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Assessing Creativity: Teachers' perceptions of the  
effect of the National Certificate of Educational  
Achievement (NCEA) on teaching and learning in the  
secondary drama classroom in New Zealand

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the implications for New Zealand secondary drama educators of the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment in drama. Traditionally a “fringe” subject with little academic credibility, drama has moved to the mainstream of secondary education with the introduction of NCEA assessment. This has carried with it improvements in terms of the recognition of drama as a secondary subject; however, it has also required a re-evaluation of pedagogical priorities for drama practitioners.

The data which formed the basis of this research were collected through interviews with drama educators throughout New Zealand. A hermeneutic approach was employed in the analysis of data in order to understand the extent to which the teachers’ priorities for teaching and learning were challenged by NCEA.

With no pre-existing models of national assessment in drama on which to scaffold the transition to NCEA, the introduction of NCEA assessment has necessitated the formulation of an entirely new system derived from a wide range of existing practices and approaches. In this study sites of tension were identified in the interface between the historic practices of drama education and the requirements of a national assessment system. Drama is an open and creative subject. Assessment systems, on the other hand, are necessarily defined by criteria designed to meet the objectives of national curricula. This thesis explores teachers’ perceptions of the pedagogical challenges associated with arriving at a synthesis of these competing discourses in drama education.

The main findings from this study indicate that the personal ideologies of the interviewees, which had been influenced by the particular nature of the historical development of drama education, had a direct effect on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. The participants in the study evinced an intrinsic commitment to nurturing student creativity through drama education by utilising a combination of kinaesthetic, interpersonal and linguistic approaches to teaching and learning. Interviewees perceived the existence of sites of tension in the process of assimilating the creative and explorative features of drama education into a prescribed schedule of curriculum and assessment requirements. These included challenges associated with structure and management of the assessment schedule and the workload generated by the implementation of NCEA.

The teachers in this study acknowledged that the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama had resulted in a shift from a marginalised position in New Zealand education to one of recognition as a mainstream secondary subject. This change in the status of drama education had generated increased enrolments in the subject; participants in the study, however, discerned a lack of appropriate pre-service teacher education in drama which would ensure its continued success in the future.

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## 1. Introduction

*In a living theatre, we would each day approach the rehearsal putting yesterday's discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us. But the Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done.*  
(Brook, 1968, p. 14)

This thesis comprises an enquiry into the perceptions of secondary drama teachers in New Zealand regarding the effect of the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) on teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom. It explores secondary school drama educators' reported experiences of the impact of official curriculum and assessment requirements on their pedagogical practice.

The genesis of this research study began with my own sense of unease about aspects of assessment in drama for this new national secondary school qualification. Initially, like many drama teachers, I was excited at the prospect of the new opportunities that NCEA offered. To teach drama at all three of the senior levels (i.e. Years 11, 12, 13) and to be able to teach drama exclusively, rather than English or any other of the "real" subjects, was a welcome prospect. I soon discovered, however, that the implementation of NCEA presented many philosophical and pedagogical challenges.

In *The Empty Space*, Brook (1968) encapsulates the tensions inherent in attempting to systemise an art form and it seemed to me that it was important that drama remain a *living* form despite the pressures of assessment and accountability. I began to wonder if the fact that drama had

always been perceived as a fringe activity was the reason for its liveliness and, therefore, its popularity with a diverse range of students. Peter Brook's work confirmed my suspicion that there is a danger in telling students involved in a creative process how things "should" be done and an insistence on a received academic approach to classic or famous plays might prevent them from seeing these works anew.

I was also concerned that the requirements of assessment might compromise the use of creative processes in the classroom. My own attitudes to drama have developed over more than 40 years of involvement in either the performance or the teaching of drama, and it was a challenge for me to encompass a radically new approach to the subject. A short personal narrative may serve to illustrate my own position as a drama educator and, therefore, the influences which shaped my approach to this study.

### **1.1 A Personal Story**

My interest in drama began as a teenager in the theatre. I appeared on television, in a children's programme, and was cast in several plays for radio. Inevitably, I resolved to become an actor and enrolled for a Performers Diploma in Speech and Drama at the University of Cape Town's Little Theatre, a three year course. It was in Cape Town that I discovered the other side of drama through exploring improvisational approaches to my work. It was a creative and exciting adventure.

In New Zealand I began to attend drama workshops at the, then, Hawkes Bay Community College (now the Eastern Institute of Technology). Here I discovered the work of Way, Slade and Heathcote and became convinced of the importance of the process of creating drama irrespective of the

product. I sat the LSB (Licentiate of the Speech Board) examination and, using the New Zealand Speech Board syllabus, began tutoring students after school. The environment of a private practice made it possible for me to use improvisational methods in my teaching which developed and grew over time.

I enrolled as an extramural student at Massey University and began study towards a Bachelor of Arts and then moved to Palmerston North to complete a Diploma of Teaching. Later, I completed a Masters of Arts in English from Massey University.

I began work at a secondary school, teaching English, integrated studies and a Year 10 drama option. I was heartened by the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) which appeared to signal a new era in drama education. With the introduction of NCEA achievement standards, drama at the school grew enough for me to teach it full-time. There are, at the time of writing, three teachers in the drama department, some of whom also teach English.

The dilapidated drama room, which for many years had been used for a variety of other subjects, has been restored to its former purpose. It did take some time to convince the school management that the drama room needed some refurbishment and, eventually, I offered to paint it myself if they would purchase the paint and hire the scaffolding. Later that year it was re-carpeted.

With the introduction of NCEA assessment, however, we found our resources were inadequate. The requirements for the taping of assessments and the need to use audio/visual resources put pressure on the recently established Drama Department. The one school video camera was often in use and

our television and VCR were well past their best. We did not have any sound equipment. At the time, it was difficult to obtain school funding for these purchases but our applications to gaming trusts were successful and, in that way, we equipped the department.

I did not doubt for a moment that the establishment of drama as a secondary school subject was worth this level of personal commitment. The enjoyment of the students, and the creativity engendered in the classroom through the process of working in drama, made it seem worthwhile. However, as I worked with NCEA, and the requirements appeared to become increasingly stringent, I found myself in a personal struggle between the centrality of process and the importance of results. When, it seemed to me, written portfolios had come to carry the same weight as practical performance in assessing student work, I sometimes found myself uncertain as to where my priorities lay. In addition, like many other teachers, my workload had escalated.

I began to question whether other drama teachers in New Zealand were experiencing the same dilemma. I could find no literature on the subject and, apart from casual conversations, had no idea how teachers were managing NCEA assessment in their classrooms. It was only a short step for me to make the decision to carry out research into this question myself and I enrolled in the Doctor of Education programme at Massey University College of Education.

Eisner (1991), drawing a parallel between works of art and the practice of teaching, suggests that teachers and schools participate in history and are part of a tradition in that they reflect a genre of practice and an ideology: "Those who know the tradition, understand the history, are familiar with those genres, and can see what those settings and

practices consist of are most likely to have something useful to say about them" (p. 3). My thesis examines the reported experiences of drama teachers in implementing NCEA assessment in drama because they are the ones most likely to have something *useful to say*. The following section describes the context in which they work and its *genre of practice*.

## 1.2 Providing the Context

Over the past decade, drama education in New Zealand has undergone a substantial and rapid transition from the fringe to the mainstream and from a high degree of autonomy in practice to operating within a structure defined by official curriculum and assessment requirements.

For drama educators, maintaining the creative impulse of their work may be compromised by these official requirements. The continual modifications of assessment requirements and a range of workload issues can lead to an emphasis on product rather than process and, therefore, less adaptability to the needs of the moment. Hargreaves (1994) attests that the intensification of demands on teachers has led to "the principles of educational workers being eroded" (p. 118).

An examination of the history of drama education demonstrates the influence of a child-centred pedagogy on its evolution. Historically, the ideas of learning through play and making drama for its own sake predominated. The rise of drama-in-education, particularly through the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, reinforced the experiential nature of the subject. Heathcote and Bolton eschewed the primacy of performance and the necessity of assessment, preferring to teach through drama rather than focus on its traditional, theatrical elements. Many of the



teaching methods developed through drama-in-education, particularly in the areas of improvisation and process drama, are still very much a component of drama education, contributing to a range of teaching strategies available to the practitioner.

The difficulty is that process drama takes time and cannot be hurried. Teachers with curriculum schedules to cover and standard assessments to deliver, who wish to be faithful to the ideals of drama education, are faced with a conundrum. Secondary school drama is situated within a national credentialing framework and drama educators are obliged to conform to the requirements of that structure. These competing discourses are ones that drama teachers must negotiate on a daily basis.

At the heart of the matter lies the issue of creativity. Above all, the arts are a creative expression of interior processes. While Codd (2005) asserts that a culture of teaching "emphasises process over product" (p. xvi), the reality is that assessment is concerned with product. While working within the parameters of curriculum and assessment requirements, drama teachers attempt to find the balance between creativity, with all the fluidity that that suggests, and accountability, with its focus on results. For secondary teachers, this "infatuation with accountability" (Taylor, 2006, p. 118) is an important issue for, beyond the classroom, it is through assessment results that their work and, indeed their school, is judged.

Efforts to either justify or validate the worth of drama as a mainstream subject have made drama teachers susceptible to a culture of *performativity*. Codd (2005) maintains that this culture of performativity has been created in educational institutions where "the moral dimension" (p. xvi) of

teaching has become less important than being seen to be performing successfully. An emphasis on assessment results, and the quest for academic recognition can obscure the fundamental value of drama as a means of learning through personal ownership and experimentation.

Bernstein (1996) expressed the way in which power was "relayed" through pedagogical discourse by means of the term *classification*. He contends that, by preserving the insulation between different groups, power relations create and maintain boundaries. In the context of secondary education these groups are dominated by the model of subject departments. The implementation of power is transmitted through the mechanisms of control which Bernstein termed *framing*. Framing regulates the communication of the boundaries, "classification establishes voice and framing establishes the message" (p.25). Even those schools with weak classification and/or framing will operate within this discourse of power and control.

