The teacher as co-creator of drama:
A phenomenological study of the experiences and reflections of Irish primary school teachers

Fiona McDonagh

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Supervisor Dr. Michael Finneran

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Abstract
This dissertation explores the ‘lived’ experience of seven primary school teachers co-creating drama in an Irish context. Co-creating drama can best be described as the coming together of teacher and students in a creative enterprise. The experience centres on the notion of the teacher as a co-artist, whereby they enliven qualities of creativity such as a “willingness to play, experiment, be a partner with learners, and to take risks” (Craft 1997, p89). Co-creating is distinguished by the autonomous behaviour of the students and the artistic act of creating something of value to the group. It resonates distinctly within the theoretical frame of constructivism, as well as with more current inquiries of collaborative and creative drama practices.

Classroom drama in an Irish context remains largely under-researched. It is argued that the knowledge base for teacher education should come from the teachers’ experiences in the classroom, but there has yet to be an in-depth study of teachers’ lived experiences of drama education in Ireland. In order to address this, a phenomenological inquiry was conducted into the experiences of teachers co-creating drama, with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of the experience as perceived by them. Through a series of interventions and interviews, the teachers’ experiences and reflections were explored in order to portray the essence of the phenomenon. The analysis of the interviews has led to a multi-faceted understanding of co-creating drama. Three main themes emerged. The teachers discuss the practical implications of navigating the co-creating experience, the importance of teacher commitment, and the outcomes of co-creating drama.

Keywords: teachers, drama, collaboration, co-creating, phenomenology
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Thank you BB.
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Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 establishes the purpose and background of the research. It sets out the main research questions and sub questions which guided the creation of the dissertation and describes the features of the research design.

Chapter 2 describes the philosophical ideas that have underpinned this study. It locates the study within the phenomenological tradition and highlights the thinking behind the selection of Heidegger’s (Interpretive) Hermeneutic Phenomenological approach.

Chapter 3 contextualises this research by providing a historical perspective of drama.

Chapter 4 introduces the general field of drama in which the study is located and provides a spectrum of drama.

Chapter 5 explores the co-creating drama attitude, and aspires to describing the educational landscape that is necessary for co-creating to come about.

Chapter 6 gives an overview of the methodological process. It moves from the philosophical ideas to show how these ideas have influenced the shape of the research process. It describes the more specific nature of the research and outlines the methodological principles that shaped the analysis and interpretation of the interview material.

Chapter 7 clarifies the methods used and processes undertaken during the CPD course.

Chapter 8 introduces the participating teachers and contextualises their experience of the phenomena. It also presents commonalities in their experiences of drama before the interventions began.

Chapter 9, 10 and 11 presents the findings by illuminating the teachers’ stories which offer the concrete details of their lived experience of co-creating drama.

Chapter 12 is the concluding chapter. It reflects on the study, debates implications for educational practice that emerge from this research, and recommends further research.
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<td>Theatre in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DiE</td>
<td>Drama in education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TiR</td>
<td>Teacher in role</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Mantle of the expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of proximal development</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing professional development</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
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<td>EACEA</td>
<td>Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency</td>
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<td>Irish Primary Principals Network</td>
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<td>EPV</td>
<td>Extra personal vacation</td>
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<td>MIREC</td>
<td>Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee</td>
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Chapter One

The study
**Introduction**

Drama can be understood as a cognitive, artistic and experiential encounter. It is playful in nature, and enables students to imagine, discover, create and perform together. It holds the potential for students to be highly autonomous, to take an activist approach to their learning and to actively respond to their creative impulses. But, for some teachers, the positive features of drama can sometimes be outweighed by the challenges. Because it is action-based, and reliant on student interaction, managing the experience in terms of discipline, and group relationships are among the many things that can make it difficult. There are also complications, and often collisions, in terms of the practice of drama. There can be an assumption in drama, that we are always creating and we are always creating as a group. Yet, sometimes in my experience, teachers have a singular understanding of drama as a scripted performance; therefore the act of creating something new is not a frequent occurrence in their drama practice. At other times, the work is entirely teacher-driven, leaving fewer opportunities for student autonomy, or, a conventions approach is taken by the teacher where the work is more pre-planned and arguably, predictable. Fundamentally, the potential of drama in terms of its imaginative, creative and social learning can sometimes be lost in the negotiating of the practice.

This dissertation has allowed me to continue my personal reflections and professional practice over the past fifteen years in the field of drama. In that time, I facilitated drama pedagogy in many schools and with teachers and student teachers in education centres, universities and colleges of education throughout Ireland. These experiences led to my original doctoral proposal which focused on fostering a more explicitly aesthetic approach in drama pedagogy in primary schools. During the early stage of my study, I began working in a local school as a visiting drama specialist, and my experiences there transformed my research intention entirely. I encountered a teacher who had ‘struggled’ with drama throughout her career. We began working closely together as teaching partners on an arts project, which involved devising drama work with primary school students. During this time, I became sensitive to the dialogue we shared about her drama practice, and I became alert to some of my ‘taken-for-granted’ ways of doing drama ‘easily’. At a difficult stage in the project she highlighted what she termed a major difference between the two of us. She explained that my role as a ‘visitor’ to the school meant I was a novelty to the children, and I did not have to deal
with the day-to-day issues that she encountered in her permanent teaching role. She also believed that ‘to be good at drama you need to be a specialist’, and she found it hard ‘to share the work with them’ and ‘play with them’ as it did because she was always ‘being teacher and making sure they don’t go crazy!’ This reminded me of something I had read in David Booth’s work where a teacher told him she was not able to replicate his results in the classroom. Booth clarified the dissimilarity of their positions, “[a]fter all, I appear for a few hours or a few days, armed with plans and stories I have prepared well in advance and without all the responsibility classroom teachers have” (Booth 1994, p12). What I slowly came to realise through my relationship with the teacher, was that while the students derived value from the drama experiences, I was not necessarily making a positive impact on the teacher’s life. I started to consider that the teachers I had worked with over the years might have felt some disappointment that they were unable to work with the students as I did, and that perhaps my practice was distancing them further from drama. I began to contemplate Hornbrook’s argument, “a mystique has developed around the teaching of drama that invites teachers to feel they are failures” (Bolton 1992, p7).

Thereafter, I became increasingly concerned with the teacher’s experience of drama. Although I had observed teachers’ drama practice from the outside for many years, it was only now I realised I had failed to understand the real-life challenges facing teachers who teach drama in an Irish context. With this experience, I reconsidered the main aspects of my study. Firstly, I decided to focus on the ‘experience’ of the teacher. The notion of phenomenologically reflecting on ‘lived’ experience was new to me, and yet I was immediately fascinated by it. Secondly, I wanted to look at an explicitly collaborative approach, which would allow the teachers to play and to share the work, and perhaps invest further in the drama experience as my teacher partner had wished. Another critical aspect was the influences on my drama practice over the years. An important part of my past Theatre-in-Education (TiE) work (I co-directed a TiE company for nearly a decade), involved devising work for children. I relished the devising process. I became aware that over the years, devising and creating had become embedded in my drama practice. Therefore, I wanted to explore the idea of involving students in moments of shared creativity which I had experienced through my devising work. But I questioned how I could do this in an authentic way. When I first began to ponder these questions, I concentrated on the nature of my experience and asked myself at what times I felt I had ‘shared’ a drama experience with integrity.
I reflected on my experiences as a devising artist in the process of creating theatre work, a teacher-artist, a drama educator and a participant in drama work. The events I recalled were moments of developing theatre work, moments in devising with students, and moments when the students and I worked together using imagination as the bedrock of our classroom drama process. I realised these moments all seemed to be embodied in an act of creativity. At this point I returned to drama literature to seek support of this notion of creating drama, and shared and playful approaches to drama work. I was enthused by Booth’s *Storydrama* where he “recognised the power of letting the drama emerge from the children’s imaginations” as opposed to giving them “constant instruction and orders” (Booth 1994, p9). He talked about setting free “the children into new patterns of behaviour, new status roles, new dynamics of interaction” (Booth 1994, p9). His work envisioned teachers as ‘artists’, as “active accomplices in the children’s play” (Taylor 1995, p39) and as “participants in the story community” (Booth 1994, p16). I was intrigued with the concept of the teacher as an ‘active accomplice’, and contemplated the impact it would have on the teacher-student relationship, and on the drama work itself. My wonderings had then provided the impetus for this research, which was to look closely at the teachers’ experience of drama in the Irish classroom, in particular the co-creating experience; a research project that appears not to have been undertaken before. At about the same time I discovered an anonymous quote, “[t]o feel fearless is not about not feeling afraid, but about getting used to doing things in the company of fear”. I imagined co-creating drama in a comparable sense, where co-creating drama was perhaps not about continuously trying to co-create drama, but about making drama in the company of creativity. In others words embedding the act of creating in the experience. It was at this point that the focus of my doctorate changed to a phenomenological inquiry of the teachers co-creating drama with their students in an Irish context.

**Purpose of the study**

Co-creating drama is the coming together of teacher and students in a collective creative enterprise. Experiences are characterised by underpinning principles which present a view of the students and teacher, as partners and as artistically active participants. It also reflects a strong commitment to the social and creative dimensions of drama, as well as featuring curiosity, spontaneity and artistry. When we consider the teacher as a co-creator of drama, it is essential to understand that it is an ontological
attitude. The goal of this thesis is to better understand the phenomenon of teachers co-creating drama in all its multi-dimensionality and complexity, and to reflect on the meaning of this for the teachers. The study will further seek to examine the relationship between the experiences of the phenomenon and the ideas that guide the actions of the teachers. It will also discern patterns revealed through themes, in order to describe how the co-creating experience unfolds in its essence, and to understand what the co-creating experience is like for the participating teachers of this study.

**Drama**

As this thesis is concerned with drama in an educational context, I will begin by briefly attempting to “untangle the confused strands of classroom drama” (Bolton 2007, p45) and establish my understanding of drama. I will also attempt to provide clarification about how this term is used within this inquiry. The definitions used to describe drama as an educational concern differ among scholars who define “in various, often contrasting ways, its aims, desired contents and strategies” (Urian 2011, p141). Its strands include ‘creative drama’, *process drama*, ‘educational drama’, ‘drama for learning’ and many others, and to add to the tangle, the names are sometimes used interchangeably, even though they can be different in orientation. Variances depend on instructional goals, cultural contexts, institutional contexts or individual teaching philosophies. This then has implications on focus and pedagogical application, which can include drama as a subject, as a teaching method, as story making, as language learning, as meaning-making, as social interaction and as a creative experience. To add to the confusion, drama exists not only as an educational concern, but also as a literary text and as a performance medium. In fact, O’Toole *et al.* suggest that rather than a simple dichotomy of thinking, or even a trichotomy (adding personal growth to the competing alignments), there is in fact a:

“megaotomy: theatre versus drama; art-form versus instrument; process versus product; subject versus service; improvisation versus script; theatre in education versus children’s theatre versus theatre for schools…let alone the broader battles, drama skills versus dramatic understanding; drama for capability versus drama for life; practice versus theory; progressive versus reactionary; drama for assessment versus drama for experience; drama education versus speech and drama; and most savage of all, Marxist versus post-structuralist.”

(O’Toole *et al.* 2009, p117)
It is important to note at this point that as my understanding of co-creating drama evolved during this study, so did my definition of drama. Therefore, rather than referring to drama education or drama in education, I have chosen to use the umbrella term ‘drama’ throughout this thesis as I perceive drama as ‘multi-faceted’ (Bolton 1986) in nature, encompassing several features: learning, imagination, improvisation, art-form, social experience, play and creativity, which I will discuss in-depth in chapter four. I will however, briefly explain that my frame of reference for drama as a practice is anchored in the praxis of Dorothy Heathcote and her contemporaries, and mainly in the methodology of contemporary practitioners such as O’Neill, Booth and Neelands who have extended her methodology into their own praxis. As one of the world’s leading practitioners, Heathcote understandably underpins my philosophy of drama. She initiated a shift in understanding that emphasised drama as a mode of learning and as an insight into human experience. She believed drama was an educational landscape of the mind where a “space for change” (Carroll 1993, p1) was possible and actively encouraged. Heathcote’s definition below articulates the nature of my understanding of drama in practical terms, it is:

“…anything which involves people in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters, are the chief concern, lived at life-rate (that is discovery at this moment, not memory based) and obeying the natural laws of the medium. These laws aim at suspension of disbelief; agreement to pretence; employing all past experiences available to the group at the present moment and any conjecture of imagination they are capable of, in an attempt to create a living, moving picture of life, which aims at surprise and discovery for the participants rather than for any onlookers.”

(Heathcote 1994, pp61-62)

Baldwin (2012) also gives a definition of drama, which is congruent with my thinking:

“[d]rama is multi-sensory, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, multi-intelligent, emotionally and cognitively linked. Whole class drama is social and relies on co-operation. Through drama, we learn and reflect about ourselves as human beings and about others and the world we inhabit together. Drama is humanistic and concerned with the intellectual, personal, social, moral, spiritual, creative and aesthetic development of people as well as being a way of understanding and making culture.”

(Baldwin 2012, p3)

Drama is about human experience and human understanding. It is cognitive, holistic and experiential. Drama has the potential to ignite the student’s imagination, generate deep understanding, challenge beliefs and attitudes, cultivate higher-order thinking,
broaden understandings, stimulate emotional capabilities and build cognitive abilities (Fleming 2004, Bolton 2007, O’Toole et al. 2009). It allows students to explore, experiment, discover, create and perform (O’Toole and Dunn 2002). At the heart of drama, is the act of creating, whether the creations are fresh ideas, different perspectives, new understandings, opinions, feelings, worlds or stories, they all belong to the students and they are in my view, the fortune of drama work. Teachers are invited into these creations “to meet the children where they are” (Heathcote 1994, p18), on the understanding that drama is a shared domain where the students’ opinions, thoughts and experiences are as valid as the teachers, and where their fictional lives and creations can hold meaning.

Co-creating drama

When I began to investigate co-creating drama within academic literature, I found that the concept of co-creating drama already existed in the work of the founding drama education theorists, which is further discussed in chapter four. Although not directly defined as co-creating drama, there is much discussion around the co-construction of drama, teacher as a co-participant, playmaking with and by the students, and the students and teacher as co-artists. From these ideas, I have developed my own definition of co-creating drama, which I will make explicit now in order to provide a frame of reference for this thesis. The educational ideas and philosophies that underpin this thinking will be discussed in-depth in chapter five.

Co-creation in drama can be considered a set of beliefs and behaviours that teachers enact in their practice. It can affect the teachers’ pedagogical approach, their relationship and interaction with their students, the physical and creative environment they create for students, and their level of social and creative participative behaviour. When we look at the concept of co-creating drama and how it may appear in the classroom, it can be characterised by features such as teacher and students collaborating and sharing power, artistic action and the act of creating something new. The presence of ‘co’ in co-creating drama relates to the partnership that happens between teacher and students, whereby they operate as co-participants and co-artists (O’Neill 2006). Foregrounding this is the concept of the teacher sharing control, bringing about a level of autonomy for the students. The students are empowered, when the teacher moves beyond the role of leader and facilitator to become a
collaborator and a co-creator of the work. It is also important to acknowledge that the student is not always at the center; rather, power can shift back and forth between teacher and student (Lee and Recchia 2008). As you would expect, for the teacher this requires a willingness to play, take risks, experiment, and be a partner with learners (Craft 1997). The teacher must also be prepared to step outside their traditional teaching role and embrace a creative partnership, in order to set free the students into new patterns of behaviour, new status roles and new dynamics of interaction (Booth 1995). The ‘creating’ aspect of co-creating can be considered the artistic action. This refers to the artistic enterprise of making drama. Fundamental to this, is the teacher sharing the creative impulse with the students (Taylor and Warner 2006), whereby they become involved in the act of imagining, and are engaged in creative acts with their students in order to create something new and of value to the group. When we consider these features together, we can recognise that the teacher operating as a co-creator of drama is bringing about a culture in their classroom which encourages the students to think for themselves (Heathcote 1984), and where the students experiences, their questions and their voices matter (Booth 1994). It is a culture that honours the egalitarian and creative nature of co-creating drama. Given these factors, we can see co-creation depends greatly on the active involvement of teacher, their value for a creative learning environment, and their ability to enliven both egalitarian and creative behaviours in their teaching practice.

Creativity
Given the creative nature of co-creating drama, I will now introduce some understanding in relation to the kind of creativity that can happen within educational contexts. In order to select the literature of most relevance to this study, I have focused on research and theory relating most clearly to children’s creativity. The words create and creativity come from the Latin: creâtus and creâre, which mean ‘to make or produce’. The same word is often used to describe different processes, which makes it difficult to define (Starko 1995). Therefore, creativity scholars seek a commonality across many definitions rather than a single definition. What all the definitions hold in common, is that creativity results in products (i.e. ideas, stories, things) that are both novel and worthwhile (Sternberg et al. 2005). For children this does not necessarily mean ground-breaking ideas, “in order to be novel, the words or act must be unique within the child’s repertoire of behaviour” (Amabile 1996, p164).
In recent times, a definition of creativity recommended by the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission Advisory Group (VSIC 2004), which is a group of representatives from a wide range of creative sectors and industries in Australia, was presented in order to find common ground for teachers and the education sector. Their ‘Creativity rationale and guiding concept’ suggests that creativity entails the use of imaginative, intuitive, and logical thinking. It involves a fashioning process where ideas are shaped, refined, and managed. There is a pursuing of purposes to produce tangible outcomes from goals, and a disciplined application of knowledge and skills to make new connections and new ideas. Finally, all of this is achieved through collaboration, evaluation, review, and feedback. This is helpful as it frames creativity as acts of imagination, shaping and refining, the pursuing of purposes to produces new ideas, and this is realised through collaboration, response and feedback. It also mirrors much of the action that happens within the co-creating experience as introduced above.

Craft (2002) too suggests that creativity is founded in imaginative activity, but she proposes it is driven by possibility thinking (p12). She frames her understanding of creativity as firstly, ‘people’ i.e. the students and teacher as people and secondly, ‘processes’. These can be distinguished as risk taking, a creative cycle (where there is a circular motion of: preparation, letting go, germination, assimilation, completion, preparation), being imaginative, problem finding and problem solving/thinking and as the unconscious, intuitive, spiritual and emotional impulses. Finally, there are ‘domains’, which she describes as the areas of learning on offer. Put simply, we can consider creativity as involving the ‘three P’s’ of a person engaging in a creative process, which produces a creative product (Barron, in Dust, 1999).

In terms of creativity in education, it can exist as creative learning, creativity, and creative teaching. Creative learning is viewed as a way of learning that sees the students actively involved in their own learning, making choices and decisions, and developing imaginative and critical ways of thinking through problem solving (Saracho 2002). This can be achieved by providing an environment which allows investigation through play and experimentation and by the teacher rewarding effort and innovation, not just correct answers (Sahlberg 2009). In other words, an environment where it is understood that there are multiple paths that lead to understanding, and where failure and setbacks can be seen as opportunities to learn. Creativity involves
traditional craft, and facilitates the students to express themselves through an art form (Jeffrey and Woods, 2003). In this way, the students are directly involved in thinking or behaving imaginatively in order to discover or create something new or something of value to the group. This type of working can involve students in exploration and risk taking, and allows them to express themselves physically and imaginatively through the art form. A product of creativity typically includes a new idea, perspective, interpretation, or contribution. Craft (2002) highlights the role of the teacher in creativity as providing an ideal balance between structure and freedom of expression. Research has also shown that environments that encourage independence, risk-taking, and intrinsic motivation have been found most conducive to creativity (Amabile 1996, Craft 2002, Jeffery and Craft 2003). Finally, creative teaching focuses strongly on pedagogical strategies and approaches that encourage creativity. Creative teaching is a term used, in particular by Jeffrey and Woods (2003) to describe what they refer to as teacher behaviour. These behaviours include asking open-ended questions, tolerating ambiguity, modelling creative thinking and behaviour, encouraging experimentation and praising children who provide unexpected answers (Sharp 2000).

**Brief study background**

As Neelands (2000) suggests, for many countries, drama is still in the midst of an advocacy phase, and is fighting to “win a stable, constant, and secure place” (p56) within the schooling system. This is also true of drama in Irish schools. While it can be argued there is generous space for the arts in Irish schools both officially in the curriculum, and typically in the hearts and minds of the teachers, drama has yet to flourish. There seems to be a plethora of reasons for this, including teacher confidence, the lack of a drama pedagogical tradition and the perceived vagueness of the subject in Irish schools. The powerful and complex nature of drama also poses difficulties in terms of the teacher’s pedagogical role. Drama as a subject has been mostly absent in the history of Irish primary education up until the introduction of the 1999 curriculum. Although there has been some positive movement in terms of recent policy, where a number of influential documents and directives were launched to promote creative learning in schools, the place and future of drama in Irish schools is still quite uncertain. Furthermore, the majority of research studies on arts education in Irish classrooms focus on music and visual arts, with very few exploring drama. Therefore,
there is a distinct deficit in terms of research on drama in schools in Ireland, making this study timely.

**Learning from lived experiences**

Teachers’ practice is a common subject in educational research (Shulman 1987, Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999), because the study of teachers’ practical knowledge can lead to suggestions for improving practice and can offer insights into their working models (Shulman 1987). Many researchers follow the guiding principle that because teaching is a complex set of practices, educational research in schools should involve trying to understand what the teachers think and do. Therefore, we can begin to comprehend the culture of the teachers’ practice, by collecting their stories and reflections. This can then allow us to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience of teaching as it is perceived and thought of by those who are personally involved in it (Cohen et al. 2000). Cochran-Smith and Lytle believe:

“[w]hat is missing from the knowledge base for teaching, are the voices of the teachers themselves, the questions teachers ask, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practice.”

(Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990, p2)

Connelly and Clandinin (1994) also argue that stories or narratives about teaching need to give voice to the teachers. They explain that reflections of teachers on their practice are key to teacher education, because the telling and re-telling of stories can lead to realisations, and to transformations in the practice of teachers. This research employs a phenomenological approach in order to understand more fully the lived practice of the teachers using a co-creating attitude. It is an examination of co-creating as seen and discussed from the teachers’ viewpoint. One of the chief aims of educational research is to find ways for making teachers’ practical knowledge available for others, and to explore the reflective conversations with the situations that create this knowledge (Ayers 1989). Phenomenology is an effective way to do this, it respects the voices of teachers and the knowledge they bring to the research. It also connects the theory and practice of education, as what we can learn in a practical sense from the teachers’ experiences can inform theory. As Fleming et al. (2004) contend, drama is seldom measured with scientific tools because “the arts are more at home with narratives than
numbers” (p178). A phenomenological perspective on this research ensures the study focuses on the teachers’ ‘lived’ experience and an understanding of their drama practice as told through their own narratives. Therefore, this thesis presents findings that describe, interpret, and discover rather than establishing cause and effect. Fundamentally, it will build an understanding of what it is like to be a teacher as a co-creator of drama in a primary school in Ireland.

The teachers’ descriptions contain a complex collection of elements including narratives on what they do in the co-creating experiences, meanings they give to their actions, and aims, ideals and beliefs about co-creating drama. The phenomenological approach permits us to look in-depth at the meanings, perspectives and practices that are often not usually visible to us. I present the experiences of the teachers with the aim of finding resonance with the reader, to allow for a deeper look into the lives of these teachers using a co-creating attitude in their drama practice. The gap in knowledge which the study addresses is what we can learn about the co-creating process in terms of the cultivation of co-creating attitudes, skills and beliefs in teachers. This brings a discernment of knowledge that could be useful for initial and continuous teacher education, and professional development. Therefore, understanding how the teachers’ experience co-creating may provide insight into changes that can be made to improve experiences of drama for teachers. We may come to understand the meaning of their experiences of co-creating drama, with a view to understanding the structure of co-creating beliefs and values that can be nurtured within an educational environment, in such a way that another person can share the understandings gained.

**Research Questions**

Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and reaffirm the purpose of the study in more specific terms. They are few in number, typically five to seven (Creswell 2007, p107). When using phenomenology, the central questions address the meaning of the phenomenon. Sub-questions are typically either issue-oriented or procedural (Moustakas 1994). In this study, two broad general questions were asked of participants. The first asks what teachers have experienced in terms of the phenomenon of ‘co-creating drama’. The second asks what contexts or situations have typically influenced their experiences with the phenomenon. The two main questions are generated to gather data that will lead to a rich description and an understanding of the
common lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). van Manen (1990) explains phenomenology is more concerned with how something is in the world, or the manner in which its existence unfolds, not ‘what this thing is? who did what? when? and under what conditions? It does not aim to reveal meaning specific to certain cultures or certain social groups; it attempts to describe meaning, as people live these experiences in their everyday life. It aims at achieving a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences. For example, what is this experience like for the teachers, what is it ‘really’ like? Fundamentally, phenomenology gives us an insight into their world and allows for more direct contact with it (van Manen 1990).

Therefore, the central questions of the study are: what are the experiences of teachers co-creating drama in the Irish classroom? and how does the co-creating experience unfold in its essence? The participants were asked to reflect on their experience of co-creating drama. The data analysis then searched for the emergence of patterns that would lead to the essential structure of the phenomenon. The two guiding research questions were further elaborated with the sub-questions: What underlying themes emerge from teachers’ descriptions and stories of experiences of co-creating? What is the role of the teacher in the co-creating practice? What are teachers’ understanding of the creative principles inherent in drama pedagogy? What are the pedagogical implications of co-creating drama in the classroom? Can we develop and integrate a system of co-creating pedagogical practice into the classroom that can deepen and enrich the existing drama practice?

**The methodological approach**

The study followed a five-phase plan (see figure 1.1). It began with a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) summer course, in which primary school teachers explored their co-creating attitude. As the sampling criterion for the study required that participant teachers have a good understanding of co-creating drama, and be actively using drama in their practice, the course offered a means to enlist potential research participants. From this, seven participants were enlisted for the study. Following the course, they were asked to activate what they understood to be a co-creator attitude in their classroom drama work on their return to school. Thereafter, I visited the school on three occasions between September and December 2012 (as discussed in chapter six). This intervention phase began with the first visit, where I modelled co-creating drama with the teacher’s class. On the second visit, I became a co-teacher to support
their interpretation and adoption of the co-creating attitude. Then finally on the third visit, the teachers were primarily in charge of co-creating drama with their students and I became a co-participant with the students in the experience. Data was generated from interviews with participating teachers.

Figure 1.1: The five-phase plan of the study

Significance of study
The significance of this study is two-fold. Firstly, the initial part of the findings discussion presents the teachers’ experiences of their general drama practice, which in turn will inform current understanding of teachers’ drama practice in an Irish context. By considering their drama teaching experience as a whole, this can lead to a better understanding of the different meanings teachers develop in their everyday experience of drama in school. Secondly, co-creating drama has not yet received attention in an Irish classroom context. Therefore, this study offers an in-depth interpretation of this experience. Through listening, interpreting, and writing about the nature of co-creating drama in the classroom, the meaning of this attitude will be explored to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. While recognising that in Heidegger’s phenomenology, the researcher does not attempt to generalise or predict outcomes, this study will offer a possibility for others to ‘imagine’ what co-creating could potentially be like for them by offering a portrayal of a common experience of co-creating. Potentially, this study could be used to spark further research regarding the co-creation of drama and also provide both academics and teachers with a rich understanding of the potential of co-creation of drama in classrooms in Ireland.
Chapter Two

A phenomenological view of the world
This section briefly traces the history of qualitative research and discusses methodological characteristics and goals of the practice, with a view to framing this study. My decision to approach this study qualitatively was primarily guided by the initial research question. Qualitative research attempts to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. It is holistic in nature, seeking to understand the broad picture of the social context under investigation. Creswell (1998) considers essential features of qualitative research as a key concern, knowing or understanding from the participant’s perspective, and a key focus, understanding (rather than forecasting or controlling) social settings or social phenomena.

“Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.”

(Creswell 1998, p15)

Qualitative researchers attempt to get close to their objects of study by observing, questioning and listening. They do this to understand how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have. An important feature of qualitative research is capturing real events in natural settings, therefore it is a ‘real life’ perspective. The emphasis is on a particular phenomenon fixed in its context. However, qualitative research can also sometimes be regarded as a ‘soft option’ lacking scientific rigour and open to possible bias (Chapple and Rogers 1998). The process of interpretation has also been criticised and it has been suggested that the analysis process can lack clarity (Crist and Tanner 2003, Clarke 1998).

The roots of qualitative research lie in anthropology, philosophy and sociology (Patton 2002). It has a distinguished history, and there have been many theoretical and philosophical perspectives that have influenced it as a research style. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) divide the history of qualitative research into six periods in the twentieth century that they refer to as the ‘moments of qualitative research’. Firstly, there was the Traditional Period (1900-World War II), where there was a leaning towards Imperialism and Monumentalism. Quantitative research held prominence at this time, but not all research undertaken used quantitative methods. Social
anthropologists such as Boas, Benedict, Mead, Malinowski, and sociologists from the Chicago School began to engage in phenomenology, ethnography or ethnomethodology to study human group life. Their ‘fieldwork’ involved researching a natural setting using observation, description, and dialogue with the participants, including discussion of meanings. Data analysis was largely interpretative, involving descriptions of the phenomena. There was also a determination at this time to encourage objectivity in qualitative research and writing.

The Modernist Phase (Post-war to 1970s) was founded in naturalism, which advocates the gathering of data in the course of natural behaviour. The naturalism of fieldwork or participant observation was thought to reveal realities concealed from the view of the social survey researcher, whose structured interviews were set in artificial settings. Post-positivism operated as a powerful epistemological paradigm at this time. This period is characterised by the quest for methodological rigour and formalisation by qualitative researchers as they attempted to be accepted by the social sciences. It also pronounced their challenge of the developing post-positivism paradigm of this time. The modernist approach included grounded theory, the case study, ethnography, phenomenology, applied critical theory, symbolic interactionism, and action research (Schurink 2003).

During the Blurred Genres Period (1970-1986), many alternative approaches, methods, and strategies emerged in qualitative inquiry. Researchers began to borrow from different theoretical models, combining techniques and therefore becoming more creative in their research approaches. Although this ‘cross fertilization’ (Schurink 2003) encouraged more innovative attitudes towards research, the multitude of approaches that appeared at that time did lead to a struggle for direction, as boundaries between different disciplines became ‘blurred’ creating some confusion. In fact, researchers today have inherited the consequences of this era as they still struggle to navigate through the qualitative perspectives such as: symbolic interactionism, structuralism, critical theory, naturalism, neo-Marxism constructionism and deconstructionism to name a few (Patton 2002). The Crisis of Representation (mid-1980s) period saw qualitative researchers interrogate issues of power, class, race, and gender. This effort gave rise to cultural studies, critical and feminist epistemologies and action research. Critics also began to argue the issue of researcher perspective. It
was proposed that the researcher’s biography played a large role in interpretation, and that their personal and intellectual biography had a significant impact on research. At this time, qualitative research began to question the process of constructing versions of reality. Because of this, theories of validity, reliability and generalisability became prevalent. The fifth period (recent history) is known as the ‘Triple crisis’ of ‘representation, legitimisation and praxis’. At this point the nature of qualitative writing was questioned, for example this included issues such as the perspective of the researcher, evaluation, the quality of the research and the significance of interpreting research (Patton 2002). During this period the problem of directly capturing lived experience also became dominant. Concern grew over the representation of the ‘other’ (Schurink 2003). Opinions differed about gathering data, participant voice, interpretation and analysis. The debate of how researchers engage with the other is still on-going today, as seen in the varying discourses about participant voice in lived experience research. The sixth and seventh phases, termed the Post-experimental (present) have seen qualitative inquiry develop even further, incorporating new movements in research such as creative non-fiction, poetic representations, ethnography and multi-media presentations (Patton 2002).

The history of qualitative research reveals many of its complexities and suggests the necessity for a qualitative study to have clear philosophical underpinnings. Creswell believes that “[q]ualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell 2007, p37). Creswell further highlights matters that should be considered before a researcher embarks on research, as it has implications for the study. Firstly, he discusses the philosophical assumptions:

“[t]hese philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology).”

(Creswell 2007, p16)

As suggested above, a study is shaped by the researcher’s ‘paradigms’ or ‘world views’. A paradigm is “the basic belief system or world view that guides the
investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemological fundamental ways” (Guba and Lincon 1994, p105). The four main world views that inform qualitative research may be understood as: Pragmatism, Post-positivism, Advocacy/Participatory and Constructivism. Pragmatism focuses mainly on the actions, situations, practical implications and consequences of the research. It seeks to realise the best resolution to solve problems. Post-positivism usually starts from a theoretical perspective, builds a hypothesis and involves a scientific approach. It “has the elements of being reductionistic, logical, an emphasis on empirical data collection, cause and effect orientated, and deterministic based on priori theories” (Creswell 2007, p20). Advocacy/participatory promotes action and transformation and can possibly change the lives of participants and researchers. Marginalised groups and social issues such as oppression and alienation are examples of subject matter. Often the participants are involved with the collecting and analysing of data in order to ensure their ‘voice’ remains the strongest feature of the research. Finally, Constructivism relies on the research participant’s perspective of a situation or experience, and it is frequently integrated with interpretivism, as it relates to the theory of meaning. Constructivists believe that to understand the world they must interpret it. Characteristics of this worldview include dialogue with participants, listening to the participant’s experience, acknowledging the researcher’s position within the research, and meaning-making of the participant’s experience which again highlights its interpretative persuasion (Creswell 2003).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) also believe the researcher’s worldview (paradigm), and her understanding of the reality (ontology) and conception of knowledge (epistemology) all guide the whole research process. Therefore I will begin by stating that my worldview is situated within a constructivist perspective. Creswell (2007) states that in this worldview, “[i]ndividuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views, rather than to narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p20). The ontological beliefs of constructivism assert that multiple, socially constructed realities exist. This assumes that the reality is always constructed, and that no mind-independent world exists (Guba and Lincoln 1994). In other words, reality is constructed by the people who experience it, and that reality can be different for each of them, because it is based on their unique understandings of the world and their
experience of it. Hence, there can be multiple perspectives of reality. A particular construction of reality might be shared by some people, but other people could construct the same reality in quite different ways. Therefore, by “letting research participants speak for themselves”, we become aware of their realities (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p209). Furthermore, the epistemology of the constructivist paradigm is interactive and subjective, where the researcher and the researched are interactively linked in such a way that the findings are generated as the study proceeds (Guba and Lincon 1995, Koch 1999).

The process of shaping the philosophical framework of this study began with a series of questions, which were derived from my core research question: what are the ‘lived experiences’ of teachers co-creating drama in the Irish classroom?

The ontological question asks: What is there that can be known about teachers’ experiences of co-creating drama with their students in an Irish classroom context?

The epistemological question asks: What could we learn about the co-creating process in terms of teacher identity and the cultivation of attitudes, skills and beliefs?

Finally, there is the question of methodology: How do I answer these questions authentically?

From the outset, my constructivist ontological position informed the way in which knowledge was created for my study. It led me to the most appropriate methodology, that is, how I dealt with the data and myself as the researcher in the study. Five of the most frequently used qualitative methodological approaches in social science are: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Narrative research investigates the life of an individual; it is defined as a group of approaches that rely on the written or spoken words or visual representation of individuals. Phenomenology attempts to understand the essence of the individual’s experiences and their lived world. Some researchers link phenomenology and constructivism because of the experiential process of meaning and knowing within it. Grounded theory attempts to focus on social processes and interaction and develops a theory grounded in data. Ethnography centres on describing a culture and customs of a group, and case study tries to develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases.
The focus of this study is a question of experience, specifically how the participant teachers’ experience co-creating drama with their students in a classroom context. With this in mind, a constructivist stance utilising a phenomenological approach and methodology was adopted for the study. As discussed earlier, constructivism is often associated with ‘interpretivist’ or ‘post-modernist’ attitudes and can be seen as both an ontological and an epistemological stance. A constructivist approach embraces the subjectivity and relativity of experience; it asks the participants about their experiences and attempts to draw the different stories together to find the harmonies within the individuals’ experiences. The constructivist researcher uses the ‘participants’ views of the situation being studied to tell a story. In this way, phenomenology is part of the constructivist/interpretive paradigm. It is a type of social inquiry that focuses on the way that people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live (Halldorsdottir 2000). Findings are created through interaction between the researcher and the participants. For this reason, constructivism provides the most suitable philosophical foundation for this study. It philosophically grounds the study in the experience of co-creating drama, as the teachers are given an opportunity to tell their stories of co-creating. Consequently, this allows me to then “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings” from these stories (Creswell 2003, p9).

**Purpose of phenomenology research**
Phenomenology is the study of ‘lived experience’, through stories, interviews and other accounts, to discover the meanings of those experiences (van Manen 1990). It is a system of inquiry that attempts to understand the way in which people experience the world they create and inhabit. Therefore, personal experience is the starting point. Phenomenologists attempt to help participants express their lived experiences as directly as possible, aiming for “rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived” (Finlay 2009, p6). Once the researcher has accessed this knowledge, they reduce these experiences to common experiences. These common experiences are illuminating details which the researcher considers are inherent and unchanging in the meaning of the experience. They then reduce them again to a description of the universal essence of the experience.
van Manen (1990) describes phenomenology as the ‘study of essences’. The ‘essence’ in a phenomenological sense is the essential nature of an experience, the true being of an experience. “The essence of a phenomenon is a universal, which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon” (van Manen 1990, p10). The essence of an experience may be revealed “in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way” (van Manen 1990, p37).

According to Patton (1990), the focus of a phenomenological study lies in the descriptions of what people experience, and how it is that they experience that experience. For example, what are the meanings, structure, and essences of the lived experience of the phenomenon for this person? The aim is to identify the essence of the experience that influences all variations in a particular learning experience. The lived experience gives meaning to each individual’s perspective of a particular phenomenon, and therefore presents to the individual what is true or real in his or her life (Giorgi 1997).

“Phenomenology wants to slow the researcher down and hold his or her gaze on the phenomenon itself, the lived-experience of some activity, seeking not to locate it in an abstract matrix by saying how its abstracted structure might be similar to others, but rather to illumine its specific quality as an experience.”

(Willis 2001, p2)

Phenomenological research characteristically begins with capturing real descriptions of lived situations. van Manen (1990) defines this as ‘borrowing’ the stories of participants as a way to acquire understanding of the nature of the lived experience. He suggests that phenomenologists do this in an attempt to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without theorising, classifying or abstracting it. This notion of pre-reflective experience is related to the idea that experiences have a subjective perspective to them, a certain quality of what it ‘feels’ like or ‘what it is like’ to have them. Experience happens for the individual in an immediate way; for the phenomenologist, this immediate and personal notion of experiencing phenomena is acknowledged as pre-reflective self-consciousness. That is, where one’s self is experienced, or lived through as the subject of awareness, without any process of reflection on itself (Zahavi 2005). Once the stories have been captured, the researcher proceeds by reflectively examining these stories, and they then begin to
identify themes within the experience. van Manen (1990) suggests that stories “involve us pre-reflectively in the lived quality of concrete experience while paradoxically inviting us into a reflective stance vis-à-vis the meanings embedded in the experience” (p121). In other words, we are pre-reflective, in the sense that there is an implicit awareness of the experience rather than any higher-order mode, but we also become involved in reflecting on the meanings that emerge. In this way “phenomenology is a poetizing project, it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1973 cited in van Manen 1990, p13).

Phenomenology differs from other conventional social science philosophy as although it has a theoretical orientation, it does not set out to prove a hypothesis. It is focused on discovery rather than prediction or explanation, and consequently the investigator attempts to clarify the meanings by giving us “plausible insights” of the phenomena from lived experiences (van Manen 1990, p9). Shi (2011) believes the researcher should be aware of the dilemmas they might encounter in this approach, this includes descriptive phenomenology versus interpretive phenomenology (which I discuss later in this chapter), objective versus subjective; i.e. how do I as the researcher avoid imposing my personal experiences and biases on the analysis of the experiences shared by the others? Do I integrate my own experiences? Again, this issue is dealt with later through my phenomenological positioning. The final dilemma they discuss is speaking for participants versus speaking for the researcher, i.e. do I speak for my participants or let them speak for themselves? In this case, the teachers and I interacted in order to discover understandings and reconstruct experience. I operated as an ‘active interpreter’ (Denzin 1989), participating in an on-going conversation about their experiences. Consequently, the understandings that emerged were a fusion of the teachers’ experiences and my experiences with the phenomenon. Fundamentally, the teachers’ voices are principal in this thesis, because it is their experience, so we should hear it first-hand from the teachers. My voice in the thesis is one of meaning-making of the phenomena.

This study is also phenomenological in the sense that the inquiry explores a particular phenomenon, the teacher as a co-creator of drama in the classroom. The motivation for this study is founded in the belief that the experiential knowledge of the teachers, i.e.
teachers’ lived experiences, reflecting their perspective and recounted in their own words, is under researched in drama education, something that will be explored later in this chapter. The intention is to give voice to teachers’ ‘lived experience’ of facilitating drama in the classroom and particularly the impact of what I have termed a co-creator role within this. Therefore, a phenomenological perspective on this research ensured that the study focused on the teachers’ experience and understanding of their drama practice, thus allowing me to then examine the meanings and connections inherent in their experience. This was in order to better understand the impact and possibilities of co-creation in their classrooms. By looking at co-creating phenomenologically, it would show how co-creation of drama was lived daily by the teachers through their own eyes.

Phenomenological positioning
Perhaps the most challenging aspect for a researcher applying a phenomenological approach, is determining which philosophical strand of phenomenology is most appropriate in terms of method. As Stevick (1971) suggests “method and phenomenon must dialogue: what method will best allow full emergence of the phenomenon in all its aspects: the situation, the behaviour and experience of the subject?” (Stevick 1971, p135). Although the study of ‘lived experience’ is the common ground among phenomenological thinkers, phenomenology as a philosophy and a methodology holds differing positions. According to Koch (1995), it is important from the outset of a phenomenological study to contextualise the research to the different philosophical traditions that inform its approaches.

Phenomenology originated in the modernist period, and it grew out of the general reaction against the scientific (positivist) view of philosophy which was dominant at that time. It was in particular Descartes’ dualism of mind and body, or consciousness and matter that phenomenologists disapproved of (Hammond et al. 1991). They could not separate mind from matter, believing that experience is always conscious. The general shift from modernism to post-modernism saw a move “from epistemology to hermeneutics; from absolute truth to relative truth, from seeking the author’s meaning to finding the reader’s meanings; from the structure of the text, to destructing the text; from the goal of knowing truth to the journey of knowing” (Geisler 2012, p4). This emergence of the phenomenological tradition was an important pre-cursor to post-
modern thought and philosophy, and although the post-modernism roots are in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, it really began to take shape around 1950 with Heidegger, particularly as he brought focus to hermeneutics and the act of interpretation.

There are two main schools of phenomenological thought, descriptive (Husserlian) and interpretive (Heideggerian) phenomenology (Creswell 1998, Laverty 2003, Finlay 2009). Though both Husserl and Heidegger sought to discover human experience, they differed on their view of how these experiences should be explored. German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was one of the first phenomenological philosophers and is described as the ‘father of Phenomenology’ (Koch 1996). He defined phenomenology as a philosophical approach to the study of experience, where experience is examined in the way that it occurs, and in its own terms. In doing this, Husserl pursued the idea of seeing things exactly ‘as they are’, therefore, embracing pure description rather than attempting to interpret. Descriptive phenomenology, in Husserl’s terms, examines lived experiences in the immediate consciousness of life’s events, prior to reflection, and without interpretation (Giorgi 1997). Husserl sought “to show the purely immanent character of conscious experience by means of careful description” (Laverty 2003, p6). Husserl’s phenomenology focused on understanding phenomena that appears through consciousness, and he was concerned with “acts of attending, perceiving, recalling, and thinking about the world and how human beings (were) understood primarily as knowers” (ibid p7). In his book *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900–1901: Logical Investigations), he sought to go ‘back to the things themselves’ (*Zu den Sachenselbst*) as they appeared to the pure consciousness and attempted to look past the specifics of everyday life to the essences underlying them. Husserl’s concept of the ‘life-world’ became a central theme in his phenomenology. The ‘life-world’ or *Lebenswelt* is the “intuitive surrounding world of life, pre-given as existing for all in common” (Husserl 1970, p121). The ‘life-world’ is pre-reflective and free from introspection; it is entirely focused on the individual’s lived situation and social world (Finlay 2008). It explores our existence in a day-to-day world, and our interactions with the world as we perceive it. The ‘life-world’ is perceived as the world that is lived and experienced by a person, not the world as something distinct from the person. It is “a world that appears meaningfully to consciousness in its qualitative, flowing given-ness; not an objective world ‘out there’, but a humanly relational world” (Todres *et al.* 2007, p55).
Descriptive phenomenological approach is used when little is known about a subject, and the aim is to create a clear understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of those directly involved in it (Giorgi 1997). Participants are asked to describe their experience directly, rather than making intellectual reflections about the experience. The goal is then to analyse these descriptive texts in order to gain an exact description of the phenomenon ‘as it appears’ (Kaam 1996). This descriptive method also proposes the researcher’s preconceived opinions and judgements about the phenomena should be set aside or ‘bracketed’ out, and the researcher should simply describe (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, they make no interpretations within their study. Husserl felt this removes the researcher from his or her ‘natural attitude’ and allows them to connect with essences of the phenomena more clearly and directly, without distorting it with interpretation.

Heidegger’s interpretative or hermeneutic (science of interpretation) tradition directly contradicts this. He felt it was important that the researcher uses his/ her previous experience, knowledge and understandings, to interpret and discover meanings with the purpose of producing a vivid representation of the phenomenon described (Kleiman 2004). He believed it was impossible to lose ‘pre-understandings’ and that context and background had meaning within experiences. Heidegger indicated that “pre-understanding is not something a person can step outside of or put aside, as it is understood as already being with us in the world” (Laverty 2003, p8). Therefore, in hermeneutic phenomenology experiences, biases and understandings of the researcher are not bracketed, but are embedded and essential to the interpretive process (ibid). The researcher is asked to give significant thought to their own experience, and to acknowledge the ways in which their position or experience relates to the experience being researched. According to Koch (1996), it is usual that an interpreter draws on experiences and frames of reference during the act of understanding, and thus, bracketing can never really be achieved. He describes the bracketing separation between the two philosophers as, on the one hand, Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology being focused on the lived world from the perspective of a detached observer. And on the other, Heidegger’s interpretive phenomenology is based on the assumption that separation of the observer from the world is unattainable. Heidegger believed that we are all self-interpreting beings. He suggested that to live is to listen, interpret and learn from the stories that others tell. In essence, Heidegger argued that
the experiences and beliefs of the researcher are genuine components of the research, and the researcher cannot help but be situated in the research.

Heidegger rejected Husserl’s emphasis on pure description and insisted that “phenomenology is hermeneutic in the primordial signification of the word, it designates this business of interpreting” (Heidegger 1962, p37). He argued that all description is already interpretation. Heidegger’s hermeneutics is considered as the study of human cultural activity as texts (understood as written or verbal communication, and different disciplines of art), in an attempt to interpret and find meanings (Kvale 1996). Therefore, hermeneutics attempts to derive meaning of phenomena through language, rather than creating knowledge. Thus, the aim of hermeneutic inquiry is understanding. A former student of Husserl, Heidegger believed the study of phenomena was a study of signs which needs to be deconstructed, interpreted and layered with significance. His hermeneutics employed the reading of text to get at the real meaning of an experience (Lewis and Staehler 2010). Fundamental themes of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology are interpretation, textual meaning, dialogue and pre-understanding. He presented a combination of both descriptive and interpretative analysis of an experience, and took phenomenology on a new path by transforming Husserl’s phenomenology of consciousness into a hermeneutical phenomenology of ‘being’ (Schwandt 2001). “Whereas Husserl had approached it (phenomenology) with an idea of bringing into view the function of consciousness as transcendental subjectivity, Heidegger saw in it the vital medium of man’s historical ‘being’ in the world” (Palmer 1969, p125). Heidegger’s concept of ‘being’ or ‘Dasein’, (translated as ‘the mode of being human’), states people are beings, who experience themselves in everyday situations in the world. The examination of ‘being’ dominated his entire philosophy. According to Heidegger, “[p]hilosophy is the theoretical conceptual interpretation of being, of being’s structure and its possibilities” (Heidegger 1982, p11). While Husserl believed ‘beings’ were primarily seen as knowers, Heidegger insisted the knowers were concerned individuals or beings with an emphasis on their fate in the world (Annells 1996). Therefore, he used his interpretive attitude to search out relationships and meanings that participants, knowledge and context had for each other.
Another influential figure within modern hermeneutical phenomenology is Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976). He developed a distinctive ‘dialogical’ approach, grounded in Greek thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, as well as Heideggerian philosophy, which he extended into practical application (Gadamer 1976, Polkinghorne 1983). His approach embraces a discursive and dialogic attitude to research. He believes that language and understanding are intertwined, and so interpretation is constantly evolving, “[l]anguage is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting” (Gadamer 1998, p389). Gadamer discards subjectivism and relativism, shuns any simplified notions of interpretive method, and grounds understanding in the linguistic tradition (Grondin 2002). Drawing from Heidegger, Gadamer argues that understanding happens within a ‘fusion of horizons’. The ‘horizon’, he explains, is the person’s past and present frames of reference. He sees this as the dialectical interaction between the expectation of the interpreter, and the meaning of the text (Polkinghorne 1983). The ‘fusion of horizons’ occurs through a hermeneutic conversation in which we compare and contrast the many interpretations, therefore meanings emerge as the text and the researcher engages in a dialogue (Laverty 2003).

Whilst Gadamer can be found throughout the thesis, it is important to note that the philosophical considerations of Heidegger are the bedrock of phenomenological thinking that underpin this study. When a researcher takes Heidegger as a guiding philosophical influence for a study, it is understood that people are self-interpreting. This assumes the research participants will engage the whole self in the process, including understanding what is real for them and what is important in their life. So when they tell their story, the researcher accepts that this story is their construction of reality. The researcher also takes their own self-awareness, their sense of reality as a human being in the world, into the interpretive act.

**The selection of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenological approach**

When a researcher considers a phenomenological orientation in their research, it means that he/she assumes the nature of the experience might be best accessed through a first-person narrative. In this way, the participants’ voices allow the researcher to attend to the features of the situation that are significant to the participants, and are important in understanding the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, by employing a
phenomenological orientation, the type of knowledge the researcher is going to create is clearly defined. The knowledge generated from this study tells us what co-creating drama is like for teachers in an Irish classroom context, and consequently what happens when they facilitate co-creating encounters. While in Heidegger's phenomenology the researcher does not attempt to generalise or predict outcomes, this study will offer the possibility for others to ‘imagine’ what co-creating could potentially be like for them by offering a portrayal of a common experience of co-creating. The purpose of the study is to understand co-creating from everyday knowledge and perceptions of the teachers. It will not be concerned with explaining the reasons for co-creating, but will describe how things are experienced first-hand by the teachers involved, in their everyday world. Furthermore, by using ‘interpretive’ phenomenology, there is an opportunity to understand the ‘meaning’ of the phenomena through studying the teacher’s thoughts and actions in their drama practice. This leads to a more profound knowledge of how the teachers experienced co-creating drama in their classroom and the knowledges, attitudes, skills and beliefs that surround the teacher as a co-creator in the primary drama classroom experience.

Hermeneutic phenomenological structure also considers where the researcher situates herself/himself relative to the phenomenon of interest. Essentially, this determines the phenomenological perspective. According to Heidegger’s (1962) phenomenology, the researcher accepts we all have implicit assumptions about life and about the experiences we have, thus we interpret everything in terms of our own experience. Therefore, when we try to understand another person’s experience, we should acknowledge our own presumptions and be as explicit about them as we can. van Manen (1990) suggests that the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is “the fulfilment of our human nature, to become more fully who we are” (van Manen 1990, p12). And so, rather than bracketing my own experiences, I include my own perspective, background and experience. I move back and forth between the teachers’ description of their experiences of co-creating and my own. This dialectical interaction of experiences fulfils Heidegger’s notion of ‘hermeneutical’ alliance. Some have criticised interpretative research for being biased toward the researcher’s knowledge and experience and for not staying true to the participant’s lived experience (Tripp-Reimer and Cohen 1987). Heidegger believed that pre-understanding, and the
Historicity of the researcher’s experience are unavoidable, and are actually necessary if the researcher is to encounter new experiences and meaning.

**Phenomenology in education**

Cochran-Smith (1990) suggests that until recently, educational research has not acknowledged the importance of the voices of teachers, or the knowledge that can be gained from the interpretative frames they use to understand their own classroom practices. Egan (1995) argues that educational philosophy should embrace a more hermeneutical approach to research because “teacher talk is usually straightforward: jargon free, experientially dense, expressive and compelling. So it makes for good anecdotal copy” (p129). He suggests the realising of teachers’ experiences and narratives in research are invaluable in terms of their practice too:

> “[t]elling a story of one’s life is often a vehicle for taking distance from that experience, and, thereby, of making it the object of reflection. Cognitive psychologists call this *de-centering*, it allows the teacher to escape momentarily from the frenzied busyness of classroom life-from its immediacy, simultaneity, and unpredictability-to explore his or her life and possible to put it into meaningful order.”

(Egan 1995, p131)

Since “narrative is the discourse structure in which human action receives its form and through which it is meaningful” (Polkinghorne 1988, p135), teacher narratives can be considered to be a powerful way to understand the complex processes of sense-making in teaching. van Manen believes that phenomenology can help the researcher “understand the phenomena of education by maintaining a view of pedagogy as an expression of the whole, and a view of the experiential situation as the *topos* [common theme] of real pedagogic acting” (van Manen 1990, p7). It can provide the opportunity for systematic reflection in understanding teachers’ experiences in the classroom. This reflection can then provide educators with information on how teachers engage with children and their classroom realities (Shi 2011, p1). However, there are critics of phenomenology in education, with even van Manen (1990) suggesting that “without doubt there is a certain body of so-called phenomenological, hermeneutic or ethnographic human science work in education that might not pass any test of rational standards” (p5). Although phenomenology is based on experience, it does not form generalisations about situations in education, and it is difficult to replicate. It cannot be
used to “show or prove, for example, that one reading method is more effective than another reading method, or that certain instructional techniques produce higher achievement scores, and so forth” (van Manen 1990, p22). But van Manen warns that “the tendency to generalise may prevent us from developing understandings that remain focused on the uniqueness of human experience” (ibid p22). This study accepts van Manen’s perspective, that there is a necessity to go beyond the ‘one size fits all’ method and to look more closely at the relationship between the individual and the experience in order to derive understanding. As Dahlberg (2006) suggests, the phenomenological method should not be seen as a simplifying approach. It often points to different levels of comprehension leading to a ‘core meaning’, which includes the essential aspects, and the constituents of the phenomenon. It offers insights into people’s motivations and is an excellent method to illuminate the influence of context and actions. In this way, “it is a potentially powerful way of making sense of education, practitioners’ (and learners’) sense-making, and can lead to startling new insights into the uniquely complex processes of learning” (Vander-Mescht 2004, p1).

When I came to the decision that my interpretive position would be framed by Heidegger’s philosophical hermeneutics, there were few studies situated in a drama context to guide my application of it. In fact, I could only find one study with a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective on teachers’ relationship with drama. This was Mimick’s (2010) doctoral study which uses an interpretative inquiry to explore the impact and implications for drama education as part of the standards-based education climate within British Columbia, Canada. There are teacher and education phenomenological studies, arts and education phenomenological studies, and also phenomenological research in the field of theatre. However, there seems to be few phenomenological studies that have been conducted with teachers in a drama and education context either in an Irish or an international context. Among a small number of studies that are positioned in a drama context, is Cramer’s doctoral study based on aesthetic response, reader response, and drama in education theories. His phenomenological study describes the literary experience of text through oral interpretation for fourth and eighth grade students in America (Cramer 2003). Another is a doctoral thesis (James 2010) which focuses on the lived experience of a group of post-graduate drama students as they undergo a one year vocational Master of Arts in Acting at a major London Drama School. Haseman (1999) structured his doctoral
study as three phenomenological investigations into contemporary drama works. And finally, Piasecka’s (2012) doctoral study recounts the development through fieldwork in primary schools of a distinctive performance pedagogy that bridges drama and live art. It takes a post-structural and phenomenological perspective on the performance element of drama.

To conclude this chapter, my assumptions, the questions they address, their characteristics, and the implication for this study are listed in the table overleaf. The table represents my overall position with regard to qualitative research and its phenomenological perspective, and presents the set of beliefs that guide this study (Creswell 2007).
Table 2.1: Modified from Philosophical Assumptions with Implications for Practice (Creswell 2007, p17) originally adapted by Guba and Lincoln (1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Implications for This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and multiple</td>
<td><em>Quotes and themes in the words of the teachers interviewed, different perspectives are evident</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?</td>
<td>Researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself/herself and that being researched</td>
<td><em>Researcher interviewed teachers in their classrooms, researcher played dual roles of participant/researcher at certain points and researcher/co-teacher</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiological</td>
<td>What is the role of values?</td>
<td>Researcher recognises that qualitative research is value-laden and that biases are present</td>
<td><em>Because of the interpretative nature of the study, the researcher’s voice is present throughout the study, The researcher discussed values that shape the narrative and included own interpretation with that of teachers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>What is the language of the research?</td>
<td>Researcher writes in a literary style, using personal voice</td>
<td><em>It was written in first-person and the researcher uses qualitative terms and definitions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>What is the process of research?</td>
<td>Researcher studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design</td>
<td><em>Researcher reviewed data in detail numerous times before developing general themes, described the context of the study, and used probing questions when needed to obtain rich detail</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Chapter Three

Drama as an educational concern
As discussed briefly in chapter one and for further analysis in chapter five, co-creating is a shared creative experience, which sees both teacher and students as artistically active co-participants in the drama experience. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how the concept of co-creating has been embedded and celebrated throughout the history of drama as an educational concern. Therefore, I will begin by providing a brief historical perspective on drama, establishing influential scholars in the field and their theoretical thinking, in order to present how co-creating as an active attitude has emerged and evolved into its present-day orientation.

