standing on the stage and being applauded. Everybody was trying to uphold a certain kind of image. We would dress up and make ourselves look cool. Although we were told that an actor needed to explore one’s inner qualities, we were actually focusing on how other people saw us. Unlike our TIE works, we seldom approached a character by looking at the social context in which this person was situated. This would be regarded as the job of the director, who would analyse the script as a piece of literary work.

Wilson further elaborated on his experiences of working with directors in his professional theatre practice. “In the so-called ‘professional’ theatre scene,” he explained, “the directors seldom work with you to explore your character. Instead, they ask you to present them with different choices, and they shop amongst those choices. The role of the actor is to serve the director.” Wilson found that his actor training at the drama college and prior experience in professional theatre made him ill-equipped for Oxfam’s TIE works. Although he possessed the skills in acting characters, he found it a challenge in approaching his characters by considering the social themes explored. It took him years to come to terms with those demands.
5.5.2 Summary

In this narrative, three types of influence emerged as having impact on Wilson’s practice in *Fifty Square Feet*. They are related to his experience as a student at school and in the drama college (educational influence), his actor training in drama college and Masters study in drama education (artistic/educational influence), and his experience in professional theatre (artistic influence).

These past influences impacted on how Wilson met the demands of a TIE actor in a few ways. His experiences as a student in the past restricted his academic ability for understanding the social themes explored in *Fifty Square Feet* (subject matter). These experiences, however, helped him develop an educational belief about the responsibilities to his students which included an attitude about education, with a key concern to help young people make meaning (pedagogy). The Masters degree he took also positively supported this educational belief.

In terms of artistic influences, Wilson’s actor training background at the drama college equipped him with the acting skills he required for performing in the TIE work (acting). However, it did not prepare him to digest the social issues since his actor training lacked academic rigour (subject matter). Wilson’s previous experience in professional theatre was not particularly useful either, because he was seldom asked to analyse his characters by understanding the social context in which these characters were situated. He found it challenging when he was required to approach his characters socially in the TIE works (acting; managing content, form & purpose).

According to Wilson’s narrative, his real life experiences made a number of positive and
negative impacts on his response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam) and the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE). Due to his educational belief, he welcomed the opportunity to work with Oxfam. However, his previous educational experience hindered his ability to work in this setting, with his lack of ability to digest the social issues. Artistically, Wilson’s actor training equipped him with the acting skills he required for handling the medium of TIE, but his former artistic experiences hardly supported him in analysing characters socially. Wilson did not make any direct reference to how his real life experiences impacted on his response to the fictional play and characters.

5.6 Mary

Mary was an actor in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale from 2006 to 2011. In 2010 she also joined Fifty Square Feet as an understudy. At that time there was a need for cast size expansion, and a few Oxfam staff members, including Mary, Rita and Patrick took up the work as understudies for Fifty Square Feet. Mary left Oxfam in 2011 and stopped taking part in the TIE works.

Mary studied geography at university and then did a postgraduate diploma in education. Her first job was as a teacher in a primary school. She taught there for a few years and found that there were many unreasonable rules and practices within the education system. She quit her teaching job and worked as an editor for a textbook publisher, and later as a staff member of Oxfam’s education department. At Oxfam she was mainly responsible for leading workshops and researching school curriculum. While this research was going on, Mary also completed a Masters programme in development education.
Mary had a passion for performance since she was a child. She was a member of the drama club at school, and when she became a teacher she also led the school drama club. The TIE works were her first performances outside the scope of school productions. She had never received any formal training in acting but participated in different drama training initiatives at Oxfam as part of her job, including a short course on acting, a drama facilitator’s training course, as well as specific training on how to lead individual programmes.

Mary’s motivation for joining the TIE teams was a combination of the need of her job, her fondness of acting, and her good prior impression of the TIE works. She recalled her first encounter with The Other Side of the Fairy Tale before she joined the acting teams, and her response was, “Wow! I didn’t know drama can be like that!” She never expected one could watch a play at such a close distance, that the audience could participate in the work, and that theatre could provide the space for dialogue without having to give model answers. Regarding TIE as “something cool, fun, and a chance for her to learn something new”, she jumped at the invitation to become a member of the casts.

5.6.1 Past Influences

In addressing the past influences that had played a part in her TIE practice, Mary shared a few topics including those related to her family background, her previous job as a school teacher, her study in development education, as well as her previous drama experiences. These influences had impact on her educational belief and the way she approached the poor characters in the TIE works.
Mary used to be a school teacher but she admitted that she didn't aspire to become a teacher in the first place. That was the only job she could find upon graduation since the economy was at a downturn. Nevertheless, she enjoyed spending time with young children and developed good relationships with them. However, she soon tired of the school system. She recalled an experience to exemplify how she found her school, which only wanted to spoon-feed and mould its students:

It was in the beginning of the school term. The students had to prepare for their exercise books to be used for the rest of the year. The school made them put their names on each copy of the exercise books with rubber stamps. They were worried about the children's poor handwriting which would make it very inconvenient when the teachers were to hand back the exercise books to the students. I found it really awkward! Isn't writing one's own name a process of learning? If we never give children the chance to practise writing their names, how would their handwriting improve?

Experiences like this made Mary disappointed about the mainstream education system. She found the adults, teachers and parents alike, very mean to children. She also found some students unfriendly and difficult to teach, and the teachers had no time to do anything truly related to education. She became hateful and afraid of teaching, and quit her job subsequently. Reflecting on this experience years later, Mary found that what made her most disillusioned was that her job at the school contradicted her belief about education. “I believe education should be something beautiful and enjoyable,” she said. “Learning should be happy, but it gradually became clear to me that happiness would
not last in school settings.”

Mary also gradually developed a deeper understanding about her educational belief as a result of witnessing the TIE works at Oxfam (before she joined the acting teams) and doing a Masters programme on development education. The TIE works made her realise that learning is not about what the teacher gives the students, but what students get out of their experience. “I like the TIE works in the sense that they did not force the students to get a fixed message,” she commented. “Instead, they allowed ideas to flow. Isn’t it wonderful when students are motivated to learn naturally and enjoyably?” Then, in doing her Masters studies, Mary deeply reflected on important questions like how learning occurs, how people realise their own responsibilities and how people become willing to do something for the world. She noticed that it was not until then that she asked herself a fundamental question: “How did I learn?” Then she realised:

I never learned by listening to what people said. I think learning always happens when people say something that you disagree with, and when you question them. So if you try to preach, the learners may actually learn something opposite because they disagree with what you preach. Preaching is probably the least effective and most risky way of teaching!

Although she became more aware of her own educational belief, Mary sometimes still found a clash between such belief and other issue-based educational works at Oxfam. She said:

There were some Oxfam workshops that I didn’t enjoy very much. They tended to round up the participants’ experiences with some grand lessons
or big morals, and guided the participants to agree on certain values or
behaviours. I was rather uncomfortable about that. I think what matters is
not what the facilitators think the participants should do. What matters is
that the participants have discussed the issues and reflected on the
situation.

Holding such beliefs, when Mary conducted *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*, she would avoid leading students to give model answers or agree on
prescribed values or behaviours. She would rather let the students realise that it was
difficult to alleviate poverty than over-simplifying the situation. She did not want to
force the students to give moralistic promises like “Okay, we should help the poor.”
However, such practice was sometimes in contradiction with her role as a staff member
at Oxfam. The NGO, being a body of advocacy which saw the alleviation of poverty as
imminent, was sometimes too impatient and wished to see its workshop participants
making clear changes attitudinally and behaviourally. Mary sometimes felt that she was
captured in a dilemma.

*Portraying Poor Characters in Serious Plays*

Mary was brought up in a middle-class family so she found it challenging to play the
poor characters in the TIE works authentically. She found it hard to truly step into the
shoes of someone in poverty. For instance, she talked about how she played Ah Yee, a
young Hong Kong girl, in the initial stage of her TIE practice. She recalled that her
imagination about the character was mostly related to how an ordinary child would
behave rather than considering her poverty situation.

In the scene in which Ah Yee could no longer afford to learn playing the
violin, I made the facial expressions of a spoiled kid. I stamped on the floor to show that I was angry. My imagination of her was simply what an ordinary kid would do when she couldn’t get what she wanted from her parents. It was only after I had been reminded of the problem and observed how another actor played the scene that I realised I didn’t understand Ah Yee’s feelings, which was probably more of frustration than anger.

Mary’s approach to acting was also limited by her prior understanding of drama. “I had always thought that drama was fake and exaggerated,” she noted, “and to act a character one had to be very pretentious.” Also, Mary had always preferred hilarious drama to serious plays. She used to write plays for her drama club at school, and she always chose to write funny stories, parodies or romantic fantasies. As such, she found it a big challenge to play the serious characters in the TIE works.

It wasn’t such a big problem in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale since some of the characters were a bit cartoonish anyway. I am a bit of an exaggerated person so it wasn’t particularly difficult. The biggest challenge came with playing Ah Yee. I portrayed the character with a lot of stereotypes. Then I looked at the video recording and found myself looking like an idiot! Gosh! Those facial expressions and body gestures!

In order to overcome these hurdles, Mary spent time researching her characters by observing and interviewing real people in poverty. She found that it would only do justice to her characters, who are real people in life, if she performed them with sincerity and authenticity. During her research, Mary also interviewed her boyfriend,
who used to live in poverty when he was a child. The experience did not only help Mary understand poor people's life more deeply to support her acting, but also deepened her understanding of a significant other. She said, “We had been in relationship for over 10 years, but it was the first time when I really tried to ask about those experiences. Isn’t it ironic? Although as NGO workers we keep saying we should not label the poor, when it comes to really asking someone about their hardships, it is very embarrassing!” As a result of the need to play Ah Yee, Mary broke through the barrier and for the first time opened her eyes to see her companion more deeply. As such, she reflected, “The most powerful thing about doing Fifty Square Feet was its education on myself.”

5.6.2 Summary

In this narrative, four types of influence emerged as having impact on Mary's practice in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet. They were related to her previous job as school teacher and current job as an NGO worker (occupational influence), her previous study in development education (educational influence), her participation in school drama and the prior understanding of drama as fake and exaggerated (artistic influence), and her personality and middle-class family background (personal influence).

These past influences impacted on how Mary met the demands of being a TIE actor in a number of different ways. Her occupational, educational and artistic influences were cited as more significant, while personal influences were briefly mentioned. Mary's previous job as a school teacher made her criticise the counter-educational practices within the school system, but studying development education and observing Oxfam's TIE works positively influenced her in formulating an educational belief pertinent to her TIE practice (pedagogy). This belief valued experiential learning processes and the
provision of the space for reflections and questions. However, such a belief was in friction with her occupation, since her NGO was prone to giving fixed messages and imposing prescribed values or behaviours.

Mary’s role as an NGO worker also impacted on how she played her characters, who were poor people in the society (acting). She deemed it important to portray the characters in the TIE works authentically, but her previous artistic influence made the task difficult. Used to doing light-hearted drama and holding the previous impression of drama as being fake and exaggerated, her previous drama experiences were not useful for her to play her characters naturalistically. The difficulty was also brought about by her cheerful personality and her middle-class background.

According to Mary’s narrative, her real life experiences made a number of positive and negative impacts on her response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam), the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE) and the fiction (the plays and characters). In turn, her experience in the fiction impacted on her response to the medium of TIE as well as her real life. Mary’s previous experiences contributed to an educational belief which was suitable to the medium of TIE but contradictory with the priorities in the Oxfam setting. Her job as an NGO worker made her conscientious about playing her characters authentically, but she lacked the personal background and artistic skills to support this task as she managed the medium. Her job also influenced how she responded to the character she played within the fictional play. She felt obliged to play her character sincerely and authentically, since the character was a real person in the society. As a result of performing the character, Mary changed her attitudes towards naturalistic theatre and saw it now as a meaningful acting approach to adopt in the medium of TIE. Also, by researching and performing in the TIE work, Mary’s real life
was in turn impacted as she deepened her understanding of her boyfriend who used to be someone living in poverty.

5.7 Sour Plum

Sour Plum had been an actor in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* since 2006. A graduate in sociology, she taught part-time in tertiary institutes in associate degree/pre-associate degree programmes. She refused to take up full-time teaching positions because she enjoyed a freer lifestyle in which she could do other enjoyable things like practising the arts.

Sour Plum had participated in community theatre workshops and performances before Oxfam invited her to join the TIE team. She welcomed the idea, seeing it as an exciting, interesting new endeavour because she had only taken part in issue-based theatre as a participant but had never facilitated one.

5.7.1 Past Influences

When asked what past influences had the strongest impact on her practice as a TIE actor, Sour Plum named her lifestyle as the biggest influence. With that she referred to the choice of remaining a part-time worker and leading a more relaxed life. She deemed it important for actors to lead a less busy life. When she conducted the TIE work, she needed the space for relaxing herself before the programme started. “I needed some quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of life,” she said. “When I was in a more relaxed state, I would be able to receive the audience’s response better.” The high regard she gave to being stress-free and easy-going was consistently reflected in Sour
Plum’s narrative.

Sour Plum never participated in any drama activities until after graduation from the university, and she did not choose to do so intentionally in the first place. Her friend wanted to join in a community theatre workshop and asked Sour Plum to accompany her. She did, and found it so enjoyable that she continued participating in many other workshops and theatre projects. Those workshops were of various types, including creative arts, movement and dance, Theatre of the Oppressed, art therapy, site-specific theatre, and a community theatre performance with Asian migrant workers. Sour Plum said that she loved the feeling of engaging in those artistic experiences and was doing them mainly for personal enjoyment. She understood that those arts activities were aimed at community development. Although this was not her goal for joining those activities, she commented:

I think they were after all better than those theoretical workshops at the universities which talked about social injustice. These artistic methods were different from those that stressed, “We must write articles about these issues!” or “We must take to the street!” They were softer and I enjoyed the space and freedom as a participant.

Treasuring freedom and space for drama participants, when Sour Plum conducted The Other Side of the Fairy Tale, she paid specific attention to providing the space for the students to engage in the experience and make reflections. She shared the view that when she first conducted the work, she was more concerned about clarifying concepts and verifying knowledge. Being a lecturer in sociology, she was well equipped with the necessary knowledge to lead a discussion about poverty issues. However, as years went
by, she found that she preferred a more easy-going approach and would stress those theories less. She explained:

I came to realise that it was not the best way of engaging the students, especially the more quiet ones. Then I invited the students to share something related to their daily lives. For example, instead of talking about how globalisation had brought about changes in mass production and thus the life of child labourers, I would ask the students to talk about their habits as consumers of goods. Then those who had been quiet began to share a lot of ideas.

Sour Plum said that she highly values autonomy. Hence in her TIE practice, she deemed it important to provide freedom and autonomy for the students.

5.7.2 Summary

In this narrative, three types of influence emerged as having impact on Sour Plum’s practices in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. They are related to her relaxed lifestyle (personal influence), her participation in community theatre workshops and projects (artistic/educational influence), and her previous study in sociology (educational influence).

These past influences impacted on how Sour Plum met the demands of a TIE actor in a few ways. Sour Plum regarded her relaxed lifestyle as the most pertinent influence on her practice. This personal lifestyle caused her to prioritise the provision of freedom, autonomy and space for student engagement and reflections (pedagogy). As an actor,
she also valued the place of a relaxed state as it would allow her to receive the audience’s response more sensitively (acting, facilitating). In terms of educational influence, Sour Plum’s background in sociology equipped her with the knowledge about social issues (subject matter), though she did not over-stress it in her practice since she preferred a more open and relaxed approach to engaging students (pedagogy). Her participation in community theatre programmes made her value freedom and space and she tried to bring similar experiences to her participants in the TIE work (pedagogy).

According to this narrative, Sour Plum focused on the positive impacts her real life experiences had on her response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam) and the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE). Her past experiences equipped her with the necessary knowledge on social issues which were pertinent to this setting. They also influence her teaching style, which was in consonance with the pedagogical approach required in this setting. In terms of her management of the medium of TIE, Sour Plum’s real life experiences made her adopt performance and facilitating approaches that stressed the actor’s relaxed state. Sour Plum did not make any direct reference to how her past experiences impacted on her response to the fictional play and characters.

5.8 Joy

Joy was an actor in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale from 2007 to 2015. She majored in physical education and minored in sociology at university. Upon graduation, she became a school teacher. Having a strong passion for drama ever since she was young, she had been a key member of the drama club at school and in university. After graduation she also continued performing in semi-professional theatre groups. She did
a Master of Drama Education programme while she was teaching at school. After she finished the programme she wanted to further her practice in drama so she resigned from her teaching job to become a freelance drama educator.

Joy was invited into the cast of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* by a former member of the team, who was leaving Hong Kong for overseas study and needed a replacement. Joy welcomed the invitation since she had only learned about TIE at that time but had never practised it. She saw the opportunity as one to expand her repertoire in drama education practice. Besides *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*, Joy also designed and facilitated another drama workshop for Oxfam.

5.8.1 Past Influences

When asked about the past influences that had played a part in her practice in TIE, Joy talked about how her educational background, her background as a school teacher, school student and a sports player influenced her style of teaching. Joy reflected that she was very aware that her teaching style was one of “first discipline, then teach”. She deemed it important to first keep the class in order before they could concentrate, listen and learn. She said that such a teaching style was influenced by her background as a student. Since she was a child she had always been involved in a disciplined learning environment. She played sports at school, and in sports teams discipline was vital. Then she became a school teacher. In her teaching position, she also coached the sports teams and served as a guidance and discipline teacher, which both required her to be very strict with her students. “The disciplining style has kind of become a habit,” Joy said, “and something that flows in my blood.”
Joy was aware that such a teaching style might be at odds with the dialogic approach to education required in Oxfam’s TIE works. She said, “Conceptually I understand this is not the best way to foster dialogue on social issues, but sometimes I could not control myself. Then the students found me too fierce and dialogue did not happen. My teaching was then weakened.” To compensate for that, Joy practiced positive reinforcement so that the students would understand why she was being strict on certain behaviours.

When I was a school teacher, I would simply scold the students and ask them to keep quiet. I’ve quit this addiction now. (laughed) I would try to explain to the students, “When it is too noisy, we won’t be able to listen to each other, right? Could you try to keep your voice down?” I would reason with them.

Joy also recounted other incidents when she found her background as a school teacher influencing her response to students’ views about social issues. For example, a TIE participant once said something very negative. On the one hand Joy wanted to correct the participant’s view but on the other, the pedagogical approach to TIE forbade her from doing so.

I cannot recall what the exact content was now. But I found her views problematic and a bit extreme. I kept focusing on her and tried different ways to guide her to think differently but in vain. Honestly, I was a bit cross but it was inappropriate to criticise her directly because I knew I should value different perspectives in global citizenship education. Also, time for discussion was running out. If I kept focusing on her, the other students
would lose their chance to express their ideas.

Incidents like this made Joy understand her background as a school teacher played a significant role in her pedagogical approach. She further remarked that when she was tired, she would be guided by her instinct more easily and would become stricter.

Handling the performance aspect of the TIE work was relatively more straightforward to Joy. She had ample experience in performance since her school days and had acquired a range of skills to help her prepare and perform her characters. Also, she commented that her previous drama experiences, especially those at school, were more focused on meaning making than showmanship. Furthermore, she had been keen on reading newspapers since she was young, and she studied sociology at the university. As such, approaching issue-based theatre was not particularly difficult for her. However, since her previous experiences were mostly related to naturalistic plays, she found the stylised characters in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* more challenging to play.

5.8.2 Summary

In this narrative, four types of influence emerged as having impact on Joy’s practice in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. They are related to her previous job as a school teacher (occupational influence), her participation in school/university drama clubs and semi-professional theatre (artistic influence), her experience as a school student and her previous study in sociology (educational influence), and her experience as sports player and coach, as well as her interest in current affairs (personal influences).

These past influences impacted on how Joy met the demands of a TIE actor in a few
ways. She deemed her previous occupation as a school teacher as the biggest influence on her practice. Together with her previous experience as school student, as a sports player and coach, this occupational influence firmly rooted in her a priority for disciplining students (pedagogy). Being a teacher in the past also brought about a tendency to correct inappropriate answers. As such, Joy encountered a lot of tensions when these tendencies clashed with the pedagogical assumptions of global citizenship education. Since she was young, Joy had been keen on understanding current affairs, and she studied sociology at university. In addition, the school drama performances she took part in when she was young were focused on meaning making rather than display of skills. As such, Joy was ready to approach issue-based theatre like Oxfam’s TIE works (subject matter). Her participation in school drama productions, and later in university drama clubs and amateur theatre groups, provided her with the necessary theatre skills to perform in the TIE work (acting). However, since her previous theatre experiences were mostly focused on naturalistic acting styles, she had difficulty in handling the stylised characters in the TIE work (acting, theatrical approach).

According to Joy’s narrative, her real life experiences made a few impacts on her response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam) and the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE). Her previous experiences developed her strong pedagogical habits and beliefs that were in contradiction with Oxfam’s global citizenship education. However, she was ready to understand the social themes which were pertinent to working in this setting. Meanwhile, her previous artistic experiences equipped her with the necessary theatre skills in managing the medium of TIE, apart from the lack of non-naturalistic acting styles. Joy did not make any direct reference to how her real life experiences impacted on her response to the fictional play and characters.
5.9 Nancy

Nancy took part in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* for two years, from 2010 to 2012. A graduate from a drama college, majoring in acting, she had worked for various professional theatre companies as a full time actor for over ten years. Although these companies presented school touring performances, she did not often participate in those performances. Her last full-time job, before she became a freelance drama practitioner, was as an actor in an established theatre company. She decided to discontinue her contract because she was “feeling suffocated with the job” to such an extent that she was losing confidence in acting. She resigned and went to France to study with Phillip Gaulier and it was during that time that she regained confidence in herself. She returned to Hong Kong and got a job as a part-time drama teacher in a primary school. At the same time, she did a Master of Drama Education programme. After a few years, she quit her job to become a freelance practitioner again.

Nancy was invited by Yuk-Ling to join *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. Although Nancy had rich experience in performance, she had never done TIE. She joined the team because she wanted to know what it was.

5.9.1 Past Influences

Talking about the past influences on her TIE practice, Nancy reflected on how her personal background and actor training experience brought about challenges in tackling the social issues in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. In terms of her understanding about global citizenship issues, she described herself as “totally ignorant”.

I always found myself lacking in the understanding of the society. I found
those social issues very difficult to digest. In the past I only focused on how to be an actor. There were many important questions that I never asked. As I started studying in the Master of Drama Education programme, I realised that there were a lot of things that I had to learn.

The lack of understanding about social issues made it very hard for Nancy to conduct the post-performance workshops in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. She was following the steps in the workshop design without a clear understanding of the purpose.

I think you have to have a knowledge framework to support you. You need to be clear about what you would like the students to get. However I didn’t really have a clear concept. I just kept asking them questions without a clear purpose. Well, the students still enjoyed the activities, but that was all that I could achieve.

Nancy’s previous drama practice did not help her gain deeper perspectives about the society. She shared the view that some theatre practitioners were more adept at approaching a play as literary text, and would interpret a script with multiple layers of perspectives. She was not strong at that. Her strength lay in being sensitive to feelings and emotions. “It was the same whether I was performing in a play or teaching a drama class,” she said. “For example, when I am teaching an acting class, I would be quick to sense that a student lacked confidence. I in my drama practice, I focused mainly on personal development and did not care much for social issues.”

Recalling her learning experience as a drama student in the college, Nancy commented that the training was mostly related to practical skills and focused little on students’
academic or intellectual capacities. She criticised most of her teachers at the college as narrow-minded, and the learning atmosphere as highly competitive. “The teachers only knew how to teach the students to look special,” she said. “The smarter students became insufferably arrogant, and the less remarkable ones were looked down upon and even boycotted, not just by their fellow classmates but also the teachers! They did not respect the different learning pace of different students.”

Nancy found the same sort of arrogance in the professional theatre companies she worked with. “I think many of the directors I met were merely concerned about fame and status,” she said. “Maybe being in the professional scene that was the game one had to play. However, I wondered how inspiring your work could be if all you cared about was making yourself famous.” Nancy deemed it important that creators of plays had something to say. For her, what would truly “burn in her heart” were human stories with deep feelings and emotions. As such, she found it hard to commit herself to The Other Side of the Fairy Tale because the social themes barely moved her.

Nancy found that her previous learning experiences hardly provided her with any good modelling in teaching. She only began to get a better idea about teaching and learning rather late in her life, when she started studying drama education. She commented that during her two-year practice in Oxfam’s TIE work, she was still in a process of exploring the work and trying to make sense of its educational approach.

5.9.2 Summary

In this narrative, four types of influence emerged as having impact on Nancy’s practice in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale. They are related to her lack of social knowledge, and
her sensitivity towards feelings and emotions (personal influences), her experience as a student in drama college (educational influence), her actor training in drama college and her Masters study in drama education (artistic/educational influences), and her criticism of professional theatre (artistic influence).

These past influences impacted on how Nancy met the demands of a TIE actor in a number of ways. On a personal level, Nancy found herself lacking in social knowledge, and it brought her difficulty in digesting the social themes (subject matter) and finding the purpose of the activities she led (facilitation). Such a personal influence also made her prioritise personal development over global citizenship education (pedagogy). Another personal influence on her practice was her sensitivity towards feelings and emotions. This, together with her negative experiences in professional theatre, affirmed her belief that meaningful theatre should be moving. As such, she found it hard to commit herself to a social play like *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* (subject matter).

Nancy’s previous training in the drama college provided her with practical skills in performing in the plays (acting), but hardly developed her intellectual capacity for understanding the social issues (subject matter). Also, the drama college provided a poor teaching model, which Nancy saw as a cautionary tale. She began to reflect more deeply on the meaning of education especially when she began studying a Masters degree in drama education. With these experiences Nancy tried to explore and make sense of the educational approach adopted in Oxfam’s TIE works (pedagogy). She gave no specific examples on how she did it.

According to Nancy’s narrative, her real life experiences made quite a lot of negative impacts on her response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam) and the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE). Nancy’s lack of social knowledge, her artistic preference
and previous theatre experience made it hard for her to commit both to the setting and the medium. These experiences also brought her difficulty in managing the medium of TIE which required the actor to have good knowledge about the social issues. Nancy’s negative educational experiences in the past and the inspirations she got from doing her Masters studies stimulated her to reflect on the meaning of education, which would be contributive to her response both to the Oxfam setting and to the medium of issue-based, interactive TIE. However, she was still on a journey of searching for this meaning when she was performing and facilitating *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. The only positive impact of Nancy’s past experiences emerging in this narrative was her previous actor training which equipped her with the practical skills in performing in a play. Nancy did not make any direct reference to how her real life experiences impacted on her response to the fictional play and characters.

### 5.10 Rita

Rita joined *Fifty Square Feet* as an understudy in 2010. She left Oxfam in 2012 and stopped taking part in the TIE work.

Rita studied geography as a major and communications as a minor at university. She had worked as an editor for a children’s magazine before joining the education department in Oxfam, where she was responsible for facilitating IEC workshops and researching the school curriculum.

Rita had no previous drama experience apart from some short drama performances in her school days. *Fifty Square Feet* was her first drama performance outside school. She had not received any formal drama training. Her only related training was Oxfam’s
training initiatives, including a short course on acting, a drama facilitator’s training course, as well as specific training on how to lead individual programmes.

Rita described her motivation for joining the TIE work as “taking petty advantage” of the chance to learn something new. She held a good impression about the TIE work before joining the acting team, amazed with its success in arousing empathy and engaging students’ discussions on social issues. Interested in knowing how these processes worked, she joined the TIE team to get first-hand understanding of the medium.

5.10.1 Past Influences

The stories Rita shared regarding past influences on her TIE practice were not as rich as those related to her TIE practice (which are presented in the next chapter). Also, the stories she shared were sometimes lying between her embodied experience as a TIE actor and her observation of the works as an outsider. She explained that since she was an understudy, she only conducted the work rarely and did not have much first-hand experience. Also, she regarded herself a novice in TIE so very often she was observing how the other actors conducted the work rather than being inside the experience. The stories Rita shared in relation to her past influences centred on her educational belief, the role as an NGO worker and the lack of prior training in acting.

The Non-verbal Aspects of TIE Acting

As shared in the above section, Rita’s motivation for joining the TIE teams was more out of curiosity about understanding the form. One thing she specifically noted about TIE was the experiential mode of learning. It was in contrast to the way she used to
learn and teach. Brought up in the conventional educational system, she was accustomed to a mode of education where “language prevails over everything”, but she found it limiting. She observed that students with good language ability always succeeded while the less articulate ones were always left behind. TIE demonstrated to her a rather different mode of learning. She observed:

For example, you asked them to explore the set in the pre-performance workshop by taking up gestures and movements. What the students did was indeed trivial and seemingly meaningless, but it provided everyone with a way into the TIE. It was a friendly invitation. They found that they were able to engage in the work without having to express themselves verbally.

This mode of teaching contrasted with what Rita used to understand about education. “It gave me a new angle to look at education, which was sensory in nature,” she said. She also found the theatrical elements in TIE powerful in providing vivid images that would stay in the audience’s mind. As such, she deemed it important to provide visual and sensory details when she played her character. However, the experience was quite challenging.