The primary instrument of framing in arts education is *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* document (Ministry of Education, 2000) which establishes four interrelated learning strands in the arts as a generic field and provides achievement objectives for each of the four disciplines – dance, drama, music and visual art –covering Levels 1-8. While *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* document offers apparent flexibility to drama teachers, the framing is established through the requirements for NCEA assessment. It is in this area that drama teachers experience the tensions at first hand as they attempt to balance the demands on their time and energy.

Broadly speaking, these stresses can be viewed as a dynamic friction between product and process. Drama education is an

aesthetic and creative practice and works best where experiential learning informs the acquisition of skills and academic theory. To be an effective learning tool, drama must engage students in a meaningful way, encouraging dialogue, reflection, collaboration and risk-taking. It is about process. In working with process, the rewards for students are intrinsic as they experience ownership of the material. Productions which earn external validation, and qualifications, provide valuable extrinsic benefits. An emphasis on public perceptions rather than the living process of the classroom can stifle the very energy that gives drama life. As Brook (1968) explains, there is a deadly effect when form takes precedence over creativity. In their work in the classroom, drama teachers are constantly choosing between the moribund and the creative but the decision is not a straightforward one. The following section examines the competing discourses in drama which teachers must negotiate in deciding the fundamentals of their practice.

### **1.3 Competing Discourses in Drama**

To understand the causes of the particular tensions for drama educators, it is necessary to examine the historical factors that have contributed to contemporary drama practice. Not least, it has always been difficult for the arts to find their niche in schools. Traditionally, the marginal status of the arts was taken for granted and, until recently, drama and dance received little recognition as subjects worthy of study in a secondary school. Drama was sometimes included in English classes by individual teachers who were convinced of its worth but, on the whole, it remained outside the mainstream.

Now, as drama takes its place as one of the newer subjects in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of

Education, 1993), its practitioners are attempting to redefine the contours of their practice. There is no previous scaffolding to rearrange or modify but a wealth of possibilities exists. In addition, drama education in New Zealand contains its own dichotomy. The tradition of the school production, with its emphasis on performance, stands in contrast to the methods used by the proponents of drama-in-education and process drama, who consider performance to be, at best, inessential. Most drama teachers in contemporary secondary schools endeavour to make the best use of both approaches, also taking into account those literary aspects of drama which add depth to the subject.

However, there is an awareness among drama educators that the subject is still proving itself. This sensibility, combined with the challenge of working with material that is constantly changing, has compelled teachers to direct much of their energy into managing assessment requirements while continuing to trust that they can, at the same time, provide sufficient creative opportunities for their students.

#### **1.4 Situating the Drama Practitioner**

The work of arts educators involves the active transformation of raw materials into new artworks. The creative process, though directed by the teacher, must be owned by the students, and creativity is an enigma. It is fluid, surprising and subjective. Internationally, there has been renewed focus on the need for creativity to be fostered in schools. The reasons for this are not merely aesthetic. The global marketplace requires individuals to be innovative thinkers who can not only adapt to rapid change but transform it into new ideas.

However, these changes in attitude do not always translate into local awareness. Many still view the arts as an

unnecessary frill. Like other teachers, drama educators wish to be recognised as competent professionals. Bernstein (1996), when examining the importance of teacher conduct in the school environment, contended that framing (control) regulates pedagogic discourse in two ways, through the *social order* and the *discursive order*. The social order regulates behaviour within an institutional hierarchy, while the discursive order controls instruction, what will be taught and when. Bernstein suggests that it is the social order that is paramount in educational institutions. There are expectations of teacher conduct, not only in the areas of appearance and relationships with students but also in the area of attitude. This includes attitudes to work and school structures but also to the very ethos of the school that employs them. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) maintain that "Nothing enters the landscape value-neutral; nothing is there for interest's sake to be discussed and understood as such. Everything comes with a moral push with which teachers are expected to do something" (p. 11). This suggests that in the classroom teachers can only represent a personal ideology if it does not conflict with the ethos of the institution in which they work.

Like power and control, these messages about conduct are not always overtly stated but are expected. Acquiescence to these codes is an acknowledgement of the prevailing power structure (classification). This is what Bernstein terms the *recognition rule*. Working within these implies that behaviour is being effectively controlled (framing); Bernstein calls this the *realisation rule*. In this way, the staff all work from the same premise and have an unspoken awareness of what is appropriate conduct. This makes persistent questioning or comments not only unwelcome but isolating (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 11).

In this way, teachers are discouraged from “rocking the boat”. Equally, the contemporary New Zealand reality may simply be that teachers are too busy for *policy deliberation* and, meanwhile, the accountability trail for the monitoring of assessment of NCEA continues to grow. Hall (2005) suggests the number of legislative, administrative, curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements placed on institutions “has reached a point when too much available time is going into compliance with administration of education reforms than into teaching and learning” (p. 243). A plethora of change means constant revision, and innovation itself becomes a source of stress. At the same time, any sensation of feeling beleaguered induces teacher guilt, generally leading the teacher to make even more effort to cope (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 142).

### **1.5 The Structure of the Thesis**

It is within the context of competing discourses that the reported experience of drama teachers in the implementation of NCEA is best examined. NCEA assessment stands at the centre of the contemporary secondary school system in New Zealand. It is a standards-based assessment model which includes both internally and externally assessed achievement standards and internally assessed unit standards. Assessment tasks revolve around criteria formulated to meet the objectives of the curriculum. A sample of internal standards is moderated annually to ensure that the marking is accurate.

NCEA results are important to schools, teachers, students and parents, and assessment issues dominate secondary education discourse. Little research had been conducted into drama education in New Zealand and none, specifically, into how teachers view the impact of NCEA on their drama teaching practice. As drama is a “new” subject, it is important that

some light be shed on the implications of this change in status, and teachers' experiences of managing this change.

Mine is a qualitative, hermeneutic study of a particular period in the development of secondary drama education (2002-2006) shortly after NCEA assessment had been introduced into New Zealand schools. It includes the presentation of data from interviews with 22 drama practitioners from around New Zealand, supported by an exploration of the available literature concerning the many facets of drama pedagogy which have influenced the development of the subject and an examination of the nature and purpose of curriculum and assessment.

This thesis contains the following 10 chapters. Chapter 2, "The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand", comprises two sections. The first section examines the literature relating to the arts in society, including an exploration of the historic marginalisation of the arts in education, cognition in the arts and a discussion on aspects of creativity. The second section of chapter 2 explores the nature and purpose of drama education in relation to its historical development and the origins of the competing discourses found in drama education. It concludes with a discussion on the possibilities of a synthesis of these discourses in contemporary drama practice.

In chapter 3, "Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy", the literature pertaining to curriculum, assessment and pedagogy is examined in relation to the function and purpose of curricula and assessment and the impact of the arts curriculum document and the implementation of NCEA assessment in relation to drama pedagogy.

Chapter 4, "To Hear the Teachers Speak: A Methodology", details the methodological approaches used in this study, providing details of the conduct of the interviews with drama educators and describing the process of the analysis of the data obtained from these interviews.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 comprise a presentation of the data. Chapter 5, "Philosophy and Pedagogy", presents the data relating to the philosophical and pedagogical attitudes of the participants in relation to their work in the secondary drama classroom; chapter 6, "Curriculum and Assessment", details their responses to questions regarding *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* document and their experiences of implementing NCEA assessment in drama; and chapter 7, "NCEA Drama in Schools", examines the impact of NCEA assessment in the daily work of drama teachers and includes their prognosis on the future of secondary drama education in New Zealand.

In chapter 8, "Discussion: Drama and NCEA", a discussion of the issues raised in chapter 6 which presented drama teachers' responses to questions concerning curriculum and assessment, and chapter 7, which reflected their experiences of the implementation of NCEA assessment, is examined in the context of the literature reviewed in chapter 3 pertaining to curriculum and assessment.

Chapter 9, "Discussion: Drama Education", discusses the pedagogical experiences and philosophical viewpoints expressed by the participants in this study in relation to the literature, reviewed in chapter 2, on the subject of the arts and drama education in New Zealand.

The concluding chapter, 10, draws these strands together to present a cohesive view of the reported impact of NCEA



assessment on teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom and to suggest possible sites for future study.

## **2. The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The review of the literature is presented in two chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature concerning the arts in society and the development of drama education relevant to this study, which focuses on the impact of NCEA assessment on contemporary drama teaching practice in New Zealand secondary schools. In chapter 3 the literature review focuses on the influence of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy on teaching and learning in drama. In subsequent chapters, the considerations of the literature review help to frame the research questions, research methodology, data presentation and analysis.

Much of the available literature regarding the arts and drama education examines historical developments, ideological issues and educational policy. As there has been little research conducted into drama education in New Zealand, and few commentaries published, a good deal of the material in this review is based on the experience of educators in the United Kingdom. Thrupp (2005) observes, New Zealand "has a strong recent record of educational policy borrowing from the UK, especially England" (p. 101).

Examination of the literature suggests that historical attitudes to the arts in society, and conflicting ideologies concerning the nature and function of education in the arts, have had a substantive influence on contemporary attitudes to drama education. Therefore, in order to understand developments in drama education, it is necessary to place drama in the context of arts education as a whole before examining its specific features.

A literature search has found no empirical studies of drama education in New Zealand. Harland et al. (2000), however, noted in *Arts Education in Secondary School: Effects and Effectiveness* that, even in Britain, there is "a critical shortage of rigorous and independent empirical data with which to interrogate the claims made about the effects of arts education" (p. 4). As a result there is a noticeable absence in the literature of empirically based frameworks for conceptualising both the effects and the factors associated with effective provision of the arts education (p. 4).

Harland et al. (2000) conducted a three year study of arts education in Britain which included research into music, arts, dance and drama. The aims of the study were to "document and evidence the range of effects and outcomes attributable to school-based arts education" and to examine the relationship between these effects and the key factors associated with arts provision in schools (p. 5). Their research methods included case studies of five secondary schools, secondary data analysis, a Year 11 survey and interviews with school management and teachers (p. 5). The detailed presentation of their findings was a source of valuable data for this review.