**Harriet Finlay-Johnson**

“At the start of the twentieth century, drama was strongly associated with the new education movement because it embodied ideas of natural growth, child centred education and experiential learning” (Fleming 2010, p40). We see this begin in the work of English primary school principal Harriet Finlay-Johnson (1911), who was the first to employ dramatic techniques in general education. Finlay-Johnson focused on the teaching of drama in order to promote a child-centred teaching philosophy. She promoted a practice of ‘integrated knowledge’, ‘activity-method’, ‘pupil-autonomy’ and ‘dramatisation’. These ideas embraced some of the philosophies that later characterised the Progressive movement, emanating from Dewey’s Experimental School in Chicago around that time. In the practice of Finlay-Johnson, we see the beginning of the notion of teacher as co-participant and the student as central to the drama experience, which I argue is fundamental to the co-creating attitude. Her drama moved away from the accepted practices of the time, which promoted elocution, speech and acting skills. She focused on imaginative work, co-operative learning and formal play-making ‘with and by the children’ or ‘scholars’ as she described them. Furthermore, she envisioned teachers as enablers and “fellow workers” (Bolton 2007, p48), in classroom work. Finlay-Johnson was also interested in performance, encouraging her pupils to write, rehearse and perform their own plays for each other in the classroom. Bolton (1984) highlights her focus on content rather than skill, describing her work as a “conception of drama that attaches considerable importance to subject matter. Drama is used as a means of mastering content” (p12). Although cross-curricular in nature, her work was a first step towards today’s *process drama* and co-operative learning. Her approach to drama would become significant to the work of later drama practitioners, because her work not only placed significance on the
student’s education through drama, but also on its aesthetic value. Significantly, she was also the first to theorise her drama practice. Finlay-Johnson’s book, The Dramatic method of Teaching (1907) included chapters exploring literature, language skills, nature study, practical skills through drama and the main aspect of her work, drama as a way of teaching history. O’Toole et al. (2009) explain that Finlay-Johnson is prominent in the history of drama education, because she recognised the significance of drama as a motivating factor to help children engage in the curriculum, and identified its multi-layered and multiple learning effects (O’Toole et al. 2009). They go on to suggest that her book was to be the most comprehensive analysis of drama as a method of learning and teaching for nearly seventy years, because she highlighted many themes that are still important for drama practitioners today.

**Henry Caldwell-Cook**

Around the time Finlay-Johnson was investigating co-operative and collaborative drama, Henry Caldwell-Cook (1917) was conceiving a pedagogic ‘playway’ approach. He saw “play activity as a basis of education”, which Bolton suggests pulled drama “towards strict artistic form” (Bolton 1994, p15). Caldwell-Cook suggested play was a practice for adulthood, saying, “it would not be wise to send a child innocent into the big world. But it is possible to hold rehearsals, to try our strength in a make believe big world. And that is play” (Caldwell-Cook 1917, p15). Hornbrook (1989) is unkind in his description of Caldwell-Cook’s book, and describes it as “heady progressivism expressed in the author’s idiosyncratic Boys Own Paper style” (Hornbrook1989, p7). But, he does note Caldwell-Cook’s belief in the significance of ‘play’, which was later recognised and formalised by psychologists, “[t]he plausibly scientific recognition of play as a form of instinctive learning, with its accepted ‘naturalness’ and powerful ‘let’s pretend’ element’ enabled the teleological gap between self-authentication and acting to be convincingly bridged” (Hornbrook 1989, p8). As with Finlay-Johnson, Caldwell-Cook proposed the drama class as a ‘body of workers’ who collaborated and learnt best by ‘doing’ (Cook 1917). However, he differed from her in his emphasis on the method, rather than the content. His main focus was on English language. In fact, his attention was not on teaching drama, instead he “was using a dramatic method so that his pupils could experience and enjoy English literature” (Bolton 1984, p15). Bolton goes on to suggest that Caldwell-Cook’s focus on the “craftsmanship of the artist” (p17), particularly the craftsmanship of the English language is key to the
history of drama. Because, in scrutinising his own ‘craftsmanship’ of pedagogy, he 
began to identify the nature of the learning that takes place in the drama class, and he 
began to value collaboration, play and process, rather than focusing purely on product. 
However, Caldwell-Cook’s approach received criticism at the time, and his approach 
raised problems in terms of its practical delivery. Bolton explains:

“Using this approach indeed remained isolated, many teachers experiencing failure. 
One teacher, a distinguished classroom practitioner, was made painfully aware when 
he tried this ‘playway’ approach to teaching history. In achieving little more than 
‘undisguised amusement’ from his students, he dismissively summarised this new 
method with: In grasping at the substance, you have even lost the shadow.”

(Bolton 2007, p48)

This particular instance highlights an important ongoing tension between the claims 
and theories of drama in an educational context, and the actuality of classroom drama 
practice, a tension which can be seen throughout its history and which is still evident 
today. Hornbrook (1989) also criticises Caldwell-Cook’s lofty notions, particularly in 
terms of students’ self-imposed discipline founded on ‘mutual trust and 
understanding’, suggesting that the problem lay in the negotiating of what pupils want 
to do, and their appropriate conduct in achieving it. The contradiction of teachers’ 
expectations of enabling ‘playful’ drama work and the reality of its delivery which 
both Bolton and Hornbrook touch on above (and which in some ways was the impetus 
of this study), anticipated the problems which were to follow, with respect to the 
pioneers of drama whose visionary approaches and outstanding drama pedagogical 
skills appeared “to be unmatchable” (Bolton 2007, p48).

Winifred Ward

The American drama movement began in the shape of Winifred Ward (1930, 1957) 
who inspired an eclectic type of drama. She blended elements of storytelling, creative 
playmaking and children’s theatre to develop a classroom teaching method that she 
called Creative drama. She believed it was a “new subject, one that has a valuable 
contribution to give to education” (Ward 1930, p3). She was America’s first pioneer of 
drama and guided the early generations of American drama practitioners, most notably 
Nellie McCaslin. Ward had significant involvement in the founding of the Children’s 
Theatre Association of America, the first professional organisation for children’s 
theatre practitioners. She also wrote Creative Dramatics (1930), where she explored
the creative act as a vehicle for the education of the child. Ward believed in the expressive and creative power of drama, but she was quite wary of the use of drama as a learning tool. Her approach focused on the external skills that children displayed during drama work (Taylor 2000). She believed, “characterisation, development of plot, enriching of action, ensemble work and tempo” were to be emphasised, with “voice and diction understood to be vitally important” (Ward 1930, p46). Furthermore, Ward suggested the teacher should possess knowledge of theatre processes to permit an aesthetic growth in the drama work. She encouraged them to lead their students towards a stage production, but also advocated that the children develop these plays out of their own thoughts, imaginations and emotions. Although her approach was child-centered in the sense of its “playmaking” approach (Ward 1957, p2), rather than any exploration of themes or issues, its focus was on story re-enactment, as well as student’s development of ‘acting skills’ and “a feeling for their theatre” (Ward, 1930, p27).

“Pupils were encouraged to see drama as a story line, teachers were encouraged to train children through a shopping list of exercises in life skills such as sensitivity and concentration, and the importance of individual activity and self-expression was stressed in the name of progressive education. Drama as a symbolic art form was ignored and replaced by an emphasis on direct sensory experience. The content or subject matter of the drama was seen as irrelevant.”

(Bolton 1985, p 154)

As Bolton alludes to above, Ward’s focus on the skills and techniques of drama suggests a lack of depth to the drama work. Perhaps this is what Fleming (2010) is indicating when he states that in the early part of the twentieth century “approaches to the subject were only ‘progressive’ in a fairly superficial way” (p40).

**Peter Slade**

The emphasis on play, collaboration, and the experience of the child that Finlay-Johnson and Caldwell-Cook advocated can also be seen in the work of Peter Slade (1954). Slade outlined a child-centred mode of exploration, self-expression and personal growth through drama that was founded on imaginative play as an art-form. His first book, *Child Drama* (1954) developed this thinking, “[t]he book wholeheartedly centred on his revolutionary discovery: that *Child Drama* has a life of its own, and exists as an art-form in its own right, with intrinsic purposes, control of form, and outcomes that are self-contained artworks” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p75). Slade
opposed conventional learning theory; he unequivocally believed that children should play in schools, asserting play as learning and child drama as natural dramatic play. The ideas of natural expression, natural artistry and creation interested him greatly. He suggested they were all grounded in children’s natural improvisational play, which he termed ‘dramatic play’, identifying specific strands as ‘personal’ and ‘projected’ play. He encouraged the teacher not to criticise or direct the students, but to become a ‘loving ally’. He also asked them to nurture the child’s natural impulse and creative dramatic instincts (Taylor 2000), to recognise and value the ‘artistry of the student’ and to allow the students to become involved with the planning of their drama (O’Toole et al. 2009). They were to respect the contributions of the child, and to trust the students to reach ‘significance’, which he suggested lay in the natural patterns of the art-form, and in particular in the natural play of children (O’Toole 1992). His approach was very significant at the time, as it “came to inform the practice of a newly created generation of drama teachers” (Hornbrook 1989, p10). Yet, his theories of student autonomy and creative play did not transfer so well to his own classroom practice, “[o]bservers of Slade’s own teaching, note that it was characterised less by creative liberation of the children than by close control and systematic management use of his own considerable charisma” (O’Toole 1992, p62). Slades’s concepts left him open to criticism, as Hornbrook argues, “[i]f the teacher’s relationship with Child Drama was vitally non-critical, then how was it possible to know what educational aims were being realised? (Hornbrook 1989, p11). Hornbrook makes an interesting point as to how teachers were to evaluate Slade’s notions of ‘absorption’ and ‘sincerity’. Also, if as he suggested, students are “wrapped up in what is being done, or what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts” (Way 1958, p19), and are so engrossed in playing “out their own fantasies” (Bolton 2007, p49), then the question of whether this type of approach had room for students to reflect on their experiences, and whether it allowed for shifts in understanding is a valid one. Slade may have been losing the learning in the art of the child making drama. Slade also criticised the model of teaching children to act, and was also critical of too much teacher intervention in the children’s play (Bolton, 1984). Fundamentally, he considered drama an experience of making connections through involvement, witnessing and creative absorption.
Brian Way

Brian Way (1967), a contemporary of Slade, was also concerned with experience. But, he had a particular interest in individuality and “developing people” (p7). Education, he stated, “is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence” (Way 1967, p3). Way’s approach included a series of life skills exercises that were designed to train the use of intuition by exploring the senses and stimulating imagination. He used space, music and movement to develop emotion, sensitivity and logic. Way used a similar structure to Slade, it was “a physical education format, but he replaced the fantasy journey of the teacher’s narration with short exercises in mimetic actions of everyday life and aimed at developing each child’s intuition and concentration capacities” (Bolton 2007, p50).

His classroom was far removed from the collaborative approach of Caldwell-Cook, as he repositioned the teacher into one of control of the class, and students were often merely acting out the narrative the teacher suggested. It also differed from Slade’s creative play, as he focused entirely on a personal development approach through direct experience.

Way gave prominence to the dichotomy between theatre and drama, saying, “[t]heatre is largely concerned with communication between actors and the audience: drama is largely concerned with experience by participants, irrespective of any function to communicate to an audience” (Way 1967, p2). Therefore, it can be argued that Way’s approach to drama removed the notion of a shared and communal theatrical experience, in favour of the individual’s experience. His book Development through drama (1967) was not known for its philosophical arguments on drama, but for its practical guidance for teachers, particularly his developmental exercises on acting, expression, and stimulating the imagination and senses (O’Toole et al. 2009).

Critics of Way (Day 1975, Bolton 1984, Taylor and Wagner 2006, O’Toole et al. 2009) argue that his focus on exercises was both “limited and limiting” (O’Neill 1994, p32). Although Way’s approach may have provided teachers with a stock of activities that could be used in drama, it also opened the door to confusion, where drama practice was and often still is interpreted as a succession of games or warm-up exercises without any connection to drama as education or drama as art-form, and which avoids the creation of drama context or content.
Dorothy Heathcote

The 1960s continued along a progressive line with Dorothy Heathcote, now one of world’s best-known drama educators. Like Finlay-Johnson, the roots of her work can now be viewed as lying in a social constructivist epistemology, in which Dewey’s (1916, 1921) concept of democratic and child-centred education praxis was central. Her practice was concerned with using drama as a way into understanding, an approach that was thought to have “brought substance back to the drama lesson” (Bolton 2007, p53). Through encouraging students’ exploration of unexamined perceptions, she sought to add depth to their thinking and experience. Like Ward and Slade, Heathcote’s work honoured the students’ input. It was founded on the co-construction of real-life understanding, through action-determined learning encounters. She saw the role of the teacher as pivotal in enriching the quality of the drama, as well as in defining educational objectives. “Through the agency of the teacher, Heathcote argued, the imaginative world simulated by the drama would reveal to a class new insights and understandings” (Hornbrook 1989, p14). Wagner maintains that from the beginning, Heathcote set about “consciously employing the elements of drama to educate” (1989 p19). She wanted to enable the students to create drama to bring about some form of change in their understanding (O’Neill 1984). She attempted to structure learning encounters to challenge their biases and assumptions, leading to the students discovering more about themselves. Her drama praxis ultimately sought to deepen their understanding, through provoking action and debate within fictional worlds. It is also widely recognised that she pioneered the process drama approach used in many schools today. The concept of process drama, characterised by improvisation and engagement of the students in negotiating the unfolding drama, emerged as a distinctive approach through Heathcote, and it was later developed by Cecily O’Neill. Gavin Bolton a fellow British drama educator, was seminal in analysing her praxis. Hornbrook, who often questioned Heathcote’s practice, suggests Bolton gave Heathcote’s “highly intuitive methodology respectable intellectual form” (Hornbrook 1989, p19).

Heathcote trained as an actor and was greatly influenced by theatre work around her, particularly the work of Stanislavski and his theories of ‘emotional memory’ and the ‘magic if’, but also Brecht’s notion of actors simultaneously observing and participating in theatre. Similar to Way, she valued intuition and considered it part of
the artistic process. She expected her students to operate intuitively in their make-believe and improvisations, because she believed it could lead to a ‘hyperawareness’ in their drama work (Bolton 1984). Her praxis began at Newcastle-upon-Tyne University, and promoted drama as a way to explore new understandings about human experience. It centered on the notion of empathy, whereby her students would ‘put themselves in someone else’s shoes’ to gain a better understanding of the world. Courtney (1980) puts the value of this transformation in perspective, “[w]hen we ‘put ourselves in someone else’s shoes’, we understand the other through the self and the self through the other and the resulting meaning is greater than either” (p125). In this way, Heathcote supposed that we gain an understanding of life through the scrutiny of particular moments of life (Heathcote 1984). Bolton states, that for Heathcote, “man’s curiosity about the world is the very source of her interest in drama, of her interest in history, of her interest in education and indeed of her interest in life” (Bolton 1994, p55). Heathcote felt that there was importance in “what we discover for ourselves and the group when we place ourselves in a human situation containing some element of desperation” (Heathcote 1967, p44). She stated, “drama is human beings confronted by situations that change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges” (Heathcote 1967, p48). This notion led to one of her key concepts, ‘man in a mess’. It centred on the idea that students become involved in the ‘crises or the turning point’ of someone’s life (Heathcote 1976), and help to unravel their ‘mess’.

The preponderance of Heathcote’s work lay in her philosophy of ‘living-through’ drama, a concept that upheld Finlay-Johnson’s notion of drama as a means of ‘doing’. The notion of ‘living through’ focuses on problem-posing and problem resolution, it sees students ‘living through’ “the circumstances of the imagined situation ‘as if’ these events were actually occurring to them; they are ‘being’ in role” (Neelands 2000, p102). In this way, she sought a lived experience for her students; drama lived at life rate, in the present, whereby they could be propelled into action. For Heathcote, the learning was not just in the rich experience of ‘living through’ drama, it was the reflection on the experience. This, she believed, is where students could make significant meaning. They were to probe and explore issues, events and relationships so they might gain insights into themselves and their “habitual orientation to the world” (O’Neill 1990, p293). Several practitioners have since adapted the ‘living through’ approach into their own praxis, for example Booth (1994) and O’Neill (1995).
While Fleming (1997), O’Toole (1992) and Neelands (1998) have moved away from Heathcote’s Stanislavski-like naturalistic interpretations of ‘living through’, and promote it as learning through the enactment of role (Finneran 2000). In the following section, I will briefly discuss important features of Heathcote’s legacy, which has shaped modern practice and has a significant bearing on co-creating drama.

To begin, I will discuss Heathcote’s notion of Authenticity. If we consider being authentic as a particular a way of dealing with the world, whereby truthfulness and sincerity are central, then teaching with authenticity can be considered as the teacher being trustworthy and genuine in his/her relationship with their students and in their classroom interactions. Heathcote believed that drama should not be a process of imitation, but that students’ responses should be authentic and purposeful. Bolton explains her authenticity principle as embodying “rigorous attention to and respect for what is true, true for the scientist, true for the scholar and for the artist and craftsman’ (Bolton 1998, p244). In her paper, The authentic teacher and the future (1980), Heathcote described ‘authenticity’ as having attention to detail; respect for what is true; and having a realistic response to the world. In practical terms in the drama class, this comes about through teacher planning activities where students take on responsibilities in order to solve realistic problems. As a result, she believed they gain knowledge of life-like situations and take part in genuine situations, but without the real world consequences or in the “no penalty zone” as she termed it (Heathcote 1984, p128).

Heathcote also thought that authentic behaviour should apply to both student and teacher equally. She defined the actions of an authentic teacher as: discovering honest forms of interaction and communication between teacher and students, encouraging student interaction and decision making, creating space for students to problem solve in an innovative way, creating more opportunity for student feedback, risk-taking, and a more organic teaching structure. In this way, Heathcote proposed that teachers who engage authentically with students create a more inquiry-based, communicative, open and autonomous environment. Conversely, Heathcote described herself as a teacher-manipulator of drama, whereby she used suggestive techniques to guide the students where she wanted them to go, which seems contradictory to the rhetoric of autonomy she sought to promote above. Heathcote also highlighted the contradiction in striving
for authenticity in drama terms, explaining that drama could be seen as “the most unauthentic art form there is” because it is operated through artificial/fictional means, is realised within an imagined context, and is created through dramatic rules. However, she justified this outlook by saying, “that good art is its own authenticity” (Heathcote 1984, p174). She also sought to “marry the truth of the art and the truth of the teacher who is trying to create learning situations” (Heathcote 1984 p114). We can understand from this that the art form of drama was important to her. Yet, she was criticised for neglecting the art-form in favour of learning (Hornbrook 1989, Abbs 1991). Hornbrook, who argues that ‘dramatic art’ is a fundamental principle of education in drama, criticises Heathcote’s learning approach. He describes it as limiting, because when she placed emphasis on the functional educative role of drama, this he believes, left it devoid of artistic influence and theatricality. When we consider how authenticity has a bearing on co-creating drama, we see how it introduces an idea of teaching where the ultimate aim it is to serve the interests of students. Both teachers and students are thus implicated in a process of honest interaction and communication, where students making decisions, and offering ideas and feedback are encouraged.

Next, I will explore Heathcote’s notion of having the teacher at the heart of the action. While Ward, Slade and Way’s drama methods promoted the teacher as facilitator, playing a guiding but non-participatory role in the drama, Heathcote believed that teachers should be deeply involved in the drama process. She suggested that rather than the teacher operating from outside the drama as an external facilitator, he/she should play a fictional ‘role’ (i.e. a character role) within the imaginary world, thereby working ‘within’ the drama. This strategy, called Teacher in Role (TiR), revolutionised drama practice (Bolton 1992, Taylor 2000). Improvisational in nature, TiR is a “carefully chosen role” in the fictional world that “manoeuvres the drama toward credibility and thoughtfulness” (Bolton 2007, p53). In this way, TiR is both acting in role in the theatrical sense, and facilitating the work in the pedagogical sense. It puts the teachers and students in the fictional moment together, therefore placing their “interaction in the present, a present characterised by imperative tension” (Bolton 1992, p33). O’Neill (1994) advises this strategy should not be seen as teachers merely ‘joining in’ or ‘acting along with the group’. The aim is for the teacher to use a role to “establish the nature of the imagined world” and to foster the emergence of understanding by building “a reflective and contemplative attitude” into the process.
The TiR strategy also allows the teacher to work on several levels; they can use a role to engage the students and “attract them to participate” (Heathcote 2010, p8), to create and change contexts, to shape the process of the evolving drama, to instil tension, conflict or composure into the action, to challenge students or impose restriction, to further the work and reflect on developments. Bolton explains:

“[t]he teacher operates as a playwright/director and as teacher/artist, planting a seed, selecting the setting and just the right fictional moment in time that will gradually focus the children’s choice of topic and resonate into deeper layers of meaning.”

(Bolton 2007, p53)

We see in Bolton’s comment that the agency of the teacher is central to TiR. However, it also seems to suggest that its potency hinges on the abilities or creative feats of the teachers. It is useful to contemplate that this can be a big demand on teachers. Bolton’s choice of words to describe the teacher’s actions in TiR is also worth noting. He describes the teacher’s actions as ‘manoeuvring’ the drama, ‘selecting the setting’ and ‘focusing the children’s choice’. His comments seem to disregard genuine collaboration between teacher and student, and suggest that the teacher leads the students to where they want them to go rather than the students making discoveries for themselves. Heathcote’s method saw the teacher laying down the dramatic content and rules, then stepping back from the drama once the learners were sufficiently involved. Therefore, it could be argued that although subtle, the TiR strategy positions the teacher as director of the work, and perhaps the strategy is not authentic in co-constructive terms. Wagner disagrees, suggesting Heathcote’s use of TiR often sought to bestow power on the students:

“[t]he roles that Heathcote takes are those that give her the greatest manoeuvrability. Her favourite ones are middle-rank positions: the first mate, the foreman in the factory, the police officer who is just following orders, the radio transmitter on a submarine, Caesar’s messenger, the doctor’s assistant. This way she is not the final power, but she is the effect of the power...she wants ample power, but not the power to make final decisions.”

(Wagner 1976, p129)

She goes on to warn of the importance of the balance of the power of the teacher, “[i]f she has too much power, the class will look to her for leadership; if too little, they’ll mow her down until she comes out of role to manage the situation” (ibid p129).
Heathcote also encouraged the students to be **co-constructors of knowledge**. Finlay-Johnson and Slade’s concepts of drama ‘with and by the children’ can be seen in Heathcote’s understanding of drama. Akin to the co-creating attitude, her approach to drama focused on the students ‘devising’ rather than ‘dramatising’ plot scenarios (Taylor 2000). She encouraged her students to make their own worlds and experience it together with her. She asked them to take responsibility for decisions, and participate as characters within the drama they were co-creating:

> “I want the children to recognise that I am putting the onus upon them to have ideas, that I am prepared to accept their ideas and to use them and make them work. This decision making, where children watch their own choices worked out in action, seems to me to be one of the important services which drama renders to education where we are trying to encourage children to think for themselves.”

(Heathcote 1984, p209)

‘Mantle of the expert’ (MoE) is a good example of this. MoE is a pedagogical strategy created by Heathcote in collaboration with Bolton (1995), which invites the students to take on the role of an ‘expert’ in an imaginary enterprise. For example, the students may become marine scientists who help to solve a problem in the local bay. This gives the students a vital purpose within the drama; they become the experts who have the knowledge needed to solve the problem. MoE is strongly rooted in inquiry and is established by the students’ involvement in, and concern for, the social context (Bolton 1992). Thus, children develop skills and deepen knowledge within meaningful contexts that they are directly involved in. The teacher’s role in MoE, is in supporting the work of the students, by creating the conditions whereby knowledge grows in the child. The teacher often takes on a role that depends on the ‘experts’ for advice and guidance, which gives the students status, as they become the knowledgeable ones. Similar to the students in the co-creating drama experience, MoE puts the students right at the heart of decision making in the classroom. This highlights the challenging aspect of the approach, as the teachers must relinquish some power within the classroom, therefore handing over elements of control to the students.

Bolton (1995) describes the main feature of MoE as involving “agreement between teacher and students to take on a functional role (i.e. someone who is expert in running something” (p23), which highlights another challenge to the teacher contemplating using MoE. The approach is dependent on all the students agreeing to participate.
unreservedly, as MoE works most efficiently within a collaborative community (O’Neill 1995). O’Neill observes the importance of the social dimensions of MoE and the learning that can occur within it:

“The mantle of the expert sets up a supportive, interpretative, and reflective community through a pattern of relationships and a network of tasks, all embedded in a flexible context. Students are required to question, negotiate, compromise, take responsibility, cooperate, and collaborate, all in the service of something beyond themselves. Their energies are focused less on these interactions than on the tasks to be accomplished, and they develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies. They are active in the learning process, not just cognitively but socially and aesthetically. They express their understanding in their response to the variety of tasks demanded of them, and they reflect on their perceptions from both inside and outside the context.”

(O’Neill 1995, viii)

A criticism of the approach may be that the curriculum can often dictate the problems they face, therefore, there is a right answer and a right way of dealing with the problem. Heathcote believed that in order to make the MoE experience meaningful, students need to strengthen these expert abilities through practice over time, and they need to be conscious of their new skills as they are attaining them, meaning they have to recognise what they are learning.

Heathcote also insisted drama is a social art (Heathcote 1984) which is inspired, activated and regulated by the group. Drama, she suggested, “is not me and it is not you, it is that which together this community makes in the spaces of communication we find between you and me and it is how society makes its social order” (p3). Within this idea, the traditional student-teacher relationship dynamic changes, whereby the teacher grants the students a level of autonomy within drama. There were two additional elements to her social art. Firstly, she believed the social dynamics of a group interacting was part of the learning process. Secondly, Heathcote wanted genuine commitment and belief in the fictional cause; she did not want the students just to pretend, she wanted them to engage in the here and now of the event. They were ‘agreeing to the big lie’, as she put it (Heathcote 1984). Looking at this more closely, Heathcote was shaping two social contexts simultaneously; the real life- the classroom and its group of students all involved in a shared willingness to participate in the drama, and also the fictional world being created and explored by the students. This notion of metaxis is comparable to Vygotsky’s ‘dual effect’ (Bolton 1992). It is the
notion of simultaneously intellectually and emotionally existing in two worlds, the real and the fictional. Bolton (1985) believes that “the meaning of the drama lies in the interplay between these two worlds” (p155) and this concept of connecting the real world to the art-form, he suggests, is what gives drama its effectiveness. The students can adopt an inside and outside perspective on the drama by living through their own actions and reflecting on them (Edmiston 1995), and therefore as participants we know “the drama is fictional and yet we also know we are actually creating it” (Edmiston 1995, p121). Bolton explains that metaxis gives:

“[a] reflective edge to the role-play which direct experience often lacks; it has a sense of applying knowledge, but lacks the consequences of real application. Because it combines these characteristics and it moves the learner towards ownership in a dynamic way, affecting the quality of the learning.”

(Bolton 1992, p 33)

O’Toole et al. (2009) believes that through this ‘dual being’, Heathcote enabled a depth to the responses of the children because:

“[t]he challenges she sets, and the freedom provided by the dual affect, combined with the support that she, the other participants and the fictional setting provide to the child, together scaffold the child’s understanding to provide a much more sophisticated and complex behaviour than the child could manage alone.”

(O’Toole et al. 2009, p72)

Heathcote’s work through the years directly or indirectly gave rise to several practitioners who analysed her work including Betty Jane Wagner (1976), Cecily O’Neill (1995) and Taylor (2000, 2006). Her work exemplified effective examples of drama as learning, and her lifelong alliance with Bolton added a much needed level of clarity and depth to her work, “[t]ogether they defined the practices and the parameters of the movement that came to be defined as drama in education” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p101). Heathcote also had her critics, most notably David Hornbrook (1989) a well-known ‘non-conformist’ figure, who was disparaging about her work, stating she had metamorphosed into a ‘drama guru’ because of her ‘mystifying’ practice. He argued that her work lacked theoretical rigour, and her contemporaries who wrote about her, were too close to be critical. He also believed she exaggerated drama’s usefulness, and her intuitive ways of working, her ‘gut-level drama’ as Wagner (1976) described it, was something teachers could not readily replicate. But, Wagner insisted that “what she does has ‘no magic in it’ and can be learned and employed by any teacher” (ibid.
p3). However, Wagner’s description of her seems to add to Hornbrook’s argument, as she described Heathcote as of a:

“[l]arge sturdy build, ruddy cheeks, and in her mesmerising eyes…lie a keen sensitivity to the nuance of language, a profound awareness of the complexity of human interaction and an artist’s dedication to perfection in meeting the demands of her craft, drama.”

(Wagner 1976, p22)

O’Neill too alludes to this idea of Heathcote as a numinous figure by suggesting that “[t]he field of drama is peopled with charismatic figures, the effect of whose personalities and ideas can be mesmerising and at times, disabling” (Taylor 1996, p144). Hornbrook also suggested that Heathcote, Bolton and their followers were in danger of destroying drama as an art-form because of their emphasis on the pedagogical benefits. He branded them ‘Muggletonians’, referring to the seventeenth century fundamentalists who followed their leader without question (Hornbrook 1989). Although Hornbook’s criticism was harsh, it did move the growing drama in education community of that time to re-examine and endorse the artistic roots of drama. After his criticism, “practitioners and writers started to pay much more conscious attention to the art-form in the process. To ask, in fact: what is the artistry in the drama process and can process drama be considered a genre of art form?” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p124).

Neelands (1998), O’Toole (1992), O’Neill (1995) and Fleming (1994, 2001) all have begun to reunify the field by reconceptualising drama in theatrical terms. O’Toole et al. describe Heathcote as ‘hurricane Heathcote’, the woman who transformed drama in education practice forever. They note the many drama practitioners such as O’Neill, Booth, Bowell and Heap to name but a few, who “have developed Heathcote’s instinctual tour-de-force into manageable pedagogy” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p104). They also note others who have gone on to develop her concepts and take them in new directions such as: Neelands (1992) linking of Heathcote’s conventions to theatrical convections, Morgan and Saxton’s (1987) taxonomy of questioning based on Heathcote class inquiry work, as well as O’Toole’s (1992) own process drama work.

Although the founding drama education practitioners and theorists differ somewhat in their drama foci, they all seem to “share a belief in the power of drama to transform human behaviour” (Taylor 2000, p107). When we explore the story of drama in an educational context, major tendencies of the movement highlight features of co-
creating as defined in this thesis, such as: the notion of ‘playing’ in drama, the teacher as a co-participant, collaboration between students and teachers, communal drama creation leading to socially constructed knowledge, students as artistic contributors to the drama, drama leading to learning and personal enlightenment, and the importance of understanding drama as an art-form.

**Drama in Irish Primary Schools**

Until the late twentieth century, drama did not feature in the formal curriculum of schooling in Ireland. Schools “concentrated on the provision of a basic minimum education for everybody” (Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) 2009, p29) with reading, writing and mathematics taking priority. The tradition of drama was mostly in terms of religious performance and scripted performance, the latter perhaps because of the association between drama and the work of distinguished Irish dramatists of that time. Teachers typically engaged in mime and stories as part of the English and Irish curricula (INTO 2009). When the Curáclam Nua na Bunscoile was introduced in 1971, it brought considerable change. This was both in terms of its child-centred approach, and its inclusion of the arts, though to what degree this philosophy was reflected in classroom practice is questionable (Sugrue 1997). It included programmes in music, art and craft, physical education and dance. In comparison to the other subjects, very little detail was provided on drama. In fact, it was presented more as a pedagogical tool than a subject (linking it with languages, English and Gaeilge). However, the curriculum did recognise drama as an intellectual activity rather than just ‘entertainment’ and introduced its association with play, make-believe and creative play-making (Finneran 2008). In 1979, a report published by the Arts Council (Benson 1979) on the place of the arts in Irish education, suggested that although the inclusion of an arts curriculum was progressive, the arts were not receiving the correct attention in schools. They:

“are often judged to be more interesting than useful, and their most significant contribution is frequently conceived of as a pleasant means of passing time. It is no accident that Friday afternoon is such a popular time for art and craft in the primary school. A set of subjects regarded and treated as unimportant will become peripheral in the curriculum.”

(Benson 1979, p20)
It also stated that “drama, both as a method and as a valuable activity in its own right, has not received the support it deserves’ (Benson 1979, p34). Although the curriculum of 1971 was promising in its ideals, inadequate funding, lack of space in schools, deficiency of viable continuing professional development for teachers, and the pressures of assessment, ensured that it did not fulfil its potential. This mismatch in the intention and delivery of curriculum allied to a system that is slow to change, began a divergence between policy and practice in terms of drama in Irish education that has continued right through to today.

However, it can be argued that arts education in Ireland has undergone substantial change since then. To begin with, there was a major revision of the primary school curriculum which took place in 1999. Historically, Ireland’s approach to developing school curriculum has been a highly centralised one, closely supervised by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The 1999 curriculum represents a more inclusive and responsive approach. It was developed in partnership with practising teachers, parents, school management and the DES. It builds on the 1971 curriculum, which promoted child-centred philosophical principles and encourages the holistic development of the child. It creates a strong vision of children as active agents in their own learning, embracing their sense of wonder and curiosity, and using their knowledge and experience as a basis for this learning (INTO 2009). The curriculum proposes three main aims: to enable the child to live a full life as a child, and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual; to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society; and to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999, p7). Notably, the ‘revised’ 1999 curriculum offers a generous space for the arts, encouraging “artistic education, that is the child making art, and aesthetic education, the child as receiver of art” (INTO 2009, p7). It states that:

“[a]purposeful arts education at primary level is life enhancing and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability. It emphasises the creative process and so ensures that the child’s work is personal and has quality. Attempts at artistic expression are valued, self-esteem is enhanced, spontaneity and risk-taking is encouraged and difference is celebrated.”

(Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999, p2)
The presence of the language of ‘creative thinking’, ‘creative process’ and ‘artistic expression’ in this statement certainly proposes promising notions, but the delivery of this vision seems yet to be realised. The arts education section of the curriculum consists of visual arts, music, drama and dance (developed through the physical education curriculum). The integration of subjects is encouraged. General aims within the art-forms include: providing aesthetic experiences, cultivating natural ability, acquiring techniques, solving problems creatively, appreciation of the arts, fostering critical appraisal of the arts, and personal fulfilment. Drama was in fact the final feature to be added to the arts curriculum, becoming recognised as a subject in 1999, and “very late in the process for reasons that are not entirely clear” (Sugrue 2004, p197). Thereafter, teachers received little preparation apart from minor planning support and in-service training in 2006 and 2007 to support its implementation. The arts curricular guidelines are organised according to four class groupings with multiple content strands. They are framed by elements and principles of the particular art-form. Drama differs from the others, in that it has only one major strand, ‘drama to explore feelings, knowledge, and ideas, leading to understanding’. This then breaks into three strand units: exploring and making drama; co-operating and communicating in making drama; and reflecting on drama. Additionally, the ‘elements of drama’ are defined as: belief, role and character, action, place, time, tension, significance and genre, and the ‘prerequisites’ for making drama include content, the fictional lens and creating a safe environment. The curriculum describes drama as comprising of:

“...interrelated activities which explore feelings knowledge and ideas leading to understanding. It explores themes and issues, creates a safe space in which to do so, and provides for opportunities to reflect on the insights gained in the process. It draws on knowledges, interests and enthusiasm of the child. In drama the child explores motivations and relationships between people that exist in the real, imagined or historical context, to help him/her understand the world.”

(Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, 1999, p3)

The initial optimism of the addition of a distinct drama curriculum was not long-lived. Rather than being a valuable resource for teachers, the drama curriculum is in fact challenging to comprehend and does not offer a coherent rationale for drama (Finneran 2000). Instead, it provides a long list of objectives with no real tangible model of practice for teachers. Reviews of the 1999 curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2005, 2008) suggest that teachers feel the
curriculum in general, places more emphasis on the theoretical level rather than providing a practical framework. This may have led to difficulties in translating it into classroom practice. The opening statement of the drama curriculum highlights this, as it sets the tone of its ambiguous nature, stating “the field that drama can explore is as wide as life itself” (p5). It goes on in a similar manner to declare the primary task of the teacher is to “preserve and encourage the desire to make-believe while at the same time extending it to other areas of life and knowledge” (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999a, p5). One of its aims is “to enable the child to create a permanent bridge between make-believe play and the art-form of theatre” (ibid p8). This statement is both mystifying for teachers in a practical sense, and ambitious even for a drama specialist. *Process drama* is the type of drama recommended, though it does not distinguish this in any great depth other than to say, it “involves children in a process of improvisation and exploration that leads to definable drama outcomes and learning outcomes” (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999b, p4). But, the curriculum is helpful when it suggests that all drama work should incorporate a balance between exploring, making and reflecting on drama. However, it uses involved terms such as ‘story-making’, ‘fictional lens’, ‘appropriate content’ and ‘safe environment’, but fails to develop them into tangible examples. The curriculum describes exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make-believe, all suitable language for drama, but it gives little detail on the art-form itself. It also contradicts itself throughout, using the notions of ‘enactment’ and ‘living through’ interchangeably, thus confusing the nature of the dramatic intention. Drama assessment measures are addressed in a general manner, but are also vague in their suggestions, for example asking the teachers to “assess how successfully the child has preserved the impulse for make believe” or “how successfully they learn through engagement” (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999a, p43). On the one hand, the curriculum makes a positive step by moving away from the tradition of drama as performance-driven by suggesting that teachers do “not dwell on the display element of drama but will rather, emphasise the benefits to be gained from the process of exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make believe”, because performance “represents only a part of the rich learning and developmental experience that drama has to offer” (ibid, p5). But, on the other hand, this causes some concern as it suggests that performance and the theatricality of drama is not essential in this curriculum.
While relatively little is known about how the curriculum has been translated into Irish classroom practice, existing research does assert that the subject hierarchy of the past remains unchanged. Reading, writing and numeracy still have precedence, with drama receiving the least attention (McCoy et al. 2012, p9). McCoy et al. break down their data further, explaining that time allocation for subjects is found to vary by teacher gender and by teaching experience. In comparison to female teachers, male teachers spend more time on Irish and mathematics and less time on drama, and newly qualified teachers are found to devote more time to drama (p12). This may suggest that recent graduates of programmes of teacher education may have a stronger perception of the curricular role of drama.

Although the drama curriculum presents considerable opportunity, and Irish schools certainly seem hospitable to the arts, from the limited research available, it seems drama has yet to prosper in Ireland. There are a number of possible reasons, not just specific to Ireland, but identified across the world. According to Bamford (2006), teaching the arts effectively is challenging, particularly for generalist teachers who often have little experience of it in practice. Therefore, the lack of tradition in terms of its place in the curriculum in Ireland, and teachers’ lack of personal school drama experiences in general, may be a factor. An absence of space and resources have also been identified as key factors inhibiting the development of arts education in general (Bamford 2006, NCCA 2010). Self-described lack of skill or experience of teaching drama leading to a lack of teacher confidence has also been highlighted (Bamford 2006, Russell-Bowie 2013). The precarious nature of drama is another factor, drama can be considered an art form based on group dialogue and collaboration. The teacher’s role within this can involve negotiation, improvised interaction and often a releasing of some power. Therefore, the students may gain greater control over the work and express themselves in new ways. This shift in the classroom dynamic, and the releasing of control can be difficult for some teachers, and it can lead to challenging teaching situations and often some degree of disruption. Consequently, teachers may be reluctant to share power, for fear that they will lose control and as a result may lose valuable teaching time. Neelands (1992) suggests, teachers “face the dilemma of wanting to work in lively and inspiring ways with young people, whilst also needing the professional security of remaining responsible and in control over classroom management” (Neelands 1992, p8). The poor representation and elucidation
of drama in the curriculum, and the uncertainty that exists in identifying drama’s overall purpose in schools is another factor (O’Neill 1995, Bowell and Heap 2001, O’Toole et al. 2009). These research reports allow us to speculate in an informed way as to why drama might be struggling in the Irish school system.

Furthermore, international research highlights concerns over the limited time allocated to art curriculums (Robinson 1999, Taggart et al. 2004). Recent Irish studies show that there is limited time in the general school timetable because of curriculum overcrowding (McCoy et al. 2012, NCCA 2010). The Irish arts education subjects are allocated an hour a week each, but in a study by McCoy et al. (2012), it is noted that although generally an average of one hour per week is spent on each of the other arts subjects, drama often receives less than an hour (McCoy et al. 2012, p9). Other international studies also support this, suggesting visual art and music consistently receive more attention than drama (Taggart et al. 2004, Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) 2009). The contribution of the arts in schools relies greatly on the subjects getting an adequate amount of time and whether they are given meaning in the curriculum (KEA European Affairs 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that both curriculum overcrowding and the lack of status in the subject hierarchy could be having an undesirable impact on drama’s position in Irish schools.

Additionally, other challenges have arisen over the past few years which have cast the position of drama in an uncertain light. Firstly, there is the matter of how drama is regarded by school principals. Although the curriculum advocates that drama should not be seen an ‘add on’ subject, a submission made by Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) on curriculum reform in 2010 raised concern around this:

“[t]he inclusion of drama as a subject in the 1999 curriculum may not be the best of ideas. Drama in education is a most effective teaching and learning methodology – this is beyond argument. However, affording drama as a timetabled standalone subject area doesn’t make sense.”

(IPPN 2010, p3)

Furthermore, in 2011, a draft national plan to improve literacy and numeracy suggested an alternative focus for drama in primary schools. The draft Literacy and Numeracy for Life Strategy Document (2011) indicated that drama should be used primarily to enable literacy and numeracy. It was opposed, and did not appear in the published strategy, but once again, the weak status of drama as a subject in Irish schools was highlighted. Ultimately, the final strategy did increase time for literacy and numeracy,
but there was no indication of where that extra time was to come from. Therefore, the implication is that it could still come from the arts, leaving drama still vulnerable.

However, there has also been a recent positive development that may give drama a somewhat more secure setting in schools. In January 2013, the Irish Government introduced *The Arts in Education Charter*, in which they describe developing “Arts Rich Schools” by placing the arts at the core of our education system (The Arts in Education Charter 2013, p4). This is very promising, but of course, it has to be considered within Ireland’s landscape of policy failure and inaction around the arts. As Wallace (2013) suggests in an *Irish Times* article, although it is a highly commendable move, we should remember that “the history of Irish education is already littered with similar aspirational documents about the role of art within schools, compiled by a plethora of experts over the past 35 years”. These ‘aspirational’ documents include: *Ready to Learn*, the White Paper on Early Education (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills 1999) which identified the value of integrated learning and integrating children’s own interests and concerns; *The National Children’s Strategy* (Department of Health and Children 2000) which emphasises the importance of considering the ‘whole’ child in policy development, and the primary school curriculum; and *The Points of Alignment Report* (Special Committee on Arts and Education 2008), which included strategies for the promotion and encouragement of the arts within the formal education system. The latter document was also followed up by three high profile conferences interrogating the association between the arts and education. These documents and events represented both ambitious and positive recommendations and actions, and raised attention of the importance of the arts in schools. However, taking the example of the *Points of Alignment* report, whether it was because of government-driven educational trends that took precedence, or the country’s economic difficulties that were to follow, all of these have resulted in largely unfulfilled promises. Because of this, we must accept that “[a]rts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision” (Points of Alignments 2008, p3). The failure to establish drama as a curricular staple in primary schools in Ireland remains a problem, and it seems its future continues to remain uncertain.
Chapter Four

A spectrum of drama
As established in chapter three, the field of drama education has produced a variety of educational perspectives, conventions and forms during the course of its history. These influences have produced divergent and conflicting types of drama, which have led to disharmony among drama scholars. As Gallagher (2007) suggests it is “an art with little consensus” (p1234). O’Toole et al. aptly describe drama as a “shape-shifter”, which “fulfils a number of purposes at the same time” (2007, p4). Consequently, if we consider that the nature of drama is not easily defined, then it is important that there is clarity around the working concept of drama employed in this thesis. As a starting point, it is useful to consider O’Toole’s (1992) description of drama in his book *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*. He discusses it as “multi-medial”, because “the contexts in which drama presents itself are invariably complex” (p7). O’Toole distinguishes three key areas of drama: dramatic form, context, and participants. He proposes that drama can exist in a number of ways: in physical action including movement, three-dimensionality and trajectory of time. It can exist in the activity of group art, which he suggests, is dependent on collaboration of the group either directly or indirectly. He believes this can be experienced individually or through group work. O’Toole explains that within this, there is also a shifting and dynamic relationship between artist and audience, something that in an educational context is negotiable as the students become playwrights, actors and audience. O’Toole also highlights how drama “operates in a number of contexts simultaneously, each of which has its own sign system and its own cultural and ideological referents” (O’Toole 1992, p7). Although quite structural in his delineation, O’Toole’s view of drama as negotiated, participatory, aesthetic and ‘procedural’ is certainly persuasive.

Esslin’s (1988) work too considers what drama is, and asks where the boundaries lie. He provides an overview of the field of drama through the lens of semiotics, which he describes as the signs of drama that create meaning on stage and screen. He includes all dramatic performances in his definition of drama, and suggests that definitions of concepts like ‘drama’ should:

“…never be treated as normative, but as merely outlining the somewhat fluid boundaries of a given field. Whenever narrow normative definitions dominated the practice of drama they invariably tend to have a cramping and deadening impact.”

(Esslin 1988, p22)
Bearing in mind Esslin’s aspiration to avoid a narrow definition of drama, and considering O’Toole’s multi-form conceptualisation, I looked to find a characterisation of drama that would encompass what I consider its multi-faceted and performative nature. Performance theorist Schechner (2004) provided the macro orientation for my understanding. Schechner presents performance as a broad spectrum, whereby the different types of performance exist along a continuum and interconnect with each other across that spectrum. His system embraces the variety of applications of performance theory and proposes a broadly inclusive delineation of performance that includes play, games, sports, performance in everyday life, and ritual. He explains:

“Performance Studies (PS) is ‘inter’, in between. It is intergeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural and therefore inherently unstable. Performance studies resists or rejects definition. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries; it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently “in between” and therefore cannot be pinned down or located exactly.”

(Schechner 1998, p360)

I consider drama as Schechner considers performance, whereby drama cannot be ‘pinned down’ because it ‘transgresses boundaries’. This does not suggest I am equating drama with performance, but rather, in the same way that Schechner presents a spectrum of activities all of which he regards as performance, I consider drama as operating along a ‘dramatic spectrum’. Although this thesis is concerned with co-creating drama in an educational context, my understanding is not limited to educational notions of drama, as that would only lead to a restriction of its possibilities. I consider drama “a many-headed monster” (O’Toole et al. 2007, p4), and as Esslin suggests, a field with flexible and permeable boundaries. Therefore, my definition of drama takes into consideration the diversity of approaches to drama education. In this chapter, my characterisation of drama in all its forms is presented as a spectrum which includes learning, art form, improvisation, imagination, social experience, play and creativity (See figure 4.1). Yet, in presenting this, I am not proposing a new theory of drama; this spectrum is offered in order to enable us to understand drama not as a singular idea, but as a structured composition of many different parts. This, in turn, enables us to understand how the desire to co-create drama can be achieved by enabling different aspects of the dramatic spectrum. I argue that the strongest co-creating experiences occur when as many as possible, or indeed all of the features across the dramatic spectrum are present.
When we consider a spectrum, it can be understood as a band of colours as seen in a rainbow. The rainbow is produced by a light source that is separated into components of light. These components have different degrees of refraction along a continuum. In the spectrum of drama that I propose, the field of drama can be seen as the rainbow, the band of colours represent its multi-faceted nature. The degrees of refraction represent the features of drama, which can vary in their intensity and efficacy within the spectrum’s continuum. Furthermore, the light source that sends the light through the spectrum is metaphorically representative of the teacher in the drama experience. Within the spectrum of drama, the features are not all always equal. Some are broadly conceptual, i.e. creativity, learning. Some are practical processes like improvisation, imagination, play, and some are social phenomena, i.e. social experience and art form. Without losing sight of each specific particularities of experience (Schechner 2004), I propose drama to be all, or any of these features at any given point. However, I argue when the full breadth of the spectrum is enabled in an appropriate context, then we have the ability to produce a type of drama that engages, entertains and educates.

Figure 4.1: The spectrum of drama education

Drama as learning
Drama is a powerful force for engaging learning in the classroom and is considered an important ‘way of knowing’ (Courtney 1990, Henry 2000, Poston-Anderson 2008). Heathcote asserts that, it “can help classes catch a vision of the universal: internalise experience, reflect on it, and put it into words” (Wagner 1976, p225). It offers a
dynamic context that nurtures learning on several levels: learning themes and content, learning social skill, learning about oneself, learning drama skills and dramatic craft, and engaging with drama as an art-form (Bolton 1992, Fleming 1999). Through these modes, students are engaged in discussion, explorative and reflective processes and dynamic meaning-making (Schonmann 2000, Bowell and Heap 2001). Drama practitioners recognise it as one of the central ways in which children can learn about the world and argue that it is one of the world’s major art forms (O’Toole and Dunn 2002), but it is often peripheral or absent from the curriculum in most countries (Hoffmann-Davis 2008, O’Toole and O’Mara 2007). Although current trends in ‘creativity’, ‘communication’ and ‘teamwork’ (Neelands 2002, O’Toole and O’Mara 2007) have increased emphasis on the value of the arts in schools, it seems education policymakers are still to be convinced about the value of drama. In many respects, it is not surprising. It can be argued that Western schooling tradition is still rooted in an outdated belief that transmitting/imposing knowledge is its central concern, and up until recently it was not even possible to “talk seriously to policymakers about humanising concepts such as imagination, creativity and the necessity of art” (Neelands 2002, p42). If we consider that our educational systems are simply teaching children “to put their assigned bolt into the assigned hole” (Brown and Vaughan 2009, p99) rather than encouraging independent thinking, where will they learn to value self-expression or learn to imagine new perspectives? Eisner (1992) asserts that “not all problems have single, correct answers…having fixed objectives and pursuing clear-cut methods for achieving them are not always the most rational ways of dealing with the world” (pp75-76). It could be argued that drama is valuable in an educational sense, because it is ‘rational’ in its ability to find explanations of the world. It permits us to imagine ourselves as another, to find difference and commonality in that experience, and to recognise who we are and what we are in the world. This is the potential of learning in drama. As Wagner states, drama aims to create experiences so “students may come to understand human interactions, empathise with other people, and internalise other points of view” (Wagner 1998, p5). Greene builds on this by pointing out that we learn more about ourselves by “seeing from unaccustomed angles, realising that the world perceived from one place is not the world” (Greene1995a, p20). But, in saying this, policymakers still need proof of its effect on academic performance. Saldaña and Wright (1996) explain that:
“[t]he generally sceptical social climate of today, and those with power to distribute funds and mandate programs, demand justification and accountability. Research has the potential in this field not only to reveal new insights and to improve our practice, but to serve as an agent for advocacy – to show decision makers that drama and theatre for youth works.”

(Saldaña and Wright 1996, p129)

In recent times, drama practitioners have become increasingly focused on the theoretical aspects of the practice, and its impact in educational settings, therefore evidence is slowly emerging. However, quantifying drama in terms of its educational impact is somewhat difficult, as it is hard to measure the learning that occurs. It is this intangible learning nature that has led to the difficulty in securing its place in education (Hoffman Davis 2008). As O’Toole and O’Mara (2007) suggest, drama is often marginalised because it happens “in the moment-simultaneously concrete, protean and entirely evanescent” (p203), therefore, it is difficult to track or define in terms of educational effect. Furthermore, Fleming et al. (2004) argue, justifying drama on the basis of its impact on academic performance is hazardous, as it may suggest other subjects have greater status and significance within the curriculum. Nevertheless, in this instance it is necessary to make explicit its influence.

So how can we identify drama’s impact on learning? The EU-supported project DICE (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education 2006), the largest research study to have been conducted in the field of educational drama, sought to measure the impact of educational theatre and drama through a cross-cultural research study. It investigated the effects of educational theatre and drama on five of the eight ‘Lisbon Key Competences’ (educational reference tool for the member states of the EU)\(^1\). The project spanned two years and brought together practitioners from twelve countries\(^2\). It endeavoured to “demonstrate with cross-cultural quantitative and qualitative research that educational theatre and drama is a powerful tool to improve the Key Competences” (ibid p5). The statistics from the project established drama as very effective in achieving the European educational standards, and major key competences of children. The findings suggest, that in comparison to their peer groups, children

\(^{1}\) ‘Lisbon Key Competences’ include: communication in the mother tongue; learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence; entrepreneurship and cultural expression (DICE Educational Resource 2010)

\(^{2}\) The twelve countries were: Czech Republic, Hungary, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom
involved in drama proved to be stronger in reading and comprehension, they were habitually creative and solved problems much faster, they learned to learn and not just memorise, and were more motivated and interested in their schoolwork. The findings also suggest the children performed well under pressure, were more socially active, had more artistic appreciation, and had higher marks and evaluations from their teachers (DICE Educational Resource 2010, p7). The DICE study demonstrates that educational theatre and drama significantly supports the targets of the most relevant EU levels of education, thus suggesting that drama does have a substantial impact on education.

The evidence for the impact of drama on learning is mounting. Many researchers have contributed to broadening the perception of drama’s educational value. There are numerous studies where drama has been shown to be highly effective, particularly in the areas of language and expressive skill development, but also in social and pedagogical “strands of related purpose” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p4). O’Toole et al. (2009) suggest four areas of learning that drama impacts upon significantly. They are the cognitive/procedural: gaining knowledge and skills in drama; the expressive/developmental: growing through drama; the social/pedagogical: learning through drama, and finally the aesthetic/cognitive: learning in the art form of drama. According to Cremin (1998), drama allows students to gain competence in interacting and communicating. Henry (2000) suggests that through the employment of different perspectives, students develop higher order thinking. Other studies have focused on the impact of curriculum-based drama (Flynn 1997, Taylor 1998b, O’Mara 2000), some on the improvement of literacy skills and multi-literacies (O’Mara 2004, Ackroyd 2000, Baldwin and Fleming 2003, Miller and Saxton, 2004). Studies include the important role narrative and traditional stories have in schools (Toye and Prendiville 2000), drama assisting moral education (Winston 1998, 2000), the development of the whole school (Dickinson and Neelands 2006), and technology (Carroll et al. 2006). As suggested by the diversity of studies above, drama promotes “learning which is many layered, personal as well as collective, non-functional as well as functional” (Bolton 1986, p68).
**Drama as art**

“When drama is taught as an art-form, the goals are both aesthetic and intrinsic: aesthetic, because product is emphasised; intrinsic, because the child as artist is a major concern.”

(McCaslin, 2006, p259)

There has been much debate about the balance between the artistic and educational objectives of drama over the years, although both can be seen to co-exist in drama today (Eriksson 2009). While, as noted, there is general agreement that drama makes an important contribution to education, there is often incongruity over the importance of its positioning as an art form within educational pursuits (Hornbrook 1998, Fleming 1999, Taylor 2000). Hornbrook describes how drama has been limited by “an inheritance of psychologistic and phenomenological ontologies”, which “have conspired respectively to internalise and universalise the dramatic aesthetic” (Hornbrook 1989, p87). Courtney (1987) reproaches Way, Heathcote and Bolton for their role in setting up ‘drama as learning’ in opposition to ‘drama as an art form’. He describes them as people “who love theatre, but in its place, and that is certainly not in the classroom” (p17). We see how this is suggested in Way’s (1967) statement:

“The provision of educational drama opportunities becomes possible only if we discard the limitations of theatrical conventions and consider drama as a quite different activity, calling upon different skills, different standards of judgement, and entirely different results.”

(Bailin citing Way (1967), 1998 p39)

Fleming (2000) explains how isolating the learning:

“…seems to be a betrayal of the art form. Although drama is about understanding human situations, the learning involved is embodied uniquely in the art form; separation of form and content in this way is not appropriate. All dramatic art derives its meaning and impact both from the particular (it is the story of a specific king called Lear with three daughters which engages us) and the universal (the illumination of family relationships which comes through generalising and making connections). Trying to describe the ‘understanding’ (we might just as easily speak of the content or theme) in drama is a reductive process but, like language itself, that is precisely what makes it useful.”

(Fleming 2000, pp39- 40)
As discussed earlier, Hornbrook (1989) in particular raised concerns about the lack of attention given to the aesthetic dimension of drama. He suggested that the end product of drama should not simply be “changed students” (p76), but rather it was also the responsibility of the teacher to provide students with an understanding of dramatic expression. Hornbrook’s thinking became more tempered later as he promoted a more ‘eclectic approach’ to drama. He acknowledged how in school, the subject of drama should “embrace the whole field of drama, allowing students to sample and engage with its diverse forms in ways that establish an appropriate balance between a knowledge of drama and the mastery of its practices” (Hornbrook 1998, p9). The debate led to practitioners such as O’Neill (1995), Booth (1994) and Neelands and Goode (2000) reconsidering drama as an art-form and demonstrating how drama could “be to an extent formalised, without destroying it entirely as an aesthetic experience” (O’Toole et al. 2009, p124). However, there is still concern. Schonmann (2005) observes that in our attempt to demonstrate how drama can be useful to schools and the learning process, we are still neglecting to nourish the aesthetic roots of the practice. She recognises the artistic-aesthetic, pedagogical-educational, and the sociological-cultural axes as the main aspects of drama, but proclaims that the artistic-aesthetic remains the most important:

“In the power relations between them, the artistic-aesthetic dimension is the core from which both the pedagogical and the cultural aspects spring…The artistic-aesthetic dimension is the foundation upon which the field of theatre and drama education is constructed. The essence of the field is that it is an art-form.”