I had to consider many details in order to play Ah Yee. For example, what was happening to her before she entered a particular scene? What was her state of being? It was not easy for me to imagine those details. I didn’t know if adding those details would really make any difference in the audience’s eyes, but at least it would help me believe in my character.

Rita was concerned about playing her character with belief and authenticity. As an
NGO worker, Rita posed such a specific demand on herself. She recalled a time when she paid a visit to a low-income family in her job. “After the visit, I reminded myself that I had to play my character seriously,” she said. “What happened in the play was happening to real people out there every day!”

Playing a character seriously, however, was not an easy task for Rita. Her previous acting experiences at school were usually frivolous. “We often broke out from the play and laughed, and the audience would not mind,” she recalled. “But it was different in Fifty Square Feet. You want to tell a story about the poor people’s difficulty. The purpose was much more serious.” She found that the lack of actor training, together with the lack of practice since she was an understudy, had a large impact on her practice. “I could not fully engage in the work,” she reckoned. “Most of the time I was trying to stay focused, and to memorise my lines and blocking. I was left with very little room for doing anything further.” As such, Rita usually did not take an active part in the more challenging in-role interactive components in Fifty Square Feet. She would leave it to her teammates to take the lead.

**Discussing Social Issues**

Compared with acting her character and interacting with the audience in role, holding discussions with the students was a lot easier for Rita. Her background as an NGO worker had equipped her with the necessary knowledge on the topics. However, she sometimes found it hard to juggle between giving voice to students and sharing Oxfam’s agenda.

Sometimes, the views the students presented had not yet arrived at the level of addressing the structural causes of poverty. They would look at poverty
as individual's problems, but what I would really like them to consider was
the structural causes. For example, what was the situation in the job market
in Hong Kong that had led to poor people's problems?

Rita had not been able to find a way into tackling this problem due to the limited
opportunities she had in conducting the TIE work. However, she was assured that this
could possibly be achieved since she had witnessed how it occurred. Referring to me as
a major influence on her TIE practice, she remarked:

People always say as a facilitator you should create learning processes rather
than impose your ideas. To me that was easier said than done. But you
modeled to me that this was possible. Somehow you always managed to
lead the students into deep reflections on the issues. There was a time
when I thought that it was probably a matter of personality match. Maybe
only some groups of students would find it easier to work with you. But no,
you seemed to succeed every time.

By observing me facilitate the TIE works, Rita realised that it was my respectful
attitude towards the students that made a difference. She said that she realised genuine
listening and acceptance of participants' views was a way into deeper dialogues. She
regarded it particularly important for students nowadays as they usually lack the
opportunity to be heard. Open, genuine listening and acceptance became something
that Rita continued to explore in facilitating the TIE work and other Oxfam
workshops.
5.10.2 Summary

In this narrative, four types of influence emerged as having impact on Rita’s practice in *Fifty Square Feet*. These influences are related to her occupation as an NGO worker (occupational influence), her experience in mainstream education (educational influence), her experience in Oxfam’s staff training initiatives in drama education (artistic/educational influence), and her lack of actor training and serious experience in drama (artistic influence).

These past influences impacted on how Rita met the demands of a TIE actor in a number of different ways. Her occupation as an NGO worker was associated with responsibilities that caused her to take the TIE work seriously, making her particularly concerned about playing her character authentically since the character was a real person in the society. Moreover, with an educational background which stressed the power of language, Rita found the sensory nature of TIE appealing and it further reinforced her motivation to play her character in detail and authentically. However, her limited artistic background was a hindrance. Rita felt that she did not have sufficient actor training or serious drama experiences in the past to support authentic acting (acting). The difficulty she encountered in performance consumed most of her energy. This, together with the fact that she did not have many opportunities to practise the work since she was an understudy, brought Rita challenges in handling in-role facilitation (facilitation). She found out of role facilitation much easier to handle.

As a staff member at Oxfam, Rita was well-equipped with the knowledge to facilitate discussions on the social issues (subject matter). However, her role at Oxfam made her prioritise students’ understanding of the structural causes of poverty, and she found it
difficult to give students much freedom of expression because it would become hard to focus on the structural causes (pedagogy). The drama education training she received at Oxfam, however, modeled that a facilitation style prioritising genuine listening and acceptance was beneficial to young people’s learning. Although Rita was yet unable to find a way into adopting this facilitation approach, she continued to explore it in her TIE work (facilitation) during the time she was involved in the acting team.

According to Rita’s narrative, her real life experiences brought into her practice a lot of tensions when she responded to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam), the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE) and the fiction (the plays and characters). Her occupational background clearly supported her understanding of the setting and the social knowledge she required to work in this setting. However, pedagogical tensions arose in this setting when the priority she placed on global citizenship education restricted her from giving students the space for expression. In managing the medium of TIE, Rita encountered many challenges too. Fundamentally, she was appreciative of TIE as an alternative way of education from the language-bound education modes she was used to. However, besides the above difficulty related to the juggle between providing space for expression and focusing the discussion, she also found it challenging to play her characters authentically due to her limited artistic skills. Rita’s job as an NGO worker also influenced how she responded to the character she played within the fictional play. She felt obliged to play her character seriously and authentically, since the character was a real person in the society, and she encountered ethical dilemmas as a result.
5.11 Patrick

Patrick joined *Fifty Square Feet* as an understudy in 2010. He left Oxfam in 2013 and stopped taking part in the TIE work.

Patrick worked in the educational department of Oxfam, and it was his first job upon graduation from the university. At Oxfam, he was responsible for coordinating applications for IEC programmes, leading some of the IEC workshops, managing the venue, as well as serving as a stage manager for some of the TIE sessions. His first degree was in public administration and he had never had any drama experience before. All his drama training had come from Oxfam, including a short course on acting, a drama facilitator’s training course, as well as specific training on how to lead individual programmes.

*Fifty Square Feet* was the first TIE work Patrick participated in, and the first time ever that he performed in a theatre production. He joined the team mainly to meet Oxfam’s needs.

5.11.1 Past Influences

Regarding the past influences on his TIE practice, Patrick referred mostly to his studies in public administration at university, which placed stress on how social policies impact on people’s lives. Although he had always been interested in political issues since his school days, it was not until he studied at the university that he began to deeply reflect on those issues. Patrick’s university days were also met with a few significant social movements in Hong Kong, like a large scale march in 2003 opposing the legislation of Basic Law Article 23 in the fight for freedom of speech. The uprising role of the civil
society at that time, together with his studies, made him seriously look into the ideologies underlying democratic and social development. Patrick told me that such a background influenced how he conducted his TIE work, as he was more inclined to discussing poverty issues on the level of social policies. For example, in the group discussions in Fifty Square Feet, he would guide the students to look at the impact of social policies on the character he played, by asking questions like “Do the government’s labour policies help this person develop himself?” “Besides giving out monetary assistance to the poor, does our government provide sufficient security and protection to low-waged workers like him?” He rendered it important that the students understand how government policies affected the lives of the working poor and brought about inequality in social development.

Studying public administration also made Patrick place high value on academic discourse and theory models. He opined that actors in issue-based TIE works must be able to understand different social development discourses and develop their own perspectives on various theory models. He deemed it desirable for himself to identify what ideologies the TIE participants held, so that he could guide the direction of discussion according to this understanding. He said:

I hope I could make a quick assessment of the students’ beliefs and assumptions through our initial conversations, and then categorise their ideas according to different ideologies. I know this might sound rudimentary, but it would help me trace their thoughts and then formulate the direction of the discussion. Say, if I heard from a student ideas suggesting that s/he believed in capitalism, the discussion might need to focus on issues around Neoliberalism or the government’s positive
non-interventionism. This was what I wished to do, but I must say I had
not yet handled it very well.

The stress on the importance of social policies, however, was sometimes a hindrance to
Patrick’s TIE practice, especially when he worked in role. In one of the
post-performance activities in *Fifty Square Feet*, he went into role as a social worker to
discuss with the students what changes were needed to improve poor people’s living.
He recounted the experience as a difficult one as he could hardly take the students’
discussions to the level of those related to social policies.

Once I adopted a social worker’s position, it became very hard to jump out
from this position to consider the broader social policies. The discussions
would become restricted to this particular social worker’s perceptions and
what he could do within his means. He could only provide support to the
poor within the constraints of existing policies related to his field. I found
it hard to stimulate students to think beyond that and consider a more
all-rounded perspective.

The above reflections revealed that for Patrick, it was difficult to embody larger social
themes within one specific character. As a result, he wondered how much an actor
could carry his/her own thoughts when facilitating learning in role. He regarded
himself not experienced enough to handle the balance well, and thus would follow up
the in-role work with out-of-role discussion to compensate for that.

Patrick had not done any acting before *Fifty Square Feet*, nor had he been particularly
keen on performance. So there were not many past influences on acting that he could
draw upon. His only drama training had come from Oxfam’s staff training initiatives.

Patrick’s most significant reward was not acting skills but the realisation of the value of empathy. “Having embodied a poor person, I found it easier to understand his experiences and psychological state,” he commented. “Then it became easier for me to examine social issues in a more humanistic angle.”

5.11.2 Summary

In this narrative, three types of influence emerged as having impact on Patrick’s practice in Fifty Square Feet. They are related to his previous study in public administration (educational influence), his participation in Oxfam’s drama training initiatives (artistic/educational influence), and his participation in social movements (socio-political influence).

These past influences impacted on how Patrick met the demands of a TIE actor in a few ways, with his studies in public administration being regarded by Patrick as the most pertinent. Not only did it equip him with the knowledge to handle the social issues, but it helped him develop a priority in discussing social issues, which placed strong emphasis on how social policies cause poverty (subject matter). However, such a priority sometimes posed challenges on him when he was required to facilitate discussions in role (facilitation). Patrick’s educational background, as well as his participation in social movements, resulted in his strong interest in understanding social ideologies. It contributed to his specific way of assessing students’ needs, by trying to understand young people’s social ideologies when he facilitated the work (facilitation). Taking part in Oxfam’s drama education training helped him understand social issues more empathically and humanly (subject matter), but Patrick did not give specific
examples in this biographical narrative on how it influenced the way he facilitated or performed in the TIE work.

According to Patrick’s narrative, his real life experiences made mostly positive and some negative impacts on his response to the requirements of the setting (Oxfam) and the medium (issue-based, interactive TIE). With his past experiences, Patrick formulated a specific approach to global citizenship education which was in line with the values at Oxfam (setting). Such an approach was also employed in managing the medium of TIE, but challenges arose when he was facilitating in role. Patrick did not make any direct reference to how his past influences impacted on his response to the fictional play and characters.

5.12 Overall Summary of Influences and Impacts

These nine biographical accounts highlight the various past influences that emerged from the participants’ narratives, and also help to reveal how these influences impacted on practice in two issue-based, interactive TIE works held in Oxfam. These individual experiences are by no means generalisable to other contexts, but the plurality of experiences shared by practitioners of diverse background may possibly inform a broader understanding of the TIE actor’s practice. In this section, a summary of the various influences and impacts is consolidated to support such an exploration.

Six types of influence were discussed in the narratives, with educational, artistic, and artistic/educational influences standing out as the most frequently cited, while occupational, personal and socio-political influences were also recounted. The summary findings below are grouped according to these six types of influence. However, in
arranging the material in this way, it should nevertheless be noted that the influences are interdependent in the way they act upon each individual.

**Educational Influences**

Nearly all participants noted different educational influences on their TIE practice. These educational influences were related to their past learning experiences as school or university students, and non-drama related subject majors at university. The narratives suggest that studying socially-related subject majors at university can provide a useful knowledge base and social concepts for devising and conducting issue-based TIE (Yuk-Ling, Mary, Sour Plum, Joy & Patrick). However, some subject majors may give rise to specific perspectives on the social issues explored that are difficult to hold within individual roles, and as such, could pose challenge for the task of in-role facilitation (Patrick).

The narratives also suggest that educational experiences that have little focus on developing students’ academic and intellectual capacities do not enhance the actors’ readiness to handle issue-based TIE (Wilson & Nancy). However, negative learning experiences as students can become a productive force, helping a TIE actor to seriously consider the meaning of education (Wilson & Nancy). Moreover, learning experiences in mainstream education contexts may encourage one to explore alternative ways of teaching, and thus motivate a person to invest in TIE as a new pedagogical approach (Rita), while educational habits developed in mainstream education may make it hard for another to adapt to the pedagogy of TIE (Joy).

**Artistic Influences**

Most of the participants also spoke about various artistic influences on their TIE
practices. These influences involved theatre experiences in church or schools at a young age, or performing experiences in professional or semi-professional theatre. The narratives suggest that youth theatre participation can provide useful theatrical skills for handing TIE practice (Ruby). If these youth theatre experiences have stressed meaning making rather than the display of skills, they can positively support the practice of issue-based TIE (Yuk-Ling & Joy). However, if the youth theatre experiences are solely limited to frivolous or light-hearted works, they can hinder the TIE actors’ subsequent ability to play characters seriously and authentically (Mary & Rita).

In terms of professional and semi-professional theatre experiences, the narratives suggest that these experiences can provide a range of useful theatre skills for managing TIE works (Phoebe, Yuk-Ling, Wilson, Joy & Nancy). Theatre practice that focuses on non-realism can usefully support the TIE actor in handling a range of acting styles (Phoebe), while the lack of non-naturalistic acting experiences would make the task challenging (Joy). Experiences in devising theatre can influence a practitioner’s approach to creating TIE works and the understanding about the connection between self and character in approaching acting (Phoebe). The narratives also suggest that theatre practices that prioritise feelings and emotions over the social implications of theatre works can hinder the practice of issue-based TIE and may cause non-commitment to the work (Nancy). Also, theatre practices that devalue the actors’ analysis of characters in social contexts can cause difficulty in acting and facilitating within TIE works (Wilson). Finally, professional theatre experiences that stress the practitioners’ ego do little to support TIE acting (Wilson & Nancy).

Artistic and Educational Influences

Some of the past influences on the participants are both artistic and educational in
nature, including studying acting in drama college and undergoing training in drama education and educational theatre, either formally or in informal training initiatives. This influence was discussed by the majority of the participants and their narratives suggest that drama education and applied theatre training can support pedagogical understanding of TIE (Phoebe, Yuk-Ling, Wilson, Mary, Sour Plum, Rita & Patrick), and/or activate reflections on the meaning of education (Yuk-Ling, Wilson & Nancy). Such training can also offer the TIE actor a readiness to tackle social issues (Phoebe & Yuk-Ling), the skills to handle interactive theatre (Yuk-Ling); and an understanding of how to approach characters socially rather than psychologically (Phoebe). The narratives also suggest that formal education in acting can usefully bring practical skills to support acting in TIE, but may hinder issue-based TIE practice if students’ academic and intellectual capacities are not developed to tackle the understanding of social issues (Wilson & Nancy).

Occupational Influences

A few participants identified occupational influences relevant to their TIE practices. These included former work as school-teachers or current roles as NGO workers. The narratives suggest that NGO workers can bring to TIE practices serious concerns relating to the purpose of the work, and an obligation to portray the characters (who are real people in the world) authentically (Mary & Rita). NGO workers can bring to the work agendas that may clash with the pedagogical beliefs underlying TIE and hence cause dilemmas in their facilitation work (Mary & Rita). The background experiences of a school-teacher may establish teaching habits which are hard to change and therefore challenge one’s pedagogical approaches in TIE practice (Joy). Conversely, they may stimulate criticism towards mainstream education and foster pedagogical approaches which are pertinent to issue-based, participatory TIE (Mary).
Personal Influences

A few participants brought up personal influences that impacted on their TIE practice, including personal and family backgrounds, personality, personal beliefs, attitudes and life goals. Given the highly individual nature of these, it is not useful to generalise about their impacts. However, in a broad sense, the narratives suggest that the TIE actors’ personal backgrounds can influence the meaning they seek in doing theatre (Phoebe, Yuk-Ling & Nancy), their interest in tackling issue-based theatre (Joy & Nancy), their approach to teaching and acting (Sour Plum), and the ability to imagine oneself as a poor character (Mary).

Socio-political Influences

Finally, a few participants named the socio-political background in Hong Kong and their participation in social movements as a pertinent factor for their practice. The narratives suggest that the participation in social movements may contribute to the TIE actors’ commitment to adopting theatre as a social change agent (Phoebe & Yuk-Ling), or develop an interest in social theories that inform the focus of facilitation of TIE work (Patrick).

The above influences and their impacts are by no means exhaustive or, as explained earlier, generalisable beyond these participants. However, they may stimulate reflections in other TIE practitioners about the kind of support that may be conducive to developing actors for issue-based, interactive TIE works. Discussion related to this will be presented in Chapter 7 in connection with the findings in the next chapter.
5.13 Reflection

This chapter addressed the research question, “how do past influences impact on the participants’ practices and understanding of devising, facilitating and performing in the two Oxfam TIE works?” Responding to the question narratively, I constructed nine biographical accounts to articulate the various forces that were in play as different actors approached the TIE works and responded to the NGO setting differently. The participants’ real life experiences clearly had impact on their practice, and these experiences reached as far back as those in the long past (e.g. participation in theatre as a youth) to the more immediate situations they currently encounter (e.g. concurrent position as NGO workers). The nature of these experiences also ranged from those that directly contributed practical knowledge and skills to the more idealistic goal-sustained life pursuits. Furthermore, positive and negative experiences intermingled to influence practice, making contributions and inducing constraints variously, with poor real life experiences sometimes becoming a driving force for pursuing good and responsible practice within the TIE works. Different dimensions of experience inextricably linked with one another, giving rise to unique and highly individual responses and encounters within the practice of two TIE works.

In closing this chapter, I reflect on a set of questions that emerged for me as I considered the narratives presented above. In considering these questions I return to the literature to discuss how the biographical narratives give insight to the demands placed on TIE actors.

The nine narratives generally confirm the assertions made by writers of TIE in relation to the different capacities required of actors within TIE works, including: devising play
texts and designing TIE programme structures; performing characters; facilitating learning in and out of character; researching and understanding the related subject matter; understanding and handling the pedagogy; managing content, form and purpose; and understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing, presentational or non-naturalistic acting styles. Within the nine narratives related to past influences, all the above aspects of their TIE practice were discussed. However, influences on some capacities were mentioned more than others. In the following, I will consider some patterns emerging from this specific set of data and discuss the possible implications.

Amongst the different capacities, acting, managing the subject matter and handling the pedagogy were discussed most often and by nearly all participants in their narratives related to past influences. The majority of them also spoke of facilitating learning in and out of role, but interestingly, only two participants mentioned managing content, form and purpose, and only one mentioned devising and understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing and non-naturalistic, presentational acting styles.

There are two possible explanations for this uneven distribution of responses. Firstly, the limited mention relating to devising was likely caused by the fact that only three of the nine participants were devising actors. It is thus unsurprising that past influence related to devising theatre was only mentioned once, and there was no mention of designing TIE programme structures. Meanwhile, managing form, content and purpose was possibly perceived by the participants as the devising actors’ task, and was thus only brought up by two devising actors.
Another possible explanation has stronger implications for understanding the participants’ past influences. It could be that past influences pertinent to some aspects of TIE practice were more common than the others, so when the participants were invited to share their stories, they were more ready to share them. If I look at the narratives this way, the different responses could indicate that past influences pertinent to acting, managing the subject matter, handling the pedagogy and facilitating learning were more readily in place within the participants’ experiences.

This pattern in the data brings me to wonder about why the participants barely discussed past influences related to understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing and non-naturalistic, presentational acting styles, although this is not a capacity specific to the devising actors. I give this phenomenon specific thoughts because authors in the field of TIE (e.g. Gillham, 1994; Ilsaas & Kjolner, 1993; Rosenberg & Prendergast, 1983; Williams, 1993) stress the value of presentational, non-naturalistic approaches to acting and the notion of distancing in devising, facilitating and performing in TIE works. They see the understanding and adoption of such approaches as more pertinent to the educational purposes of TIE works, including stimulating audience reflection and highlighting the subject matter rather than psychological details of the characters. However, the participants’ narratives seem to suggest that their past training or theatre experiences seldom emphasised this aspect of theatre practice.

By contrast, what emerged from the data was how some participants put high value on the past influences that support naturalistic acting, especially for playing characters who are real people in the world. The educational purpose these actors emphasise is different from what the TIE writers suggest, but is no less significant. These actors had
strong concerns about giving fair and authentic portrayal of deprived groups in the society, so as to convey to the audience a genuine concern for these people. The concern for social justice heightened the importance for naturalistic acting. The narratives remind me that both naturalistic and non-naturalistic acting have a place in TIE when different educational purposes are considered.

The participants' narratives indicated a number of influences on their acting and theatrical approaches. For the two of them who had no prior formal drama training but only performed in school plays when they were students, they suggested that these experiences were inadequate because they were not serious enough to help the actors play their characters sincerely and authentically. The other participants who had received prior drama training, or had performed in professional or semi-professional theatre productions, emphasised the practical skills they acquired helped them manage the TIE works. This group of experienced actors also made a few specific points in relation to acting styles and management of the theatrical form. The kinds of theatre works they previously took part in made a difference to their readiness to handle non-naturalistic acting. Hence, a participant who had taken part in physical theatre and experimental works found it easier to handle diverse acting styles compared with another participant who had only performed in naturalistic theatre. The kinds of previous drama training the participants received also affected the ways they handled the theatrical form. For instance, a participant who received actors training in a drama college in Hong Kong expressed that he was not taught to approach and analyse characters socially, while a participant learned how to do it through a drama education programme in the UK. Furthermore, the participants’ previous theatre experiences influenced how they saw the relationship between actor and character. As such, a participant trained in Playback Theatre had a clear idea about how the actor could be a
vessel embodying real people’s stories. Another one gained a clear sense of the actor-character relationship from taking part in professional theatre focused on a devising approach which employed the actor’s own qualities in creating characters.

These findings enrich my reflections on the kinds of support that may be useful to help TIE actors meet the different demands in their practice. I will provide a full discussion of these ideas in Chapter 7 in conjunction with the findings in response to the second research question which are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter Six: A Collective Narrative of the Nine Actors’ TIE Experiences

This chapter presents the findings relating to the second research question:

How do the actors participating in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale and Fifty Square Feet, two Hong Kong issue-based, interactive Theatre-in-Education works, understand, describe and explain their practices?

In addressing this question, my focus was again guided by material presented in the literature review, which pointed out that actors in TIE are faced with specific pedagogical and artistic demands. The collective narrative in this chapter relates to this discussion by presenting the nine research participants’ experiences in meeting the specific demands placed on them as TIE actors, including:

- Devising play texts and designing TIE programme structures;
- Acting characters in a play;
- Facilitating processes of learning in and out of character;
- Researching and understanding the subject matter of their TIE works;
- Understanding and handling heuristic rather than transmissive approaches to teaching;
- Managing content and form effectively to achieve the purpose and function of their works;
- Understanding and adopting theatrical approaches that operate on the notion of distancing and non-naturalistic, presentational acting styles.

To further support the understanding of TIE practice, a theoretical discussion was offered in the literature review regarding the relationship between the actor’s self and
character. This discussion addressed the different orders of experiences, in and out of character, that co-exist in TIE practice. The concept of metaxis was discussed in connection with the relationship between fiction and reality. Discourses relating to practices of acting in contemporary theatre were also reviewed, with notions of double existence, double consciousness, involvement and distancing, liminality, neutrality, transparency and heightened consciousness variously addressed in a range of contemporary acting theories.

Informed by these theoretical understandings, I documented and analysed the nine participants’ narratives to investigate their lived experiences as they devised, facilitated and performed in the two TIE works at Oxfam. These different experiences were captured and presented as a collective narrative in this chapter. Instead of presenting the participants’ experiences individually, these experiences were consolidated into a collective narrative in order that a holistic understanding of the actors’ practice could be developed. By collating the various personal stories and comprehending them holistically, I aimed to make use of the multiplicity of voices to illuminate a more complex understanding of TIE practice as a social phenomenon.

The development of this collective narrative followed the research approach explained in Chapter 3. Narrative data were collected through interviews, dialogues and written exchange, and then analysed with a “thematic narrative analysis” approach (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Speedy, 2007). I went through the collected data and wrote thematic statements (van Manen, 1997) to retain the richness of the core ideas in the stories. Finally, an interim collective story was composed and presented to the participants for verification and modification. Aspects of this interim story, originally written in Chinese, were translated into English for presentation in this thesis. In the following
The collected data gave rise to six themes that emerged during the data analysis process. These themes, related to the participants’ experiences at various stages of devising, rehearsing, facilitating and performing in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*, included:

1. How the actors managed the social issues related to global citizenship education as they devised, facilitated and performed in the TIE works (Section 6.1);
2. How they managed the pedagogical demands of TIE (Section 6.2);
3. How they perceived the need to play their characters authentically, and how they managed the tasks (Section 6.3);
4. How they considered the function of their characters in order to achieve the educational purposes of the TIE works (Section 6.4);
5. How they juggled between the different artistic and educational goals in facilitating audience interaction in role (Section 6.5);
6. How they reflected on the values imbedded in the TIE works (Section 6.6).

The different capacities identified in the literature review apply across these themes. Together, these six themes contributed to a body of “personal practical knowledge” held by the participants in relation to TIE acting. Personal practical knowledge, as defined by Clandinin (2013), is a “body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience” (p. 68). Clandinin asserts that action is imbued with
knowledge, and such knowledge can be understood through people’s narrative accounts of their embodied experiences. As I constructed the participants’ narratives, I developed a deeper understanding of their personal practice knowledge. In the following sections, I present this understanding and invite the readers to join me in reflecting upon the characteristics of the actor’s practice in issue-based, participatory TIE works.

6.1 Managing the Social Issues

The first theme arising from the collected data relates to how the nine research participants managed the social issues explored in the two TIE works, *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet* essentially dealt with judicious examination of social issues related to the topic of poverty. The programmes were designed to align with Oxfam’s critical approach to Global Citizenship Education (GCE). In this specific approach to GCE, emphasis was put on addressing “unequal power relationships in the society and the structural causes of social and economic inequalities” (Chan, 2013, p. 80-81). All the participants in this research had a shared understanding about the importance of having good knowledge of the social issues explored in the TIE works. Three of the participants were involved in devising the works, and they acknowledged the need for making use of their understanding of the social issues to create the TIE programmes in a way that would stimulate critical reflection. Together with the other non-devising actors, they recognised that they also needed to employ their understanding of the social issues in performing the play, leading discussions and facilitating other learning activities. These learning activities sometimes involved the actors in interacting with the students in role.
The nine participants in this study, due to their different backgrounds and degree of involvement in Oxfam’s projects, possessed different levels of understanding of GCE issues. In Chapter 5, their readiness in handling social issues was variously discussed in connection with their past experiences. It was noted that those who had been active in social movements, had studied relevant subjects, or who came from NGO or social work backgrounds found it easier to handle the social issues. Two of the participants who came from a theatre background found the task more demanding. In this section, I will further explore the specific situations and challenges faced by the participants, and the different ways they handled the situations. These discussions will then be analysed in connection with the literature on TIE discussed in Chapter 2.

6.1.1 The Challenge for those who Lacked Prior Social Knowledge

Two of the research participants had far less experience in handling social issues in comparison with the others. They both shared the experience of encountering many difficulties in managing the social issues in the two TIE works. Both of them graduated from the same bachelor level acting degree, and expressed that their previous training as actors in the drama college had hardly equipped them with the knowledge and skills to approach the broad and complex themes related to global citizenship education. The approach to acting in their prior studies focused predominantly on technical acting skills, and placed little emphasis on developing students’ academic and intellectual capacities for understanding social concepts. Furthermore, their past experiences in professional theatre did not require them to analyse their characters in relation to the larger social contexts within which these characters were situated. Such analysis was usually handed to the director, and as actors they were inexperienced in such analytical tasks.
In the following narratives, the two actors, Nancy and Wilson, share their journeys in Oxfam’s TIE works as they tackled the difficult concepts of social development. Wilson, who was involved in devising one of the TIE works, expressed the view that the devising process helped to digest the social issues. Nancy, who was a non-devising actor in the work she conducted, struggled more.

Nancy shared a deep account about how her lack of social knowledge made it hugely challenging in facilitating The Other Side of the Fairy Tale, which was concerned about social development in the globalised world. She said, “We’re talking about humanities, socialism, economics… But the economic system is a huge thing! The knowledge involved in the work… much of it was something that I didn’t have a clear picture of. Sometimes when I asked the students a question, I didn’t even have an answer myself. I wouldn’t be able to engage in discussions about those questions on the same level as the students did!” Nancy said that the burden was still not so big in the first year of practising the TIE work, since she was holding the attitude of “I am just experimenting”. However, in the second year, the problem surfaced more acutely and she walked her path gingerly.

Wilson, upon reading the interim texts created for this collective story, said that he resonated strongly with Nancy. Also coming from an actor training background, he found himself ill-equipped with approaching the social issues in the TIE works in the first place. Unlike Nancy, he was involved in the devising process of Fifty Square Feet, and such a process facilitated his understanding of the social themes. He recalled his first stage of TIE practice as one about digesting reading materials provided by Oxfam:
“We needed to get an initial idea of the issues in discussion. Only by doing this would you be able to devise a play around the related themes.” Devising the TIE work engaged Wilson in a process of repeated maneuvering of the related themes and materials as he turned information into dramatic presentations and student learning activities.