I examined the available literature, firstly with a view to clarifying which experiences were common to all four domains of the arts (dance, drama, visual arts and music) and, secondly, to clarify those which were specific to drama. I decided that, in a review, it would be expedient to move from the general to the particular when presenting the findings. Consequently, I have arranged the review of the literature concerning the arts and drama education in this chapter into two sections. The first section, 2.2, comprises an exploration of the arts, society and creativity, and the

second section, 2.3, consists of an examination of drama education with reference to developments in New Zealand.

Section 2.2, entitled "The Arts in Society", is organised to consider, in turn, the marginalisation of the arts, the arts and cognition, and creativity and the arts, in education. Since the value accorded the arts in education reflects the attitudes, over time, of the various leaders, influential figures and decision makers of a society, attitudes to the arts in society are also considered and discussed.

In the *meta-narratives* of western civilisations – that is, those discourses which have legitimised the dominance of science and reason (Lyotard, 1984, p. 5) – the arts have been viewed as an adjunct to the real work of society and as an inessential luxury. The philosophical foundations of this ideological position are explored in this first section, 2.2. Inherent in the ideologies of scientific rationalism are concepts of intelligence which have excluded the arts as recognised cognitive instruments in education. An exploration of the concept of cognition in relation to education in the arts is therefore included. Central to the discussion in section 2.2, is an examination of the literature pertaining to creativity. It explores the tensions inherent in attempting to assimilate the creative process into the essentially rationalistic systems of the modern era.

Many commentators (for example, Giroux, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Smith, 1998; Robinson, 1999a and 1999b; Abbs, 2003; Grierson & Mansfield, 2003; Gilbert, 2005) have suggested that we are now living in a *postmodern* age. The inclusion, in this thesis, of discourses pertaining to postmodernism is based on these commentaries. While I cannot claim a depth of knowledge regarding the influence of modernism and

postmodernism on social developments, the frequency of references to this topic in the literature indicates that it constitutes an essential element in a discussion which examines changes in New Zealand education.

In this thesis, I position the modern era as beginning with the Industrial Revolution and discuss the considerable influence of the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century on the ideologies evident in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The postmodernist era is situated in the latter half of the twentieth century and is characterised by the apparent rapidity and frequency of change in Western society. Gilbert (2005) suggests the following definition of postmodernism:

Post-modernism obviously means "coming after" modernism. The term as generally used refers to a historical period beginning somewhere in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century and characterised by major social, intellectual and economic changes. (p. 17)

Lyotard (1984) describes postmodernism as "the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies ... it designates the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and art" (p. xxiii).

There is a growing awareness that in an environment of rapid change, in order to educate students to meet the demands of the twenty first century, it is essential to nurture creative and innovative thinkers (Robinson, 1998; UNESCO, 2006). This recent focus on creativity, however, may be as politically and economically motivated as the traditionally modernist agenda for education. In *Education Policy Directions in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Codd and Sullivan (2005)

discuss the influence of political ideologies and economic theory on contemporary education policy, arguing that there is still a connection between education and economics (p. 15). In his report to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999), Robinson places emphasis on the necessity of fostering creativity in education in order to provide innovative strategists for the businesses of the future. A statement issued by The World Conference on Arts Education affirms that "21<sup>st</sup> Century societies are increasingly demanding workforces that are creative, flexible, adaptable and innovative and education systems need to evolve with these shifting conditions" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 5). In their study of arts education in Britain, Harland et al. (2000) observe:

In the main, comments made by the employers and employees who were interviewed seem to corroborate the pupil and teachers' view that the arts in school offer benefits to the pupil in terms of their future employment. Notably, it was the transferable skills which the arts developed which were felt to enhance employability, rather than specific arts-based competencies. (p. 96)

These transferable skills, such as self-motivation and the ability to find innovative solutions, are inherent in the creative process<sup>1</sup> and, while it is possible to be creative in myriad fields of endeavour, in modern schools it has traditionally been arts education that has consistently fostered the creative experience (Harland et al., 2000; Ministry of Education, 1999; Robinson, 2001; Smith, 1998; UNESCO, 2006). However, the processes of creativity often remain inexplicable. For this reason, section 2.2 concludes

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<sup>1</sup> See section 2.2.3

with the exploration of a range of theories concerning creativity and its place in arts education.

## **2.2 The Arts in Society**

This section comprises an exploration of the relationship of the arts to society, so that attitudes to education in the arts may be understood in context. It includes an examination of the factors which led to the marginalisation of the arts in education and discusses issues concerning cognitive development in relation to arts education. The section concludes with a discussion of the nature of creativity and explores its significance in education.

Participation in creative activity has been a consistent feature of human societies over time. Smith (1998) points out, in *The Arts Within a National State Curriculum*, that the arts are an intrinsic part of the total culture of a society and a fundamental and significant dimension of human life, work and understanding (p. 5). Similarly, Abbs (2003) expresses the view that "The Arts matter because they serve – at their best – the deep human impulse to understand; they serve life's ineradicable desire to live more fully, more abundantly" (p. 67).

Historically, however, the arts have had a marginalised status in education generally. The factors that have contributed to this position are examined in the following subsection.

### **2.2.1 The Marginalisation of the Arts**

This subsection traces the importance of historical and cultural influences on modern perceptions about the arts and education in the arts. It explores the genesis of the modern "academic" curriculum and examines the factors which led to the marginalisation of the arts in education.

The creation of works of art became divorced from the daily life of the community with the growth of industrial societies and the movement of communities from rural centres to the cities. Landy (2006) observes that, in metropolitan societies, while "people may sometimes support museums, libraries, concert halls and theatres as economic and culturally significant indicators of civilisation" they may not view the historical artefacts in museums and libraries as art (p. 84). In modern society, art has come to be seen as either "high" art – works by acknowledged masters and considered rare, expensive and elitist – and "low" art which is generated by the masses. The conventional view of high as opposed to low art is that some works are qualitatively superior to others. Dewey (1934) maintained that, as art became remote, it lost much of the vitality which gave it credence and people turned instead to the drama of sports or the things "he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazzed music, the comic strip" (p. 5). Since the 1930s, jazz music and film have come to be recognised as serious art forms. Nevertheless, new manifestations of the arts in popular culture are still viewed as mass entertainment. In his report to the NACCCE (1999), Robinson remarks that "elements of popular culture are thought of as ephemeral and shallow" (p. 45). When school students create their own works therefore, influenced by contemporary experience, they may not be given much credence.

Eisner (1998) contends that the reasons for the diminution of the arts in Western society lie in the traditional concepts of intelligence and knowledge, ideas which derive from the philosophers of ancient Greece. Plato, in particular, held the view that knowledge could only be secured through reason and reason could only be processed through words (logos). Gilbert (2005) suggests that Plato's



model of education, which was intended to train the future rulers of an ideal Greek state, has formed the basis of "the traditional, 'liberal' education, and its modern equivalent, the academic curriculum" (p. 49). She observes that:

It was unashamedly elitist and designed not to produce new knowledge, but to reproduce existing knowledge (and the existing order). Modern western education systems are directly descended from Plato's model, and, like his system, they are elitist, hierarchical, conservative and closed. (p. 49)

Plato's opinion of the arts was unequivocal. In *Creativity and Beyond: Culture, Values and Change*, Weiner (2000) cites an extract from Plato's *Republic* in which he dismisses the arts as merely mimetic:

Moreover all the arts (painting, poetry, music, dancing and sculpture) are imitations of nature (or life) as if in a mirror (mimesis). Since nature, crafted by the demiurge, is already an imitation of the eternal ideas, the arts are merely imitation of the imitation, and therefore far removed from the truth. (p. 35)

Eisner (1998) suggests that, for Plato, philosophical reasoning towards truth was unquestionably superior to being possessed by the gods or being immersed in base natural things. Plato considered the senses to be deceptive, producing excitation of the passions and, thereby, leading to delusion:

It is understandable that the sensory, imaginative and passionate features of the arts should appear divertimento like, at best a pleasant diversion, at worst downright dangerous. (Eisner, 1998, p. 4)

This separation of mind and body influenced all areas of Western philosophy, including the development of Christian theology which has had such a formative influence on Western values. Peters (2004) affirms that "The idea that the soul is distinct from the body has its roots in classical Greek philosophy and is found in Plato" (p. 13). In *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds*, Bresler (2004) cites Dewey's article, "Nature, Life and Body-Mind" (1929) in which he traces "the dichotomy of body and soul in Pauline Christianity" (p. 8). Arts education, however, is embodied knowledge: "The arts, unlike the traditional academic areas, are an arena in which the body is central to the process of inquiry and constitutes a mode of knowing" (p. 7). Embodiment can be defined as the integration of the physical body with the experiential body or, in other words, a synthesis of mind and body (p. 7).

Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner (1994) argue that the Greek philosophers failed to acknowledge individual creativity:

Plato and Aristotle both placed the source of change outside the individual, and in doing so they set the course of Western thought on creativity for more than 2000 years. (p. 129)

According to Doll (1993), the Greek ideal of order was a "pre-modern paradigm of an earth-centred universe" (p. 31). Doll points out that Copernicus' discovery in the sixteenth century that the Earth was not at the centre of the known universe changed the very foundations of knowledge. Science came to be seen as a tool of illumination more powerful even than religion. With the Age of Enlightenment, science and reason became the means by which humans could experience control over nature. As scientific knowledge increased,

questions raised by scholars such as Descartes and Newton fuelled criticism of the assumptions of the established order.

Descartes was a mathematician and a rationalist, and aspired to the kind of precision and certainty that mathematics provided. Descartes asserted that "knowledge must be based (via deduction) on certainty" (Doll, 1993, p. 31). His was a closed system which privileged the written over the oral word. Gilbert (2005) observes that, in education, mathematics became "the new Latin – the subject that would train the mind" (p. 54).