(Schonmann 2005, p36)

What this spectrum offers is a consideration of the art form of drama sitting alongside, and perhaps at times merging with drama as learning, rather than sitting in opposition. Drama is an embodied interactive art form that allows teacher and students to create, perform and appreciate dramatic works. O’Toole (1992) highlights the need for the artistic experience of drama to be embedded in classroom drama:

“…the experience involves the discovery of what was not there before—the insights, the artist experiences during the act of art-making. In other words for there to be aesthetic understanding of the drama, part of the meaning that emerges is mediated by a corresponding awareness of the form.”

(O’Toole 1992, p100)
The dramatic and theatrical form he refers to comprises visual, aural, linguistic, and kinaesthetic systems that are activated within different contexts to convey meaning. In practical classroom terms, to treat drama as an art-form, means encouraging the students to manipulate the elements of the art-form, to understand how that manipulation works, and to comprehend how drama is devised to generate meaning (Taylor 2000). O’Toole also highlights the artistic experience of art-making, which can involve teacher and students engaging in fiction, experimenting with the elements of drama, and enriching their use of dramatic language and playmaking. The aesthetic understanding that he mentions, can come from exploring different theatrical styles and conventions, and learning to appreciate and understand dramatic genres. As Taylor suggests, students should have an understanding of theatrical language and skills involved in the dramatic art form. Bailin reflects my own thinking when she suggests that:

“[i]n order to be creative, students require the resources which will enable them to engage knowledgeably and skilfully with these traditions. In the case of drama, this means acquiring the skills and knowledge of dramatic art as well as an understanding of the multiple and diverse dramatic traditions past and present which are the embodiment of creative achievement.”

(Bailin 2011, p212)

However, it is worth asking whether teachers perceive understanding drama as art as being a fundamental part of classroom drama. We see an illustration of the conflicting ideas about the value of the art form in the Irish primary drama curriculum. It suggests that teachers do “not dwell on the display element of drama but will rather, emphasise the benefits to be gained from the process of exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make believe” (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, 1999a, p5). This proposes that the theatricality and dramatic art of drama is not essential in the classroom, directly contradicting both Taylor and Bailin’s beliefs. O’Neill (2006) proposes that both the art and learning of drama should be active processes so that the students are enriched both aesthetically and in terms of learning. In fact, O’Neill contends that “[d]rama and theatre are in effect the same medium” (O’Neill 2006, p38), and Neelands considers drama and theatre as I do, whereby they are “inter-related and inter-dependent dimensions of the same art-form” (Neelands 2010, p9). O’Toole (1992), Bolton (1998), O’Neill (1995) and Neelands (2004, 2007) have all made subtle moves towards linking their praxis with performance and theatre concepts.
Fleming (2001), Gallagher and Booth (2003) and Ackroyd (2004) have done so too, more explicitly with performance and applied theatre connections, which O’Toole et al. (2009) describe as, “[d]ramatic and theatrical performance for specific context, purpose and audience, usually taking place beyond conventional theatres, usually involving interactivity” (p194). While Winston (2011), has connected the arts and performance to the power of beauty as an educational concept. Furthermore, there have been studies in the last two decades that found drama is most effective when the art form is recognised, understood and experienced (Nicholson 1999, 2008 and 2010, Fleming 2008).

Drama as improvisation

During the time Heathcote’s praxis was establishing roots in England, there was another practitioner at work who greatly influenced modern drama practice. Viola Spolin was a theatre educator, director, and actress recognised internationally for her improvisational theatre, a form of theatre in which actors use improvisational acting techniques to perform spontaneously (Spolin 1963). Spolin began her career as a settlement worker helping ‘new Americans’ integrate into society, whereby she used play, games and dramatics “to affect social behaviour in inner-city and immigrant children” (ibid pvii). She then studied traditional game principles and creative group work under sociologist Neva Boyd, and began constructing new games that attempted to unlock the individual’s capacity for creative self-expression by means of play. But, this was not just through playing games. Spolin’s work encompassed physicalisation, self-awareness, heightening of sensitivity, spontaneity, intuition, creativity and transformation. In fact, she believed that “the heart of improvisation is transformation…creativity is not rearranging; it is transformation” (Spolin 1983, as cited by Wolf, 1996 p4). Spolin’s method of theatre games influenced the use of improvisation in the drama classroom because the ‘improv’ was centered on immediate action, the connection of movement to thought and action. The ‘as if’ principle applied to her ‘improv’ practice, and a lot of her work centered on problem solving as a group activity.

My understanding of improvisation in classroom drama is centred on the notion of it as a working practice that allows both teacher and students to use their intuition and imagination, to invent characters, situations and dialogue as they move through action.
It is one thrust of drama, and can happen as the process of creating an imagined world, the spontaneous response to an unfolding dramatic situation, the solving of a problem with no predetermination as to how it should be done, or the spur-of-the-moment reaction of a group. Heathcote suggests it is “discovering by trials, error and testing: using available materials with respect to their nature, and being guided by this appreciation of their potential. The end product of improvisation is the experience of it” (Heathcote 1984, p44). Within improvised encounters, students collaborate and build on the offers of others, and from this a ‘text’ emerges which is spontaneously and collectively created from the moment-by-moment contributions of students (Lobman 2003). O’Neill (1995) clarifies that this text is not a scripted text, but an ‘animating current’ to which the students yield to. She believes improvisation is a powerful tool, and in a similar way to Heathcote, she suggests it “provides the possibility of immediate and prolonged experimental engagement with the dramatic medium” (O’Neill 2006, p123). In O’Neill’s Process Drama approach, students are involved in a series of structured improvisations, with an emphasis on the process of creating ideas and making discoveries as a group. O’Neill believes the teacher should operate as a ‘playwright’ in improvisational work, shaping the unfolding text and interweaving reflective moments to lift it from a superficial level. If not, the students may end up with one-dimensional characters and plot, and the work may be devoid of tension, atmosphere or dramatic intention. A fundamental principle of improvisation is the giving and receiving of offers. Students learn to accept and build on each other’s offers, in order to work together to create something which they “spontaneously invent and enact” (O’Toole et al. 2007, p136). But, it should not be perceived as simply ‘making something up as you go along’. The students have intention and purpose, and it is an active and improvisational encounter controlled by a particular educational context (Taylor 2002). Within this encounter, students negotiate and renegotiate elements of the dramatic form in order to make spontaneous decisions as the work progresses. They learn to make use of everything in their environment whether animate or inanimate, actions or ideas. They learn to look closely at things that people say or do (Johnstone 1981, Spolin, 1963), and it teaches them to offer ideas and thoughts, and also to let go of some, in order for something to be achieved. The difficulty with improvisation can be the vulnerability of students performing, or the tendency for them to overplay in order to inject humour to generate a response from their classmates. Research suggests that drama that includes improvised activities strongly motivates
students to be creative in the learning process (Sæbø 2009). Henry (2000) too proposes that improvising develops emotional intelligence, negotiating skills, and the ability to translate ideas into a new context through narrative and action. Spolin considers improvisation an art form. She describes it as a living practice, and believes it is a fundamental drama process because it is concerned with investigating, experimenting, discovery, and inventiveness (Spolin 1991).

**Drama as a social experience**

“Working together in the social and egalitarian conditions of ensemble based drama; young people have the opportunity to struggle with the demands of becoming a self-managing, self-governing, self-regulating social group who co-create artistically and socially…”

(Neelands 2009, p182)

As Neelands suggests, drama is built on communication, negotiation and creation. It is created by, and for, its participants. Therefore, it is socially constructed, interactive and unfolds in contextual ways. There are shared rituals, experiences and goals, and all are engaged at some level within the group. It is fundamentally a ‘group art’ (O’Toole 1992, Taylor 2000), or as Bowell and Heap (2001) describe a ‘social art’. Nelson (2011) states that the idea of drama as an effective way to build ‘community’ is seen as a truism within the field. This notion of drama as ‘community’ can be seen in the work of Cremin, who describes drama as a “community of imaginers” (Cremin 1998, p223), and in Cahill (2002), who talks of drama as creating an experience of community where meaningful participation and contribution can happen. Finally, O’Neill (1995), suggests that drama is about negotiating a community partnership where all stakeholders have an investment in the quality and themes of the work. Gallagher (2007) describes drama in schools as a collective experience, where “any notions of the introverted, solitary, creative genius are quickly dispensed with” (p1235). In recent years, research on collaborative creativity (Miell and Littleton 2004) mainly in the area of oracy, literacy and maths, has included the potential of peer collaboration to facilitate imagination and creativity in children. In this way, drama draws attention to the processes by which students think and work together creatively in classrooms. Mercer and Littleton’s (2007) research on children’s collaboration, emphasises the need to give children the intellectual means to engage in shared work. Their studies have provided evidence that the opportunity for and quality of children’s talk, in
collaborative instances has a strong influence on learning. Some observers of collaborative activity in classrooms contradict this, suggesting that often the talk is off-task, and uncooperative, and therefore of little educational value (Alexander 2004). O’Toole (1992) cautions that the drama experience is dependent both on the particular group of people taking part, and on external conditions over which they have very little control. Therefore, the group must continually collaborate and negotiate the way in which they can manage themselves and the work. Other considerations, which can impact the social aspect of drama, include group dynamics, the distinctiveness of the individual personalities, the individuals varying abilities and their varying language skills.

This notion of collaboration within a group can be seen in Vygotsky’s concept of social constructivism, whereby he promoted social interaction and shared communication. He referred to the arts as “the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life” (Vygotsky 1971, p.249). This idea of conveying our emotions and our personal self in a ‘social’ way through dramatic language is part of the drama experience. McNaughton (2011) acknowledges the physical language of the group collaborating in drama. She explains they share a kinaesthetic experience, because “learners will often move together, and explore relationships through their physical proximity” (p129). The engagement of reciprocal physicalisation and spatial movement of a group can involve delicate negotiation and result in an ensemble-like relationship. Neelands (2009) discusses the drama ‘ensemble’. He considers the importance of drama is in the processes of social and artistic engagement, and experiencing of drama, rather than in its outcomes. He believes the drama ensemble celebrates “the powerful creative synergy which can be released through collective artistry, through solidarity of being and purpose” (Neelands 2009, p183). Silberman (1996) agrees, stating that giving students tasks in which they depend on each other creates a strong dynamic, which encourages and motivates students to collaborate and talk. He believes this is valuable, because it results in the group individuals explaining their thought processes and seeing things from another’s viewpoint. I believe the motivation to collaborate that he talks about, is activated through drama’s collaborative and constructivist orientation, where students are working towards a common goal and are “hearing others and being heard about issues that are of consequence to them” (Nelson 2011, p82).
Drama as play

Slade (1954) asserted natural expression and natural artistry were all grounded in children’s natural improvisational play, which he described as ‘dramatic play’. Dewey also favoured the notion of natural play, considering it educational. He argued that if games and instincts are developed, the senses are cultivated (Dewey 1959, Courtney 1989). Dewey’s idea of play continues to be valued in education today, and his concepts have become the foundation for contemporary views of play. He advocated an education for young children that was embedded in their experience of the world that surrounded them. He believed that play helps children to reconstruct their experience and to gain meaning from it (Saracho and Spodek 1995). In contemporary Western society, play can be viewed as providing valuable time and space for children away from the adult world, and a medium through which young children can make sense of, and feel at home in the world (Kernan 2007). Although it can be argued, that society is in fact socialising children away from play, by increasing their homework time, and by reducing their freedom to play on their own when they are out of school (Gray 2013). Gray explains that adult-directed sports for children have begun:

“to replace ‘pickup’ games; adult-directed classes out of school began to replace hobbies; and parents’ fears led them, ever more, to forbid children from going out to play with other kids, away from home, unsupervised. There are lots of reasons for these changes but the effect, over the decades, has been a continuous and ultimately dramatic decline in children’s opportunities to play and explore in their own chosen ways.”

(Gray 2013, p3)

Through play, children explore social, material and imaginary worlds. They play with language, act out behaviours and curiosities through make-believe. They broaden their experiences by responding to the challenges they encounter or create. They negotiate roles, agree on themes, and cooperate to play out different situations. Play provides the context for building on their own knowledge or creating new knowledge, skills and understandings in a way that makes sense to them. Studies invariably show that good quality play experiences impact positively on children’s learning and development (Kernan 2007). Baldwin et al. (2003) suggest the origin of drama is in dramatic play. In classroom drama terms, when the students play, they can make-believe and interact both socially and fictionally. Play gives rise to a malleable and improvisational atmosphere, where students can create their world and have an opportunity to respond to the immediate context. Bolton (1986) believes play to be of tremendous importance
to drama because of its ability to increase concentration and attention, and the level of awareness. He also highlights how meaning is evoked because play builds on the structures of everyday life. Dunn (2008) sees child’s play in drama as the managing of the dramatic form, spontaneous thinking, socially negotiated playwriting, meta-communication and the preservation of the illusion. Baldwin (2012) suggests that dramatic play involves engaging with a role or imagined situation, pretending and imagining, and interacting verbally and physically. Some connect play within drama with the playing of a game (Watkins 1983, Bolton 1984):

“...drama as a game in which the players, in role, present an analogy of social behaviour. They employ verbal and non-verbal skills in a series of encounters that cumulatively reveal the form of the analogy. The players do not aim at a convincing imitation of reality but at the illusion of impending outcomes from immediate actions. The operation of this sense of destiny is the particular province of the drama game.”

(Watkins 1983, p38)

Teachers who play the ‘game’ of drama can take a meddlesome approach, as Winston (2013) suggests. In this way, they can provoke the students’ thinking, heighten engagement, inject tension, wonder, excitement and intrigue into the action, thereby adding intricate levels to the drama. The way knowledge is constructed is different in dramatic play (fictional) and socio-dramatic play (pretending games), than in rule-bound games. Bolton (1984) points out that in a game context the rules are socially constructed, while in a drama sense they are negotiated and adapted within the fictional context. He notes that the social contexts of drama are similar to the social contexts of real life, in which individuals are ‘playing’ by “mutually agreed but unspoken rules that give meaning to the context” (Heathcote and Bolton 1995, p2). Dunn (2008) sees play as a form of dramatic improvisation. Her study involving 11 and 12-year-old girls, looks to provide a greater understanding of how cohesion in dramatic play is achieved. She explains that when children play dramatically they are involved in the creation of an improvised text. Within this study, she identifies the five key phases through which the play passed through as the preparation, enactment, innovation, breakdown and conclusion phases. She also recognises four playwright functions within this: narrative, intervening, reinforcing and reviewing, which act as a support framework to play. Dunn explains:

“[t]ogether, these categories provide one approach to understanding the text creation processes used within dramatic play, and have focused on the impact that the
collaborative use of these processes has, not only on the shape of a play narrative, but on the potential for the creation of a satisfying and possibly meaningful experience.”

(Dunn 2008, p68)

The practice of play within drama also has concerns. It invites a freedom for the students, which can often be daunting for teachers (O’Connor 2009). Play can also turn into ‘drama games’ which is often to the determent of dramatic activity. Osmond (2007) suggests that rather than having an explicit dramatic intention:

“[p]lay, games, and performances have historically been taken together as activities that provide salubrious ways for students to use their bodies in energy-releasing ways, little more than enactment of what was already known. More often, dramatic play has been conceived as a relaxing opportunity for the student body to counter the stresses placed upon the student mind.”

(Osmond 2007, p1110)

Craft (2000) proposes that play is not inherently creative, but rather provides important qualities for enabling children’s creativity. Play scholars Stuart Brown and Christopher Vaughan (2009) take this further by considering play as a catalyst for creation. They go on to identify types of play in life, which I suggest could be part of any classroom drama experience. The first is Body and movement play, which they describe as universal and how we learn about self-movement and possibilities of physical manifestations. They explain it “structures our knowledge of the world, time, space and our relationship with others” (Brown and Vaughan 2009, p84). Then, Object play, where “curiosity about and manipulation of objects is a pervasive, innately fun pattern of play” (ibid p85). This allows the brain and the hand to operate and experiment together to solve problems. Imaginative play, “allows us to create simulated realities that we can explore without giving up access to the real world” (ibid p86). Brown and Vaughan believe that make-believe play, or the making up of stories, are necessary to develop empathy, understanding and coping skills. They believe that Social play falls into three categories: friendship and belonging, rough and tumble play and celebratory and ritual play. Storytelling and narrative play enables human understanding by helping us put our lives into context through story, and by “allowing us to make up stories about why things are the way they are” (ibid p92). Finally, there is Transformative –integrative and creative play, which they say involves trying out new behaviours and thoughts, and generating new ideas through engaging in fantasy.
“Creative play takes our minds to places we have never been, pioneering new paths that the real world can follow” (ibid p93).

**Drama as imagination**

Imagination is the dynamo of the brain, a source of intellectual energy and creativeness (Smith 1992). It has the power to mould experience into something new (Greene 1995), and to bring us to unexpected places. “To work at something, to find it interesting, this is to begin to let the imagination play on it. To begin to see it stretching out into unexplored worlds, whose ends are not in sight” (Warnock 1977, p155).

Greene (1995a) discusses the nature of imagination in a philosophical sense. Central to her work is the use of the arts to awaken the imagination (Hirsch 2012). She notes that “[i]t is my conviction that informed engagements with the arts would be the most likely way to release the imaginative capacity and give it play” (Greene 1995b, p379). She explores the concept of imagination as a form of empathising and gaining insight into alternative realities, and explains that it allows us to examine the human condition:

“[W]e are called upon to use our imagination to enter into the world, to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is. That does not mean we approve it or even necessarily appreciate it. It does mean that we extend our experience sufficiently to grasp it as a human possibility.”

(Greene 1995a, p4)

Greene discusses a social imagination, whereby we envision possibilities for society, and how the act of learning invariably involves imagination. She also highlights the artistic notions of imagination, where we are enabled to break through that which is fixed to create new experiences. Greene explains that, “the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (ibid p28). In this way, she is encouraging students to imagine what is possible, not just what is known. In Egan’s work (1995, 2005), there is also an interest in the meaning of imagination. He observes the capacity of imagination to “probe alternatives and to explore beyond what is conventionally represented or can be formally or literally extrapolated from what is or seems to be the case” (Egan 2005, p40). He also argues that imagination cultivates cognitive skills such as the ‘sense of abstract reality’, ‘the sense of agency’, ‘ideas and their anomalies’ and ‘an understanding of truth’ (Egan 2005). Eisner (2009) believes that it is imagination not necessity that is the mother of invention:
“[s]o much of the way we test students teaches them the tacit lesson that there is a single correct answer to every question that is posed and a single correct solution to any problem that is addressed. Can we design tasks that provide open-ended opportunities for students to arrive at solutions that are not closed, not fixed, not permanent, not certain, but are open ended and which permit, indeed, encourage, the generation of alternative possibilities. If people learn what they have an opportunity to do, then to have tasks that are open-ended gives students the opportunity to become imaginative and problem-solving in their orientation to the world. Not a bad inspiration really; it’s an even better potential reality.”

(Eisner 2009, p6)

Anderson and Donelan (2009) consider drama as “the flow of imagination made physical” (p165), and Way (1967) argues that drama enriches the imagination. In a practical sense, I consider imagination as the act of visualisation and construction of thoughts, action or experience through an imagined perspective. In drama, it can be activated through an ‘as if’ thinking position, a concept of imaginary possibility which is the driving force of dramatic energy (Bolton 1986). Students visualise and materialise new worlds with varying degrees of complexity within the safety of the imagined context, thereby creating an understanding of their experiences in their own imagined way. According to Cremin (1998), who conducted an inquiry into imagination within the practice of classroom drama, “a major purpose of classroom drama is the creation of a shared fictitious world. This world materialises through the imaginations of the children and the teacher” (p212). He identified particular kinds of imaginative processes that the children demonstrated during his study, including a readiness to make-believe, fluency and flexibility in terms of tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty, ability to integrate and reshape material, verbal and non-verbal forms of representing, open and spontaneous qualities, the ability to create meaning that is new, living imaginatively within a situation, manipulating and connecting ideas and enlivening visions. Interestingly, he notes that “at no time were activities introduced in order to stimulate the imagination outside the parameters of the drama investigation and the preoccupations of the children as they addressed the issues. The imagination was always assumed to be present” (p212). This is because drama is concerned with the construction of the imagined experience and the generating of creative dialogue (Bowell and Heap 2001, Kao and O’Neill 1998, O’Toole and Dunn 2002). I argue that imagination allows students to attempt original thinking, to envisage ‘possibilities and probabilities’ (Cremin 1998), to play with ideas, to form and reshape their thoughts and
to create experiences. It encourages them to be “eclectic in drawing on whatever will help them fill in the gaps in their sense making” (Poston-Anderson 2008 p11). Essentially, imagination is a cognitive process. It is a necessary step prior to the act of creating, therefore, “creativity is a product of an executed imagination” (Magno 2009, p10).

**Drama as creativity**

As discussed in chapter one, there are many diverse definitions of creativity, which have differing standpoints, yet most “rest upon this idea of bringing something new into existence” (Gallagher 2007, p1230). In this instance, ‘drama as creativity’ refers to both the act of creating, and drama’s capacity to foster creativity. Essentially, drama is a creative enterprise (Bailin 2011). Bolton explains, “when we invite children to make drama, I think the term ‘making’ is useful. We and they know they are making something” (Bolton, 1992, p6). In this process of making or creating, the drama evolves as ideas are imagined, shaped, fused, reshaped, and then brought to life. Something new to the group happens, in whatever form they choose to bring it about. They are actively bringing drama into being, it is theirs because they have created it. It is their living and breathing construction. In order for this to happen, students should become accustomed to the rules of drama, in order to deviate from them to create something new. Bailin (2011) believes that:

“[a] fundamental problem with the romantic view of creativity is that it assumes that creativity implies total freedom and fails to realise that it is possible to be creative within constraints. Indeed, all artist creation takes place within constraints of some sort, and the majority of artists are not radical innovators of form but rather work with the limits of technique inherent in a particular style. Yet there is certainly scope for creativity within these limits. Creativity in drama is not confined to spontaneous improvisations but is possible in all aspects of dramatic work.”

(Bailin 2011, p210)

In this way, she suggests that attention to the skills and traditions of the drama discipline, enriches rather than inhibits the possibility for creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) offers a perception of the process of creativity. He suggests it starts with, “a period of preparation, becoming immersed, consciously or not, in a set of problematic issues that are interesting and arouse curiosity”. Next, there is a “period of incubation, during which ideas churn around”. This then leads to an insight of some kind. The person evaluates whether the insight is valuable and worth pursuing. Finally, there is a
process of elaboration on the work (pp79-80). It can be argued that Csikszentmihalyi’s thinking aligns with aspects of ‘creating’ in drama, such as devising which is the creation of performance drama, or drama created in classroom by students and teacher. We see this in the idea of students and teacher becoming interested in an idea, exploring and nurturing this idea in a process of ‘incubation’ as Csikszentmihalyi describes. This then brings about an awareness, a discovery or an insight which can be elaborated upon in the creating process through dramatic language. How this creative act is activated, is similarly important. Teachers look to produce the drama by different means, for example through an idea, text, image or prop. This provocation, or pre-text as O’Neill terms it, has a purpose, it has to gain the interest of the students. Whether it based on a puzzle (Booth 1994) to be solved, a perplexing situation (Day 1983) to be explored, or a mystery (Egan 2005) to be probed, there is a hook that engages the student’s curiosity.

“The ideal pre-text ‘rings up the curtain’ by framing the participants effectively and economically, in a firm relationship to the potential action. It may hint at previous events and foreshadow future occurrences so that the participant’s develop expectations about the dramatic action.”

(O’Neill 1995, p22)

Bearing all this in mind, I would argue that the nature of creating in drama is framed by firstly, the initiating of curiosity and then the act of imagining. Thereafter, the actions of experimenting, developing and discarding, all lead to the act of creating something original to the group. Within this system, equal to the artistic processes of many artists, there may exist the acts of intuition, inquiry and risk taking. The students and teacher can play with knowledge already established, or new knowledge constructed in a different manner. They may work through the ambiguity of thoughts in action to concrete ideas. There can be a reimagining of possibilities and the presenting of ideas in progress.

Lucas (2001) highlights key conditions for teaching creativity and creative learning in the school context, which I argue are resonant with drama: the need to be challenged, both by having goals set for students and by helping them to set their own goals in a supporting and demanding atmosphere (Lucas 2001, p39 cited in McCammon et al. 2010). Accountable Talk (Resnick 1995) is an example of how this may materialise in the drama experience, it requires the students to ask for and give evidence to support
their statements. Within this, they cite evidence, ask for explanations, they question and build on the responses of one another, and extend understanding by using the statements they have heard to form new ideas. Another key condition for teaching creativity is a need to eliminate negative stress, but feedback is necessary to “distinguish which approaches work better than others and to develop reflective internal feedback strategies”. Feedback in drama can happen in many ways because teacher and students can adopt different ways of communicating. Dialogic Teaching (Alexander 2004) is example of this, whereby there is ongoing talk between teacher and students, rather than just teacher-presentation. These interchanges can allow the students to contribute to classroom dialogue, and allow the teacher to elicit the students’ thoughts and ideas, and help them build understanding. There must also be the capacity to live with uncertainty (ibid p147). This fits with Craft’s (2002) notion of classrooms which foster creativity. She believes they operate “in a special way conceptually. These classrooms allow mistakes and encourage experimentation, openness and risk taking” (p116). They then may go on to produce something original and of ‘value’ to the group (Craft 2002). She clarifies that the ‘original’ creation does not necessarily mean ground-breaking ideas, but can be something they have created that goes beyond their existing understanding. Zimmerman (2009) supports the notion that original ideas that are novel to a learner can be considered creative. Gallagher (2007) mirrors Craft’s thinking. Her studies indicate that creative encounters often occur when students engage in situations of greater freedom of expression, risk taking, and imaginative thinking. Gallagher (2007) questions why those in the field of drama have paid little attention to the notion of creativity in drama. She suggests that it is maybe because of the struggle to understand how creativity manifests itself in drama, or the difficulty in evaluating and measuring creativity because measurement happens through the children. Gallagher (2007) also highlights that we should always remain open to serendipitous moments of creativity, “[t]here are so many moments in theatre, both the rehearsed kind and the improvisational kind, where students surprise themselves and others by unanticipated moments of creativity” (ibid p1233).

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that the spectrum that I present here is not, in any way, a definitive analysis of drama; it is a means of understanding the potential components of drama activity. In presenting this spectrum, I propose that trying to define drama is like trying to capture light in a jar. Instead, if we choose to
understand that there are different shades and actions of light i.e. rainbows, thunderstorms, sunsets and sunrises, then, we may understand that each of us has our own lens in which we experience this light. Therefore, rather than presenting a singular definition of drama, I understand drama as being composed of many different parts, and the way in which the drama experience unfolds depends on many different things. It can depend on our identities as teachers, artists and practitioners, our teaching styles, and our goals and objectives for the class. Equally, group dynamics, social structures, and the nature of student interaction can influence the drama experience. These factors can dictate which features of the spectrum are present when we facilitate drama in a classroom setting. Thus, when we consider the spectrum, we must also recognise that different types of pedagogical practice and student engagement can illuminate different dramatic features, which can then lead to different educational and artistic impacts and outcomes. If we take into account the range of features in the spectrum, it can allow us to understand the experiences that co-creating can facilitate in drama. We must also bear in mind that teachers arbitrate, to some degree within their classrooms, on what is taught and how it is taught; therefore, it is at a teacher’s discretion whether he or she embraces a co-creating attitude. When we consider the co-creating attitude, we can understand it as an attempt to engage the full spectrum of drama, in order to create a rich drama experience. I argue that the most successful co-creating drama experiences extend beyond embracing one or two features, and the best co-creating experiences involve enabling all the features of the spectrum. Fundamentally, when the full features of the spectrum are enabled in an appropriate context, it can extend the students’ experience from participants of drama, to co-creators of drama, therefore opening pathways to rich and creative drama experiences.
Chapter Five

Co-creating drama as a lived ontology
This chapter explores the attitudes that are central to co-creating drama, and aspires to describe the educational landscape that is necessary for co-creating to come about. In other words, when we consider the attributes of the drama spectrum as described in the previous chapter, and how the strongest co-creating experiences occur when all the features across the dramatic spectrum are present, then we now need to consider how this may only exist within a suitable ontological landscape. The discussion also recognises the nature of drama education as an unfinished story, where the uniqueness of the individual teacher determines the journey and the finish line. Therefore, the ontological landscape that I present is underpinned by varying philosophies in an evolving rather than culminating fashion.

When we discuss co-creation in drama, it is essential to understand that it is realised through an ontological attitude. Ontology is the consideration of being; what is, what exists, and what it means for somebody or something to be (van Manen 1990). Therefore, attitudes are fundamentally ontological in nature, in that they are an individual’s personal consideration of the world and how they exist in it. It is recognised that attitudes have a profound impact on teacher practices and behaviours. Richardson (1996) states, “attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person’s actions” (p102). The aspiration to co-create drama can be achieved by enabling an attitude which sees the teacher open to the following ideas. For instance, co-creating exchanges are characterised by student autonomy, teacher and student artistry, spontaneity and the act of creating. The teacher requires a strong commitment to the social and creative dimensions of drama. Students and teacher become partners and artistically active participants in the drama experience. In this way, it is the mutual engagement of teacher and students in a shared creative effort. Co-creating drama also resonates distinctly with the educational principles of constructivism. It distinguishes itself from the ‘dramatising’ or ‘enacting’ of existing stories, improvised drama ‘sketches’ or ‘teacher-directed procedural drama’, because the main value of this attitude is the emphasis placed on creating something new, and of value to the group, and the realising of authentic collaboration between teacher and students.
I will begin this section by contextualising my first encounter with the idea of co-creating, through an article by O’Neill and Lambert. Next, I will examine the praxis of Cecily O’Neill and David Booth, who both offer an understanding of co-creating drama. I will then discuss the epistemological underpinnings of drama, which can be considered as rooted in constructivist philosophy. Therefore, the question of how knowledge is created in co-creating drama is addressed. Thereafter, I will attempt to describe co-creating, not as a series of practical steps, but more as a composition of attitudes, educational concepts and relationships that are essential to the co-creating experience. A number of factors facilitate and dictate the success of the co-creating experience; some are relationship based, where issues of power, autonomy and interaction are a factor. Others are praxis related, whereby they determine how the participants engage with each other and the art form. Finally, all this occurs through curiosity-driven spontaneous and creative encounters.

My appreciation of co-creating drama began with a paper, ‘Working from within: teacher and the group as artists in the process’ which Cecily O’Neill co-authored with Alan Lambert in 1979. It presents some thought-provoking ideas, which initiated my interrogation of the co-creating attitude. Within this article, the authors discuss teacher and students in a collective agreement to create drama, working as co-artists in ‘open possibility’ (p55). They describe the teacher working ‘within’ the drama, taking risks and learning to “think on their feet”, thus enabling “a number of possible choices for action before the inner eye” (O’Neill and Lambert 2006, p55). They highlight the idea of imaginary play being part of the process, and how the rules of play can operate in the drama work. They also discuss the value of the ‘teacher in role’ convention within the work, explaining that through this, the teacher can challenge and progress the children’s ideas to achieve new insights. They suggest, that when they are taking on a role “teachers are putting themselves inside the creative process, where they, without distorting the progress of the drama, challenge pupils’ thinking, support any contributions to the work, and make the drama move on” (O’Neill and Lambert 2006, p52). A significant part of the article proposes the role of the students within the experience as not just the participants of the drama, “but a means by which the drama is created” (p54). This highlights the importance they put on valuing the contribution of the students, not unlike the thinking of Slade and Heathcote. O’Neill and Lambert suggest this provides the students with opportunities for input, choice and control,
which in turn, motivates participation and builds responsibility. They propose spontaneous improvisation as a key part of the work, because students “are challenged by what takes place”, and “they build on what others offer and they negotiate the meaning of the work” (p52). They also note that at first, the teachers may not be able to tolerate the spontaneity of the work, but should persevere, as they will acquire technique and become more skilled. O’Neill and Lambert’s view of the teacher and students as co-artists and co-creators of drama, and the students possessing power and sharing control of the work can all be considered essential characteristics of the co-creating drama experience.

O’Neill’s (1995) process drama approach, which is the central concept that the Irish drama primary curriculum is based on, also embraces several co-creating principles. Procedural in nature, process drama involves students in a series of structured improvisations, and focuses on the process of creating and participating in drama. It “gives access to dramatic elsewhere, imagined worlds in which students may experience new roles, novel perspectives and fresh relationships” (O’Toole 2006, p141). Process drama is often launched by an ‘aesthetically charged pre-text’ and features conventions such as tableaus, teacher-in-role and student role-play. There is “no external audience to the work, so that teachers and students are the equivalent not only of theatre actors, directors, and technicians but also of a theatre audience” (Edmiston 2003, p.223). Though fundamentally improvisational in nature, O’Toole and Dunn (2002) offer a concrete structure for process drama. First, there is the initiation phase, where students create their roles, build belief and enter into the dramatic situation. This is followed by the experiential phase, where they explore the dramatic world and the “children construct meaning inside the dramatic context” (p7). Finally, there is the reflective phase, where they reflect on the learning and generate their own meanings. Piazzoli explains:

“Within each phase, the participants experience a number of scenarios, or ‘episodes’. These episodes are not inter-connected in a linear, chronological sequence, but follow a non-linear narrative, playing with spatial and temporal dimensions in order to explore a theme, within the realm of human emotions and behaviour.”

(Piazzoli 2012, p31)

O’Neill highlights what I consider to be inherent principles of co-creating that exist in process drama; in her next statement, process drama happens “by using the group’s
existing play skills and sense of rules, and involving them directly in the art-form as co-artists with shared responsibility for the direction and development of the work” (O’Neill 2006, p67). Other shared values include its collective improvisational experience, and the building of a dramatic experience. There is also the pursuit of artistic and aesthetic qualities, where the teacher operates as a co-artist, or as Taylor and Warner (2006) suggest, a “co-conspirator” of the drama (p18). Where co-creating is not obvious in process drama, is in the degree to which the teacher directs the drama, and therefore, the level of autonomy afforded to the student within this process. O’Neill explains that the teacher and student may be sharing responsibility for the growth of the work, but “the teachers’ purpose will be different from those of the children. The teachers’ educational purposes will likely shape their efforts within the process, as they try to focus the work in order to achieve what Bolton called ‘intrinsic learning’” (O’Neill 2006, p63). Therefore, in process drama, the teacher may have a pre-determined outcome in mind, or may be driven to achieve specific types of learning in the drama experience. In other words, the experience may be motivated primarily by a specific educational focus, rather than the teacher being more open to different types of contextual and emergent learning, or engaging in more spontaneous, artistic co-creations. It also suggests that the teacher in process drama leads the student, and perhaps even imposes their vision and their direction, rather than allowing for the work to be more student-driven. Sæbø (2009) argues that student-rulled dramatisation results in superficial learning, while teacher-structured drama develops engagement and understanding. This reminds us how ultimately the teacher always has responsibilities and obligations in a pedagogical sense in drama. O’Neill explains that:

“[a]lthough process drama is a group process, it is no more democratic in its operation than the production of a piece of theatre. The leader or teacher working inside the creative process, may acquire some of the functions of a director, designer, stage manager and even audience, but because of the nature of the activity, will go beyond these purposes. The leader’s primary tasks are those of managing the action, of operating the structure, and of functioning as a dramatist.”

(O’Neill 1995, p64)

While all teachers of drama need to be “mindful of the value and the standard of the learning that occurs” in the drama experience (Aitken et al. 2007, p12), within a co-creating experience the teacher is willing to let go of some of his/her power, in order to encourage more student autonomy. Heathcote highlights this concept too, explaining that within the drama process, the teacher should consider how many powers they can
hold on to and which they can give take away (Heathcote 1984, p12). Therefore, the co-creating experience is less teacher-driven, and directed more by the contributions of the whole group, teacher included. Consequently, this can result in subjective, emergent and contextualised work, whereby the work is unique to the individuals of that group at that moment in time.

David Booth is also influential in my understanding of the practical nature of co-creating drama. Booth, a Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, developed an approach to drama called Storydrama, a method that uses a pre-existing narrative to develop drama work. The narrative of the story itself is not the prime focus, it becomes a framework for building drama, and it is used as both a stimulus as well as a tool for the teacher in giving form to the drama (Booth 1987). He describes Storydrama as “improvised role-play stimulated by a story” (p8), where the students build “the drama cooperatively into a playmaking event” (p78). It is centred on the notion of shared stories, where the children “become co-constructors of a story, the story itself and the characters living within the story” (ibid p12). They become, as poet David McCord says, “the singer, the song and the sung” (Booth 1994 p12). Booth sees drama as:

“…the act of crossing into the world of story. In sharing drama, we agree to live as if the story we are enacting were true. We imagine the story, engage with it, struggle with its unfamiliar concepts, associate our own experiences with it and fill its shape with our particular interpretation. We process the key events, images and themes of the story by living them out in the drama.”

(Booth 1994, p40)

Booth studied with Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, and as is clear from the comment above, Heathcote’s ‘living through’ concept is an underlying influence in his thinking. He suggests that the benefit of his approach is in how the drama emerges from the children’s imagination. Booth states that in Storydrama, the teacher may bring the story and construct the lesson, but the students are the ones who create the drama (Booth 1994). Storydrama is a good example of the practical application of the co-creating attitude, as it involves the students directly in the story and its direction, and sees the teacher shaping the work with the students, not continuously driving it. Therefore, the students’ imaginations, their thinking and their decisions influence it. As Booth says, they fill the story with their own interpretation, and they live its moments and circumstances, and often its consequences. He believes that by having the children
think on their feet, addressing issues in the moment, meeting challenges and cultivating the story, they move into ‘areas of significance’ and become responsible for their own learning. Taylor (1995) states that Booth uses the ‘spirit’ of the story as a beginning of a dramatic process, which involves students in a dramatic and improvisatory exploration of issues, themes, characters or conflict that are suggested by the story. The students tackle the issues by drawing from within themselves ideas, feelings, and expectations. This concept of the students taking charge is not just a dramatic device for Booth, it is also his philosophical stance:

“…we must learn to use the tools of theatre to help our students create not just their own drama, but produce their own culture; a culture where their experiences matter; where their questions matter; where their voices matter.”

(Booth 1994, p78)

However, Hornbrook has his reservations, suggesting that the learning Booth talks about in Storydrama can be achieved in other, less complicated ways:

“Curriculum time is valuable and the question has to be asked whether students might not effectively achieve what often seem excessively modest goals in less convoluted ways. It is hard to refute, for example, the suggestion that David Booth’s 10 year olds might equally well discover the heart of a story (whatever that is) by reading one.”

(Hornbrook 1995, p86)

In Storydrama, the role of the teacher is not to direct the children, but to facilitate their thinking. Therefore, the teacher is fulfilling different functions at different times. They guide, structure, support and integrate ideas, and elate feelings and ideas, or make things difficult, surprise, shock or apply pressure to reveal deeper meaning (Booth 1994). Booth defines the role of the teacher and the student very clearly. He explains that although the students are in control of the themes and direction of the drama, the teacher has the responsibility for the framing and action of the work. They must decide on appropriate strategies and activities that meet the needs of the students at any given time. He suggests that “the drama rests upon the balance between what they want to do and my perceptions of the possibility inherent in the drama” (p76). Booth is unwavering in his belief that the teacher does not direct the drama, and the students do not follow orders, therefore the content is not fixed, but generated by the group. He believes teachers should “let loose the ties” and “set free the children into new patterns of behaviour, new status roles, new dynamics of interaction” (p13). But, he also warns
that Storydrama is not about offering students simple resolutions to problems, it is about helping the students “go back and forth between the story and their responses to it, translating the experience of the story into the context of their own lives” (p42). In terms of the co-creating attitude, what is significant about Storydrama is firstly, the commitment of the teacher to the students ‘creating’ drama. Secondly, in Taylor’s exploration of Booth’s Storydrama practice, he discusses Booth’s concept of co-creating, describing it as ‘co-construction’, “[a]t the heart of Storydrama lays the co-construction of a fictitious event. Where the co-construction depends upon the coming together of mind and bodies, and a mutual agreement to create” (Taylor 1995, p36). This is a useful description of the understanding of co-creating drama in the classroom. Finally, we see an openness of the teacher in Storydrama work to content and outcomes which are not fixed, but generated by the group. Booth believes working in this way means “the pressure and the authenticity of the dramatic moment can help children create new knowledge and make different and necessary connections” (Booth 1995, p193).

Both O’Neill and Booth embrace several co-creating principles within their practice and offer a practical understanding of the manifestation of co-creating in the classroom. Both employ the students’ ideas within the process and provide moments for student autonomy and creativity. Therefore, there are no scripts or fixed outcomes, the experiences are co-constructed, and centred on the imagination and participation of the students. The drama that is created reflects both the students’ and the teacher’s collective artistic contribution. The students are active inquirers, and the teacher role within this is to support this position, and to become a co-participant and a co-artist in the process, which is evident in both practitioners’ praxis.

**Constructivism**

An understanding of the nature of the knowledge that is created in co-creating drama and the influence of constructivism on the co-creating attitude is addressed in the next section of this chapter. Drama scholars have increasingly placed drama within a constructivist epistemology because of its alignment with knowledge being constructed and shaped by experience, and learning as an interpretation of the world (Wagner 1998, Wright 2000, Edmiston 2000, O’Toole et al. 2005). However, Rasmussen argues that this constructivist:
“…term often functions as a convenient label and the epistemological implications of constructivism are seldom elaborated in a way which addresses why drama in particular constitutes constructivist thinking and practice.”

(Rasmussen 2010, p536)

Constructivism in education is a meaning-making theory that explores the nature of knowledge and learning. It has been highly influential in education because of both its impact on the philosophy of teaching, as well as being an educational strategy (Muijs and Reynolds 2011). Constructivists purport that “meaning is not given to us in our encounters, but it is given by us, constructed by us, each in our own way, according to how our understanding is currently organised” (Duckworth 1987, p112). Therefore, rather than seeing knowledge as given to us or as facts to be remembered, constructivism upholds learning and understanding as co-constructed, contextual and emergent. Ebrahimi (2013) presents the major assumptions of constructivism as the contract between the real world that puts boundaries on what we can experience, and a reality in which there are multiple realities. He suggests that “[t]he structure of the world is created in the mind through interaction with the world and is based on interpretation” (p163). In this way, meaning is the outcome of an interpretive process, and is dependent on the knower’s experiences and understandings. Therefore, knowledge is not “…independent of the learner, it is constructed by the learner” (p164). He also proposes that human thought is “imaginative and grows out of perception, sensory experiences, and social interaction” (Ebrahimi 2013, p163).

Scholars such as Dewey (1929) and Piaget (1954) can be considered constructivist in retrospect (Hyslop-Margison and Strobel 2007). In contemporary terms, Vygotsky (1978), who places emphasis on the value of social interaction, is known for his notion of Social Constructivism. There are two schools of thought on constructivism. The first is Social Constructivism, which aligns with Vygotsky’s theories of social, dialogical and collaborative processes. The second strand is Individual Constructivism, which aligns with Piaget’s theories where the emphasis is on a person’s individual knowledge construction. Educationalist John Dewey, who is credited with having begun the progressive movement in American education, was one of the first theorists to initiate thinking on constructivism within a classroom setting (Richardson 2007). Dewey is seen as one of the principle theorists who has influenced our understanding of the
experiential and aesthetic nature of *process drama* (Taylor and Warner 2006, Rasmussen 2010). He dismisses the rote scholarship, believing that learning should be child-centered. He speaks of schools as communities of learners, and promotes the child’s active involvement in the learning process. He states that knowledge emerges best from circumstances in which the learner participates in the “continuing reconstruction of experience” (Dewey 1959, p27). Furthermore, the relationship between constructivist teaching/learning and democracy began through Dewey’s early vision, and has gathered speed over recent years (Richardson 2007).

Piaget too puts the learner at the centre of educational activity. His ideas are based on the psychological development of the child, whereby he identifies developmental aspects of human thought processes. He contends that children engage in different kinds of thinking through various stages of development: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. Piaget believes that the stages, structures and processes they use, are inherent and true for all, regardless of culture. He suggests that intellectual growth results from the child attempting to reason and solve problems, because by means of this they continually reconstruct the external world through personal experience as internal representations (Iran-Nejad 1995). Piaget specifies that children construct an understanding of the world around them by experiencing differences between what they already know, and what they discover in their environment. He also connects the concept of play and cognitive development, saying that play is the answer to how anything new comes about (Piaget 1962). Furthermore, he discusses the notion of learning through activity, symbolic thinking and imitation, whereby children investigate the world around them by imitating it.

Piaget’s ideas are challenged by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) who highlights the importance of a child’s cultural background in their development. He suggests that different cultures stress different social interactions, contrasting Piaget’s theory of learning as inherent and not culturally predisposed. For Vygotsky, “the educational process is active on three levels: student is active, teacher is active and the environment created between them is an active one” (Vygotsky 1997, p54). Vygotsky’s theory of knowledge attainment is often described as *Social Constructivism* because of his emphasis on the capacity to learn from others. He believes that social interaction and community is fundamental in the process of making meaning, and therefore
reinforces Dewey’s thinking that learning is a reciprocal and collaborative process. Vygotsky does connect with Piaget in terms of the importance of play, saying that “a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (Vygotsky 1978, p102). The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is probably one of the most widely known theories associated with Vygotsky. It is founded in the notion that there are two kinds of developmental levels. Firstly, the actual level of development, where students can solve problems independently and construct their knowledge individually. Secondly, the potential level, where they can co-operate with peers to accomplish more advanced tasks and thinking. Vygotsky believes that at any time, each child has these two co-existing intellectual levels. The distance between the levels is the ZPD. As Fabes and Martin (2001) suggest, “[i]t is within this zone that a person’s potential for new learning is strongest” (p42). Vygotsky defines the ZPD as:

“The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

(Vygotsky 1978, p68)

He believes that less competent children could develop through interaction with “more capable” students within the ZPD, because “…with collaboration, direction, or some kind of help the child is always able to do more and solve more difficult tasks than he can independently” (Vygotsky 1987, p209). Therefore, “…what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (ibid p211).

The term scaffolding has become synonymous with ZPD. Scaffolding is seen as a support structure for learning, whereby as the student begins to comprehend and realise the action of a task, the scaffolding support tapers off, and they can then attempt to complete the task on their own. The scaffolding occurs within the relationship between student and teachers, where teachers ask focused questions, guiding the student and creating positive interaction between themselves (who knows) and the student (who is coming to know). Wagner (1998) suggests that aspects of Vygotsky’s work are closely related to drama, for example, language in the classroom. Vygotsky considered language as way of mediating thought, noting that, “[t]he relation between thought and word is a living process; thought is born through words” (p 255). He believed children
construct meaning through dialogical activities and social encounters. Wagner believes this is reflected in the importance of the student’s voice in negotiating and creating drama work, and in their use of language as a way of expressing their thinking and feelings about the world. This social nature of learning, as highlighted by Vygotsky, is mirrored in the social nature of drama, whereby dramatic play in the classroom is a powerful social act that engages children in learning in their ZPD (Wagner 1998). Wagner also connects drama’s pretend play with Vygotsky’s work, as Vygotsky believed that all play creates imaginary situations with self-attributed rules and children are active meaning makers in play.

Constructivism has become a popular concept in contemporary teacher education programmes (Hyslop-Margison and Strobel 2007) and numerous pedagogical practices such as discovery learning, collaborative, experiential, and task/project-based learning have stemmed from it. Although the meaning and application of constructivist approaches can differ amongst educational theorists, it fundamentally centres on the child as active rather than passive in the building of knowledge (McCoy et al. 2012). There is, however, debate about the value of constructivist teaching strategies. Some studies find that direct instruction methods have more encouraging learning outcomes than constructivist approaches (Spiro and DeSchryver 2009), while others argue constructivist-based classrooms show positive effects on student learning (Kim 2005, Muijs and Reynolds 2011). Brooks and Brooks (1993) also note that the constructivist teacher faces conflicting concerns; on the one hand, they are teaching in a student-centered way and enabling their students to shape their own understanding and learning, yet on the other hand, they are asked to assess the student’s learning through traditional testing. Activities in a constructivist classroom are characterised by active engagement, student reflection, problem solving, and the building of understanding, which happens not just in an individual way, but through interactive, socially and culturally participative behaviour (Richardson 2007). The learner is perceived as unique, and both the content and pace of learning are based upon the abilities and interests of each individual learner. The constructivist teacher attempts to pose problems and questions, searches for windows into students’ thinking, and negotiates emerging relevance. Teachers provide learners with learning-support strategies such as modelling, coaching, and scaffolding. In constructivist environments, students are at the core of the experience and their points of view are highly valued. This notion
pushes the students to support their own thinking and take responsibility for their ideas and actions, and it fosters the respect of others. Dangel et al. (2004) who examined constructivist pedagogy in classrooms identified the three characteristics of constructivism in classroom context as, “the important role of children, authentic and purposeful interactions among classroom participants, and engagement in academic activity” (p237). They describe the common elements in constructivist classrooms as the physical environment, whereby amongst other things, children and teachers have ownership of the environment in different ways. The social environment, where children take responsibility for classroom instruction and routines, and the teacher offers structured and spontaneous opportunities for decision making. The linguistic environment, where purposeful talk happens rather than question and answer and there is an encouragement of peer interaction. The intellectual element, where there are layers of content knowledge and the teacher allows different levels of engagement and interaction. Finally, the curriculum element, where there is a balance of activity growing out of the children’s experience and teachers offering variety of activities. These common elements described by Dangel et al. can be argued as all pertaining to drama. Whereby, the use of space, shared responsibility, interaction, decision making, different layers of engagement and drama developing from the students’ experience are all essential activities within the drama experience.

Rasmussen (2010) postulates how constructivist philosophy relates to the choices made educationally and aesthetically in drama. He explains that “[t]he constructivist artist or teacher believes that the self, meaning and knowledge is developed under the influence of all present and ‘interacting’ language, materials, environment, bodily acts, cognitive and affective representations” (ibid p533). He goes on to say this interaction of ‘drama forms’, such as cognitive and physical aspects, as well as the notion of “co-players”, and the “intentional and contextually influenced” experience, may well be why drama is regarded as “exemplary in the type of education that unmistakably builds on constructivist ideas” (ibid p534). Drawing from Dewey’s aesthetic theory, sometimes named ‘constructivist aesthetics’, he also suggests that meaning-making and knowledge generation can be achieved effectively through role-play. He states that “participation in sociolinguistic practices [that] produces meaning as well as a Self, not least by taking the role of the other” (Rasmussen 2010, p534). Finally, Rasmussen highlights how the “linguistic basis in constructivist aesthetics is important to drama”,

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because as Dewey suggests, language “aims to ‘conceptualise’, to make imaginations, feelings and thoughts ‘conscious’ to us (Dewey 1934/1958, p13). The special aesthetic experience is therefore not only ‘sensuous’, it is also a social and cognitive experience” (Rasmussen 2010, p538).

Reflecting on Rasmussen’s thinking, and on the findings of Dangel et al. (2004), constructivism can be considered an important philosophical tenet of co-creating drama. We see this in how the students co-creating drama ‘co-construct’ understanding through active and social learning encounters, and how the teacher encourages peer interaction so they may engage in purposeful talk. The teacher also attempts to engage students’ interest and curiosity, encouraging active investigation, and fostering cooperation. From this, the students can take responsibility for the growth of the drama work. The teacher as a co-creator acts in a constructivist manner by becoming a “co-explorer who encourages learners to question, challenge and formulate their own ideas, opinions and conclusions” (Bhat 2007, p3). Furthermore, implementing a constructivist stance in terms of co-creating drama involves more than activities and classroom organisation. It is a culture, “a set of beliefs, norms and practices that constitute the fabric of school life” (Windschitl 1999, p752). The constructivist culture effects interactions, relationships and experiences (Windschitl 1999). A constructivist-oriented teacher considers each individual as a valuable and contributing member with unique thoughts and understandings. This is a fundamental principle that underlies the teacher’s attitude in the co-creating experience. Consequently, the next section is written in the light of an educational landscape that recognises the importance of constructivist philosophy. I will now discuss a number of factors that are important educational features, which can facilitate the success of the co-creating experience.

**Educational Philosophies and their impact on the classroom**

Rousseau (1778d), Pestalozzi (1827d), Froebel (1852d), Montessori (1952d) and Dewey (1952d), are all helpful in establishing the notion of the student at the centre of the educational process. Their attention to specific aspects have significant bearing on how co-creating is perceived today within educational discourse. *Rousseau and the child’s natural ability*: Modern child-centered education can be traced back to the *Romantic Movement*, beginning with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He considered the individuality of the child as paramount, and believed in principles of ‘natural
education’. Central to this was the focus on the environment, and the need to develop opportunities for new experiences and reflection. Rousseau believed that the child’s natural interests, like play and curiosity should form the basis of their learning. He highlighted the importance of the children developing ideas for themselves, so they may make sense of the world in their own way. He also suggested that the teacher’s role should be as an interested observer and a guide who encourages and stimulates the child. Thus, instead of being taught other people’s ideas, the child was encouraged to draw his own conclusions from his own experience. Today this is known as ‘discovery learning’ (Darling 1994).

Pestalozzi’s democratic and active learning: Pestalozzi insisted that education was not only for the privileged, but the right of every child. His beliefs led to the concept of democratic education. Pestalozzi’s methods became widely accepted, and most of his principles have been absorbed into contemporary education, all of which would feature in the co-creating experience. These include a focus on the interests and needs of the child, the child’s active participation in the learning experience, and the child having direct experience of the world. It is a child-centred approach to teaching rather than teacher-centred, and pursues the notion that instructions proceed from the familiar to the new. It also supports student-paced learning and has a focus on ability rather than age.

Froebel’s self-activity and play: Froebel is best known for the concept of the kindergarten, which was conceived as the centre of an interactive educational process. It was based around the activity of the young child (Caldecott 2009). For Froebel, play was the key to education. He believed children typically learn through song, dance, and self-activity play with objects and blocks. He emphasised the self-development of the child, and believed the child’s activity should stem from his own interests. His influence on modern educational practice is seen through principles such as the recognition of the uniqueness of each child’s capacity and potential, and a holistic view of each child’s development. He also recognised the importance of play in a child’s development and learning, and the significance of the child being part of a family and a community (Brehony 2001).
**Montessori and choice:** The Montessori method is often used as a pre-school approach to education. Montessori emphasised the learning environment, and how this can allow the child to pursue their own learning. In particular, Montessori embraced the freedom of movement and freedom of choice for the children. The teacher as a facilitator and guide was also significant, whereby they introduced new concepts and encouraged the children to ask questions, investigate and discover new ideas.

**Dewey and democracy:** Dewey (1934) believes that quality of experience for students is to do with their growth in rich and rewarding ways as individuals and as a community. Essential to this is establishing and sustaining a democracy, and endeavouring to enhance people’s quality of life. This comes about through encouraging and teaching individuals to question the status quo, and to develop better possibilities. It is also founded in the recognition and development of the individual’s capacities and what they can contribute to the good of society. Dewey believes it is essential that children should learn in democratic and ethical ways, which in modern terms has been interpreted as, “a curriculum of democratic civility” (Buchart 1998, p4).

“Democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. Faith in democracy is all one with faith in experience and education. The task of democracy is forever that of creating a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute.”

(Dewey 1939, p3-4)

The idea of ‘faith’ as mentioned in Dewey’s quote, is an interesting link to the co-creating attitude, as the co-creating teacher must have a faith and trust in the abilities and commitment of the students, in order to activate a collaborative relationship. Rockefeller (1991) believes Dewey is proposing that “children imbued with the democratic spirit will be persons who have learned how to think for themselves and to make fresh intelligent value judgments when confronting changed circumstances and new possibilities” (p249). This idea positions the teacher as a “classroom facilitator whose role is to help students, as autonomous agents, design their own learning experiences in response to personal priorities and objectives” (Hyslop-Margison and Strobel 2007, p82). Dewey believes that teachers can create a living democracy through the cultivation of curiosity, open-mindedness, and reflective and active thinking (Shenaar-Golan and Gutman 2013). He urges teachers to design a curriculum
which is centered on children’s interests and needs, therefore creating real, lifelike, and purposeful encounters. This, he suggests, would make the learning more meaningful.

In more modern terms, Freire’s ideas on empowering students and democratising education have been widely recognised. Shor (1993) describes Freire’s approach to education as participatory, critical, democratic and activist. His emphasis on a ‘liberating dialogue’ has enabled educators to teach to the needs and interests of the learners, and to invite them to take part in their own education. Teachers empower students, by providing opportunities for them to have an opinion and a voice in the classroom, and to realise their abilities as active members in changing the world around them. Furthermore, his emphasis on critical pedagogy encourages students to question issues of power and dominance, and to review “the culture of silence” which exists in some countries (Freire 1998, p14). He believes that facilitating the examination of social imbalance in this way, exposes students to the power of education as a medium to give voice and take action against their own oppression, perhaps even leading to reform.