As a non-develing actor in The Other Side of the Fairy Tale, Nancy did not have the opportunity to go through such a process of digesting the social themes. To make things worse, Nancy’s cast was faced with a very tight rehearsal schedule and they had to focus on the imminent task of “delivering the script”. They could hardly find any extra time for clarifying and exploring the social issues embedded in the work. As a result, Nancy could only rely on her own resources, learning it by doing as she conducted the TIE work.

The duration of learning by doing for Nancy lasted for two years, before she left the TIE team. For Wilson, this process spanned over nine years and he gradually developed a better grip of his task over the years. He described this as an ongoing journey that underwent a few stages. “At first, I was gobbling up the information provided by Oxfam due to the necessity of the work. I had a lot of doubts in my mind, and I asked myself ‘What do these social issues have to do with me? What do they have to do with the students?’ Then came a stage when I became more familiar with the topic, but I easily became judgmental. I held some strong criticisms towards certain people or parties, say, the big enterprises. As years went by I began to see that there were no absolute answers to many of those questions. Now I’ve come to be more

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13 There were ten to twenty performances of the TIE work in each year, subject to demand.
These accounts by Nancy and Wilson reflect the challenges faced by those who have limited knowledge and experience in approaching issue-based TIE work and support the assertions made by various authors and practitioners whose writing I referred to in the literature review, that the devising process serves an important role in helping the TIE actor to engage in critical research into the topics at hand (Hennessy, 1998; Jackson, 2013; Williams, 1993). Wilson’s experience further illuminates how the devising process was only a start. To internalise understanding and develop his own approach to tackling the social issues, the experience of testifying ideas in the actual implementation of the work was equally important. By taking a reflective practitioner’s stance, Wilson engaged in ongoing development of his personal understanding through actual experience.

Wilson’s experience appears to confirm Pammenter’s (2013) assertion that the process of devising and ongoing experimentation is the key to practicing TIE:

The experimentation and analysis embedded in the action of theatre-making, and the subsequent testing and development in light of audience responses, exemplify the pedagogical processes of praxis which is at the heart of our work.

(p. 87)

Such processes, according to Pammenter (2013) require the TIE actor to recognise the interconnectivity of research and creativity. However, even recognising the importance of research, most of the participants in this study still found handling the social issues a challenging task. Even the participants who were more ready to handle social issues reflected that the task was difficult, because the global citizenship topics they were
dealing with often involved a lot of hard facts and conceptual ideas which were difficult to transform into artistic practice. The following part of the collective narrative describes the experience of this group of participants.

6.1.2 The Challenge of Transforming Conceptual Information into Drama Practice

In sharing their experiences of handling the information regarding global citizenship education, a number of the participants used the term “hard facts” and commented on how demanding it was for them to turn these hard facts into human situations. By using the term “hard facts” they were referring to conceptual information such as discourses about the structural causes of poverty, and the dynamic forces between different stakeholders in social development. Again, the devising process was recounted as one that had played a vital role in helping the actors digest this information. The non-devising actors who did not have such a process to support them, found the task more challenging. Amongst the participants, there were also opposing views towards the value of this information in the actors’ work – some saw it as essential, while one of the actors saw it as diminishing the aesthetic quality of the works. These contrasting views were found to be related to different understandings about theatre. The following stories about Nancy, Joy and I provided a clear explanation of the case.

I (Phoebe) shared with Joy, in her interview, the challenge my TIE team faced when we began devising the two TIE works. I told her, “Oxfam provided us with a lot of information when we were devising the works. However, those were usually hard facts or commentaries on social phenomena. I read the information and found that it barely gave rise to any images, characters or stories. Then I asked our partners at Oxfam, ‘Can
you give us some human stories? The information you gave us was hardly useful for creating drama!” After the interview, and as I wrote this collective story, I further reflected on the long toils the devising actors went through in exploring the hard information and eventually finding successful ways of embodying it in our practice. It involved repeated experimentation of various contents, forms and styles of the play text, trialing of different structures for the TIE programmes, and gradual development of the characters taking into account the larger social implications. Through these processes, we continuously internalised the hard information within our bodies and minds. I came to realise how different the experiences had been for the devising and non-devising teams.

Joy was not involved in the devising process of her TIE programme, but she nevertheless regarded reading hard information an essential support for her acting. She said, “That information may not be directly used in playing our characters, but we must get hold of it. It makes my acting more grounded.Basically you need to do research for any kind of theatre, but for issue-based theatre it is even more important because there is an educational purpose. It’s not a theatre piece for pure aesthetic appreciation. You need something richer to support you. The information serves as the ‘soil’ in which I ground my performance.” Joy was unable to cite any specific example to illustrate how her understanding of factual information supported her acting. However, she had a strong conviction about the usefulness of the information for her performance. Such a belief justified the place of factual information in her TIE practice.

For Nancy, the “hardness” of social issues was barely helpful to her acting. She explained, “If I create a piece of theatre, I do it because something moves me, because
there is something that I want to say. But these social issues… how do we use them to carry human life? What I value about theatre is subtle feelings. I look at a play not to see what kind of messages it conveys but whether it captures life. We can only move the audience with human stories.” Nancy’s belief in theatre put her in doubt regarding the approach to *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. “I always asked myself if the way we executed this TIE work was the best way to go?” she wondered. “To a certain extent I didn’t find it the most powerful way of working.” Noting Nancy’s thoughts, I asked if she had tried to input her aesthetic belief into the work to instil more feelings and life. She paused for a thought and said, “Maybe it was a matter of timing. The whole thing had already started. The direction had been set. It didn’t seem to be appropriate to propose too many changes… And maybe I hadn’t really had the space to consider this question closely. We had to get prepared for the work within a short period of time. I hadn’t thought about approaching the work differently, or to change it fundamentally. When you asked me this question just now, I also started to think that maybe I felt rather distanced from the work.” In essence, Nancy had never really managed the incorporation of hard information into her drama practice in the TIE work.

Nancy’s sharing about *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* made me realise that she and I held very different ideas on what good theatre was about. I documented in my reflective journal: “While Nancy saw the place of feelings as paramount, what I valued about theatre was its power to both move and invoke thinking. In devising *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* I worked with the other actors (in the original cast, not including Nancy) to look for different styles and representations for the works – some were more slanted towards the portrayal of flesh and blood human situations; some were more slanted towards presentation and critical examination of information and ideologies – so as to
both engage and distance the audience in the Brechtian sense.”

The narratives, outlining the challenges of handling hard information regarding global citizenship education, elucidate how our different understandings of theatre impact on the actors’ experiences. The three actors saw the place of hard information differently owing to different beliefs about acting and theatre. For Nancy, theatre is more concerned with the psychological aspects of “feelings” and “moving the audience”. The hard facts embedded in the TIE work were seen to be at odds with what she believed good theatre should be. Such a belief not only influenced her ownership of the work but also made her question the way the work was designed and implemented. On the contrary, Joy saw TIE as a kind of theatre with larger goals than purely aesthetic appreciation. She regarded the hard and conceptual information as a kind of useful support to make her acting more grounded. For me, the information not only served as support for acting but also a pretext for the creation of the work. In this creation process, hard facts and conceptual information were transformed into dramatic representation of various styles and forms to achieve the purpose of the TIE work.

These different perspectives exemplify what Zarrilli (2002) refers to as “theories of acting”, defined as “a set of assumptions about the conventions and styles which guide [an actor’s] performance” (p. 3). As denoted from the narratives, the different theories of acting held by Nancy, Joy and I were not just related to “assumptions about the conventions and styles” as Zarrilli suggests, but also considered the way we saw the purpose of issue-based TIE works. It was our different “theories of TIE acting” which affected the way we dealt with the social issues and factual information. Joy’s theory was “characters in issue-based theatre should be grounded in real facts” so she found the factual information supportive to her acting. By contrast, Nancy’s theory was that
“good theatre should move people” and she found the hard information unhelpful to her acting. My theory was that “theatre should both move and invoke thinking” so I used the information to support different performance styles with varied audience engagement and distance. Our different beliefs in theatre gave rise to different readiness in handling the information, and different ways of using it.

6.2 Managing the Pedagogical Demands of TIE

The second theme that emerged from the collected data relates to how the research participants met the pedagogical demands of TIE. Informed by a heuristic view of education, TIE values the provision of an enabling environment for exploring ideas, making meaning and self-discovery. TIE actors are required to take on the responsibilities for facilitating learner engagement, stimulating dialogue and activating critical reflection. As such, the participants in this study had to be capable of creating a student-centred, open and non-judgmental learning arena. Their practice was further guided by Oxfam’s critical approach to global citizenship education, which emphasised the understanding of the structural causes of poverty, the need to tackle injustice and inequality, as well as the desire and ability to work actively to do so. The following narratives relate to how the participants managed the pedagogical demands required for facilitating the TIE works.

Before joining the TIE teams, all the nine participants were already experienced in facilitating experiential workshops. Most of them were familiar with leading drama workshops too. They were already equipped with the skills required in deploying drama strategies to explore human issues. They also possessed the related questioning and classroom management skills. Above all, they all had a clear concept about the heuristic
nature of TIE as learning and teaching approach. The narratives in this section are related to how the participants, with all the prior understanding, knowledge and skills related to TIE’s pedagogics, encountered further pedagogical demands and expanded their pedagogical understanding. In Section 6.2.1 narratives are offered in order to illustrate some of the tensions that arose as a result of meeting such demands. Section 6.2.2 presents the views related to the impact of the rehearsal process on the actors’ pedagogical understanding of TIE. Thirdly, the identity of the TIE actor is discussed in Section 6.2.3 regarding how this unique identity supported the pedagogical process subtly.

6.2.1 Tensions in Pedagogical Approach

Most of the participants in this study found meeting the pedagogical demands of TIE challenging but generally manageable. Some of them, however, found themselves occasionally caught in a dilemma when they discussed global citizenship issues with the audience. This group of participants commented that although they understood that the mode of learning in TIE should be explorative and dialogic, they sometimes found gaps or tensions between what they knew and what they practised. Sometimes, the clashes were caused by past pedagogical habits that were difficult to change, while at other times they were induced by the specific agenda set by Oxfam as an advocacy NGO. This advocacy agenda was highly action-oriented and did not always align with the more reflection-oriented educational agenda held by the TIE teams. When the line between the two sets of agendas became blurred, those TIE actors who were also Oxfam staff members were caught in a dilemma. In the following accounts, Joy, Rita and Mary shared the experience of encountering pedagogical tensions that existed in their TIE practice.
Previously a school teacher, Joy found that she had a low tolerance for inappropriate answers. She said that although she fundamentally believed in non-didactic teaching approaches, when she came across students who shared views that she deemed problematic, she felt obliged to correct those views. She recounted an incident in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and expressed her frustration when she wanted to criticise a student’s view, but forbade herself from doing so. She knew that the pedagogy in TIE should be heuristic, so instead of criticising the student she tried all sorts of methods to prompt the student to rethink those views. It was in vain. Eventually, Joy rounded up the workshop with some words that suggested to the student that those views were problematic. “The girl looked at me and remained silent,” Joy recalled. “I had no idea what was going on in her mind. I doubted if I had changed anything, but I said what I was compelled to say.” Joy reflected on the incident and said, “What is difficult about TIE is… It would be much easier to give the student a moral lesson to tell her what I thought. With that girl, I was trying in so many different ways to inspire her but it still didn’t work. I really wished that, if she ever questioned her own views, it was a result of self-reflection rather than what I imposed on her.”

Rita and Mary were both staff members at Oxfam, and they both commented that their job positions came with assumptions and priorities that would clash with the pedagogical approach to the two TIE works. Oxfam believes that poverty is caused by injustice rather than individual circumstances, and deems it important to examine the structural causes of poverty. Rita said that such a priority made it difficult for her to give the students too much freedom of expression. It would make it hard for her to focus the discussions on those structural causes. Rita was unable to give concrete
examples to elaborate her case. Mary, on the other hand, provided a more succinct account of the tensions she encountered.

“The most embarrassing moment always came with the last thirty minutes in the workshop,” Mary recalled her general experience in leading workshops at Oxfam. “I felt pressured to round up the workshops with some grand lessons,” she said. Oxfam’s advocacy agenda urged global citizens to take actions to change unjust situations faced by the poor. Mary often times found that she was expected to guide the students to think in a certain way, to agree on one particular value, or to commit to certain behaviours. Although the workshops were participatory in nature, the students’ experiences and the personal meanings they got out of the experiences did not seem to matter anymore when it came to the concluding part of the workshops. Mary commented, “I don’t believe that is education. I don’t believe you can change people by imposing fixed ideas. Above all, I don’t believe the world will become a better place if we ask everyone to take up the same set of values and behaviours.” Mary preferred giving students the space for making dialogue, asking questions and making reflections, rather than guiding them to commit to set values or behaviours. Her preference was often in tension with Oxfam’s priority, but somehow she found the tension less intense when she conducted the two TIE works. Compared with other Oxfam workshops, the TIE works were different due to its artistic form and the way the discussion activities were designed. She explained, “From watching the play and taking part in the interactive activities, the student had learned something implicitly. What they had learned might not always neatly tie with what we intended to teach, and might be still at a superficial level. Yet what’s important was that we first based the discussion on their feelings and experiences, and then elevate their level of thinking from there. Sometimes
the discussions would indeed reach an amazing level of depth! I like this process since it was very spontaneous.” Mary found the two TIE works more closely aligned with her preferred pedagogical approach than other Oxfam workshops.

The above narratives appear to authenticate the literature suggesting that the practice of TIE involves its actor scrutinising the pedagogical principles underlying TIE. The three actors’ experiences above further illuminate the more complicated dynamics that came into play as they addressed these demands. Firstly, as revealed in Joy and Mary’s narratives, their personal beliefs and teaching habits seemed to influence how they handled the pedagogical processes. Secondly, the social justice agenda entailed in the two TIE works affected how they responded to students’ views, like when Joy and Rita struggled with how much freedom they should give the students in addressing poverty issues. Lastly, organisational requirements imposed on the actors also brought about tensions, as exemplified in Rita and Mary’s stories. These different narratives indicate that meeting the pedagogical demands of TIE does not only involve the confrontation with one’s personal and philosophical assumptions about education, but the negotiation of different expectations that come from the funding or organisational body. When the working partner has a strong social agenda like in the case of Oxfam, the additional demand on the TIE actor can be strong.

6.2.2 Impact of the Rehearsal Process on Understanding the Pedagogy

The other part of the collected data addressing how the participants handled the pedagogical demands of TIE was related to the rehearsal process, with these experiences being mostly noted by the participants less experienced in performance. They regarded the rehearsal process an important part of their TIE experience; some
even said that the rehearsal process was far more significant to them than the actual performances. Without much prior training in educational theatre, these actors reflected that rehearsing for the two TIE works achieved something beyond memorising lines and blocking (their original idea, as novices in theatre, was that rehearsals were only about memorising lines and blocking). Their understanding of the pedagogical characteristics of TIE was enhanced as a result of the rehearsal process.

In the following sections, two examples of rehearsal experiences are shared to explain how the participants acquired understanding of the pedagogics of TIE. These rehearsal sessions were conducted by the more experienced cast members when new members joined the TIE teams. Besides learning how to perform in the play, the new actors also took part in structured activities built into the rehearsal process to teach them how to lead the interactive activities.

Mary recalled strongly the activities designed to help her lead the post-performance activities and discussions. In those activities, the actors took turns to lead and also took turns to act as students participating in the activities. “It helped me imagine what the students would be experiencing in the programme,” she said. “Before that, I simply looked at it from an outsider’s point of view. I was only trying to understand the process cognitively. It was rather different when I got to experience it first hand, from the students’ perspective.” Mary regarded this kind of embodied experiences useful to develop a deeper understanding of what learning is about. “You got to realise that learning is not merely a brain activity. You have to use your body, and to employ something rather immaterial.”
Sour Plum looked at the rehearsal process from a different angle and observed how the director’s approach helped her consider what was the desired pedagogy in TIE, and indeed in education at large. She said, “The director gave me very clear instructions and feedback. Some other directors were like… They just wanted the actor to follow their way. But in rehearsing for The Other Side of the Fairy Tale, the director would base on what I had presented to her to tell me what worked and what didn’t work… The way she communicated with me made me feel assured, but at the same time she gave me suitable pressures, asking me to demand myself of higher standard. You know, some directors could be too nice and they just accepted whatever you gave them.” Sour Plum drew a parallel between this director-actor relationship and that between teachers and students: “There are things that young people are yet unable to achieve, or unable to absorb… but what’s most important is that the teacher start from where the students are, accept what they can do, and guide them patiently.”

The above narratives reveal that structured rehearsal activities did not only support the novice actors in performing for the play and developing the skills for facilitating interactive activities, but also helped them understand the pedagogies of TIE. The narratives suggested that the rehearsal process could provide the actors with a learning experience that mirrored what the TIE participants would be experiencing. Moreover, the rehearsal process and the director’s approach could model a pedagogy that was open, non-didactic and built upon participants’ capability. In other words, the rehearsal process was a manifestation of the pedagogical approach that TIE employed.

Earlier in this thesis, I pointed out the shortage of research that focuses on the TIE actors’ practice as compared to those related to how school teachers employ drama as a learning medium in the classroom (Section 1.4). Likewise, research on the specific
training processes for TIE actors received less attention than those addressing the training processes for beginning teachers to adopt drama as pedagogy in classroom teaching. This part of my findings makes a contribution to the discussion of the training experience of new TIE actors. The participants’ narratives corroborate the assertions made in a large body of teacher development literature that highlight the importance for teacher development initiatives to provide processes for participants to experience the pedagogy of drama first hand (e.g. Morgan, 1984; Norris, 1999; Owens, 2011), and to recognise the strong connection of drama practice with a learner-centred view of education (e.g. Chou, 2006; Mulcahy, 1991). The participants’ narratives also demonstrated the benefits for the training process to live the pedagogical theory rather than teach about the theory so that experiences with theory within context are provided.

### 6.2.3 The TIE Actor as a Pedagogical Entity

A third set of data related to the participants’ experiences in addressing the pedagogical demands of TIE was focused on the unique identity of the TIE actor. Although this idea was only shared by two participants, it came across to me as a noteworthy viewpoint for understanding TIE practice. The narratives in the following describe how the audience’s perceptions of the TIE actor’s identity removed certain constraints on them and made them respond to the actor differently. As a result, some pedagogical opportunities were opened up.

Sour Plum recalled her experience of bringing her own students to participate in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and how the students responded to her differently from her daily teaching. She recalled, “I found that we became closer to one another as a result of the TIE experience. The line between teacher and students was no longer so
clear-cut.” Sour Plum said that she was proud of her unique identity as a TIE actor as it was associated with the image of a liberal teacher. “I am the one and only one teacher in my university who would both perform and teach!” she exclaimed. “When students realised that a teacher could embrace different and diverse identities, they saw you as a more open-minded person.” Sour Plum also regarded it as a kind of modelling. “By showing your students that a teacher can be more than a teacher, you are telling them that they can also have many possibilities. You can be… You can be… You can be… You can be!” Sour Plum’s sharing triggered my reflections on how I saw my identity as a TIE actor. I told her in her interview, “Like you, I also regard the TIE actor as a special identity that helps me connect with students. When I conducted other kinds of workshops, I usually needed to spend more time and effort in building relationship with them. In TIE, however, this was much easier. I think there were two reasons. Firstly, young people in Hong Kong are usually curious about actors because they rarely come across actors in their daily lives. Secondly, I felt that as they watched me perform, although they were simply sitting there as spectators, a subtle and invisible connection was built between us. I believed that through my character they also saw me. Then when I stepped out of role to lead group activities or discussions, it was easier to open up dialogue. The students seemed to be already quite familiar with me and would be ready to talk to me.” After the interview, I further reflected on my conversation with Sour Plum and wrote in a reflective journal: “I think the students saw through my characters to see an open-minded person who was happy to engage in many different characters, including naïve or low-status ones. What was also interesting was that sometimes they didn’t really clearly differentiate between me and my character. They would comment on the
character I played using the words ‘you’ and ‘she’ interchangeably, understanding I was that character but at the same time not that character anymore. Sometimes I would make use of this ambiguity to manage the degree of engagement or distance I needed in the discussions.”

The above narratives show how the roles of actor and facilitator, when conflated within the hybrid identity of TIE actor, serve the pedagogical purpose of TIE. Firstly, this identity indirectly suggests certain personal qualities of a facilitator which are conducive to the teaching and learning process. The usual power relation between teachers and students, adults and youngsters, shifts. The students perceive the facilitator as an open-minded person capable of embracing diverse possibilities. The power shift and the changed perceptions both contribute to the implementation of TIE, which pedagogically requires an environment for open dialogue and divergent thinking.

These ideas are worth pondering in relation to what has been suggested in the literature, where the usual focus is put on the actors’ pedagogical understanding and the knowledge and skills they possess. These participants’ experiences, however, suggest a different order of experience more related to the metaphysical existence of the TIE actor than material pedagogical skills and knowledge. The very nature of TIE practice seems to be able to turn actors into pedagogical entities, generating a conducive environment for learning to occur. I wonder then whether TIE actors’ practice might be enhanced if more of them were aware of such a notion.

The other key idea manifested in these narratives is one related to the liminality of the actor (Schechner, 2004). According to the participants’ accounts, the TIE actor serves as a medium for connecting the play and the audience. Such an existence exemplifies
Bond’s idea of the actor as a mediator “through which the play needs to speak and through which the audience speaks to the play” (Cooper, 2013, p. 136). The existence also connects with Gao’s notion of the neutral actor, in which the actor is “at the same time the performer, the performed, and the neutral observer who tried to negotiate between both” (Zhao, 2000, p. 177). Such a liminal state of the TIE actor appears to contribute to the pedagogics of TIE, in a subtle way, by promoting dialogue about the play.

6.3 Playing Characters Authentically

The third theme in the research findings was related to how the research participants perceived the need to play their characters authentically. Amongst the participants, there was a general agreement that playing their characters authentically was a basic requirement of an actor’s practice in TIE, and indeed in any theatre work. They pointed out that conducting TIE works was different from facilitating other Oxfam workshops, since the participants would have higher expectation of their acting skills due to the performative nature of TIE. Hence these participants demanded of themselves greater acting skills than in other drama approaches, including for example, Process Drama. In this part of the collective narrative, how the participants endeavoured to attain authentic acting is discussed. The first section is related to how the participants relied on real stories and their real selves to support their acting. The second part is related to the actors’ perceived responsibility for playing characters who are real people in the society, and how such a responsibility impacted on their acting practice.

6.3.1 The Reality as a Resource to Support Authentic Acting

As the participants accounted for their journeys in creating their characters, a large
number of them talked about how they made use of their real life experiences to help them play their characters authentically. For example, some participants would inject into their characters their own personal traits to make their acting more authentic (Phoebe, Mary & Rita). Some would use their previous experience as a teenager to elicit imagination about the way the young characters in the plays might think and behave (Mary, Rita & Patrick). Others would borrow ideas from indirect real life experiences. For instance, an actor would make use of her previous experience of visiting rural villages in a developing country to support her imagination of the life of a child labourer (Joy). The participants also researched their characters by interviewing and observing real people in life or watching related TV documentaries to help them imagine the lives of the characters they played (Phoebe & Mary). These experiences demonstrated how the actors called upon their real life experiences to help them play their characters. Such practice was clearly connected with Stanislavsky’s (1963) notion of “double existence” in acting, as discussed in the literature review. According to Stanislavsky, the self and the character are conflated in this double existence when the actors invoke their personal emotions and experiences in creating characters that are unique to themselves. The research participants, in one way or another, tried to search for relevant real life experiences to support their acting. These experiences were similar to what actors usually do as they approach the task of playing the other. However, amongst the different narratives, two of them brought me to look at the notion of “double existence” in a deeper sense, and as such these are examined in more detail.

Patrick recalled one of the rehearsal sessions very strongly. That day Yuk-Ling, Wilson and I were helping him, a less experienced actor in our team, to develop the character
of Ah Sang in *Fifty Square Feet*. Patrick found it difficult to play the character because he had no personal experience to draw upon which would help him imagine the life of a middle-aged, married man living in poverty. We set up an improvisation for a scene which was not in the script but represented the past experience of Ah Sang. The scene was set at the time when Ah Sang’s wife and daughter first arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China, only to discover that their new home was a tiny cubicle room in a sub-divided apartment. During the scene, Ah Sang’s young daughter went to the toilet, which was a shared toilet with other tenants in the apartment. The daughter, having no idea that other people would share her toilet at home, did not lock the door and a male neighbour bumped in while she was in the toilet. Terrified, she ran back to her parents in shock and could not stop crying. Ah Sang looked at her daughter, not knowing what he should do, and was feeling deeply embarrassed and a bit angry with himself. As Patrick’s partner in the improvisation, playing the daughter, I observed the deep and authentic emotions invoked in him as a result of the improvisation. Patrick recalled this incident vividly in his interview and commented on how real the emotions were to him. The female actor’s tears were real; so was his embarrassment, because Patrick did not have a clue about how to handle a woman crying in front of him. Patrick said the experience in the rehearsal session created a past for his character and it became a real memory to draw upon when he performed the play. He said, “I found my acting in some parts of the play more grounded as a result of that day’s work. I recalled my emotions on that day and the past history of Ah Sang’s life.”

Mary also recounted a similar activity during the rehearsal process of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. She was asked to improvise a scene in which her character (a child labourer) played with her siblings in her home village. Mary said, “The situation was
simple, but it triggered in me lot of ideas and deep understanding about the character’s past life.” She regarded such kind of creative activities highly useful for her to enter the world of the character. Later on, when Mary read the interim texts I composed for this research, she further pondered on the experience and wrote me a long email sharing her reflections. She wrote, “Being a TIE actor demands a high capacity for imagination. Those of you who were previously trained as actors were more imaginative, but may lack understanding of the social issues. So you needed to study the social issues in order to put your imagination on the right things. For non-drama people like me, it was important to develop our imagination. However, developing one’s imagination is much harder than developing one’s understanding about social issues. It takes a much longer process because many people’s capacity for imagination has been murdered by the modern society in their upbringing. Their imagination may need to take years to revive. The training needs of the drama and non-drama people are indeed very different.”

Mary and Patrick’s narratives deepened my understanding about the relationship between self and character in acting. The improvisational activities in the rehearsals helped Mary and Patrick enter into the world of the characters to develop useful understanding of the characters’ circumstances. The rehearsal process also helped them construct the past memories of their characters, which they could later draw upon in acting the character. It was interesting to note how Patrick recounted his rehearsal experience as a form of real experience for him. In acting his character he was looking for relevant emotion memories in the Stanislavskian sense, but also differently because he was not applying his real-life emotion memories. Instead, he was constructing his character’s emotion memories through the rehearsals. The experience he drew on was a second order reality, but this reality also consisted of Patrick’s real self for his emotions during the improvisation activity were real. There were complex layers in this double
existence, involving:

- Patrick as his real self responding to the character’s situation, and as the person who had taken part in the improvisation, plus the Patrick performing in the TIE;
- Ah Sang as the person in the scene being performed, and as the person who had lived the constructed memory of his past.

All these layers of Patrick’s self and his character were called into play as he performed in *Fifty Square Feet*, with Patrick’s experience enriching what I had previously understood about the double existence of actor and character in acting in the sense that a second order reality might be involved.

The experiences of Patrick and Mary also helped me understand more deeply the journey the less experienced actors went through to attain authentic acting. Mary’s reflections succinctly pointed out the different needs of the trained and non-trained actors. The high regards she placed on the capacity for imagination was a good reminder to trainers of TIE actors in considering useful approaches to support different actors in handling the demands on the TIE actors.

### 6.3.2 Playing Characters who are Real People in the Society

The need for authentic acting, according to some of the participants, also came about as a responsibility for social justice. Some participants commented on how they were particularly concerned with playing their characters authentically because these characters are real people facing oppression in the society. They felt that they must do these people justice by giving them a fair portrayal in the plays. In the last chapter, Rita and Mary’s views in this regard were shared in relation to their past experiences. In the
following, their views are joined by mine and the discussion will focus on how we dealt with the additional demand arising from our social responsibility.

Mary said that she was particularly concerned about how she played Ah Yee in (the poor teenage girl) in *Fifty Square Feet* because, “She was a real person and this is a story happening here and now in Hong Kong.” The character of Ah Yee was based on a real story featured in the news. Before each performance, Mary would spare some time to watch the TV documentary featuring “Ah Yee” in reality. She deemed it an important process, not just because it would help her get in character, but she also wanted to remind herself of the meaning of doing this TIE programme. “The stories of poor people are worth sharing and being listened to,” she told herself.