Descartes considered learning to be the discovery of what already existed, waiting to be uncovered. In his view, knowledge could not be created. Considering Descartes' influence on Western thought it is evident that the creative and personal nature of the arts would lack credibility as a cognitive activity. Lyotard (1984) argues that "Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables" (p. xxiii). Lyotard maintains that science legitimises its discourse by "making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative" (p. xxiv), such as the freedom bestowed by rational thought or the possibilities of the creation of wealth.

It was against this philosophical background that modern education took shape in the nineteenth century. Gilbert (2005) suggests that early state secondary schools were not organised to serve the needs of a growing clientele: "Following the English grammar school system, they offered the traditional academic curriculum" which continues to "exert a strong influence on our secondary schools" (p. 52). In other words, the "academic" subjects are still considered

the appropriate training for future leaders and professionals. It was the practical, or manual, subjects which were intended to provide the country's workers (p. 52). The arts, therefore – creative, open and, by their nature, subjective – were considered unnecessary to the progress of society and unimportant in education. While music and the visual arts could take their place in schools as manual subjects, dance and drama were only ever “play”. In their study on arts education in secondary schools in England, Harland et al.(2000) explain that, in the UK National Curriculum, the arts are not deemed to be core subjects but while “art and music are established foundation subjects drama and dance have a more peripheral status, thus implying they are even less important than art and music” (p. 568).

In New Zealand, early attempts to introduce drama programmes in schools met with little success. In 1949 a drama enthusiast, Margaret Walker, who was studying drama in London, was encouraged by the then New Zealand Labour Prime Minister Peter Fraser and educationalist Clarence Beeby, to return to New Zealand to provide drama opportunities for New Zealand children (Alcorn, 1999, p. 196). She became a teacher educator at Wellington Teacher Training College where she would train other teachers in her methods. The college principal, A.J. Waghorn and his deputy, Walter Scott, both convinced of the importance of the arts in education, were highly supportive. This was to change, however, and Walker found herself working in a hostile environment. Alcorn suggests:

The climate in which they were working had changed dramatically, however. At the end of April 1950 under the heading *Drama Invades the Schools*, *New Zealand Truth* was claiming that Walker's appointment was a

political one, that "members of the teaching profession" were incensed, that she had no teaching qualifications or experience and that there was already too much "playway" in schools. (p. 197)

In 1950, the Department of Education withdrew its support and Walker's appointment was terminated. Her work remained unrecognised until Sunny Amey was appointed as National Curriculum Advisor in Drama in the 1970s (Alcorn, 1999, p. 198). The position of National Curriculum Advisor itself would end in 1988 when Amey retired and another wave of change was to transform education in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>

In 1986, when Sixth Form Certificate replaced University Entrance in New Zealand secondary schools, drama became a curriculum subject and, by 1996, more than a third of all secondary schools offered Sixth Form Certificate drama (Bushnell, 1992, p. 7). Most drama teachers, however, were also English teachers, "for although many schools offer Sixth Form Certificate Drama, few offer enough courses at other levels to allow drama teachers to specialise in their own subject" (p. 7). In some secondary schools drama was offered as an option in the junior school but this was a choice made by schools individually. Dance and drama, therefore, were considered inessential and science, mathematics and English remained the core components of a secondary school education.

The introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and its designation of the arts as one of the seven essential learning areas signalled a shift in attitudes towards the arts in New Zealand schools. The status of the arts in education, particularly in regards to dance and drama, was further advanced by the

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<sup>2</sup> For further detail see subsection 2.3.2

introduction of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000)<sup>3</sup>. Prejudices still exist, however. Landy (2006) suggests that "For non-consumers, art is a frill" (p. 84).

The traditional concepts of knowledge and intelligence, by which the arts are perceived as non-academic and therefore of less cognitive value in education, still have some influence on contemporary attitudes to the arts. In the following subsection these ideas, which have determined the modern perception of cognition, are examined in relation to the arts and their contribution to education.

### **2.2.2 The Arts and Cognition**

It is apparent that the cognitive value of arts education is sometimes perceived as having minimal value. Although many arts practitioners throughout the world acknowledge that "Education in and through the arts also stimulates cognitive development and can make how and what learners learn more relevant to the needs of the modern societies in which they live" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 2), the dominance of a scientific and rationalist world view has resulted in a failure to acknowledge different ways of thinking. Abbs (2003) argues that the arts are "cognitive to the core" (p. 56). He views the arts not, primarily, as acts of self-expression and psychological adaptation but as vehicles of human understanding: "Art makes visible the cognitive life of the senses and the imagination" (p. 56). Eisner (1998) contends that "When well-taught the arts develop complex and subtle forms of thinking" (p. 19). The delineation of knowledge, however, which gained prominence during the Enlightenment, has privileged the position of what Gardner (2006) terms,

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter 3

the "logical-mathematical" and "linguistic" intelligences (p. 6).

Gardner was co-director of Project Zero, founded in 1967 "to study and improve education in and through the arts". (Project Zero Research Projects, 2007). He formulated his theory of multiple intelligences (MI) in the 1970s and, in 1983, first published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Gardner (2006) maintains that the Western educational tradition recognises only two types of intelligence (logical-mathematical and linguistic) and suggests that it is preferable to consider individuals as "a collection of aptitudes" (p. 22). He proposes that there are at least eight types of intelligences and that the standard Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests, first used by Alfred Binet in 1900, are a one-dimensional view of how to assess intelligence. Gardner (2006) argues that, while standardised IQ tests are considered fair because the same test is applied to all, the tests address only a certain kind of mind, that of "a future law professor" (p. 6). He suggests that a pluralistic view of the mind would be more humane: "I believe that human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents or mental skills, which I call intelligences" (p 6).

Gardner (2006) posits that society suffers from three biases, "Westist", "Testist" and "Bestist". He asserts that, while logical thinking and rationality are important, they are not the only virtues which should be acknowledged. Putting Western cultural values, dating back to Socrates, on a pedestal is Westist; to be Testist is to focus only on abilities and approaches that are readily testable; and Bestist is any belief that all the answers to a given problem lie in one approach.

In Gardner's (2006) view, "logical-mathematical thinking can be dangerous" (p. 24). In his theory of multiple intelligences, he devised the following four criteria by which to define an intelligence (p. 6). Firstly, he considered that an intelligence should possess the "computational capacity" to process a certain kind of information. Secondly, each intelligence should have an identifiable set of operations, and, thirdly, it must be activated by certain kinds of internal or external information (for example someone with musical intelligence is sensitive to pitch). Finally, an intelligence must be able to be encoded in a "symbol system", that is a "culturally contrived system of meaning that conveys information" (p. 8). Gardner's original list of intelligences comprised:

*Musical intelligence:* Music is universal across all cultures;

*Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence:* Universal across cultures; can express emotion (as in dance), play a game (sport), create a new product (invention);

*Logical-mathematical intelligence:* Also known as scientific thinking, rapid problem-solving, non-verbal and one of the kinds of reasoning recognised by IQ testing;

*Linguistic intelligence:* Universal across cultures; use of language, also one of the recognised intelligences;

*Spatial intelligence:* Understanding the relationship of forms, used in navigation, chess and the visual arts;

*Interpersonal intelligence:* Ability to notice distinctions among others (moods, temperament, motivations and intentions);



*Intrapersonal intelligence:* Access to one's own feeling life to understand and guide one's own behaviour (can only be evidenced through another form of intelligence e.g. linguistic, musical etc. (pp. 8-17)).

Gardner (1994) suggests that the "creative individual is characterised as much by an unusual combination of intelligences as by a single outstanding intelligence" (p. 72). Practitioners of the arts, for instance, may draw on a number of these alternative intelligences. People who have a facility for music, for example, might activate musical intelligence as well as, possibly, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence. Those working with the visual arts are likely to utilise, among others, spatial intelligence, as would dancers who might also exhibit bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. Drama specialists might use a range of intelligences including bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, linguistic intelligence, spatial intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. Many artists may also access intrapersonal intelligence. Harland et al.(2000) noted that "The perceived gains in self-awareness and personal and social skills correspond to Gardner's (1993) concepts of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills" (p. 141):

Looked at from the perspective of Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1993), by facilitating engagement in musical, bodily, kinaesthetic, spatial and active forms of linguistic intelligences, the individual arts subjects provide many pupils with an essential antidote to the concentrated diet of logical-mathematical and passive forms of linguistic intelligences. (Harland et al., 2000, p. 38)

When Gardner first published *Frames of Mind* he wrote, later, that it “spoke immediately to educators” (Gardner, 2006, p. 53). Gardner had thought of himself, primarily, as a psychologist and found this attention from educators a little disconcerting, especially when he realised how some schools had put his theories into practice. Some of these practices, he believed, had undermined his credibility. He stated that:

Traditionalists suspect that my allegiance still remains with educational adventurers; they would prefer a curriculum that focuses on facts and information rather than one that pursues the elusive goals of “understanding”. Progressives fear that I may have deserted the cause of individual-centred education and placed faith in the designers of the curriculum rather than in students and teachers themselves. What I perceived as an elegant middle ground – a traditional educational goal with flexible means to achieve it – seems to have satisfied neither party in the educational wars. (p. 61)

Gardner has suggested that, “It has sometimes been quipped, more in sorrow than in joy, that it is easier to thwart gifted youngsters than it is to encourage their flowering” (p. 50).

When Ken Robinson convened the NACCCE in England in 1998 he noticed how many of the group were nervous about being on the committee because “they weren’t very good at school themselves. Many highly successful people harbour a sense of failure from their own education.” (NACCCE, 1999, p. 1) Robinson was chairman of the NACCCE, which was commissioned jointly by the Secretaries of State for Education and Employment and Culture, Media and Sport. Members of the

committee included, amongst others, famous actors and comedians, businesspeople entrepreneurs, head teachers, a television executive, a director of a dance company and a conductor. Robinson questioned why so many of these people would categorise themselves as "not clever".

Csikszentmihalyi observes that there is "no correlation between traditional measures of intelligence and creative accomplishment" (Feldman et al., 1994, p. 138). Razik (1970) posits that the lack of correlativity is due to the difference between *convergent* and *divergent* thinking. Convergent thinking moves toward responses that fit the known and specified: "Traditional measures of intelligence emphasize convergent thinking – logical reasoning towards single right answers" (p. 159). Creativity, on the other hand, requires divergent thinking, that which moves away from the already known and expected.