In Freire’s ‘dialogic and problem-posing’ approach, students and teacher roles are less structured. They engage in acts of conversation and questioning to discover knowledge from each other. Teachers pose problems derived from student life, social issues and academic subjects. These issues are debated and discussed in shared discourse. Students are invited to think critically about things that matter to them. Consequently, “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire 2008, p244). However, Freire warns that teaching in this way, can often present a threat to traditional teachers, who see themselves as the only possessors of knowledge. He believes when a teacher has a predetermined lesson-plan, there can be no true independence on behalf of the student. There is simply a ‘banking’ of knowledge, making the student’s participation anti-autonomous. Freire’s ‘banking concept’ (2004), a term he uses to criticise traditional methods of education, claims by assuming the roles of depositors (teacher) and receptors (students), the students are subject to ‘dehumanisation’. They become passive objects with no ability to rationalise and conceptualise knowledge at a personal level. He states that:

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“Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not re-creator. In this view the person is not a conscious being (corpo consciente); he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty “mind” passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside.”

(Freire 2004, p95)

Freire suggests that once students have become critical thinkers, they will be able to begin a process that can lead to their humanisation. He referred to this process as ‘praxis’, a process which allows for reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Saleh 2013). According to Freire, the learning environment should include participatory learning, whereby the learning process is grounded in interactive and cooperative behaviour rather than reliant on teacher talk. Within this, he suggests classwork should involve shared dialogue and problem solving by teacher and students. This invites students to assert ownership of their own education. He also describes a democratic behaviour, where teacher-student discourse is democratic, and students have input and negotiation rights regarding their curriculum. These aspects have significant bearing on the co-creating attitude, which will be explored further below. In recent times, Freire’s philosophy has been emerging in the work of some drama scholars, for example in Neelands’ (2010) thinking around Open-space Learning, and his notion of the drama ensemble, and Gallagher (2000) who discusses the agency of the learner.

**The teacher: issues of power and autonomy**

Drawing on Freire, it is held here that the concept of teacher and students in a rich, dialogic and creative exchange is an important characteristic of the co-creating drama experience. It involves an ‘interactive and cooperative’ partnership between the teacher and students. Like this, Aitken *et al.* (2007) suggest that in drama, the “power need not be solely wielded by the teacher nor the total preserve of the child, but that there are spaces to be negotiated, created, and extended by both parties” (p15). In these spaces, the students move away from receiving and storing knowledge, and start actively discovering and creating it. As a direct implication, the teacher should be prepared to facilitate this process. In any learning situation, the role of the teacher is significant because it is central to the way in which the classroom operates. Because co-creating drama is a collective creative enterprise, the role adopted by the students hinges on the role adopted by the teacher. Co-creating aspires to allow students to have choice,
power and effect in the classroom experience. It encourages them to become co-
constructors of their knowledge, and to become more critical and active members of
the classroom, and as Freire desires, of society. Therefore, the teacher must enable this,
because students can only gain power if the teacher chooses to yield his/ her own
power. This may mean a change in their classroom status, change in their relationship
with their students, and perhaps a change in their teaching style. Greene (2000)
believes that:

“[w]e have to realise that if we are trying to release children to become what they are
not yet, to be free, to explore, to discover…we can’t tell them where to go. We have to
rejoice that they are alive, [then] a kind of wide-awake-ness can develop through the
partnership…so that children can see more, feel more, and hear more and reach
further, and maybe become something more than what they call human resources for
other people to mould.”

(Greene 2000, p2)

In the kind of ‘wide-awakeness’ that Greene discusses, we are asking the students to
think for themselves, just as Dewey promotes. We are offering them a voice, to
question, to explore and to choose. Through this, they can be enabled “to pose
questions with respect to their lives”, in order to “renew their worlds” (p13). Greene’s
suggestion of ‘releasing’ children and allowing them to become ‘more’ “moves the
young to reach beyond themselves; it is the idea of being more, becoming different,
experiencing more deeply, overcoming the humdrum, the plain ordinariness and
repetitions of everyday life” (Greene 1987, p14). In this fashion, co-creating may move
students beyond passivity, where they can become more invested in their own learning
experiences. As Greene suggests, in becoming ‘more’, they may reach further. Within
the co-creating drama experience, traditional dramatic principles such as improvisation
and role-play still apply to the work; it is the fact that it is rooted in a more
autonomous way of working, which is significant. It is an attitude, which appreciates
the choices of the students, and where there is an invitation for action. Heathcote
(1984) maintains that:

“[t]his decision making where children watch their own choices worked out in action,
seems to me to be one of the important services which drama renders to education
where we are trying to encourage children to think for themselves.”

(Heathcote 1984, p209)
Freire (1970) proposes the teacher’s authority can serve the students’ freedom in this way. The teacher can employ their authority to encourage students’ participation, criticism and thinking, rather than imposing ideas upon them. The role of the teacher in Freire’s approach aims to make students autonomous learners, by helping them achieve their critical consciousness. This is achieved by engaging them in democratic dialogues, rather than the teacher attempting to continuously dictate or rescue the situation. This idea of greater autonomy for students can be considered an important aim of the teacher in the co-creating experience. The students are empowered by the teacher, as he/she moves beyond the role of facilitator to become a collaborator and co-creator of the work. However, for this to happen, the teacher must learn to acknowledge the limitations of their perspective, learn to accept the loss of their role as the sole source of knowledge, and have faith in their students and the cooperative experience.

At this point, having explored the idea of shared power between student and teachers, the question of how this may manifest itself in classroom practice is also cause for consideration. As discussed above, given the collaborative orientation of co-creating, there is a need for renegotiation of the students’ and teachers’ roles and status within the class. Therefore, co-creation in drama can be considered to be dependent on both the teacher’s egalitarian attitude, and the culture of the group. It is also important to recognise that students are not always willing volunteers, therefore, there may be different levels of commitment at any given time, which will affect the type of collaboration that can occur. The change in status and classroom dynamics can prove difficult for some teachers. In this way, Aitken et al. (2007) believe that to “share power and co-construct”, drama requires “flexibility and accommodation from the teacher” (p7). Nicholson (2010) too contends that drama requires relationships of trust, if students and teacher are to collaborate and work productively together. Swick (1999) proposes this may be achieved through “dignifying and respecting students” by giving them ownership of the work, and that this ownership encourages an “unparalleled level of commitment and collaboration” within the drama process (p79). She proposes that ownership occurs through personal investment, engagement, responsibility, and empowerment within drama. Taylor (1998) contends that “students are likely to have a greater investment in the activity, if they are the source of its construction” (p48). He suggests that by investing in the work, students are creating this sense of ownership. In
Jeffery and Craft’s (2003) research of teaching for creativity, they too highlight the importance of learner ownership and control, and the importance of the students as partners with the teacher in the learning experience. They discuss how the teacher should be at the least “learner considerate and ideally ‘learner inclusive’, thus prioritising learner ‘agency’” (Craft 2005, p42). Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider the importance of the teacher encouraging the students to take ownership of the work, something, which may lead to the commitment and collaboration that Swick, suggests. Spolin interprets ownership as allowing students true personal freedom and self-expression, which she believes:

“…can flower only in an atmosphere where attitudes permit equality between student and teacher and the dependencies of teacher for student and student for teacher are done away with. The problems within the subject matter will teach both of them.”

(Spolin 1963, p8)

Sharing power and ‘true personal freedom’ is not without its problems. The teacher and students dealing with moments where there are shifts of authority can be one of the biggest challenges in the co-creating experience. It can lead to disruption and some conflict, as both parties become accustomed to the differentials of power. In particular, the teacher’s loss of control when managing student’s behaviours within these shifts can create difficulties for teachers (Lee and Recchia 2008). However, if the teacher is sensitive to this, and is prepared to make allowances in order to find stability, then the need for reactive discipline should become less frequent. If empowerment is ill handled by the students, then the teacher can return for a time to teacher-directed work until they see an opportunity to test the power positions again. In other words, teachers need to fully understand the issues of sharing power as it plays out in the co-creating experience, and be prepared to work through the challenges in order to find stability, as issues of power are by their nature, complex and require negotiation. Craft (2005) suggests that achieving an atmosphere of ‘learning inclusivity’, where students can co-create work with each other and their teacher, can be dependent on the creative abilities of the teachers and their ability to co-create with the students (p45). Aitken et al. (2007) seem to concur with this, noting that “for the teacher to hand over power successfully requires a thorough knowledge of the children, a sense of security in one’s social role as ‘teacher’ and a degree of skill and ease with the conventions and strategies of drama” (p11). We can understand from the points that both Craft and Aitken et al. make, that the teacher’s role within the co-creation experience is firstly,
tied up in their relationship with the group, whereby the teacher recognises the importance of sharing power, and is respectful and trusting of the students. Fundamentally, everything depends upon the connection and interaction between teacher and students permeated by the artistic element. It is also dependent upon their ability to work as a co-participant with their students, as it can often involve intellectual, experimental, practical, artistic, and social participation. Just as Craft and Aitken *et al.* suggest, the teacher also needs to demonstrate flexibility in the sense of adapting to the co-constructed nature of the work, and the increased autonomy of the students. Furthermore, as the co-creating attitude is quite different from a traditional knowledge transmission approach, when we examine the teacher’s role we should consider the changes they may need to make within their practice to enable a co-creating experience, and the effects of these changes. In other words, how it may shape the teacher’s identity. Teacher identity is at the heart of classroom practice, it is developed through day-to-day experiences that occur in the classroom (Walkington 2005). Sachs (2005) believes teacher identity ‘provides a framework for teachers to construct ideas of “how to be”, “how to act” and “how to understand” their work and their place in society’ (p15). It is a negotiation between experiences and the meaning-making of those experiences (Sachs 2005). Therefore, as the drama experience becomes more collaborative and the power dynamics of the classroom change, the teacher must re-evaluate themselves and understand how their identity interplays with the change in power.

**Collaboration between students**

Within the co-creating experience, the students are not only collaborating with the teacher, they are sharing an experience with each other. They are in fact, becoming a community working/acting/creating together. Bolton (1985) argues that “[o]f all the arts, drama is a collective experiencing, celebrating, or commenting” (p154). Vygotsky’s social constructivism offers a theoretical basis to the co-operative nature of co-creating, and it is also consonant with Dewey’s idea of the individual as a social learner. Research shows that drama facilitates collaboration within the peer group (Neelands and Goode 1990, Gallagher 2007), through activities where students become “responsible to and for each other” (Nelson 2011, p82). Whilst collaborating, students practise skills of relationships such as communication and co-operation. They also embrace the notion of sharing common goals, peer learning, and respect for self
and others (McNaughton 2011). Drama involves the students in offering, negotiating and accepting, and within this notion, they become accustomed to the act of persuasion and evaluation. Furthermore, through this they may come to appreciate different opinions and also different ways of thinking. At the core of students collaborating with each other, is the ‘relationship’ of the group, and the range of their interactions. This type of collaboration not only requires continued negotiation and re-negotiation of the rules and expectations of the group, but also bonds of ethics and respect (Nicholson 2002). It is not simply the act of collaborating which is a prerequisite of co-creating, but it is also what this collaboration represents. Co-creating can also be seen as a democratic teaching stance. Neelands’ (2009) notion of a ‘pro-social ensemble’ is quite fitting within this idea. He describes it as a “way of modelling how through collective artistry, negotiation, contracting of behaviour and skilful leading, the ensemble in the classroom might become a model of how to live in the world, a model of ‘being with’” (p174). This quality of the social and democratic ‘being with’ that he describes can be considered the ‘collective’ being involved in an experiencing of each other. It is as an opportunity to juxtapose identities, and to relate and live with each other. Fundamentally, it is about modelling a democratic way of living. Neelands highlights the link to Freire’s notion of ‘indispensable knowledge’:

“[t]he kind of knowledge that becomes solidarity, becomes ‘being with’. In that context, the future is seen, not as inexorable but as something that is constructed by people engaged together in life, in history. It’s the knowledge that sees history as possibility and not already determined-the world is not finished. It is always in the process of becoming.”

(Freire 1998, p72 cited in O’Connor 2010, p156)

Neelands believes it is the ongoing experience of ‘being together’ in drama which can contribute to change, he qualifies his thinking with an example from two schools he worked in:

“…they (students) were part of a public and participatory process of changing cultures and attitudes. In this sense, young people in both schools were learning how to act together in both artistic and social domains, so that their learning about how to act together in the drama classroom was also shaping their social actions as a community beyond the drama class and also, possibly, beyond school.”

(Neelands 2009, p181)

Neelands describes the ensemble as having key features such as:
“...the uncrowning of the power of the director/teacher, a mutual respect amongst the players, a shared commitment to truth, a sense of the intrinsic value of theatre making, a shared absorption in the artistic process of dialogic and social meaning making.”

(Neelands 2009, p183)

These are all characteristics which are relevant to co-creation. His concept of ensemble not only focuses on collaboration, but also on the artistry of the group. He describes the ensemble as “acting together socially and artistically” (2009, p181). This moves us on to the artistic demands placed upon the students within the co-creating process.

**Students as artists**

“One of the most persistent but elusive ways that people make sense of themselves is to show themselves to themselves, through multiple forms: by telling themselves stories; by dramatising claims in rituals and other collective enactments; by rendering visible actual and desired truths about themselves and the significance of their existence in imaginative and performative productions.”

(Myerhoff 1986, p261)

If we consider creativity as the potential to bring into “being something that is both original and considered valuable within a specific environment” (McLauchlan 2001, p42), when we discuss co-creating drama, we should understand it is implicitly a creative, artistic activity. Drama is, as Neelands (2009) explains, an ‘artistic engagement’ and as Dewey further suggests is about students “learning by doing” (2008, p120). Therefore, the artistic act of creating is a fundamental part of the process. The medium of drama involves salient aspects such as fictional composition and performance elements (O’Toole and Haseman 1988). Students and teacher manipulate dramatic form and processes to create something new. The product of co-creating can appear in imaginary form, or tangible form as action of the moment, and it can happen in a state of *metaxis*, in “the tension between the real fictional context and the real context” (O’Toole 1992, p30). Neelands and Goode (2000) believe that:

“[i]f groups involved in theatre are to gain practical experience as artists, rather than spend their time as students learning about artists, then the teacher leader needs to allow focus to emerge through the work and through the choices that the students take about the course of the work. To be too definite and clear about the intentions and focus of the work in advance is to deny students the power and experience of being artists.”

(Neelands and Goode 2000, p8)
In the experience of ‘being artists’, students must learn to adopt attitudes of openness, spontaneity and inventiveness. They must learn to experiment, take risks and to offer ideas and opinions. Within this, the ability to recognise which ideas are worth pursuing and which are not, is an essential part of the creative process (Sternberg and Lubart 1999, Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Also, the ability to see problems in new ways and the practical/contextual ability to realise new ideas and persuade others of their value, can be considered intellectual abilities of creativity (Sternberg and Lubart 1999). In McLauchlan’s (2001) study which examined collaborative creativity, she identified student engagement, democratic peer interaction, and freedom of choice as necessary components of creativity. She also suggests that while harmony is important within the group, conflict and competitiveness are also necessary. Although these elements were identified within her specific drama setting, the collaborative elements she highlights provide understanding of the necessary ingredients and conditions of creating drama. McLauchlan’s idea of ‘conflict’ being necessary to benefit the collaborative creative process is an interesting one. Although she is referring to disruption of opinions, and competitiveness among students, it is worth considering whether ‘conflict’ in terms of debate and questioning is advantageous within co-creating. After all, creating art is essentially a process of inquiry. Booth (1994) talks about this as the teacher challenging the students’ “superficial responses”, and how they should “press for elaboration and extension of inadequate contributions, but without rejecting the speakers themselves” (Booth 1994, p77). This mirrors Neelands’ notion of creating a secure environment, but not a comfort zone (Neelands 2009). Watkins (1983) also suggests if creativity is to thrive, there should not be a fear of probing or interrogating the ideas that the student comes up with, because in the artistic process they should know what they believe in and why.

**Teacher as artist**

Foregrounding the idea of co-creation in drama involves the teacher becoming an artistically active participant in the drama work. We see this in Taylor’s work (1995), where he identifies that rather than being a passive observer of the child’s drama, teachers should become proactive in the work by becoming an artist in the dramatic experience. O’Neill too highlights that both teacher and group can “share the creative impulse, and be co-artists in the development of the work” (Taylor and Warner 2006, p62). Throughout her work, O’Neill is consistent in her articulation of the aesthetic
and artistic intentions of the teacher in the drama experience (Taylor and Warner 2006, p29). The ‘artist teacher’ as Miller et al. (2001) describe, possesses an ability to explore unfamiliar perspectives, and unexamined assumptions, so that students can create new understanding and new meaning (pp103-104). Although below Greene (1987) is referring to artists rather than teachers, she offers an aspirational image of teacher as co-creator:

“…artists are for disclosing the extraordinary in the ordinary….they are for affirming the work of the imagination – the cognitive capacity that summons up the ‘as-if’, the possible, the what is not and yet might be…They are for doing all this in such a way as to enable those who open themselves to what they create to see more, to hear more, to feel more, to attend to more facets of the experienced world.”

(Greene 1987, p14)

Eisner (1985) suggests ‘artistry’ in teaching is vital, because the teacher who functions artistically provides students with aesthetic experiences that can nurture exploration, risk taking and disposition to play (p183). He believes that qualities of artistry exist in the performative element of teaching, and the fact that teaching ends are sometimes created in the process. Eisner also suggests that teachers, like painters, composers, and dancers, make judgments based on qualities that unfold during the course of action. He uses terms like ‘flexible purposing’, and ‘fluid intelligence’ to explain how artists, and therefore teachers, learn to cope with the shifting elements of their mediums. Eisner also explains how they draw on a range of possibilities to create and work with the language of their respective art-forms. Furthermore, he sees artistry in how the teacher’s activity is not always dominated by prescriptions or routines, but is influenced by qualities and contingencies that are unpredicted (Eisner 1985, pp176-177). Craft (2002) states that teachers can use ‘possibility thinking’ in order to cultivate creativity and creative learning. She explains that “much of the artistry of being a successful teacher involves holding on to the notion of possibility in what may seem to be adverse situations: in other words of using possibility thinking” (p4). Through their empirical work in primary classrooms, Craft and Jeffrey (2004) found that possibility thinking is embedded in learners’ engagement with problems and imaginative activity. They believe that ‘possibility thinking’ involves being imaginative, posing questions and involves play. In connecting pedagogy and possibility thinking, the core areas of ‘possibility thinking’ which were identified in studies are: posing questions, play, immersion and being imaginative, innovation, risk taking and self-determination (Burnard et al. 2006). When we consider the co-creating
attitude, it is with the understanding that the teacher is an artist who is able to activate and inspire a variety of learning experiences that are catalysed by artistic engagement. They are also operating as a co-artist, which requires greater individuality, greater artistic freedom, a greater willingness to imagine and improvise, to experiment, to take risks, to fail and try again, and to share all these experiences with their students.

The next section explores spontaneity which is centred on the imagination and inventiveness, and curiosity, which can be considered a driving force in the learning experience. Both are features of the educational landscape that hold great potential in terms of a supportive environment for co-creating drama.

**The spirit of spontaneity**

Co-creating involves the teacher and students in the unfolding of a dramatic experience. This is punctuated by spontaneous moments of creation, reaction and interaction. Lyas (1997) suggests that all aesthetic experience has its origins in what he calls the “bedrock of spontaneous reactions that we make, from earliest infancy, to nature and to created things” (p2), and if we did not “spontaneously respond as we do, we could not develop as aesthetic beings” (p3). Moreno (1953) considers spontaneity as one of the main characteristics of creativity, and believes it propels a person towards an adequate response to a new situation, or a new response to an old situation. He recognises life as infused with creativity and spontaneity, and calls the times when a person is most spontaneous as ‘being in the moment’ and where they are at the ‘very roots of vitality’. In this moment, “is the experience of living in complete harmony and unity while staying connected to the social realities of the here and now” (Johnson and Emunah 2009, p402). In describing behaviours of spontaneity in a drama context, Davies explains, the “participant responds to stimuli in an unguarded manner, that is, he responds honestly and openly in the given context, being willing to suspend the responses of the real world in favour of the response appropriate to make-believe” (Davies 1983, p87). Spontaneity is a key theme in Booth’s (1994) work. He describes allowing students to engage their imagination and spontaneously ‘work through the dilemma of the story’, because it can stretch and develop their abilities and capabilities. In this way, Eisner suggests that:

“[e]ducation can learn from the arts that surprise is not an intruder in the process of inquiry, it is a source of reward. The arts often push the rim of possibility. Students are encouraged to work at the edge of incompetence. To try things they don’t know how to. To develop work which is called imaginative.”

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He also suggests that “learning in the arts requires the ability and willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds” (Eisner 2000, p8). Pendlebury (1995) focuses on spontaneity and the teacher. She explains that education needs teachers who are “alive to the possibilities of the moment, who are able to see freshly and wisely, who are not slaves to regulation” (p56). Pendlebury suggests what is effective about a spontaneous teacher, is “a liveliness of imagination and a fresh, almost innocent responsiveness to new experiences” (p61). But, she warns, the ‘perceptively spontaneous teacher’ can also be blind to the obligations of practice, and may fail in their responsibility to their students. She goes on to argue that a balance is needed in both spontaneity and the reflectiveness process within teaching, because:

“…where a teacher’s spontaneity is driven by a habitual blindness to or dismissal of the standing commitments and internal goods of teaching, he or she fails in her responsibility to both her students and her subject. A failure in both dimensions of responsibility is a failure that thoroughly undermines the practice of teaching. Unless a teacher feels the pressure of these responsibilities, there is a sense in which we can question whether he or she is teaching at all.”

(Pendlebury 1995, p56)

Just as Eisner suggests, the spontaneous nature of co-creating engages the students and teacher in moments of surprise. It is driven by impulsivity and reactivity. Therefore, they are operating in a live sense, reacting in the moment to the unexpected. It also creates a sense of agency, as the students are propelled into action, which allows them to immediately affect situations. Students and teachers learn to think afresh, to become inventive and resourceful. They can display openness and flexibility. Finally, there is an understanding of human behaviour, as spontaneity creates ‘a moment of explosion’ in which we can learn about ourselves (Spolin 1991, p25).

**The arousing of curiosity**

Curiosity can be understood as the motivating desire to learn of something further. It is sparked by ‘something of interest’. Curiosity is inquiry based, requiring open-mindedness and inquisitiveness and can lead to action. Shenaar-Golan and Gutman (2013) describe curiosity as a “state of arousal brought about by complex stimuli that leads to exploratory behaviour” (p350). Dewey (1938) believes curiosity is a natural
resource and that children’s instinctive curiosity is the basis of their learning. He says the teacher’s task is “to keep alive the sacred spark of wonder and to fan the flame that already glows” (Dewey 1938, p34). For Dewey, “cultivating the dispositions of curiosity, which is also the desire to go on learning, is one of the most important aims of education for students and teachers in a democracy” (Meadows 2012, p7). He describes the dispositions as: open-mindedness, active and reflective inquiry. Freire (1998) too explains, “[t]here could be no creativity without the curiosity that moves us and sets us impatient before a world that we did not make, to add to it something of our own making” (p38). He suggests it is triggered by questions, not answers; it is “what makes me question, know, act, ask again, recognise” (ibid p80).

Curiosity has consistently been viewed as one of the most important motivators for educational achievement (Day 1982), and it could be considered a key component to heightening students’ interest in drama. Dewey (1939) interprets the ‘thing of interest’ that may spark curiosity as a ‘perplexing situation’, an investigation into something that can lead them to discover and develop their thought structures, and find lines of inquiry. It drives them to seek answers and solve problems. Day (1983) explains that “between the perplexing and resolved”, Dewey places reflective thought, and Day continues by asking “isn’t that what a drama class does between say initial improvisation and any succeeding stage of work?” (p84). Egan (2005) understands ‘the thing of interest’ as a ‘mystery’ which is exciting and enticing, “drawing the students toward the vast riches of understanding” (p32).

“Mystery enables the mind increasingly to recognise that the world around us, the world we can see and hear and learn how to behave within, is only the immediate surface under which, or behind which, or beyond which are intellectual riches and experiences barely guessed. Mystery is our sense that there is more than we can see and hear and experience in our environment. By opening our minds to the wider, stranger, and less easily accessible world, we create the first tool for its exploration.”

(Egan 2005, p33)

As Egan suggests, curiosity is a unique tool to inspire students to interrogate the world. Research (Amabile 1996, Csikszentmihalyi 2008) suggests that curiosity is considered an “intrinsic motivator” which is defined as a “motivation that arises from the individual’s positive reaction to qualities of the task” (Amabile 1996, p115). Craft (2000) suggests that curiosity is a characteristic of creativity, and this coupled with openness can lead to successful creators or in this case, co-creators. Woolland (2010)
also believes arousing a child’s curiosity encourages them to be active and imaginative. In co-creating terms, curiosity builds the drive to figure out something, or to bring new information in order to move forward. Woolland suggests curiosity generates the impulse to imagine reactions, answers and possibilities, and drives the students to act on ideas. Fundamentally, it fosters an investigative stance, creates an atmosphere of interest, and enables responsiveness to unfamiliarity and complexity. This leads us to understand that curiosity is a necessary ingredient in co-creating work and it is a necessary precursor to imagination which ultimately leads to creating.

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to describe co-creation in drama as an attitudinal disposition. This disposition draws on a spectrum of drama in terms of its range of features and practices, and requires some or all of the educational factors described in this chapter to enable it. The influence of constructivism on the co-creating attitude, and its implications in a practical sense was introduced in this chapter. From this, we can understand that the teacher’s attitude is “not to transfer knowledge but to create possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire 1998, p30). Furthermore, the teacher needs to embody not only the readiness to establish a shared environment, but also the willingness to build an interactive and cooperative partnership with their students. Through this relationship, the students are enabled to have choice, power and affect in the classroom experience. Encouraging collaboration amongst the group was also discussed. I explored how the nature of group interaction can influence the nature and outcomes of the experience, because in the co-creating experience the students are involved in interactivity, and interdependence. I also acknowledged how the activating of an artistic mind-set within both teacher and students is fundamental in fostering the possibility of co-creating. For the teacher, this highlights the importance of stimulating the students’ creativity, and creating a space that nourishes their imagination. It also sees greater venture and investment by the teacher in terms of creative and artistic activity, whereby they become a co-artist in the experience. Finally, I explored spontaneous exchanges and the triggering of curiosity which can be considered necessary components of the co-creating experience. In conclusion, I suggest the success of the co-creating experience depends to a large degree on the ontological landscape described in this chapter, and the attitude of the teacher within this.
Chapter Six

Phenomenology in action
In discussing how Heidegger’s philosophy shapes the study, I will begin with the concept of interpretation. Heidegger claims that to be human is to interpret:

“[h]ermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on historical meanings of experience and their developmental and cumulative effects on individual and social levels. This interpretive process includes explicit statements of the historical movements or philosophies that are guiding interpretation as well as the presuppositions that motivate the individuals who make the interpretations.”

(Laverty 2003, p15)

The purpose of this study is not only to describe the lived experience of teachers, but also to interpret the meaning of the experiences in educational terms i.e. what can we learn about the co-creating process in terms of teacher identity and the cultivation of attitudes, skills and beliefs in teachers? Heidegger believes that interpretation is critical to the process of understanding the phenomenon under study, and that the researcher should remain open to the evolving nature of interpretive work. The principal aim of this approach is for the researcher and participant to interact in order to discover understandings, and reconstruct experience and knowledge. Therefore, the researcher is a ‘passionate participant’ (Lincoln 1991) who collaborates as a co-inquirer. Together, both parties are actively creating the knowledge (Laverty 2003). The researcher then goes on to interpret the meaning of the findings. In some cases, the researcher creates the final version of the experience and in other cases the participants and researcher would perhaps reach an agreement as to how their experience is represented. Koch (1995) as with Gadamer, believes that hermeneutics research is an on-going conversation where understanding occurs through actively constructing interpretations of the experience, and questioning how those interpretations came about. In this study, the idea of interpretation through conversation was achieved through the collaborative interviewing process which will be discussed in-depth later in this chapter. van Manen describes this co-construction of knowledge through conversation as ‘interpretation through conversation’ (van Manen 1997). The notion of the researcher and participants as ‘beings’, reflecting together about shared meanings, is at the core of Heidegger’s phenomenology, and it is inherent in the idea of creating a dialectic hermeneutic. Therefore, all conversation in a phenomenological sense is orientated towards meaning-making and interpreting the phenomena:

“[b]y setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations, the researcher can mobilise participants to reflect on their experiences (once they have
been gathered) in order to determine the deeper meanings or themes of these experiences.”

(van Manen 1990, p99)

The process of the co-construction of findings is also present in another key area of Heidegger’s work, the hermeneutic circle of understanding. Here, the researcher and participant work together to bring life to the experience through a circle of reflecting and interpreting. The hermeneutic circle process asks both researcher and participants to be self-reflexive, it requires reflective discourse about the experience, while simultaneously constructing interpretations of the experience and exploring how those interpretations arose (Heidegger 1962). It is a shared activity, where both parties move back and forth between interpreting significant parts of the experience and the whole of the experience, to deepen the engagement with, and the understanding of the experience (ibid). The circular movement back and forth is necessary, as neither the whole nor any individual part of the experience can be understood without reference to one another:

“Phenomenological understanding is distinctly existential, emotive, enactive, embodied, situational, and non-theoretic; a powerful phenomenological text thrives on a certain irrevocable tension between what is unique and what is shared, between particular and transcendent meaning, and between the reflective and the pre-reflective spheres of the life-world.”

(van Manen 1997, p.345).

The hermeneutic circle was engaged in three ways within this study. Firstly, through my own process of exploring and interpreting narratives, transcriptions and my personal research log. Secondly, the teachers and I continually examined what had occurred in the classroom in an attempt to refine it in the context of the experience. These shared conversations were also interspersed with opportunities for reflection and review. Finally, there were numerous conversations with my doctoral supervisor about meanings that were emerging in the study. Koch (1995) believes that these multiple phases of interpretation allow patterns to emerge, and the process of interpretation itself is critical within phenomenological studies. Attention is also paid to the cultural and historical context during this cycle, as within a hermeneutic perspective human experience is context-bound. Therefore, for the researcher, his/her own “historicality” (personal experience, background, beliefs, ideologies) as well as that of the participants’ are considered and brought into the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger 1962,
Heidegger believes that all understanding is connected to a particular group of \textit{fore-structures}, i.e. historicity, context, values, experiences and background. Therefore, this should be explored during the reflecting process. Gadamer’s (1976) term for \textit{fore-structure} is \textit{prejudice}, suggesting the nature of perspectives and our judgements about the world. The \textit{fore-structure} concept was reflected in this project through the use of Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series, which explored teacher identity by biographically and historically contextualising the participant’s experience.

The notion of truth also features heavily in Heidegger’s writings, and is embedded in this study. For Heidegger, \textit{aletheia} or truth is always revealing. \textit{Aletheia} is the Greek word translated as ‘unconcealedness’. In phenomenological terms, it is the concept of revealing something unknown, so in turn, something is becoming visible. Daniels explains, “experiences are the basic data with which the phenomenologist works. The experiences of another can be known. Our job is to make them ‘visible’, and true to the subject’s own ways of living them” (2005, p7). Yet, Smythe \textit{et al.} believe that as phenomenologists, what we seek to understand will always be:

“…in flux between what can and cannot be seen, between what ‘is there’ and what ‘disappears’ just as we sense a hint of what we have not yet grasped. An interpretation of an experience is always also a withdrawal of all that still remains hidden, silent, unspoken. If we can free ourselves from the noise that tells us all that is already known as information then we may find ourselves amidst the clearing, the open space where thoughts are free to play and roam, where fresh insights emerge, shyly. In the clearing there will always be light and shadow. Just as the trees hedge the clearing one comes to on the forest path creating shadow, which draws back into darkness; so our fresh insights will find the place of withdrawal where ‘what we have grasped’ merges with the still-not-yet-known.”

(Smythe \textit{et al.} 2008, p1391)

They suggest that from the very beginning, researchers put aside any claim that the research will produce objective, simple scientific concepts of truth, but rather, recognise it will provoke thinking towards the ‘mystery’ of what ‘is’, that is the truth (Smythe \textit{et al.} 2008). van Manen (2007) too makes the distinction between ‘problem’ of the research and ‘mystery’. He states that problems require working out and solutions, while ‘mystery’ requires an approach that cannot be categorically solved because there is no one truth. Therefore, one should always remain open to the emergence of different truths. Heidegger (1962) believes that truth is context-specific, as truth recognises things are partly a product of their place in the world and their own
way of living this. He believes that there is no one truth, truth is multiple and that we are all self-knowing. So the truth is simply as the person sees it and experiences it. In attempting to realise Heidegger’s concept of truth, I pursued a discovery of the relationships and meanings that the knowledge and context had for each other, in order to construct a ‘truthful’ understanding of co-creating. The knowledge we were building together could be seen as the best understandings we were able to produce; the best version of our context-based truth.

**Finding Research Participants**

There are two common methods of participant sampling schemes usually employed in educational research: probability (commonly known as simple random sampling) and non-probability sampling (Merriam 1998). The difference is in the basic assumption about the nature of the population under study. Probability sampling uses random selection, and permits the researcher to generalise the results of the study from the sample to the population of interest. Non-probability samples are selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher, who is interested in a particular sample being studied. The defining characteristic of non-probability sampling is that the choice of people to be included in the sample is not a random selection. I felt that a non-probability sample scheme would be appropriate for this study for two reasons. Firstly, the research involves studying a small number of teachers with specific experiences of co-creating, and secondly the findings will not be generalised but used to form a unique interpretation of co-creating drama (Creswell 2007). Merriam suggests that the most common form of non-probability sampling is purposeful sampling, as it is usual that the researcher approaches sampling with a specific purpose in mind:

“Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore, must select a sample from which the most must be learned.”

(Merriam 1998, p61)

In Creswell’s discussion of purposeful sample strategy, he states there are a limited range of sampling strategies for phenomenological research, and acknowledges that the vital feature of sampling for phenomenology is that all participants have experience with the identified phenomenon (Creswell 2007). He suggests purposeful sampling with a ‘criteria’ selection process works well for phenomenological studies, as it leads to ‘information-rich cases’. “Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn
a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (Patton 1990, p169). These ‘information-rich cases’ are significant in phenomenological studies because they involve participants that have had explicitly direct experiences with the phenomenon. The most relevant of the non-probability sampling strategies to this study was purposeful sampling. It allowed me to select a particular sample that had co-creating experiences. It is, “essential that the interviewer has identified participants who have both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination” (Roulston 2010, p17). Within this sample system, I chose ‘criteria sampling’ as the most useful approach, as it allowed me to further identify a list of features that I had determined were essential for eligibility in the sample. A criterion sampling would guarantee participant inclusion in the study, and it is based on the satisfaction of pre-determined principles decided by the researcher, and so provides a measure of quality assurance (Miles and Huberman 1994). According to Merriam (1998), it is important that, when using criteria sampling, researchers clearly define the criteria that frame their sample selection and detail why the criteria are important.

The essential criteria for my sample was firstly that the participants had a good understanding of co-creating drama as a practice, and secondly, that the participants were actively using a co-creating attitude in their drama teaching. This posed a problem initially as it proved difficult to identify participants that had co-creating experience. At this point, the Continuing Professional Development Course (CPD) came into play. To enlist participants that fitted my criteria, I devised, designed and facilitated a five-day CPD course at Galway Education Centre (Ireland) during the summer of 2012, focusing on drama education, particularly co-creating drama. The course was approved by the Teacher Education Division of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), which is predominantly responsible for CPD provision in Ireland (although some courses are also provided by teachers’ unions). In Ireland, all schools have six compulsory CPD days per year and teachers are entitled to EPV days (extra personal vacation) if they attend approved summer courses. In this case, once the five-day course was completed, the teachers were entitled to three EPV days. The participants were also required to pay a course fee of forty euro to the Education Centre. Once the course was approved, it was promoted through the Education Centre website, newspaper advertising, and mail shots to schools throughout the west of
Ireland. Sixteen teachers self-selected to join the course. The principal element of the course involved teachers exploring the attitudes, skills and beliefs involved in co-creation. During the course, the teachers and I investigated a practical process of co-creating in the classroom. We revisited the application of drama strategies and techniques with a new co-creating attitude. The final part engaged the participants in inquiring how they could use this co-creating model authentically within their drama practice. At the end of the course, I generated interest in my study by discussing the research purpose, rationale and expectations of the participant. Seven teachers volunteered to continue on as research participants in the study (see table 2). Although seven is a small sample size, this was not a limitation as it is usual for qualitative researchers to work with, “small samples of people nested in their context and studied in-depth, unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance” (Miles and Huberman 1994, p27). The gender breakdown of the participants was six females and one male. Two participants were known to me through past professional associations. While it is possible that each participant experienced the course uniquely, they all meet the necessary criteria as they had all participated on the CPD course which meant it was likely they gained an essential foundation in co-creating knowledges and techniques. Once the teachers committed to the study, they all agreed to activate a ‘co-creator’ attitude to their drama work in their classrooms, beginning the following September. Ultimately, the criteria used ensured participants came from a common experience, which is important for the “quality assurance” of phenomenology (Creswell 1998, p119).

The second criterion was that the teachers were from various teaching contexts. I had planned for a sample of teachers from various schools in County Galway who were teaching different class ages. I chose Galway as that was the county I lived in and where I was conducting the CPD course. A range of teaching classroom contexts was important to the study as I was looking for the ‘essences’ of the phenomenon that transcended the participant’s particular teaching circumstances (Patton 1990). This criterion took an unexpected twist when four of the seven teachers who came from the same school volunteered to join the study. Although as a researcher I felt there was another insight to be gained through the common environmental link amongst the four teachers, the study was not motivated by comparison. Therefore, I classified it as a criteria modification, which did not jeopardise the potential for rich information, but
rather enhanced it. Fundamentally, the complete sample was diverse enough from one another to enhance the possibility of acquiring rich and unique stories of the particular experience (van Manen 1990). The other three teachers were from different schools, and all the participant teachers and schools were based in County Galway. Therefore, the qualifying criteria had been reached. These teachers became the ‘rich information cases’ (Patton 1990) of my study. Once they had initially self-selected to join the research, the teachers were informed of the full purpose of the study, time commitments, risks and benefits etc. Prior to the formal research work commencing, ethical clearance was sought. Full consent and releases were obtained from the participating teachers before the interviews began.

Table 6.1: a small, non-probability, purposive, criterion-based sample selected for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant A</td>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Teaching: 28 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Class: 1st, 2nd, 3rd (30 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed gender class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two hearing impaired children in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant B</td>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Teaching: 30+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Class: 1st (27 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed gender class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant C</td>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Teaching: 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Class: 1st (27 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed gender class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant D</td>
<td>School *4</td>
<td>Teaching: 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Class: Junior infants (21 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in hall and classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed gender class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant E</td>
<td>School *4</td>
<td>Teaching: 2 (unqualified) 7 (qualified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Class: 4th (26 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant F</td>
<td>School *4</td>
<td>Teaching: 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Class: 2nd &amp; 3rd (25 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant G</td>
<td>School *4</td>
<td>Teaching: 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Class: 3rd class (30 pupils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24 teacher school</td>
<td>Teaches drama in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The context I bring to co-creating drama

This phenomenological inquiry occurs within a history of my experiences and understandings of drama in Irish classrooms. Heidegger (1962) suggests that our ‘pre-understandings’ have influences on the research and should be acknowledged. He believes we are not just carried along unthinkingly by the world, but that we experience what surrounds us with a specific attitude. As the researcher, I am immersed in the world and its many relationships. I came to researching co-creating drama with these experiences. Therefore, these pre-understandings impact my lived experiences with the participants and their stories. So it is important to consider my particular context, which has influenced my ‘way-of-being’ (van Manen 1990) in the research. I have added some context to this study in my introduction, so I will continue to build on this here.

I have been involved in tertiary drama education for nearly a decade, and I have nearly fifteen years experience working in schools in the role of visiting drama teacher. As I engaged in this inquiry, I became increasingly aware of a range of assumptions that I had been holding about drama in the classroom. They have been informed by my educational experiences, my teaching experiences and my own reflections on these experiences. My assumption included the idea that teachers were not really that interested in drama. Although I would always invite teachers to participate in the drama that I was facilitating, I had experienced teachers who had been happy for me to take over the teaching of drama within the classroom, while they had become peripheral participants. At other times, teachers had openly declined to work with me and the students, preferring to correct homework at the back of the class. I had wondered why teachers did not want to do drama, and why they didn’t ‘play’ more with their students. Over the years, I had also noticed that teachers didn’t really know what drama was, and were surprised when I was working with students and it didn’t result in a ‘performance’. Another assumption I held was that the teachers were continuously working in a didactic way. I had assumed that there was very little co-constructing of knowledge, or collaboration between teacher and student. I realised during this study that this is untrue. Another of my main prior-understandings was that it was easy to ‘co-create drama’ with children. As a drama specialist, working in schools for many years, I had watched teachers struggling with drama and I had come in as the ‘heroine’ with my drama plans and schemes. Experience had afforded me a
level of confidence to go ‘off plan’ and to play with the children. Over the years, I could predict their answers, and even if they didn’t react as I expected, I could lead them where I wanted to go. Usually this was back to the end of my plan. Booth agrees with this, stating that over time “drama teachers develop their own tricks and are conscious of what they can achieve within limited constraints” (Booth in Taylor 1995, p39). This highlights how extensive experience can help drama teachers achieve this level of capability. In fact, I really did not know the true meaning of spontaneity and the reality of improvised work with primary school children, until I became a co-creator of drama in this process. I often struggled and I came to realise I was very structured in my drama work. The modelling of the process in the first intervention series was the most difficult experience I had in recent years. It took time for me to adjust to the sharing of power with the students, the unpredictability and the spontaneous nature of the practice. So this was not just a learning experience for the participating teachers, it was also a learning process for me too.

Interventions

Figure 6.1: Five stages of study
On completing the CPD course (phase 1 of the study), the seven participant teachers were asked to activate what they understood to be a co-creator position in their classroom drama work, on their return to school that September. Thereafter, I visited the school on three occasions between September and December 2012. A system based on *Cognitive Apprenticeship* (Duncan 1996) which uses a modelling, scaffolding and fading method, guided my development of the intervention process. *Cognitive Apprenticeship* is rooted in the history of apprenticeship learning, i.e. learning by ‘seeing and doing’. At the core of apprenticeship is the notion of more experienced people assisting less experienced ones, providing structure and models to support the attainment of skills and goals (Dennen 2008). *Cognitive Apprenticeship* combines the physical learning of apprenticeships, and the intellectual skills of the cognitive domain. Therefore, knowledge is created through the development of intellectual skills. In this approach, and by creating learning environments that are based on cognitive apprenticeship, the student is able to use direct experiences to learn intellectual processes. Collins *et al.* define it as, “learning through guided experience on cognitive and metacognitive, rather than physical, skills and processes” (1989, p456). *Cognitive Apprenticeship* is considered constructivist in nature, because it includes forms of teaching and learning such as: scaffolding, modelling, mentoring, coaching and learning (Rogoff 1990, Dennen 2008). This learning occurs through social interactions, and negotiating content. Research on *Cognitive Apprenticeships* has grown over the past decade with more studies focusing on children’s learning processes (Rogoff 1990). This is attributed to a renewed interest in Vygotsky’s (1978) work on the social nature of cognitive development in children (Dennen 2008). Central to *Cognitive Apprenticeship* as a method of learning, is the concept of situated cognition, whereby the context in which learning takes place is critical. Collins *et al* (1989) argue that *Cognitive Apprenticeships* are less effective when skills and concepts are taught independent of their real-world context. Legitimate peripheral participation is also significant as “newcomers enter on the periphery and gradually move toward full participation” (Dennen 2008, p814).

In *Cognitive Apprenticeship*, an activity is modelled within the context of real world situations (Johnson 1992). This approach seeks to engage participants “in contextual, situated learning situations that enhance their ability to transfer their newly acquired skills and knowledge through their instructor’s use of specific techniques such as scaffolding” (Duncan 1996, p60). Based on this premise, the intervention phase began
with me modelling the co-creating practice with the teacher’s class on the first visit (Phase 2). On the second visit, I became a co-teacher to support their interpretation and adoption of the new approach (Phase 3). Specific elements of co-teaching such as interpersonal skills and teaching philosophy (Conderman et al. 2009), were discussed in advance to support the co-teaching process. Then finally on the third visit, the teachers were primarily responsible for co-creating drama with their students (phase 4) and I became a co-participant with the students. The final phase of the study involved the interviewing of the teachers. I employed a structure of this process based on what Lave (1988) calls the observation, coaching and practice method in Cognitive Apprenticeship:

• **Modelling/observing:** This occurs as behavioural modelling allowing learners (or in this case the teachers) to observe the performance of an activity by an experienced or practiced person.
• **Scaffolding/coaching:** This stage minimises risk, while at the same time allowing the teachers to approximate the real experience and it can take the form of trying tasks with coaching and supporting from the practiced person.
• **Fading stage/practice:** Here, scaffolding and other supports gradually decrease as teachers’ abilities increase and they refine their practice.

**Data Collection Instruments**

There are a variety of data collection methods which can be used in phenomenological research such as: interviews, conversations, participant observation and action research. There is also the study of personal texts, such as diaries or journal, or artistic expressions such as poems or drawings (van Manen 1990). Because the focus of this study was on the meaning of ‘co-creating drama’ as it is ‘lived’ by teachers, it seemed important that I should attempt to get first-hand descriptions and stories of such experiences. Therefore, interviewing the participants seemed the most appropriate method in this instance. Interviewing is a fundamental form of qualitative data collection, and is built on the basics of human interaction, conversations and exchange. Interviewing is “one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings” (Fontana and Frey 1994, p367). But, there are some observers who are critical of interviewing. Kvale notes that since there is no single method for interviewing, researchers have no tangible procedures to rely upon:
“Until recently, the field of qualitative inquiry was fragmented into different disciplines with communication gaps across interpretative communities. With an absence of common literature, procedures, and criteria, interviewers have to a large extent had to rely on their individual creativity.”

(Kvale 1996, p9)

Gubrium and Holstein (2001) question the participant’s role in the traditional qualitative interview, suggesting they lack empowerment. They believe there is a need for interviews to be a form of democratic social interaction, where the participants are valued rather than treated as passive beings full of answers. I agree with their notion of collaboration within interviewing, and have addressed this later in this chapter.

Another concern is that interviewing may in fact be exploiting participants. It could be argued that by turning them into subjects, the researcher benefits from using these subjects for their words. van Manen’s interpretation of interviewing as a method of sharing would seem a more appropriate form. He suggests candidness from the outset of the interview process and for the researcher to highlight the benefit participants may receive from the interaction, noting that “we gather other people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves” (van Manen 1990, p62).

Silverman (2006) also has reservations about interview-based research. He warns that because the interviewer sets the agenda, their concerns and expectations may be embedded in their choice of questions, and as a result, he believes the data from an interview can be seen as somewhat manufactured. Although there are questions of integrity concerning interviewing as a research method, I was driven by the fact that in any research the choice of data collection must hinge on the research problem:

“The chief criterion in determining what research method will be used should be the initial research question (based on research interest or research problem), not tradition or norms. In addition, the true experiment is based upon the idea that the subject (i.e. researcher) observes an object. The interview, in contrast, has its foundation in the presence of a subject as researcher to another subject.”

(England 2012, p15)

Interviews are generally the principal source of data collection for phenomenological studies, as they provide a situation where the participants’ experiences can be explored, illuminated and gently probed (Kvale 1996). Interviewing is valuable for phenomenologists, because it offers an opportunity for the researcher to see things from the participant’s point of view, and hear their experiences in their own words. In
phenomenological research, the researcher is often the sole person responsible for the
design of the data collection process. As such, interviewing offered me an in-depth
opportunity to explore the teachers’ experiences. It allowed me to question deeply and
probe, as the participants spoke directly about their experiences. van Manen explains
that:

“…interviews may be used as a means of exploring or gathering experiential narrative
material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding
of a human phenomenon and the interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a
conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an
experience.”

(van Manen 1990, p66)

The most common interview used in phenomenological research is the semi-structured
interview. It is informally conducted with a moderately open framework. It uses open-
ended comments and questions, which allows focused and fluid interaction between
the researcher and the participant (Moustakas 1994). The semi-structured format
allows the participant to highlight things that matter to them and encourages mutual
understanding through discussion. Daniels (2005) explains that the phenomenological
interview has a very specific motive, whereby the researcher adopts a readiness to
listen to the descriptions of the lived experiences. He believes phenomenologists
should explain this motive to their interviewees, “the attitude is to understand your
world through your eyes and your experiences so far as possible, and together we can
probe your experiences fully and understand them” (Daniels 2005, p8). The semi-
structured interviews in this study were designed around the primary research question,
and were framed by two phenomenological procedures. Firstly, I adapted Seidman’s
*Three Series Phenomenological Interview Method* (2006) as a guide. As the name
implies, rather than using a single in-depth interview, Seidman promotes a three-
interview series with each participant. He considers this an important step for
researchers and participants, because it contextualises the phenomenon of interest. In
this way, if there is no context, there is little prospect of exploring the meaning of an
experience (Patton 1990). The first interview known as the ‘focused life history’, sees
the researcher exploring the context of the participant’s experience of the phenomena.
Participants are asked to recount past experiences that connect to the phenomena being
investigated. Egan (1995) suggests that a teacher who explores their “life as a teacher
can and often do open up alternative ways of reconstructing ways of acting and being in the classroom” (p131). He believes that this happens in particular in phenomenological circumstances, because the interactive interviewing process around the “teacher’s autobiographies, is a royal road to attitude change and, from there, to a sort of emancipation from the grooved ways of thinking of ones work” (ibid p131). In this study, the participants were asked about their first experience of drama teaching, what it was like for them when they taught drama, and the influence of co-creating drama on their practice to date. It established a context and an understanding of what led them to participate in the study.

The second interview, *details of experience*, concentrates on the “concrete details of the participant’s present lived experience in the topic area of the study” (Seidman 2006, p18). In this interview the focus is on the phenomena. It is an attempt to reconstruct the details of the lived experience of the phenomena. As the teachers were co-participants in the first modelling session, and were to adopt the co-creating approach during the final two interventions, this interview structure was utilised three times. The *details of experience* interview involved questions: Can you tell me about your experience of the class? Do you remember when you were co-creating drama with your students? What happened in that experience? And how did you feel? This repetition of the interview format and questions allowed a building and layering of the details of their experience of co-creating drama. Seidman approves of adaptations of his method such as that implemented here:

“[A]s long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three interview structure and duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored.”

(Seidman 2006, p21)

The final interview, *reflection on the meaning*, involves questions that access meaning-making. It focuses on the participants’ understanding of their experiences. It gives participants the opportunity to reflect on their lived experience, and also to discuss their present understandings of the phenomena. This interview occurred during the last intervention visit and was combined with the final *details of experience* interview. Seidman’s interview series also paralleled well with the three phases of the *Cognitive Apprenticeship* process. The interview process breakdown was as follows: *Initial*
interview, learning about the teachers’ background, their drama pedagogical practice and their subjective world. Details of experience interview/ (modelling experience), learning about the teachers’ understanding of the co-creating model. Details of experience interview/ (co-teaching experience), learning about the teachers’ direct experience of co-creating drama with their students. Details of experience interview/ (co-creating experience and final reflection on the meaning), learning about the teachers’ direct experience of co-creating drama with their students and discussion of their understandings of the phenomena.

On initially deciding to interview, as in keeping with traditional interview methods, my intention was to ask a set of organised, predetermined open-ended questions, and then to listen closely in a passive manner. But, during the CPD course where we co-constructed an understanding of co-creating practice together, the teachers enthusiastically embraced a ‘co-inquirer’ position. This was evident from their eager questioning and whole-hearted participation in the activities. Therefore, a ‘teacher as co-inquirer’ relationship was established from the beginning of the CPD course. The notion of the participants as co-inquirers led me to a second phenomenological interview procedure, an alternative method of phenomenological interviewing called Socratic-Hermeneutic Shared Inquiry (SHSI) (Dinkins 2005). Rather than the interviewer taking a neutral position, which sees the interviewer record “long narratives from the respondent, with few interruptions or prompts from the interviewer” (Dinkins 2005, p112), this rethinking of the interviewing process involves the interviewer and interviewee (referred to as ‘co-inquirer’) engaging in dialogue and negotiation during the interviews. SHSI is also in keeping with Gubrium and Holstein’s (2001) constructivist concept of an active interview, in which the interview partners actively construct meaning. SHSI allows the interviewer and the interviewee to become partners in a journey of discovery. Both parties question and reflect on the proceedings, thus permitting the interrogation of themes, ideas and most importantly interpretations that emerge within the interviews. This style of interviewing is based on the Socratic method of inquiry, where Socratic dialogues were conducted to allow for in-depth understanding of everyday issues. Dinkins explains that in this type of dialogue, Socrates positioned himself at the center of the inquiry thus allowing for a process of challenge, clarification, exploration and development within the dialogues:
“He expresses surprise when an interlocutor says something he didn’t expect, he challenges beliefs that seem to conflict, and he acknowledges his own assumptions and allows them to affect the dialogue. He is never passive, and he never simply asks a question and lets the answer lie.”

(Dinkins 2005, p116)

Socrates’ notion of shared inquiry is also reflected in Heidegger’s phenomenology tradition, in which this study is philosophically grounded. Heidegger advocates openness to the ‘other’, allowing dialogue that is fluid and dynamic, and that uncovers and generates, rather than re-presenting understanding (Vandermause and Fleming 2011). The concept of knowledge being actively constructed also features in his hermeneutic circle, described earlier, which has a shared unfolding of ‘continual re-examination’ (Dinkins 2005, p137). In terms of this study, this type of interview allowed me to position myself within the inquiry with the co-inquirers i.e. the teachers, much as Socrates did. As partners, we noticed, questioned, listened, challenged and reflected together. By engaging in this two-way dialogue throughout the interview process, I was able to begin to make meaning from participants’ experiences. In terms of structure, SHSI begins with definitions. Adhering to this method, the participants of this study were asked for their definitions of co-creating, and perspectives on co-creating drama. Dinkins (2005) believes that beginning with definitions of the phenomena under investigation offers many benefits. Firstly, she suggests that it indicates the understanding the participant holds of what is being discussed. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to clarify understanding of the characteristics and value of the experience. Furthermore, the researcher can ensure a common value and understanding amongst the participants, and the answers often generate potential follow-up questions. A sharing of examples by the researcher is also permitted in this method. For example, in my case, it could be an illustration of questioning within a drama scenario, or a decision to use a specific convention. Lastly, in this process, “interpretation is seen to be part of the interview process itself, rather than a separate phase that takes place after the interview when the researcher analyses data and writes the report from her study” (Roulston 2010, p18). Therefore, there was also dialogue between the teachers and I about patterns and relationships of meaning in the interviews. Logistically, the interview process took place in the four primary schools in the county of Galway. Over a twelve-week period from September 2012 to December 2012, dates and times for the face-to-face interviews were scheduled and conducted. The interviews took place immediately, or no more than two hours after the co-
creating experiences. All interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon time and location in the schools, and were digitally recorded.

As well as the interviewing process, a research log was kept. A research log is an effective way of recording thoughts and reflections that are part of the research process (Ely 1991). My log existed as handwritten field notes in a notebook which I later transcribed. I used the research log in two ways. During the CPD course, I recorded perceptions of the course, reactions to exercises and topics that were discussed. Through this I was able to reflect on the questions, tensions and successes that characterised the teachers’ experiences. Therefore, the notes in this instance were used to progress the CPD course work at certain points, as detailed in the CPD section. Secondly, I used my research log to record the breakdown of the classroom activities, and to record my feelings and thoughts after every interview. These reflections subsequently provided discussion ideas and questions for the subsequent interviews, and also assisted with the development of the teachers’ profiles for the thesis. It is important to note that I did not gather observational data, because that would have compromised my dialogic methodology. Thus, I did not record examples of what I observed the teachers doing in a practical sense; the log was used as a way of documenting my thoughts during and after the interviews.

**Conducting Analysis**

According to Giorgi (1997), a phenomenological analysis does not aim to explain or discover reasons for a phenomenon. It attempts to clarify the meanings of the phenomena and understand the structure of the lived experience. I hoped by listening attentively, and attempting to analyse the teacher’s stories, I could come to understand the meaning of their experiences of co-creating drama. Therefore, I was attempting to comprehend the teachers’ stories and develop an interpretation, with a view to understanding the structure of co-creating beliefs and values that could be nurtured within an educational environment. Interpretation is often thought of as examining meanings and unearthing hidden messages, and it suggests an explanation that we seize from the research. Interpretation means this is what I believe the person is getting at (van Manen 1990).