Rita also talked about a similar responsibility. She commented, “It is important to remind myself that the character I am playing is a real person. I reminded myself to play Ah Yee seriously because her story is not something to be taken lightly. It is something that happens in the society day by day.” The understanding of Ah Yee as a real person, however, cast some doubts in Rita about “what is a truthful portrayal of the character”? She pondered, “In our play, we portrayed her and her family members as nice and optimistic people, and their relationship was good. I would wonder, in reality, if someone had been living in hardship for so many years would they still manage to be so optimistic? Would their relationship be so harmonious amid their difficult life?” Rita said sometimes she would wonder if her portrayal of Ah Yee was truthful enough. However another inner voice reminded her of the importance of giving the character a positive image. She explained, “The nice image of the family would arouse empathy in the audience. It would do good to the poor people in real life if other people think about them positively.”
Rita was not alone in wondering about what a truthful portrayal of Ah Yee was. I told her in her interview how I had gone through a similar struggle: “A friend who joined our trial run told me that she found it unconvincing that Ah Yee was such a well-behaved girl. She said that a teenager brought up in such a complicated family background would be prone to encountering bad influences. I understand what she was trying to tell me, but deep down I was reluctant to make Ah Yee ‘bad’. I didn’t want to stereotype people living in poverty, giving out the message that young girls coming from poor families must be ill-behaved or even morally corrupted. Even if a ‘bad’ Ah Yee would be seen to be closer to reality, I was unwilling to reinforce the stereotype.”

In this struggle, I found that I was compelled to consider the ethical responsibility towards real people living in poverty. I justified my choice by telling myself: “There are good girls and bad girls in poor families, aren’t there? I think it is okay that I am choosing a good case as the blueprint for my character.”

The above narratives encapsulate the multiple demands on the TIE actors as they perform characters in issue-based work. These different demands are related to the three modes of operation suggested by Jackson (2013) in providing an explanation of acting practice in TIE. According to Jackson, the TIE actor simultaneously operates on the three modes of:

1. The self-expressive mode, in which the focus is on the actor’s virtuosity as a performer;
2. The collaborative mode, in which the focus is on how the actor relates to the TIE participants;
3. The representational mode, in which the focus is on how the actor communicates the world of the play through the character one plays.
In striving to play our characters authentically, Mary, Rita and I were concurrently working on: 1) How do I act my character truthfully? (self-expressive mode), 2) How do I want the audience to perceive my character? (collaborative mode), and 3) How am I communicating the world of my character? (representational mode). The management of these different modes of operation appears to be further complicated when a social justice agenda is called to attention. Assuming the responsibility for doing justice to the poor people in the society, we urged ourselves to consider the important questions of “What kind of reality do I want to show through my work?” and “What do I want the audience to receive from this reality?” These different considerations exerted influence on the way we portrayed our characters.

The narratives shared in this section also add more layers to the discussion about the notion of double existence in acting. The juxtaposition of the fictional story with real people in life introduced more dimensions to this dual existence. In the case of playing Ah Yee, what existed in the actor’s state of being comprised the multiple layers of: Ah Yee in real life, Ah Yee as portrayed in the story, the actor who understood what Ah Yee’s real life might be like, the actor who felt obliged to give Ah Yee a fair portrayal to achieve the educational purpose of the work, and the actor who used her acting skills in shaping and controlling the character portrayed. Existing in this state of being was not just the actor’s emotional identification with the character but also her comment on this character’s social circumstances, as well as the considerations she gave to the impact of the work on the audience. The qualities of Brecht’s divided actor (1964) were noticeably present in this example of our practice.
6.4 Considering the Function of the Characters

In the previous part of this collective narrative, the starting point of the actors was related to how they portrayed their characters authentically. In this section, stories related to a different starting point are presented. Here, the actors’ major consideration was given to the function of their characters in the play. The actors were more conscious about the use of their characters as vehicles to convey meanings and achieve their educational goals. Different experiences were shared in relation to the different styles of characters in the plays.

6.4.1 The TIE Actors as Active Interpreters of Meaning

In some narrative accounts, the actors talked about how they made conscious decisions regarding the function of the characters they played. Interestingly, these accounts were more readily shared by those participants who were responsible for devising the plays, individuals who had made significant decisions on character design and the intended outcomes of such design. The following story by Yuk-Ling exemplifies the need for the TIE actors to take up the responsibility for making such decisions, and her ongoing reflections and adjustments to the function of the character she played.

Yuk-Ling said that as a TIE actor she found herself carrying greater responsibility to consider the meaning of the work. She said, “I need to think about the audience’s response, and the message conveyed through each dramatic action.” Yuk-Ling compared her practice in TIE with her acting practice in other theatre productions. She observed, “In other productions, it was the director’s job to decide on the message of the play. As actors, we followed the director’s choices.” TIE worked differently by asking Yuk-Ling to take on more responsibility and ownership of the work, especially
as a devising actor. She found that practising in TIE made her a more autonomous actor whose role also mingled with that of a director cum educator, holding the responsibility for text interpretation and conveying meaning to the audience.

The combined responsibilities of acting, directing and teaching caused Yuk-Ling to constantly review her characters to see what impact they were having on students. For example, she gave an account of how she approached the character she played in Fifty Square Feet, Ah Har, and how her approach changed over the years.

When Yuk-Ling first created the character of Ah Har (the mother in the poor family), she intentionally depicted her as an optimistic woman with a strong will to change her living conditions. “I hoped that the audience would appreciate her and empathise with her,” she explained. “I also wanted the audience to see the irony… Despite her faith and optimism her life did not improve.” After playing Ah Har for some years, Yuk-Ling realised that she needed to change the way she played the character. She said, “I began to wonder if I had been portraying Ah Har as too naive a person.” Her doubt had come about as a result of her growing understanding about the poverty issues over the years. Also, the students’ knowledge and understanding about poverty had advanced through the years and the optimistic Ah Har no longer served its original function. On the contrary, the character looked over-simplified and the students did not find her very convincing. As such, Yuk-Ling had to adjust the way she played Ah Har to make the character more down to earth and pragmatic. The character now served a different function which was to show the weariness experienced by people living in poverty.

Yuk-Ling’s story offers some evidence of the demands on the TIE actors in managing
content and form to achieve the play’s purpose. She acted as an interpreter of meanings rather than a passive executor of the directors’ choices. In devising and performing her character, she was engaged in an ongoing scrutinisation of the function of her character, and was ready to review her decisions according to changing circumstances and participant needs. Yuk-Ling was consciously making artistic choices with regard to the function of her character.

6.4.2 The Function of Everyman, a Non-Realist Character

Three participants in this research played a character called Everyman in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*, and they respectively brought up their experience of playing this character as a remarkable one in their practice. Such experiences prompted their reflections on the relationship between the function of this character and the acting style involved.

Before presenting the narratives, it would be useful to first introduce the character of Everyman. Everyman appeared in four solo scenes in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale*. In each scene, s/he (Everyman was a non-gender specific character) did something which was subtly linked to the other characters’ stories. For example, the clothes s/he wore were made by the child labourer in another episode of the play. All the actions that Everyman did were acts of consumerism, like buying gifts or dining out. Everyman was an abstract character who did not speak in the play but only mimed and made vocal sounds. The style of performance was clown-like, with some direct interaction with the audience. (The plot structure of *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* has been given in Chapter 4, page 90. An excerpt from the play was presented on page 99 to illustrate the style of acting for the character Everyman.)
I (Phoebe) created the character Everyman while we were devising The Other Side of the Fairy Tale. The character was developed with a few purposes in mind. First, the play was highly episodic and we needed a device to link up the scenes. Everyman was this linking device, which also suggested to the audience that the stories of different people in the globalised world were connected in one way or another. Everyman was a representation of the consumers in the globalised economy, and a manifestation of people’s ignorance and inference towards what happened in the society. A non-realist style was chosen to arouse curiosity about this person. Then as the audience came to realise who Everyman was representing, the abstract representation also provided the distance for the audience to comment on the character’s actions. The clown-like acting style added to this distance. The students found Everyman funny, thoughtless and ignorant, making it easier for them to criticise, or even laugh at him/her. In commenting on Everyman, the audience was at the same time commenting on ignorant and indifferent attitudes.

When I first developed the character of Everyman, I was not clearly articulate with the above analysis of the character, nor did I consciously draw on any acting theories. I used my artistic judgement based on experience. It was only later when I made a presentation in a drama conference that I began to articulate my ideas. It was also not until I wrote this thesis that I analysed the character along with the acting theories.

Sour Plum was eloquent in describing the function of Everyman. She used the word “transparent” to describe the character, saying that Everyman was like water:

“Whatever kind of light the audience projected into water, whatever light it illuminated.” In order to perform such a function of the character, Sour Plum had to
prepare herself for a very relaxed state. She said, “I had to be very relaxed in order to become so transparent that the audience saw through me to see themselves,” she described. Sour Plum said that as an educator she could easily form criticisms towards Everyman’s ignorance and indifference, but she had to put aside her criticisms towards this character in order to hand over the job of critical thinking to the audience.

Joy also referred to a similar state of being in playing Everyman. She said that her experience in playing this character was nothing like her previous acting experiences, which were all about playing naturalistic characters. The difficulty in playing Everyman urged her to think about the function of this character, but she was unable to explain what this function was. Nevertheless, she regarded it useful to prepare herself for a state of neutrality and emptiness when she played Everyman, so that she could spontaneously respond to things happening around her, including the audience’s response.

The non-realist nature of Everyman gave the three actors the opportunity to examine closely their state of being in playing the character. A state of “transparency” was called for in playing Everyman, with the purpose of bringing the audience to see through the character to see themselves or people in the society. The experiences of playing Everyman, as described by the three participants, in many ways relate to contemporary discourses about acting. They bear elements of Grotowski’s (1968) notion of acting, where the character is employed as a vehicle for revealing the actor’s self and activating the audience’s self-understanding. The actors’ experiences also manifested Gao’s aesthetics which regarded the actor as a neutral being, through which the audience developed interpretive powers and were encouraged to carry out “self-criticism when facing the drama of the real world” (Zhao, 2000, p. 212). The design of the character
of Everyman also adopted a Brechtian notion of theatre (1964) in the sense that the focus was put on social conditions rather than psychological circumstances, and that the audience was prevented from pure emotional identification with the character but to form critical examination of the character. The style of acting was different from the one adopted in playing naturalistic characters. The considerations given to the function of the character was also very different from the naturalistic ones, like Ah Har’s as discussed in the previous section. The different considerations given to character function called for different acting approaches.

Sour Plum, Joy and I had different levels of understanding about the function of Everyman. I had designed the character in the devising stage and thus had a clear understanding of the original intention with its function from the onset. But I only got to articulate the ideas I had embodied when I presented them to the others. Sour Plum and Joy worked out the logic of the character through practical experience. It led Sour Plum to articulate her understanding, but Joy, although having an embodied sense of how the character should be played, was yet unable to articulate the purpose. The narratives show that the TIE actor’s theory of acting may sometimes be implicitly embodied but not articulated.

6.5 Managing Facilitation in Role

This part of the narrative is related to the implementation stage of the TIE works, in which the research participants were engaged as facilitators of student learning. Like in any TIE practice, the nine actors in this study were engaged in facilitating various types of audience participation activities besides playing characters in a performance. A number of artistic and pedagogical goals were involved while the participants
accomplished these different tasks. Artistically, they needed to create believable characters, take care of presentation styles and different drama elements in their performance. Pedagogically, they worked to activate understanding and reflections on global citizenship issues, and to stimulate dialogic and heuristic learning processes. As cited earlier in this chapter, actors in TIE were simultaneously involved in different modes of operation suggested by Jackson (2013) as the self-expressive, collaborative and representation modes, respectively addressing the actor’s skills, the communication with the audience, and fictional characters and stories presented. This part of the collective narrative is related to the participants’ experiences of juggling between these different artistic and educational goals.

The highly participatory nature of TIE requires its actors to possess sophisticated skills in facilitating student involvement to achieve various goals. In the literature review I introduced Sz. Pallai’s (2005, p. 49-50) framework for understanding the processes that actors undergo in facilitating participation in TIE. In this framework, four types of facilitation are identified. They are reinstated in this part of the thesis for ease of reference.

1. Out-of-role facilitation: The actors work out-of-role to facilitate workshop activities or discussions in the TIE programme.

2. Character-student encounters: Actors in-character interact with students who do not take on any roles, with a separate facilitator (out-of-role) conducting participation.

3. Character-role encounters: Actors in-character interact with students who take on roles, with a separate facilitator (out-of-role) facilitating the interactions.

4. In-character facilitation: Actors improvise in character as in (2) and (3) to interact with students, at the same time taking on the additional function as facilitator of the activity. No separate facilitators are involved. (p. 49-50)
As explained in this framework, the TIE actor’s practice involves a range of facilitation experiences, sometimes in character and sometimes out of character. The data I collected in this research reflected that most of the participants found it more challenging to facilitate audience participation activities in character. For example, they would find holding discussions manageable, but when there was a need to take on a character and interact with audience as this character in order to activate debate or reflection, the challenge became much more intense. Two of the actors, Rita and Patrick, clearly attributed these challenges to their past influences. In their biographical narratives (Chapter 5) they recounted how their lack of experience in drama, their background as NGO workers and previous study in public administration brought about the challenge in facilitating TIE in character. In the following narratives, further discussions will be made on the experiences by focusing on the intrinsic tension between educational and artistic purposes entailed in this kind of facilitation.

6.5.1 Tension between Artistic and Educational Goals

Many participants shared the opinion that they were more confident in facilitation when out-of-role rather than in-role. Sometimes their lack of confidence was so big that they would withdraw from it or leave it to the more experienced members in the team. The most difficult thing about facilitation in role, according to the participants, was to juggle between the different artistic and educational goals. The following narratives by Patrick and Wilson are typical cases of this topic.

Patrick recalled that when he was conducting the teacher-in-role activity in *Fifty Square Feet*, it was hard to oversee the learning process. He was unable to put on the hat of the
character and that of a facilitator at the same time. “I don’t think I have reached that level yet,” he said. “I was still processing the response of my character, like, was he coherent in giving response? How would his tone be like? What was in his mind when he answered a particular question?... things like that. It was hard for me to consider at the same time, say, how would my answer to a question influence the students’ perspectives on the social issues?”

Patrick’s experience was echoed by Wilson, who shared a similar experience in another in-role facilitation activity in Fifty Square Feet. In that particular activity, Wilson was adopting the drama strategy of hotseating to answer the audience’s questions in role as a Foreman in a cleaning company. The purpose was to help students understand the problems with the government policies and how these policies had put low-income workers’ benefits in jeopardy. Wilson said, “To a large extent, I had to rely on my partners to remind me if I was going along with this educational goal while I was in the hotseat. When I was in character it was hard for me to jump out and make judgments on whether my emotions and the way I answered the students’ questions were in line with the teaching purposes.” He pointed out that he was managing too many different things at the same time. First of all, he had to stay very concentrated in order to be able to answer the diversity of questions, yet keeping his character coherent and believable. Secondly, he had to ensure that the dialogues with the students were of high quality so as to keep students engaged. “Therefore I was totally incapable of handling the third task – that of aligning my acting with the educational goal related to the social issues!”

Believing that “lookers-on see more than players”, he left it to his partners, as hosts of the hotseating activity, to ask the “foreman” relevant questions so as to guide the direction of the activity towards its intended focus.
Patrick and Wilson’s experiences help to illustrate the complexity of managing the artistic aspects of acting while an educational process is simultaneously in place, and when spontaneous interaction with the audience is occurring. These narratives corroborate the assertions made by many writers of TIE who address the sophisticated demands on the TIE actors as they both perform and facilitate learning (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.3). In the above scenarios, Patrick and Wilson were juggling between two to three goals at once, amongst: 1) managing the role to keep him coherent and believable, 2) managing the participants to sustain interest and engagement, and 3) managing the social issues to stimulate thinking. As revealed in the two examples, both actors found it hard to manage all the three goals at one time. Managing the social issues was the hardest for both of them, regardless of their level of acting skills or level of understanding of the social issues. (Wilson had stronger acting skills than Patrick, while Patrick was more knowledgeable about the social issues than Wilson.)

Ilsaas and Kjølner’s (1993) proposal about the levels of communication within the TIE programme is relevant to analysing this part of the narrative. The authors suggest that the TIE actor is engaged in four levels of communication within a TIE programme, including 1) the “I am me” level (the actor before and after performance), 2) a story-telling level (the actor introduces or furthers the fictional story, not yet in role), 3) the role level (the actor engages in in-role improvisations with audience), and 4) the character level (the actor performs in the play). The experiences Patrick and Wilson cited were at the role level according to this framework, where the improvisations with audience took place. Ilsaas and Kjølner suggest that “the role level necessarily puts the educational concept at the forefront; at the character level acting techniques rule the energy” (p. 203). Applying this to the above activities in Fifty Square Feet, the actors should put more energy on managing the social issues and the participants than
managing their characters within the fiction. However, the two actors focused more energy on their acting techniques.

Yuk-Ling, Wilson and I had an in-depth discussion on this topic in an interview. The discussion generated deeper insights into what happened when our energies were placed differently while we were facilitating in role. This discussion revolved around our experiences in facilitating the teacher-in-role activity as Patrick recounted above. While both Yuk-Ling and Wilson acknowledged that the educational goals were important, they both gave priority to keeping their roles believable and I noticed that I had approached the task a bit differently.

I told Yuk-Ling and Wilson in this interview, “Talking to you now and to Patrick earlier on the same topic, I now realise how I had adopted a ‘target-oriented approach’ to this activity.” By target-oriented, I meant I would justify my role according to my teaching purpose. For example, if my teacher-in-Role was a government official, I would play a government official who was reasonably willing to listen to the citizens (the students in the TIE programme) even though a bureaucratic one would be closer to our reality. During my conversations with the students, the government official would bring up certain views to trigger debates about social justice. For example, I would say, “It is unfair to the tax-payers if we allocate so many resources to help the poor.” As I said that, I understood that it would be unlikely for government officials in real life to be as frank as that. I did so because I knew the purpose the activity was to stimulate thoughts and discussions. I told Yuk-Ling and Wilson, “I realised that I was clearly
differentiating between a role and a character. For example, I would clarify with the students, beforehand, that I was not playing Leung Chun-Ying\(^4\), but ‘a’ government official. Instead of playing one particular character who acts and thinks in a particular way, I adopted the attitudes of a government official and used this role to activate debates about the mainstream concepts related to social development.”

In this narrative, a clear differentiation was drawn between the concept of “role” and that of “character”. I took the government official as a “role” – someone who holds a set of perspectives, instead of a “character” – someone with specific behaviours. As such, according to Illsas and Kjolner (1993) I was operating at the role level instead of the character level. As I did so, I found it relatively easier to let my educational purpose rule the energy instead of my acting techniques.

Such a differentiation between the concepts of “role” and “character”, however, is not a shared understanding amongst the nine TIE actors in this study, nor was there a widely shared understanding within the broader field of theatre and educational theatre. The terms “role” and “character” are often used interchangeably in discussions and writings about acting practice. To make things more complicated, in the Chinese language, the two terms are understood by many as one, since both “role” and “character” are translated as “角色” in Chinese. Although more refined differentiation between the two concepts can still be expressed, there is no distinct terminology to define the two different concepts in Chinese. The experiences shared in this part of the narrative suggest that a clearer differentiation between these two concepts may positively impact on TIE actors’ in-role facilitation tasks.

\(^4\) Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Government
6.5.2 Facilitation during Performance

In some of the narratives, the participants shared experiences when they were managing their educational goals at the character level rather than the role level. These experiences occurred when the audience was watching the performance and no direct interaction was occurring.

Nancy talked about how she tried to manage the level of engagement of students in one of the performances. She once came across a group of students who kept chatting and did not pay much attention to the performance. At one point of her performance, Nancy looked at the audience directly and spoke her lines with a blaming tone, and she got back the attention of the audience. She described her state of being this way: “I was communicating with them as myself, but I was in character.”

Mary also shared her observation on how I dealt with a group of flippant students in one of the performances of Fifty Square Feet. We were doing the Forum Theatre scene and the students were reluctant to come onto the stage. So we let them speak out their suggestions in their seats for us to act out. Yet the students were hardly serious in the task – they sidetracked, gave irrelevant suggestions and even took advantage of the chance to make fun of the situation. Mary noted that I abandoned the students’ suggestions, stood up and said, “My family is very poor. My father died. My mother is a scrap-picker.” Mary recalled that when I said those lines Ah Yee was in pain and was almost in tears. There was a moment of silence in the theatre. From that point onwards, Mary noticed that the students were no longer able to take the matter frivolously. The actor was managing the class by signaling to them that they needed to
take the characters’ situation seriously.

In another incident, I tried to manage the social issues while managing my character. In Wilson’s interview, I recollected something that happened in a scene between Ah Yee (the character I played) and her father (Wilson’s character). He asked me to go the kitchen to get some beer for him. Since I needed time to climb down from my bunk bed in order to get to the kitchen, I added some ad libs to fill the time gap. I said, “Is it correct that only the beer on the top shelf in the fridge is ours?” I compared what I said with what another actor said when she was playing the same scene. Her ad libs were, “Hurrah! Ah Yee is very good at fetching beer!” I discovered that while the other actor was trying to say something to help her engage more in her character, I was saying what I said to send the audience a message: “People living in sub-divided units in an apartment do not have a fridge of their own. They have to share it with other tenants in the same flat.” I was using my ad libs to broaden the students’ understanding about the living conditions of the poor.

These narratives reveal the way the participants managed both artistic and educational goals on the “character level” according to Ilsaas and Kjølner’s (1993) framework. However, while the authors suggest that at this level the actors would focus their energy more on acting skills than the educational concept, the narratives show that both acting skills and the educational concepts can be managed on equal grounds.

These narratives also brought me to reflect on Sz. Pallai’s framework, presented in the beginning of this section (page 216). This framework proposes four types of TIE facilitation by differentiating between: 1) whether the actors are in character (the author used the term “character” in the actors’ part, and “role” in the participants’ part), 2)
whether the participants are in role, and 3) whether a separate facilitator is present. I summarise these features in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Types of Facilitation according to Sz. Pallai (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Facilitation</th>
<th>State of Facilitator</th>
<th>State of Participants</th>
<th>Presence of Separate Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-role facilitation</td>
<td>out of role</td>
<td>out of role</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character-student encounters</td>
<td>in character</td>
<td>out of role</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character-role encounters</td>
<td>in character</td>
<td>in role</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-character facilitation</td>
<td>in character</td>
<td>in or out of role</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying this framework to the participants’ narratives, the above stories of Nancy, Mary and I should belong to the fourth type of facilitation. However, a closer look at Sz. Pallai’s definition seems to contradict the case. She defines this type of facilitation as “Actors *improvise* in character as in [types] (2) and (3) to interact with students, at the same time taking on the additional function as facilitator of the activity. No separate facilitators are involved.” (my italics) It appears that she was mainly referring to audience participation activities outside the performance. With such a definition, the experiences in the above narratives would not be regarded by Sz. Pallai’s as facilitation. The reason was possibly due to her view of these experiences as purely performative.

The participants’ narratives, however, expanded the understanding of facilitation-in-character by considering how the TIE actors may also facilitate learning in what appears to be pure performance. The acting experience here exemplifies the theories of acting which argue for the existence of a “rational onlooker” (Diderot, cited in Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005) and for the occurrence of a “double consciousness” (Stanislavsky, cited in Benedetti, 2005) while one is acting. According to these assertions,
the actor is at the same time deeply emotionally involved yet still in conscious control of the acting. Applying such notions of acting to understanding TIE practice would help to offer more possibilities for the TIE actors to consider as they facilitate learning.

6.6 Reflecting on the Values Conveyed to the Audience

The final theme arising from the data is related to how the research participants reflected on the values conveyed to the audience through their TIE works and the way they handled the works. Throughout the research process, the idea of “we are what we teach” was frequently brought up in the participants’ conversations. They recognised how their personal beliefs about social development and about education were infused in their practice, and impacted on the TIE work thus devised, as well as the emphasis they placed in facilitating the works. These shared ideas were most succinctly delivered by Mary and Yuk-Ling in the following descriptions.

Mary expressed that she found in Fifty Square Feet a sincere, humble attitude, and such an attitude was “carved” in the play and conveyed to the audience subtly. In her view, the collaborative team which devised the work had a genuine concern towards poor people’s lives. “Their sincere concerns were subtly carved in the work and it touched the audience with its honesty.” Mary said that looking at the work this way gave her less pressure on her acting skills. She explained, “Though my acting experience is limited, I believe that what’s most important is whether I believe in the programme. It is sincerity rather than professional acting skills that counts. It all gets back to the core values of humanity. I reminded myself that if I base my works on these core values, the audience will be touched.”
Mary saw the TIE programme as a premise encompassing the creative team’s personal beliefs, and thus giving rise to authenticity. Such a way of seeing authenticity again validates the notion of “double existence” (Stanislavsky, 1963), in which the actor’s unique self is embedded in the actor’s practice. Firstly, authenticity in *Fifty Square Feet* came from the devising actors’ input of their attitudes towards people living in poverty. Then Mary, holding a similar attitude, found it easier to act out, authentically, the characters created by the devisers. As a result, an honest, sincere piece of work was presented to the students, thereby putting across a genuine and serious concern about poor people. Such understanding of how meaning was conveyed to the audience helped Mary meet with the demands of a TIE actor. She became less concerned about the technical skills in acting, believing that a sincere and genuine attitude would support her work.

Mary presents a case in which her personal belief is in agreement with what the TIE work presented. What if there was a disagreement? Yuk-Ling had a different experience in reflecting upon the message *Fifty Square Feet* was trying to put across. She also reflected on her struggles as she started to ask, “Do I believe in what I teach?”

“I always asked myself, ‘How much do I believe in what I am sharing with the students?”’ Yuk-Ling reflected on her practice this way. She said that whenever she had doubt about the values conveyed in the TIE work, she would become less confident in conducting the work. “In our TIE works, we often challenged the models of social development which overtly prioritised economic growth. Basically, I agree that such development models were problematic. But I would also ask myself: How do I reconcile the fact that I am indeed someone who has benefited from the social
development process? How does my vested interest as a middle-class person affect my thinking? When I conveyed those messages to the students, did I believe in them myself?”

Yuk-Ling’s husband was a businessman and held a very different view about social development. For instance, on the issue related to wage protection policies, his standpoint as an employer was entirely different from Oxfam’s. To him, minimum wage protection would inhibit the development of business, and if the business could not sustain, the workers would become jobless. Oxfam’s emphasis, however, was on the protection of human rights. Situations like these made Yuk-Ling reflect, “Realising that people around me saw things so differently gave me pressure. I would become uncertain when the students brought up the related issues. Should I discuss it from the benefits of the poor or from those of the middle class? The tension was intense.” Due to this tension, she would avoid some topics when she led the student activities in the TIE works.

Yuk-Ling’s narrative indicates the tensions the TIE actor might face when their values collide with the values their works are intended to convey. In her case, the issue was further complicated when her real life circumstances were taken into account. Again, the notion of double existence applies to Yuk-Ling’s narrative here. Fundamentally, Yuk-Ling as a global citizenship educator agreed with Oxfam’s social justice agenda. However, real life situation as a middle-class person with vested interest in economic development caused her to confront herself honestly as to how her own values impact on her teaching practice. Tension of metaxis (Dunn & O'Toole, 2009; O'Toole, 1992) occurred as a result of the dissonance between her real being and the TIE work, inducing a strong desire to question the dominant values that exist in the real world.
Conquergood (2007) considers the playing of others who are clearly separate from oneself an act that requires an ethical concern. He proposes the idea of dialogical performance as a way of finding the moral centre of this kind of work, suggesting the performers should speak to and with the people they play instead of speak about them. According to his idea, the performance is “an occasion for orchestrating two voices, for bringing together two sensibilities” while “each voice has its own integrity” (p. 67). In other words, the performance is the site for the conversation between two existences – that of the player and that of the person being played. When Yuk-Ling asked, “Should I discuss [the issue] from the benefits of the poor or from those of the middle class?” she had clearly identified the two different voices that existed in the TIE works. What she found challenging, however, was finding a way to let the two voices converse in her work and she chose to avoid the tension brought about by the contrasting voices.

Mary and Yuk-ling both demonstrate here the worth of ongoing reflections on how values are conveyed to the audience. Such reflections helped them understand their practice more deeply, and sharpened the awareness of how their own values were formed and how these values influenced their works. When discussing the demands TIE actors are faced with, generally the artistic and pedagogical demands are addressed. These narratives, together with some of the others shared in the previous sessions, suggest that additional ethical demands are also placed on TIE actors in handling issue-based work. These ethical demands are heightened when the plays, the characters, the actors and the audience are essentially connected with the real people and real stories the TIE works portray.
6.7 Summary of Findings

Through a collective narrative, I have recorded and analysed the nine participants’ experiences in devising, facilitating and performing in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*, to address the research question of:

How do the actors participating in these two issue-based, interactive TIE works, understand, describe and explain their practices?

The rich narratives gave rise to six themes related to the participants’ TIE practice and revealed a range of responses as the participants tried to meet the demands of TIE practice. The relationship between the actors’ selves and their characters, between the actors’ realities and the fictional worlds portrayed in their works, and between their different identities, further intensified these demands. In the following, I summarise the findings under each theme.

The first theme relates to how the actors manage the social issues in the two TIE works. The first key idea discussed is related to how the practice in issue-based TIE requires internalised knowledge about the social issues explored in the works, but that not all actors were confident in handling the task effectively, while another showed reluctance to handle the task. The devising process and ongoing experimentation was found to be useful in supporting actors who lacked prior social knowledge. Another key discussion relates to how devising and conducting issue-based TIE involves the actors in manipulating conceptual, factual information and turning it into drama practice. It was found that different theories of acting held by the actors influenced their readiness in to handle this task and the way they made use of information. The devising process was deemed useful in supporting them to undertake this task through experimentation.
with different forms and styles.