Creativity, on this argument, requires a more divergent view of cognition. In their study of arts education, Harland et al. (2000) suggest that creativity and the use of the imagination are "part of the cognitive process" (p. 98). Traditional, Western concepts of intelligence do not recognise the particular abilities and thought processes utilised when participating in the arts. In the following subsection, the issue of creativity and its relevance to education in the twenty first century is examined in further detail.

### ***2.2.3 Creativity and the Arts in Education***

This subsection comprises an examination of the development of contemporary perceptions of creativity. It reflects on the tension between creativity and the existing structures in education. It considers teachers' responses to creative students and explores how the motivations of these students

might conflict with the usual expectations of behaviour in the secondary classroom. The lack of research into situations which might foster creativity is considered and the contribution of arts education to the development of creativity is discussed.

In his report to the NACCCE, Robinson (1999) argues that in a postmodern world creativity will be the key to achievement:

The world is changing so quickly that promoting cultural adaptability is essential. Remember that kids starting school this year will be retiring in 2065. We don't have a clue about what the world will be like then. The trouble is that the educational system isn't designed to promote this sort of innovative thinking that we need. It is designed to promote uniformity and a certain type of narrow skill set. Creativity is as important as literacy and numeracy, and I actually think that people understand that creativity is important – they just don't understand what it is. (p. 1)

As Robinson suggests, the problem is that creativity is an enigma. Weiner (2000) maintains that the word *creativity* did not exist until 1870 and even then was not really part of common vocabulary until after World War Two, when its use was a reflection of wider social changes (p. 5).

To be creative is to produce an original piece of work out of existing raw materials; it is to see these materials in a new way; to create a reality that was previously unknown. It is a uniquely human process. Feldman et al. (1994) observe that "The central problem in understanding creativity is understanding change – how it is expressed and how it is controlled" (p. 88). They point out that Jean Piaget, whose

model of cognitive development had a profound influence on modern pedagogical theory, was unable to account for the existence of creativity to his own satisfaction and that this was "no small piece of unfinished business" for him (p. 92). Piaget himself admitted that "The crux of my problem is to try to explain how novelties are possible and how they are formed" (Green, Ford, & Flamer, 1971, p. 194).

Piaget was convinced that the emergence of knowledge was not random but had sequence and continuity; his goal was to describe the various systems people construct for describing and explaining changes in the world. He proposed three "functional invariants" to explain the process, namely "assimilation" of new knowledge, "accommodation" of new knowledge and the "equilibration" of this knowledge by finding the balance between the assimilation of new ideas and their accommodation by existing schema (Jardine, 2006, p. 48). For Piaget equilibrium was the goal of development. His emphasis was on the progression towards more logically mature cognitive structures and greater stability. Eventually an individual reached the final stage of logico-mathematical knowledge which, Piaget thought, was inherent in life itself. However, Feldman et al. (1994) argue that what Piaget missed were "the amazing possibilities of the non-conscious, non-rational, expressive side of the mind" (p. 129).

The creative process is about change and transformation, the goal of which is not necessarily to achieve equilibration. In fact, according to Gardner (2006), creative people often pursue instability: "Perhaps their temperament is such that, constitutionally dissatisfied with the status quo, they are perennially disposed to up the ante to stir up troubles, to convert the comfortable synchrony to tension – producing asynchrony" (p. 63).

In the 1950s several researchers in psychology, such as J.P. Guilford, Henry A. Murray and John C. Flanagan, attempted to come to grips with the processes that give rise to human creativity, some even devising psychometric tests in order to measure it, but none was able to produce a definitive explanation of the phenomenon (Weiner, 2000, p. 6). Guilford's research into creativity was intended to find and train innovative thinkers to help in the Cold War effort of the 1950s and 1960s. The military willingly funded psychometric approaches to research into creativity until the research moved away from technological, military and scientific goals. Then "its power base and sources of support virtually vanished" (p. 9). Research into creativity became part of the emerging social agenda of the 1960s and, viewed as radical, was "recast as a way of breaking out of the perceived stranglehold of conservative educational practices" (p. 7).

This association of creativity with radical activity further marginalised the arts in education. Gardner (2006) posits that creativity will always "clash" with what presently exists in the field (p. 45). Regardless of Gardner's conviction that the results of this clash are usually "fruitful" (p. 45), they would clearly present challenges for educational administrators and would be difficult to encompass in a system that is, according to Gilbert (2005), apparently "conservative and closed" (p. 49).

Razik (1970) observes that the studies carried out by Getzels and Jackson (1962) "showed that it is not only the intelligence tests that are biased against the creative child but also the teacher" (p. 160). This view was confirmed by Torrance (1965) whose studies indicated that teachers had a great deal of ambivalence towards the kind of student who could be described as highly creative (Razik,

1970, p. 162). Getzels and Jackson's studies, conducted in the United States, found that teachers preferred high IQ students over highly creative pupils, in spite of the fact that, in this particular study, the high IQ students and the highly creative students had comparable academic results. According to Razik, Getzels and Jackson found that the high IQ children's self-image was consistent with what the teachers approved of; they sought to conform to expectations. The creative child, on the other hand, had a self-image consistent with their own projected values. They had less interest in high marks, and the goals that might lead to adult success, than in finding unconventional careers.

Amabile (1983) argues that, while creative people still desire external recognition and reward, they exhibit a deliberate rejection of society's demands; a reaction against time pressures; and a preference for internal control and intrinsic motivation over external control and extrinsic motivation (p. 15).

Razik (1970) maintains that Barron and McKinnon, in their studies of successful and highly creative adults, found that they had rarely been "straight A" students while at school. Barron asserts that the creative person is "original, independent, self-assertive and imaginative" and their needs are best served through flexible teaching practices (p. 164). *The Robinson Report* (NACCCE, 1999) suggests that traditional approaches in education have not been particularly successful in this regard:

Our education system has been largely shaped by the needs of an industrial economy and by particular views of ability and intelligence. In our view, the result has been that many areas of young people's potential –

of their real resources – are untapped and neglected. Among them are powers and talents that will be of fundamental importance to them and society in meeting the challenges we have described. (p. 126)

The meta-narratives of modern western culture have given rise to a preoccupation with individual creativity. The emphasis has been on the careers of individual artists or famous scientists, rather than on the potential of the majority to develop their own creativity:

In my own view, the problem is not that expectations have been too low; they have also been too narrow. If we are to unlock young people's potential, we have to recognise how profound and diverse their potential really is. (Robinson, 1998, p. 1)

Feldman et al. (1994), for example, contend that "without the comparative evaluation of art historians Rembrandt's creativity would not exist" (p. 144). However, Robinson (NACCCE, 1999) argues that, though not all manifestations of creativity may be recognised by "experts", they can, in fact, give participants a sense of their own potential. Creativity expresses itself in numerous guises and it is possible to live a creative life without achieving fame as an artist:

Creativity is possible in all areas of human activity, including the arts, sciences, at work, at home. All people have creative abilities and we all have them differently. When individuals find their creative strengths, it can have enormous impact on self-esteem and on overall achievement. (p. 7)

Amabile (1983) maintains that the emphasis on individual creativity has led to a lack of research into "creative



situations", that is circumstances conducive to creativity. There has been a narrow focus on "internal determinants of creativity to the exclusion of external determinants" (p. 5). In schools, traditionally it has been the arts subjects which have been the most concerned with fostering creativity. In their study of arts education in Britain, Harland et al. (2000) determined that both the teachers and students who participated in their study considered creativity and imagination to be the aim of arts education<sup>4</sup> (p. 112). Robinson (1998) concurs that "the case for the arts does need to be pressed" (p. 2). In the statement issued by the 2006 World Conference on Arts Education it affirmed that "Humans all have creative potential. The arts provide an environment and practice where the learner is actively engaged in creative experiences, processes and development" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 2). Similarly, Holland and O'Connor (2003) reiterate that learning in the arts has an impact on the lives of students: "quality learning experiences in the arts contribute in significant ways to social success, and impact positively on education and the academic achievement of students" (p. 2).

Harland et al. (2000) summarised their findings from case studies in five secondary schools by concluding that, for students, arts education resulted in a heightened sense of enjoyment, excitement, fulfilment and a therapeutic release of tensions. Students gained an increase in the knowledge and skills associated with particular art forms; enhanced knowledge of social and cultural issues; the development of creativity and thinking skills; the enrichment of communication and expressive skills; advances in personal and social development; effects that transfer to other contexts, such as learning in other subjects, the world of

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2

work and cultural activities outside of and beyond school; institutional effects on the culture of the school; effects on the local community (including parents and governors); and art itself as an outcome (p. 565).

A student does not need to have set his or her sights on a career in the arts to benefit from the creative experience offered by education in the arts. Harland et al.(2000) affirm that "some of the pupils looked ahead to their future careers *through* the arts (and not necessarily careers in the arts)" (p. 96). *The Robinson Report* (NACCCE, 1999) suggests that:

The arts are quite simply a magic key for some children and within the hands of gifted, committed teachers of the arts they are the key to *all* children. Not only do they open the mind of the learner, they then reveal a cornucopia of endless delight, challenge and opportunity. (p. 33)

There is increasing awareness, internationally, that the arts have value in education. As one of the subjects in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000), drama, like music, the visual arts and dance, has a role to play in nurturing creative thought.

In this section, the position of the arts in education has been explored, through an interrogation of historical and cultural factors and the potential benefits of arts education examined in the light of rapid social change. This investigation has served as necessary background to my study of the impact of educational developments, namely the introduction of NCEA assessment, on teaching and learning in drama. The aim of the next section of this chapter, "The Nature and Purpose of Drama Education", is to discern the

particular qualities of drama education in secondary schools and to consider the implications for drama pedagogy.