The methodological ideologies of Max van Manen assisted me in the practice of conducting this study, and in particular how I approached the task of analysing the
interviews. van Manen, an educational philosopher, applies phenomenology to educational investigations and believes that phenomenological research aims to discover ‘what something is really like’ (van Manen 1990). He works within the ideology of Heidegger, where ‘being-in-the-world’ and connecting to the phenomenon is central. van Manen states that because it is discovery-oriented, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach does not have a step-by-step procedure. Therefore, a method of analysis “cannot be determined by fixed signposts, they need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand” (van Manen 1990, p29). He does however, provide guidelines for phenomenologists to follow. van Manen begins by explaining that reflecting on lived experience means reflectively analysing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience. He defines this analysis as “trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience” (van Manen 1990, p79). A theme is the focus or meaning of an anecdote, and is perhaps something that appears often in a text. The aim in phenomenological terms, is to uncover essential themes that give the phenomenon its uniqueness, and that contribute to a deeper understanding of it. To decide if a theme is essential to the experience, the researcher poses the question, ‘would the fundamental meaning of the phenomenon change if this theme were removed?’ By using van Manen’s guiding principle of discovery-based analysis, I sought to uncover the essential themes which represent the lived experience of the teachers and characterise the co-creating phenomenon. Then, through a process of interpreting the emergent themes, I would define the ‘essences’ of co-creating as lived by teachers in an Irish context.

van Manen believes that forming a thematic structure of a human experience is not a regulated process that can be taught, it is “a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” in the text (van Manen 1990, p79). He continues his guidance by suggesting that thematic features can be exposed from participants’ stories in three distinct ways: the holistic approach, the selective or highlighting approach and the detailed or line-by-line approach. Each approach guides a different examination of the text. The holistic approach is more global and asks the researcher to read the text as a whole, and decide what phrase captures the meaning of the text. They then try to express the meaning by framing such a phrase. The selective approach asks the researcher to read the text numerous times, and then highlight or distinguish statements or phrases that stand out or that seem essential to the experience under study. Finally, the detailed approach sees
the researcher analyse every sentence in a line-by-line approach, to see what it reveals about the experience being described (van Manen 1990).

The analysis for this study was conducted through a hermeneutic phenomenological lens, whereby I was, “working toward meaning through a structured process that is pre-determined yet influenced by data” (Laverty 2003, p 20). The teachers’ interviews provided the basis for the reflective structural analysis, and both the holistic approach and the highlighting approach were employed for the analysing process. The teachers’ descriptions of their lived experience provided a textual journey from which I attempted to discover the underlying themes that defined the experience as a whole. The four series of interviews were grouped in accordance with Seidman’s *Three Series Phenomenological Interview Method* structure. I then examined them group by group in order to build and layer my themes, and therefore, my understanding of the co-creating experience. In doing this, there was an overlaying of differing statements about the phenomenon which built up layers of perspectives about the meaning. I began the analysing process by listening to the digital recordings of the interviews, and then reviewed the transcripts. Beginning with the holistic approach, I read each interview in its entirety to find and record the “fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole” (van Manen 1990, p93). The development of an interpretation occurs during the reading of written words, when we start interpreting what the participant is telling us while we are reading, observing or listening. I took the position that, when interpreting, the central question was, how can we come to understand (interpret) ‘what is happening here?’ As I interpreted, I was reaching for an understanding that satisfied the experience. After I read the transcripts once, I reread them several times. In doing this, I hoped to surrender to the idea that significant statements would emerge. With each reading I asked myself, ‘what statement or phrase was particularly essential or revealing about this phenomenon?’ I then used a highlighting approach, selecting “some sentences or part-sentences that seem to be thematic of the experience” being studied (van Manen, 1990, p94). As significant statements and recurrent statements revealed themselves, I underlined or highlighted them. Next, I selected each of these highlighted phrases and began to capture what meaning the highlighted text conveyed. As the collection of themes emerged, it began to lead to a rich description of the phenomenon. The transcripts were again re-read with a view to identifying which of the teachers’ stories might best show each of these
themes, and this then began to give some meaning to the lived experience. Finally, I then compared the findings to what was found using the holistic approach. This process of examining the whole and the parts, embraced the hermeneutic circle theory of the researcher moving back and forth between interpreting the whole of the experience and significant parts of the experience, to fundamentally deepen the understanding of the experience (Heidegger 1962). In keeping with Heidegger’s thinking, the rewriting continued until I felt the themes (parts) and the relationship between the themes (whole) captured as much as possible. The analysis framework honoured the individual and contextual nature of each participant’s narrative, yet, allowed common themes to be illuminated (van Manen 1990). It revealed thematic core components of the experiences, common to all of the participants’ stories of co-creating drama. A total of three main themes emerged: navigating to unknown destinations, teacher commitment and the outcomes of co-creating drama. Within each theme, there are a number of subthemes which will be discussed in the chapters ten, eleven and twelve.

**Possible Limitations**

This study was limited to the lived experiences of seven primary teachers working in County Galway, Ireland, who participated in a CPD course in Galway, July 2012. The nature of phenomenology means that the studies are limited to the experiences of those who participate in the study. Although it is possible for readers to transfer the descriptions discussed in this thesis to other settings, generalisation is not possible because of shared or similar situational characteristics, (Creswell 1998). But, in saying this, transferability can be demonstrated through the application of the findings to other contexts, and also in the possibilities created by the study. Therefore, readers may view the findings as meaningful and applicable in terms of their own experiences, “everything comes down to our capacity to recognise ourselves in the finished account, in the ‘story’ of human existence which is recounted there” (Caputo 1987, p80). A good interpretation takes the reader to somewhere that is recognisable, having either been there before, or the suggestion of it being possible (Koch 1994). Other limitations include possible memory fade, whereby people forget or distort past memories and events. There would have been little possibility of this, as all interviews took place immediately or no more than two hours after the interventions or co-creating experiences.
The lack of member checking could also be seen as a limitation. I would argue that it is not so in this case. Member checking is a returning of findings to participants so that they may validate their contributions. Many theorists strongly advocate using member checking and it is seen as a crucial qualitative verification method for establishing credibility, as it ensures that the researcher’s description and interpretations have been substantiated by the participants. Member checking, according to Colaizzi (1978), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002), allows research participants to provide further information and gives them an opportunity to review and clarify. It also provides them with the opportunity to challenge and correct perceived misinterpretations, which in turn negates any prospect of arguments or misunderstandings.

I sought to adhere to the Heideggerian form of phenomenology which states that member checking is not appropriate, and in fact threatens the rigour in phenomenological research.

“Phenomenology is not underpinned by the positivist need for ‘right’ answers. Heideggerian phenomenology aims to develop an empathic understanding that is cognisant of the multiple nature of truth and that context determines the meaning of the experience. Hence, member-checking threatens the rigour of phenomenological studies.”

(McConnell-Henry et al. 2010, p37)

This view is confirmed by Webb (2003), who believes that an attempt to validate findings or interpretation with participants is outside the interpretative tradition held by Heidegger. He believes that if a description is deemed acceptable by the researcher who has written it, then it should be accepted as ‘valid’. Or if a research participant creates another account, it does not nullify the researcher’s version, but should instead add another level to the overall description. In an article by McConnell-Henry et al. (2010), called ‘Member checking and Heideggerian phenomenology: a redundant component’, the writers discuss several member checking issues which undermine rigour in Heideggerian phenomenology, arguing that they contradict many of the underpinning philosophies. The first matter is that of ‘Rigour and the halo effect’, which suggests revisiting a participant for clarification. This can be considered a potential threat to the rigour, because the participant may overthink the request and attempt to ‘say the right thing’. This is known as a ‘halo effect’ (McConnell-Henry et
Another issue cited in this article is the ‘when is it the ‘right’ interpretation?’ If the participant begins to recheck their accounts, their recollection of the experiences could differ, and the original experience would inevitably become an altered experience. According to Thorne and Darbyshire (2005), ‘adultery validity’ is another matter for concern. This considers a situation where the participant may feel compelled to agree with researchers out of politeness or due to an intimidation of researcher intellect, so there is a type of mutual agreement to comply. Morse (1999) and Giorgi (1989) both caution against member checking too, arguing the strategy surpasses the participant’s role and the researcher should be the ruling authority. In relation to the teachers in this study, to break down their stories and begin to interpret them after the interviews would not be in keeping with Heidegger’s notion of context-specific truth. Heidegger believes revisiting an experience after the event has happened and after it has been recorded and discussed at the time, may alter its truth, as we are inevitably returning to it within a different life context. He believes truth is as the person sees it and experiences it, not how they reinterpret it. “Returning to participants is antithetical to phenomenology’s requirement that a recounting is presented in native, or original, form and that it is considered a snapshot in time, not a generalisable right answer” (McConnell-Henry et al. 2010, p31).

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that evaluating the trustworthiness of a study requires the researcher to address a principal question; how can I convince myself and others that the findings of the current study are important and worthy of consideration? (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Although some critics are reluctant to accept the ‘trustworthiness’ of qualitative research, frameworks for ensuring rigour have existed for many years (Shenton 2004). Trustworthiness is discerned through the application of different criteria of judgment, rigour, validity, and credibility, rather than that of other kinds of scientific inquiry (Koch 1994). Consequently, trustworthiness is reconceptualised in hermeneutic research. Koch and Harrington (1998) argue that the criteria used to ensure quality in an interpretive study, should be in keeping with the philosophical and methodological assumptions on which the study is based. Bearing this in mind, I chose the criteria of rigour and credibility as being appropriate for this study. Strategies identified as enhancing rigour in interpretive research include: transparency in documenting the congruence between the chosen paradigm and chosen
methods, alongside seeking consistency in working within the philosophical assumptions and traditions of the research paradigm and approach (Guba and Lincoln 1989). Multiple methods of data collection, and an extended period of engagement with participants and the phenomena also augment rigour (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). To address these strategies, I will begin by saying that I have attempted to be clear about my decision trail (Guba and Lincoln 1989) throughout the study and have documented it accordingly in chapter two. The data was collected using interviews with seven different teachers and field notes. These methods provided multiple constructions of the experiences, thereby augmenting the depth and richness of the data. The use of the transcripts and my field notes assisted in achieving rigour and transparency of the study process. Finally, the data from each participant was collected over a period of three months, during which time I visited the teachers in the schools at least four times. But, this was not as straightforward as the other strategies. During the CPD course I had established a strong rapport with the teachers where a level of friendship and warmth had developed. Over this period I gained their trust which allowed some comfort and freedom to discuss their experiences, thereby increasing the rigour and trustworthiness of the findings.

But this rapport also caused some problems. As Seidman (2006) states the interview process is both a research method and a social relationship, which can lead to challenging situations. On reflection, although this relationship was an excellent method in terms of initiating a co-inquiry association, it also left me compromised at certain points of the study. For instance, the teachers’ comments at the beginning of the intervention period illustrated a desire to please me, and I feared they might not disclose all the truthful events of their experiences in the interviews. Seidman (2006) believes the rapport a researcher creates with a research participant needs to be measured. He suggests that the relationship be friendly, but reminds us it is not a friendship. Too much rapport, he believes, can “lead to distortion of what the participant’s reconstructs in the interview” (Seidman 2006, p97). My concerns were realised in the first interview I conducted with Ellen. I sensed by her responses she was not revealing the true details of her drama practice, as perhaps she did not want to disappoint me. This became obvious when she asked me to stop the audio recorder to discuss a challenging event that had happened in the class. This highlighted the fact that Ellen was looking to perhaps support me by giving a good impression of the study on tape, hence not revealing the real situation that took place. Or, perhaps there was an
element of self-protection, whereby she did not want to be recorded admitting she was struggling as a teacher? To combat this reliability concern, I reminded Ellen that the value of the inquiry was founded in the truthfulness of the participants. I explained again that the teachers in the study were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and that all data and materials were kept in strict confidence. I reiterated that it was her authentic experience of co-creation that was paramount, and my personal feelings or my desires for the study were not important. I also explicated that, in order for the study to be reliable and have validity, the participants should try and give an honest account of their experiences. This frank conversation set a precedent for the following interviews with all the teachers. In order to foster a truthful and sincere connection between both myself and the teachers, it became vital before each interview to discuss the expectations of both parties and to remind the participants of their role in the research.

This struggle also reminded me that a certain amount of distance between the participants and myself was necessary, not only to allow them space to be critical and candid, but also to allow me to interrogate their experience honestly. In this way, hermeneutics is conscious of the “storied nature of human experience…we find ourselves, hermeneutically speaking, always in the middle of stories, and good hermeneutical research shows an ability to read those stories from inside out and outside in” (Smith 1991, p201). In phenomenological terms, credibility refers to the vividness and faithfulness of the description of the phenomena (Koch and Harrington, 1998). Credibility can also be realised if the researcher ensures the voices of both the participants and the researcher are apparent in the text (Lincoln and Guba 2000). This was achieved by the use of rich narrative and description, and by using the teachers’ own words where possible, to allow them to speak for themselves.

**Ethical Considerations**

At this point, it is important to recognise the importance of conducting ethically responsible research. As this study involved human participants, a full proposal was submitted for ethical clearance to the Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC), and subsequently approved before any data collection or participant interaction. I ensured that the participants received full disclosure as to the nature of the study. They were made aware of the risks, benefits and alternatives, and were
offered an opportunity to ask questions. This afforded protection, and allowed them to participate voluntarily with full informed consent. All consent forms included a statement that reiterated the voluntary nature of the research. That is, that participation in the research was entirely voluntary and the participants could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence. The children’s assent was acquired by firstly explaining to the students that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary. We then provided the students with a specially designed information sheet (see Appendix 3 and 4) and a child Agreement sheet, and they were asked if they would agree to join this study. I also ensured that parents/guardians received a full description of the study. They were asked for their consent. All teachers, students and parents/ guardians gave full consent to participate. I made certain that the research did not subject the participants to embarrassment or undue professional risk. It was also explained that upon completion of the study, the investigation would be presented in the form of a written doctoral thesis, and would also be presented at conferences and possibly published in academic papers and books to help further the study of drama in Irish classrooms.

Furthermore, measures were also taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. For example, the teachers, students and schools were given pseudonyms, and only I have access to the pseudonym identities. The recorded data was stored on audio tapes and documents on my USB key, before being transferred to my personal PC at home which is a secured dwelling, and then deleted from the USB key. The USB key and computer are password protected with ‘True Crypt’ encryption software (True Crypt 6.3). All material on USB, laptop and backup was encrypted. Data was removed and stored on a password safe disc intermittently. Any physical data, i.e. observational notes, interview notes and video/audio tapes notes are kept in my office in Mary Immaculate College, which is locked at all times. The storage of all data is in conjunction with Mary Immaculate College’s research record retention period and also complies with Data Protection legislation. The data will be retained for an indefinite period of time in order to allow for further analysis and to allow for the publishing of the research over the coming years. However, a link file was created which contains the participants’ names beside their pseudonyms. This link file will be stored for three years after the conclusion of the research project and then destroyed.
Research Struggles

During the study process there were struggles that I encountered, which I feel are important to articulate as part of this thesis. When the teachers and I moved from the co-teaching stage to the final handover stage of the interventions, some of the teachers’ actions and responses led me to believe that they were having difficulty adopting the co-creating attitude. They began looking to me to take the lead in certain co-teaching situations. It was becoming apparent that our partnership could fall into a one-way transmission of expertise (Peters et al. 1996), from researcher to teacher if I did not address the situation. There seemed a real possibility that the teachers would become over-dependent on me as the primary driver of the work, if I did not encourage them to take the attitude on as their own. Cherednichenko et al. (2001) suggest that moving to a more collaborative research stance requires changes to the traditional roles of ‘researcher’ and ‘teacher’, whereby rather than research being done on the teachers, it is done by and with teachers. Therefore, it was important for the teachers to become independent of me, and take over the reins of the co-creator work. They needed to value their knowledge and expertise and become genuine co-creators, if the study was to be authentic. Although this notion of independence was addressed during the CPD course, and in the early stages of the research process, it was necessary to remind the teachers of this. At this point, I had to make a considerable demand on the teachers to move the study forward, during the final handover interventions I stepped back and coaxed the teachers to take over. I encouraged them to use their own interpretation of the co-creating attitude, explaining we would learn more by the defeats and failures than if I was to step in to salvage a situation. I felt this small push was necessary; it seemed our relationship was evolving. At this stage I had to become a motivator, a supporter and a co-participant in the work. I hoped by creating a supportive and encouraging environment the teachers would claim more ownership of their drama practice. A development emerged from this struggle; when the teachers took ownership they began to take risks. They moved out of their comfort zone, and began to experiment. The teachers suggested in subsequent interviews that this notion of risk-taking in their practice was an important part of the co-creating attitude. The teachers were brave in their efforts, once they seized the opportunity to really possess their co-creating attitude; they started to see the benefits. It was important to challenge the teachers to move on in the study and when they did this, some of them saw the benefits. This change of condition in the study, whereby the teachers realised their co-
creating attitude, therefore feeling the rewards for their actions, made a difference to their commitment to the co-creating experience. As Stinson suggests, “the benefit of participating in research needs to be perceived and felt by the site-based researchers” (Stinson 2009, p239), otherwise their efforts to change their practice will become an imposition, and they may feel exploited rather than being involved or benefiting in terms of their drama practice.

A further challenge that arose during the intervention stage was the time commitment of the interviews. The teachers appeared to always be under time pressure, with one participant in particular, Faye, only willing to commit to a small amount of time. She was the only participant who didn’t seem to fully ‘buy in’ (Stinson 2009) to the work. Faye revealed early in the interview phase that she had ‘conceded’ to the interviews as a payment of sorts for me working with her, and admitted she didn’t have a lot of time to commit but did not disclose why this was. I discovered she viewed the study as professionally advantageous as she got to “see up close how it works with my class” (Faye Interview 2), but was hoping I would “settle for a quick payoff interview” (Faye Interview 2). Although she was not overtly displaying a disinterest in the study, her actions sometimes told a different story. She contributed very little to the process and relied heavily on me during the intervention phase. In saying this, it is important to note that her interviews were really insightful as she was very candid about the experience. Peters et al. (1996) argue that teachers should feel empowered in the research process rather than feeling like objects of study, and that problems and practical concerns should be mutually explored by teachers and the researcher together. Consequently, I felt it was important to be direct with Faye. We discussed the type of experience she was expecting from participating in the study, and I articulated the type of commitment I was hoping for. This example highlights the pressure I often felt in conducting interviews quickly and under unsuitable circumstances with different teachers, for example at the back of the class, or during the short morning break. Throughout the study, it was a constant challenge to gain enough time, and secure appropriate interview spaces without alienating the teachers.

Finally, as I began the analysis process I realised that there were very few negative thoughts or reflections from teachers about the experience of co-creating drama. This was a concern. As a beginning researcher who is new to the interviewing process, I
worried there were moments lost where I could have queried the teachers answers more to form a more critical understanding of the co-creating experience. Because of my inexperience, this may be true. But, I reminded myself my job was to let the teachers’ thoughts and understandings emerge, and be heard. And the teachers did have mainly positive experiences. From the moment the CPD course began, the teachers invested in the idea of sharing the drama experience with their students. And once they embraced their own interpretation of the co-creating attitude, many of them went from strength to strength. This was the truth of their experience, so this is what is reflected in the findings.
Chapter Seven

Continuing Professional Development
This chapter provides an overview of the ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD) course, and its bearing on the methodology of this study. The CPD course formed the initial part of the study, and was devised with two purposes in mind. Its principle objective was to encourage teachers to reconsider their role in their practice by taking a more collaborative and artistically active approach to their drama pedagogy, and to consider the act of creation as a fundamental part of the drama process. Furthermore, as the sample criterion for the study required that participant teachers had a good understanding of co-creating drama, and be actively using this attitude in their drama practice, the course also offered a means for me to enlist potential research participants. I will now present a breakdown of the CPD course with the rationale behind the choice of activities. I have only chosen to discuss the significant activities rather than including warm-up and scaffolding exercises that took place. The breakdown will also include observations I gathered from the course, which yield insights into how teachers experienced the programme.

CPD can be described as all activities and educational experiences in which teachers engage in during the course of their career, which are designed to enrich their work. Day (1999) defines CPD in a descriptive sense as:

“[t]he process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.”

(Day 1999, p4)

Contemporary views of professional development promote CPD as lifelong teacher learning, ranging from tertiary level teacher education to in-service training (Ball and Cohen 1999, Putnam and Borko 2000). It should be an active and constructive process that is problem-oriented, set in social situations and on-going throughout teachers’ lives (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002). Policy on teacher education in Ireland provides a framework for teacher education across a ‘continuum’, which covers initial teacher education (induction and early), continuing professional development and late career support (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2011). Bredeson (2002) separates professional development into three interdependent concepts: learning, engagement and improved practice. He describes professional development as “learning opportunities that engage educators’ creative and reflective capacities in ways that strengthen their practice”
CPD research and development has become a policy priority within education systems worldwide (Day and Sachs 2004). Studies show that formal and informal professional developments are critical for improving instructional practices, pedagogy and student outcomes (Day et al. 2007). Internationally, recent research on CPD has been greatly influenced by national contexts and traditions. Consequently, research is increasingly encompassing the historical, cultural and political contexts in which teachers are situated. Furthermore ‘attracting, retaining and developing teachers across the professional life-cycle’ have become policy primacy in many countries (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2005). Despite the acknowledgement of CPD as being vital to improvement in education, analysis of research increasingly points out the ineffectiveness of many programmes (Cohen and Hill 2000, Kennedy 1998). It is thought that amongst the reasons for this, is a lack of understanding amongst educational researchers of the motivating factors of teachers engaging in professional development, and the process by which change in teachers naturally occurs (Guskey 1995). Bolam and McMahon (2004) also contend that while much work on CPD is being published, it is often contradictory and rarely mutually informing. Goodall et al. (2005) state there is not enough research-informed knowledge about how CPD may be aligned with distinctions in teachers’ work, lives and effectiveness. They also believe that the range of CPD experienced by teachers is limited, and there is a deficit of evaluation of its impact on teachers’ thinking and practice. They go on to suggest that current CPD evaluation processes appear to be restricted in the following ways. Firstly, little is known about the cost-effectiveness of CPD programmes, therefore it is difficult to evaluate the cost benefit. Secondly, the evaluation of evidence of the positive impact on student learning is under researched. Thirdly, it is difficult to evaluate how effective the matching of appropriate professional development provision to particular professional needs is. When we reflect on the findings of this study, we may consider that it addresses some of the unresolved issues that are discussed above. For example, the study can give some insight into the motivating factors of the teachers who engaged in professional development as part of the study. Within their initial interview, some of the teachers discussed their motivations and reasons for participating in the CPD course, and for enlisting in the study. The findings also can offer some insight into the impact of the CPD course on the teachers’ thinking and practice, as this was also discussed within the interviews.
In Ireland, in the past twenty years, the development of CPD has become an important focus of education policymakers (Sugrue 2002, Coolahan 2003). During this time, a number of reports such as the OECD Review of Education (1991), and a *Green Paper* on Education (1992) were delivered. They both had significant implications for educational policy, as they recognised the importance of teacher education throughout a teacher’s career (Coolahan 2007). In 1995, the Department of Education published a *White Paper*, which included a comprehensive policy approach to teacher education. It officially established two important principles, that teaching is an all-graduate profession, and that teacher education is a ‘continuum’ across initial, induction and in-career development (White Paper on Education 1995). In 2011, the Teaching Council of Ireland, the professional standards body for teaching, provided a policy framework for the reconceptualisation of teacher education across the continuum (Teaching Council Of Ireland 2011). Within this, they stated that the Council’s policy on CPD is “underpinned by the three pillars of innovation, integration and improvement” (p19).

CPD provision in Ireland has received greater attention over the past ten years. In recent times, CPD evaluation studies suggest that because of the variety of forms of CPD available, CPD provision in Ireland is disjointed and there is a lack of learner-centred experiences (Sugrue 2002, Loxley *et al.* 2007). A comparative study in which Ireland was a case study, was recently published by the Teaching Council (Conway *et al.* 2009). It addresses CPD policy in an international context and provides an overview of all stages of teacher professional development. Highlighting the role of teacher education for the knowledge economy, the study suggests the importance of a teacher’s professional profile, their motivations, and support frameworks, in contributing to their own professional education (Conway *et al.* 2009). The study emphasises how changing expectations about teaching, learning and assessment, means that teachers are expected to embrace a more interactive relationship with students and other school-associated individuals such as parents and colleagues. The study also recognises one of the main challenges identified both in Ireland and in fact internationally, is the short-term nature of CPD work, where once-off workshops are the main intervention (Conway *et al.* 2009).

**CPD course**

Kelchtermans (2009) suggests professional development implies learning by the teachers. However, in designing this course, my intention was to fully employ the
teacher’s voice in building a co-creating attitude. I felt that the teachers’ everyday classroom experience would be key in developing a feasible approach to co-creating, “because they are closest to the context and often understand it best” (Guskey 2000, p25). In terms of the actuality of my CPD pedagogy, I tried to achieve a ‘collaborative and dialogic’ state by deliberately avoiding instructive methods. I attempted to activate a reflective and participatory approach in order to facilitate sharing, exchange and conversation. This was realised through various activities I incorporated in the course, which I will discuss later in this section. But I also used this approach to ensure that our understanding of co-creating remained fluid throughout the course, to allow the teachers and I to co-construct our knowledge and understanding of the attitude collaboratively. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2000) state that increasingly, teacher education has become less transmission-oriented, and more constructivist in nature. They believe this is based on the recognition that teachers bring prior knowledge and experience to all new learning situations. Errington (1993) too believes that collaborative inquiry in drama education, allows teachers and outside researchers to gain from pooled strengths and experiences. Bearing this in mind, it was important from the outset to create a collaborative atmosphere in order to facilitate the teachers and I to become ‘co-inquirers’ ‘or co-investigators’ (Cahill 2011) in our co-construction of a co-creating attitude. As Dawson et al. (2011) suggest, “[t]o make sustainable changes in instruction, teachers need to experience what happens when they are allowed to learn in a collaborative, dialogic professional development environment” (p315). From the outset, I attempted to build a ‘creative space’ to “accommodate the fluidity of collaborative, integrated work, where ideas are analysed, synthesized and applied” (Loi and Dillon 2006, p365). A variety of artistic processes were introduced at the early stage of the course, because this type of artistic inquiry can provide an excellent way to examine experience and to cultivate creativity (McNiff 2008). Furthermore, throughout the course, the sessions were underpinned by collaborating features such as sharing, trust and respect, mutual commitment, shared leadership and decision-making (Roschelle and Teasley 1995). My understanding of collaboration was underpinned by Roschelle and Teasley’s definition:

“[c]ollaboration is a process by which individuals negotiate and share meanings relevant to the problem solving task at hand...collaboration is a co-ordinated synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem.”

(Roschelle and Teasley 1995, p70)
They propose collaboration is centred on meaningful conversations about the selected ‘problem’, therefore collaborative partners should find ways to introduce and accept knowledge, track exchanges for indications of divergent meanings, and repair any differences identified along the way (Roschelle and Teasley 1995). Working from this basis, the group members work towards a common understanding. The ‘problem’ that the teachers and I were to explore on the course was twofold. Firstly, what is co-creating? and how do we develop a viable co-creating approach for the classroom? Consequently, our common goal was the co-construction of our understanding of co-creating drama in an Irish classroom setting, and the building of a co-creating attitude. This led me to consider deeply the activities for the course, because “if we want teachers to rethink the way they teach students, then we must also rethink the way we teach teachers” (Dawson et al. 2011, p315). According to Simmie (2007), the problem with providing CPD to experienced teachers, is finding an appropriate approach to encourage teachers’ involvement while simultaneously offering support and challenge in their personal, professional and pedagogical growth.

My research into an ‘appropriate approach’ took an interesting turn when I began to examine a study by Kelchtermams (1996) in which he developed a theory around a ‘teachers’ interpretative framework’. He describes this as a “…set of cognitions, mental representations that operate as a lens through which teachers look at their job, give meaning to it and act in it” (Kelchtermams 1996, p220). The aim of his study, was the reconstruction of teachers’ personal interpretive frameworks from their intellectual and emotional understanding of their career experiences. In other words, he used teachers’ career stories to understand their ways of thinking about teaching and themselves as teachers. Within this study he identified five aspects through which teachers’ professional identity could be seized upon: self-image (descriptive component), self-esteem (evaluative component), job motivation (conative component), task perception (normative component) and future perspective. He also identified a further domain which he called the ‘subjective educational theory’, i.e. the personal structure of a teacher’s knowledge and beliefs about teaching. This notion of teacher identity interested me greatly, because teaching is about more than just technical knowledge and skills, it is a “passionate profession. The person plays a large part in the work of the professional. So any conception of CPD needs to include in it
the education of the self, including the emotions” (Day and Sachs 2004, p9). Or as Palmer elegantly affirms, as a teacher:

“...only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of this ‘I’ who teaches—without which I have no sense of the ‘Thou’ who learns. Here is a secret hidden in plain sight: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

(Palmer 1997, p14)

The teachers’ identity is central to their beliefs, assumptions, values, and the practices that guide their actions both inside and outside the classroom (Cochran-Smith 2005). Sachs (2005) highlights the nature of teacher identity as a negotiation between experiences, and the meaning-making of those experiences. Furthermore, Day and Sachs (2004) assert that a purely cognitive approach to CPD does not sufficiently encompass all the perceived factors in teachers’ professional development requirements. They go on to argue that CPD needs to have a more holistic approach, it should include the education of self, including the emotions. This concept of ‘teacher development as self-development’ (Bolam and McMahon 2004) does have its critics. Hargreaves (1993) disapproves of it, claiming it can be self-indulgent and excessively invested in the transformation power of personal knowledge. My instinct to add a personal development profile to the course was guided by Day’s (1999) thinking. He believes it is vital that CPD work includes ‘personal development’ because teachers move in and out of phases of both organisational and personal environmental influences. Therefore, he advises it is “essential for continuing professional development to be cumulative and a personal profile offers one important means of achieving this” (p68). Consequently, Kelchtermans’ ‘teachers’ interpretative framework’ framed the first day of the course. The course was structured in the following way; day one focused on the teachers constructing their own teacher story. The second day involved them exploring their relationship with drama. Day three focused on collaboration, and the nourishing of the creative self. Day four involved the teachers in exploring what co-creating drama is as a practice. On the final day, the teachers explored the development of a feasible approach to co-creating drama.
Day 1- constructing our teacher story

The CPD journey began with the teachers contemplating their personal and professional experiences, and then constructing them into ‘a meaningful story’ (Goodson 1992). Volkmann and Anderson (1998) state that one of the most important issues in defining identity is the highly complex notion of the self. However, they believe it can be revealed through ‘writing or talking about oneself, because in this way the ‘self is shaped’. Therefore, the first activity of the course was an interdisciplinary approach I designed based on Michael Schartz’s ‘Micro level of initiating teacher thinking’ (Schartz 1989). This activity led the teachers to explore their teacher identity, their learning history and their beliefs and values. Some elements stayed true to the Schartz model and I adapted other elements to our particular CPD situation. It is important to note that there was an intentional absence of drama techniques at this initial stage, because I wanted the teachers to focus on the exploration of their teacher self rather than jumping straight into the matter of drama. They began by drawing a magnifying glass on an A1 sized poster sheet and they also drew two large shapes in each corner. I asked them to respond to my requests through drawing or writing (whichever they felt most comfortable doing), using colour to enhance points if they wished. At the end of the task the teachers viewed all the posters and added Post-it notes with comments or questions to any points of interest on the posters. Finally, incorporating Volkmann and Anderson’s ‘talking about oneself’, there was a discussion of all that had been revealed, questioned or commented upon. As Diamond (1991) states, “[o]ur narratives allow us to reflect on our experience and in doing so we can sort out, make sense of and come to terms with ourselves and our world” (p91).

The activity was broken down into four units:
1. **The magnifying glass as a means of reflecting on teaching**: This aspect encompassed the ‘self-image’ and ‘self-esteem’ features of the teachers’ interpretative framework (Kelchtermans 1996). They were asked to express their difficulties/fears/expectations concerning their teaching in general by drawing/writing in the inner part of the lens of the magnifying glass. This first unit was important on two levels. Firstly, by turning the mirror around in order to ‘learn from the reflection’ (Craft 2000), they were sharing their fears and expectations. Thus, the task provided common ground in which the teachers could connect personally with each other. Also, as Farber (1991) suggests, it took account of the challenges that teachers face and offered an opportunity to reveal the realities of their teaching to each other, because although:

“…many teachers begin their career with a sense that their work is socially meaningfully and will yield great satisfaction, this is lost as the inevitable difficulties of teaching interact with social pressure and values to engender a sense of frustration and force a reassessment of the possibilities of the job and the investment one makes in it.”

(Farber 1991, p36)
2. **Our learning history as a means of reflecting on becoming a member of the teaching tribe:** This connected with Kelchtermams’ belief that the nature of a teacher’s work and understanding, can only be fully understood against their biographical story and their expectations of the future. He believes their past, present and future characterises their work. In this work, they were asked to draw or write their learning history in timeline style around the lens of the magnifying glass, from when they first went to school to the present time. They were also asked to highlight what drew them to teaching as a profession. I was looking for what Kelchtermams called “critical incidents”. These are events and experiences which are powerful triggers of professional learning that “touch the teacher’s professional self and bring it up for discussion” and have “a profound influence on their thoughts and professional actions” (Kelchtermams 2009, p225).

3. **The fantasy journey as an immersion into the inner world of teaching:** drawing on the task perception (normative component) aspect, which involves answering the question of what do I need? and what must I do to be a proper teacher? I asked them to answer the following questions in the first shape they had drawn:

   - Ideally what would I like more of…i.e. time/energy?
   - What influences your day in a positive way? i.e. energy, personal factors etc.
   - What space/ ideas / material/ learning do I need to be enhanced as a teacher?

4. **The teaching market as a mirror of teachers’ work:** In the second shape they had drawn, they were asked to present a career highlight or a particular pedagogical skill. This was something that worked well whether in a subject, in classroom management, or in their day-to-day working. This aspect was concerned with the teachers noticing what skills and talents they had at their fingertips. They were to acknowledge what they had to give, how their experience was valuable in a practical way, as well as in an emotional way, and what skills and abilities they could share with the other teachers. Through the subsequent discussion, they also began to explore ways they can reform their thoughts and future practice. An added motive for placing this ‘initiating teacher thinking’ activity as the start of the course, was inspired by Wilson and Berne (1999), who stated that it is important for a CPD process to offer opportunities for teachers to talk to each other about learning, about their students, about their teaching and about themselves. This, they believe will turn the teachers into a community of learners, and allows them to redefine their practice. The process combined an examination of the
actions of their work with the beliefs and knowledge that are at the core of their actions (Kelchtermans 2004). The activity as a whole was very effective as it gave weight to the teachers’ previous experiences and it created an opportunity to converse and share feelings and thoughts. It also initiated ‘teacher thinking’ in terms of how their knowledges, attitudes, skills and beliefs influenced their teaching.

**Day 2 - Exploring our relationship with drama**

On day two, the first activity engaged the teachers in an inquiry into their relationship with drama and a practical re-evaluating of their role in their drama work. There were three main activities. We began with a simple paper activity. In pairs, they were asked to manipulate coloured paper, in order to respond to words i.e. imagination, teacher, students and drama. We then discussed their creations. There were additional levels to the activity. The teachers worked in pairs which initiated a collaborative association, and furthermore, they could not simply tell us what they thought, they had to ‘create’ something to ‘show’ us what they thought. It is interesting to note that the teachers greatly appreciated this activity, firstly because of its simplicity, and secondly because it became a catalyst for discussing feelings towards drama and their drama practice. It led to a thought-provoking conversation about what they think drama actually is. As Neelands states, because of the range of activities that come under the broad umbrella term of drama, “[m]any teachers remain confused about what actually ‘counts’ as drama” (Neelands 1992, p3). Finally, the teachers valued the fact the activity encouraged the act of ‘creating’ which allowed them to produce interesting interpretations and commenced the teachers reflecting on their own ‘creativity’. I kept a log of the discussions that resulted from this work to use in the next activity.

This follow-on activity was a circle activity. They were asked to swap places with someone else if they agreed with the statements I made (which were derived from the discussions in the previous activity). The statements included: ‘I have stopped drama because the students are playing up’, ‘I have left the kids to it in drama work’ and ‘I feel like I’m not arty/ creative to do drama’. Wilson and Berne (1999) believe that teacher learning is ‘activated’ by discussion and exchange. This activity provided an opportunity for the teachers to talk to each other in an honest manner. The strongest outcome of this activity was the discovery that there is a strong sense of stress and anxiety that goes with their drama practice. The teachers shared many of the same ‘feelings’ and experiences of drama, which I noted included fear, apprehension,
avoidance, feelings of being unqualified or not having the necessary drama skills. The most thought-provoking aspect for me was their feeling of guilt of ‘not being creative enough’. Hargreaves (1998) believes that teaching is an emotional practice, and suggests that feelings such as guilt can be a motivating force for many teachers, thus shaping action in the classroom. The discussion highlighted how some teachers do not feel ‘creative’ enough or competent enough to teach drama and are feeling fear and apprehension. This phenomenon therefore, might impact upon their relationship with drama and affect their drama practice. This was certainly something to consider further when moving into subsequent stages of the fieldwork.

This third activity was an adaptation of Augusto Boal’s ‘real/ideal images’ activity (Boal 2002). The teachers were grouped, and asked to construct an image showing the ‘real’ events or happenings of their drama classes. The images were shared and then discussed. All of the images showed examples of discipline issues, or points of conflict, where students were ‘climbing the walls and jumping off chairs’ as one teacher commented. Next, the group constructed their ‘ideal’ drama class. The final part, involved the groups adding a third (middle) image which showed the act which could bring them from the ‘real’ to the ‘ideal’ of drama work. They had to consider what this change was, and how they could activate it. This produced an intense discussion on the difficulties of drama in the classroom, and the differing opinions on how to remedy them. While at some points the teachers did ask me direct questions about ‘controlling’ the drama to avoid these problems, mostly the dialogue happened amongst the teachers. They swapped ‘horror stories’, and also positive recollections of their drama teaching. It was at this point that a tension between my research objectives and the teachers’ expectations of the CPD course became evident. While they were looking for drama ‘tips’ and practical drama ‘ideas’, I was seeking to discuss and elaborate upon their understanding of their drama practice. This led to a subtle negotiation that was played out throughout the course, whereby I attempted to balance their needs with my research intentions. This exercise also led to a level of deeper exploration on the part of the teachers, of the conditions and circumstances necessary for drama work to be fruitful. At the end of this discussion, it was agreed that if issues with classroom management could be resolved, they felt they could develop a better relationship with drama in their classroom.
The next exercise used the same technique, but focused on the teachers’ role in drama work. The whole group built a group image of what they saw as their ‘real’ or ‘usual’ role in the drama work. Adding themselves as the students and objects of the classroom, they were then to position me in their picture as teacher. Following this, I introduced the concept of the teacher as a co-creator of drama. I asked them to create an image of what that might mean, and what it may look like in the classroom. I had anticipated this would be a fast exercise. But, as we negotiated the physical and symbolic role of the teacher, the theoretical understanding of the co-creator role began to be debated. This resulted in a decision to show different versions of the co-creator role through five images which in fact became a way to explore the “different versions of their pedagogical selves” (Diamond 1991, p13) within the co-creating experience. We also made a decision at the end of this process to revisit this exercise at the end of the course to challenge our initial understanding of the teacher’s role as co-creator.

**Day 3- Collaboration and nourishing the creative self**

The first half of the third day, was focused on exploring the meaning of ‘co’ in co-creating. Craft (2000) believes that individuals need a ‘mix of circumstances’ for co-creation of art to happen. This ‘mix’ was to be the exploration of our afternoon work. We were to explore what it meant to co-create with others, what it meant to collaborate, and what it meant to collaborate with the students in the classroom. The teachers were asked to use *Playful Triggers* (Loi 2005) with the aim of collaboratively unpacking the notion of collaboration. This method uses the playful, tactile qualities of everyday objects to access, interpret, visualise and communicate thoughts and ideas. The concept is based on the idea that the objects are placed in a specific context, therefore they take on the meanings placed on them by the participants. In the same way that objects can become triggers to devise stories in theatre-making, the teachers’ task was to construct these everyday things into ‘a meaningful story’, in this instance the story of collaboration. The concept of *Playful Triggers* is a modification of cultural probes (Gaver *et al.* 1999), and was developed as a way to foster collaborative practices before undertaking co-design activities. As Loi describes:

“[p]layful triggers generate receptive modes through their tactile, visual, mysterious, playful, tri-dimensional, poetic, ambiguous and metaphorical qualities. These triggers ask people to challenge taken for granted or conventional ways of doing, seeing and articulating things to co-generate shared understandings and collaborative practices.”

(Loi 2005, p18)
There were four determining factors that led to this activity. Firstly, this practice is aimed at stimulating collective, collaborative, participatory activity, and introduces the notion of autonomy. As has been discussed, these are all elements that underpinned my understanding of co-creating. Secondly, it offered the possibility for the teachers to experience curiosity, wonder, play, experimentation, and gave them the opportunity to discover the pleasure and effect of this. Thirdly, it invited an element of unpredictability into the room, and finally once again they were involved in the act of creating something. The Playful Triggers were to be used to prompt reflections around their understanding of collaboration, and from this they were to create a three-dimensional representation or ‘sculpture’ which could be in the form of a collage, map, story, plan, memories, whatever they felt was appropriate. There was much giddiness when this exercise began, but as the group moved through the deliberating and experimenting stages, they began to work seriously and created concrete examples of their representation of collaboration, first in smaller groups and then they moved into a whole group activity.

By the end of the morning session, the teachers had a sense of the power of the collective and also the difficulties of collaborative work. At one point, they probed the different parts that people played e.g. the ‘peripheral role’, they described this as those who observed, maintained a distance and selectively added from outside of the work. They also highlighted those who structure the work from within, and others who were ‘knee deep in it’. They also discussed the nature of the teacher-student interaction within a collaborative environment, and the development of a more egalitarian classroom, and how this might happen. They tried to “detect the ‘invisible rules’ or the norms and discourses that are at play in teacher-student relationships” and what might “shape the way we play into certain positions and storylines within school settings” (Cahill 2011, p19). This led to the notion that perhaps co-creating with the students would be “collaborating, just not all the time” as one teacher explained. The most interesting outcome of this work, were the rich metaphors of collaboration that the teachers physically created through their sculptural representations, and the way the triggers became tools for reflection, imagination, participation and meaning-making. There was also a revealing insight in the difficulty the teachers faced in completing the tasks. They struggled with the fact there was not one ‘right answer’ and the unpredictability of the final product. They repeatedly asked me ‘what are you looking
for?” ‘What do you want at the end?’ My reply was, “it is your representation, so the only opinions and thoughts that matter are yours. There is no one right answer for this”. Eventually, through debate, the teachers decided that rather than the product being important, it was the process of the collective agreeing to create, and producing a representation that worked for all the individuals of the group.

Craft (2000) believes there is a need for the teacher to “be nourished and inspired appropriately” if they are in turn “to foster the creativity of others” (Craft 1997, p93). Bearing this in mind, in the afternoon session I attempted to nourish the creative capabilities of the teachers through imaginative work, in order to enhance the ‘artistry’ of their teaching, something that Eisner refers to. On the previous day, the teachers had discussed feelings of ‘not being creative enough’ and a ‘lack of confidence’ in their artistry. I wanted to tackle this head on. As Craft (2002) suggests, “[t]he choosing of a creative path in any given situation is less a matter of ability to do so and more about a mind-set or attitude” (p107). Therefore, this was to be a process of ‘rediscovering’ their creative attitude. In her study of educators’ conceptions of creativity in relation to personal identity, Craft suggests that the question of how teachers are nourished and inspired is the most challenging question in teacher development. But through the findings of her study she believes the answers to this question are:

“[m]ultiple and holistic rather than singular and/or rational. It will involve acknowledging the importance of ‘receptivity’ or ‘openness’ to stimuli in oneself and others which may include intuitive, unconscious, physical and spiritual, as well as rational.”

(Craft 1997, p93)

Craft identified similarities between her findings and Howard Gardner’s (1993) qualities of creativity, which she suggests is “the amalgamation of the childlike and the adult like, in willingness to play, experiment, be a partner with learners, and to take risks” (Craft 1997, p89). This quote inspired my thinking on co-creating, and I decided to display it at the beginning of our afternoon work, suggesting this was to become our philosophy of the day. Gardner’s notion of becoming more childlike in order to encourage creativity, also sits within Piaget’s suggestion that if we are to be creative then we must stay in part a child (Piaget 1954). I asked them to remember what it was like to be a child, I wanted us to play, to try things out and to question everything.
In attempting to find, as Craft suggested, a ‘receptivity’ and ‘openness’ to our creative work, I looked to find a supportive framework to the work. Torrance and Safter (1999) suggest that strategies to support creative thinking skills may be developed through techniques of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. They believe that when these four techniques are exercised, we are more likely to become creative problem solvers. The strategy is as follows; fluency, a creative thinking skill, suggests that we can brainstorm easily and can thus generate many ideas. The second level of creative thinking is flexibility, which is defined as flexibility in creative thought, where we are able to move easily from one idea to another, to overcome blocks in our thinking and to alter our approaches to problems. The third level of creative thinking is originality, where we test our philosophies out and look for originality of ideas or look to find a unique response. The fourth level of creativity is elaboration, whereby we elaborate on an idea, we become artist-like and attempt to extend our thoughts and push ourselves to think in a divergent manner. This concept of building creative thinking skills, provided a guiding process for the teachers’ first activity. I facilitated an activity based on Heid’s (2008) art exercise, which she combines with Torrance and Safter’s strategy. We began by looking at the book ‘If...’ by Perry (1995) which is a book of recognisable, but oddly divergent ideas fused together in an image i.e. mice and hair. Other examples include ‘If caterpillars were toothpaste’ and ‘If butterflies were clothes’. The book ends with the words, “If...this is the end, then dream up some more”. This ending set up the teachers’ work. In pairs, they were to create their own pages in order to extend the storybook. Using Torrance and Safter’s creative thinking skills strategy, they began to generate ideas. Finally, to connect the artwork to drama, I asked the teachers to present their new ideas to each other, pretending to be scientists/inventors/experts/archaeologists/explorers at the Conference of Extraordinary Things.

To begin with, the teachers were hugely concerned with the quality of their artwork and their drawing skills. But, as the ideas began to flow, their focus turned to the quality of the ideas they were creating. The structure began with the teachers working from the familiar, simply combining recognisable animals and objects, but they then took a creative leap to the creation of their own original ideas. When the teachers were given the tools to find alternative ways to arrive at their images, they did so with inventive and imaginative results. I noted their surprise at their ability to be imaginative. The work seemed to give them a fresh perspective on their own creativity.
At the end of the session, when we discussed the planned activities for the final two days, many of the teachers commented on how little drama they had done so far. When I asked them why they thought that was the case, one teacher made a very interesting observation:

“I think it’s because the co-creating stuff is about a way of thinking isn’t it? We’re doing all this to help us learn that…way of thinking.”

(Anne-CPD course)

This was a significant moment for me, because essentially it clarified my own philosophy of co-creating. As I alluded to earlier, my intention was to facilitate both myself and the teachers in co-constructing our understanding of co-creating drama. But on reflection, I had a particular idea of co-creating, and in fact I was aiding the teachers in coming to share my understanding. From the outset, when designing the course, I did not want to simply introduce “a decontextualized learning of conventions” (O’Connor 2010, p4). In theory, the teachers had all undertaken drama pedagogy of some kind as student teachers. Therefore, in theory they had knowledge of drama strategies and conventions. I was concerned with activating a co-creating orientation in the teachers, so they might look for opportunities to work spontaneously with the group and create drama work as an artistic partner. Therefore, in reality, my notion of co-creating was in some way imposed in a facilitative manner, rather than co-constructed with the teachers. However, I struggled to articulate what co-creating was ‘exactly’. When Anne expressed it as a ‘way of thinking’, it shed light on the co-creating ‘attitude’ we had been exploring. I had hoped by encouraging the teachers to see their own imaginative and creative dimensions, and by encouraging them to pursue openness to artistic experience and creative action, they may become aware of the co-creating possibilities in their practice. Greene’s depiction of the teacher’s part within aesthetic and imaginative work sums up the rationale behind my thinking, and the action that teachers could be enabled to take. She explains teachers are to:

“make possible a continuing enlargement of experience. There must be open-mindedness and a sense of exploration; there must be breaks with ordinariness and stock response. If this is how we approach curriculum, there may be a new readiness, a new ripeness in our students and even in ourselves. There may be an increasing awareness of things in their particularity, of beauty and variety, and form. People may be brought to watch and to listen with heightened attentiveness and care. The questions may keep coming. We can ask no more of ourselves.”

(Greene 2001, p28)
By posing co-creating as a way of thinking, therefore as an active attitude, Anne had begun building her own understanding of co-creating, which in turn informed my thinking. Therefore, her influence and experience overtook my understanding at that point, and a process of authentically co-constructing of co-creating came into being. From Anne’s comment and further discussion, we came to understand that co-creating was a way of thinking and an attitude, thus our business on the course was to put that into action.

**Day 4 - What is co-creating drama and how do we do it?**

Based on the revelations of the day before, we spent time considering co-creating in terms of its influence on our drama practice. As a collective we generated a shared description of the important elements of co-creating drama. These were recorded as curiosity, collaboration, student autonomy, play, trust, risk taking, investigating, imagination, creativity, spontaneity and the defining of a collaborative space in the classroom. It could be argued that these are features that Craft associates with creativity, and that Eisner associates with teacher artistry. We then discussed the notion of producing something original and of ‘value’ to the group (Craft 2002) in the co-creating process. Through various group activities and discussion, we also debated the role of the teacher and the role of the students, and what essential attributes and qualities were necessary for a co-creating attitude. We agreed on the following: collaboration between students and between teacher and students, aiming for student’s involvement and teacher involvement, valuing student suggestions, ideas and questions; teachers valuing their own suggestions, ideas and questions, and rolling with the importance of a moment/idea. The teachers also suggested that both parties need openness to the journey, and be ready to work in a ‘live’ and playful sense. Finally, they discussed working intuitively at times, and being attentive to emergence of understanding.

Fullan (1995) states that what attracts teachers to professional development, are often the specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to the day-to-day operation of their classrooms. Bearing this in mind, the next step was a practical illustration of co-creating. I felt by giving a concrete example of co-creating drama in action it would help bring the attitude alive and support understanding of the practicalities of this way of working. We began with a brief introduction to the elements of drama (Haseman and O’Toole 1988). Then we used an image as a starting
point. I positioned myself alongside the teachers as a co-participant and we brainstormed ideas. I reminded them that we were to operate as much as we could in a shared manner. From here, we experimented, improvised, discussed and co-created new ideas which developed into a story. I attempted to remain open to all suggestions and continually looked for support and ideas from the teachers. The teachers and I then revisited the application of drama strategies and techniques with a new co-creating attitude. The strategies and techniques we used were a synthesis of ideas and methods of established practitioners such as O’Neill, Neelands, and Booth. Afterwards, the teachers made observations. Some teachers were concerned with having a myriad of possibilities to develop the work, and suggested in this way, that choosing one which will work well could be challenging. Some teachers agreed that because the group are involved in decision-making, the students would be helpful in choosing the best direction for the work. One teacher added that the teachers would need a broad knowledge of drama strategies, and a good understanding of linking the activities to develop the work. They suggested though, that the teacher’s pedagogical choices in terms of conventions may be problematic if they are not experienced in using them. From this point, we discussed the notion of the teachers’ part in the process, and the idea of when to contribute, and when to step back and let the class take control. We agreed that it was about finding the appropriate level of autonomy for the students, at different points of the process. They also recognised the importance of creating the right conditions to enable students to feel comfortable about sharing and building ideas. Overall, this discussion allowed us to reflect on the issues that may come up in the classroom and talk through solutions and plans of action. It also allowed us to consider and debate the practical implications of the leap from experimentation on the course, to actual classroom practice.

**Day 5- The practice of co-creating drama: a feasible approach**

On the final day, in order to draw upon the teachers’ rich teaching experience and to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the closing part of the course involved the teachers and I in a review, of how we could use the co-creating attitude authentically within our drama practice. The teachers worked in groups to select pre-texts/starting points, and we discussed possible avenues to explore. The next stage involved one teacher from the group facilitating a small class using a co-creating attitude. Neelands suggests:
“there must be an aesthetic logic to the sequence of conventions used, it is not enough to simply use a bag of different techniques, taking together the various exercises and techniques used must develop into a complete and satisfying dramatic experience.”

(Neelands 2008, p4)

Bearing this in mind, I asked the teachers when working, to consider the choice of convention and strategies in terms of enhancing the aesthetic, collaborative and dramatic experience. We then reflected on the experience and dissected the process in terms of artistic process, the elements of drama explored, the actual aesthetic work that was co-created, the level of equality achieved, their understating of the pedagogical responsibility and the extent of collaborative work that was realised.

Finally, we returned to the collective image exercise from day two. We had agreed to revisit this exercise to challenge our initial understanding of the teacher’s role as co-creator. The teachers proceeded to show me three images of what a teacher as co-creator of drama may look like in the classroom. The third image they presented was symbolic. It reflected a unified group holding hands in an interwoven web with some students looking in which represented the moments of involved co-creating, and some looking out which represented students looking for opportunities. They placed me as the teacher figure, holding hands with the students, in an active pose, an equal, co-participant in the action and the creation of the drama.
Chapter Eight

Introducing the teachers
The purpose of this chapter is firstly, to introduce the participating teachers, and secondly, to present the commonalities among their narratives before we move on to the teachers’ concrete experiences of co-creating drama. Therefore, the first section of this chapter introduces the participant teachers and presents their stories from the initial interview. We learn about the teachers’ background, drama pedagogical practice and their subjective world. It is the first in a series of four interviews, and it happened before the interventions took place. The second section, presents the commonalities across the initial interviews. Polkinghorne (1995) suggests a ‘paradigmatic analysis’ can be used in the analysis of narratives to “uncover the commonalities that exist across the stories” (p14). By working this way, the researcher analyses individual narratives as well as identifying any patterns and commonalities among the narratives. This permits a shared movement between stories and common features, allowing hermeneutic interpretation. Kramp (2004) also believes it is important to honour the individual experiences of the participant by firstly examining individual narratives and then finding shared elements across these narratives in order to paint a broad picture of the common contextual experiences.

**The teachers’ stories from the first interview**

Given that each teacher has an individual relationship with drama, I wanted to provide some insight into their experience of drama before the study began, to give context to their experience of co-creating. Each participant was asked to recount past experiences that connected to the phenomenon being investigated, particularly the way in which the teachers made sense of drama within the context of their professional lives. We discussed matters such as their first experience of drama teaching, what it is like for them when they do drama with their students, what their typical drama practice was and how they felt about drama. During the initial interview these questions functioned as flexible points of interest for discussion. Therefore, each exchange evolved in different ways depending on a participant’s individual history and interests. They were also asked for a working definition of co-creating in their own words. The timing of this definition (first interview) is significant as it is post the CPD course, therefore it is somewhat theoretical in nature, and it is prior to the interventions, i.e. before the co-creation was enabled in their practice. It is hoped that situating the narratives at the beginning of this chapter in this way will help the reader understand the contextual aspects that may have influenced the teachers’ experience with the phenomenon. As
Carter states, “teacher’s experiences are framed within a context of a teacher’s life history” (1993, p7), therefore, this reflection on the past will provide a context for understanding how they interpret their present experience. It is an attempt to access the participants’ experience in order to build an authentic picture of their drama practice. While this section is not an analysis, interesting points have been elaborated on. I will begin by giving a brief description of their educational setting and I will also give my impressions of the teachers based upon their participation on the CPD course and the interviews. In the following narratives, participant hesitations such as ‘em’ ‘ahh’ and interviewer neutral interruptions such as ‘ok’ and ‘go on’ etc have been edited out (unless meaningful to the accounts) to create a more holistic version. The interview narratives are referenced by the number of the interview in the series of four, e.g. (Anne I3) represents interview three with Anne. I also use a pseudonym name for each teacher and also for the children that are mentioned.

The Teachers

Anne

Anne teaches in a three teacher rural school in the west of Ireland. She has been teaching for twenty-eight years and has a mixed class of first, second and third class students. There are thirty in total and two are hearing impaired. Anne left teaching for nearly nine years in the early 1990s, and on her return the new curriculum was being phased in. During the CPD course, many of the participants commented on Anne’s enthusiastic spirit and her passion for drama. I had previously worked with her on a drama project some years before this study. I was excited for her to come on board, because of her candid nature, and her passion for the arts. She began by explaining she didn’t have any memory of having experienced drama when she was at school, although she would have taken part in Christmas concerts and shows occasionally, “but no actual drama class as far as I can remember” (Anne-I1). Her first “real experience of drama” was at college, where she had:

“...this wonderful drama teacher, she was this tiny little woman like yourself, bundle of energy and she was just fantastic and that suddenly brought drama alive for me.”

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3First Class (age 6-8) Second Class (age 7-9) Third Class (age 8-10)
When we discussed Anne’s typical drama practice in the classroom, she expressed an interest in discovery learning, and explained how she enjoyed working collaboratively with the students on occasion. But, she clarified that a lot of her work was founded in structure and schemes. She also highlighted how her spontaneous work left her unconvinced of its impact:

“Often, ideally, I like it if it’s almost a scheme of work. Where I can follow a plan or something, and give you know, more form and more structure in terms of what I can do, rather than going down adlibbing. I can do that as well…but I often feel it doesn’t really go anywhere in particular. You see that’s me, that’s the teachery kind of thing. We go back to what we are…it must be right! I must get it right!” (Anne-I1)

Fellow participants from the course described Anne’s enthusiasm for drama as infectious. She clearly expresses her feeling for drama in this next passage:

“I know some teachers would be very scared about teaching drama, that’s never the problem with me. It’s just the time, it’s always time, time, time. Time to give it the priority it probably needs and deserves. My problem is how can I really make it come alive? I completely and thoroughly see the value of it. I love drama myself, I love it. But, it’s just making this time to do it. So I don’t know what else you want? I love it! I think it’s great…oh but let’s be realistic about what actually happens.” (Anne-I1)

This notion of the busy teacher and the issue of time are recurring themes within Anne’s initial interview. When asked about the challenges of drama education she discussed the issue of time again, and significantly, drama’s status amongst the other subjects.