The second theme is concerned with how the actors manage the pedagogical demands of TIE. The first key idea discussed relates to how the practice of TIE requires an understanding of its pedagogical assumptions, but even with a clear understanding, the actors could still encounter pedagogical tensions due to clash of personal beliefs or organisational expectations. The social justice agenda in Oxfam’s setting intensified the above tensions. As such, the TIE actors were faced with the additional demands of negotiating different expectations with funding or organising bodies of the works.

Another key point of discussion under this theme relates to how the rehearsal processes in TIE were useful, not just in equipping the actors with the skills in facilitating learning activities, but also in helping them to understand TIE’s pedagogics by mirroring the participants’ learning experiences and modeling an open and non-didactic facilitating approach. The third discussion relates to how the TIE actor, with his/her unique artistic and educational identity, can serve as a pedagogical entity inducing a conductive environment for learning to occur. The liminal nature of the TIE actor can turn the actor into a medium to connect the play and the audience.

The third theme in the findings relates to how the actors perceived the need to play their characters authentically, and how they managed the task. The main points of discussion include, firstly, how the actors drew on aspects of their realities as a resource to support authentic acting, including personal traits and past experiences. The rehearsal process further added to this resource by creating second order realities of the characters’ past, which the actors could draw on during the performance. The second discussion relates to how the actor-character relationship involves a double existence of
fiction and reality, including a second order reality. Thirdly, the different training needs between actors who are previously trained in drama and those who have no prior drama training are discussed. The capacity for imagination is referred to as particularly important for the latter. Fourthly, discussion is made regarding the additional demands placed on the TIE actors who assumed the social responsibility to take care of the characters they played, who were real people in the society. The multiple kinds of existence in an actor’s state of being were found to be more complicated when the characters they played were real people in life.

The fourth theme in the findings relates to how the actors consider the function of their characters in order to achieve the educational purpose of their TIE works. The key ideas discussed involve, firstly, how the TIE actors would consider the function of their characters rather than just immerse themselves in playing their characters. They became active interpreters of meanings instead of passive receivers of director's choices, due to the nature of TIE. This was particularly relevant to the devising actors. Secondly, the different styles of acting required to achieve different character functions is discussed. Thirdly, it was found that the actors may implicitly understand their practice without being aware of it or being articulate about it.

The fifth theme in the findings relates to how the actors juggled the different artistic and educational goals in facilitating audience interaction in role. The key ideas addressed first relate to how in-role facilitation was regarded as a harder task than out-of-role facilitation, as it involved more advanced skills that required the actor to shift between different modes of communication. It was found that a clear understanding about the concept of role as opposed to the concept of character is useful in enhancing in-role facilitation. The second point of discussion relates to how
in-character facilitation could also occur while the actors were, seemingly, merely performing for an audience without engaging them in any participatory activities.

The sixth theme in the findings relates to how the actors reflect on the values embedded in their TIE works. The first key discussion relates to how the values the TIE actors held could become manifest in the work and be subtly conveyed to the students. The second discussion relates to how ongoing reflections helped clarify the values and assumptions held by the actors, leading to the assessment of the possible impacts brought by these values to the learning process. The third discussion addresses concerns with the ethical demands placed on the TIE actors, particularly when the works they presented were related to real people and situations in the society.

6.8 Reflection

The collective narrative in this chapter presented the nine participants’ experiences in devising, facilitating and performing in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*. The rich narrative expounds the complexity of the actors’ practice in issue-based, interactive TIE works. A wide range of knowledge and skills were called for. A variety of demands and responsibilities were necessitated. Diverse needs of students, oneself and working partners were attended to. A mixture of tensions and dilemmas were confronted. The journeys that the actors went through did not only require them to understand the pedagogical and aesthetic dimensions of TIE, but also to constantly manage the relationship between their real selves and their characters, and between their realities and the fictional worlds portrayed in their works. In concluding this chapter, I share the key insights I gained from reflecting on this collective narrative in relation to the theories presented in the literature review.
Reflecting on the demands on the actors

A review of the collective narrative once again confirmed the assertions in the literature that the TIE actors are met with many demands including acting, devising, facilitating, managing the subject matter, the pedagogy, and the relationship between content, form and purpose, as well as adopting the notion of distancing and presentational, non-naturalistic acting styles. Compared with the biographical narratives in the previous chapter, the different demands were more evenly addressed when the participants responded to a question non-specific to past influences.

Although many authors regard devising as a major part of how TIE is experienced by its workers, only one-third of the participants in this study was involved in devising the works and as such, the demands on devising were only discussed by the few devising actors. Also, structuring TIE programmes remained an area of limited discussion. Meanwhile, both the devising and non-devising actors were more ready to explain how they managed form, content and purpose to achieve the purposes and functions of their works. Likewise, more participants addressed how they adopted non-naturalistic approaches to performing the characters, most obviously in explaining their experiences in playing the non-realist character Everyman. It is noteworthy that in discussing these two aspects of their practice, the devising actors more often addressed them as their intention while the non-devising actors addressed them as their realisation upon playing the characters. The latter seemed to have understood the ideas as a result of embodied experiences more than conscious planning.

While the above experiences confirm the assertions by TIE writers (Hennessy, 1998; Jackson & Vine, 2013; Pammenter, 1993; Williams, 1993) about the devising process as useful for preparing the actors to develop critical understanding of the themes, the
purpose of their works and the artistic forms employed to engage learners, I also reflect on the equally important needs of the non-devising actors in these regards. Circumstances do not always allow all actors to take part in the devising process of their TIE works, like in the setting in these two Oxfam programmes. What kinds of support, then, can be provided to the non-devising actors for developing clear understanding about the relationship between form, content and purpose and the use of various acting styles to achieve different goals, so that they can put such understandings to fuller use in their practice? In Chapter 7, I will offer my reflections on this question in consideration of the different ideas emerging from both findings chapters in this thesis.

Reflecting on the place of acting theories
The collective narrative offers evidence of the application of different acting theories in the participants’ practice. These theories were not just applied to their acting practice, but also when they considered the function of the characters as they devised the TIE works, and in facilitation work especially while in role. Some of the experiences described in the narratives clearly connected with concepts like emotion memory, double consciousness, double existence (Stanislavsky, 1963); the divided actor and de-familiarisation (Brecht, 1964); transillumination (Grotowski, 1968); liminality (Schechner in Brown, 2003), neutrality (Gao, 1996); and site and gap (Bond in Cooper, 2013). The narrative also enriched my understanding of some of these concepts. For example, I had never considered the idea of second order reality until one of the participants pointed out that his rehearsal experience was a form of reality that provided him with the emotional memory to play his character. Also, my understanding of the idea of double existence was expanded with the discussions on how the participants played characters who are real people. The layers of existence were more
complicated than I originally understood them to be – as related to the actor’s self and the character only. Furthermore, I deepened my understanding of the notion of liminality based on the participants’ accounts of this concept as not just relating to the relationship between self and character. They pointed out that the very identity of the TIE actor makes the actor a liminal entity for mediating artistic and educational purposes.

Another point I noted in the findings is that the participants do not just adhere to one set of acting theories. They applied different theories to create and play characters of different styles and in order to achieve different character functions. Sometimes multiple theories were applied to approaching the same character. However, I must stress that the participants did not explain their practices using these acting theories, but instead, the descriptions they offered related to their experiences clearly connected with the concepts the drama theorists suggest. Seemingly, the participants blended a mixture of theories and imbedded them in approaches of their own. They might have understood and embodied these theories implicitly without articulating them, or in some cases, were not aware that they were adopting such theories.

While I do not believe one has to be well versed in acting theories to master the tasks required in TIE, I do ponder about the value of seeking a more articulated theoretical explanation for practices in TIE. I wonder if such an explanation would help practitioners communicate the complex nature of TIE acting, and deepen exploration into their practice by incorporating more theoretical perspectives. In the next chapter, I attempt to offer my understanding of the artistry of TIE practice based on the findings across this chapter and the previous one. I also discuss the implications of my findings in this thesis for the broader field of Theatre-in-Education.
Chapter Seven: Discussion

This thesis aimed to explore the lived experiences of nine TIE actors, including myself, who were engaged in facilitating and performing in two issue-based, interactive Theatre-in-Education works conducted at Oxfam Hong Kong. Three of them were also involved in devising the works. The study sought to investigate how the nine actors understood, described and explained their practice in the two TIE works, and what past influences impacted on their practice. The research is a significant endeavour in addressing the shortage of research that focuses on the actors’ own voices relating to the understanding of TIE practice. By placing the actors’ narratives within theories of both TIE and contemporary theatre, the thesis used the participants’ experiences to inform a broader understanding of TIE practice.

A narrative inquiry approach with components of autoethnography was adopted as the methodology to privilege the voices of the actors and to gain rich and deep insights into their TIE practice. The participants engaged in collaborative conversations and continuous storying to give rise to nine biographical narratives explaining how past influences impacted on their practices, and a collective narrative documenting their experiences in devising, facilitating and performing in the two TIE works. The narratives contributed a great deal of information about TIE practice, grounding this information in the lived experiences of nine actors of diverse backgrounds. In this concluding chapter, I first consolidate the main findings across the two chapters. Following this, I discuss the implications of the findings for current theory, professional practice and research.
7.1 Major Findings across the Biographical and Collective Narratives

In this section, I discuss the major findings across the two previous chapters respectively addressing the two research questions in this study. For a start, I discuss the relationship between the two sets of findings by looking at how the various experiences of the participants interacted to impact on their TIE practice. Then I portray the artistry involved in the TIE actor’s practice emerging from the empirical findings.

Following this, I describe the demands placed on the participants as they simultaneous took on the role as social justice educators.

7.1.1 Interaction of Experiences within Multiple Dimensions of TIE Practice

The two previous chapters looked at the nine TIE actors’ experiences from different perspectives. Chapter 5 identified a range of past experiences influencing their TIE practice. Chapter 6 distinguished key themes that described and explained their experiences within the two TIE works. The two sets of findings connect with each other with the notions of continuity and interaction proposed by Dewey (1934) to understand human experiences. Continuity refers to how past experiences are carried forward to influence present experiences, for better or for worse. Interaction refers to the situational influence on one’s experience. Dewey asserts that an individual’s experience is a function of the interaction between one’s past experiences and the present situation. In this study, the past experiences of the nine participants, together with the specific circumstances within the Oxfam setting, work together to give rise to their unique individual experiences as TIE actors. The Deweyian notion of experience also stresses the continuity between experiences of art and those of everyday life in understanding aesthetic experiences. The range of artistic, educational and other life experiences addressed in the participants’ narratives interconnected to give rise to the
many ways they handled the two TIE works.

If the past is a resource to inform the present, what resources were brought into the nine participants’ practices? The narratives in this thesis point out a range of resources. Practical knowledge and skills related to subject matter, pedagogy and the artistic form were acquired through studying relevant subjects in university and participation in related drama workshops or theatre productions. Other than practical skills and knowledge, the past was also a cradle of inner resources, developing the convictions of the worth of social theatre, commitment to engaging young people in meaningful learning, and the dedication to social justice education. These inner resources supported the participants’ engagement with the Oxfam setting, their readiness to employ TIE as a pedagogical medium, and the way they related to the fictional stories and characters in the TIE works.

The past no doubt can sometimes become a constraint or a burden too. The findings indicated how the inadequacy in certain aspects of training limited the participants’ knowledge and skills for handling issue-based, interactive TIE. Previous educational or occupational experiences were sometimes a hindrance to the management of the more open and heuristic teaching approaches required in TIE. Lack of interest in social matters and the belief that theatre is merely concerned with feelings and emotions can also affect one’s motivation and readiness to engage in TIE works related to social issues, and can bring about difficulties in handling the works.

According to the participants’ narratives, the temporal continuity of experiences does not only apply to past influences. Supportive resources for handling the TIE works also came from experiences during the implementation of the programmes. The devising
and rehearsing processes provided technical support for the actors to carry out the works. Further still, these processes supported their imagination of the characters’ lives, and the understanding about the pedagogical principles of TIE. On the other hand, ongoing reflections on practice during the actual implementation of the works helped make sense of the interactive theatre works through continuous trial and error and reflection on this experience. Many of the narratives showed that the participants’ understanding of their practice arose as a result of practice rather than previous training or planning. Deep understandings were derived from embodied experiences, especially when the actors encountered challenges.

The participants’ experiences also came as a result of the situational factors existing in their practice – Dewey’s notion of interaction. Different dimensions existed within their practice, including the circumstances within their real life situations (e.g. family background and occupations), the specific purposes and requirements arising from the Oxfam setting (global citizenship education for teenage participants, with a strong social justice agenda), the specific characteristics employed for TIE as an artistic and pedagogic medium (issue-based, interactive theatre entailing activities built around a performance and requiring a range of acting styles), and the fictional stories and characters the actors played (including those related to the real life situations of people in poverty). The participants’ experiences across these different dimensions of the works interacted to bring about many possibilities and challenges in their practice in terms of their social knowledge, artistic demands, pedagogic requirements and ethical responsibilities.

The findings of this thesis take into account the continuity and interaction of positive and negatives experiences of the past and present, of the artistic, educational, social and
personal, and across different dimensions of the TIE actor’s practice. These findings are consistent with existing theories and discussions related to the complex artistry required in managing TIE works.

7.1.2 The Artistry Involved in the TIE Actor’s Practice

What is the artistry involved in the nine TIE actors’ practice? The findings reveal a range of acting and theatrical styles were required, both as the actors perform their characters and facilitate the works. Skillful management of the theatrical form is also required, not just in acting and facilitating, but also for those who are involved in devising the works. The artistry involved is not limited to technical skills but also requires sophisticated understanding about the art form in relation to how it is employed to convey messages, stimulate reflection, activate engagement and fulfill the specific purposes of the TIE works. Furthermore, the artistry of TIE requires effective management of the different demands that come about as multiple dimensions of the actors’ practice interact. Contemporary notions of acting like liminality, transparency, double consciousness and double existence, are variously called into play as the actors’ approach their works.

These findings are generally compatible with what the TIE literature asserts relating to the different demands placed on TIE actors and the acting approaches involved, but there are some areas in which they differ. While many writers emphasise the non-naturalistic, presentational approach to theatre as being more suited to TIE, particularly for achieving the purpose of distancing and stimulating reflection, the participants in this study also valued naturalistic approaches. This discrepancy appears to be caused by a shared concern for offering a fair portrayal of characters who are real
people living in poverty. In other words, for these actors, the social justice agenda, together with the juxtaposition of fiction and reality, heightened the demands for naturalistic acting approaches.

Some of the findings have also deepened my understanding about the notions of acting discussed in the literature. For example, the narratives point to how emotional memories for a character may come from second order realities created during the rehearsal process, with an actor constructing past experiences of the character in the rehearsals, and then drawing upon these memories to support his performance. In addition, my understanding of the notion of liminality has deepened as the actors applied it to explain not just the relationship between the character and the actor, but also to the double existence of actor and teacher within the identity of the TIE actor. Such a form of liminality turned the TIE actor into a unique pedagogical entity with qualities that support the learning and teaching involved in TIE.

A noteworthy observation accompanying the findings is that the nine actors’ experiences related to the application of non-naturalistic theatrical approaches were less readily brought up in the narratives, especially when they accounted for past influences impacting on their practice. The findings seem to suggest that past influences related to non-naturalistic approaches are less common in this group of actors’ experiences. Another point of interest is that most of the participants were not articulate about the acting theories they were applying in their work. Some of them did not explain their embodied experiences according to acting theories until they were invited to share their experiences in this narrative inquiry. Many of them seemed to have embodied the acting theories without being aware of them. Understandably, those who had not studied acting would not refer to acting theories, but it was quite surprising that those who had
studied acting also did not make much reference to this. A third point worth noting is the lack of mention of how the participants structured the TIE programmes. The devising actors were in the minority in this research, and when they described and explained their TIE practices relating to devising, they mostly focused on how they devised the performance pieces rather than the overall TIE structure inclusive of the participation activities. The research design that privileged the participants’ own voices and perspectives led to the uneven mention of different aspects of the actors’ practice.

7.1.3 TIE Actors as Educators for Social Justice

A key idea emerging from the narratives of the nine participants is related to how the demands on them as TIE actors are intensified when the TIE works have a strong social justice agenda. As Finneran and Freebody (2016) note, inherit tensions exist within drama and theatre works related to social justice, concerning purpose, evaluation and the place of the aesthetics. The participants’ experiences within their narratives echo some of these concerns, with specific focus on the challenges of managing the social issues, the artistic form and the pedagogical processes as they tried to achieve the purpose of the works. Furthermore, the ethical considerations they gave to the TIE works were also addressed.

The two TIE works, set within Oxfam’s Interactive Education Centre that is committed to a social justice approach to global citizenship education, were essentially issue-based and required the actors to possess deep understanding of the related social themes. Turning materials on social themes into dramatic presentations during the devising process was the first hurdle the participants encountered. Unlike devising other theatre works, the materials being handled in Oxfam’s TIE works were often conceptual,
essentially dealing with discourses about the structural causes of poverty and the
dynamic forces between different stakeholders in social development. Dramatic
presentation of conceptual ideas requires understanding of a wider range of forms
beyond naturalism, so that the plays and characters created are not merely reduced to
personal, psychological struggles but vehicles for understanding and reflecting on social
structures. Furthermore, attention needs to be given to the functions of the characters
so as to enable the audience’s understanding of the broader social issues.

Similar demands were required for the nine actors in playing the characters and
facilitating in role. Deep understanding of the social issues was required to an extent
that the actors were able to flexibly apply such understanding when handling
spontaneous audience response. Since the TIE works, as stated above, employed a range
of forms and styles to present the conceptual ideas related to global citizenship
education, the actors needed to prepare themselves for handling a range of acting styles.
The findings reveal that the actors’ readiness to handle social plays was not supported
when they held theories of acting where feelings and emotions prevail over critical
thinking on social themes. Actors must be able to shift their focus, while facilitating and
performing in the works, in order to portray the social values imbedded in their works
rather than the characters’ individual psyches. A more Brechtian approach to acting
would be beneficial to actors who engage in this type of work.

Theatre for social justice also comes with stronger social responsibilities. The
participants realised that they were faced with extra pedagogical and ethical demands.
Some of them found themselves confronted with pedagogical dilemmas when the
advocacy agenda of Oxfam clashed with the educational agenda of the TIE works.
Others were confronted with their own beliefs and values about social development,
which might not always align with those conveyed in the TIE works. Furthermore, the plays required the actors to play characters who are deprived people in the real world. In response to this situation, the actors placed high importance on portraying the deprived groups authentically, but they also sometimes doubted if the artistic choices they made were truthful to reality.

The experiences of the research participants reflect that when their role as TIE actors conflated with that of educators for social justice, their practice was made more complex. At the same time, their awareness of the artistic, pedagogical and ethical considerations required for their work was sharpened, leading to more careful examination and management of the relationship between content, form and purpose of the TIE works.

In the above sub-sections, I have reviewed the major findings in this thesis. Overall, the findings contribute to the field by providing thick and elaborated descriptions of key aspects of TIE practice, grounded in the lived experiences of nine actors. The narrative inquiry and autoethnographic methodologies enable in-depth understandings about these experiences to develop. The multiple voices of the participants provide a kaleidoscopic view of the various ways different actors meet the demands of TIE practice, and the dynamic forces affecting such practice. The findings provide concrete examples to support the discussions in related literature, and further expand some theoretical notions. In the following sections, I offer what I have learned from the empirical findings. The discussion focuses on the new insights I have gained in terms of theoretical concepts relating to TIE practice and the implications of these insights. I also make some practical suggestions for professional practice in the field.
7.2 TIE as an Artistry of Managing Multiple Existences

The motivation for this research came about as a result of my interest in how practitioners’ understanding about acting manifests in TIE practice. I was particularly keen to explore how the notion of duality in acting applied to interactive TIE, noting that TIE actors both engage in the plays and characters and stay fully aware of the audience’s response. With this research interest, I reviewed a body of literature examining the dialectic relationship between fiction and reality, self and character. The research process in this study expanded my understanding of some of these theories, with a key discovery being related to the concept of double existence. In this section I offer my newly developed understanding of this idea, seeing it as a useful contribution to current theories related to TIE actors’ practice.

When I reviewed the literature for this thesis, I understood the notion of double existence as the scrutiny of the relationship between the actor and the character. Most of the authors explained this relationship by adopting the central idea of duality. For example, the term double existence was originally used by Stanislavsky (1963) to describe the conflation of the actor and his/her character. A body of literature by other contemporary dramatists also suggests that a dialectic relationship exists between the actor and the character (Brecht, 1964; Brook, 1987; Schechner cited in Brown, 2003; Gao, 1996; Grotowski, 1968; Diderot cited in Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005; Stanislavsky, 1963)). The idea of metaxis (Boal, 1995; Bolton, 1985; O'Toole, 1992) was also based on the notion of duality, noting that there is a state of betwixt and between in the interplay between fiction and reality. Gao (1996) goes beyond the notion of duality when he suggests the idea of the triplication of the actor. His main idea, however, was still concerned about the relationship between the actor and the character, reality and fiction,
as he refers to the three distinct qualities of an actor as: the actor in real life, the actor who has transformed into his or her role, and the neutral actor who is an intermediate stage between the first two identities.

As I examined the findings of this research, I found that the notion of double existence applied keenly to the participants’ TIE experiences and has strong implications for their practice. However, the participants’ narratives indicated that their TIE practice involves many forms of existence beyond those between self and character. For example, the double existence of the NGO worker faced with specific organisational demands and the TIE actor required to adopt open, dialogic teaching approaches would lead to dilemmas in one’s facilitation work. The double existence of a middle-class person with vested interest in economic development and the global citizenship educator who challenges the assumptions behind economic development may cause serious confrontation to one’s own values. Hence the actors may scrutinise how their own values may have been conveyed to the audience.

Such kinds of double existence stretch beyond what I have previously understood from the literature. While the theorists use the notions of double existence and metaxis to explain the dialectic relationship between reality and fiction, self and character, the participants’ narratives indicate their TIE practice involves more layers of experiences. As the above examples illustrate, the different forms of existence may be related to the actors’ social roles and their position as actors in the TIE works, both within their real life contexts. In some other narratives, there is a temporal dimension to this double existence, like one who used to be taught badly and the facilitator who now wishes to help students seek meaning, giving rise to the actor’s specific pedagogical understandings and priorities. In some narratives, the layers of existence were multiple, like one who is a significant other of someone who had gone through poverty, the global citizenship educator withholding
specific educational beliefs, the actor playing a poor character in the play and the character in the play who is a real person in the society. The four kinds of existences were found to be simultaneously present as the actor approached one character in the TIE works. In some other narratives, the double existence of actor and teacher within the very identity of the TIE actor made it a unique pedagogical entity that models open-mindedness and possibilities for dialogue.

The interplay between these double or multiple existences is complex. As the findings reveal, sometimes the co-existing experiences are conducive to each other, like when the participants shared how their past influences contributed to their current practice. However, sometimes, values, expectations or experiences clash within the different existences and cause tensions, as exemplified in many of the participants’ narratives documenting how they managed the tensions arising from their different experiences. As a result of these tensions, they interrogated values and behaviours that existed in the society, and came up with deeper reflections or personalised approaches to practice. TIE practice, in this sense, becomes a site of negotiating the different meanings and behaviours that manifest themselves within multiple forms of existences. The TIE actor’s practice necessitates the art of managing such multiple existences.

Such an understanding of the TIE actors’ artistry came about as a result of applying acting theories to explain TIE practice. The notion of TIE practice as an art of managing multiple existences may provide a useful theoretical concept for practitioners, scholars and researchers to understand the actor’s practice in TIE.
7.3 Articulating the Complex Artistry of TIE

The findings in this research offer me deeper understanding of the actors’ practice in TIE, and further cause me to consider the benefits of formulating a more articulate explanation for the artistry of TIE. In considering this idea, I share the same concern with other practitioners (Ackroyd, 2004; Jackson, 2007) who identify common assumptions which place the practice of educational drama/theatre outside the realms of theatre discourse, thus hindering understanding of the artistic nature of the related practice.

When Ackroyd (2004) applies contemporary acting theories to explain the teacher-in-role strategy in drama education practice, she is concerned about the common misconception that teacher-in-role is something other than acting, obstructing the exploration of the artistry involved in adopting this strategy. My study shares a concern of similar nature. While no one would argue that the TIE actors’ work is not acting, there is a tendency to undervalue the artistry of this work. I hold this concern particularly close to heart as a practitioner in the field. TIE is still a relatively young discipline in Hong Kong. Common assumptions hold that the additional dimension of teaching to acting is diminishing the artistic value of theatre arts. The literature and findings in this thesis appear to show the contrary, suggesting that the actor's work in TIE is more complex when teaching is combined with acting, especially when multiple existences are in play and a range of contemporary notions of acting applied. I therefore regard it as useful to have a clearer explanation for TIE practice that takes into account such complexities in the actors’ work. Not only will it help inform theoretical discussions in the field, in Hong Kong and beyond, but practitioners may also draw on such ideas to deepen their professional practice.
I concur with the view of Kemp (2012) who asserts that many actors have incorporated implicit knowledge within their practice, but the concepts and terms they use to describe their works have been bound by limiting terminologies. Kemp makes specific reference to the use of vocabularies like “outside-in” and “inside-out” to describe acting practice, while he observed that most actors actually approach acting without being bounded by such an internal/external dichotomy. He deems it useful to adopt a vocabulary for theatrical activities that more accurately describe the psychophysical nature of acting, one that involves body-mind experiences holistically.

In the same spirit, I would argue that discussions about the actor’s practice in TIE need to make use of a suitable language that more truly reflects the nature of such practice. As this thesis suggests, this language needs to indicate that the actor’s practice in TIE involves the art of managing multiple existences – of actor and teacher, of self and roles/characters, and of the real world and the fictional representation of this world. The practice of the TIE actors, as this research suggests, is to a large extent related to how they mediate the dialectic relationship between these different kinds of existences through managing the art form. As such, the TIE actor’s practice is an art of liminal existence across different dimensions of the actors’ experiences.

In considering the language we use to describe the actor’s practice in TIE, I also regard it helpful to apply concepts discussed in theatre practice discourses more deliberately. This thesis shows the benefits of making use of acting theories to explain TIE actors’ practice, yielding fruitful discoveries and deepened understandings about the phenomenon of TIE acting practice. The experiences of the nine TIE actors in this study make manifest many characteristics of contemporary theories including those
related to the liminal nature of acting. By positioning TIE works within the discourses relating to practices of acting in contemporary theatre, I hope this thesis will help to address the misconception that the artistry of theatre suffers when an educational purpose is incorporated. As Brecht (1964) puts it, “Theatre remains theatre, even when it is instructive theatre, and in so far as it is good theatre it will amuse” (p. 73). What makes good TIE is reliant on how it makes effective use of the theatre form. The artistic dimension of the work is thus crucial. I agree with Schonmann’s (2005) argument that engaging with the language of aesthetics is the way to reclaim the place of the artistic and the aesthetic educational theatre practice, and it helps to broaden the horizons of the field.

Rhetorician James Boyd White (1984) asserts that culture is reconstituted through language. The language we use for discussing TIE practice influences our understanding about TIE and the practices derived from such understanding. Incorporating acting theories in the discussion of TIE helps to reframe thinking about the nature of acting in TIE, including a greater recognition of its roots in contemporary theatre practices. A new language acknowledging the liminal nature of the actor’s practice may provide a conceptual structure for practitioners to develop their practices including to enrich its artistic dimensions. At the same time, it may provide them with a more useful vocabulary for communicating their practice to people outside the field.

7.4 Support Systems for Actors in Issue-based, Interactive TIE

The findings in this study have further implications for professional practice in the field, related to the support systems needed to help actors manage issue-based,
interactive TIE. The narratives indicate that the nine actors, who came from a range of backgrounds, encountered different challenges within the TIE works. Some of these challenges were associated with their lack of experience in related practice. Some of the actors were skillful as actors but lacked the subject knowledge. Some of them had good social knowledge but did not have the required acting skills. Some found themselves inadequate in certain styles of acting, which limited their capacity for playing non-naturalistic characters. Some had the pedagogical knowledge about the heuristic approach to teaching, but lacked experience in the actual implementation of such approaches. As such, the findings reveal that the demands on the actors are intense and diverse, requiring deep understanding about the subject matter, the pedagogy and the theatrical form, as well as adept skills in acting and facilitating in and out of role. The participants’ experiences therefore invited me to consider the kinds of support that may usefully help actors meet the demands for conducting issue-based, interactive TIE works.

As far as the two TIE works in this study are concerned, there was no systematic approach to training the actors. For the participants who were experienced in educational theatre, it was somehow expected that their prior experiences would have sufficiently supported them for handling the works. The findings, however, indicate that this was not always the case. The novice TIE actors received some systematic training through the rehearsal process, and this group of actors reflected a number of benefits of such training. The rehearsal processes helped them manage TIE artistically and pedagogically. By and large, a consideration of the different support systems required for actors of different backgrounds may contribute to the professional practice in the field of TIE.
The findings indicate that there are different kinds of support conducive to the participants’ practices. These include: studying socially related subjects at university; participation in different kinds of theatre productions; formal and informal drama training (including actor training and drama education training); the rehearsal process of the TIE works; and ongoing reflective practice on the actors’ works. I reflect on the implications of these supports and consider what practitioners in the field of TIE can do to enhance such supports. Discussions on courses on social subjects unrelated to drama are outside the realms of our field, and participation in theatre is rather dependent on individual experiences. As such, I focus my discussions on the other three kinds of support.