### **2.3 The Nature and Purpose of Drama Education**

The apprehension of contemporary developments in drama education in New Zealand, particularly in relation to the impact of the introduction of NCEA assessment on drama practice in the secondary school, is best understood in the context of a range of pedagogical influences which have shaped drama teachers' experience of teaching and learning in drama. This section of chapter 2, therefore, explores the nature and purpose of drama education in order to provide a frame of reference for this research both in the composition of the research questions and methodology, and in the interpretation and analysis of data. Inherent in this discussion is the recognition that, as an art form, drama also shares in the discourses outlined and discussed in section 2.2, "The Arts in Society": "A scrutiny of some of the reasons popularly advanced for the value of drama as pedagogic method reveals an implicit recognition of the nature of drama as an art form or subject" (Fleming, 2003, p. 33).

In education, drama has been one of the most marginalised of the art forms<sup>5</sup> with doubts raised about its cognitive value. Bolton (2003) remarks, "I hope that it's not too late for educationists and their political bosses, and those whose concern is to help people develop, to recognise that dramatic fiction releases new capacities. This should be the slogan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (p. 137). Drama has specific features which differentiate it from other art forms: "Drama is no longer considered simply as another branch of art

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<sup>5</sup> See section 2.2

education, but as a unique learning tool" (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p. 42).

Drama education, however, is subject to specific pedagogical challenges. Harland et al. (2000) remark that throughout their research they observed that "of all the artforms, drama displayed the greatest variation in interpretation: different schools and teachers held contrasting views as to the nature of drama as a subject" (p. 219). Bearing in mind that NCEA assessment in drama requires a certain consistency of approach, I considered that it was necessary, for the purposes of this study, to clarify the rationales behind these various interpretations so that the possibilities of a synthesis of ideas could be explored.

Therefore, in order to facilitate this investigation into the nature and purpose of drama education, this section contains the following three subsections: 2.3.1, "The Qualities of Drama Education", an examination of the unique learning experiences that drama provides; 2.3.2, "An Historical Overview of Drama Education", an historical overview of early developments in drama which were to influence future discourses in drama education; and 2.3.3 "A Synthesis of Competing Discourses in Drama", an exploration of the diverse ideologies and pedagogies which exist in drama education, and the pedagogical challenges of integrating these differing viewpoints in order to deliver effective drama programmes in the senior secondary school.

As there is still some lack of consensus among drama educators regarding the terms used in drama<sup>6</sup> (though work is in progress, at the time of writing, to formalise a subject-specific vocabulary for use in schools), based on my readings of the subject I have decided on the following

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<sup>6</sup> See subsection 2.3.2

definitions for use in this study. To clarify the distinction between *drama-in-education* and *drama education*, I use the term *drama-in-education* to refer, specifically, to the methods practised by its early exponents, most notably Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and Cecily O'Neill. *Drama education*, on the other hand, has a broader connotation and includes both improvisational work, in the classroom, and performance work for an audience, regardless of whether the script used for production is the student's own devised piece or a published play text. The use of a published script may involve the literary study of the playwright, context and genre of the work. I use the term *theatre* to denote any work which has been prepared for viewing by an audience and suggests the use of a range of theatrical skills and technologies.

Drama has many facets and encompasses a broad range of processes and skills. Neelands (1992) observes that "Drama is not simply a subject, but also a method ... a learning tool. Furthermore, it is one of the key ways in which children gain an understanding of themselves and of others" (p. 3). The following subsection, therefore, explores these features of drama and discusses the particular contribution that drama education makes to teaching and learning in the secondary school.

### **2.3.1 The Qualities of Drama Education**

This subsection considers the features of drama education which distinguish it, not only from other arts subjects, but also from traditional secondary school subjects as a whole. It also discusses the status of drama in secondary schools with reference to contemporary developments in drama education.

For the most part, drama is a group activity in which drama students experience the advantages of a collaborative learning process: "Drama more than any other classroom subject requires group co-operation. This occurs in its preparatory stages and in performance" (Bolton, 1998, p. 42). Harland et al. (2000) list some of the skills developed through group work such as "cooperation, negotiation within a group, getting on with people, leadership and skills and listening" (p. 170). In group situations students work together, sharing ideas, teaching and leading each other toward a common goal. Harland et al. report that a number of students interviewed for their study mentioned that working in groups had helped them to "get along with people" and that the group work skills they had developed would be helpful with "teamwork in the workplace in the future"; improvements in social presentation skills were recognised largely to be an outcome of drama and were mainly cited by older pupils (pp. 173-174).

Working in groups allows students to explore worlds and experiences not usually open to them and so develop empathy and greater understanding. Greenwood (2003) reflects on "how participants develop an increasing awareness of the power of the group and how interaction within the group may accelerate the discoveries the students make" (p. 130). Fleming (2003) affirms that:

In any successful drama lesson there may be a number of achievements – development of personal qualities such as increased self-confidence, development of greater understanding of the content, development of language and development of understanding of ability in drama. (p. 20)

Harland et al. (2000) remark that, in relation to the development of interactive communication skills, drama received far more comments from participants in their study than any other arts area: "It was claimed that in drama pupils learn to convey a wide range of content messages through a variety of forms of communication (e.g. verbal and non-verbal signals)" (p. 114). Apart from having to communicate with each other in groups, when students are in role, for instance, they may play a range of characters from a variety of historical periods, from kings to street kids. This provides an opportunity to communicate in ways that remove them from personal identification with the language used (Fleming, 2003, p. 20).

In the study conducted by Harland et al. (2000), drama was the subject most often mentioned in regard to language development: "In one school, accounts from the head teacher and the drama teacher corroborated the perception that drama was having a significant impact on the capacity of the pupils to articulate their opinions and speak confidently in public" (p. 117). The comments from pupils in all of the schools studied supported this view. Students referred to spoken language skills, language and communication for a variety of situations within drama lessons, and understanding the power of language. Several students mentioned the use of the language of Shakespeare; for them "understanding Shakespeare meant understanding the language" (p. 47). Some of the students interviewed by Harland et al. also mentioned an improvement in written skills and "the transfer of language skills to situations outside the arts" (p. 119). A few students considered that the language development achieved through participation in drama provided improved language for job applications and interviews; one

student, in particular, suggested that it would assist him in his future career as a sports coach and teacher (p. 121).

However, one of the most valuable aspects of drama education is that students, and teachers, find it an enjoyable activity. Harland et al. (2000) determined that "enjoyment – in its various guises – is a key factor in accessing the remaining outcomes" of an education in the arts (p. 37). They noted that enjoyment was a prevalent theme emerging from their research, with a great number of comments about the arts giving rise to enjoyment, happiness, a sense of satisfaction and fun. Harland et al. found that "Across the artforms, it would appear drama elicits the most fun" (p. 37). Discussion on staging and performance elicited a real "buzz" outcome from the students (p. 31) and drama was often specified as a favourite subject. One pupil spoke about drama "allowing him to take on a different role, rather than being himself for a while, allowing a form of escapism" (p. 36), while for another pupil the self-expression afforded by drama was seen as a way of "not keeping your emotions pent up" (p. 135). Harland et al. conclude that the evidence presented suggests that a curriculum lacking in sufficient access to the individual arts subjects would lead many pupils to experience "greater tedium, disengagement and ultimately greater disaffection at school" (p. 38).

Fleming (2003) argues that the value of drama education is that it stimulates motivation, not only because it provides a break from established classroom routines but because it harnesses the inclination to play which persists into adolescence and, arguably, into adult life. He maintains that the association of play and learning has a long history within educational thinking. For instance, Bolton (1998) maintains that Peter Slade, one of the pioneers of drama-in-education, was so keen "to establish that Play and Drama are



one and the same thing he logically follows his own thesis through by referring to these commonplace activities as acting" (p. 123). Fleming (2003) cites Watkins (1981, p. 14) in saying that "We preserve in the familiar theatrical expressions players, play-house and play, the relationship of drama to the whole world of play and game" (p. 34). Greenwood (2003) suggests that:

There are connections it seems between having fun, ownership and that extension of awareness that we call learning ... The relationship between the freedom to play and learning is largely under-explored but is supported by an extensive literature that deals with the body as a site for desire and a way of knowing. (p. 131)

Greenwood argues that drama is "a powerful way of knowing" (p. 129) and that it is useful for teachers to be aware of the different contextual frames in drama in which we can manipulate knowing, and of reasons why drama has potency in shaping participants' knowing (p. 119). These contextual frames include working with the mind, both cognitively and creatively, and the body (embodied knowledge<sup>7</sup>). Drama engages the students on several levels, "emotional, physical and intuitive as well as intellectual" (p. 119). In terms of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, drama utilises linguistic, bodily-kinaesthetic, and spatial intelligences (Gardner, 2006). It has been argued that, at its best, drama has the potential to provide a truly holistic education.

In drama, images may be said to be created through working with the body; in this way ideas are made visible. This can enable a student to analyse concepts that they might not have previously realised: "Image-making is a device that is

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<sup>7</sup> See section 2.2

repeatedly used with a range of variations by drama teachers" (Greenwood, 2003, p. 131). Using the body as an instrument of expression is recognised as one of four central drama techniques, the others being movement, space and voice, all of which also require some manipulation of the body. In the study conducted by Harland et al. (2000) pupils specified drama as being important as a tool for non-lingual expression because it used more of themselves: "Indeed, expression of emotion not through language was emphasised in the dramatic artform, perhaps, more so than in the other artforms" (p. 131).

For the kinaesthetic student the physical nature of drama work can provide rewards. While they may not have a facility for learning through the written text, these students can often find the incentive to memorise large sections of script for performance, whether it be play texts or their own devised pieces: "For many of our students, book knowledge is sometimes alienating, or at least elusive. On the other hand, quite complex materials can be developed and remembered through physical enactment" (Greenwood, 2003, p. 131). It is the "physicalisation" of ideas which can have such a positive impact on student attitudes, to both their own work and that of their peers. It is this "coordination of thinking with 'action'" that Harland et al. (2000) consider as one of the effects of drama education (p. 101).

The complex material that may be generated in practical drama work is evidence of the cognitive developments that can take place in a drama classroom. In their research into creativity and thinking skills as an effect of arts education, Harland et al. (2000) divided the presentation of their findings into two subcategories: (1) "the acquisition of thinking and problem-solving skills" and (2) "the

development of creativity, imagination and the capacity to experiment and innovate" (p. 98).