“Doing drama really depends on time and the space. It’s never just down to the lesson, whereby you will always teach Irish, maths, literacy and so on. It often can be left on the backburner. There isn’t enough hours in the day sometimes to do everything…there’d be some days I wouldn’t get as far as the bathroom by three o’clock!” (Anne-I1)

Anne’s definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“I suppose it’s not where I’m going in with a script. I’m going in working with the children and things are kind of developing together. I suppose it’s more developmental, as opposed to go in with a finished product in mind maybe. Or maybe there is a vision…maybe there is somewhere you want to get to, but you work together on how you get there. We’ve something to explore, and asking
them (the students) what do you think? Getting them more involved, and more participative I suppose, rather than me standing up there me as the God Almighty.” (Anne-I1)

Anne’s use of the terms ‘script’ and ‘finished product’, highlight her association of drama with the notion of a final performance. Significantly, in describing co-creating as more ‘participative’, and how the student may get ‘more’ involved, this suggests her previous drama practice may have been predominately teacher-driven. Also, her comment, “maybe there is somewhere you want to get to”, suggests she sees the teacher as leading the students in co-creating, rather than the drama evolving, and being organically developed in a shared fashion. In this way, O’Toole (1992) believes that teacher-driven work is often the default position for teachers teaching drama, as the ‘context of the setting’ asserts itself, whereby “the teacher is paid for pedagogy, and some didactic purpose is inevitable…” (p101).

Barbara

Barbara teaches in a ten teacher urban school in the west of Ireland. She has been teaching for thirty-eight years, and has first class students; twenty-seven in total. Barbara spent several years teaching in London and Australia, where she described drama as an important part in the curriculum. She was disappointed on her return to Ireland, that it was not part of the curriculum at that time. She believes “it has a right to be a subject on its own” (Barbara-I1). Barbara begins:

“Well my experience of drama is…I’m very positive about drama…even though I have never considered myself very dramatic, and I wouldn’t be great at acting myself. I’d be quite inhibited, but I enjoy teaching the children drama, but my drama classes aren’t always what they should be.” (Barbara-I1)

Throughout Barbara’s initial interview she was often critical about her drama practice, but during the CPD course I noted she displayed a keen interest in storytelling, and also she contributed a lot when we were constructing stories. Furthermore, during the interventions she was not afraid to play with her students, and become a partner in the drama work:

4First Class (age 6-8)
“I can’t say I’m great at teaching drama, but I love to give it a go and I know the kids love it. I think my teaching experience in London really helped me a lot, because we had a fabulous drama teacher who was an actress in her spare time, it was the first time I really saw...because I hadn’t seen it before, that drama could be such an integral part of the curriculum. The only time really in Ireland I seen it, was you know, when they were doing some little drama in Irish or English. I’ve never really seen it used as an art-form and...that it had the right to be a subject on its own.” (Barbara-I1)

Barbara’s experience of having “never really seen it [drama] used as an art-form” seems to be reflected in some of her drama practice. She often referred to her use of drama as a focus method, and frequently uses theatre games in her classroom:

“Today now this afternoon, I could see the children were getting really restless at about two o’clock...so we just did some drama games as opposed to a proper full drama lesson. I found it brought them back to life, and refocused them. So I often use it like that...as opposed to a very organised drama lesson. I suppose also I do lead them a lot, I know it shouldn’t really be like that.” (Barbara-I1)

Barbara goes on to explain she has worked with story but struggles to progress the work:

“I love to use stories because they have some kind of a development in them. And even if we’re adding or putting a different ending to a story...well then I’m not telling them the ending. I feel that there’s a development in that. Sometimes my problem is...I don’t know how to develop it, whereas I saw you...every day you developed something that we were doing to the next stage. I could apply that here, instead of flitting about from one thing to the next, and I’d be doing more than just drama games.”(Barbara-I1)

Barbara was very committed to the research. She expressed several times how she viewed our relationship as an opportunity to learn more about drama education, and she continually looked for advice and guidance in order to progress her drama practice. She makes several interesting points within the next passage, which highlights the struggle of working with the specific age group (six-seven years olds), the difficulty with evaluating the work and the nature of drama.

“Sometimes some of them just get carried away...and lose total track of what they were supposed to be doing. So you have to bring them back you know. I think the challenges are that some of them do get a bit silly, and then you’ve to make them all come and join the circle again...which isn’t what you want to do. Sometimes it does get a little bit repetitive for some of the children who’ve
really got it, and are just off really doing well, and sometimes some of them mightn’t ever get what they’re actually doing. But, that’s ok too, as long as it’s not you know, impinging on the others. I think that’s one of the things that I find difficult, to let go of all these groups working on something, and feel that they’re all you know ‘working’ and doing what they’re supposed to be...that they’re getting something from it. I think that’s a fault in me, because you know as a teacher in the class you know they produce a certain amount of written work like maths and that, whereas it’s more difficult to gauge it in a drama class, you know…it’s really hard to quantify that in drama.” (Barbara-I1)

Barbara’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“Well I think it certainly doesn’t mean a script or me with absolute set ideas about what I’m going to do, and where it’s going to lead. But at the same time, I feel I have to be able to steer whatever we’re doing in some direction, especially with the younger children. So, I think it’s the children coming up with ideas, and maybe me setting boundaries for those ideas…and them working something out. I mean some of them can be really…really imaginative and creative.” (Barbara-I1)

The age group is a factor for Barbara as she feels they are too young to be left to complete the work on their own. O’Toole (1992) highlights this too, he explains that often young children “seek swift resolution to a state of order or problems are solved quickly, by magic if necessary”, therefore the “function of the playwright, the adult or the teacher is usually to provide as much as a stay or retardation of this urge towards swift gratification” (ibid 1992, p134). Barbara also indicates how allowing students freedom means building a framework for this to happen, which is discussed further in the next section. As is resonant in Anne’s narrative, her comment about steering the work indicates her need to regulate the work, in this case, because of the age group she is working with.

Cathy
Cathy teaches in a fifteen teacher urban school in the west of Ireland. She has been teaching for seven years and has first class\(^5\); twenty-seven students in total with one special needs student. Cathy completed an Early Years course in London, and

\(^{5}\)First Class (age 6-8)
describes herself as a highly organised individual who likes “order and direction” (Cathy-I1). Her personality somewhat contradicts her description, as she comes across as fun-loving, and enjoys engaging in play with her class enormously. She is new to using drama education as part of her teaching practice. She had the least drama experience of all the participants, and in our first interview confessed to not knowing “what drama really was” until her participation on the CPD course. She begins with her first encounter with drama:

“It was on my Early Years course, we only got half a day in drama…it was performance and evaluating.” (Cathy-I1)

This notion of performance and evaluating as a drama practice can been seen in her typical drama class work:

“Normally, I’d be like saying right, we’ll play these games, and then I’ll give ye scenarios and ye act it out…and that’s it. I think that’s all I thought it was in my head really. And I’d get stuff…just Googling you know on the internet and stuff…I actually looked at my folder yesterday, and everything I had taken down was from all different websites…they were all games.” (Cathy-I1)

She recalls her hesitancy at the beginning of the CPD course:

“At the start of the course I definitely felt I was like God now these guys…they’re probably all brilliant at drama, and I don’t even get it! So I just kind of stayed quiet, then we did a bit and I realised…I can do this!” (Cathy-I1)

This change of heart became very significant. I observed her becoming more engaged each day during the course, and noted she made considerable contributions to the drama work. She was also the first to enlist to the study after the third day of the course, saying “I’m in! I’m loving it! Sign me up!” (Cathy-research log). She goes on to explain her lack of confidence, and describes her drama practice after the CPD course:

“I always felt that I wasn’t teaching it [drama] right, either the noise gets too much and I can’t handle it…or it’s just I was constantly doing games or scenarios and that’s it. I didn’t really know what drama was…or how I should be teaching it until I did the course this year with you…and immediately this September, (she whispers- ‘I’ve a great class this year’), so I pushed back table and chairs and started. And we’d cry laughing so much, it was like this is great, and the kids all enjoyed it and straight away that’s something to work with. It’s
not just that class either, this way of working carries on d’you know like into other subjects.” (Cathy-I1)

The next piece of dialogue clarifies Cathy’s feeling about her imaginative capabilities, which could possibly explain her initial reluctance on the CPD course.

**Fiona:** “Everybody has an imagination don’t you think?”

**Cathy:** “I know, but sometimes you don’t think you have.”

**Fiona:** “You don’t think you have?”

**Cathy:** “Ya, cause even I remember writing essays and stuff in school, and I would have to base them on something I’d already read…or something that had happened to me. I wasn’t able to go into the imaginary world as such. So I have to break that out in myself…if I’m to get it going in the kids. And I know it is killing them…the kids…for my lack of imagination d’you know.”

**Fiona:** “I think as you get older it’s harder, you know. I’m in a job where… I suppose that’s my job…to use my imagination.”

**Cathy:** “But so is my job really…it should be.” (Cathy-I1)

What is particularly important about Cathy’s narrative is that she describes herself as having a lack of imagination, as well as indicating how she believes imagination is important in relation to her position as a teacher. Greene (1995a) draws attention to the importance of teacher’s imagination:

“[i]magination is as important in the lives of teachers as it is in the lives of their students, in part because teachers incapable of thinking imaginatively or of releasing students to encounter works of literature and other forms of art, are probably also unable to communicate to the young what use of imagination signifies. If it is the case that imagination feeds one’s capacity to feel one’s way into another’s vantage point, these teachers may also be lacking in empathy.”

(Greene 1995a, p36)

As Greene suggests, imagination in a teacher’s practice can encourage empathy, and allow him/her to identify with the students. It enables the teachers to see, hear, and feel beyond the visible world. It is not just in terms of the pedagogical implications that imagination is important, it is also in its purpose in relation to creativity. Egan (2005) defines imagination as “the ability to think of things as possible, the source of flexibility and originality in human thinking” (p220). If imagination is the generation of ideas, and the thinking or visualising of something, then creativity is then ‘doing’ something meaningful with your imagination. Consequently, it follows that there is a
need to be imaginative, in order to be creative. This is significant for teachers in two ways. Firstly, in a professional sense, as Halliwell (1993) states, because of the variety of students a teacher may work with and the variety of work they may have to undertake, there is a need for teachers to be creative in teaching and have “inventive flexibility” (p69). Duffy (2006) defines creativity as the ability to see things in fresh ways, learning from past experiences, and relating this learning to new situations. He also explains that creativity is thinking along unorthodox lines and breaking barriers, using non-traditional approaches to solving problems, going further than information given, and creating something unique. If we consider these factors in a pedagogical sense, we can see their bearing on the flexibility that Halliwell talks about. Secondly, if imagination is intrinsic to the creative process, then it is a necessary attribute to have in terms of creating or co-creating dramatic work. Craft (2000) states that a significant theme within her research is the belief that as educators, our self-esteem and self-confidence needs to be nourished if we are to be creative. Furthermore, Robinson (1999) believes that among the misconceptions about creativity, is the belief that it is restricted to the ‘arty’ or ‘gifted’ individual. He disagrees with this, and suggests creativity is a “function of intelligence, it takes many forms, it draws from many different capacitates, and we all have different creative capacities” (ibid p111). Sahlberg (2009) too believes “everyone has creative abilities and talent of some kind. The challenge is that we are not always aware what our creative capacities are, or how to use them in situations that are not directly related to particular creative processes” (p55). Therefore, it could be argued we all have the capacity to be creative, and that Cathy’s comment “sometimes you don’t think you have [imagination]” is related to self-confidence in her creative abilities, rather than a lack of imagination. This leads us to the next part of Cathy’s narrative, where her lack of confidence is indicated further. She also highlights her interest in creating an atmosphere which will benefit her students’ confidence.

**Fiona:** “Did anything surprise you about the course? Or about yourself?”

**Cathy:** “That I enjoyed it!”

**Fiona:** “Ya?”

**Cathy:** “Ya!” [laughter]…Sorry! But ya!…completely, cause first of all…I was like ‘oh God!’ d’you know? But it was good craic and…I came out of myself I suppose. They think in school that I’m confident…but no…I act…it’s a bravado like, I get embarrassed and I wouldn’t be able to do things…on the
inside I am red as a berry and shaking. So for children that feel like that as well, I’d love to create the atmosphere that we had on the course… in the classroom as well…cause…I have a few shy children…and it’s freeing.” (Cathy-I1)

Cathy’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“I suppose it’s me being more a part of it. You know the teacher doesn’t just sit back, and let them off or whatever. I used to do that I have to say. I was always thinking I could go correcting now while you guys are doing that. I’d shout ‘you’ve ten minutes and I’ll come back to ye then’…whereas now I’ll be going around being part of it…and…also not having it so structured. Say if they pick up on something…we can go wherever they take it…rather than me telling them exactly where to go. I’ll be more into it too. I want to be a part of the drama now, whereas before it was like drama…nightmare!

Fiona: “Why do you want to be part of it now?”

Cathy: “I enjoyed your course so much, I enjoyed drama! I actually want to enjoy this with them [students]. Just… I mean they’re getting to move, they’re getting to make noise, they’re working in groups, and they’re not in their seats. It’s all different d’you know, even PE is more structured than drama in the sense of they have to be in a particular place on the team or the place on the pitch or whatever. Whereas here it’s a lot more free. I know…I’m using free a lot!! But it’s about being free!” (Cathy-I1)

Dawn

Dawn teaches in a twenty-four teacher urban school in the west of Ireland. She has been teaching for five years and has a junior infant class6; twenty-one students in total with two special needs students. She is part of the four teacher group from one school who enlisted in the study. She struck me as a thoughtful individual, and seems to enjoy working with her infant students. Throughout, the study she enthusiastically talked about her students, and the joy that she experiences in teaching them. The following is an example of this from the opening of the initial interview:

“They are a lovely little bunch…I mean they’ll be good. I’m sure they’re going to love it, cause it was only today that they found the dress up box in the corner, and they were like ‘my goodness’ and they found masks and that sort of thing in there, and they were delighted with themselves.” (Dawn-I1)

6Junior Infants (age 4-6)
Early on in the interview, Dawn admits her negative view of drama:

“I kind of always see drama as an add-on to other subjects, as opposed to doing drama on its own.” (Dawn-I1)

In describing her experience of drama, Dawn explains she specialised in Early Years teaching in England:

“A lot of it was learning to play, and they’re [the college] very into their acting. They’re also like kind of ‘think outside of the box’ as opposed to the writing and reading and that sort of thing. So…very much the ‘carpet time’ kind of thing and that then circulated around drama. So I suppose I did a lot of that, and then I did a fantastic drama course this summer!” [laughter] (Dawn-I1)

Similar to Anne and Barbara, she discusses the influence other drama teachers have had on her first experience of drama:

“I suppose with the Early Years course, because it’s nursery, which is like the children are three and four, we would have done an awful lot of drama. So I suppose, the teachers I observed were kind of eccentric and dramatic, you know, into it. I loved it, because like I think it brought it out of me as well. I saw how it can work, and how the children enjoy it so much…and they don’t realise that they’re learning through it.” (Dawn-I1)

The use of the words ‘eccentric’ and ‘dramatic’ in relation to the drama teaching at her teacher education institute, is worthy of noting. This reveals that she may believe that a certain personality type is needed to teach drama effectively. Contrastingly, Woolland (2010) argues that many of the best drama teachers “are quietly spoken and would never want to take an acting role in a theatre production” (p6). Dawn also has strong feelings about drama, and how it can help transfer the children’s thoughts into language:

“It’s so important, you see so many children actually find it so difficult to just be able to explain what’s wrong with them. There are so many children that would have troubles at home, or troubles even in school, and you know they find it very difficult to put into words how they’re feeling. I think definitely drama can bring that out of them and…it’s fun for them as well. They are so small, they need to be enjoying school.” (Dawn-I1)

She explains that as an infant teacher she would use drama a lot within her practice, but mostly through other subjects:
“I feel that I use it more so through other subjects…like a lot of the time through music and that sort of thing. I kind of integrate it and with story time and that…I’d usually do it as kind of an adaption of story time, or an adaption of music, or that sort of thing.” (Dawn-I1)

Dawn describes her typical drama practice as having to be “quite structured” (Dawn-I1) because of the age group. She often begins by splitting the class into groups putting them in corners of the room and then:

“I’ll narrate the story and we’ll all act it out...so you know they’d just be saying one or two lines like ‘who’s been sitting in my chair’...that sort of idea. They’re not really doing little plays with themselves, but they’re doing it in a big group. I would always feel that I need to give them the information...like...we are now going to do the three little bears or whatever it may be. I suppose I’m telling the story, so I’m in control of it. I’m kind of reading the story so I’m telling them when they can say their lines or whatever, or do their actions or whatever it may be. The idea of control is a big thing with this age group.” (Dawn-I1)

Dawn discussed her apprehensions of co-creating with this age group. She explains that her experience of children of this age was that they had difficulty:

“...thinking outside the box d’you know that sort of way...they think of the story and that’s it, whereas at the end of the year they might be able to use their imaginations a little bit more I suppose.” (Dawn-I1)

Other concerns which she feels are particular to the age group, are turn-taking and arguing:

“I’d just feel with the infants, they can get a little bit upset when they don’t all get a turn...and it’s just easier kind of to have them all involved. You know, there’s so many of them that they can start arguing and that sort of thing.” (Dawn-I1)

Dawn’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“I suppose it would be us all coming up with the story together, as opposed to me telling them what to do. I suppose them coming up with the ideas too... and us just all discussing it together. I suppose I talk to them more about the actions and talk to them more about what do they think, as opposed to me telling them...they kind of come up with things themselves.” (Dawn-I1)
Ellen

Ellen teaches in a twenty-four teacher urban school in the west of Ireland. She has been teaching for nine years, two unqualified (substitute teacher) and seven qualified. She has an all-female fourth class\(^7\), with twenty-six students including three special needs students. This is her second year working with this class. She is also part of the four teacher group from one school who enlisted in the study. Ellen appears to be a warm and sincere young woman. Each time we talked, I could see the enormous thought she puts into her work with her students. There were also moments when I understood the weight of being a teacher that she feels:

“I know when I first started teaching, I put this tremendous pressure on myself to be…to have everything really exact and every single math done, every sum done, but I realised actually all the kids can do it, and it’s no problem, so I can push on. I suppose it’s experience really…I think when you start off, you over analyse things.” (Ellen-I1)

When conducting this first interview, I recognised Ellen’s commitment to improving her drama practice as she had already begun co-creating drama with her class “in a small way” (Ellen-I1) before the interventions began. Ellen’s first experience of drama was at college. She completed the Professional Diploma in Education at Hibernia College, which offers its programmes primarily on line. She admits drama is:

“…probably one of my weaker subjects. I was bit scared of it. I suppose because I’m not as confident in it. I was leaving it and leaving it, till I had to do it. I was doing a lot of kind of drama games, or freeze-framing and this kind of thing. But, I was like, where is it going? Where am I going with it? Where is it progressing to?” (Ellen-I1)

Ellen describes her typical drama practice before the study:

“I’d have picked a fairy-tale character out randomly, nothing to do with anything, and say ‘ok now you know do twenty questions for the fairy-tale character’. I would have groups freeze-framing, or carrying on the scene.” (Ellen-I1)

Ellen feels the biggest challenge of doing drama was:

\(^7\)Fourth Class (age 9-11)
“Discipline…ya they’re lively…anything out of the ordinary that’s when problems happen. That’s why with drama, I would find I would be wary, because that’s when the arguments start. They could surprise me and they could be fantastic, cause I have no doubt that they are fantastic at drama. It’s the group work thing, dynamics that could cause…problems.”  (Ellen-I1)

She discussed the excitement at the introduction of co-creating drama with her students:

“They were so excited…and they’re definitely not a crowd I thought would be that excited about things like that. I think the barriers were lifted really and they were allowed to use their imagination in whatever way they wanted… they didn’t have to stick to the story… the story became theirs.”  (Ellen-I1)

One of the most important issues to emerge from the initial interview with Ellen was the pressure she feels when doing drama, and the isolation she can sometimes feel:

“I liked what you said on the course, do you remember? You said, if it’s not working just stop. I think sometimes I put pressure on myself…oh I have drama down today for half an hour, and I have to get it done. Then, I could have half an hour of just pulling my hair out. Whereas, now it’s ok to just stop and leave it. I found that reassuring, cause you know, you do put this pressure on yourself when you have certain things down for certain days, and you have to have it completed on that day. They [students] react off that, they know, they can see it in you, like you’re obviously going ohh…and they react off that…then nothing is productive.”  (Ellen-I1)

She continues later in the interview, by suggesting that as a teacher:

“…you are isolated. You’re on your own…ok you see other teachers outside the classroom but you have no idea…even just to say to another teacher oh that’s a great idea, I’ll try that. Even some of the things in the course were so obvious. I thought, why didn’t I ever do that? I feel that it’s good just to touch base with somebody else…and go oh well I do that and I do that…or I could do that…or even the sharing.”

Fiona: “Ya I think sometimes with these [CPD] courses, the most interesting thing is when people share things with each other…like you said even to know oh I’m not the only person that happens to, or even when everyone talked about discipline…it’s like people were afraid to say it…and once you said it…”

Ellen: “You are afraid to say it.”

Fiona: “And it’s…but everyone is feeling the same way.”
Ellen: “I think it’s cause you feel you have to prove you’re ok…I’m a capable teacher here [laughter] and you know I’m a capable teacher in a lot of subjects. I think it’s vulnerability, you’re afraid to say well actually I’ve a problem with that, a problem with drama.” (Ellen-I1)

Ellen’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“Well, I suppose my interpretation of co-creating is where the group work together to come up with their version of whatever they’re doing, maybe with a little influence from the teacher at the start. I always say…with art especially, ‘there’s no right or wrong, these are only ideas’. I hate it in art, when they all have the same thing…I always want them…to have their interpretation of it. They kinda say it like a mantra now-‘there’s no wrong, this is only an idea’. With co-creating drama, I think there could be no wrong as such, of course there are the boundaries of discipline and that, but they are working together and as a group, it’s not just one person dictating what’s going to happen.” (Ellen-I1)

In Ellen’s interpretation of co-creating, she talks about her class mantra, ‘there’s no wrong- this is only an idea’. Within this, it can be argued that there is an implicit notion of the freedom to imagine and suppose, and to experiment with ideas. There is also an open-mindedness to other ideas and an opportunity to build upon them. Craft (2002) suggests that “being able to have a go at expressing oneself, is essential to creativity” (p32). She elaborates by explaining that the ability to take risks, in this sense to think differently to others, allows us to push boundaries and reach further just as Greene (1987) advocates, and in some way, bring about changes in ourselves. Furthermore, when Ellen says she wants them to have their own interpretation, we can understand from this, she wants them to make discoveries, and come to their own understanding of their feelings and thinking about the ideas and the work.

Faye

Faye teaches in a twenty-four teacher urban school in the west of Ireland. She is part of the four teacher cohort from the one school who enlisted in the study. She has been teaching for seven years, and has a mixed class of second (thirteen students) and third (twelve students) classes8. It is an all-female class. Faye also completed the Professional Diploma in Education at Hibernia College. While I would consider Faye

8Second Class (age 7-9) Third Class (age 8-10)
an honest and committed teacher, my impression from her participation on the CPD course led me to believe that she had little regard for drama. She frequently arrived late, and also chatted to colleagues while others were speaking during the CPD sessions. Therefore, I was surprised when she volunteered to take part in the research. At the time, I thought she was somewhat disingenuous about her interest in the study, and suspected she had enlisted because the three other teachers from her school had encouraged her to do so. The following dialogue seems to support this thinking:

**Fiona:** “How come you ended up doing the [CPD] course?”

**Faye:** “Honestly?” [laughter]

**Fiona:** “Ya.”

**Faye:** “Em...[laughter] well most importantly I wanted to do it in July cause I wanted to have it done and dusted and em...there wasn’t a huge amount of choice this year.”

**Fiona:** “ok.”

**Faye:** “But drama was something I genuinely did feel...I need to work on... like I’d done an art course before and I got great ideas out of it. I did a PE one before, I didn’t get as many great ideas out of that one...I’d like to do ones that I can use in the classroom.” (Faye-I1)

As suggested by Marsh (2004), there are two attitudes of teachers who participate in curriculum innovation and change. The first, is the ‘consonant user’ who embraces the change, displays a committed attitude, and is philosophically matched to the research work. And the second, is the ‘dissonant user’ who seems to be committed, but in reality has little involvement and may even be presenting “a façade of compliance while adopting Machiavellian tactics to resist or even undermine the new curriculum” (Marsh 2004, p93). At this stage of the study, when the CPD course was completed and I was beginning the interviews, I would have placed Faye in the ‘dissonant teacher’ category. Although she was not expressing disinterest, her actions told a different story. Because of what seemed like her lack of engagement in the CPD course, I thought it was important to be direct from the outset. Therefore, I asked her what type of experience she was expecting from participating in the study:

“I suppose really I’m hoping to learn from you, to watch how you do it, how you set it up, how you engage... I don’t know, I suppose I just want to learn and watch.”
She then admitted:

“Usually it [drama] wouldn’t be the area I’d be the most confident in…I don’t mind doing it, but as I said I just don’t have the confidence with it. And being truthful it’s usually something I’d put on the back burner. I’d have to make sure I’m, obviously, in charge of maths, the main ones: geography, history...make sure we’ve all those done first of all. Drama is one of those ones that if I’ve time I’ll do it, but I’d also try and link it with history, or link it in with English.”

Fiona: “Why is that?”

Faye: “Because I have no choice time-wise, and plus I had fifth class before, and I used it to make the topics a little bit more interesting for them. We’ll say, like when we’re doing the French revolution. They wouldn’t find it very interesting, whereas if they played the part of Marie Antoinette or...King Louis, then they find it a bit more interesting. It brings it alive a bit more for them…and they’re actually miming the ‘let them eat cake!’, whereas you know if they’re reading that in a book they would kind of gloss over it. Whereas, they love the whole saying it, and playing it out, and…it’s such a known phrase, you’d often hear them afterwards in the yard saying it...I kind of feel it sticks a little bit more.” (Faye-I1)

When Faye described her drama practice, she seemed quite proficient and capable. Also, she highlights how some of her practice is focused on performance:

“Very often if we’re doing a story in English, and if it seems to be one they are particularly enjoying, I might use an idea from that to do drama. I might use hot-seating, miming, freeze-framing, things like that. I would try every Christmas and every summer to do a big enough one in the classroom...it’s only a drama that’s in the reader [English reading book]. If there are two or three dramas in the back of the reader, I’d usually split them up into groups of four or five, and let them bring in their own costumes and their own props and things like that…but we’d only show it to the class.”

Fiona: “That’s a big job isn’t it?”

Faye: “I’d only do it for the class, not for the school now or anything. I’d usually make them do it at break or lunchtime, cause I wouldn’t really have the time to let them practice in class...like they’re allowed to have the script in front of them and that, it wouldn’t be a big production. But usually that would be the majority of what I would do.” (Faye-I1)

On ending the initial interview, I felt that Faye might not participate as fully in the study as the other participants. But, her final reflection of the pressure of ‘doing drama’, allowed me to see that my first impression of her as a reluctant participant was
somewhat misguided. We can understand from the following narrative, her priority is to provide a valuable experience for her students:

“They just love doing it [drama] so much, they don’t mind what we do…Like I pull out the maths book, they go ooohhh…but when we’re doing drama, it’s always yay! So, I think once they hear the word drama they’re usually very happy to do it…I think it’s more you put the pressure on yourself really, don’t you? You want it to be something they’ll enjoy or that they’ll get something out of it really.” (Faye-I1)

Faye’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:

“I suppose it’s kind of working with the girls…as in I’m co-creating, it’s kind of I’m giving you part of my idea, what’s your ideas? and kinda marrying them together.” (Faye-I1)

George

George teaches in a twenty-four teacher urban school in the west of Ireland, he was one of the three teachers who completed a Professional Diploma in Education at Hibernia College. He is also part of the four teacher cohort from the one school who enlisted in the study. George has been teaching for five years and has an all-female third class\(^9\); there are thirty students in total. Throughout the study, George shared rich stories about his experiences and wasn’t afraid to challenge my thinking. From my encounters with him during the interventions, I understood him to be an energetic and humorous character, who shares a very playful relationship with his class. I admired the firm but caring way he managed his students, and his obvious loyalty to them. Throughout the interviews, when we discussed experiences directly related to him, he always included his students in his personal narratives, as if his journey as a teacher could not be separated from his class and their journey.

“I’ve a very good class, and I think they’re a class that would be able to operate something like this. And myself personally, you know I like drama, and I’ve no problem having a little bit of fun or whatever, even if it’s at my own expense. So I think that…we’ll work well together and it will be something that’ll be enjoyable for the children. Cause at the end of the day, as far as I’m

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\(^9\)Third Class (age 8-10)
concerned…that’s what it’s all about for me…and if I didn’t think it was beneficial for the children I wouldn’t be inclined to agree with it.” (George-I1)

He also sees the potential of co-creating:

“Well I would like, for the children to be able to give me feedback, and to say do you know what would be fantastic teacher if we went this direction, and if we went that direction. Because, then number one, the creative sides of their brain would be working, and number two, they’d be taking some pressure off me! [laughter] The word ‘co’ you know in co-creating…I mean that’s what it’s all about…both sides working.” (George-I1)

George’s explains:

“I suppose a lot of the experiences that I would have had with drama in college would have been taking a story, opening it up, taking it in different directions and things like that.” (George-I1)

He continues by explaining his past understanding of drama:

**George:** “I would always have felt drama would have to be singing, dancing you know, whereas now [after the CPD course] I can see that drama isn’t all about the big production.”

**Fiona:** “What is it about?”

**George:** “I suppose it’s about a whole wrap-around of different things all being under the drama umbrella…not just a performance at the end. So, whether you’re integrating it to get them to do a piece of writing, or a piece of art…or maybe getting them to retell the end of the story…to retell from the point of view of a different character…to create a piece of music even if it’s a song or a dance…I suppose drama to me was always making a production, whereas I think now that was a very single-minded view of what drama is…it’s creativity…let them be creative in whatever way they are creative, that’s drama.” (George-I1)

This has interesting implications in terms of his initial teacher education, as while he was exposed to ‘opening up stories’, he still connected drama with a production. We can perhaps deduce from George’s early experience of drama where the connection originated:

“I wouldn’t have done drama per se, but I would have done a musical or two in secondary school so I’d be into drama. I love drama like, I love the whole creative side of it and so I wouldn’t be somebody who’d have to be asked to do drama. I love participating in it.” (George-I1)
George seems to be the most experienced of all the participant teachers, he acknowledges he does “a lot of character in role” and seems quite skilled in his practice:

“I would be relatively good to plan. I would know what I want to do, but the problem I find, is that I possibly don’t have enough avenues. We’ll say sometimes now if we’re doing a character in history or something like that…we might take that character and we might put him in the hot seat, or we might do conscience alley or something like that. So, I know the techniques…well I won’t say I know the techniques, but I’m aware of the techniques. I would have done them in college. It’s trying to weave all the different things in, so that you’d have an enjoyable drama lesson. What I would love to have is lots of different varieties of drama classes, rather than a lot of the same stuff that I’d be sticking to.” (George-I1)

The narrative sections below offer a good understanding of the difficulties that George faces when teaching drama, and how he has developed over his career, and as is characteristic of him, he shows his unwavering admiration of drama. Firstly he discusses control:

“The problem in the classroom environment is that being a teacher, you’re always worried about losing control…I find that when it comes to doing drama, the children see it as a release, or a method of breaking the mundane, and getting on to something different from the maths or Irish. It’s trying to keep them on task, and I suppose that’s my problem, any teacher’s problem. A lot of teachers would be in the controlling business, and sometimes you can see them [students] going off track or going out of control a little bit. It can, I won’t say knock the good out of what they’re doing, but maybe the teacher is trying to keep it leashed. But, definitely drama would be a part of my classroom…not as much as I’d like it to be.” (George-I1)

He then moves on to the implications of handing over more control to the students during the co-creating process, and he expresses concern over the consequences of the group exploring topics in an unpredictable and uncontrolled way:

“Now maybe, this is just myself as I’m getting older, maybe it wouldn’t knock anything off a younger teacher, but as I’m getting a little bit older I’m always conscious that everything I say will be brought home. The idea of giving over control to the kids in that situation…I suppose that’s the thing isn’t it you’re handing over control as such. You see when you’re a teacher you have the information, you teach the information, everything is very straight down the
line. But, when you become a teacher in a role or a facilitator, basically, what you’re doing is saying ‘ok I’m in a role, now you guys direct the conversation and I’m just part of this’. I suppose as a teacher, you’re always conscious that a parent would come to your door and say were ye discussing this in class yesterday? You see sometimes if you’re doing a sad topic or embarrassed…like one of the funniest ones that they did was where they came up with ‘situations of embarrassment’. In the drama there were four girls, one of them was working in a supermarket, two of them were teenagers and the other was a younger child who was after having an accident in the shopping centre. So the girls came over, and they were being cool or whatever, looking at this child who was after having the toilet accident and they were taking pictures on their iPhones and all this kind of thing. Now it was brilliant, you know, I thought it was a well thought out and it went well. But, just trying to be careful of what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate. Now that was fine...another one of them was about bullying and so I’m always...maybe I’m over the top I don’t know, but you’d always be worried about a parent coming in saying look it you were doing this topic in class and do you think it’s appropriate and blah blah blah. I suppose the bottom line is, what makes teachers uncomfortable is when things come up in their class that you don’t know where it’s going to go.”

**Fiona:** “And that makes you uncomfortable?”

**George:** “It would, for the simple reason, you see, the fact that I’m a male as well teaching in a girls’ school...you have to be just very careful now. As I said, if I was just out of college and I was twenty-two or twenty-three, these things would probably go over my head, but when you get a little bit older, and you’re a parent yourself, you’re always just conscious of where everything’s going.” (George-I1)

Finally, the enthusiastic manner in which George communicated his expectation of co-creating drama with his class made me eager to see him in action:

“There are definitely certain targets that we should be able to reach. I’m going to set up a certain amount of it, the children are going to take it on...with me as a kinda facilitator...it will take a certain amount of creativity on their behalf. I think there are always possibilities. Otherwise, you know, it’ll just be me coming up with ideas and them following. They do enough of the chalk and talk in maths and Irish and English. They need to be able to express themselves, and while one child can be fantastic at the languages and numbers, the other child could be fantastic at the artistic...sorry you know the more creative types of subjects, it gives them a chance as well.” (George-I1)

George’s working definition of co-creating before the intervention stage was:
“Well co-creation to me would be working together with children to see where the drama…will go…and I would be a part of the drama too…to me that’s kind of what co-creating is. A child then might decide to move the drama in another direction and I have to go with it…all of a sudden I’m following them rather than the children following me. I would do a lot of teacher in role…and to me that’s what co-creation is about too. I’m creating something for them too, but they’re also in the drama and they’re directing the drama and…I’m a facilitator for them to be involved in the drama and sometimes we’re in the drama together.” (George-I1)

**Commonalities across the initial interviews**

While all the interviews progressed differently, and took diverse directions, there were mutual understandings and shared issues that appeared in the initial interviews that are briefly discussed in this next section. As the above narratives are not the full interviews of each participant, new material will be included in this section as well as themes already touched upon.

**Theme 1: The class community**

Grundy (1998) argues that the individuality of students and the dynamic nature of classroom interactions all add to the complexity of everyday teaching. This is particularly true of teaching drama. Its variety of creative processes and the use of a ‘dual reality’ of imagined and real contexts, make it a multi-faceted and challenging practice (Bowell and Heap 2010, Wales 2009). Nicholson (2002) describes drama as an interactive and dialogic art form, which depends on collaboration and positive group dynamics. An insight apparent in nearly all the initial interviews is that drama in the classroom is hugely influenced by the culture of the class, and their ability to interact and work as a group effectively. Although the teachers speak of their classes with great affection, they also acknowledge the unsettling effect the class can have on the drama experience. They cite things such as the “children’s energy, either too much or too little” (George-I1), “kids throwing tantrums” affecting the group (Cathy-I1), or how “one child can negatively impact on the rest of the group” (George-I1). This highlights one of the main struggles of drama practice in the classroom (Neelands 1984, Woolland 2010). As Davis (1983) suggests, drama is essentially a ‘social event’, therefore “the dynamics of the group are of great importance” (p104). It is dependent on the group negotiating the content, on their interaction, and the direction they take.
the work. Therefore, the students and the dynamics of their relationships can affect the class greatly. We can see this in George’s narrative:

“See the problem is...the class will vary from year to year. There will be classes where you can write the topics on the board, then you could go off for a walk for an hour and they’ll just be fantastic. Then there will be other classes...and maybe two out of the five won’t want to participate, the other two will be challenging each other for the main role, and the third person doesn’t want to be in school that day…and that’s when it gets very hard. There will be days that as the drama is coming to an end, you’re happy that it’s coming to an end, and that’s maybe not...you know that’s not the fairest way to do things, but that’s life.” (George-I1)

Toivanena and Pyykköb (2011) believe creating a ‘positive emotional working climate’ in drama is dependent on the teacher’s skills, the students’ engagement, and the level of trust in the group (p164). Their research on classroom drama teaching practice, undertaken at Helsinki University, identifies two main factors that affect the functioning of interaction in drama lessons. These are “the teacher’s actions plus teaching arrangements and group structural factors” (Toivanena and Pyykköb 2011, p152). They identify the most influential factors within a group structure as being norms, roles, statuses and communication. It can be argued that each of the structural factors they describe is affected during the drama process. Firstly, students participating in drama move from the ‘norm’ of a traditional ‘chalk and talk’ setting, to a more social and interactive drama setting. Therefore, there is a shift in the conventions of behaviour towards each other (Davis 1983, p99). Consequently, the student’s typical ‘role’ in their classroom community is changed. They occupy a new role which displays new aspects of their personalities, and alters the working expectations of the whole group. This new working position, not only involves them in differing working environments whereby they are using multi-dimensional group roles, but they also take on various fictional roles, which is a central part of classroom drama. There is also a change in their ‘status’, as their position as learner is elevated, they gain power, and have the capacity to influence the direction of the drama work. Furthermore, sometimes they may be unwilling to commit, or have different levels of commitment, resulting in a need to renegotiate the terms of the work (O’Toole 1992). Finally, their ‘communication’ role is significantly increased in the drama experience. They are invited to share ideas, negotiate, and voice opinions, rather than answer set questions with right or wrong answers. All of the factors mentioned, suggest that
drama pedagogy requires knowledge and skills in both drama and group dynamics. In this way, the teacher has to balance the interaction of the group, and their roles and expectations, all within the playfulness of the drama work. O’Toole (1992) highlights the ‘luggage’ that teachers should be aware of in the drama context. He describes this as the group’s education needs and social needs, and the limitations of both the group and the individuals in the group. Heathcote (1984) also states that the ‘social health’ of the class should be considered before beginning drama. This, she believes involves observing mannerisms, physical levels of energy and spatial behaviour. Dawn suggests that it is also important to recognise the student’s temperament, and goes on to also highlight the teacher in this way:

“I mean if kids aren’t getting on, then it’s not going to work. You have to make sure that you’re in the right place as well, and you’re in the right mood…’d’you know, cause I mean sometimes you might not be feeling that dramatic!” [laughter] (Dawn-I1)

Most of the teachers feel that the group dynamic is driven by the particular culture of the class and also, that group members can be affected by the actions of other group members. Cathy reflects on how the dynamic of the class has stopped her doing drama in the past:

“I’d say nearly everything we did on the course…I was thinking at the time, oh, not a chance! Because, I’d remember what my previous class was like. But, now that I have this crew, I’m like everything is possible, d’you know.”

Fiona: “So it comes back to the group sometimes?”

Cathy: “Ya, I mean seriously, the dynamic in the group last year was unreal. I tried drama maybe once or twice, but I had to just put an end to it…there was no way, it could have caused physical harm…you know and even the noise, the bother of it and ya it ended up in tears more than anything else.” (Cathy-I1)

**Theme 2: Place of drama in the curriculum**

One of the underpinning principles of the Irish Primary School Curriculum is that ‘learning is most effective when it is integrated’. The curriculum promotes this principle by saying that:

“[f]or the child, the distinctions between subjects are not relevant: what is important is that he or she experiences a coherent learning process that accommodates a variety of elements. It is important, therefore, to make connections between learning in different subjects. As they mature, integration gives children’s learning a broader and richer
perspective, emphasises the interconnectedness of knowledge and ideas and reinforces the learning process.”

(Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, 1999, p16)

Therefore, when the topic of the teacher’s typical drama practice was discussed, it was not unexpected that integrating drama with other subjects was a recurring theme. Only two of the seven participating teachers teach drama as an independent subject, and this is not on a regular basis as they would also “integrate if there’s not enough time” (Barbara-I1). The teachers talked about using drama “to bring subjects alive” (Faye-I1), “put things into action” (George-I1) and how they “build it in” (Anne-I1) and “work it into another subject” (Ellen-I1). The teachers’ narratives suggest that it is more often the case that they integrate drama with other subjects. Drama is seen by many as valuable, both in terms of its cross-curricular application, and its capacity as an effective teaching tool. But, as Fleming et al. (2004) argue “the more drama is recognised as a teaching method the less claim it has to separate subject status” (p29). Robinson (1983) proposes the status of a subject in the curriculum is indicated by (a) the amount of time allocated to it, and (b) if it’s compulsory or optional. It is apparent from the initial interviews that although drama is a required subject, it is often not given its recommended amount of time (one hour), which indicates its low status amongst this cohort. Although in conversation they were all positively predisposed to drama, it was clear from some of the teachers’ narratives, they were not seeing drama as an essential subject to teach their students. The following teachers’ narratives suggest that it continues to be seen as a peripheral subject and as a teaching tool. But, it is unclear whether this is as a result of the integrated curriculum or the teacher pedagogical preference. Dawn vocalised a view common to many of the teachers:

“I kind of always see drama as an add-on to other subjects as opposed to doing drama on its own.” (Dawn-I1)

And Faye too explains:

“It would be rare enough I would do stand-alone drama. I’d usually get the idea from…a history topic or an English story. I’d usually link it.” (Faye-I1)

Ellen states:

“Definitely I just build it into the lessons rather than giving it an individual lesson, because that’s not practical I don’t think.” (Ellen-I1)
Nearly all of the participating teachers offered similar reflections concerning integrating drama with another subject, rather than conducting an independent drama lesson. Woolland (2010) states that drama is cross-curricular in nature. He believes that the argument that the power of drama is diminished when it is used as a learning medium is “flawed and misguided and indicates a failure to understand the nature of drama” (p109). However, Shaw, who is congruent with my own thinking in this regard, maintains that “drama may well be an effective teaching methodology, but to relegate it to the role of hired hand is an appalling waste” (Shaw cited in O’Neill 1983, p31). O’Toole explains that drama can sometimes be used simply as functional role-play rather than as an artistic form, and the issue lies in if “the functional role-play goes no further than simple interactions for short-term pedagogical ends” (p56). Although he goes on to say, that this is not true of all functional drama as some are “elegant and artistic structures” (p56). If we recognise that many of the teachers of this study are adopting a cross-curricular approach to drama rather than practising it as an art form, it is important to consider what is lost from the experience when drama is treated simply as a ‘service’ (O’Toole 1992). I would argue the language of the art form is lost, the dramatic processes and performance, the “technical skills of presentation and characterisation” (O’Neill and Lambert 2006, p52), the fictional play of drama and the act of creating are all lost. They may also limit imagination and creative opportunities, by simply using it only as a pedagogical tool. Furthermore, they may also be lessening the social and personal impact, because as studies have indicated, drama operates most effectively when a balance is achieved between the art form and the pedagogy (O’Sullivan 2011). Fundamentally, they are not utilising the full potential of the spectrum of drama that I described earlier in this thesis.

It can also be argued, that the practice of using drama as a tool for learning in a singular way, does not honour the social constructivist or aesthetic interests of drama. Furthermore, Taylor (1998b) makes an important point when he suggests that systems in education are often founded on preparation and control; therefore, there is already little space for “the unpredictability, the spontaneity, and the improvisational” that is so vital to working through artistic forms (Taylor 1998, p83). Fundamentally, what we can understand from this theme is that the promotion of an integrated curriculum in an Irish context may have implications for the teachers’ drama practice. Because, when teachers use an integrated approach, it could be argued that their attention is not on the art form, which leaves the creative and aesthetic elements of drama ignored.
Theme 3: Co-creating elsewhere?

During the initial interview stage, I enquired if the teachers thought they co-create in other areas of the curriculum. The teachers’ responses suggest that they do draw on co-creating principles in other subjects. Cathy describes an attitude of co-creating she considers evident in other subjects, as an ‘openness’ on the teacher’s part to ‘go with’ the students’ ideas and to take unplanned courses. She believes this can begin simply by:

“Just talking about something with the children, and they ask a question and suddenly you’re in another discussion so you know it’s been led in a different way...so you go with that and see where they take you.” (Cathy-I1)

What Cathy discusses above can be considered a type of risk-taking. Perhaps why Cathy is drawn to this risk is because of the interesting discoveries the students might make. Eisner (1985) proposes teacher artistry can be seen when the teacher’s activity is not dominated by preparations or routine, but is influenced by “qualities and contingencies that are unpredicted” (p177). I argue that this is Cathy’s point, that within other subjects she already possesses an ‘openness’ to the unpredictable, a type of teacher artistry as Eisner describes, that allows her to respond skilfully to improvisational contexts. Next Faye explains:

“In English, if we’re starting a new story, and we’re talking about what’s going to happen and what’s it going to be about, I’m getting all their ideas...or if they’re doing creative writing and they’re brain-storming...they’d be used to that. They’d be used to offering new ideas...and kind of talking and...listening to each other’s ideas, and listening to what one person thinks is going to happen next.” (Faye-I1)

Here, Faye illustrates a co-creating attitude in English. She describes the encouraging of students’ new ideas, therefore, the encouraging of ‘innovative contributions’. Craft (2005) believes ‘innovative contributions’ are a vital part of creativity in classrooms. Faye goes on to mention how they share their thoughts and understandings through brainstorming, which suggests a dialogic interaction. According to Mercer and Littleton (2007), where students’ interactions and discourses include brain-storming and inter-subjectivity, this is seen as processes of collaborative creativity. The notion of thinking ‘what is going to happen next’ which Faye mentions, also involves the ‘act of imagining’ which is a necessary element of creating. Finally, the students treating each other respectfully by listening to each other could be interpreted as a democratic
act. All of these aspects can be considered working practices within co-creating drama. Anne describes a more involved co-creating process, whereby the teacher learns from the students, and follows their direction. Of particular interest is the creating aspect she highlights:

“...We do it in music and art I think...I’m doing line at the moment in art, you know curved lines and straight lines. We come up with things together, cause sometimes I can learn from them. In music we work together on patterns and rhythm and we are almost like creating a piece of music. I think because, let’s say in music, we’ll be doing clapping on the legs and the knees...they might say ‘maybe if we put this in and what other body sound will we add?’ And then suddenly they’re producing something together...it’s something we...can all do...make...together.” (Anne-I1)

In all of the situations where the teachers discuss instances of co-creating in other subjects, they use words such as making, producing, creating, sharing, discussing, openness and changing direction. Not one of the teachers feel this kind of interaction is unusual within their general pedagogical practice. Although it can be argued that the features the teachers discuss are simply examples of good teaching, what is significant about this insight, is at the heart of the teachers’ descriptions is the artistic act of creating something new, which is a fundamental feature in co-creating drama. We see this in Faye’s creative writing story, and Anne’s music composition story, both experiences which see the teacher and students involved in a collective creative endeavour. This notion of the group bringing something new into existence and the co-creating attitude in other subjects, may well be an area to investigate further, and an opportunity to exploit, in order to support teachers teaching drama. Ultimately, the teachers’ responses suggest that aspects of co-creating do occur within other subjects, therefore, perhaps Winston’s suggestion that teacher’s “pedagogy may be closer to drama” than they realise, is something to seriously consider (Winston 2004, p30).

Theme 4: The teacher and their ‘craft’

During a group discussion on the CPD course, Anne stated that in the co-creating approach “we could use some of the skills we are using anyway as teachers.” She went on to say that this includes a type of a “teacher instinct”, as she described it. This pedagogical ‘instinct’ could be interpreted as Teacher Professional Craft Knowledge (Desforges and McNamara 1979, Brown and McIntyre 1993), which is a theory particular to teaching. Professional Craft Knowledge is a form of personal practical knowledge, developed by teachers through practical experience rather than formal
training. However, Hielbart et al. (2002) express concern over the term ‘craft’, which they feel might be interpreted as diminishing the status of teachers’ professionalism, and warn that this knowledge should be scrutinised further if it is to be worthwhile within research. This concept of Professional Craft Knowledge, or “teacher expertise” as Barbara called it, was further discussed on the CPD course, and consequently it emerged as an important tool that teachers may rely on in terms of their pedagogy. This led me to ask the teachers during the initial interview, to expand on it in terms of co-creating drama. They describe it as recognising “the body language...just even the buzz in the room” (Cathy-I1), “reading their expressions” (Anne-I1) or a “gut feeling about how something is going...or how a child is managing something” (George-I1).

Brown and McIntyre (1993) define Craft Knowledge as “part of their [the teachers] professional knowledge which guides their day-to-day action in classrooms, which for the most part is not articulated in words, and which is brought to bear spontaneously, routinely and sometimes unconsciously in their teaching” (Brown and McIntyre 1993, p7). Shulman (1987) interprets it as the ‘wisdom of practice’, saying “craft knowledge is essentially the accumulated wisdom, derived from teachers’ and practice-oriented researchers’ understandings of the meanings ascribed to the many dilemmas inherent in teaching” (p428). Black-Hawkins and Florian (2012) define the blend of experience and understanding of students’ needs as becoming a “crafty teacher-not in a derogatory way, but in the dextrous, ingenious sense” (p567). Schon (1983) is closest to what I believe the teachers are talking about. He notes that teachers’ learning comes through continuous action and reflection on everyday problems. He believes through this, teachers cultivate a range of theories, practices, knowledge and values which influence how situations are defined, what is noticed, and the kinds of questions and decisions that they will form about particular actions and situations. When Vernon (1983) interviewed teachers during his study on how drama teachers evaluate themselves, the teachers talked of a similar notion. Vernon (1983) defined it as a type of teacher intuition, where a “sensitivity and feelings in the bones” happens (p140). He too believes it is the product of the teachers’ experience. We see this in George’s explanation:

“If you think things are going wrong in a class, your instinct would tell you hold on, I need to pull this up now for a second...or maybe your instinct might tell you that the group are doing fantastic, so I’ll let them go that extra
bit…that’s where your instincts might be. Because, what you don’t want to do is, you don’t want to stop groups that are being productive…I suppose, it’s an experience that you build up from the class…in general our instincts, we build them up because of our experiences.” (George-I1)

In Aitken et al.’s (2007) study of how pedagogy is enhanced when spaces are negotiated between teachers and children, they found particularly in the teacher in role strategy, that “the skilful management of power and role appeared to rely to a large degree on the teacher’s intuition” (p7). They go on to say that teachers often rely on this sense of intuition, more than formal planning in complex interactions in drama. Vernon (1983) says “intuition can involve creative leaps and be the source of the necessary ability to make connections and the ability to feel the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of potential courses of action” (ibid p140). This was similar to how Ellen explains it:

“It’s what you do automatically without thinking…I think it’s also experience, it’s a bit of both. I suppose you get the sense of the children. It’s probably when you get to know the children themselves, their personalities, and you know ok I can see now that they’ve had enough now, and we need to stop this because it’ll undo all the good we’ve just done.” (Ellen-I1)

The concept of teachers’ *Craft Knowledge* recognises and values the wide-ranging experiences and skills that teachers gain through their career, and also establishes an important link with their intuition in terms of response to work and students. Nearly all of the teachers agreed that their *Craft Knowledge* would be invaluable within the co-creating process.
Chapter Nine

Navigating to unknown destinations
Having introduced the teachers and established their contexts and commonalities, it is time to focus the reflective lens on the phenomena under study. In contextualising this section, it is important to remind the reader that following the initial interview, there were three further interviews focusing on the teachers’ experience of co-creating in the classroom. Thus, the material in this chapter is derived from the three interviews. Therefore, the core focus of this section and the study in general, is the teachers’ experience of their co-creating encounters. As highlighted earlier, phenomenological hermeneutics as a research method does not look for the reason or the why of an experience. It looks for the what. In this case; ‘what is the lived experience of teachers’ co-creating drama in an Irish classroom?’ As meanings of lived experiences are not usually apparent, the aim of this section is to illuminate these lived experiences. The meaning-making begins with identifying the themes of their experiences; these themes should touch “the core of the notion we are trying to understand” (van Manen 1990, p88), if they are to become the essence of the experience. The focus of this study is on the experience of the teachers, it is hoped that by using the teachers’ own words it will ground the interpretive narrative of the experience further, and reinforce confidence in the findings. The interviews were re-read a number of times, with a view to recognising which of the teachers’ self-described experiences best exemplified each of the themes. Therefore, excerpts in the form of quotations from the teachers are included to illustrate how the themes emerged. I also propose the meanings of the participants, and share the understandings gained. Furthermore, this interpretative course is grounded in my own theoretical and personal knowledge. van Manen (1990) states that a hermeneutic phenomenological study should interweave the interpretations of both the participants and the researcher to reveal layers of experience, and to identify the core essence of the lived experience. Therefore, my personal understandings are fused into the findings and are used as a lens by which I viewed the data. The meanings are formulated and organised into themes, which are clustered into comprehensive categories. The themes presented in the next three chapters represent the commonalities in the teachers’ experiences of co-creating drama, and highlight the features of the experience that were communicated with the greatest significance and frequency.
Navigational aids: Seeing, questioning and responding

If we consider the co-creating experience as one where the teacher and students are on a journey together to an unknown destination, then the navigation aids are of the upmost importance. Anne says that co-creating “is a bit of an unknown journey” (Anne-I3) and George describes it as discovering, “where can we go next? So it’s not just about performance, it’s the road to the performance as well…the journey of it” (George-I3). In this chapter, the teachers provide important perspectives on what they consider is needed to guide the co-creating experience, and also provide examples of some of the challenges they face. In other words, they describe the operational aspects of co-creating drama in the classroom. The first element they describe is the navigation of the co-creating experience. Within this, they discuss noticing and encouraging, curiosity and questioning, and the willingness to take a chance. The second element is the need for a structure in co-creating; one which is flexible enough to allow both spontaneity and support. Fundamentally, this theme illuminates how the teachers believe it is essential to be sensitive to the creative and operational dimensions of co-creating.

1) Noticing and encouraging

The participant teachers discuss how working with a co-creating attitude means them noticing more, being alert to opportunities, and being receptive and reactive to events that emerge unexpectedly. They also discuss being encouraging and responsive to the students. It can be argued that being encouraging and responsive are attributes of an ‘artist’ teacher, who as Miller et al. describe, is reflexive and responsive and who not only identifies opportunities, but is dedicated to “imagining possibilities and breathing life into the experience” (Miller et al. 2001, p103). Eisner (1985) considers ‘noticing’ in teaching terms as having sensitivity and awareness, and he believes these elements are part of the artistry of teaching (p177). To begin, participant teacher Anne highlights how attention to both the contributions of the students, and their reactions is essential in the co-creating experience. She echoes Eisner, describing how co-creating means “being in tune” with the students, having a “heightened awareness…noticing things”, and being “more observant and listening to them…how they respond” (Anne-I4). She goes on to explain:

“…maybe more now, I look for where something could go or where it could lead…or the potential of a response or situation. I’ve got better at doing that, I think as a result of this process.” (Anne-I4)
Ellen too suggests “noticing the potential of the idea” that a student offers is important. But, she also believes:

“…it’s about encouragement too. You just have to cover them, and you have to come about them in a certain way that they feel happy to offer ideas. You’re using their ideas…you know instead of feeding them ideas all the time.” (Ellen-I4)

We see in Ellen’s narrative above an important feature of co-creation emerging, whereby the teachers is using the students’ ideas, and in this way is being open and receptive to the students contributions. In Aitken et al.’s (2007) study of the negotiation of drama between teachers and children; they found that being responsive to what the children contribute “made for deep engagement by children and co-ownership of the drama” (p11). Cathy talks about recognising potential opportunities and listening with total attention:

“I mean sometimes an idea could come, and if you don’t hear it, I mean if you don’t really listen...If I hadn’t been listening properly then that magic hole wouldn’t have come up…you know all the interesting stuff, it wouldn’t have come up. So it’s much better to work from the kids, so you have to like…really listen.” (Cathy-I3)

Shultz (2003) defines listening in teaching as an active, interpersonal, and interpretive procedure that is focused on making meaning. Shultz believes listening allows the teacher to fully ‘attend’. This implies becoming deeply engaged in understanding what a person has to say through words, gesture, and action. She proposes listening is fundamentally “about being in a relationship, and through this relationship supporting change or transformation” (Shultz 2003, p89). Shultz also suggests that teachers can listen for the particularities of individual students, listen for the rhythm of the class, and listen for silence. Furthermore, she believes listening in this way can generate knowledge of the individual student, give an understanding of a student’s place within the classroom, and allow the teacher to gain a mastery of the subject matter and their pedagogy.