My attention is first drawn to the experiences of the two actors who studied acting at the same drama college, which is the only tertiary institution in Hong Kong providing formal actor training. Both of them shared the view that they encountered huge difficulty in managing the social issues because the conservatoire approach to training in their previous studies only equipped them with vocational acting skills and hardly developed their academic and intellectual capacity for understanding broader social issues.

My contention is that the conservatoire approach to actor training may be limiting drama students’ readiness to approach a broader range of theatre practices like TIE. With this in mind, drama training programmes should put more focus on developing students’ academic and intellectual capacities. Pragmatically, even if vocational training is of major concern, the broader training will better equip drama graduates for meeting industry needs. Most acting graduates are engaged in educational theatre or applied theatre in their careers, and this is particularly the case in Hong Kong theatre where
job opportunities in mainstage theatre are limited. As such, the provision of training related to educational theatre is beneficial to all acting students. A further concern beyond pragmatism is that ideally, an expansion of training will nurture drama students who do not just become technical practitioners but artists who understand how to approach the world through theatre with a critical mind. In suggesting this, I hold the same opinion as Cohen (1998) who argues for the need to incorporate intellectual components into actor training, concurring with his suggestion that acting requires “sensitivity to literacy values, acquaintanceship with political and social history, understanding of philosophical dichotomies, and general appreciation of art and culture” (p. 28).

In view of the experiences shared by the participants in this study, in order to support actors who want to engage in issue-based, interactive theatre, drama training, be it formal or informal, should also equip actors with improvisational skills and diverse acting styles. Equally importantly, drama training programmes need to develop the actor’s understanding of how to manage the theatrical form in order to achieve the purposes of their works. Actors must also be taught to create and analyse characters socially rather than just psychologically. Together, these ideas suggest that a paradigm shift might be necessary to replace, as (Zarrilli, 2002) suggests, “the paradigms of the actor-as-interpreter of a theatrical text with a paradigm of the actor-as-creator” (p. 15). Such a paradigm is obviously relevant to actors who are involved in devising or performance creation, but indeed is equally significant to all actors, be they involved in devising or not. Actors who see themselves as creators rather than interpreters of texts would be more ready to consider the overall form of the work and to make suggestions as to how to approach the work, rather than merely taking directions or focusing on individual character presentations.
In addition, the findings of this thesis suggest that drama training specific to educational theatre practice should equip students with the necessary artistic and pedagogical understandings and skills required for conducting interactive TIE works. On a more general level, actor training programmes should be designed to help actors understand the relationship between the multiple existences that are present in the actor’s TIE practice, in order to inform practice and support practitioners in managing the sophisticated form of TIE. It is not my intention to suggest any “best” or “universal” training approach, for I regard actor training practices as necessarily being culturally specific. As such, readers from different places and cultures may resonate with this narrative inquiry in different ways, and consider different training initiatives specifically suited to their contexts. On a local level, given the existing understanding of acting in Hong Kong, I would suggest that actor training in this context needs to include more contemporary theories of theatre besides those related to character-based method acting, and take on board deeper understanding about the relationship between self, character and the actor’s state “betwixt and between” these existences. Actor training should help students gain a stronger sense of themselves, and acquire broader social and artistic knowledge other than those limited to acting skills. Such training should help them understand their selves as an essential part of their multiple existences, and provide opportunities for them to negotiate such multiple existences in acting practice and reflect on how it occurs.

Clearly, to suggest that every member of a TIE team needs to possess prior drama training meeting all the above requirements is a challenging idea, while it would also be dependent upon the availability of such all-encompassing drama training programmes. However, what might be possible is for TIE teams to consider the combination of
their team members, to include individuals with different skills, knowledge and capacities. Exchange of skills and knowledge could then be made available through on-the-job training in the form of rehearsals and ongoing reflective practice.

Arguably, on-the-job training has been a key process for the actor's professional development throughout the centuries. In this research, the participants noted how purposively structured rehearsal processes helped the actors, particularly those inexperienced in TIE, manage the demands of the TIE works. According to the participants, the rehearsal processes more usefully support their needs when they are structured so that the actors do not only rehearse for the play but also learn how to conduct the participatory elements of the TIE works. Rehearsal activities that engaged them as the TIE participants appeared to help them comprehend the pedagogy of TIE intrinsically, and understand the learning experiences they were going to facilitate. Actor-centred approaches to rehearsing the works also modeled the pedagogical beliefs underpinning the medium of TIE. Although it was mainly the novice TIE actors who were making comments on the rehearsal processes, I see that the same benefits could apply to those who are experienced actors but less adept at issue-based, interactive TIE. In view of the findings related to the difficulty in digesting the social themes, I propose more structured learning activities in this regard could be built into the rehearsal processes too, rather than relying on the actors to study the themes by reading related materials on their own.

Finally, some of the participants pointed out how their competence for handling the TIE works grew with time through ongoing experimentation and reflection on their practice. Such remarks point to the value of reflective practice in enhancing professional practice. O’Mara (1999) suggests that reflective practice is useful for
understanding drama practice which is often intuitive in nature. She points out a number of benefits of reflective practice, including making tacit understanding explicit and supporting drama educators to dwell into specific moments of practice to make greater sense of one’s own action. The different TIE teams in this study worked differently and there was no formal system to encourage reflective practice. Some of the teams were keener to discuss and share their experiences following each TIE session. Some teams were less enthusiastic. I would suggest that regular and systematic reflections could become a useful support for TIE actors. Besides the above benefits asserted by O’Mara, collaborative reflections amongst TIE team members of different experiences have the potential to also support exchange of expertise. For the inexperienced actors, the learning community can serve as a platform of actor training, adopting a co-participation model of apprenticeship (Prior, 2012) to support their professional development.

The discussions in this session aimed to generate suggestions for systems that may support actors to handle issue-based, interactive TIE. However, I am fully aware that actor-training methods are diverse and the number of approaches one may adopt are varied. The support systems suggested are by no means prescriptive. The usefulness of these systems would very much depend on specific settings, composition of TIE team members and available resources.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

Every study has its limitations. This narrative study was committed to a research approach where data was collected based on the actors’ own perceptions and understanding of their practices. I chose this particular research approach in an
attempt to ground the data in the participants’ own understandings of their experiences and highlight their voices. However, I am also aware of the limitations that come with the reliance on participant responses. The findings were limited by the participants’ perspectives, conceptual understanding of theatre and the language they employed to describe their experiences. I noted that the participants were not always articulate about their practice, particularly when acting experiences were mostly intuitive in nature and not easy to make clear in words. I also noted that some participants had more theoretical insights on their practices than the others. As such, it cannot be ruled out that this study contains gaps in understanding restricted by the participants’ perspectives and the language they could offer to describe their practice.

Another limitation was related to composition of the participants. Since only three out of the nine participants were devising actors in the two TIE works, the experiences in devising the TIE works were less often mentioned than those in facilitating and performing in the works. There is an imbalance of experiences related to the different aspects of TIE in this study.

A major constraint I encountered during the research process was the time demands required of the participants. The research was deliberately designed in a way that the participants were invited to read and feedback on the interim texts. The purpose was to generate richer data through continuous dialogue as the research proceeded. However, the amount of time the participants were ready to commit varied. Some of them took time to write long emails in response to the interim texts, some welcomed further conversations with me to discuss their thoughts on the emerging narratives, while some of them never gave further substantial response apart from a brief confirmation that the narratives were truly reflecting their experiences. As such, there
remains an inevitable imbalance of voices in the narratives presented in this study.

7.6 Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis proposes that the practice of TIE actors involves multiple existences of the actors’ experiences. I believe this is a useful conceptual structure for further TIE studies, but there is also potential to examine how this emerging concept may apply within other contexts. The research site in this study, with its strong commitment to a social justice agenda, may have intensified the issues relating to managing the multiple existences in TIE actors’ practices. It would therefore be worth exploring how and to what extent the management of multiple existences may apply to other kinds of work, within and beyond TIE, where the social justice agenda is not so strong. Furthermore, companies from beyond Hong Kong may conduct similar narrative inquiry studies to understand their actors’ experiences and how past influences have impacted on their practice. The different cultural contexts may give rise to interesting findings with regard to how differing backgrounds may lead to TIE actors bringing different levels of ability and understandings to the work they do.

A future study may also explore more deeply how the notion of multiple existences may apply to the actor’s experiences in devising TIE works, and the past influences that have impacted on such experiences. Restricted by the composition of the research participants and the specific research design, limited data was collected in this study concerning this aspect of TIE practice. Further research in this area may help provide more comprehensive understanding about the actors’ practices in devising TIE.
7.7 Concluding Remarks

Investigating the practice of the nine TIE actors in this study allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of this practice, including my own. The narrative approach to research helped my fellow teammates and I to articulate what we did not originally articulate, to share practice and to collaboratively reflect on our practice. Presenting our experiences narratively also helped me to capture richness and the nuances of meaning which “cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of facts, or abstract propositions” (Carter, 1993, p.6). Narrative, with its retrospective nature of meaning making, “communicates the narrator’s point of view, including why the narrative is worth telling in the first place” (Chase, 2005, p. 656). For me, the narratives presented here were worth telling because I am a TIE practitioner, and more specifically, one who works within the specific cultural context of Hong Kong. Here, TIE practices are poorly understood, and often viewed as lesser art. I began this study as a personal pursuit, and reached the end with some emerging theoretical concepts that I hope might make a useful contribution to current knowledge, together with some practical suggestions that may usefully support professional practice. Like Prior (2004), I see that the value of investigating practice is in opening up one’s practice to other practitioners in order to learn and develop professionally. By attempting to make sense of a complex artistry, I hope this thesis will create a foundation for further research and help practitioners to further develop the practice of Theatre-in-Education.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Letter to Oxfam

[Date]

Dear [Name],

**A Narrative Inquiry of TIE Actors’ Conceptions of Acting in Two Issue-based, Participatory Theatre-in-Education Works**

I am currently undertaking a higher research degree in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University under the supervision of Associate Professor Penny Bundy. My research is an inquiry on my understanding of acting in issue-based, participatory Theatre-in-Education works. I wish to seek Oxfam Hong Kong’s consent in allowing me to conduct the research at the Interactive Education Centre on the works *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*.

**Purpose of the Study**

My research involves an examination of the experiences of acting of myself and other actors in the two TIE works, seeking to find out:

- How do we understand, describe and explain our practice in devising, rehearsing and performing in the two issue-based, participatory TIE works?
- How do past influences (artistic, educational, personal, philosophical etc) impact on our practice and our understanding of such practice?
- How does an understanding of the other participants’ experiences and conceptions inform my own understanding of acting, and of the influences I have had on them as a teacher educator?

I hope the study will help me to develop a better understanding of the nature of acting in TIE, and thus develop myself professionally as a TIE actor and teaching educator.

**The research activities involved in the study**

The research will involve me and the other 8 actors involved in the TIE works in interviews and dialogues about our understanding of acting. I will also visit some of the TIE rehearsals/performances/workshops conducted by the other actors during the period of 1 Dec 2010 to 31 Aug 2011.
The actors whom I am inviting to participate in the study are [names]. Individual consent will be sought from them to take part in the study.

**Credit in publications**
The research findings will be published in the form of a research thesis and/or other academic publications. The participants’ names will remain confidential and fictitious names will be used in the publications. Due to the nature of the work, I wish to be able to include Oxfam Hong Kong’s name in the research reports as this piece of information is inherent to the understanding of the research context. Draft copies of the publications will be presented to your organisation for comments before dissemination.

The decision about participation in this research project rests with Oxfam Hong Kong. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at [contact information].

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at [contact information] or my supervisor, Associate Professor Penny Bundy at [contact information].

Thank you very much for your kind attention. I am very much looking forward to your favourable reply.

Yours sincerely,

Chan Yuk-Lan
CONSENT FORM

Project title: A Narrative Inquiry of TIE Actors’ Conceptions of Acting in Two Issue-based, Participatory Theatre-in-Education Works

Research team:
Principal Investigator: A. Prof. Penny Bundy ([contact information])
Researcher: Chan Yuk-Lan ([contact information])

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Ms. Chan Yuk-Lan and A.Prof. Penny Bundy of the School of Education and Professional Studies at the Griffith University. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that nine participants, including the researcher herself, who take part in Oxfam Hong Kong’s TIE works will be involved in the study, and they have given their individual consent to take part in the study.

I was informed that Oxfam Hong Kong may withdraw its consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethical clearance through, Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if Oxfam Hong Kong have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, we may contact the Manager, Research Ethics at [contact information].

With full knowledge of the foregoing, I agree, on behalf of Oxfam Hong Kong, to participate in this study.
☐ Yes    ☐ No

I agree to have the researcher sit in and observe the rehearsals and performances in the two TIE works stipulated in the study.
☐ Yes    ☐ No
I agree the researcher to take field notes on her observations of the rehearsals and performances in the two TIE works stipulated in the study.

☐ Yes    ☐ No

I agree to the use of Oxfam Hong Kong’s name in any thesis or publication that comes of this research, and I understand that draft copies of the publications will be presented to Oxfam Hong Kong for comments before dissemination.

☐ Yes    ☐ No

Name of representative: [name]

Signature of representative: ___________________

(For and on behalf of Oxfam Hong Kong)

Date: ___________________
Appendix B: Consent Letters to the Participants

[Date]

Dear [Name],

A Narrative Inquiry of TIE Actors’ Conceptions of Acting in Two Issue-based, Participatory Theatre-in-Education Works

I am currently undertaking a higher research degree in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University under the supervision of Associate Professor Penny Bundy. My research is an inquiry on my understanding of acting in issue-based, participatory Theatre-in-Education works. I wish to seek your help in this research by taking part as a participant.

Purpose of the Study

My research involves an examination of the experiences of acting of myself and other actors in *The Other Side of the Fairy Tale* and *Fifty Square Feet*, seeking to find out:

- How do we understand, describe and explain our practice in devising, rehearsing and performing in the two issue-based, participatory TIE works?
- How do past influences (artistic, educational, personal, philosophical etc) impact on our practice and our understanding of such practice?
- How does an understanding of the other participants’ experiences and conceptions inform my own understanding of acting, and of the influences I have had on them as a teacher educator?

I hope the study will help me to develop a better understanding of the nature of acting in TIE, and thus develop myself professionally as a TIE actor and teaching educator.

The role of a participant in the study

Should you agree to take part in the study, you will be invited to engage in the following activities from Dec 2010 to Aug 2011:

- engage in dialogues with me about your current and past experiences related to the research questions, via the following means:
  - individual and/or group interviews (which will be audio recorded)
  - informal conversations (which may or may not be audio recorded, according to circumstances and your agreement)
• written exchanges in the form of letters, emails, Facebook dialogues, blog post responses;
• allow me to observe and record field notes (in the form of writing, photos or drawings) of some of the TIE rehearsals/performances/workshops conducted by you;
• read 3-5 interim research reports, which will take the form of a story I write continuously as a researcher, and share your feedback on the stories at subsequent interviews or conversations, which will be written in Chinese (please refer to Annex 1 for an example of such narratives);
• comment and revise a written narrative of you at the end of the research, and share your feedback with me in writing or verbally (these reports will be written in Chinese, see Annex 1 for an example).

Confidentiality
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/privacy-plan or telephone [contact information].

The research findings will be published in the form of a research thesis and/or other academic publications. Your name will remain confidential and fictitious names will be used in the publications. All data collected will be used for research purpose only.

Audio recordings and field notes collected during the study will be retained in a locked cabinet in my office, and will be erased at the end of the study or within five years from when the recording was made, whichever is shorter. People who have access to these materials will be the researchers and research assistants whom I have trained to strictly observe confidentiality of the study.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. While dearly hoping to have your participation in the study, I understand the decision to participate and to withdraw at any stage of the project will entirely rest with you. Should you decide not to take part in the research, however, I hope you will still grant me permission to attend some of your TIE rehearsals or performance to observe the other actors involved
who have consented.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at [contact information].

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at [contact information] or my supervisor, Associate Professor Penny Bundy at [contact information].

I very much look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Chan Yuk-Lan
Annex 1 attached with the Consent Letters to Participants
香港藝術發展局委託策劃，邀請「香港藝術發展局」與香港藝術學院進行的香港「舞齣教育研究及成果研討班」協同研究員：

「世界優秀藝術教育論壇」之專題論壇「應用劇場與社交文化」講座，及《What Could Teachers Learn from Their Students?》論文發表者；

以及出席不同機構的教師、社工專業發展講座，工作坊，擔任一些專題比賽評委……等；

還有自己作為博士研究生，正在探討教育劇場演員對演劇的觀念。

我不斷地去尋找自己身分的異同，一方面是要讓旁人了解我講的故事之背景脈絡，另一方面要指出劇場教育的複雜多面。這個故事中的“我”，長有兩重身份：工作坊導師、教師／社工／導師培訓者／項目與課程籌劃、演員／指導演員／研究者／戲劇研究／寫作人等，而“我”的工作範圍亦涉及實踐劇場／教育劇場及演出、公民教育／戲劇教育／個人成長等多個不同領域。

故事，由她開始……

我做流行？

我經常跟人誇大自己做流行工作的，以下是一段典型對話：

我：我在香港藝術學院做老師。
別人：哦，你在香港藝術學院做工作的。
我：不，我在香港藝術學院做老師。
別人：噢，那麼你是……演員的？
我：哈哈……我其中一部分的工作是演員，特別是劇場演員；我還在青少年演出中扮演角色的角色。
別人：哈哈……你有什麼會演或演員的？
我：我有教學生劇場，但不止是表演課。除了學生，我也教老師／社工／戲劇研究者，甚至叫導演／社工／戲劇研究者進行到教學和社會工作中，例如用劇場來教授。
別人：哈哈……你是教老師演員的……
我：哈哈……
戲劇教育之重要性：

- 所有的學生都需要參與——是必須由一班人（通常是少數）改換另一班人（大多數）的教法，有時未必最合適。
- 所有的學生都要學會選的東西上，如果教學是以語文、人流教育為主，學生的注意力要放在課堂上，如果教學是以寫作、思考、研究為主，學生的注意力要放在課堂上，思考和寫作，如果教學是以演劇、音樂、舞蹈、繪畫、設計等為主，學生的注意力要放在課堂上，思考和演劇。故此，有時演劇就是完全的創作、排練和演出，有時是創作和排練，有時是演出和創作。

你會注意到我用上許多「有時」、「合適」的字眼，我這樣寫，是因為要提醒大家每個教學場景是不同的，有時演劇是以創作、排練和演出，有時是創作和排練，有時是演出和創作。演劇的教育發展至今，我覺得需要把它的深層次、複雜性予以正視和深入研究，並多加注意和尊重戲劇的即興性、偶異性、表演者與觀眾之間／真實與虛幻之間的對話性——正說的優。而且，需要認識這些觀念的，不只是戲劇以外的人，也包括戲劇圈中人自己，如另一位戲劇教育同工、多個劇團演出的反應。M在加入上述演劇和N的討論時寫道：

There is a misunderstanding about drama and theatre not only outside the theatre community (but amongst the field of theatre practitioners too) ... I really think that we are in the middle of a revolution, that DIE and TIE will not only change education, but the art form itself and how it is practised. If we change our way of thinking about educating students, if we change how we educate students, we (actors) will also change our way of thinking about how the art form is taught and practiced. (April 2009)

然後我回答：

Can't agree more on your point that drama education takes a re-examination of the art form itself. As a younger member of the drama/theatre family, it incorporates ideas and practices of contemporary theatre, but this has often been overlooked. One problem seems to come from a misinterpretation that educational drama/theatre is a "lesser" art. Some people even go so far to seeing educational drama as anti-theatre; which is totally not true.

在這一件事上，我實際上建立了一個新的實踐和反思，教育劇場帶領我到一個更深層的理解，回顧以前的經驗和作為，這種理解和反思必將養育我的專業劇場實踐。 (April 2009)

戲劇教育 ≠ 次等藝術

我看著二零零九年文字的書、書和顧問，與別人的對話、不少均要著於如何確認戲劇教育的藝術性這方面。同工Y談，說這些反覆出現的主題顯示出這些問題一直纏著我，我說：「我不會用問題（bother）這個字，只是覺得我們的行業要向前走，討論這些問題十分重要，但討論的人太少，所以覺得要提出來讓更多人注意。」

討論不多的另一個原因，除了可能是沒有相關的觀念，也可能是業界根本沒有去想，只想當然地認為戲劇教育其實不重要，不重要戲劇價值。

二零零九年五月三十日我在「facebook」中一句有感而發的留言，意外地引來不少評論：

Chan Yuk-lan Phoebe 陳玉蘭對「買票經營困難「只好」去做戲劇」這種說法（今天 Cable News），極為反感！
A: Who said that? Should write them a letter word for word!  
B: Am I mad or something, you're like a foodie you're so hungry! classmates, don't tease me!

A: Yes, right right! Agree!!!!
B: Do you want to eat noodles? I don't like noodles, I prefer rice. classmates, don't tease me!

A: That's right, isn't it? In the past, I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.
B: I agree with you. I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.

A: I think it's right, the truth is you're not interested in eating.
B: Yes, yes, that's right. You're not interested in eating.

A: I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.
B: I agree. I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.

A: I think it's right, the truth is you're not interested in eating.
B: Yes, yes, that's right. You're not interested in eating.

A: I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.
B: I agree with you. I used to be a foodie, but now I'm not interested in eating.

A: I think it's right, the truth is you're not interested in eating.
B: Yes, yes, that's right. You're not interested in eating.
戲劇教育工作者之自我修養

有人會擔心，觀劇數學教育會淪為形式，不會令人	
步驟嗎？

戲劇教育十多年前開始在香港（特別是學校）普及化之	
初，許多人不敘洪記它的儀器性，認為會嚇怕人，會誤	
嗦。這種想法何時是出于穩重和，想紓緩初學者的需	
要有時是源自一種「香港教育良好」的宿命，觀將	
會向他們介紹戲劇教育，就是遊目、接觸、直接一	
點、那些遙遠、遙遠化的教學理念，他們不擔心的。」
（陳珊，2009b）或許是另一個不必然的自我提煉。

近年來，我和身邊的同事接觸了一批又一批來上工作	
坊的教師、社工、劇場工作者，當中越來越多一再碰上	
的熟悉面孔，他們在錯躍過想象教育後，開始嘗試不	
受地繼續進行演進的機會，有些期望繼續學習不同的	
方式，更具實用性、開始靈活變通的並非更多形式，而是	
內功與心法的浸潤。

不難想象，數年後我和一部分同工發展到驚訝，看見戲	
劇教育推進得那麼快，新單位的溝通環節更差異的共	
道。可今天當下，我們轉變了，看來除了掌握適當的	
時間和用心收納的朋友，看過香港藝術學院及格里菲斯	
大學合唱的師生演出後，香港藝術學院及香港公開大學陸	
續開設課程，且Heat來作反應，足見戲劇教育在業界各	
同行的共同努力下，獲得了一定的肯定和認同。我驚奇，
現在我們可以放心去想盡意地推廣戲劇教育之餘，如何在	
推廣方面下功夫，好讓戲劇教育繼續有所提升。

觀劇專業發展的觀念在許多行業都相當重視，我們作為	
戲劇教育工作者亦不例外。但香港環境急速動的城	
市很奇怪，好將於要成就出專家，於學藝學院畢業就	
立即被視為專業戲劇人，就將於戲劇教育課程（有時甚	
至只是一門不通課程），就將於成為專家，這實在有點	
腳步自約的問題。任何一種專業，都需要細年基礎、沉	
澱，以及持續學習，作為戲劇教育工作者，要浸透	
的範圍更要廣泛，故此才許——戲劇教育、技巧的影	
響（包括上述提及的有關當代劇場理論和實踐的影響）；
支撐方式的演繹（例如過去戲劇教育有關論）自己得	
讓旁觀，了解相關的觀點和見解），被學者的腳（例	
如認識和研究學生互動的能力）……凡此種種，皆為我	們學的修煉，也需要我們用以研究的精神去細心審視	
和摸索。

接受我研究，許多人又容易抱有誤解，以为這是象牙塔	
裡的事情，與現實脫離的事件，是研究者，或那些「無能者、無能者」的學者才會做的事情。讓理想的人，
不論是否接觸過戲劇教育過程當中，正順著研究的實際	
後，要成為真正實際工具的方法（例如戲劇研究，反思	
實踐等），我們的每一個實踐，皆能成為或非正式的	
研究，成為實際、 Educación的過程，再從其他不同的	
平台發展，引發討論和對話，依此架構，以至最終	
與戲劇教育家和它的之交流，支持後期得以戲劇	
教育研究。

近年來努力在部落格發表文章，以及講座相關研究的	
研討，目的也不外如此，期望它們可以將更多的思	考、影響與討論。
注：
1. 《變形記》（Chadwin & Connelly, 2003），戏剧教育为一种新的学习方式，其核心在于对自我认知的发展。通过角色扮演，学生可以体验不同角色的视角，从而更好地理解他人，提高自我认知能力。因此，戏剧教育在教学中的应用越来越受到重视。
2. 本文中引用他人的意见，并以英文字母为示例，旨在说明他们在实际教学中的应用。
3. 语言与文化差异，为了保留原汁原味，我把原文引述对照译。我文中其他部分作同样处理。这一部分的译文，“不少西方教师都倾向于理解老师与‘正确’的观念差异而咎之有德。而此观点是基于对‘权益’的重视，即学生在角色扮演中加入角色之外………我理解这一部分在于，人们对戏剧和教育行为的看法是否有必要有某些观念，对于在课堂中引入戏剧手法的目的与方法的探讨……”
4. 文中，人们对戏剧和教育行为的误解和偏见，我们可以从以下几个方面来分析。首先，戏剧和教育行为之间存在着密切的联系。其次，教育行为的误解和偏见，也反映了人们对戏剧和教育行为缺乏了解。因此，我们需要对戏剧和教育行为进行深入的研究和探讨。
5. 文中，对你的归宿进行思考，人的教育行为和角色扮演有密切的关系。通过角色扮演，人们可以看到自己在不同角色中的表现，从而更好地理解自己。因此，戏剧和教育行为在教学中的应用，可以提高学生的学习效果。
6. 文中，对你的归宿进行思考，戏剧和教育行为之间存在着密切的联系。通过角色扮演，人们可以看到自己在不同角色中的表现，从而更好地理解自己。因此，戏剧和教育行为在教学中的应用，可以提高学生的学习效果。
7. 文中，对你的归宿进行思考，戏剧和教育行为之间存在着密切的联系。通过角色扮演，人们可以看到自己在不同角色中的表现，从而更好地理解自己。因此，戏剧和教育行为在教学中的应用，可以提高学生的学习效果。
8. 文中，对你的归宿进行思考，戏剧和教育行为之间存在着密切的联系。通过角色扮演，人们可以看到自己在不同角色中的表现，从而更好地理解自己。因此，戏剧和教育行为在教学中的应用，可以提高学生的学习效果。
9. 文中，对你的归宿进行思考，戏剧和教育行为之间存在着密切的联系。通过角色扮演，人们可以看到自己在不同角色中的表现，从而更好地理解自己。因此，戏剧和教育行为在教学中的应用，可以提高学生的学习效果。

参考文献：
Chung, Y. (2009), In Their Own Words: How Do Students Relate Drama Pedagogy to Their Learning in Curriculum Subjects? Research in Drama Education: 14, 2, 191-209.
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陳玉華（2009），《戲劇教育的生命價值》，刊載於台灣師範大學學術研究學術論文集，http://phoebe1/alamy/lambda/lambda.php?sp=showArticle&sid=1080942

香港戲劇教育論壇 2009

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CONSENT FORM

Project title: A Narrative Inquiry of TIE Actors’ Conceptions of Acting in Two Issue-based, Participatory Theatre-in-Education Works

Research team:
Principal Investigator: A. Prof. Penny Bundy ([contact information])
Researcher: Chan Yuk-Lan ([contact information])

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Ms. Chan Yuk-Lan and A.Prof. Penny Bundy of the School of Education and Professional Studies at the Griffith University. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview and informal conversations with the researcher to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording my responses.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my written exchanges with the researcher in the form of letters, emails, Facebook dialogues and blog post responses, which are related to the study, to be included as data in the study.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing field notes to be taken about my participation in the project.

I am also aware that the excerpts from my writing, the interviews and the researcher’s field notes may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this study, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethical clearance through, Griffith
University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Manager, Research Ethics at [contact information].

With full knowledge of the foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to be interviewed and have my interview audio recorded.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree audio recordings to be made on informal conversations with the researcher related to the study, upon my agreement each time a request for such recording is made.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that only the research team will have access to the audio recordings.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that the audio recordings will be erased at the end of the study or within five years from when the recording was made, whichever is shorter.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree my written exchanges with the researcher in the form of letters, emails, Facebook dialogues and blog post responses, which are related to the study, to be included as data in the study.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to have the researcher sit in and observe my rehearsals and performances in the two TIE works stipulated in the study.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree the researcher to take field notes on her observations of my rehearsals and performances in the two TIE works stipulated in the study.