In reference to the first subcategory relating to thinking and problem-solving skills, teachers claimed an improved cognitive ability in their students (Harland et al., 2000, p. 98). In their findings Harland et al. report that it was widely held that the arts encouraged children to grow intellectually, to think critically by fostering the challenging of ideas and perceptions, to interpret and analyse in depth, and to think "off the top of their heads" (p. 98). Pupils interviewed for the study cited the ability to think more clearly and to think with reflection, and commented on the improved concentration engendered by participation in the performance arts (p. 111). Drama was singled out by one of the students as helping him to think "around the whole subject" (p. 101).

Greenwood (2003) suggests that the repetition required by the rehearsal process in drama, when students refine and improve their creations, helps develop habits of reflection and self-evaluation. When students do act from texts, they are willing to research and retain background information about the author and his/her work simply because it is relevant to their project. The key is that it is *their* project. Because students have some degree of freedom in making choices in the progress of their work, they experience an ownership of what is created; a "high degree of investment is called for in drama" (p. 131). Harland et al. (2000) report that, in their interviews with students, an "element of freedom was expressed" (p. 140). Many pupils related self-expression to being able to do what they themselves wanted to do, particularly in art and drama. Greenwood (2003) suggests that it is this "ownership of what is made, its identification with the participants' physical

and mental being, and the camaraderie and play of the drama classroom" which fosters learning (p. 131).

In their study of arts education Harland et al. (2000) note students' remarks on the self-confidence engendered by participation in drama: "Developing a sense of self was a prevalent claim among teachers of most of the artforms, but especially drama" (p. 143). There was a particular emphasis on this aspect of drama in the comments received from participants in the study, both students and teachers. Students mentioned developing a sense of confidence, not only extrinsically in their capacity to perform in front of others, but also intrinsically in having the confidence to express their own opinions. For some students, an outcome of this increase in self-confidence was increased self-esteem which was reflected in their experience of social situations such as making friends and dealing with people in authority (pp. 153-157).

In relation to the personal and social development of students, Harland et al. (2000) observe that, "The perceived gains in self-awareness and personal and social skills correspond to Gardner's (1993) concepts of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence" (p. 141). In terms of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences<sup>8</sup>, drama utilises linguistic, bodily-kinaesthetic, and spatial intelligences (Gardner, 2006). Harland et al. (2000) report that, in respect to interpersonal intelligence, drama was often seen as an "important carrier subject for increased awareness of other people, their needs, moods and problems" (p. 164). When drama students explore, in the course of their creative process, social and moral issues such as discrimination or poverty, it allows them to place their experiences into a larger social context. Harland et al. recount that most of

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<sup>8</sup> See section 2.2

the drama teachers alluded to this type of impact, citing the exploration of social issues, such as racism, as a significant contribution to the pupils' social and moral education. For pupils, too, this was an important outcome: "Pupils talked about social, moral and real-life issues" (p. 92).

The process of creating drama, however, cannot occur without a high level of engagement from students. With the teacher they are co-authors of their work. In their study Harland et al. (2000) observed the methods of drama teaching in two schools:

One of the most striking similarities was constant pupil engagement in drama classrooms. Both of the observed lessons were characterised by high levels of pupil activity throughout. This activity was tightly structured, but allowed pupils much freedom to express their own ideas in a way that they found suitable. (p. 510)

In their report on creativity and thinking skills, namely "the development of creativity, imagination and the capacity to experiment and innovate" (p. 112), Harland et al. (2000) note that the pupils' concept of creativity was very diverse. It was both process and product in that students associated creativity with freedom, experimentation, imagination, thinking new thoughts, self-expression and a learning strategy (p. 112). Harland et al. report that "a sense of freedom, spontaneity and running with ideas was evident in pupils' talk about developing the imagination in drama" (p. 109). Fleming (2003) maintains that the drama classroom provides security for the exploration of these ideas (p. 36).

In creative drama classrooms, such as those described above, the learning and use of stagecraft skills might be seen as "a means towards an end, the end being more effective and confident personal expression" (Harland et al., 2000, p. 510). In contemporary New Zealand schools, however, some emphasis is placed on the acquisition of skills and knowledge in drama. Indeed, NCEA assessment in drama requires evidence of development in these areas (*Drama Matrix-2000*, Ministry of Education, 2009b). Harland et al. remark that, in British schools, there are indications that teachers of other subjects sometimes fail "to recognise that arts teachers share a common concern with the teaching of critical skills, evaluation and review" (p. 42). There is little empirical evidence available in the literature to corroborate that New Zealand arts teachers have shared this experience. This lack of research into drama education in New Zealand has engendered some reliance, in this thesis, on the work of Harland et al. (2000) in discussing drama in the secondary classroom.

In considering the development of knowledge and skills, Harland et al. observe that the comments they received, regarding knowledge and critical skills in drama, revealed a difference between teachers' and students' understanding. While drama teachers spoke of their subject extending pupils' critical faculties and making them more discerning and more discriminating (p. 41), most students did not appear to perceive much about this effect at all (p. 47). This does not necessarily indicate that students do not develop critical faculties in drama but rather that it might be learned in the process of experiencing the art form and appreciating the work of others, including any professional productions they might have the opportunity to see.

In terms of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), knowledge of drama includes understanding the elements or building blocks of the art form (e.g. focus, action, role, tension, time and space), the use of drama techniques and the application of a variety of methods in the production of effective work. In order to process and present their work, students of drama need to utilise a range of drama techniques (or skills). Broadly speaking, in drama, there are techniques associated with the creative process such as freeze-frames, hot-seating and role-play etc., and performance skills associated with stagecraft, such as the use of body and voice. In practice, in a contemporary New Zealand drama classroom, these categories of skills are not necessarily discrete and may overlap in the creation of new work.

Harland et al. (2000) observe that, although drama is treated as a separate subject in most British schools, it is still considered part of English in the National Curriculum and only music and art are accorded separate status as arts subjects. In contrast, *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) includes drama with dance, music and visual art as one of the four arts subjects. For drama teachers in New Zealand the introduction of the arts curriculum constituted a significant change to drama teachers' position in New Zealand schools. Furthermore, it signalled the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama and a new way of operating in the secondary drama classroom.

Previously there had been no national system of assessment in drama apart from Sixth Form Certificate: "Music and visual arts already held an established space of practice in school curricula and national assessments; not so dance and drama" (Grierson & Mansfield, 2003, p. 28). Often, drama was

associated with approaches to creativity emerging in the 1960s which, as Feldman et al. (1994) point out, were viewed as part of a radical social agenda, intent on "breaking out of the perceived stranglehold of conservative educational practices" (p. 7). Abbs (2003), citing *The Intelligence of Feeling* (Witkin, 1974), reflects:

Drama has emerged and grown in schools at a much later time than the other arts and its "youth" is touched with the spirit of the times which is for the relaxing of constraints and the release of personal initiative and expression. Some of the most pressing doubts about the value of what the drama teacher is doing stem from this very freedom, this lack of imposition of formal control. (p. 117)

This is an image of drama education that lingers, not only in the minds of those with less experience in the subject but also, in some measure, in the ideals of some drama teachers. To understand this philosophical viewpoint, and its current influence on drama practice, it is necessary to examine the historical development of drama education, particularly in reference to the philosophy and practices of drama-in-education. The following subsection, therefore, provides an historical overview which examines the principles and practice of drama-in-education and reflects on its influence on drama education in New Zealand.

### **2.3.2 An Historical Overview of Drama Education**

In this subsection, the evolution of drama education is examined in an attempt to explain the various discourses which have had an influence on drama education in New Zealand and, therefore, contributed to the tensions experienced in the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama.



The review of the literature pertaining to international developments in drama education, however, is limited to the period prior to 2000. With the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) drama educators in New Zealand began to function within a unique situation. As the aim of this research study was to examine New Zealand teachers' perceptions of the situation regarding the introduction of the NCEA, an exploration of international literature concerning developments in curriculum and practice would have a limited relevance to the challenges facing New Zealand drama educators in the twenty-first century.

The essential dichotomy in drama education in New Zealand stems from the disparities between the philosophical tenets which underlie improvisational approaches to drama (such as *creative drama*, *process drama* or drama-in-education) and the requirements of skills-based and performance-orientated approaches to drama.

This conflict of ideas about the nature and purpose of drama is, perhaps, best epitomised in the work of Gavin Bolton (1998) and David Hornbrook (1998). Hornbrook considers that the exponents of improvisational classroom drama often lack credibility and takes issue with the methods espoused by Heathcote and Bolton in their work with drama-in-education. He argues that:

One of the principal questions I asked myself in the 1980s was what effect the drama methodologies so extensively advertised in journals, conferences and in-service training sessions had actually had on classroom teaching. My conclusion was that the gap between rhetoric and reality was a disturbingly large one. My visits to schools revealed custom and practice looking

not so very different from that which I experienced when I began teaching in the 1960s. (p. ix)

In response to Hornbrook's criticisms, David Davis wrote in his foreword to Bolton's publication of *Acting in Classroom Drama: A Critical Analysis*:

Far from seeking to lock horns with Hornbrook, Bolton is at pains to find an approach that is inclusive. He is quite content for Hornbrook's claim to be true for the type of drama that Hornbrook himself is advocating (theatre/performance focussed work) but is challenging the notion that it could cover what has come to be known as "living through" drama. Bolton's massive scholarly research does enable him to arrive at a definition that is inclusive and wider than Hornbrook's approach. (Davis, 1998, p. IX)

Bolton, a friend and associate of Dorothy Heathcote<sup>9</sup>, is a dedicated proponent of drama-in-education. He argues that when make-believe play is described from the point of view of an observer, who makes it concrete by describing it in terms of an external sequence of events utilising a range of skills, it is about *doing*. Bolton (1979) points out, however, that there is also an *internal action* that is taking place in the mind and feelings of the children during drama activities and that this "essential feeling level is often either not recognised or is ignored by teachers" (p. 30). He proposes a type of drama which focuses on internal action (p. 17). Bolton remarks that, when he was a young teacher, colleagues might ask him what he was doing with a class but never asked him what he was *teaching* them: "Apparently learning and teaching were all right for other subjects, but in drama one just talked and thought about

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<sup>9</sup> See subsection 2.3.2.6

what one was *doing*" (p. 30). Bolton admits that this type of drama can have the appearance of loose dramatic playing but argues that it is purposeful and has the "tautness" of a good dramatic exercise (p. 52).