In the following narrative, we see the notion of ‘noticing and responding’ in George’s attempts to be attentive and to seize opportunities:

“When you’re co-creating, the more avenues that are opened up to you the better. Because, you have to remember...there’s a bunch of ideas to work with...mine and the kid’s ideas. I want to...seize all the opportunities that
come up! A lot of the time you’ll just see what’ll work, keep an eye on them, and see what they give you...and keep an eye on where it’s going.” (George-I3)

We can understand from this that George is “working in a kind of open possibility” just as O’Neill and Lambert suggest (2006, p55). In this way, he is noticing the different aspects of the process as it unfolds i.e. the students’ contributions, the process itself and the direction of the work, while remaining open to new possibilities.

Some of the teachers highlight matching the appropriate conventions and strategies to the process as a key challenge. Faye:

“...once you have recognised an opportunity, how do you bring the ‘doing’ into it? Like in a drama way…that’s hard.” (Faye-I3)

As Barbara acknowledges below, confidence can be an issue:

“I did become unstuck a few times. Not knowing quite sure where to go with it or what to use drama wise. But I think it’s just a kind of lack of confidence.” (Barbara-I3)

Dawn admits:

“Ok I was getting ideas, but I was like how am I going to…move on? But, then they came up with the inside the belly...so I said then tell me what’s inside the belly. It’s hard isn’t it...to make it come alive? Do you know that sort of way?...it’s that jump from getting the idea and saying ok yes that’s great, we’ll go with this. But, what are we going to do with this now...do you know what I mean? And I was like ok, let’s take your idea...we’re going to go to the giant shop but what are we going to do there? How do we actually bring the drama out...it’s the difference between talking about it and doing it.” (Dawn-I4)

Perhaps, for Dawn and Barbara, this may be because of a lack of experience or mastery of techniques, but it is a valid concern. This also corresponds with Aitken et al.’s study. They found that in order to affect a sharing of power in creating drama, the teacher needs a “degree of skill and ease with the conventions and strategies of drama” (2007, p11). O’Neill and Lambert (2006) also highlight the notion of purposefully connecting opportunities in drama to an appropriate strategy, by saying teachers should be ready to “think on their feet” and hold a number of “possible choices for action before the inner eye” (p55). Baldwin (2008) suggests that with experience, the teacher can become “increasingly skilled at selecting and adapting the most effective and engaging strategies” in drama (p104). O’Neill explains the complexity of working this way, and how the noticing and developing that the teachers allude to involves “a subtle
attention to detail, nuance and implication; the ability to exploit the unpredictable in the course of the work; the confidence to shift both educational and artistic goals where appropriate; and the security to deal with disappointment and possible failure” (O’Neill 2006, p121). This highlights the responsibility of the teacher, who as Anne suggests, needs to have a “heightened awareness…of noticing things” (Anne-I4) and in this way is open to possibilities, and therefore amenable to change. It also highlights the need for the teacher to acquire the requisite skills for thinking creatively and for building on opportunities to ‘exploit the unpredictable’ as O’Neill suggests.

2) Questions, curiosity, and arrows
O’Conner believes that the “single most important thing we can do as teachers is to ask questions…build on the answers given and…play with the power of the genuine question well asked” (O’Connor 2009, p13). When discussing how they progress the work, some of the teachers highlight the significance of using questions effectively. Anne observes that there is a “natural bond between teachers and questions”. She describes it as “quizzing” the work and believes questioning is “something we do every day” (Anne-I3). Bolton (1992) agrees, stating that asking questions that engage students in their own learning is part of the teacher’s everyday activity. Gallagher (2000) describes how the teacher’s role is to create “spaces of possibility”, whereby they nurture questions and ask the learners to bring their own knowledge and thinking into their learning (p114). Woolland (2010), Booth (2005), Taylor (1995) and Neelands (1984) all discuss the importance of skilful questioning within drama. Booth says:

“I want to be a teacher in drama who encourages and promotes the student’s ideas, who acts as a catalyst in order to stimulate their minds or challenge their joking responses. I want to use my questions to help them think of new ways of entering areas of drama. I want the questions to be real, to be authentic.”

(Booth 2005, p73)

As Anne describes, questions can provide both direction and inspiration:

“I love questions…teachers have a way of questioning. The fact that I said today [in the drama class]…look I’m not very strong does that matter? I was coming back to all those elements of the book, how he [the character] wasn’t strong or a scholar, or had a golden tongue. And I thought of the questions that he would naturally ask himself. And they got it, they told me what I did have…what this guy did have, and what he could do about the situation…so that led us to the next step.” (Anne-I4)
However, Cathy explains that knowing what to ask can be challenging. This also highlights the importance of the type of questions used. She explains:

“The questioning is so important. It’s hard though, because when I was going around to the groups…some of mine were kind of closed questions. I basically told them what I wanted them to say by the way I asked the question. It has to be you know, open-ended questions…You also have to try and take a step back from it like, and decide what question will move things along.” (Cathy-I3)

As Cathy highlights, the teacher needs to be conscious of “the range and purposes of questions, and then to be attentive to the pupils’ response in order to shape the next question in a way likely to promote deeper or wider thought” (Baldwin 2008, p92). In this way, the teachers’ intentions need to be clear when questioning. Furthermore, their role within (in a fictional sense) or outside of the drama (in a pedagogical sense) needs to be considered, because this will also impact the type of question asked. George described questions as ‘arrows’ that appear in the drama work:

“Arrows appear…in what I see…but they also become arrows for the children. Sometimes I ask ‘what would ye like to do?’ and see how it works. And the children then, like we’re really co-creating in your classroom then…ok I would have brought the topic, but the children decide what we do, and the questions move it along. I suppose the challenge is that you’re able to cope with whatever way, whatever direction it goes…a child might come up with an idea and you need to think on your feet…and I suppose questions are a great way to do that too.” (George-I4)

George also notes that it is essential sometimes to challenge the students on their responses, by following up with more questions. Bowell and Heap (2001) validate George’s point, by proposing that children sometimes give answers that they think we want to hear, because they want to please us or they haven’t thought the question through. This indicates the need to challenge the students, to develop layers of meaning, rather than taking superficial answers. In this sense, the teachers are encouraging debate and interrogation of ideas, but as Booth (1994) states they also have to be sensitive to the student, and should do this without rejecting them. George explains:

“It’s good to challenge them. I kept saying why would I keep him at the circus? He’s running customers out of the place because he’s so unfunny and I’m losing money? Why should I keep him? A simple but important question. The problem for the girls is that they all went for emotion…‘please keep him’, whereas they missed the point that the ringmaster…me…I had no emotional
ties whatsoever and didn’t particularly care. This guy wasn’t turning over the
money, so he was out! But once I challenged them….they came back with real
ideas to keep him. So it’s not just questions, it’s to then question their
responses too I think.” (George-I4)

By challenging the students, it can be argued that George is looking for depth and is
asking the students to work for their knowledge. This notion is comparable to that of
the Meddler-in-the-Middle figure (McWilliam 2009). The meddler is a re-positioning
of “teacher and student as co-directors and co-editors of their social world” (p288).
McWilliam describes it as a learning partnership which puts everybody in the thick of
the action and where more time is spent on experimentation, risk taking and co-
active and engaged; they don’t “take over the work of thinking and doing”, or “dumb
the curriculum down”, they create opportunities for sophisticated and complex
collaboration (p290). The Meddler-in-the-Middle is a good example of the stance a
teacher can take in the co-creating experience. George goes on to say that the
challenging is also reflected in the portraying of the character in an honest way:

“And even, like if you are going to be in character you have to try be the
character, because they don’t see it then unless you are being true to it. If
you’re just saying oh yeah you are right to everything, well then they don’t see
you as being the character…so it’s just good to challenge them as the character
would. ” (George-I4)

Some teachers spoke about the power of sparking the students’ curiosity through
questioning. Dawn explains:

“A good knowledge of what way to ask something is important in this…what
kind of questions to ask. If they are open, it will be able to take us in different
directions…that’s what I found. It can spark their curiosity too…like with little
hints of what could happen. At this age curiosity drives everything.” (Dawn-I4)

Dewey (1938) suggests children’s instinctive curiosity is the basis of their learning. He
believes the teacher’s task is “to keep alive the sacred spark of wonder and to fan the
flame that already glows” (Dewey 1938, p34). It can be argued that with curiosity
comes an inquisitive drive. This may mean the students become nosy about a situation,
or are lured by something. Essentially, they are drawn to investigate more.
Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the first step towards creativity is the
“cultivation of curiosity and interest”. He says that a child’s “curiosity is like a beam
that highlights and invests with interest anything in range. The object need not be
useful, attractive or precious; as long as it is mysterious it is worthy of attention” (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, p346). In saying this, he touches on Egan’s notion of mystery as enticing the students’ interest, and Booth’s notion of the fascination of ‘puzzlement’ in drama. Fundamentally, curiosity fosters the impulse to investigative and question, and to pursue answers. It drives action, it asks the students to discover things that may be ambiguous or unfamiliar to them. Additionally, it can be argued that curiosity is a necessary ingredient of fiction. Because, if we are not curious about the ‘why’ of a story, we will not want to know the ‘what’ that happened. Therefore, in order to understand narrative construction and the fictional form, curiosity is a necessary feature that the students should experience and understand.

3) Willingness to take a chance
The teachers also suggest that the willingness by both teacher and students to take a chance is an important part of the co-creating practice. According to Craft (1997), in order to shape a creative and collaborative approach, the teacher should attempt to enliven a “willingness to play, experiment, be a partner with learners, and take risks” (Craft 1997, p89). Taylor (1995) believes artistry is powered by risk taking, as does Neelands (1984), who states that one must be willing to take informed risks, if we are to encourage children to do the same. Nicholson (2002) connects risk taking with trust, and believes “it is only through successfully negotiating the circularity of risk and action, that students might extend their dramatic repertoires, and become active participants in new learning experiences in their drama education” (p85). O’Neill says, “...if there’s no place for the unexpected, for the unpredictable, for the unknown even, then you’re not, perhaps, going to learn as much than if you take a risk” (Taylor and Warner 2006, p75). Research also shows that environments which encourage risk taking have been found most conducive to creativity (Amabile 1996, Craft 2002, Jeffery and Craft 2003). George articulates risk taking as taking a chance:

“A lot of it I think this is trial and error…we have to be comfortable and very confident in taking a chance on something, and if it works...fantastic, if it doesn’t then we move on. What I’ve learned from this is not to be totally stonewalled on certain things working, certain things might not work. You would also have to prepare yourself then for sessions that wouldn’t be that successful. For me now, it’s about letting them be creative, I’ll be telling them to try some things and if it doesn’t work or it’s wrong, it’s very easy to move in a different direction.” (George-I4)
Craft (2002) believes that classrooms that allow mistakes and encourage experimentation, openness and risk taking foster creativity (p116). Sahlberg (2009) directly addresses the notion of ‘trial and error’, stating that creativity is often blocked by the fear of being wrong. He argues that rewarding effort and ideas, not just correct answers, is essential for promoting creativity, and that being open to being wrong is an important part of being creative. George goes on to echo Sahlberg, by suggesting that the students:

“…should be free with their ideas and take a chance because sometimes when you are being creative you are taking a chance.” (George-I4)

Cathy talks about learning to take chances in terms of experimenting, and trying things out in a pedagogical sense:

“I think when we got to the point where we were to meet the aliens…like I mean I would have just had them showing me before [the interventions]…but it was so much nicer to go and meet them…that was so much nicer and so simple. Just little things like that, that’s why I’m glad I’m doing this with you. It’s just the tiniest little things…you learn to try…and it might make the whole thing move in a different direction. Like, that completely changed things up…we didn’t know what was next…we were just trying things.” (Cathy-I3)

We can understand from Cathy’s narrative that if she had not taken a risk and had not been open to trying things out, then they would not have discovered the interesting aspects that arose in the work. In essence, the capacity to take risks emerged as an important part of the co-creating process. Eisner (1995) observes that “artistry in teaching is more likely to occur when the classroom provides a context for improvisation and where unpredictability, rather than the predictability of activities and consequences, is acknowledged” (p152). Bearing this in mind, when the teachers discuss navigating the co-creating experience in terms of a willingness to take risks, we may understand this as a feature of their artistic practice.

In summarising, it is important to reflect on the navigation aids that are discussed, in terms of their influence on both the teachers and students. Firstly, where influence is most evident, is in the teachers’ behaviour and their actions in the classroom. This is highlighted in many ways, such as Anne explaining how she has become ‘more observant’ and ‘better at noticing the potential of a response’. We see it in Cathy where she is attempting ‘to really listen to the students’, allowing her to engage in the experience in a deeper way, and George too describes being open to, and willing to act
on new possibilities. We can also understand from their narratives the challenge of making the most of the opportunities in a ‘drama way’, and how finding ways to respond to opportunities can depend upon the degree of skill that the teacher holds. Underpinning this is the influence on the students. The teachers highlight how the students are given freedom to contribute, freedom to make mistakes, and are asked to work for their knowledge. It can be argued they are in fact given the ability to choose their own pathway to increase involvement and learning in their classroom. Finally, when we consider the three aspects of practically navigating co-creating drama that the teachers discuss i.e. noticing and encouraging, curiosity and questioning, and a willingness to take a chance, we may consider how this fits with Craft’s (2000) suggestion of how creativity can be “shaped crafted and encouraged” (p34), and how it is equal to the artistic processes of many artists, where acts of curiosity, inquiry and risk taking often take place. Within this theme, these aspects provide interesting insights into what teachers can do and what can be done to support them when they adopt a co-creating attitude towards drama.

Balancing structure and freedom

“One must spy a problem in drama teaching where too much structure destroys spontaneity and yet too little rule can result in chaos.”

(Watkins 1983, p38)

When the teachers describe co-creating in a practical sense, the common perception is that there is a need for a structure or framework to support both the teachers and the students. The teachers define structure in different ways. Some define it in terms of their use of drama techniques or conventions, for others it is a guiding material such as a storybook which can provide structure. Other teachers discuss structure as Neelands (1992) does, where there is a balance between discipline and constraint, and the fluid form of drama. Furthermore, the structure the teachers discuss does not seem to be a particularly ordered or inflexible arrangement, rather, it is a more carefully framed and mediated development of the work. A few of the teachers believe that structure is necessary because the improvisational nature of the practice makes it sometimes “difficult to regulate” (Ellen-I3), “unpredictable” (George-I3), and “precariously spontaneous sometimes, but in a creative way” (Barbara-I2). O’Neill believes structure and spontaneity are inextricably linked (O’Neill 2006). She explains that “…if pupils
are to grasp concepts, understand complex issues, solve problems and work creatively and co-operatively in drama, they will be helped by a clearly established context and a strong but flexible framework” (O’Neill and Lambert 1992, p9). The key point in her statement is the concept of a ‘flexible’ framework, which will allow the students to flourish in a creative sense but will also offer them support. Cathy highlights how a balance is needed:

“I think from a teacher’s point of view when you have it too structured, it’s not going…I mean if there was this idea that you had to keep it to, you’re going to stifle them, and you’re going to have them all doing pretty much the same thing. Whereas it should be open enough for them to use their imagination.” (Cathy-I3)

Neelands and Goode (2000) define the balance between organisation and spontaneity, as the chemistry between the planned and the lived:

“...every drama teacher knows that the true art of teaching lies in the complex tempering of the planned and the lived. Whatever the plan, it is not complete until it meets with and is mediated by the different live(d) experiences of the students who enter the drama space. We recognise that these students do not come to us as human beings but rather as human becomings – we believe that what we do is planned to help them in this journey of becoming. We try, by all manner or means, deriving from art and deriving from other sources, to put living reality into the hands of living people. The curriculum is the necessary map, it is not the journey itself.” (Neelands and Goode 2000, pp54-55)

Their assertion is helpful in understanding the need to support the students’ co-creating experience. As Neelands and Goode describe, the drama experience is live and the students are unique individuals who are learning to become who they are. Furthermore, in the co-creating experience, the students are often invited into unpredictable situations; therefore, there is a need to support them in coping with the spontaneity and the shifting elements. Essentially, the teachers are seeking to support the students to journey into the unknown. George describes his concept of a structure as having boundaries, and how the teacher can retrieve control over the direction if needed:

“Like, I would love to see them going off in a different direction as long as the direction they are going in is still within the boundaries…working boundaries…of where we would like it to go. This work doesn’t really make me nervous, because you know there are still ways of directing it if you want. At the end of the day, I’d like it to go wherever they want it to go, but within those boundaries.” (George-I4)
In George’s next narrative, he identifies his working boundaries as drama conventions and his familiarity with them:

“The whole thing opened up…they came up with their own ideas…ok yes we structured it as regards setting up the meeting and things like that…but the ideas were all their work. While I was there to facilitate, I wasn’t telling them a right way to go. These things we were using, like the meeting or me…in role, offered it structure I suppose…we all have our favourite things…mine is…teacher in role and that…things that teachers are confident in, that we know work well…that offers structure too.” (George-I4)

We can also understand from George’s comments, when he talks about facilitating the experience and using certain conventions that he is both comfortable with and experienced in using, that he is using his authority and experience to serve the students freedom (Freire 1970). McLauchlan (2001) observes in her findings from a study of her own drama classroom practice, that striking a balance between creative interaction and structure can be challenging, but it is also essential if the students are to ‘create’ work. She explains:

“[m]y most difficult challenge was to strike the optimum balance between student freedom and teacher-imposed structure so that creativity would be sparked and not stifled. Student reports suggested that, while freedom of choice was a necessary component of their creativity, structure offered a framework wherein their creative product was woven.”

(McLauchlan 2001, p54)

This supports Bailin’s (2011) proposition that creativity does not imply total freedom, and that, “all artistic creation takes place within constraints of some sort” (p210). Cathy commented early on in the intervention process that because the teachers are balancing their control with the students’ autonomy, they are actually operating a “framed” co-creating practice (Cathy-I2). In this manner, when the teachers allow the students a level of autonomy, they are offering them freedom to contribute and direct the drama. But equally, the students are not be left to their own devices, nor expected to form and shape ideas without the teacher’s guidance (Taylor and Warner 2006). Fraser and Price (2011) support this notion, suggesting that a:

“…complete reliance on learning as a shared endeavour can at times, be an inefficient way to progress in learning. Some learning requires more direct whole class instruction; some requires individual pursuit; and some requires the teacher to be explicit and informative about what needs to be done.”
Winston describes the act of teacher guidance as a “balance between her agenda, or sense of direction for the lesson, and those moments where the children themselves can influence what happens” (Winston 2004, p11). Anne explains how she uses structure in a similar manner:

“I start it a bit more concrete like, then branch out from that...I think that’s what they need, I start the ball rolling and then they take over. It becomes their work, but I structure it.” (Anne-I4)

Faye’s comment below echoes this idea:

“I think to an extent...there has to be the bit of instruction or guidance, you know, kind of giving them the bones of it...but...the formalities were gone after that...and it was all theirs.” (Faye- I3)

As with Anne and Faye’s comments, Taylor (1998) explains that structure in drama can exist as teacher-structured work in the beginning, and as the work unfolds, the opportunities for student-structured work can be strengthened. This suggests a slow release of student autonomy as a form of structure, resonant with the notion of scaffolding in constructivism. Therefore, tied up within the idea of structure, is the notion of the teacher releasing control within the experience. Consequently, there are implications for the teachers in relation to this transfer of power. As Aitken et al. (2007) suggest it requires flexibility and accommodation on the teacher’s part to share power with the students, and to dispense with the ‘formalities’ and allow the students to own the work as Faye describes. Anne goes on to explain structure within the co-creating process is also vital for some teachers:

“I think for any teacher it can be scary not to have a plan and something to hang your hat on, and also maybe not having an outcome...this type of drama can go anywhere really...I suppose that in itself is the outcome isn’t it? You know, I’m starting to get my head around the fact that the experience is the important thing...I think the whole experience with you has really taught me that it doesn’t have to be planned out d’you know...like A, B, C you know, but you need something to hang your hat on... it’s just having little crutches along the way.” (Anne-I4)

Here, Anne highlights how co-creating involves the work spontaneously unfolding, and how it can ‘go anywhere’, therefore the ‘crutches’ she speaks of help the teachers cope with this. Barbara describes her favoured framework as the use of a story, which
can provide a ‘narrative shape’ (O’Neill and Lambert 2006). When she discusses the idea of using a story, it is as inspiration rather than as a linear structure. She describes a storybook as a “back-up” and “something to come back to”. She goes on to say:

“I mean having the book there set the boundaries to start with, and then I got them to try...these things, and go beyond that then and come up with their own ideas. You can come back to it you see…you can base it on the book in the beginning and then let it go freely. The book was part of the structure, we worked through it, but opened it up to their imagination…asking questions at certain points, them responding to it. I like that little bit of structure. The book today gave enough of a structure and then it…I…we can be a bit more free.” (Barbara-I4)

Although the teachers acknowledge the need for structure, they also emphasise the significance of being “free” (Cathy-I3) from predicted courses of action just as Barbara describes above, and being “open” (Ellen-I3) to an undetermined outcome. When the teachers speak of structure, it is in terms of support for them in navigating the improvisational and unpredictable nature of co-creating, because as Anne states, “...it can be scary not to have a plan and something to hang your hat on” (Anne-I4). They also discuss it as a balance between student freedom and teacher-imposed structure, so that creativity can be ‘sparked and not stifled’ (McLauchlan 2001, p54), and so that the students are supported. I would argue they are creating a space where freedom and power are negotiated by both teacher and students (Aitken et al. 2007), which can lead to creative independence for the students. Ultimately, when the teachers discuss structure, they describe a flexible structure, one which enhances the quality of the experience rather than regulates or constrains it and one which frames what is possible in a practical sense, with what is imaginable in a creative sense. Therefore, having a structure does not suggest a lack of creativity in the experience but rather, gives creativity a framework in which to flourish.
Chapter Ten

Teacher Commitment
According to many of the teachers’ narratives, the effectiveness of co-creation relies greatly on the level of the teacher’s involvement in, and commitment to, the co-creating experience. Barbara describes co-creating as “a way of thinking and being with the students” (Barbara-I4). Her comment is a fitting way to describe the co-creating attitude, and the commitment that the teachers demonstrate. She echoes Anne’s comment on the CPD course, in which she too describes co-creating as a way of thinking and working with the students. From this, we can understand co-creating as a set of beliefs and behaviours that the teachers enact in their practice, and a culture that is created in the classroom. The essence of the theme of this chapter is exemplified with specific comments and situations that deal with the teacher’s commitment in several ways: a commitment to a sharing relationship between students and teacher, the teacher’s genuine engagement in playful and artistic activity through teacher in role (TiR), “being present” (Faye-I4) as a type of teacher commitment, and the effect of trusting students and being considered ‘trustworthy’. In essence, throughout this theme the teachers of this study suggest that they must have a strong sense of advocacy for the co-creating attitude if the experience is to be effective. They acknowledge that if co-creation is to be both authentic and fruitful, there is a need to readily commit themselves to the egalitarian and constructivist nature of co-creating, and to honour the implications of the type of relationship with their students. They also highlight the value and importance of fully embracing their roles as co-artists in the experience.

The Sharing relationship
The teachers discuss the importance of creating a sharing relationship between student and teacher in two ways. Firstly, they describe sharing power with their students. By doing this, the teacher offers more opportunities for student autonomy, and also facilitates a dialogical atmosphere where the content and the direction of the work are negotiated by both parties. Secondly, the teachers discuss becoming a co-artist, where they actively partake in the creative enterprise with their students. Furthermore, when considering the sharing behaviours and beliefs that the teachers describe, it is useful to consider how this signals the realising of the constructivist nature of co-creating, whereby “[t]he constructivist artist or teacher believes that the self, meaning and knowledge is developed under the influence of all present and ‘interacting’ language, materials, environment, bodily acts, cognitive and affective representations” (Rasmussen 2010, p533).
Anne describes the nature of her co-creating relationship with the students:

“It think it is about building a…sharing…relationship, and me being prepared to just muck in and even make a mistake. And I think it’s me having confidence and trust in them, and for that relationship. That is key really. Today wasn’t the teacher being in total control…I was kind of going with them and then leading sometimes, then sometimes they led…it wasn’t me standing up there saying ok next we’ll do this…a lot of the time I did what they wanted to do actually.”

(Anne-I2)

When Anne talks about ‘doing what the students want to do’ and following their direction at certain points in the experience, we can understand from this that she is permitting her students to have choice and a level of power over the experience. Furthermore, by offering them opportunities for decision making, she is asking the students to think for themselves and to take ownership of the work. By empowering the students and allowing them to directly affect the experience, it can be argued that Anne is in fact facilitating the students’ direct engagement with their own learning. Anne also explains how she leads the experience sometimes, and how the students lead at other times, therefore, there is a continuous renegotiation of power. Consequently, we can consider that a teacher who initiates a co-creating attitude is willing to let go of some of his/her explicit signs of power, in order to encourage more student autonomy and to realise collaboration that is more authentic. Finally, Anne describes ‘being prepared to just muck in and even make a mistake’, which suggests her role as a co-participant, and her willingness to take risks. Dawn explains:

“I suppose I’m trying to give the kids the opportunity to come up with their own ideas and give them more power over the lesson… I would have been a wee bit controlling I suppose, over what way we went with different things. But definitely this has taught me that’s not what drama is….it should be more about the children’s ideas and using their imaginations…so I have to give them more power.”

(Dawn-I3)

Aitken et al. (2007) suggest that, “where this kind of power sharing occurs, the teacher no longer ‘owns’ the drama. Rather, it is co-constructed” (p7). Faye highlights this notion further in her next statement:

“There was a real kind of partnership thing going on today. I was feeding off them, they were feeding off me, and you know, there was a whole kind of give and take thing going on…we were making it work together.”

(Faye-I4)
When Faye describes a ‘partnership’, we can perhaps understand this as the teacher operating as a co-participant. Furthermore, by becoming a “co-explorer”, as Bhat describes, one “who encourages learners to question, challenge and formulate their own ideas, opinions and conclusions”, the teacher is acting in a constructivist manner (Bhat 2007, p3). We can see this idea embedded in Cathy’s comment below:

“I think there definitely was two of us in the decision making…me and them…I mean the kids knew as much as I did about what was going on [laughter], so it all came together…it came from their ideas and then we were like –‘what will we do with that idea?’ so you know we were completely on level par.” (Cathy-I3)

Next, Faye explains how her co-creating relationship is based on:

“...the whole idea of listening to them...giving them kind of a forum you know to share their ideas...and where I am acknowledging their ideas...cause you can’t plan what part they’re going to find interesting or what part they’re going to kind of latch onto, you wanna see where they will go... I suppose it’s the idea that you’re feeding from what they’re doing with the ideas. It’s not like before cause they’re in charge sometimes...we’re in it together I suppose.” (Faye-I3)

The co-creating attitude Faye demonstrates is key in this statement. She is displaying a readiness to listen, take direction and follow the students, but fundamentally, as she explains, she sees both parties as in the experience ‘together’. Faye also highlights how the relationship between them has changed, because the students are in charge at certain times. Aitken et al. (2007) agree, stating that co-constructing drama changes the traditional teacher-student relationship because of the sharing of power, and because of the artistic practices involved in making dramatic work. Furthermore, Faye explains how she is ‘acknowledging their ideas’. Freire (2009) believes learners are encouraged and empowered by the teacher actively acknowledging the experiences and views of the group. This in turn, encourages the teacher to accept the child as an individual of worth, which is congruent with constructivist practice. It can be argued that by having faith in the student, and also by encouraging and acknowledging their contributions, the teacher is “making it possible for the students to become themselves” (Freire and Horton 1990, p181). Furthermore, by enabling the students to have choice and power in the classroom drama experience, the teacher may be creating a classroom that is more conducive to the creative experience. McLauchlan’s (2001) study supports this notion; she identified student engagement and freedom of choice as necessary components of creativity. Gallagher’s (2007) studies too indicate that
creative encounters often occur when students engage in greater freedom of expression. However, the implications of this sort of relationship are not without their challenges, Dawn reminds us of the trials of sharing power in the classroom:

“I suppose from a teaching point of view, you just need to...I suppose you need to have some control, so that you know that you can stop them at any point...because you are giving them so much power. I think you need to be safe in the knowledge that you will be able to calm them down after all this too...and that they will be able to go back and do other work...you just need to make sure that you’d be able to bring them back...after you’ve given them so much control. In some ways, with giving them that much freedom, you’re stepping back on what you’ve already taught them like.” (Dawn-I4)

Anne too:

“It can be a bit scary...it is a bit of the unknown of journey, and I suppose any teacher fears they [the students] are going to climb the walls, and go absolutely mad, when you give them that much say...and then you’d have to completely get out of role and go into ‘stop talking, do this, ok that’s the end of the drama’...but maybe when you’re more experienced I suppose again that comes, you kind of try to avoid getting to that stage. But, there’ll always be a bit of it.” (Anne-I3)

In addition, some of the teachers observe that the shared relationship wasn’t a fixed or consistent thing. If we consider co-creation in drama as students and teacher generating and creating work together, the teachers’ narratives suggest that the teacher and students will not be constantly collaborating, but rather there will be moments of collaboration. These moments may be when the students decide on certain details, moments when the teacher and students work together, and moments when the teachers may need to guide the work. Barbara highlights this and also explains the teacher has to learn to work in this way:

“I thought we would be collaborating all the time...you know I was so idealistic. But actually, there are moments of it...happening. It hasn’t been constant... I think as well you have to learn how to work that way, and learn to work from the kids.” (Barbara-I4)

Cathy discusses the sharing relationship in terms of the teacher artistically contributing to the experience, and links it to becoming a co-artist:
“I actually thought, God I’m actually coming up with stuff here too. We…together…we were coming up with ideas…I was becoming one of the children like, rather than me being a teacher, trying to think of drama ideas…telling them what to do, we were actually coming up with imaginative ideas together, no really I get it now, this way of working…it’s different.” (Cathy-I3)

We see in Cathy’s comment an example of how co-creation in drama involves the teacher becoming an artistically active co-participant in the drama work. O’Neill acknowledges this idea, and believes that it is possible for both teacher and group to “share the creative impulse, and be co-artists in the development of the work” (Taylor and Warner 2006, p62). When the teacher acts as a co-artist, contributing ideas and becoming involved in the act of imagining and creating with their students, they are displaying a shared commitment to the artistic process, and are demonstrating a vested interest in the act of doing and creating in a dramatic sense. Therefore, they are not only modelling learning as a shared, social endeavour (Fraser and Price 2011), but also modelling drama as a shared creative endeavour.

**Teacher involvement**

Within the theme of teacher commitment, the degree to which the teacher becomes practically and physically involved in the co-creating experience emerges as being significant. Anne highlights this by suggesting that the teachers in the co-creating experience must not “be outside watching…no, we have to be part of it and…really in it” (Anne-I2). This idea is exemplified with most frequency through the teachers’ descriptions of their use of Teacher in Role (TiR). Within this idea, the teachers suggest that TiR enlivens a playful attitude in the teacher, and that some choices made in TiR can entail a type of dramatic artistry which leads to a deepening of engagement by both parties. George begins by suggesting the concept of becoming a co-participant is greatly connected to the teacher taking on a role within the drama:

“Firstly by being in role…I could guide them to open up the different characters and I could also guide them in coming up with ideas….it was good for them to see me in role as well, you know being a part of it…I just find that for that time you’re their equal…you’re the children’s equal…you’re not the teacher…you’re another character in the drama I suppose…I enjoy it, my challenge is to make sure that I don’t get lost in it too much!” (George-I4)
A point worthy of attention in George’s statement is that he uses TiR to ‘open up characters’ and guide them to ‘come up with ideas’, rather than dictating the direction or content of the work. Similarly, most of the teachers discuss how they can exploit opportunities in the co-creating process most successfully through the TiR approach. Perhaps, one of the reasons for this is, “teacher-in-role enables the pursuit of an unplanned direction that underlines education as a shared and unpredictable endeavour” (Fraser and Price 2011, p21). O’Neill and Lambert suggest that TiR is effective because the teacher “can control, guide, and shape the lesson from the inside” (O’Neill and Lambert 2006, p52), just as George indicates. However, this also highlights the risk of this strategy, whereby the teacher may guide the work excessively, therefore reducing the students’ influence. But, O’Neill and Lambert further argue, the teacher using the approach can “support any contributions to the work” and “move the drama on” without “distorting the progress of the drama” (ibid p52). Prior (2001) highlights a major challenge for teachers in TiR is letting go and sharing “the created world with their students” (p28). Aitken et al. (2007) state, this may be because the usual power positions are ‘disrupted’ through TiR, a strategy they say which has “both political significance and pedagogical force” (p2). They explain that during their study, they found that TiR can release teachers and students from traditional classroom roles and open ‘space’ for children. This is how several of the teachers describe the effect of TiR on the co-creating experience, as George says the relationship becomes more “equal…you’re not the teacher…you’re another character in the drama”, and later he explains:

“…they like it...because you see, I am no longer the teacher, I am in the drama and I suppose they feel that they can say things or act in a way that they are possibly not allowed do in class time.” (George-I4)

Ellen suggests that the commitment of the teacher to the part they are playing is an important part of their teacher-in-role experience, for both teacher and students:

“…once I became the king I felt more involved…more part of it and when they saw me so into it, they were more into it.” (Ellen-I3)

Anne’s statement supports Ellen’s thinking, and describes the effectiveness of TiR:

“I think the in-role stuff helps the children…it helps me as well because it makes it all more real which is why…they were then able to react and interact so well with me as the character.” (Anne-I4)
Here, Anne is indicating how the TiR strategy can aid the teacher in building belief in the imagined world. Furthermore, the convention allows the teacher to be flexible in terms of gaining input from the students i.e. ‘feeding off them’ as Faye suggests, and at the same time it allows them to be focused, as they can negotiate structure and co-create in character, as the experience unfolds. In a similar way, Aitken et al. (2007) believe that, “like theatre makers, teachers in role could be described as the ‘managers’ of the drama and also as ‘relationship managers’ in that they retain ultimate say over how aesthetic, social political, and power dynamics will be organised within the drama” (p4).

Furthermore, O’Connor believes that TiR also “signals that the teacher is prepared to play alongside the students, they are willing to give it a go. Students love the sight of their teacher willing to engage in the most human art of all art forms” (2009, p14). Ellen highlights the excitement that O’Connor mentions, and explains how the students respond when they engage in play:

“I thought when you [Fiona] did it too [TiR]…when you were the clown…their eyes were just alight, they were so excited. They just thought wow! This is so amazing! I suppose they don’t really see adults play like that you know…I think it lets them know, by seeing us let ourselves go…and us being playful, they let themselves go and they let their imaginations go and they play.” (Ellen-I2)

Drama’s link with play can be seen throughout its history, for example in the work of Finlay-Johnson, Caldwell-Cook and Slade. Saracho (2002) suggests play provides a space for creative activities and processes, and educators should bring play and imagination in their classrooms in order to encourage creativity. The playful nature of drama involves teacher and students in a collective agreement to make-believe. Just as Ellen suggests above, teachers that play in a dramatic way, often engage in role in an imagined situation (Baldwin 2012). The teacher opts to become a character in a fictional world because, as Anne says, ‘it makes it all more real’ and because of the heightened level of ‘reaction and interaction’. However, O’Connor reminds us:

“[t]he willingness to play can be scary for some teachers who rely on the power of their status to engage students in learning. But if you relate to students on the basis of human beings rather than from a position of authority then the opportunities for real engagement and learning are boundless.”

(O’Connor 2009, p14)
It can be argued that when the teacher uses a playful approach, they are essentially agreeing to relinquish some control in the classroom. In this way, the ‘rules’ are not set by the teacher, they are negotiated and adapted within the make-believe. The teacher acts and reacts according to the situation of the play, and follows a ‘play path’, rather than dictating its direction. The teachers suggest that this kind of playfulness is another way in which their relationship with their students alters during the co-creating experience. Dawn explains how she will be more playful in her future practice:

“I think because of this experience, and how well we [students and teacher] worked together…anymore we’ll play around with a story, or we’ll play around with an object, or maybe an idea and see how…just see how it goes. I think I’ll treat the lesson more…kind of, let them be more involved in the planning of the lesson…and kind of say…let’s play.” (Dawn-I4)

By doing this, Dawn will be inviting her students to be playful in their use of form and content, therefore inviting them to be creative. She will be cultivating a playful environment that will encourage the students to ‘play’ with ideas, use their imagination to view things from different perspectives, and explore alternative pathways to solve the problems. Craft (2000) believes that students engaging in imaginative play is vital to creativity. She states this is because it operates between the familiar and the novel, and “can provide models of creating processes” (p67). Furthermore, she believes that playful ideas “encompass a number of possible forms of thoughts” such as supposing, imaging and being imaginative (ibid p67). Below, George discusses another way in which play manifests itself through TiR in the co-creating experience. He explains how TiR allows him to invite the students deeper into the story, and also allows him to play with their thinking:

“I suppose...it [TiR] gets us deep into the story. Like today, we got deep into the character and we got deep into the theme of the story and the topic of the story. While you can always have more avenues, I felt that we covered it fairly well, more so than in a normal drama lesson. I think it was because when I was him [the character], I could manoeuvre...and play with what they were feeling...and their opinions...kinda like wind them up...to act...to do something about the situation! [Laughter]” (George-I3)

I would extend George’s notion of ‘winding the students up’ further, into what Winston identifies as the ‘game of drama’. He describes a type of ‘deceptive artistry’ at play, where the teacher can “manipulate, deceive, and actively play” with what the students may be thinking (Winston 2013, p8). This is not to say the teacher is being
dishonest or deceptive as the title may suggest. He/ she is simply using a more playful approach by using fictional devices within the drama experience, in order to deepen the engagement, and maximise the possibilities for fictional and artistic involvement. By deliberately challenging students’ expectations and playing with what they think, the teacher is arousing interest and curiosity in the dramatic event. O’Toole (1992) discusses this as creating suspense in the dramatic work through dramatic tension, and it can happen by “withholding or [the] retardation of knowledge, either from the audience by the playwright, or the characters: in other words suspense” (p30). Winston makes an interesting point in terms of the manipulation of the dramatic work:

“[s]killful teachers of drama can be very good at this, but it is a skill either ignored or mistrusted by those practitioners who adopt, usually uncritically, a discourse of “ownership,” which they often mistakenly conflate with a belief that children’s ideas must shape the unfolding drama at the expense of all other considerations.”

(Winston 2013, p8)

In this, Winston reminds us that this type of teacher involvement is a form of dramatic artistry, and when there is a sharing relationship between students and teacher, it does not mean it cannot or should not exist. In fact, I would argue that when the teacher and students pretend, imagine and interact together in the co-creating experience, part of their role as co-artists is to actively play, not only in terms of participation, but also fictional play, by injecting doubt, suspicion and mystery, therefore creating tension just as O’Toole suggests. Essentially, the teachers’ narratives establish in different ways, how TiR is particularly helpful in developing the co-creating work, and in how it engages the students and teacher in a more playful and dramatically involved relationship. O’Neill (2006) and Booth (2005) believe that TiR is an effective way to engage with both the drama and the students. Bolton even states that it “is the most important strategy in a drama teacher’s repertoire” (1992, p31). However, Aitken et al.’s (2007) finding from their project is noteworthy, they suggest TiR does not ultimately “ensure the development of children’s ideas, or their ownership, but the timely, skillful use of drama conventions do provide this” (p11). This reminds us that it takes commitment and skill, and a willingness to actively play and use artistry on the teachers’ part, to partake in this type of drama.

Finally, when the teachers discuss their engagement in the co-creating process, they also speak about “being present” (Faye-I4) as a type of commitment. In this notion, they describe being fully “in the moment” (George-I4), or as Barbara explains, it is
about “…getting into the zone…I suppose being open to things…I think also having an understanding of your children in the moment” (Barbara-I4). She suggests that when this happens they are engaged in the moment and can respond with astuteness to the needs and offerings of their students. These qualities are indicative of the teachers committing to being ‘truly present’ (Palmer 1999):

“…good teaching comes in a myriad of forms, but good teachers share one trait: they are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subject, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self.”

(Palmer 1999, p11)

Furthermore, Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) define ‘presence’ in teaching as:

“state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step.”

(Rodgers and Raider-Roth 2006, p265)

Bearing Palmer, and Rodgers and Raider-Roth in mind, we may understand the teachers are discussing being engaged and connected to the students, leading to an increased commitment to the experience.

Greene’s (2001) philosophy of aesthetic education is also appropriate here. This concept is developed around the idea of ‘awakening’ peoples’ consciousness through aesthetic experience’. For Greene, aesthetic experience can often begin with an encounter with a work of art, which she suggests can nourish our ‘wide-awakeness’. The work of art can be poetry, music, dance, performance, painting, or literature, or in this case a dramatic experience. She suggests that the wide-awakeness we experience widens the world, but also makes people live in the moment. Greene defines aesthetic education as “an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful” (Greene 2001, p6). She goes on to say that it “cultivates the disposition to choose to engage with diverse art forms, to attend and
explore, and take risks” (ibid p23). Greene also discusses how teachers can learn how to ‘attend’ and be more present. This includes being present to oneself, as well as being present with students and their learning (2001 p11). I am reminded here of Cathy’s comment in chapter nine about listening with total attention, and the connection made with Shultz’s notion of teachers listening as permitting the teacher to fully ‘attend’:

“I mean sometimes an idea could come, and if you don’t hear it, I mean if you don’t really listen…So it’s much better to work from the kids, so you have to like…really listen.” (Cathy-I3)

Shultz proposes listening is fundamentally about being in a relationship which supports change (Shultz 2003). We may understand that this relationship involves the teacher committing fully to the experience in order to ‘really listen’ and perceive fully in an aesthetic manner. It can be argued that by being fully present, the teachers are awake to the experience. Therefore, they have a heightened sensitivity to the students, to the moment, to the work and to the aesthetic experience. I suggest this is also associated with the sense of being ‘wide awake’ to their own responses, in such a way that their attention to the creation of the drama is served.

Trust

While all the teachers discussed the difficulties of co-creating in terms of its “behaviour issues” (Ellen-I2) and “chaoticness” (Barbara-I1), another common experience that emerged was that as the teachers became more comfortable with the co-creating process they began to ‘trust’ the students. Trust in drama is ‘multi-layered’ and is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated according to context and social circumstances (Nicholson 2002). The trust the teachers spoke about appeared in many forms, for example, trusting students to direct the work and to contribute ideas of quality, trust in terms of risk taking, and mutual trust. It is not unusual that the teachers discussed the notion of trust in drama work. Trust-building activities are often used to build group dynamics in drama. Nicholson contends that as a drama educator:

“…one of our customary roles is to foster an environment which enables participants in the drama to establish productive working relationships. In so doing, much effort is often expended on creating an atmosphere of trust, in which group members feel sufficiently comfortable with each other to engage actively in the drama process. It is this very atmosphere of mutual trust and collaboration which is one of the special qualities of drama education.”

(Nicholson 2002, p82)
Among the kinds of trust that the teachers mention is one that focuses on the way the students engaged with and developed the dramatic work, which could be defined as a form of ‘dramatic integrity’ (Bundy 2003). Bundy argues that this particular concept of trust happens when a connection with the ‘idea’ of the work is made, and that then leads to an aesthetic engagement. She believes that this connection requires participants to trust:

“[t]he workshop leader; the group process; the physical, emotional and intellectual responses of other participants; their membership and status in the group; the appropriateness of their own responses; their image/perception of themselves; and the disclosure of the private self in the public sphere.”

(Bundy 2003, p179)

Appleby too distinguishes this particular observation of trust as a way of effectively engaging within the dramatic world. She believes this is established “through a slow process of building trust in the drama strategies, developing understanding of the limits of their dramatic freedom, and building belief in the emerging story” (Appleby 2002, p6). Furthermore, Sahlberg (2009) states that generating trust between teacher and student is a vital condition for creativity to flourish. Dawn notes that teachers may be hesitant at first to trust:

“It’s hard for teachers to relax basically, and say ok…we’re just going to let it flow…but I think you can rely on the children to be able to do it… that’s our trust in them…I have to…trust them in making the story because they can…I know that now.” (Dawn-I3)

George states:

“I don’t think before this, I would not have been open to the idea of giving the children a chance to create the drama…whereas now I could throw it open to the children. I’d say ‘right where do you think we should go from where?’ I feel I could trust the ideas they come up with…I suppose you build it up…the trust that you’d have in your class.” (George-I3)

Several of the teachers discuss how when the children are trusted with the construction of the drama work, it can result in teachers feeling less pressure. They see it as liberating, because the drama no longer relies solely on them. Ellen explains:

“I think that it takes the pressure off me in a lot of ways, because it’s them coming up with the ideas as well…rather than me dictating what way it’s going…what they come up with is way better than what I would come up with, their imaginations are way better than mine.” (Ellen-I4)
Anne says:

“I’ve started to trust the children…they actually came up with some really good stuff! That takes the pressure off me as I am thinking of so many other things!” (Anne-I4)

George too believes:

“The kids’ brains are full of all these wonderful ideas. It’s all there like, there’s an ocean of ideas in front of you…you just have to get used to tapping into it. What is great is I’m getting the information out of them, rather than me constantly trying to come up with stuff…they’re so into it that they often see where we are going better than me!” (George-I2)

Dawn highlights the notion of trust encouraging ownership:

“Ya I was picking up their ideas…I mean I didn’t think of a Goblin they did…and the fact that we made the thing about the magic word…they came up with that themselves, and it was important once they started giving the ideas, to follow through, as it lifts them and they take it on a something of their own.” (Dawn-I2)

Nicholson (2002) also highlights the importance of trust in situations of ‘risk’, whereby the students’ involvement in the drama is dependent on gauging the advantages and disadvantages of their participation. Barbara suggests that by offering ideas, the students take a risk; and therefore the teacher should do likewise:

“I try to tell them ‘keep the ideas coming’…and they don’t feel silly as well if I am offering stuff…I’m doing it too…I say we are all just giving ideas and seeing what fits.” (Barbara-I4)

Finally, some of the teachers believe that the trust is a two-way thing; i.e. the students need to trust the teachers. Faye suggests it:

“…begins with just the whole idea of listening to them…giving them kind of a forum you know to share their ideas, and where I am acknowledging their ideas.” (Faye-I2)

This corresponds with Nicholson’s (2002) notion of being ‘trusting and trustworthy’ in drama. She explains it requires the participants to work in ways which “demonstrate reciprocal respect for each other’s physical, emotional and intellectual well-being” (Nicholson 2002 p83). It arguably follows that the teacher as a co-participant in a process which involves co-creating should be considered trustworthy too. However, this does not suggest that the teacher should be artistically or organisationally agreeable to every suggestion. Rather, they are open and caring, because “a caring
environment may create a robust environment in which debate, dissent, generosity and artistic experimentation might be encouraged and valued” (ibid p90). O’Neill and Lambert believe that “the teacher must genuinely respect their contributions…even the smallest contributions must be heard” (O’Neill and Lambert 2006, p53). The teachers describe cultivating the trust of their students and building a reciprocal trusting relationship by valuing their contributions, and honouring their ideas when they can.
Chapter Eleven

The outcomes of co-creating drama
This chapter explores the outcomes of co-creating drama, in terms of what the teachers consider co-creating drama means to the students, their learning and to the teachers’ own practice. The teachers’ narratives disclose five major outcomes. Their comments reveal the creative nature of the students’ learning; the outcomes of the work being unique to the group; and the students growing in unanticipated ways. Furthermore, they describe becoming adept and practised in co-creating drama as an outcome. Finally, the teachers describe how the co-creating experience has cultivated confidence in their own drama practice. In essence, when the teachers contemplate what co-creating offers them and their students, the underlying theme that emerged was the creative nature of the learning that occurs, the uniqueness of the experience, and the beneficial effect on both the students and teachers.

**Creative nature of the learning**

We see throughout this theme that co-creating is instrumental in promoting learning in a variety of ways. Nearly all of the teachers suggest that once the co-creating process was embraced by both parties, there were many educational benefits. Although at times, scholars have not agreed on the educational value of drama (O’Hara 1996), the learning that occurs within drama is well documented (Taylor 2000, Bolton 1984, Neelands 1992, O’Toole and Dunn 2002, Heathcote and Bolton 1994). Some of the kinds of learning the teachers speak of, i.e. language development, social interaction and development of emotional and cognitive intelligences are recognisable within a drama education context. Therefore, this outcome is not exclusive to co-creating drama. But in saying this, on re-reading the interviews, it becomes clear at certain points that the teachers speak about a type of learning that is new to both the teacher and their students.

This section explores the creative nature of students’ learning in the co-creating drama experience. In describing the creative nature of the learning that occurs, the teachers are referring to both creative learning and creativity. Creative learning sees the students actively involved in their own learning. They make choices and decisions, and develop imaginative and critical ways of thinking through exploring ideas and problem solving. Whereas, creativity involves the students directly in thinking or behaving imaginatively in order to discover or create something new or something of value to the group. Creativity involves the students in exploration and risk taking, and allows them to express themselves physically and imaginatively through the art-form. When
the teachers discuss the creative nature of students’ learning, it can be linked to the potential of co-creating to enable the full spectrum of drama. Equally, we can understand how the use of the full spectrum of drama within the right educational context can enable co-creating possibilities. Throughout the interviews, the teachers consistently touch on the features of the spectrum of drama discussed in chapter four, for example the use of drama as an art-form, the realising of improvisation and imagination in the work, the playfulness of co-creating, the social experience and the opportunity for creativity. They use words such as ‘engaging’ (Ellen-I4), ‘imagining’ (Cathy-I3), ‘communicating’ (Anne-I3), ‘co-operating’ (Ellen-I4), ‘collaborating’ (Barbara-I2), ‘playing’ (Dawn-I4) and ‘creating’ (George-I3) to describe the activeness of the students. They mention how they can express opinions, thoughts and ideas in an embodied way, and fundamentally, in a creative way. Many of the features of the spectrum are threaded through the teachers’ narratives over the last two chapters, but the following narratives will give further understanding of the creative potential that is on offer in the co-creating experiences. To begin, we see Ellen’s description of the type of engagement and creative learning that is involved in the co-creating experience:

“…the way this engages them is different too. I felt they really had a much better understanding of it [the story]…and what they were doing and why they were doing it. Whereas, we’ll say, if that was a story I read to them, and they just acted it out, I don’t think they would have gotten the depth they did. They probably would have missed a lot…of the thinking or…the investigating even. Whereas when they’re involved like that, in their little groups…working out what are we going to say, and what are we going to do, they get it more because they get to do it. Like even today now, I started with that book, and it was only a free book I got…and I couldn’t believe at the end of the class they couldn’t wait to hear the end of the story! It just shows when they get to imagine their own ending, they want to know how the real story ends. There is learning in that too for them, like in how someone else imagined the ending.” (Ellen-I4)

Ellen describes engaging, imagining, doing and investigating, all actions I consider as indicative of creative practice. Her narrative also indicates the presence of many of the features of the spectrum. Ellen explains:

“I’ve learnt to…basically…not to cut their imaginations off, like I was doing before. Sometimes I leave them at a turning point in a story so they can go in different directions, or I ask them to make up a new way to do something, or to explore something. This is more about letting them use their imaginations,
thinking things up, trying things out…getting their ideas and their feelings about things…that is a big part of it.” (Ellen-I3)

Other teachers offer similar reflections of how imagination and creativity is embedded in the co-creating experience, and how it leads the students to think and act beyond what is, toward what might be (Fraser and Price 2011), and essentially to create. They also suggest that co-creating entails the use of creative thinking, and the application of knowledge and skills to make new ideas and new connections. Faye suggests “…this is a chance to make something in an imaginative way” (Faye-I4). Anne explains:

“It’s really thinking outside the box stuff, which is great…it’s a different way of thinking…this kind of thing is really so good for children. I just think the whole idea of…the kids saying I can do this, I can make this up myself in my own head, for them to come away with this kind of a feeling is amazing.” (Anne-I3)

The children saying ‘I can do this’, is resonant with Wassermann’s (1990) thinking. He explains that, “[y]oung children have already established a strong sense of can-do. They want to do things for themselves, and they receive great satisfaction and ego affirmation when they are able to demonstrate that they can do” (Wassermann 1990, p4). George describes the students being:

“…creative about what they are doing, or how they are going to solve the problem. I would always have felt I wasn’t doing that enough. They are making their own drama now…like creating it...there is a real buzz in the room when it’s happening. It’s exciting for them because they’re making things of their own, and for me too…it’s exciting to see what they are going to do.” (George-I4)

He extends this to connect it to artistry:

“When we do this, we appeal to the artistic side of their brain by giving them opportunities to come up with different ideas…and to create.” (George-I4)

The teachers also reflect on improvisation, and how it can lead to the students being ‘inventive’ (Anne-I4). As Barbara suggests, co-creating can be “precariously spontaneous sometimes, but in a creative way” (Barbara-I2). The teachers describe the students searching for solutions, making guesses, and trying things out, and then as Anne says “what we make is so interesting” (Anne-I4). Barbara continues:

“It’s interesting for me as a teacher to see how many answers there was…and to see how they can work off the cuff…” (Barbara-I4)
Anne describes the influence of improvisation, where the students:

“...think on their feet, and can be inventive...because they're in these new situations, they’re not prepared for what’s coming and I think they have no time to worry about...like what if this word isn’t right, they just say it. Like I said earlier, someone said ‘dismayed’ today...and it was the perfect word to use to describe what was going on, because they [characters] were thrown into this tricky situation and they didn’t know what to do...I didn’t teach them that word, so they are using what they know from outside school or like books they are reading.” (Anne-I4)

We can take from the final part of Anne’s comment that the students are using their own knowledge. This reflects Dewey’s philosophy where he asserts that children learn by doing, and that knowledge does not come merely from the teacher, but the child’s experience plays a significant part in the learning (Dewey 1938). The teachers also speak about ‘play’ as energising the students’ learning experience and their interest. Ellen explains:

“I think it lets them know, by seeing us let ourselves go...and us being playful, they let themselves go and they let their imaginations go and they play.”

(Ellen-I2)

Barbara notes that:

“...the kids see it [co-creating] like we are playing and it is playful. I am playful in it, and I’m just...keeping an eye on everything too. It’s amazing watching them make things up, like the make-believe, and their imaginations are great.” (Barbara-I4)

Furthermore, all of the teachers at some point during the interviews highlight the social and collaborative dimensions of the co-creating work. Some of the teachers suggest that when provided with the opportunity to collaborate, the students were all “involved and motivated even” (Faye-I2), they experienced “new interactions...with each other” (George-I3) and sometimes they controlled the pace of their own learning, as Ellen suggests:

“It was great to see the dynamics of a group...you know there are natural leaders that come out or whatever, and they kinda help the others move along. I found it interesting to see how into character they got, and once they got the rules...ok they might have been a bit lively at the start...I think it’s good to have time where they work together...to do exactly what they have to do without me interfering...where they find a way to work things out...together at their own pace.” (Ellen-I3)
George explains:

“I definitely think they did [collaborate], they got so involved…their ideas…when I was going around they were swapping ideas…I definitely felt that they were figuring things out together. The whole lot of us…were involved together. I wasn’t telling the children what to do…they were interested in discovering things for themselves. I thought it was a good group session.”

(George-I3)

When the teachers discuss the co-creating experiences, we understand the potential to create a rich creative environment, where students and teacher share creations of their imaginations, play out problems and possibilities, collaborate, and invent, elaborate and extend their thinking. In this way, the teachers highlight how co-creating can foster capabilities like thought-in-action, resourcefulness, originality and can nurture an understanding of creative processes. It allows both teacher and students to affect the role of artist within the work. It can also encourage open-mindedness, whereby students value ideas different from their own and have the capability to think about what matters or to figure out or imagine what is needed to overcome obstacles. Fundamentally, this all happens within the creative context that the co-creating experience can produce.

**Unique ‘end product’**

Barbara discusses how the ‘end product’ is unique to the group:

“I think…when you’re teaching reading or writing or science or whatever it is, you’ve got your goals and an expected outcome…I suppose as teachers we always feel we have to have a product at the end of it, and…that’s not necessarily so now. You see, with this you’re not sure what the end product is going to be…and the product might be very different for each group you know…because of the individual kids. So once you get that idea, I think it’s easier than to plan for drama. You know when you to do this, you feel…that it is developing their imaginations…and developing them.” (Barbara-I4)

Barbara’s observations about the end product highlight a matter that the teachers all speak about in different ways. Some of the teachers really appreciate the different types of learning involved in the co-creating experience, and the undetermined nature of the learning outcomes or the ‘end product’ as Barbara describes. Anne highlights this:
“…this type of drama can go anywhere really…I suppose that in itself is the outcome isn’t it? You know, I’m starting to get my head around the fact that the experience is the important thing.” (Anne-I4)

Just as Anne indicates, when the teachers speak about co-creating it is more as an experience, than having an end product or outcome in mind. There is a product in the sense that something is created, but this can be anything from the forming of new ideas or new perspectives, to a small performance, or perhaps a move by the students beyond the typical classroom thinking, or it can be something created that encourages personal or creative satisfaction for the students. Fundamentally, the end product is not fixed and is unique to the group, because as Barbara says, it depends on the individuals in that particular group. In this sense, we see the constructivist nature of co-creating, whereby the learner is perceived as unique, and both the content and pace of learning is based upon the abilities and interests of the students. Therefore, the experience and the students’ responses in and to the experience is the focus, rather than the students fitting into an end product. The learning and understanding they are achieving is co-constructed, contextual and emergent, and is not dependent on planned outcomes or products. Consequently, the teacher’s role within this is to help students design their own learning experiences, and to treat them as autonomous agents (Hyslop-Margison and Strobel 2007). Day (1983) suggests when teachers use open methods without fixed outcomes in drama, just as they do in the co-creating experience, it “gives the pupils the right to disagree with people’s beliefs, including the beliefs of the teacher”, and helps “pupils learn procedures for critically evaluating knowledge and principles, leaving what is to be learned as a result of this process an open matter” (Day 1983, p83). Essentially, rather than judging the value of co-creating by something predetermined that the students produce like a sketch or a play, the teachers discuss outcomes such as collaboration between the teacher and students, students taking risks, students participating in critical reflection, students being flexible, using their own knowledge, imagining and sharing ideas, creating things and making decisions, as all valuable products of the co-creating experience.