☐ Yes  ☐ No
I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Name of participant: __________________ (please print)

Signature of participant: ___________________    Date: ___________________
Appendix C: Example of an Interim Text

My Past Influences (Phoebe)  
Written on 20-23/6/2012

This part of my writing is a translation of a narrative I originally wrote in English. What I realised in translating this is, when I was translating my own story, some ideas became clearer to me in the process that made me rework on the original Chinese writing. This did not happen when I was translating the others’ stories, because what has been said were “given” to me and my responsibility was to find the best way of expressing the precise meaning of what was said in the translation. Translating my own story is different. The translating process is an on-going thinking process that further developed my ideas.

X        X        X

After writing Yuk-Ling’s story, I began to wonder if the use of a linear, chronological representation of her past influences is appropriate. I asked Yuk-Ling how she feels about it. She told me, “You wrote the story this way because I told it to you this way. Indeed the question of ‘how my past experiences have influenced me’ did not first come about as a result of this study. I have always been thinking about this, and the chronology of incidents was how things occurred to me.” In other words Yuk-Ling does not think the linear representation is a problem.

However, when I began to consider my own story, I asked, “Does it work for mine?” One day when I was on the MTR, I took out a pen to outline my past influences. What appeared in my head, rather than a linear diagram, was a web-shaped diagram.

In this web, different experiences are not necessarily directly related. There is also no fixed chronological or causal relationship between the different experiences. I think such a representation depicts my experiences more closely in that it addresses the complexity of my life and the complexity of the relationship between different past experiences. I used this as the basis to list out what I regard as significant influences. What came out in my mind were not just people or incidents, but also what I have written in the past including blog posts, journals, Facebook comments, articles, speeches and artifacts. In the following paragraphs I will cite some of these information where appropriate.
Fondness for performance emerged and encouraged

My fondness for performance started when I was very small. The following extract from an article I wrote for my alma mater’s 50th anniversary summarises my journey in drama before I graduated from secondary school:

“I have always been fond of performing since I was very young. However the primary school that I went to did not have any extra-curricular activities. In order to compensate for that, once I got to secondary school I participated in all kinds of activities related to the performing arts: choral speaking, singing, drama, folk dance… etc. In those activities my experiences and love for performing arts gradually grew.

When I was in Form 2, I joined the school drama club [and did my first stage performance]. In Form 3, I joined the inter-house drama competition for the first time and took up the main role… The performance brought me the first drama related award in my life. I won the Best Actress Award… In Form 6, I also attempted to take up directorship and I won the Best Director Award. These awards that I
Choosing the road less travelled
At school I had always been excellent academically and in conduct, and I always took up leadership roles. My decision to opt for drama surprised many people. In alumni gatherings I always come across schoolmates who tell me that they wouldn't expect their head prefect, one who excelled and went to the business school at the University of Hong Kong, would give up the path of becoming the cream of the crop in the society in order to seek after the ideal.

What is the “ideal” that I have been seeking after? After years of consolidating my thoughts I found that for me the ideal means “refusing to live under others' expectations” and “seeking for things that are meaningful to me”.

I think that is why when I was in Form 6 when everyone thought that I should take up the more prestigious position as the chairperson of the student association, I opted for the house captain because my sense of belonging to my house was strong.

I think that is also why when I was choosing between becoming an executive committee member of the university's students union and that of the students association of my residential hall, I opted for the latter because I regarded it a better position that could give full play to my abilities.

And I think it is also why when I realised that I had been holding naïve ideas about business administration as a job that are about people, and that it is indeed about wearing suits and carrying suitcases to become a “Successful Businesswoman” I decided to follow what I truly love at heart and go for a job at a theatre company upon graduation.

A few years ago I was asked to draw a life map in a workshop to show significant experiences that have had an influence on who I am today as a drama educator. This was what I drew:

15 Source:《我的荃官舞台》──為母校的五十週年特刊撰寫的文章
Now when I revisit this, I realise that the image of the wide road vs the road less travelled has always been very clear!

The influence of this is two-fold: Firstly, “seeking for meaning” becomes something important to me and something that I stress in my artistic and educational endeavours. Secondly, I don't like being looked upon as “someone who becomes an actor because she is not a high achiever at school”. My path was my choice, and I wish to use my experience to tell people that intelligent people can become actors too. Actors can always have the ability to both feel and think. I believe that is also why I am particularly drawn to the duality of notions like “rationality and feeling”, “instinct and thinking”… and so on.

**Political awakening and political stance**
When I was young my family rarely talks about politics or social affairs. Mom is the kind of person who concerns more about TV soap dramas than current affairs. Dad used to be a soldier in China. I had a vague impression as a child that he didn't like the communist party, but father seldom talked about his past experiences. When my siblings and I were young we didn’t care much. When we grew older we became aware of the meaning of learning about Dad’s past history but he just didn’t care for telling us. Is it because of his quiet personality? Or is it because those are memories that he doesn't want to revisit? Or is he finding those experiences meaningless to
him now? I really have no idea.

I still recall when we were small, after finishing homework in the afternoon we would watch cartoon on TV. At half past six, we would have to give way to father who would watch the daily news reports. Not interested in it, my sisters and I would break up in a “boo”!

I started to realise that the politics is related to me in 1989 when the June Forth Incidence (1989 Tianmen Square Incident) happened. I was in my first year in the university, and I was the vice-chairperson of the hall association so I was responsible for organising my hallmates in the demonstrations against brutal acts of the Chinese government. Used to be unenthusiastic towards the politics I began to realise how ignorant I had been. I joined study groups my hallmates organised to learn more about the theories of communism and the current political situations in China.

Since then, I would attend the Candle Light Vigil for the June Forth Incident every year, except for once or twice due to work commitment. Then as the democratic circumstances in Hong Kong keep deteriorating, voicing out and going on demonstrations gradually become a norm in my life. I know those demonstrations seldom really change the government, but I still regard them important. Earlier this year, on 12 March 2012, the day of demonstrating against the small circle election of the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, I wrote a Facebook status which clearly stated my views towards political demonstrations:

That year, amid the winds and storm, I went on the street to answer your call for

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16 Note for non-Hong Kong readers: In Hong Kong going on demonstrations is not normally regarded as part of people’s usual rights. In some people’s eyes it is even seen as radical acts that hamper the harmony in the society.

17 Note for non-Hong Kong readers: We don’t have a democratically elected government so the government can easily decide to turn a deaf ear to people’s requests.

18 Note for non-Hong Kong readers: This is a metaphor for the June Forth Incident – nearly a million Hong Kong people went on the street in Typhoon Signal Number 8 to protest against the Chinese government.
condemning the brutality of the Chinese government...
Another year, under the fierce heat of the sun\textsuperscript{19}, I went on the street again to answer your call for fighting for freedom of speech...
Today, I will go on the street again. Like the last two times, and like many other times, I am not doing that hoping to get any concrete result. I only know that I have to go as I owe you for that.
You, are my conscience.

Then on 11 June 2012, after the suspicious death\textsuperscript{20} of Li Wang-Yan, a prisoner of conscience from the June Forth Incident who had been imprisoned for two decades, I went on the street again. Upon returning home that day, I posted a comment on a friend’s Facebook status responding to his question on whether demonstrations are useful:

More and more I refuse to use “usefulness” to assess the meaning of demonstrations. When faced with injustice, we have to voice out and express our resentment; this is what demonstrations mean me. And more importantly, we all know that besides demonstrations, we’re also trying to make changes in our everyday lives. Your work in the media, my work in culture and education, as well as what many other people do in different sectors, all play a part in joining forces to plant seeds of change if we insist on doing them.
Let’s fight for it together!

The two comments clearly indicate that what I value is the process of fighting for justice and democracy rather than the outcome. The second message also expresses how such thinking has an impact on my work, and that obviously also include my TIE work with Oxfam. I am concerned about encouraging young people to make reflections, voice out and express their views in dialogical processes. I would not like to force them into taking actions to change the society if they are not yet ready. I believe that when they have gained the willingness to voice out and the capacity for making changes, actions will be made eventually.

\textsuperscript{19} Note for non-Hong Kong readers: This is a metaphor for the 1 July March in 2003 – five hundred thousand people went on the street in the summer heat of 32 degrees Celsius to protest against the government’s plan to pass a law bill that would restrict the free flow of information and freedom of speech.

\textsuperscript{20} Note for non-Hong Kong readers: Li was reported to have committed suicide but it was commonly believed that he was killed by the community government.
I wouldn't be so naive in believing that what I am doing will bring about drastic social changes. One time I was asked, “Having worked in drama education for so many years, do you see education progressing?” I thought for a second and answered, “No. But I think the meaning of my work is probably not to make the world better, but to make it deteriorate more slowly.”

Today I found resonance in Aung Saan Suu Kyi’s Nobel Prize Speech:

The peace of our world is indivisible. As long as negative forces are getting the better of positive forces anywhere, we are all at risk. It may be questioned whether negative forces could ever be removed. The simple answer is no. It is in human nature to contain both the positive and the negative. However, it is also within human capability to work to reinforce the positive and to minimise or neutralise the negative. Absolute peace in our world is an unattainable goal, but it is one towards which we must continue to journey...

~ Aung San Suu Kyi Nobel Peace Prize speech (2012)

Significant others

Wong Yuen-Ling and Chris Johnson: I met these two ladies when I was working at Chung Ying Theatre Company. Yuen-Ling was the Workshop Officer. Chris Johnson was the Artistic Director. Meeting these people with strong political consciousness in my first job in the theatre made me realise at an early stage that theatre and the society are indivisible.

David Davis: David is my teacher in the drama education programme I did in the UK. He was the first teacher who introduces me to drama education, and a teacher of a lifetime. From him I not only learn what drama education is, but also many the beliefs behind drama education, and David practices what he believes. For instance, he fought with the university for equal tuition fees of local and overseas students in order to make the programme affordable for students from developing countries. He did that because he wanted to promote drama education to those countries, and that was precisely why he had set up the programme in the first place. As such I came across the socialist and global visions of drama education when I first came into contact with it. David is a person who never conforms and he always fights against the bureaucracy of the university. This is something I appreciate about him and I see him as my role model.
My men: Coincidentally, all the lovers in my life are people with strong social consciousness - president of the student union, student representative in the university council, NGO worker, teacher of liberal studies… My husband, who is a musician, writes songs of social issues and political movements and is given the nickname of “Long Hair in the Musical Scene”\textsuperscript{21}. I said this is coincidental because being socially conscious was not the reason why I fell in love with them in the first place. Yet I am always aware that their presence is important as it normalises my concern for the society and fight for justice. They provide me with a supportive environment to go for what I believe, and I also gain inspirations on social issues from them. I cannot imagine if the person I love is someone who doesn't care about the politics, have no concerns about the society, or even someone who buys in the mainstream values of social development, what kind of pressure it would pose onto my educational work.

Refusing to be stereotyped

Strangely, I am always seen as someone who I am not. Out of nowhere, people hold certain impressions on me and make all kinds of interesting associations…

Some people mistake me for a Christian; In fact I have never been a Christian, nor do I believe in any religion.
Some people think that I used to be a social worker. I have never been one.
Some people think that I used to be a teacher. The fact is I have never taken up any formal teaching position in a school. And I know it very well that I won't be able to tolerate working in the school system.

What interest me are the implications of these associations and impressions. It seems to be a reflection of people’s first impressions or even stereotypes. It seems that if I possess those qualities or experiences it is easier to explain why I, as a dramatist, would be so keen on educational work and works that care for social issues or humanity.

I have always refused to be stereotyped. I remember one time a friend told me that “Artists are all self-centered and undisciplined”. I protested, “I am not, and I am an

\textsuperscript{21} Note for non-Hong Kong readers: “Long Hair”, Leung Kwok-hung, is a radical political activist in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, few musicians would write political songs in the pop music scene as it has impact on artists' opportunity to get into the huge Mainland China music market.
artist too!” And she said, “Then you are an atypical artist.”

I have always queried whether “typical artists” really exist. In an article in 2009, I wrote a self-introduction to help the readers realise that “drama educator” is a complex identity:

I am someone who has been actively practicing drama education in the last 10 years. “Drama Educator” is a complex identity... In this story that you are reading, “I” have multiple identities: workshop facilitator, training for teachers/social workers/facilitators, project and course coordinator, actor teacher, researcher, lecturer and dissertation supervisor, writer... “I” also involved in a wide range of practices including Process Drama, Theatre-in-Education, moral and civic education, language and education, as well as educational work for personal development.22

Something that often bothers me is that my role as a drama educator is also often regarded as “non-actor” by some people in the industry. The truth is due to time constraint and my reservation towards the way most theatre companies make theatre in Hong Kong, I have become less active in main stage theatre. It brings about the impression of “you no longer perform”. Every time I come across such comments I would say, “No. I have always been performing in Oxfam’s TIE works all these years.” The usual response is an ambiguous “Okay~” The ambiguity has an undertone: they don't see TIE as formal performances. In other words my identity as a TIE actor does not count me as a formal “actor” in their eyes.

I surely am not satisfied with such a given identity. To a certain extent this is why I want to do this topic in my PhD study. I am hoping to be able to articulate the work of TIE actors, to declare its many commonality with the work of actors in ordinary theatre, and even to acknowledge that it is a kind of more complex and difficult acting practice.

Acting experiences
Putting aside the performances that I did at school and university days, the kinds of performances I am involved in a mostly experimental works, apart from a few more mainstream theatre that I did when I first entered the industry. I have never been formally trained in acting, my knowledge and skills in acting were all accumulated

22 Source: 陈玉兰，2010，〈敘說‧回顧‧思潮‧對話〉，刊於《戲劇年鑑2009》，第22-27頁，國際藝評人協會（香港分會），22-23頁。
through working in my theatre works.

1995 was a big turning point for me. I joined Theatre du Pif’s *Fish Heads and Tales* of and came into contact with a new way of making theatre of which I really like. The rehearsal process was one that blends actor training with devising theatre. The rehearsals take place in the form of workshops in which we undergo a large amount of physical training and exercises, and create performance episodes based on various materials. These episodes are finally scrutinized and further developed to become the content of the work.

I still recall an impressive experience in which the Sean and Bonni (directors at Theatre du Pif) showed me the painting of a woman seductively dressed up in a red evening dress who looked like a retired movie star in my eyes. I was first asked to imitate the woman with my body. When I had developed bodily feelings on the character, I began to move about and walk. Then I was asked to sing (the directors knew that I can sing). The song *Bu Liao Qing*, a movie theme of the sixties came to my mind and I started singing it in a melancholic mood. Later on this episode was developed into the opening scene of the whole play as an introduction of the song *Amsterdam* by Jacques Brel, which talks about the decadent life in the port of Amsterdam.

This kind of rehearsal process was eye-opening to me. As the least experienced actor in the company and the only one who had never received any formal training in acting, the rehearsals gave me a lot of security. It was because everything started from “me” - my personal qualities and skills, as well as my personal feelings. It made it much easier for me to handle the performance well, and the process brought about high satisfaction in me. There was also another segment in which I had to do a solo performance in the style of Bouffon. I played a dwarf who laughed and shouted uncannily, directly interacting with the audience. It was highly challenging yet fulfilling experience and it unearthed some hidden potentials and qualities within me by stretching me to do something of which I don’t normally do.

*After Fish Heads and Tales*, I continued working with Theatre du Pif for many years. I like the unique style of their works. At that time there were a number of experimental theatre companies in Hong Kong. However I found that a lot of their works emphasised too much on the form. Some were too thin in content; some didn’t seem to have any meaning but the artists would tell the audience “whatever you get from it this is it”! Theatre du Pif was one of the few companies that blends
innovative performing styles with meaningful content in their works. As an actor in
the company, not only did my performing skills grow but I also developed deeper
reflections on the themes of the plays. Now when I look back, this has been and
informing period when I started to consider the relationship between form and
content in theatre.

The works of Theatre du Pif usually do not have linear plots. Their plays were
structured episodically so as an actor I had to switch from one role to another rather
quickly. The director usually asked us to not just focus on the psychological aspects
of our characters but to pay close attention to our physical and vocal rhythm and
state of being in order to pitch for a character precisely. These experiences have a
large impact on my later acting practice, and I seldom approach a character merely
by considering its psychological states.

Besides Theatre du Pif’s work, another theatre experience that was impressive was
*China in Sight* directed by Wong Yuen-Ling. The play was about the Hong
Kong-China complex, and it was also a piece of devised theatre. After a series of
workshops, Yuen-ling tailor-made a character for each actor. Each character was a
symbol of a kind of perspective towards the issue of Hong Kong-China complex.
This early experience in theatre made me learn that what a character carries is not
just a personal perspective but can also be a social one.

However, such an understanding of acting does not always work in cooperating with
other directors. I remember I once auditioned for the role of Aldonza for *The Man of
La Mancha*. The director asked me to share my thoughts about the character, and I
told him that Aldonza is a representation of many people in the society who are used
to feeling powerless, but are inspired to see the hope of change. The director looked
surprised, as if he was expecting a different answer. Later when he shared with me
what he thought, I realised that what he had been expecting was the personal
feelings and inner journey of Aldonza instead of what this character represents. I
finally didn’t get the part. But it was a meaningful experience for me in that it made
me realise that my views towards acting is probably different from the mainstream
ideas. The discrepancy became even more obvious when I came across drama
graduates in the MEd Programme, making me ponder on what had gone wrong in
Hong Kong’s actor training.

**In/out-of-role: my views**

In the discipline of drama education, I have always been fascinated with the notion
of “the interaction between one’s state of being within and outside a role”. When I
was doing my master degree, I chose this as the topic of an essay, discussing the notion of “self-spectatorship” by Dorothy Heathcote and the notion of “metaxis” by Augusto Boal. These ideas attracted me because when I was a kid I used to have the habit of jumping out of myself to see myself with a third eye. So when I realised that people do explore this idea in drama I was particularly keen on learning more about them. Writing the essay brought me an understanding of how “self-spectatorship” and “metaxis” can bring about changes in knowledge, action, as well as the power relationship in the classroom. It also helped me understand that it involves a process where the fictional world and the reality interacts, and people are put in an ambiguous state of being as they are both involved and distanced in their roles.

When I taught the MEd Programme, I designed a Process Drama called *Whose Toy is it Anyway?* to help my students understand these concepts. The drama involves them in some immoral behaviours within the drama, and requires them to experience the tension created by a discrepancy between their characters’ values and those of their real selves. I did the drama with different groups of participants and it had always worked well in bringing about deep reflections. Yet when I was working with a group of students with a large number of drama graduates, it didn’t work. In the reflective phase, I asked the participants if there was any tension between their real selves and their roles. Only one of them, who was one of those students with the least experience in drama, said that she had experienced tension. The trained actors did not seem to have experienced any tension. Then a drama graduate shared, “When I am involved as the character, I won’t, and I shouldn’t think as myself.”

It was a rather striking experience for me. I realised that my understanding of acting behaviours was rather different from the drama graduates’. From further working with them in the MEd Programme, I came to understand that their training was overwhelmingly dominated by the Method Acting approach, one that puts much emphasis on psychological realism. For them, acting is to immerse oneself in a character, totally become a different person, and there should be no place for thinking since acting is “to do and not to think”. Although they know that there are more contemporary and non-realist approaches to acting, they regard Method Acting the more, if not the most, proper approach.

In one of our lessons, I asked the same class about their understanding of Brecht’s work. Those without any drama experience before, understandably, did not have any idea. What surprised me, however, was that the drama graduates’ understanding was merely about the theatrical effects that Brechtian alienating devices can bring. Even
the notion of “alienation” seemed to be unfamiliar to them, nor were they clear about the social aspects of Brechtian theatre or his purposes of making theatre. One of the students had actually just finished performing in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* with a theatre group, but she admitted that she had never considered Brecht’s theatre belief in the rehearsal and performances process. Her team only created the work like what they normally do with any scripted work.

From these experiences I noticed that the kind of acting training in Hong Kong (there is only one institution in Hong Kong that provides formal actor training) predominantly stresses on the actors’ skills but little is stressed on the knowledge and reflections on the art form. I realised the knowledge about the art form of theatre that I have gained from the discipline of drama education and applied theatre are far deeper and broader than what actor training in Hong Kong normally provides.
Appendix D: The Interim Collective Story in Chinese

～我們的「演教員」故事～

說在前面——少少理論框架
大家分享的不同故事，帶出在議題為本、參與式的 TIE 中擔任演教員，是一種複雜的實踐。O’Toole (1996) 提出所有戲劇皆在四個重疊的處境中進行，我就着他的觀點，提出一個解釋 TIE 演教員既演且教，置身在曾曾交疊的處境中之理論框架：

Figure 1: The TIE actor in the four contexts of the dramatic event

在以下分享的故事中，我將根據這個理論框架來分析大家的故事，回應一個主要研究問題：
我們如何了解、形容和解釋我們在《(另)一部份的童話》和《五‧拾‧米》中作為演教員的經驗和實踐？

好！開始說故事～
1. 大家對 TIE 、對演教員，有何總體看法？

我們當中有幾位朋友是首次做 TIE 的, 其中一些說, 加入演出團隊是基於對 TIE 一種眼前一亮的鍾愛:

Mary 說她首次接觸 TIE, 是看《(另)一部份的童話》的串排。她當時的反應是「哇 ! 原來戲劇可以是這樣的！」她從來沒想過戲劇演出可以和觀眾拉得那麼近, 更沒想過一個演出可以邀請觀眾參與, 然後, 又可以提供對話空間, 讓年輕人分享想法, 當中不設標準答案。她覺得這個媒介很神奇, 加上自己自少便喜歡表演, 於是當 IEC 須找同事成為兩個 TIE 的 Cast B, 她非常樂意地參與了這件「既有型、又好玩, 更有嘔學」的事情。

Rita 首次在 IEC 接觸 TIE, 也是有「哇」一聲的反應。她深刻的感受, 來自看見 TIE 可以很細緻地描畫人物, 帶來同理心, 又以一些 iconic 的視覺畫面把故事情境深切地烙印在人們腦中, 並可以引發同學的對話。「我看見同學對整件事產生興趣那種 magic！」對於平日習慣「語言壓倒一切」的教育方式的她來說, TIE 透過活動去邀請學生參與是「一個很親切的 invitation」, 而且透過這些活動, 她看見「學生好像人人都有想法可以分享, 而且都好有 point.」帶著這個良好印象, 雖然自己從未演過話劇, 也一直對戲劇的興趣不大, 但當 IEC 找同事參加培訓做 Cast B, 她就帶着「貪小便宜」的心態加入了, 想多學習和 TIE 有關的東西。

Patrick 沒有 Mary 和 Rita 那麼興奮雀躍地加入 Cast B, 主要是 IEC 有需要, 自己亦不抗拒, 便加入團隊。但他初接觸 IEC 的 TIE, 一樣有很大的好感, 因為看見它能達致其他一些 IEC 工作坊做不到的東西。那些工作坊採用比較簡單的角色扮演, 學生對角色的細節掌握不夠, 以致無法更具體地想像得到角色的處境。「TIE 能夠提供一個 context, 學生經歷過看演出的部份後, 再去做討論, 比較聚焦和深入。」

與新演員不同, Yuk-Ling 把自身演出其他戲劇的經驗, 與 TIE 作比較, 得出這樣的體會:

「TIE 對我來說是很踏實的一種經驗。」排練和創作 main stage theatre, 她享受的是有一個抽離了生活的空間, 放低自己的生活去幻想自己處於另一個世界, 更纯粹地享受演出的樂趣。在 TIE, 則有更大的責任去照顧觀眾的反應：「這個 dramatic action 或這個 scene 這樣處理, 帶出了什麼訊息給觀眾呢？」由於 Yuk-Ling 除了演出, 也是兩個 TIE 的 devising actor, 相對一般演出對創作過程

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23 The real names of the participants were initially used in this interim narrative. They have been changed to pseudonyms for this thesis for confidentiality concerns.
也有更強的 ownership。「在其他演出，帶出什麼訊息主要取決於文本，或是由導演告訴我他想怎樣處理這個劇。」

其他有較多戲劇經驗的朋友，也分別談到對演教員身份的看法，有些較着重「演員」的部份，有些較着重「教員」的部份。

Wilson 在訪談過程中，比較強調自己作為教育工作者的身份，而在樂施會做教育劇場的經驗，更是一個「不斷透過經驗去完善的過程」，因應學生的背景、社會的變遷，引導學生思考的方法都不同，令演教員的工作充滿變數。Nancy 和 Joy 則較強調自己作為演員的身份，在訪談中 Nancy 較多談及「演教員」如何作為「在演戲之外，也要帶議題討論的演員」，而 Joy 則說到自己要先照顧好演戲才處理帶活動和討論。

有些朋友提及特別提到他們怎樣視「演教員」為一個獨特身份：

Sour Plum 說「演教員」對她來說是一個十分吸引的身份。「我是我大學裏面唯一一個演教員啊！哈哈！我很擁抱這個稱號，這個特別的身份！」一個會演戲的教師，是令 Sour Plum 感到十分自豪的身份，是自己的資產。「我的學生來 IEC 看我做 TIE 後，我覺得拉近了我們之間的距離；師生之間的界線不再那麼明確。」當學生看見自己的老師可以擁抱不同的身份，擁有多元的面貌，會覺得這個老師的包容程度較高。此外，她也視此為一種身教。「學生看見自己的老師不純粹是一個老師，即是告訴他們『你也可以有許多可能性。You can be… You can be… You can be… You can be!』」

對於 Sour Plum 的說法，我有很大共鳴。我一直體會到「演教員」這個身份讓我與學生之間更容易產生連繫。在其他類型的工作坊中，我通常需要花更多時間，較費勁地去和學生建立關係，在 TIE 中，這卻來得比較容易。我覺得有兩個原因，第一是因為香港的年輕人畢竟對「演員」這個身份帶有一份好奇和好感，較有興趣和我產生連繫。第二，我覺得在觀、演的過程中，學生雖然只是坐着看戲，一份無形的、微妙的連繫卻油然而生。我相信學生透過角色也看見了我，當我跳出角色和他們進行小組活動或討論時，學生好像已經對我頗熟悉似的，話題很容易便展開。

無獨有偶，幾位朋友在談到 TIE 中的「演教員」這個身份時，均拿過程戲劇中的「教師入戲」的經驗作比較，這兩個同是透過演繹角色作教學的身份，原來執行起來，演員的心態、觀眾的期望，不盡相同。

Mary 說在「教師入戲」時，她對自己的演技沒有那麼高要求。Joy 也分享了類
似的看法，更进一步分析了原因。她认为 TIE 和 Process Drama 的教学情境并不相同，故此学生的期望也不同。在 Process Drama 中，学生主要视我们为导师，在 TIE 中，学生主要视我们为演员，因此我们对自已的演技的要求也有所提高。

Rita 则从自身的经历出发去看这个现象。「做阿德同做蒂娜（教师入戏），我做得是自己多一些，角色比较接近一个导师，因为仍然很需要注意学生在说什么，问什么问题。但是演阿仪就是做阿仪，你不会望观众，不会和他们有互动，只是把自己代入那个角色之中。」她觉得做「教师入戏」有较大空间去说一些「剧本」以外的台词，但作为演教员，则要依循剧本，而且要令观众入信，跟演技有更直接的关联。「在『教师入戏』时，与学生之间有明确的 contracting：我是扮的！故即使我扮得不太似，也无人会介意。但学生明知你是扮的，却又愿意相信你，愿意和你一起入戏。」在演绎剧本时，没有这个 contract，作为演员压力较大。

作为演教员，同时在处理不同的任务、挑战，自己与观众的不同期望，说到底，「演教员到底是怎样的一个经验」是很难用一句话概括起来的。然而在访谈内容中，我也似乎看见一些不同的取向和定位。我感觉我和 Yuk-Ling 较倾向于视它为一个独特，自成一格，不纯粹是教育或演员的实践。Patrick 则明言「演教员」对他来说，是导师的实践多于演员的实践，其目的是带出对议题的思考和讨论。

Mary 和 Rita 的看法也有点接近，基本上视自己为世界公民教育者，演戏只是手法。Sour Plum 說道自己的身份是「会演戏的教师」，似乎亦是以教师身份为基调。而在 Wilson 的故事中，我则看见他视演教员为一个教育者以及不断精進自我的反思实践者。对 Nancy 與 Joy 来说，演教员的基调是演员—Nancy 视自己的身份为「在演戏之外，也要带议题讨论的演员」，而 Joy 则说到自己要先照顾好演戏才处理带活动和讨论。

2. 當演教員的具體經驗

2.1 多重任務，一眼關七

演教员其中一个特点，就是要同时兼顾多重任务，既要演活角色，令观众入信，又要兼顾与观众互动的环节，而进行这两个任务期间，还有一顶「世界公民教育」的帽子戴在头上，所做的选择，皆为了让同学更深入地了解和思考贫穷议题。

从大家在访谈中谈到如何处理这些不同的任务，我看当「演繹角色」与「带活动」分開進行时（例如演出後的討論和活動），大家會覺得較容易掌握，然而
遇上這兩個任務須同時進行，即透過演繹角色同時與學生進行互動或溝通（例如 hotseating，論壇劇場），挑戰則變得很大，甚至感到能力或信心不夠。例如《五拾米》Cast B 的三位演員（Mary、Rita 和 Patrick）皆表示，在論壇劇場的部份，他們會將處理觀眾互動的部份盡量交由 Cast A 較有經驗的演員去負責，自己只能較被動地配合。Joy 也道出，在飾演阿人的時候，對於開場時與觀眾用角色與觀眾直接交流的一段，感到沒信心，故此便把「與觀眾交流」推延至「送禮物」那不得不與觀眾直接交流的一場才進行。

Wilson 述說了一個很具體的例子，說明同時兼顧這些不同任務的難度。那是在《五拾米》中一個 hotseating 的環節，他需要透過一個外判清潔公司管工的角色，接受觀眾的提問，從而帶出外判制度的問題。Wilson 這麼說：「Hot-seating 的時候，我頗頗我身邊的夥伴對我作出提醒，因為我投入在角色當中時，要跳出來去審視自己的情緒和對答是否配合議題教學的需要，頗有難度。」他指出自己坐在 hotseat 上，要兼顧的東西非常多。一來他要用很大的專注力去投入角色，才能在應付學生千奇百怪的提問時，仍然保持角色的真實感和連貫性；二來他也要同時兼顧如何維持與學生對話的質素，保持他們的投入感。「所以那一刻我是沒有能力再去審視究竟是否達到教學目的！」在當局者迷的情況下，如何藉由角色帶出社會議題，成為 Wilson 須要交托給合作夥伴去處理的一環。

這個例子十分具體地指出 IEC 的演教員要處理的東西，是多重而複雜的：既要處理好角色，使其令人入信，有真實感，又同時在促進一個啟發式的教學過程，照顧的既是如何激發對議題的思考，又是怎樣促進對話、參與投入。凡此種種，有時並不容易全盤掌握。

寓教於演的情況，有時未必直接透過和觀眾互動的環節。觀眾純粹作為觀劇者，演教員在角色內亦會藉由演出調控一些觀眾反應，例如觀眾的投入感：

Nancy 提到有次在演出《(另)一部份的童話》時，遇上一班不專心的學生，演出期間不斷逕自談天、高談闊論，於是她直接望向觀眾，語帶責備地說出角色的台詞，結果觀眾的注意力回來了！Nancy 這樣形容自己當時的狀態：「我突然間向佢哋溝通咗……我用洪迎喜同佢哋溝通，但係亦喺角色裏面。」

Nancy 這個例子教我想起 Mary 在訪談中談到一個關於我如何處理一班態度不認真的學生的情況：

Mary 一次來觀察《五拾米》，看見在論壇劇場的部份中，學生毫不認真，拉扯了一輪都沒有同學肯出來，於是我決定在座位上喊出建議，由我（阿儀）演繹出來，但他們卻越扯越遠，又「講衰嘢」，故意「玩嘢」，突然我決定
不在跟循學生所說的，高聲說「其實我屋企好窮架！阿爸死咗，阿媽執紙皮架咋！」然後全場鴉雀無聲，學生無法再以輕率的態度去對待這件事。

我回看這個經驗，自己當時像 Nancy 一樣，在處理的不但是角色裏面的東西，而同時在處理角色以外、關於學生 engagement 的問題，而且，有點透過角色在責罵學生，向他們「發脾氣」的意味，彷彿在責罵學生的，既是 Phoebe，亦是阿儀。

在另一個例子中，我看見這種既演且教的雙重任務，不僅出現體現與引觀眾投入這個層面，而是用作加深學生對議題的認識：

在《五‧拾‧米》其中一個段落，爸爸叫我（阿儀）去廚房給他拿啤酒。由於從上隔床下來需要一點時間，我加入了一點 ad lips。我說：「係咪雪櫃上格啲啤酒先係我哋架？」我一直沒有特別為意自己在做什麼，直至為 Rita 排戲，我見她的 ad libs 是：「好嘛！阿儀最叻就係攞啤酒！」我才發覺兩者的分別。Rita 的是幫助自己進入角色內心而說的 ad libs，我的 ad libs 卻不純粹在演繹角色，也同時在向觀眾傳達一個訊息：「住在板間房的人，需要與其他人共用雪櫃。」在我的下意識中，演繹角色與透過演繹角色來傳達議題內容，是融合為一的過程。

2.2 角色裏有多少「我」？
縱然大家都確認演教員的任務並不純粹是演繹角色那麼簡單，但演繹角色始終被視為我們在教育劇場中的基本任務，因教育劇場需要仰賴一個有完整角色的劇作方能進行。在談及自己怎樣去處理角色的時候，幾位朋友都分別提到演繹的角色中，「真我」佔據一個怎樣的位置。

首先，好幾位朋友都提到如何把自己的真實經驗放進角色之中，令演繹更順心。

Patrick 認為演繹李文軒比演繹阿生容易，那是因為他有中學生的生活經會，但從事地盤工作的中年男士，卻是他從未有過的的生活經驗。Joy 也提到這個關於生活經驗的話題，不過卻並非實實在在的體驗。她說演尼奧的時候，雖然自己沒有做童工的經驗，但可以把自己對童年生活的記憶，以及曾經探訪鄉間地方的經驗，放進角色當中。她覺得這樣自己演來會更投入，也可以為角色注入多些情感，觀眾的感動更大。Rita 則看見三個版本的阿儀都有點把自己的性格滲入角色之中，Phoebe 演繹的阿儀比較內斂，Mary 演繹得比較 presentation，她自己演繹的，她反而比較難保持距離去評論，只是覺得基本上是以自己作為別人的女兒的經驗去代入角色，但遇上要演繹阿儀較委屈，不 voice out 的一面，卻感到有點困難，因為與自己的性格不大吻合。然而 Rita 也指出，有時自己也有
疑惑，到底應該使自己像阿儀多一點，還是做自己多一點，而只是把自己放進阿儀的處境？前者似乎更忠於角色，但後者則可以令她的演出更真摯，因為當中有「我」。

角色裏的「我」，不僅是性格、經歷，也蘊涵着一些更抽象的狀態。Joy 就提到一種她稱為 “in flow” 的狀態，就是當一切都「很專注，很集中，超級忘我地去做着那件事情」的時候，而並非很技術性地去用聲線動作演角色。在這種狀態下，情感會很真摯細膩，在演後活動中學生最記得的也是那些細節。然而要做到 “in flow”，個人本身的狀態有很大影響，「自己比較疲倦、能量不足，或伙伴比較疲倦等時候，就很難出現」。Joy 說這個狀態不經常出現，而她亦不知道怎樣可以令它出現，故某程度上只可以靠一點機緣。

說到從角色透視自我這一環，以上提及的角色還不及《(另)一部份的童話》中阿人這個角色有趣。以上的角色都是實實在在、有血有肉的人物，但阿人卻是個虛的角色，三個曾演繹阿人的演教員，都分別由這個經驗想到很多。

Joy 說道在演繹較寫實的角色時，注意力會集中在如何進入角色的內心世界，其狀態和神粹，可是這對演繹阿人並不管用。這個角色沒有背景，出現的時候都是在做一些彷彿與故事不相關的事情，像一個 dummy，「我演繹時是純粹進入情境去 receive data 然後用一個……沒有 rationale，沒有角色的 belief 的狀態下去反應。」在這樣的情況下，Joy 發覺自己會不其然多了去想「這個角色在戲中在發揮什麼功能呢？」使她能有更明確的角色的定位。Sour Plum 形容這個是一個「很透明」的狀態，「演繹時要很放鬆，才能做得到那種通透的狀態，觀眾才會看得通，看見自己。」 阿人這個角色某程度上在反照人們對貧窮議題無知、漠不關心的一面，Sour Plum 覺得演繹這個角色的時候，須放下自己對這些人的批判，使阿人像水一樣，「觀眾射什麼光進去，他就照出什麼光。」

阿人是我創造出來的角色，某程度上，我覺得這個角色很能夠反映 TIE 演員的特性，因為他採納一種較近乎「小丑」的演繹，當中包含著很強烈的演員自身當下的狀態，但與此同時，角色也在發揮一種教育功能，觀眾由他身上可以看見自己或身邊的人，而阿人傻兮兮的行為又可以令觀眾很容易去嘲笑他，甚至批判他，在批判他的同時，卻同時在批判自己或某些人。「所以我很清楚我進場時不純粹在演阿人，而是想帶出某種思考和態度。」

然而當角色是那麼「透明」，又蘊藏了演員的真我，當觀眾批判阿人的時候，卻為 Sour Plum 帶來了某種難堪。「他們有些覺得阿人『好得意』，很喜歡你，有些會覺得你『好黑人憎』、『好白痴』，甚至用不大 desirable 的字眼去形容你。雖說自己是演員，卻也不多不少會 take it personal……『咦？死啦，咁係咪白痴呀》
Sour Plum 覺得自己演戲的經驗，未足以讓她瞬間能放下角色，分開觀眾對角色的批評以及對自己的批評。

2.3. 最能幫我入戲的經驗

若演繹角色是演教員的基本工作，那麼如何揣摩角色就變得很重要。在訪談中，在這方面談得特別多的是幾位演繹經驗較少、沒特別接受過演繹培訓的朋友，似乎對有經驗的演員來說，這個是他們自行懂得處理部份，並不特別構成演教員經驗的主要部份。然而對戲劇經驗較少的朋友來說，「怎樣揣摩和投入角色」是個新穎的經驗，故在問及他們做演教員的經驗時，幾位朋友都主動提到練排的過程，甚至認為經驗比起演出本身更深刻。例如 Rita 說道，由於作為 Cast B 演出場次疏落，每次均要花很大力氣去重新背誦台詞、記台位，相反，在練排的時候，她有更大空間去感受整個戲，與角色建立關係。

Mary 也同樣練排的過程比真正演出有更多發現和學習。比起以往在樂施會參加過的戲劇培訓，她覺得為一個戲練排的時候，比起那些工作坊中玩的遊戲，做的練習，更能實實在在地去體會戲中的角色及其處境。她很喜歡練排中有系統地幫助她逐漸掌握演戲的設計，那並不光是要她背劇本排練動作，而是先讓她與其他演員建立連繫和默契，然後於他們機會去探索一些劇本中沒有的東西。「例如你叫我們扮演尼奧在家中會和弟妹玩什麼遊戲，你給我們一個 creative situation，予我們一個簡單情境去創作……呀！原來真的會『無端端』想到很多，想得很深入！」她覺得這種創作對於她進入角色的世界有很大幫助。

Mary 又提到練排的經驗同時予她更深入去思考學習是什麼一回事。「學習真的不能只靠腦袋，要靠身體，靠一些很微妙的東西，即是人與人之間的連繫之類……」練排後期，我們也設計了一些活動去讓演教員掌握帶演後活動和討論的技巧，請他們輪流嘗試帶領，也輪流嘗試扮學生。「那幫助我去想像來參加工作坊的學生在經歷什麼，這比起之前自己純粹從旁觀察工作坊，很知性地去理解這件事，是很不同的經驗。」

Patrick 對於其中一次練排環節，印象深刻。當日我們嘗試用 hotseating 的手法幫助他建立阿生這個角色，可是他每每很容易跳出角色外去想阿生應該想什麼。有見及此，我們請他做一個即興演出。他與我和 Yuk-Ling 嘗試呈現他的太太和女兒首日到港，看見那個五十呎蝸居的失望反應。劇情後來發展至女兒上廁所時，住在同一單位的男人撞進廁所，因為女兒沒想到會有人共用廁所。我飾演的女兒大哭著回到房間，我看見 Patrick（阿生）站在那裏，既無奈又尷尬，又有點憤怒的樣子，對女兒的號哭手足無措，知道那場即興演出牽動了他的情感。Patrick 說這樣的練排方式對他的幫助很大：「我更掌握到阿生平日的生活細節與狀態，與妻女的相處情況，甚至當初是如何與太太結識的……」這些沒有
寫在劇本中的「角色前傳」，使 Patrick 在演阿生時有更實在的想像和感覺。

Patrick 與 Mary 的經驗，令我想到情境建構對於演員揣摩角色的作用，特別是之前沒有演戲經驗的一群，他們沒想過原來可以藉由探索劇本以外的情境去幫助自己入戲。他們的經驗也令我對史坦尼斯拉夫斯基提出的「情感記憶」有新的理解。 「情感記憶」除了可以是演員借助自身在真實經驗中的情感借代在劇中，也可以藉由這類即興演出去建構，就像 Patrick 一樣，在綵排中演過這一幕，牽動過情感，在演繹劇本時這便成為阿生「過去的記憶」，有助他投入角色。

這些排練經歷，也令我想到對於沒有參與編作過程的一班演員，其演出經驗與原創者可能是有出入的。在編作過程中，我們經歷過資料蒐集，把資料轉化成戲劇，這對於我們去用身心去理解議題，去建立角色的幫助，是非編作演員所欠缺的一環。

2.4. 編作，加上濃得化不開的議題……
Sour Plum 曾經與其他團體作過編作劇場，對比起《(另)一部份的童話》去排演由別人創作的劇本，過程中少了一份樂趣。「在編作劇場那個經驗，我可以探索自己的東西，找到屬於自己的東西，我很喜歡那種 artistic experience，在演出時會有一種自由的感覺……但排演這個有劇本的戲……要費勁記誦台詞，擔心自己記錯，尤其在演出初期。」縱然 Phoebe 作為導演在綵排的時候有刻意設計一些活動讓演員不單止去執行劇本的要求，而是去了解創作的背景、作品的原意，但畢竟不能「甩台詞」、「錯台位」是首要任務，Sour Plum 的注意力都集中在先處理這些問題上，直至演出順暢了，才有機會更細緻地去咀嚼劇本在帶出怎樣的意義，更深入去探索箇中的議題。

然而基於 Sour Plum 本身讀社會學的背景，以及對社會議題有一定的認識基礎，沒參與編作過程未至於為她帶活動和討論帶來太大的困難。相反，本身讀戲劇，又沒有參與編作過程的 Nancy，要掌握議題探索便感到較為吃力。

「一向我都覺得自己最缺乏的是對社會的認識，社會議題那些東西，感到自己料子不夠。以前有許多東西不會去問，只顧著去做一個演員。接觸了戲劇教育，發覺一下子要學很多東西，但自己卻不是那類讀書快、認知快的人，所以有些『摳底』啊！不過話說回頭，第一年演《(另)一部份的童話》，因為抱著『膽粗粗』去嘗試的心態，仍未有很大包袱，但到了第二年，問題就開始明顯。」

Nancy 開始意識到作品在處理的是一些非常大的議題，「當中涉及人民科、社會主義、經濟……但經濟體系是很大的一樣東西啊！……戲中涉及的學問，我真的很多都未清晰，有時我問學生的問題，我自己都沒有答案，自己都討論不到！」
一直演出，一直發覺都自己的不足，令帶 TIE 的過程變得戰戰兢兢。

Nancy 本身對議題不熟悉，但排演《(另)一部份的童話》的過程又由於三位演員的時間都很緊縮，很難遷就時間，於是排練只能集中在「排好劇本」這個基本任務上，要騰出額外時間去釐清議題的內涵，十分困難，只能靠演出時邊做邊學。

Sour Plum 和 Nancy 的經驗提醒我在培訓議題為本的 TIE 之演教員中，若演員本身相關的知識不多，探索議題的部份是重要的一環。例如 Wilson 和 Nancy 的背景比較接近，都是從演員出身，參與編作過程，成為了 Wilson 去掌握議題的重要學習過程。

沒參與編作過程，令演員對作品的歸屬感也有影響。以上 Sour Plum 提到欠缺了自行探索、創造的過程，令過程沒那麼享受。在 Nancy 的訪談中，也反映了她對《(另)一部份的童話》的擁有感及其他作品那麼大，這除了涉及時間限制、沒參與編作過程，也關乎她本身對劇場的信念。「我常常問自己這個戲現在 execute 的方法是否最 work 的呢？有沒有更 work 的方法？某程度上我覺得現在的處理並不是最 powerful 的……怎麼說呢？我覺得你們很懂得用文字去帶出一些觀點，但文字不是我的強項呀，我更注重的是演繹出來的感覺，一些細微的情感……我去看一個戲不是看它能帶出什麼訊息，而是它有沒有承載生命，承載人的故事，這樣才能打動觀眾。」明白了 Nancy 的想法，我問她有沒有嘗試過把這種對戲劇的追求，放進《(另)一部份的童話》當中？她想了想，答道：「可能是 timing 的問題吧，事情已經起開了頭，訂下了方向，總是覺得不能去提出太多改動……也可能是我從來沒有真正靜下來去想這個問題，因為很短時間之內便要排好劇目去演出……我沒有想過可以用另一個方式去處理這個戲，甚至是把它作出徹底的改動……現在你這麼問我，我更想到一點，可能我覺得自己跟這個作品有距離。若我自己搞一個戲，是因為心裏有些東西在滾動，有些東西想說。但 IEC 這些議題，如何用它來講生命呢？我還未捉摸得到。」

Nancy 提出的問題目，確實是處理議題為本的作品中一個重大課題。在創作兩個 TIE 的過程中，如何以人的故事去捕捉議題的精粹，為我們帶來很大挑戰。在 Joy 的訪談中，我這麼說：「創作過程中，樂施會有向我們提供很多資料，但通常都是很硬、數據性的，或是以評論性質居多。讀完那些資料，發覺產生不出什麼畫面，沒有人物，沒有故事，然後我向樂施會的同事說：『喂，可唔可以俾啲有故仔嘅嘢來睇下？』，那堆資料不大幫到我們創作故事啊！」

對於本身是樂施會成員的演教員(Mary, Patrick, Rita)，或是像 Sour Plum、Yuk-Ling 和我等對議題本身已有一定思考的，要去掌握議題或許比較容易，對於沒有太
多相關背景的朋友，這就要花一點功夫。

Wilson 在述說教員的經驗時，第一件事就是提及閱讀樂施會提供的資料。「做演教員的經驗……唔……有幾個階段，首先就當然是閱讀 reading 啦，先別談去排戲，我們得先對議題有初步的概念，才可以 devise 到這個戲要討論的東西。」Joy 更指出，即使閱讀的資料未必能直接運用在編作故事或演繹角色上，卻提供了一個重要的框架去支持她的演出。「那些資料未必直接和作品有關係，但我們一定要知道，這樣覺得演出會實在一些。基本上，演所有戲都應該做資料蒐集，但這類型的演出，議題為本，教育目的比純粹讓觀眾去觀賞美學來得重大，你就要有豐富的背景去承載整個作品。這些資料有如在提供一片土壤，讓我作為演員會更 grounded，支撐著我的演出。」

2.5. 角色蘊涵了我的信念……但不無內心交戰
以上幾部份分別談及兩個 TIE 作品如何蘊涵了演員的性格、經歷、狀態，以至對議題的理解。在這個部份，我們在看看它與我們對教育、對社會發展的信念有何關係。

Mary 對《五拾米》在角色處理上所反映的教育信念，進行了深刻的形容。「我覺得那些角色很真摯，而那是與寫這個劇的人（編作演員）那種誠懇、真摯、虛心有很大關係……那份態度會滲進了演出中，令整件事很舒服，很 down to earth，沒有為嘩眾取寵而刻意做些花巧的事情……當設計這個節目的人抱著認真、真心的態度，那些東西會很 subtle 地烙印在演出中。有些其他 IEC programme 我自己也不大喜歡，我想是因為背後不夠虛心，有點自以為是：我知道好多，等我設計一個 programme 去教你啦！……我演《五拾米》，不是要做得很專業、形神俱似那麼要求高，據我理解，最重要是我們要相信這件事。為何我覺得所謂專業技巧不是最重要呢，可能因為我覺得那份真摯，是最基礎、必需的東西，因為有它才會打動人，然後人才會思考。」

Patrick 也同樣指出演教員對事物的態度會反映在角色當中，察覺到不同演教員在處理《五・拾・米》的討論時，都各有不同的重點，但他卻關注到「入戲」去帶動思考時，與他自己對議題的想法之間所產生的張力：「到底跟同學討論這些議題，我應該 out 多一些，還是 carry 阿生這個角色多一些？又或者說，在什麼情況應該 carry 角色，什麼情況不應該呢？我看見在討論過程中，Wilson 時而會突然進入角色，像做 hotseating 那樣去激發同學發言。這是否好事呢？雖然這樣會幫到同學講多一些，但當中會否太集中在某些層面，而少了某些東西？」

Patrick 所說「少了」的東西，是一些較宏觀、社會性的角度。導師入角帶動討論的時候，焦點較容易放在角色個人的經歷，他看見學生在其後的剪報標題中，
都容易停留在個人遭遇的層面，但他更重視的，卻是宏觀的政策層面。「如何令同學想多一些較宏觀的東西，譬如政府政策或勞工政策等？若最初不入角，講一些較宏觀的東西，會否有幫助？到底怎樣決定你自己在 debriefing 嘅時候，用人角的方法還是宏觀一些去討論？我還未掌握到應該怎樣取捨。」

在 Yuk-Ling 的訪談中，她特別提到個人的信念如何影響她演教員的工作，而且深刻地反思其中帶來的衝擊。「我常常問自己到底我有多相信我向學生說的東西？整個 TIE 討論的東西，我自己相信多少？認同多少？」 Yuk-Ling 對社會議題本身並不陌生，思考也相當深入，甚至思考到自身與劇中人的關係。「在社會裏，我屬於中產階層，是社會上的既得利益者啊！」當自己真實的社經地位與劇中角色碰撞，產生的張力會令她感到矛盾。他的丈夫營運中小企，「站在他的立場去看最低工資的問題，他會覺得這對中產階層形成很大壓力。這對我帶《五‧十‧米》時會帶來一定的衝擊，令我時而在帶討論時感到有不確定的感覺。我應該怎樣去和學生討論這個問題呢？從基層的角度還是從中產階層的角度？」

Yuk-Ling 的另一個張力，來自作品的教育目標與她對貧窮人士的看法之間。「我越來越覺得自己把阿霞演繹得太天真！」她塑造阿霞的角色，希望呈現她努力試圖改變貧窮狀況卻徒勞無功的困境，所以塑造了一個單純、意志堅定的角色。「我希望觀眾看見她的信念有多強，使得觀眾產生感慨、反諷。」然而越演下來，對基層人士的認識越深，她便越覺得真實的阿霞沒可能那麼天真，繼而在演繹上作出了一些調節。

Yuk-Ling 的分享讓我們看見一件事，就是我們在演繹兩個 TIE 時，角色與真我的關係不僅止於我們帶了些什麼進入角色和作品之中，也關乎這個作品在帶出什麼到我們的真實世界中。這個情況，在《五‧十‧米》中，因為演繹的是香港社會中實實在在的人物，情況尤其顯著。

2.6. 我的角色是真有其人啊！
幾位《五‧十‧米》的演員都不約而同提到由於作品呈現的是社會上真實的人物，我們會特別關心到角色的真實性，也感到有責任予他們公平的描畫。

Mary 比較自己演尼奧與演阿儀的經驗，發覺自己較在意是否真的理解阿儀：「演尼奧，似乎覺得對她的理解不是一個很大的問題，但阿儀嘛，太近身了，是一個香港人的故事啊！」出身自小康之家，對於要掌握一個基層人士的內心世界，Mary 感到頗有難度。「說來慚愧，自己在 NGO 做扶貧工作，但其實對貧窮人的理解仍是很不足呀！表面的還可以，但說到真正『人心肺』地進入阿儀的狀態，我做不到啊！我覺得自己演得有點膚淺和浮誇。」為了幫助自己做好一些，Mary 會很在意在每次演出前靜心細想這個角色，幫助自己進入角色的世界，
因為她想認真對待這個角色。

Rita 在訪談中也提到這種責任。「我覺得要提醒自己，我在演繹的是真有其人，這會幫助我認真地去進入角色的狀態。我提醒自己每次都要認真去做阿儀，因為這個角色，她的故事，不是說笑的，是嚴肅的，每天不斷在社會中上演。」這份對基層人士的責任感，有時卻帶來演繹上的一些疑惑。「我們呈現的《五．拾．米》，一家父慈子孝，全部都好人，但我會想，事實未必會如此，當你長期處於貧窮的處境，不會事事都那麼樂觀和努力啊！有時我在演繹阿儀的時候會想，她的狀態是否真的就如我們所呈現出的那樣呢？但同時我又覺得，那父慈子孝的想像其實可以令觀眾對她有更深的同情，可以幫助得到窮人。」

對 Rita 的分享，我有很大共鳴。在她的訪談中，我告訴她我也經歷過類似的掙扎。「第一次做試演後，有位朋友向我提出以阿儀的複雜家庭背景，她不大可能會那麼『乖女』。我理解她的觀點，但情感上卻不想把她演得那麼壞。我覺得那就像在把阿儀定型：『哦！你們家境不好的，必定個個無禮貌、『唔識諗』，甚至個個都會學壞，去接交那樣。』雖然容易變壞可能比較接近真實，但情感上我真的不想去加強那種標籤。」在這個掙扎當中，我也考慮到教育目標。「我常常想，到底我要透過作品呈現怎樣的 reality？而藉這個 reality 想觀眾接收到什麼呢？」我發覺自己比較希望觀眾著眼的，不是阿儀個人的性格、命運，而是社會對窮人的壓迫，而一個乖的阿儀，比較能呈現這種壓迫。如是者，我接受自己演繹乖的阿儀，「窮人當中都有乖女的嘛，我選擇做窮人中乖女的那個，也可以吧？」戲劇雖取材自真實，卻不是反映真實的全部，當中的內容是有目的地經過選擇的。

這段傾談也帶出了我對一次演出的深刻印象。那次的觀眾是「關注綜援低收入聯盟」的義工，本身就是窮人。「我一邊演，一邊心情非常忐忑呀！我不斷問自己，其實他們看見我們在扮他們，會不會覺得很假、很可笑？又或者覺得我們把他們的生活簡單化，很脫離現實？他們又愛邊看戲邊開聲評論劇情，他們一開腔，我便有點慌，心裏在質疑，到底將他們已經那麼熟悉的生活演一次給他們看，有什麼意思呢？我們不是在做 Playback Theatre 啊！」

當這個演出抽離了原先的 Context of the Setting（活動原先是設計給中學生的，但關綜聯的朋友主要想來認識教育劇場的手法），偏離了原先的目的，頓然使我們有點不知所措！

作品同時在豐富我的生命

以上的環節探討的是角色與真實世界的關係，演教員檢視自己的作品在帶出什
讓我們轉到真實世界。而兩個 TIE 帶出到真實世界的，有時也可能是演員自身的生活。

Yuk-Ling 說這兩個教育劇場的經驗，是一種很「踏實」的經驗。「有機會排這兩個戲，令我在往後的生活看自己，看週遭的社會環境都實在了很多。」兩個戲表達的議題都是真實生活，自身亦活在這個真實環境中，創作過程有調理地去整理和思考想法後，「當我排完完戲離開，出到外面我會覺得跟這個香港的生活接近了；我所說的踏實是來自這一點。」

Mary 的經驗更直接連繫到與身邊人的關係。她的爸爸和不少朋友都做成衣生意，所以她對《(另)一部份的童話》中工廠老闆的角色很理解、同情，有時在帶討論時學生對老闆作出苛刻的批評，她會刻意帶領學生去明白老闆的難處，希望學生不要將其妖魔化。可是《(另)一部份的童話》，以至《小英與阿 Nick》等 IEC 工作坊，在在都帶著一個使學生反思血汗工廠狀況的目的。「演過《(另)一部份的童話》後，我想影響一下爸爸，便嘗試和他討論這些問題，殊不知，我只是平和地談了某些觀點與角度，爸爸已經冒火，猛烈批評我不明白他的處境！之後我再也不敢跟他說這些事！」Mary 也試過叫朋友來看《(另)一部份的童話》的試演，他們的反應都是：「那你覺得可以怎樣做吖？」更有人尖酸地向她說：「若你爸爸不是做這個行業，你哪有大學讀？」Mary 唯有笑說：「所以我現在要做這些工作，為爸爸作補償囉！」

對於以上的遭遇，Mary 尚算一笑置之，又或以從此絕口不提來應對，但談到演《五・拾・米》對她和男友關係的影響，她便顯得相對嚴肅。「為了演出阿儀的角色……我覺得自己不懂得演呀……於是我向男友詢問他童年生活的狀況。」她的男友兒時生活很窮困，連開飯也有困難。Mary 想從他身上更深入了解貧窮青年的心理狀態，卻感到有點難以啟齒，擔心再次揭開男友的瘡疤。「我向他說：『我不是要標籤你是窮人，但可否請你分享一下童年的生活呢？你家都算是拮据，是不是？當時你的心態是怎樣的？因為我覺得我做不我要演的角色。』」Mary 發覺在樂施會工作，機構口口聲聲說「不要標籤掙綿緩人士，窮人是很有尊嚴的！」但到了真正要向男友了解他的人生故事，她發現始終談論貧窮是一種禁忌。與男友的傾談，令 Mary 更實實在在了解貧窮人面對的問題的複雜性，並非 NGO 用一些口號就能解決，在演出上，也能幫助她更踏實地去演繹阿儀，更重要的，是加深了她對男友的認識。「說來慚愧，我和他拍了拖十幾年，卻完全不關心他這些經歷！但因為《五・拾・米》中阿儀的故事，令我張開眼睛去看清楚自己身邊這個親密的人。」因著這些經歷，Mary 形容《五・拾・米》予她最大的震撼，是對她自己的教育。