**Students growing in unanticipated ways**

An integral part of this theme deals with the common experiences and sentiments expressed by the teachers about how the students grow in unanticipated ways. The teachers describe the students not only uncovering new understandings about the
drama work, but also new understandings about themselves. They also speak about noticing a way of thinking and behaving that the students displayed that was new to the teachers, in fact they express surprise at times at the abilities and imaginative capabilities of children. Barbara notes that:

“You know when you do this, you feel...that it is developing their imaginations...and developing them.” (Barbara-I4),

Or, as Ellen experienced, “…you see the benefit of it...they grew, they really did” (Ellen-I4). The teachers refer to the students using approaches that go beyond their normal engagement or their “mundane thinking” (Barbara-I4). This is clear in Anne’s next narrative:

“They’re more involved in the learning, and the kids themselves I think find out also what they’re better at maybe. They’re hit all round, like all parts of them...and suddenly the child who wouldn’t be normally academic is the one with the ideas and can argue a point...you see a new side to kids working this way and when ideas are accepted...I heard Michael saying today, you know that was my idea, and once we acknowledged that, he felt good and I saw him shine and he wouldn’t be a child who always would succeed like that.” (Anne-I3)

Anne highlights how the students can grow ‘socially’ through the co-creating experiences. She talks about a student being able to ‘argue a point’, and explains that when contributions are acknowledged by the teacher and the other students, it can cultivate confidence in the students. Furthermore, students are ‘hit all round, all parts of them’ in the sense of not just using their academic skills, but perhaps their multiple intelligences too (Gardner 2011). This highlights how the co-creating experience can be conducive to fostering the multiple intelligences, perhaps because co-creating can offer the students diverse opportunities for creative ways of learning. The eight intelligences identified by Gardner (2011) include verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner’s thinking supports the argument that education needs to accommodate students’ unique ways of learning, and creativity needs to be part of the learning process. Anne continues this idea by saying:

“I think because we can use a variety of things...you know how some teachers might be naturally drawn to the written word or for some it’s poetry...like the spoken word or music...it’s the same for the children do you know, if it’s a book we are going to use...they may say ‘oh no another bloody book!’” Do you
know what I mean? They may be reluctant readers, but working this way, there are lots of different ways of engaging them…it lets me vary my approach…and they can dictate a way to respond to something…like movement or drawing or using something, like even science came into it today…there was a scientific…answer…way of looking at what we were doing and they came to that conclusion.” (Anne-I4)

The teachers frequently discuss the students engaging with, and using different kinds of thinking, learning to be adaptable, inventive and to cope with the ambiguous situations that co-creating produces. We see the notion of different ways of thinking and working in Faye’s comment:

“...I think they can express themselves differently. It doesn’t just have to be one way of working on something, cause I’ve had quite a few children here…who need that, with this they don’t have to write anything down…they don’t have to you know think in that way…it’s not like maths it’s not English. I think they have more of a chance…to use different thinking…to come alive, you can kind of encourage them more so…I think it’s good for the weaker children and the child that mightn’t feel as comfortable say in the mainstream class. This is a chance to make something in an imaginative way, and their chance to kind of you know be a part of it…to be important in the process and its working with me too…you know and they can be a bit more active in their own learning which they don’t normally get to…or even knew how to be.” (Faye-I4)

There are key points in this statement that point to the importance of the learning that happens in the co-creating experience. Faye echoes Anne’s point, whereby the students can express themselves in different ways and be active in their own learning. She refers to maths and English, saying the students don’t have to think in ‘that way’, indicating they are using alternative types of thinking, perhaps meaning that they are using creative thinking. During the co-creation experience, she observes the students being imaginative and innovative, and engaging in authentic shared learning experiences. Faye also explains how the students get to ‘make something imaginative’, and she goes on to say how it’s a chance for them to be a part of the experience with the teacher, and to be ‘important in the process’. Faye’s last point highlights a significant feature of co-creating, whereby the students are at the centre of the experience and are given power and voice. They are enabled to speculate, challenge, imagine, create, and reflect. This indicates the influence of the constructivist nature of co-creating, and I argue this would not happen if the teacher was unwilling to share power. By the same token, Anne like other teachers, suggests the students become “more involved in the learning” (Anne-I3), and some of the teachers talk about how
the children become active agents in their own learning. Cathy believes that co-
creating drama is:

“...more organic...and the learning is coming from them...it’s like they see you 
learning from them as well...it’s more open I think.” (Cathy-I3)

In this way, they are inviting the students to take part in their own education, just as 
Freire advocates. Ellen articulates this notion, saying that:

“...now I kind of put it back on them to make a lot of the decisions...I do 
notice that...well they are all so different and what I have learned is...they love 
to show each other that they’re different as well. Ya, because sometimes we’re 
afraid to be different. Like it’s ok to be different. They are individuals and I am 
giving them the chance now to be individuals...to have a choice and to show 
what they think...do you know...otherwise they’d all be like robots!”

(Ellen-I4)

Another aspect of this theme to emerge is the teachers’ surprise at the abilities 
and imaginative capabilities that the children display when the teachers give them “more 
power” (Anne-I2). Anne explains:

“You know I was surprised at some of the ideas. I was surprised that they used 
words like ‘taxes’, and you know we did that in medieval times...it was ages 
ago...it was last term you know...but that’s what’s so lovely about it isn’t it? 
They are using what they have learnt already...but in a different place, in the 
drama context...world. It’s all so integrated and it’s all related...in this work. I 
think they really did listen quite intently, and came up with ‘dismayed’ and 
‘despaired’...and you know it sort of surprised me I suppose.” (Anne-I4)

Ellen discusses an idea that her students came up with that was quite complex:

“Did you see when...the scene was all part of a computer game they were 
playing...although we started with a traditional story, a legend in fact...just to 
see how they had interpreted it...it was fantastic, and six completely different 
ways of how the sun came to the earth...I didn’t think they were capable of 
coming up with ideas like that. I was really surprised at how imaginative they 
are...I wouldn’t have thought they would have had that ability.” (Ellen-I2)

This highlights Gallagher’s (2007) point, whereby she suggests that serendipitous 
moments of creativity can happen in the classroom, and therefore we should remain 
open to them, “[t]here are so many moments in theatre, both the rehearsed kind and the 
improvisational kind, where students surprise themselves and others by unanticipated 
moments of creativity” (ibid p1233). The moment that Ellen describes above could be
considered an ‘unanticipated moment of creativity’ where both she and the students were surprised by the outcome. Faye describes:

“It wasn’t always the ones I expected, you know, that came up with the ideas. It was also good for me to see students working in a more advanced way…than I thought they could. I couldn’t believe even…their general knowledge. Everybody got a chance to shine you know…and there was some surprises for me in how they came up with ideas…which is the beauty of this.” (Faye-I2)

We may take from this that co-creating drama gives the students a level of autonomy which may permit new qualities to be revealed. This in turn, makes space for the teachers to appreciate the hidden dispositions of their students. In some ways, the teachers are allowed to see how the children can function in the world as “a participant in, contributor to, and shaper of democratic society” (Miller and Saxton 2009, p35). Barbara explains:

“You know that was their first time ever doing something that complicated, and coming up with ideas like that. I couldn’t believe they could do it, sometimes you never get to see this side of them, or see that they are able for more, as their other work is so organised.” (Barbara-I3)

At this point, we may speculate on why the teachers feel such surprise at the students’ abilities? I would argue that the abilities that the teachers describe where always there, but may not have been revealed or noticed in their normal classroom interaction. We can see this notion in Faye’s narrative:

“…they can be a bit more active in their own learning which they don’t normally get to…or even knew how to be.” (Faye-I4)

When we reflect on this insight, we may consider how the teachers may have changed. Perhaps, through the experience they have begun to recognise the borders and possibilities of their teaching. Therefore, I would argue that through the experience of helping their students to work social, intellectually and creatively in the co-creating experience, this has also enabled their own professional growth.

The teachers also discuss how co-creating allows them to recognise the different ‘stages of development’ Eisner (1969), as there were opportunities for new and higher thinking. They describe how they can identify students that can be challenged more, or students who were responding to things artistically or emotionally, and those who were
responding intellectually or in a meaningful way, perhaps making it a more unique and tailored experience. It also led to the teachers being more aware of the capacity of their pupils to contribute sophisticated responses. Barbara notes all these ideas in the next passage:

“I suppose when I was working this way, I could notice the children who are capable, who can think things through a little bit more…that’s very important definitely. Because, we are asking them to push through the normal mundane thinking…asking them for help if you like. It’s interesting for me as a teacher to see how many answers there was…and to see how they can work off the cuff…it’s definitely letting them use their imaginations more than the drama I normally do.” (Barbara-I4)

When Barbara talks about the students working ‘off the cuff’ in this way, we can understand how the improvisational and unpredictable nature of co-creating drama, furthers the notion of the students navigating what Eisner calls “the vicissitudes of the unpredictable” (Eisner 1992, p76). Whereby, they learn to be adaptable and to cope with ambiguous situations, thus valuing surprise as Dewey advocates, becoming open to the unexpected nature of both learning and life.

**Becoming adept and practised**

Nearly all of the teachers state that the co-creating experiences become easier as the group and teacher become more practised in this way of working. Within this idea, they describe becoming practised in their co-creating practice, outcomes of the students’ familiarity of the practice, and the flow that emerges because of both these things. Firstly, it is worth considering that this outcome suggests that the teachers are forming *Professional Craft Knowledge* in terms of co-creating. Whereby, their learning is developed through their action and reflection on co-creating practical knowledge. This then generates knowledge about the kinds of decisions that will inform particular actions and situations within the experience. We see this in Cathy’s next narrative:

“The more I do it, the more I learn…the more I feel comfortable as well cause you know like I’m…using all…you know, the kind of same things every time, as in you know we’ll go into the circle, into the groups, then questions or asking them for direction or whatever…I want to break out of that as well, change it up…move on more.” (Cathy-I3)
Some of the teachers also talk about familiarity of the practice helping the group to have an awareness of what is expected, and therefore, they acquire a more informed approach to the work. It can be argued that through their routine of co-creating action and behaviour, the students are acquiring skills and knowledge of the practices involved in co-creating drama, which is perhaps leading to an ease of co-creating action and behaviour. Ellen explains:

“...it’s good for them to kind of learn how to question and to reason...they knew how to work in groups...they knew how to kind of put their argument forward you know that sort of way…it’s because they know this way of working now you know.” (Ellen-I3)

Dawn, who feels she had the biggest challenge because of the age of her infant class, describes her class’s progress as “unbelievable!” She believes:

“I suppose it’s just practice with the kids…I felt that they were more confident doing it...they were much quicker at it, do you know that sort of way. They were able to come up with things a lot quicker now…I think keep doing it with them and you know they’ll get used to this way of working, coming up with ideas and they seem to listen to me more as they are involved more I suppose.” (Dawn-I3)

Anne reflects on her understanding of becoming more practised:

“I was really happy now today. I felt it was more settled than the first day, because I suppose they knew what was going on...and what we were looking for...you know an idea or response...and I guess so did I. I think we are learning the more we are doing it, and I’m learning from my mistakes!” (Anne-I3)

When Anne says she is learning from her mistakes, this seems to suggest that she is reflecting upon her understandings in the light of her experience and that therefore, she is opening up her practice to examination. Reflection on perceptions, experiences and practices can be considered a core activity for all teachers (Walkington 2005). Day and Sachs (2004) describe teacher reflective practice as the ability to reflect critically on their behaviours, in order to develop a deep understanding of their teaching and learning. Neelands (2006) proposes that “reflection-on-practice and reflexivity-in-practice” indicates “an active commitment to articulating and making visible the essential dialectic within teaching and learning processes, and within/between the experiences of teachers and learners” (p19).
Borko and Putnam (1995) connect the cultivation of professional knowledge to teachers’ professional growth. They say that teachers can make changes in themselves by acquiring “rich knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy and subject specific pedagogy, and they must come to hold beliefs in these domains” (p72). Therefore, it can be argued that Professional Craft Knowledge impacts upon the teacher in time, whereby the changing practice may lead to a shift in teacher identity. We can already notice this in the teachers’ comments about a change in their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. They describe learning in the experience, which implies a change in practice i.e. learning to “really listen” (Cathy-I3), “learning to work from the kids” (Barbara-I4) and learning “to try” (Cathy-I3). Furthermore, they also suggest a change in attitude, in “being open to things...” (Barbara-I4), and “I think it is about building a...sharing...relationship, and me being prepared to just muck in and even make a mistake” (Anne-I2). Pitfield (2012) suggests that, in terms of drama, the “link between subject, reflection, transformation, and the self-identification of the teacher is worthy of further examination” (p427). The teachers’ identity is central to their beliefs and the practices that guide their actions (Cochran-Smith 2005). Therefore, the teachers’ philosophy of teaching is constantly evolving. Their identity as teachers is continually being created and recreated. Walkington suggests that, “[r]eflection on action assists in the development of the functional role of a teacher, and also provides strategies to nurture the on-going development of a teacher identity that has been shaped, and will continue to be shaped over a long period of time” (Walkington 2005, p59). Based on the comments of the teachers throughout these chapters, and indeed the following section dealing with confidence, we can assume that teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and beliefs are changing, because of both their new co-creating attitude and their co-creating practice, and this in turn may have an effect on their teacher identity.

Flow

From the teachers’ experience, we can also understand ‘becoming practiced’ in terms of finding flow. Anne explains:

“It almost seems natural now, I think this is what’s so good about this way of working, the more we’re doing it, it begins to flow...when it flows it really flows kind of, do you know...and what we make is so interesting.” (Anne-I4)
The flow she is describing is resonant with Csikszentmihalyi’s definition (1996), where ‘flow experience’ is a sense of automatic effortless action, which involves a balance of one’s ability to act and the available opportunities for action. Csikszentmihalyi believes flow often involves “risky, difficult activities that stretch the person’s capacity and involves an element of novelty and discovery” (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, p110). This, he suggests, occurs when one faces a set of goals that require appropriate responses, and when one’s skills are fully involved in overcoming the challenge. This can be considered something that occurs in the co-creating experience. Often the teacher and students are faced with a challenge, whether in the fiction of the story, or in the development of the drama work. They have to become inventive to overcome it. Barbara refers to flow as:

“…getting into the zone…I suppose being open to things…I think also having an understanding of your children in the moment…what I’ve learned from you is you can take anything really and make something out of it…you can make a new story out of just anything. Anything can spring it off. I think the kids love to work like that, when I say ‘ok let’s make a story’. That’s the beauty of this…but I as a teacher I need to be open to that.” (Barbara-I4)

Cathy explains this further, and introduces the notion of finding a similar wavelength to the students:

“That’s what it’s all about…I mean they were all on the same wavelength anyway, so I just need to tune into that and flow with it.” (Cathy-I3)

When Anne talks about ‘getting into the zone’, and Cathy speaks about being in ‘tune’ with her students and being on the same ‘wavelength’, we can understand this as the teachers finding a type of synchronicity with the students; a sense of everybody understanding the part they have to play in the work, the automatic action that Csikszentmihalyi talks about. They are all invested and working together in the moment. Csikszentmihalyi suggests that “when goals are clear, feedback relevant and challenges and skills are in balance, attention becomes ordered and fully invested”, it is then he believes that we reach our flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1998, p31). Barbara also observes that the teachers need to learn to work in this way:

“I think as well you have to learn how to work that way, and learn to feed off the kids, and the hardest thing is to feed off the kids and to not know where you’re going, but moments happen and you have to allow them to develop and let them flow…you have to flow with them.” (Barbara-I4)
Dawn cautions us on the difficulties of this kind of flow:

“I know with other classes I would have had, that I wouldn’t have been able to do so much free flowing work, let them, you know go with it as much or me going with it too. Because of the behaviour issues or whatever, it may be…especially like, I’ve one particular child in my head now, and I think if I let him go with it, he’d just be he’d be wired for the day.” (Dawn-I4)

When the teachers discuss becoming more practiced, there is an implicit acknowledgement of learning on their part, in that they are forming *Professional Craft Knowledge*, and understanding the actions and behaviours associated with a co-creating attitude. As O’Neill and Lambert assert, when teachers become more practiced in drama, they acquire technique and experience (O’Neill and Lambert 2006). I argue that this augmentation of knowledge will lead to a better management of the co-creating encounters, and to the *flow* that the teachers discuss. Furthermore, the reflection on their experiences, perhaps will lead to a change in their practice, and then arguably will lead to a refining of their teacher identity.

**Co-creating as cultivation of teacher’s confidence**

Throughout the process, the teachers involved expressed strong sentiments about how their confidence in their drama practice had increased because of their co-creating experiences. This confidence can be viewed across a number of levels: as an attitudinal confidence; a confidence in their skills; and a personal and professional confidence. Barbara spoke for many of the teachers when she said, “I’m definitely inspired now to make it (drama) more…definite you know on my timetable” (Barbara-I4). I believe the confidence they gained happened for a number of reasons, for example some enjoyed the imaginative freedom of the practice. Faye articulates this really well when she says:

“I realise now it doesn’t have to be kind of based on something we’re doing in history or something we’re doing in English, it can be a brand new story. I was looking around there this week and thought what will I use and I looked down and I saw a globe…and I thought I could use that! You can use anything…and I know they can see everything and anything in…the simplest of objects really…it’s all about the questions!” (Faye-I4)

She then goes on to say:

I was surprised at how I felt, I suppose after watching you [Fiona] and working with you I felt more at ease doing it. Even when I went back, I was just sitting
in there…I was kinda thinking about it…I never would have felt comfortable doing drama in front of you a few months ago, whereas now I feel I could take a story and like I’ve watched you, seen how you can lead a story on…I think I’m doing that too now. And like, I wouldn’t feel scared to start something new now. I definitely feel more confident. I feel a lot more comfortable jumping in at any time at all…in role and that…that’s what I feel exactly. Before I would not have it as stand-alone, like the drama as a subject…now I feel more comfortable letting it stand-alone. (Faye-I4)

Others feel the benefits of their newly acquired knowledge and skills were responsible for their confidence. Cathy notes:

“It’s just about getting my confidence up more, so then we’ll move on. Last year we would not have been able to do this, I wouldn’t have signed up for it. I’ve hugely changed. I know more…I want more now…I want to enjoy it too now, like them.” (Cathy-I3)

Anne too says:

“I’d imagine I will branch out further as I gain more confidence, and I suppose often when you do it with the kids that gives you more confidence anyway…like thinking God that went down so well…maybe more now, I look for where something could go or where it could lead…or the potential of a response or situation. I’ve got better at doing that, I think as a result of this process. I feel more confident now…that I could almost pick a book from the library or see something on the way to school and say oh that’d be good d’you know for drama…I wouldn’t have done that before.” (Anne-I3)

The spontaneous element of the practice really suited some of the teachers. Cathy describes an incident where the co-creating work didn’t happen as she had hoped or how she had experienced before, and that made her realise how much she values co-creating drama, rather than a more structured pedagogical approach. The following exchange between Cathy and I provides a clear understanding of her feelings about co-creating drama.

**Cathy:** “I can’t believe I did that! I went straight back to tight structure. I had it all structured…it was so different from the other times where we just said…let’s do it. I guess I was afraid that something wouldn’t happen…so I wanted something…a backup…but then knowing that backup, then there was a plan…and then I was leading them into it all the time! I took an idea from a book and then started following the exercises it gave, instead of following the group.”
Fiona: “I didn’t expect you to say that at all, because I saw how well you’d taken to this way of working. It seems to really suit you.”

Cathy: “It does suit me!”

Fiona: “Was it me being there?”

Cathy: “Very much so, because I wanted it to be good… I thought maybe they’ll go nowhere… shit! Stick with the plan I said to myself… but it was all about not having a plan! I mean when I was going around… I was leading them… I didn’t do that before, it was all their ideas before. In fact I was using all my ideas in the end! It was all me… no like co… sharing! I mean it didn’t give them any room for imagination… there was no real imagination or collaboration today really. Like I mean if this was before all this, the course and that… it would have been fine you know… but I want more now… I think it’s best for me to go in blind like them… it takes the pressure off as well… I am throwing something into the centre, well not throwing [laughter] but I’m going to go in with an idea and let it flow from now on and see what happens, say to them let’s figure it out… I will never look at a structured lesson again as long as I live… I’ll do my own thing!” (Cathy-I4)

This highlights how Cathy did not trust herself in the co-creating process, and was looking to influence the work rather than letting it evolve through her work with the students. It also suggests the influence of a formulaic approach taken from a drama book, which sets up a next step that may not correlate with the teacher’s instincts or intentions, yet they may feel under some pressure that this is the ‘right’ way to do it as it appears in print. For one teacher, a number of anxieties still remain. Ellen expressed some worry, and was the only teacher who felt that integrating drama with other subjects would still remain a part of her drama practice:

“I’m definitely more confident about drama now. I suppose I just have the fear of losing control or whatever. It can be hard to do it, especially with a group like mine who can often abuse the freedom they get. I suppose it’s just you know I’ve other challenges going on in the classroom, so if I try to do something different, I have a fear that it’s not going to work… maybe it’s a bit of pressure, but no I definitely would embrace drama with them now because I realise it’s their thing… you know what I mean like… because like it’s just you see the benefit of it… they grew, they really did. I think now maybe I could do a bit of both like, a bit of co-creating but still integrate like I was doing. It will come down to time. I do think that today was very productive but I can’t do that every week… I think I would try and do both once a month… but I couldn’t see myself being able to do it every week.” (Ellen-I4)
The influence of the study on the teachers’ confidence can be seen throughout their interviews. There are clear indications that the enjoyment and the success experienced often outweighed the worries that accompanied the teachers’ teaching drama. Faye is a good example of this:

“For me, out of all this it’s definitely that I feel…on your first visit I was more nervous about this, when I knew I was doing the least…amount of work. Like I was watching you and contributing a little bit…whereas today I was so much more confident about you coming in and watching me even when I was doing all the co-creating do you know what I mean? That I think tells me how much better I feel about doing drama…whereas if that was just teaching drama how I was doing it before, I would have hated you being there like!” (Faye-I4)

George’s comment indicates that part of the success of the co-creating practice lies with a combination of the teachers’ increasing knowledge, expertise and confidence, together with their own enthusiasm.

“When I find myself standing in a class with those same feelings of ‘God what will I do?’ the thing is I feel…I’d be open now. I just feel I would have more confidence now. I suppose the big challenge is that you never know exactly where you’re going to go or where it’s going to end up. But, the benefit for me is that when you are gone I’ll still…be doing it…I’ll be here with the class, together we’ll be creating the drama. When we started reading the story today we literally, we had left it in such a way that we wouldn’t know where we were going next. So I definitely feel now that there’s even more scope and more directions that…you can take a picture or a book or a page out of a newspaper, something that is intriguing and the drama could take off from there and we’d…the children will be creating the drama as well as me creating it…with them.” (George-I3)

Research indicates that one of the most substantial hindrances to drama in primary schools is a lack of confidence on the part of teachers. It is consistently found that a deficit of skill and experience of teaching drama leads to teachers’ lack of confidence (Bamford 2006, Russell-Bowie 2013). We are reminded by Wales (2009), that “teachers’ feelings are an important aspect of their work, because much of the work of teachers is about how they express their identities and personalities in the classroom” (p262). Craft (2000) also states that a significant theme within her research, is the belief that as educators our self-esteem and self-confidence needs to be nourished if we are to be creative. Therefore, it is critical to acknowledge how a lack of confidence may influence teachers’ teaching practices. The teachers’ narratives indicate that co-creating improved their self-esteem in terms of their pedagogical skills, and increased
their confidence in their drama practice. In some ways, it can be argued they also realised the value of their Professional Craft Knowledge within this experience.

A central tenet of adopting a co-creating attitude is the belief that the teacher should become more egalitarian in their approach to drama, and should become a co-artist in the work. While challenging at first, this seems to open up a new way of working for the teachers. The teacher surrenders their role as the imparter of knowledge, therefore empowering the students, allowing them to impact the work imaginatively, artistically, intellectually, as well as practically. They are no longer the font of all knowledge; therefore they do not carry the “burden of having to have all the ideas” (Barbara-I2), or constructing the drama by themselves with the students simply as players. In co-creating, the students are a central part of the co-created experience, which permits them to share their imagination, ideas, and knowledge with the teachers; this then provides the teacher with insight and support in terms of the drama experience. The sharing relationship also gives the teachers and students more freedom to interact and play. For this to happen, a shift in the relationship of the teacher and the students, their interactions, and the teachers’ strategies is required. However, the outcomes in terms of students’ creativity, social and theoretical learning, and the teachers’ confidence and enthusiasm can be seen throughout their narratives.
Summary

The previous three chapters examined the essential themes that emerged through the teachers’ experiences of co-creating drama with their students. The teachers’ descriptions contain a complex collection of elements; narratives on what they do in their co-creating experiences, meanings they give to their actions, and aims, ideals and beliefs supporting the attitude. As their stories began to unfold, notable themes began to emerge.

The essence of the first theme: *Navigating to unexpected destinations* was exemplified with specific experiences and accounts, all dealing with the supports and attitudes necessary to navigate co-creating drama. The teachers’ narratives point to teachers being sensitive to the creative and operational dimensions of the practice. The approaches and knowledge all offer an interesting insight into the essential underlining assumptions of the practice.

Through a review of the second theme: *Teacher commitment*, we gain insight into the complexities of the teacher’s role in co-creating drama and the nature of the student-teacher relationship within the co-creating drama experience. This theme was illustrated by statements made by teachers about the shared nature of the work and the teachers’ attitude within the process, the importance of trust in the students and their contributions, and also students having trust in the teachers.

A unifying meaning of the third theme: *The outcomes of co-creating drama* was evident in the positive outcomes of the co-creating practice and the nature of the learning involved. Many of the teachers exemplified experiences and expressed sentiments of how they were surprised by the students’ capabilities and creativity. They also highlighted how the co-creating experience has served to cultivate their confidence in their drama practice.
Chapter Twelve

Concluding thoughts and recommendations
The focus of this final chapter of the dissertation is to readdress the research questions that guided this study. A brief summary of the study purpose will be provided, followed by key insights that have been drawn from the analysis. Finally, recommendations and proposals for further research will be suggested.

The purpose of this study was to build an understanding of what it is like to be a teacher who is a co-creator of drama in a primary school in Ireland, and to reflect on the meaning of this attitude for the teachers. It also aimed to be attentive to the relationship between the experience of co-creating drama and the ideas that guide this practice. Therefore, its aim was to uncover the essences of the phenomenon through examining the motivations, experiences, and reflections of the teachers. A hermeneutical phenomenological approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience as it was perceived and lived by the teachers. In this way, the approach permitted the study to focus on the teachers’ ‘lived’ experience and an understanding of their co-creating practice as told through their own narratives. Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that teacher narratives can be considered a powerful way to understand the complex processes of sense-making in teaching. Therefore, the teachers’ reflections provide rich and authentic knowledge on how the co-creating experience unfolds in its essence. It is important to note that in using Heidegger’s phenomenology as a philosophical framework, the study does not attempt to generalise outcomes, rather, it provides an opportunity for the reader to ‘imagine’ what co-creating could potentially be like for them by offering a portrayal of the common experiences. It is hoped that the readers may identify “shared characteristics” enabling them “to transfer information to other settings” (Creswell 1998, p203).

**Significant findings and outcomes of this research**

The main research question was: **What are the experiences of teachers co-creating drama in the Irish classroom?** The study illustrates how seven primary school teachers in Ireland experience co-creating drama with their students. The data analysis resulted in three essential themes that emerged from the teachers’ descriptions and stories of co-creating. The first theme presents the teachers’ descriptions of the operational dimensions of the practice. In order to engage in rewarding co-creating experiences with their students, the teachers identify the following features as essential to embrace. First amongst these, is having a sharp awareness of the opportunities that emerge, and
being receptive and reactive to them. As Anne describes, she now looks for “the potential of a response” (Anne-I4), as it can provide an opportunity to build the drama or progress the work. The teachers also suggest that possessing the ability to respond to these opportunities; in other words, taking action in a dramatic and artistic sense is also essential. Bearing this in mind, they seem to believe that having the requisite drama skills and techniques is a necessity. They also discuss being supportive to the children, and listening with total attention. Next, the teachers describe the use of skilful questioning, challenging the students’ answers, and the importance of arousing curiosity. We can understand from their insights in this first theme, that building an atmosphere free from right and wrong, in order to encourage risk taking is important, because as George says, “when you are being creative you are taking a chance” (George-I4). We see some of these principles reflected in Craft’s suggestion that creativity can be, “shaped crafted and encouraged” (Craft 2000, p34). The teachers ‘shape’ and ‘craft’ through skilful questioning within the process, and they actively encourage the students by reassuring them, and being open to, and respectful of their contributions. In addition to this, the teachers’ comments and sentiments also revolve around descriptions of building a flexible structure. They recognise that within co-creating they do not have ultimate control over the direction, content or outcome, therefore they feel a balance between student freedom and structure is important, as Anne suggests, “You need something to hang your hat on…it’s just having little crutches along the way” (Anne-I4).

The second theme illustrates the importance of the teachers’ involvement in, and commitment to the co-creating experience. One way this commitment is highlighted is through the teachers’ statements and attitudes regarding the need for a sharing relationship with their students. They describe offering the students more choice, and opportunities for decision making, and essentially giving them more power over the experience. We are reminded here of the constructivist nature of co-creating, and the extent of the commitment on the teachers’ part is demonstrated through their willingness to let go of some of their overt signs of power. Aitken et al. (2007) suggest this type of relationship requires openness, flexibility, and accommodation on the teacher’s part. I would go further by suggesting that the significance of this sharing relationship for the students, is in how it allows them to move from being participants of drama to being creators of drama. The teachers also describe becoming co-artists, whereby they become invested in the creative endeavour with their students, sharing
imaginative and creative ideas, collaborating, and taking an artistically involved role in that process. Through the sharing behaviours and beliefs that the teachers describe, we can see how they can build a culture in the classroom which focuses on drama as a shared, social and creative enterprise. Within the theme of teacher commitment, the significance of the teachers’ depth of involvement in the process also emerges. This is demonstrated most frequently through descriptions of their use of Teacher in Role (TiR), and how it allows them to move from figures of authority to co-participants in the drama experience. Furthermore, the teachers describe how TiR enlivens a playful environment, and how it can involve a type of dramatic artistry, whereby the teacher in role can provoke, co-construct, and stimulate the children’s thinking (Dewey 1966). The teachers also note ‘being present’ (Barbara 14) as an important type of teacher commitment. This may be linked to the teachers having an “awareness, receptivity, and connectedness” with the group, and the co-creating experience (Roger and Raider-Roth 2006, p265). Finally, within this theme, the teachers describe building a reciprocal trusting relationship as essential, if co-creation is to happen, and if the teachers’ commitment and involvement is to be realised.

The final theme discusses the outcomes of co-creating drama, in terms of the students, their learning and the teachers’ practice. There are five major outcomes. The first outcome is the creative nature of the students’ learning. The teachers indicate the potential of co-creating to create a rich creative environment. They refer to many instances of imagination and creativity, and the use of creative thinking. This highlights how the skilled use of the various artistic and educational possibilities that exist across the spectrum of drama, within the right educational context, can enable some co-creation between the teachers and students. It also shows how a co-creating attitude on the part of the teacher can enable the full spectrum of drama activity. The second outcome that is evident is how the work is unique to the group, because the understanding they are achieving is co-constructed, contextual and emergent, and not dependent on planned outcomes. The third outcome to emerge is how the teachers saw new qualities of the students’ personalities and attributes, and how the students grew personally and socially in unexpected ways. Within this discussion, some of the teachers talk about their ‘surprise’ at the imaginative capabilities of the students. This may happen because sometimes in the coming together of teacher and students in this collective creative enterprise, where the content and outcomes are not directed or
predetermined, students can be afforded more opportunity to both initiate and display imagination, creativity and different types of thinking. Furthermore, the improvisational nature of co-creating delivers unexpected moments for both the teacher and students, which offers them an opportunity to respond to things in new ways. In addition, the teachers explain how during the co-creating experiences, they recognised how the students were capable for more at certain points in the work. Perhaps as the students and teacher roles become less structured, and the students begin to share power with the teacher, it ‘releases’ the student and allows them to become as Greene suggests, ‘more’, moving them “to reach beyond themselves; it is the idea of being more, becoming different, experiencing more deeply” (Greene 1987, p14). Another outcome is that the more practiced the teachers and students become, the more comfortable the process becomes. This would suggest that both parties learn to cope with the fluid and improvisational elements of the approach and learn to work in a shared and creative way. Huberman and Miles (1984) note that teachers develop commitment to changes in their practice, when they begin to master them in the classroom. Therefore, their craft knowledge (Brown and McIntyre 1993) is augmented through the repeated practice of co-creating. This allows them not only to acquire the skill, creative capabilities and knowledge leading to an improved management of the co-creating experience, but also allows them to build on the skills and knowledge that already exist in their general practice. Finally, all the teachers feel their confidence in their drama practice has become greater because of their co-creating experiences. They describe having a confidence in their skills, and having a confidence in their own drama practice. There is also the added insight that the improvisational and spontaneous nature of drama is favoured by some teachers over a more procedural method, because they believe it offers them more freedom, and for some, it suits their particular teaching style. What is noticeable in this theme are the positive gains of co-creating drama, not just in terms of its focus on the social, creative and intellectual impact on the students, but in the positive attitudes towards drama that emerged in the teachers.

Recommendations
The nature of a phenomenological study is to simply share the common experiences of those willing to relate to that experience. In saying that, the themes of this study open
opportunities for new dialogues about drama and co-creating drama in Irish primary schools.

Many of the teachers of this study describe how before this study, they used drama mainly as a teaching method, or integrated drama with another subject rather than conducting independent drama lessons. It is important to acknowledge what is lost when drama is not recognised as a discipline in its own right. The full potency of the spectrum of drama may not be realised, the act of creating something new, and the child operating as artist in the drama experience may also be lost. There is no suggestion here that all drama practice should involve co-creating. But, this research does highlight that some of the teachers felt that their students’ creativity was enabled to a greater degree through their adoption of a co-creating attitude. This issue can be addressed through more emphasis in the curriculum on the appreciation and awareness of drama as a discipline in its own right, and the aesthetic, creative and artistic opportunities within this. Also, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support could also be put in place to refresh this thinking in teachers.

The importance of the teachers’ confidence in their creative abilities, and its impact on their drama practice was the subject of much discussion throughout the interviews. Some of the teachers’ reflections in this study suggest that they often feel ill-equipped to develop and support creativity in their students. Craft (2000) states there is a need to nourish the creativity of the teacher, if they are to nourish this in their students. Therefore, it is worth considering how teacher educators in Initial Teacher Education and CPD can address this further.

The complexity and diversity of the creative processes in classroom drama can make it challenging for some teachers, therefore the drama curriculum should be relevant and above all useful to the teachers. However, the drama curriculum did not feature as an aid in the teachers’ practice in any of the interviews. This is an important issue for curriculum creators and policymakers to address, if teachers are to have a supportive resource available to them.

Finally, there needs to be greater agreement with respect to the practice of drama in Irish schools. If we consider the narratives of the teachers in this study, some describe
how they did not know what drama was before the study, others were ‘putting on shows’ as their drama for the year, and many of the teachers are now actively pursuing a more shared and creative approach. We may understand that these approaches differ greatly, and some are not in keeping with the Irish drama curriculum. Therefore, there is a need to broaden and deepen the manifestation of drama in Irish schools in order to create a balance of provision. This may be achieved through a CPD campaign or through further examination of drama in schools in Initial Teacher Education.

**Opportunities for further research**

The study has raised several areas for further research.

This research has begun to explore teachers co-creating drama with their students. Further phenomenological inquiry could consider the experiences of the students in the co-creating drama encounter. Student voices could offer a sound basis for exploring the practical knowledge, and the personal impact of co-creating drama on the students.

Collaboration between the drama specialist and generalist teachers in this study resulted in learning by both parties. Further research could look at the impact of this experience on the drama specialist’s practice.

A companion study could be conducted with an in-depth look at the effect of the teachers’ co-creating attitude across the full curriculum, with a view to understanding the experience of co-creating across the subjects and the outcome of this.

The concept of *teacher craft knowledge* has proved very valuable in this research. While the concept of *craft knowledge* exists in everyday experiences of education, within the drama context, there seems to be a lack of discussion around this idea. This would be worth exploring, as the narratives of this study point to a connection between teacher identity, teacher artistry, confidence and *craft knowledge*. In this way, teachers’ *craft knowledge* could provide valuable resources for the professional development of teachers in the realm of drama.
Final Words

Working with the teachers of this study has had a profound effect on me. Their commitment to improving their drama practice and to creating positive learning experiences for their students has been inspiring. Although co-creating drama posed challenges for the teachers at the beginning, they persevered. Eventually, they began to create rich creative, learning environments, where they played, experimented and co-created drama with their students. I felt, for the first time in my career, that it was not only the students who thrived and flourished in the drama experience, but that the teachers did also, an outcome which was exciting to witness. Although there were of course moments of uncertainty and struggle, this study for me became a journey of understanding, empathy and personal growth. It asked me to critically explore who I am as a professional, a drama practitioner, an artist and a researcher. Ultimately, I came to understand that my doctoral journey offered me the sense of belonging to a community of supportive academics who had the same value for drama as I did. It ignited my curiosity in teachers and their experiences of drama, and fundamentally, it allowed me to finally have an impact on teachers’ lives, I hope in a positive way.
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Appendices
Appendix 1

Teacher Information sheet

Study
The teacher as co-creator of drama: A phenomenological study of the experiences and reflections of Irish primary school teachers

Introduction/Purpose:
I, Fiona McDonagh a doctoral student at Mary Immaculate College am conducting a research study to examine what it means for teachers to be a co-creator of drama in an Irish classroom. This study will explore the experience of co-creation in the classroom, how teachers achieve this and the circumstances under which it occurs. In July 2012, you participated in a Continuous Professional Development summer course in Galway Education Centre facilitated by me. The course investigated the teacher’s role in drama and explored becoming a co-creator of drama.

Following this course you have been asked to participate in this research study. There will be approximately 4/5 teacher participants from the west of Ireland in the study.

Procedures:
If you agree to be involved in this research study, is envisaged that the research will consist of the following stages:

- You will be then asked to participate in an initial open-ended interview with me discussing your experience of teaching drama. The interview will be a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 90 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded and can be held at your school; in your classroom or an alternative location that you identify. The names of staff or students are not necessary, and I will encourage all interviewees to not mention them by name.

- You will then be asked to activate what you understand to be a co-creating attitude in your classroom.

- I will visit the school on three occasions between Sept 2012 and Dec 2012 to facilitate 3 workshops/ classes where I will co-teach with you to support your interpretation/ adoption of the co-creating attitude. The sessions will be approximately 1 hour long. The content and times of these classes can be decided once the initial meeting has happened. The focus of the study is on the teaching of drama, particularly your experience of teaching drama, not you the teacher and not the children.

Fiona McDonagh
Research Postgraduate & Departmental Assistant
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education,
Mary Immaculate College,
South Circular Road,
Limerick.
Office: G24A   0877769825
• The study is a phenomenological investigation which means I will focus on your ‘lived experience’ of being a co-creator of drama. The methodology will be phenomenological with data analysed using phenomenological guidelines. The focus of a phenomenological study lies in the descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience it. Therefore, the focus of the study is on your experience of teaching drama. The basis for adopting a phenomenological methodology is to allow me to study your drama and co-creation practice from your perspective and give a voice to your lived experience.

• There will be 3 in-depth interviews between Sept 2012 and Dec 2012. This will allow me to collect examples of the co-creation experiences in order to reflect on the meanings that may emerge in them. The interviews are likely to happen on the same day that I will be co-teaching with you in the school.

• You will be assigned a Pseudonym. Responses will be confidential, you will not be personally identified nor will your responses be attributed to you.

• Once the primary interviews are transcribed and reviewed, you will be notified by telephone or email whether or not a follow-up interview is necessary. A follow-up interview may be needed for clarification and verification to ensure accuracy. You will be asked to review the transcript and a brief analysis of the interviews for verification purposes.

**Questions you may have:**

**How will confidentiality be kept?**

School and Teachers will be given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The pseudonyms will be used throughout the research project. Pseudonyms will also be assigned to the students. Only the researcher will have access to the pseudonym identities. The link file containing the pseudonyms and real names of the participants will be deleted within 3 years of submission of my thesis.

**The archive:**

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. All data and texts will be kept in strict confidence. The original recording and transcripts and all other data including the video recordings will be available only to me and my supervisor. All data will be kept in a secure location in the Faculty of Education in Mary Immaculate College. The video recordings will be erased or recorded over after they have served their learning purpose. The storage of data is in conjunction with Mary Immaculate College’s research record retention period and also complies with Data Protection legislation.

**Risks:**

There is minimal risk involved in this study. I will ensure that the research is not subjecting you and the other participants to embarrassment or undue professional risk.

**Voluntary Nature of Participation and Right to Withdraw without Consequence:**

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence.

**Student participation:** Your students’ participation in the research is entirely voluntary. They and their parents/guardians must give consent for them to participate and they can withdraw at any time without consequence. In terms of the children that do not agree to
participate: once discussed and agreed with you and the school then arrangements will be made to accommodate these students, possibly by placing them in another class during the drama sessions (approx. 1 hour) or engaging them in other school work during the drama sessions.

Benefit:
The benefit for participation in this study is that it may give voice to your experience as a teacher facilitating drama in your classroom, and possibly add to the general knowledge about drama in the classroom and the potential role of co-creator. The nature of drama is powerful and complex and poses many difficulties in terms of the teacher’s pedagogical role. This study will also offer an understanding of the pedagogical challenges and perceptions of drama in the classroom. Potentially, this information could be used to spark further research regarding co-creation and also provide both academics and teachers with a more rich understanding of the potential of co-creation of drama in Irish classrooms.

How will the information be disseminated?
Upon completion the study will be presented in the form of a written doctoral thesis. It may also be presented at conferences and published in academic papers and books and help further the study of drama in Irish classrooms.

If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may contact
Fiona McDonagh   fiona.mcdonagh@mic.ul.ie
0877769825

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:
MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
061-204515
mirec@mic.ul.ie
Appendix 2

Teacher consent form

Study
The teacher as co-creator of drama: A phenomenological study of the experiences and reflections of Irish primary school teachers

- I have read and understood the teacher information sheet.
- I understand what the research is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of all of the procedures and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study any stage without giving reason.

Signature of research participant
I understand what is involved in this research and I agree to participate in the study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________ ________  ________________________ ______
Signature of participant     Date     Signature of researcher     Date

I, Fiona McDonagh believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may contact Fiona McDonagh  fiona.mcdonagh@mic.ul.ie
0877769825

Fiona McDonagh
Research Postgraduate & Departmental Assistant
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education,
Mary Immaculate College,
South Circular Road,
Limerick.
Office: G24A  0877769825
Child Information sheet

Dear Pupil,

You are invited to take part in a study called; “Inspiring primary school teachers in Ireland to become dynamic co-creators in classroom drama: A phenomenological study of the cultivation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and beliefs.”

I am trying to learn about what happens in your drama class because I want to help your teacher and other teachers find a way to have a bigger part in drama classes. I could learn a lot more about drama from watching you work with their teacher. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will only have to be part of the drama classes your teacher gives and let her try new drama ideas. I will come in a number of times before Christmas to work with you and your teacher when you are doing drama. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian and you have to say it’s OK for you to be in the study. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be upset at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s OK. You can stop at any time.

You can talk to me or your teacher if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.

If you have worries about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you can contact the MIREC Administrator, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick, 061-204515 Email: mirec@mic.ul.ie

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.
Thank you,
Fiona
Study Title:
*Inspiring primary school teachers in Ireland to become dynamic co-creators in classroom drama: A phenomenological study of the cultivation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and beliefs.*

**Agreement**

- I have read and understood the child information sheet.
- My parents/guardian have talked to me about being part of the research study.
- It has been explained to me that the study will involve classes in the school where Fiona will teach drama with our teacher and we will be part of this experience.
- I know that I will be audio-video recorded when I am working with Fiona.
- I know I am free to decide not to take part in this study if I wish.
- I know that if I agree to be part in this project and later change my mind, I do not have to take part anymore.

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don't have to do it. Fiona has answered all my questions.

_________________________  ________________________
Signature of Study Participant                      Date

_________________________  ________________________
Signature of Researcher                               Date

PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE TO SCHOOL
Appendix 5

Title of Study
Inspiring primary school teachers in Ireland to become dynamic co-creators in classroom drama: A phenomenological study of the cultivation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and beliefs.

Dear Parent / Guardian/Responsible Other,

I, Fiona McDonagh, a doctoral student at Mary Immaculate College am conducting a research study to examine what it means for teachers to be a ‘dynamic co-creator’ of drama in an Irish classroom setting. Becoming a dynamic co-creator means the teacher takes on a more creative and collaborative role with the children in their drama work.

There will be approximately 4/5 teacher participants form the west of Ireland in this study. Your child’s teacher ____________________ and her/his class have been asked to participate in this study. The study is proposed to happen in __________________ Primary school between Sept 2012 and Dec 2012.

What will my child have to do?
The students will continue their normal classwork, their teacher will simply be teaching drama in a more shared way with them. I will come into the school a number of times between Sept and Dec 2012 and during these visits I will co-teach drama with the teacher and also observe the teacher working with the students during their drama class. The main focus of this study is on the experience of the teacher teaching drama, not the teacher and particularly not the children.

Participation in the research is on a completely voluntary basis. Your child does not have to participate in this study if you or your child does not want to. If you agree and then change your mind about your child’s involvement, you are free to withdraw them from the research at any time without consequence. For the children that do not wish to participate, arrangements will be made to accommodate these students elsewhere during the drama sessions. Also, your child’s anonymity during the study is assured.
What are the risks?
There are no risks in this study other than those involved in everyday practice at school.

What are the Benefits?
The benefit of participation in this study is that I hope drama classes can become more engaging for your child and their teacher. As well as this, the teacher’s involvement in the study is an opportunity for them to gain more skill in the area of teaching drama and thus improve the everyday drama experience for your child. Upon completion the study will be presented in the form of a written doctoral thesis. It may also be presented at conferences and published in academic papers and books and help further the study of drama in Irish classrooms.

If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may contact me at: 0877769825 or fiona.mcdonagh@mic.ul.ie

The study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Mary Immaculate College (MIREC). If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:
MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
061-204515
mirec@mic.ul.ie

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS
Appendix 6

Study Title: Inspiring primary school teachers in Ireland to become dynamic co-creators in classroom drama: A phenomenological study of the cultivation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and beliefs.

Parent/ Guardian/ Responsible Other Informed consent
Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

• I have read and understood the Parent/ Guardian/ Responsible Other information sheet.

• I understand what the research is about, and what the results will be used for.

• I am fully aware of all of the procedures involving my child, and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.

• I know that my child’s participation is voluntary and that he/ she can withdraw from the study any stage without giving reason.

I understand what is involved in this research and I agree to my child participating in the study.

____________________      __________________________
Childs name (PRINTED)     Name of school

______________________________ _________________________
Parent/Guardians name (PRINTED)  Parent/Guardians Signature     Date

PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE TO SCHOOL
Appendix 7

Activities from co-creating drama class

Recorded from working notes made in class
Co-teaching session with Faye (2\textsuperscript{nd} & 3\textsuperscript{rd} class)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I (Fiona) used this image and the circus/clown theme many times so I asked the teacher to lead discussions with the students so I would not influence the direction, and we then consulted on appropriate exercises and conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• approx. 1 hour class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discourse is not verbatim (close as possible from hand written notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle</th>
<th>• Presented Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher Questions i.e. What do we know about the circus what performers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clowns, acrobats, trapeze acts, musicians, tightrope walkers, jugglers, unicyclists, ringmaster etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teacher asks:</th>
<th>&quot;What kind of class do we want this to be?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gives them choices e.g.</td>
<td>&quot;Will we look at making a story about someone in the circus? Or try making the circus come alive?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies vary: make the circus to start is consensus (teacher mediated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher and Fiona agree on Guided Imagery exercise to begin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher narrated/improvised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s picture it then</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Close your eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We’re going to imagine that we’re at the circus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you see? What’s going on doing? What can you smell?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Teacher elicits answers from pupils by putting hand on their shoulders |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairs Quick still image</th>
<th>The teacher asks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create still image of something that is happening at circus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| • They presented ideas- selling popcorn, juggling, clowns etc |
| • all groups were seen |
| • Student asks: can we act them out? |
| • Teacher: will we try to bring it alive for a few seconds?(improvisation) |
| • Consensus: yes |
Circus comes alive all around the room and teacher stops its after 1/2mins

Teachers become spectators as circus and interact with students in character

Teacher and Fiona stop and quieten group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher and Fiona discuss next step decide to open to students</th>
<th><strong>Fiona:</strong> What should we do next?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher:</strong> Who are you? What do you do? What type of act are you? <strong>Fiona:</strong> You can be as ordinary or as extraordinary as you like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When they decided, they were asked to show us what they do physically- gave them time to do this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher:</strong> You will only get ten seconds to show us the best part of your act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They presented group by group and we discussed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher and Fiona decide on guidelines for students

Teacher and Fiona agree on adding tension but allowing students to decide how

| **Fiona explains:** |
| You are going to meet someone…someone important and someone not so happy…who might that be? |
| Reply consensus: Ringmaster |
| **Teacher:** Why might he not be so happy? |
| Replies vary |
| **Teacher:** what might make a good story? |
| Teacher mediates answers and takes one idea |
| **Teacher:** ok so maybe the circus has to close down? Why? **Teacher:** decide why? They are in same groups (four/five) |
| Presented ideas- whole group agree on one idea (teacher mediated) |
| **Fiona:** lets meet ringmaster to find out more |
| Fiona sets up guidelines of TIR |
| Teacher in role  
| (TiR)          | Students in role                        |
| Hot-seating    |                                       |
| Teacher becomes Ringmaster / Students ask questions  |
| TIR improvises: no audiences, TV and video games are the problem, can’t afford to stay open, too many acts, you all cost me too much!  |
| Students pled with Ringmaster to keep it open  |
| TIR –Ringmaster: you better come up with some ideas because we are closing next week!!! Ringmaster leaves  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole group discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiona: How should we tackle this now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of discussion- Teacher mediates – quietens group, clarifies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher suggests they go into groups to make up different ideas, some want pens and papers to record ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: you work at the circus, your acts are brilliant but now you are all in danger of losing your jobs and moving away from your friends here-how could you keep it open?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and Fiona circle groups and query ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the ideas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need big star/ act to bring in crowds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Re-train some of the acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Find out what public want-how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Get rid of Ringmaster, he is the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Get rid of biggest cost i.e. biggest act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Close down and start new business/ entertainment Company!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Lots of ideas- pick one that you think would work the best and present to whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: What should we do next time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher highlights interesting ideas for next time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student one: go back to Ringmaster with the ideas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student two: we should protest! With signs and stuff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class ends**
Appendix 8

Excerpt from George’s interview – example of co-creating drama

Fiona,
Ya of course…they are magic aren’t they?

Respondent
They are good kids, there is a lot of good characters. What I find with them is…there are no clicks or no gangs. There is no one picking or there is no one shouting, there is nice harmony within the group. They can come up with an idea and even if it’s not the best nobody will shoot them down.

Fiona
Ya, when you are doing drama it’s important that you don’t have that negativity in the room, like feedback is fine but it should stay constructive.

Respondent
Yes, it means people can try things out…they should be free with their ideas and take a chance because sometimes when you are being creative you are taking a chance. You know, today they came up with ideas quickly, and the minute they were given a task the heads went down to do it.

Fiona
Ya, the circus work today…what did you think?

Respondent
The circus idea is one that they are all familiar with, as you could see they were well able to throw in their two pence worth! As regards where it would go or what would happen, it definitely was open and gave plenty of room for collaborating.

Fiona
Did you see that [collaborating] happening, what did you notice?

Respondent
They were making a lot of the decisions…I was in on it but I didn’t have the final say if you know what I mean, we had to come to an agreement I suppose. When we were making the still pictures too, I let them lead me, I was happy to be told what to do. Actually I noticed they were very quick to tell me where I had to go [laughter]…you know they enjoyed putting Mr Walters into his position…giving me a role, it was good for them to see me take instructions…as well, like they saw me like one of them. And definitely when I went into teacher in role as the clown, when they were deciding new jobs for me [the clown character]…and they were talking to him directly, and I was in the improvisation, I like that type of thing, you know making stuff up as I go along! [laughter].
Fiona
[laughter] Yes em…what about you in role, have you done that much before?

Respondent
Yes, they would be familiar with me going into role…they like it because you see I am no longer the teacher, I am in the drama and I suppose they feel that they can say things or act in a way that they are possibly not allowed do in class time. There are lots of reasons to do it really. Firstly by being in role…I could guide them to open up the different characters and I could also guide them in coming up with ideas….it was good for them to see me in role as well, you know being a part of it…I just find that for that time you’re their equal…you’re the children’s equal…you’re not the teacher…you’re another character in the drama I suppose…I enjoy it, my challenge is to make sure that I don’t get lost in it too much! [laughter]. And when they’re in role, it’s safe for them too, they know that okay we are doing a drama here and he can’t really give out to me if I am doing something in role or whatever. But I make them justify their actions too…if they are not being true to their character; I ask them would she really do that? I suppose I like getting into it as well because I like the acting aspect…I like letting myself go a little bit with them.

Fiona
I like that you challenged them, like you had set up the ringmaster as being business minded and a bit kind of…not so much cross…but a bit tough and you played that really well, because sometimes when I’m in that situation I kind of want to please them. But I love that you challenged them and it made them come with legitimate reasons to keep the clown. And the questions you asked…it made they work harder at it!

Respondent
If they are being a character, you have to be really in the moment with them. And even, like if you are going to be in character you have to try be the character, because they don’t see it then unless you are being true to it. If you’re just saying oh yeah you are right to everything, well then they don’t see you as being the character…so it’s just good to challenge them as the character would.

Fiona
It’s good to challenge them.

Respondent
Ya, it’s good to challenge them. I kept saying ‘why would I keep him at the circus? He’s running customers out of the place because he’s so unfunny and I’m losing money? Why should I keep him?’ A simple but important question. The problem for the girls is that they all went for emotion…‘please keep him’, whereas they missed the point that the ringmaster…me…I had no emotional ties whatsoever and didn’t particularly care. This guy wasn’t turning over the money, so he was out! But once I challenged them….they came back with real ideas to keep him. So it’s not just questions, it’s to then question their responses too I think.

Fiona
I mean, like all their ideas were valid but like what was really going to help the situation…that’s what we wanted them to figure out.
Respondent
He [ringmaster] needed to get some cash...quick. There was no room for sentimental stuff with him! [laughter]. But, I felt you were fantastic there, there was one or two answers that obviously weren’t going to work in the real world like…but you praised them and thanked them, then we debated why it wouldn’t work and that made them think about it again, and off we went.

Fiona
I took that from you cause I saw you doing that earlier! [laughter] I suppose if they decided actually no, and said that’s a really good reason teacher, you know like the group are going ‘no no that is a good reason!’…we would have to go with that, do you know what I mean. So I guess that’s scary…like this way of working you never know what will happen.

Respondent
But if it doesn’t work there is learning in that for them. Like I guess you have to be open to what happens next! Like, I would love to see them going off in a different direction as long as the direction they are going in is still within the boundaries…working boundaries…of where we would like it to go. This work doesn’t really make me nervous, because you know there are still ways of directing it if you want. At the end of the day, I’d like it to go wherever they want it to go, but within those boundaries. The whole thing opened up…they came up with their own ideas…ok yes we structured it as regards setting up the meeting and things like that…but the ideas were all their work. While I was there to facilitate, I wasn’t telling them a right way to go. These things we were using, like the meeting or me…in role, offered it structure I suppose…we all have our favourite things…mine is…teacher in role and that…things that teachers are confident in, that we know work well…that offers structure too.

Fiona
So the experience today…

Respondent
Today the students had to be...creative about what they are doing, or how they are going to solve the problem. I would always have felt I wasn’t doing that enough. They are making their own drama now…like creating it…there is a real buzz in the room when it’s happening. It’s exciting for them because they’re making things of their own, and for me too…it’s exciting to see what they are going to do. When we do this, we appeal to the artistic side of their brain by giving them opportunities to come up with different ideas…and to create.

Fiona
And like we didn’t really come up with a solution in the end

Respondent
I think it is important that there isn’t always an answer or there isn’t always a right answer or you know what I mean you’re not always going to finish off what you started or whatever. It’s not always going to be full stop. That’s life.