Bolton (1998) suggests that a good teacher, realising that a single focus on any one type of acting is open to overuse, will tend to favour a wide range of acting behaviours. He asserts, however, that it is important that teachers share a common language. By this, he does not mean a common vocabulary: "What does matter is that teachers *share the conception* of a mode of acting" (p. 249). Bolton observes that Hornbrook (1998) falls into a trap when contending that, conceptually, child acting in the classroom is no different to the actor on the stage because, of course, according to Bolton, "at the *conceptual level* he is right" (p. 250).

Bolton (1998) suggests that there is a distinction between *presenting*, which is rehearsable and repeatable, and *making* which is the kind of acting evident in a dramatic exercise where participants are free to explore. This is neither rehearsable nor directly repeatable. Bolton points out that his definition of making is somewhat different to Hornbrook's: "I would perhaps reiterate the warning that this classification of acting behaviour as 'making' should not be confused with Hornbrook's categorisation of 'making' and 'performing' as but two stages in a dramatic process". (p. 274)

In order to comprehend this debate about drama education, some knowledge is required of the historical development of drama-in-education and the roots of its essential ideals and methodologies. Both Hornbrook (1998) and Bolton (1998) wrote extensively on the subject and concur that drama-in-

education had its genesis in the progressive education movement of the nineteenth century. Progressive educators, inspired by the work of Rousseau, were influenced by eighteenth century romanticism which promulgated an ideal of moral superiority through true and natural feelings. The movement was a reaction against the perceived narrowness and formalism of traditional education (Hornbrook, 1998). Its main objective was to educate the "whole child" and the first progressive schools were established in accordance with the belief that change could be achieved through "love, creation and self-expression" (p. 6).

Bolton (1998) suggests that the progressive movement in education is characterised by a search for something even deeper than its appeal to "freedom" and "individuality": "it represented a search for an alternative to ugliness, moral corruption, and industrialism" (p. 5). The teachers in progressive schools regarded themselves as facilitators, offering opportunities for growth rather than imposing knowledge from without: "It is here that the radical spirit of drama-in-education has its source" (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 6).

The pioneers of drama education were notable for their innovative techniques and commitment to sharing their enjoyment of dramatic expression with their students. Accounts of the work of these early innovators are provided by both Bolton (1998) and Hornbrook (1998). Bolton's criteria for eligibility as a drama pioneer include evidence of radical changes in classroom practice supported by theoretical exposition and published accounts. To facilitate this process of selection he analyses major publications relating to drama from four perspectives:

1. Placing the pioneer and the identified trend in a historical context;
2. Providing a sufficient account of the methodology of the pioneer or trend;
3. Drawing inferences from publications about activities in the classroom;
4. Examining their relevance for successive authors and practitioners. (p. XVIII)

On the basis of these criteria, Bolton (1998) selected only five practitioners of sufficient depth, namely: Harriet Finlay-Johnson, 1871-1956; Henry Caldwell-Cook, 1886-1937; Peter Slade, 1910-2000; Brian Way, 1923-2006; and Dorothy Heathcote, born in 1926 and still practising (p. XIX). Hornbrook's selection of significant figures in the history of drama education differs only slightly from Bolton's in that he omits Finlay-Johnson.

In the following subsections the major tenets of the work of each of the five pioneers, as selected by Bolton, are examined. These subsections are numbered as follows: 2.3.2.1, "Harriet Finlay-Johnson"; 2.3.2.2, "Henry Caldwell-Cook"; 2.3.2.4, "Peter Slade"; 2.3.2.5, "Brian Way"; and 2.3.2.6, "Dorothy Heathcote". Included in this series is subsection, 2.3.2.3, covering the period from the start of the First World War to the end of the Second World War. During this time very few innovations occurred in relation to classroom drama. Amateur theatricals increased in popularity, however, and the influence of this movement on drama in schools is a contributor to the differences in approach and philosophy which exist in drama education. The following subsections dealing with these developments, therefore, are placed in chronological order.

### **2.3.2.1 Harriet Finlay-Johnson.**

Finlay-Johnson was head teacher in a village elementary school from 1897 to 1910. She was the first teacher whose classroom drama practice has been recorded. Bolton (1998) remarks that Finlay-Johnson "perhaps more than any other pioneer in classroom drama, can claim the right to that title, on the grounds that she had no model to follow or surpass, no tradition to keep or break" (p. 5). She embraced some of the features that later characterised the progressive movement: "integrated knowledge"; "activity-method"; "pupil-autonomy" (p. 10). Dramatisation became Finlay-Johnson's means of achieving these goals. She justified her "Dramatic Method" on the grounds that one of the first essentials in teaching any subject should be "first arouse the desire to know" (p. 10); "At a time when knowledge was perceived as a 'given' for pupils to absorb, Finlay-Johnson spurred her pupils on to find it and remould it, making it their own" (p. 21). Finlay-Johnson's intention was that pupils would see the teacher as a fellow worker. The educational goals, which she believed could be reached through dramatisation, were that children would teach and learn from each other. In the classroom Finlay-Johnson attempted to ensure that all students participated in drama activities, either as crowds, stage managers, note-takers or directors (p. 23).

In her ideas of group work, however, Finlay-Johnson broke away from the accepted ideals of the progressive movement which valued individuality rather than dependence on a group (Bolton, 1998, p. 14). Nor did she consider drama work from the point of view of a potential audience, believing that in an educational context adult perceptions become irrelevant (p. 15). Occasionally, however, when classical scripts were carefully rehearsed for presentation to an audience Finlay-

Johnson worked within the confines of theatre conventions (p. 16).

### **2.3.2.2 Henry Caldwell-Cook.**

Caldwell-Cook became an English teacher in an independent school in 1911. His view was that the education system had "ceased to be educational" and he advocated for drama as a "potent method of learning" (Bolton, 1998, p. 27). Hornbrook (1998) argues that Caldwell-Cook's perception of drama was the result of the growing interest in psychology evident at that time: "Through the offices of psychology, drama had been transformed from the frivolous diversion described by Rousseau to an essential ingredient of a child's balanced development" (p. 8).

Caldwell-Cook was the first progressive educationalist to fuse play with work, teaching his students literature through performance (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 8). Caldwell-Cook's approach was non-traditional; he considered play activities to be a way of freeing the individual imagination and he preferred his students to work collaboratively within a group rather than individually (p. 31). For Caldwell-Cook, play meant being fully engaged and active. He named his educational method the "Play Way" and his image of himself was as a "Playmaster" (Bolton, 1998, p. 28).

Many of the characteristics of the Play Way coincided with the tenets of the progressive education movement such as action, freedom, individuality, and self-government, and Bolton (1998) suggests that Caldwell-Cook's instinct as a practising teacher "led him to see the pathway, not merely as a means of reaching a goal, but as the goal itself (p. 29). However, Bolton asserts that the Play Way approach to playmaking was not a "free-for-all romp but a serious harnessing of dramatic structure" (p. 35). When Caldwell-

Cook taught Shakespeare, for instance, he expected not only a literary understanding of the dramatic form but a familiarity with the structure of an Elizabethan stage (p. 35). In recommending earlier theatrical styles for his pupils Caldwell-Cook was making a pedagogical rather than an artistic point. Bolton maintains that "the central strand of Caldwell Cook's dramatic work was either not understood or ignored by his successors and that consequently some school drama suffered from the cult of realism in the theatre" (p. 46). Caldwell-Cook believed that boys of 11 to 14 were not ready for naturalism and social realism.

### **2.3.2.3 Amateur theatre.**

The First World War was to put an end to any further innovations in drama education and it would be over 30 years before the appearance of any new publications on the subject of classroom drama. Hornbrook (1998) maintains that it was in the 1950s that the separation of *drama* and *theatre* began and drama came to be seen as a "quasi-therapeutic process", dedicated to the perceived aesthetic and developmental needs of the young, and not a body of theatrical skills and practices (p. 8).

In the period between the world wars, while there was little innovation occurring in classroom drama, involvement in theatre expanded. For the first time since the Puritan revolution in Britain, small amateur drama societies (often known as Little Theatres) began to appear in the large, industrial cities (Bolton, 1998, p. 71). Gradually, companies were established in towns and villages across England and the former Empire which, of course, included New Zealand. Through the auspices of the Women's Institute, The Village Drama Society (started by Mary Kelly in 1918) and the British Drama League (started by Geoffrey Whitworth in 1919) instituted a series of training programmes for



amateurs under the direction of Frances Mackenzie whose 1935 publication of *The Amateur Actor* became a handbook for teachers of amateurs (Bolton, 1998, p. 72). Mackenzie was not directly involved in school drama and considered that, while performances by village players and children could be profoundly moving, they were not repeatable. She commented that while these performances had their value, it was not that of acting:

From this viewpoint, what children do on stage, provided it is untarnished by technique, does not qualify for the term "acting": children's stage behaviour is to be seen as "artless" and "real" acting, in contrast, as "artfully" working to achieve a calculated and repeatable effect. (Bolton, 1998, p. 73)

The amateur drama movement was to have some influence on the classroom, however. Among theatre enthusiasts there were some who wanted to see better school plays. Some wanted to see drama in secondary schools as a timetabled subject taught "by an English teacher (or, possibly, the speech specialist or the trained actor)" (Bolton, 1998, p. 74). They imagined creating a stage area in the front of the classroom "for an active interpretation of scripts" (p. 74). A few educators suggested that there should be a timetabled course in drama, independent of theatrical productions, composed of training exercises. This idea had some appeal for those teachers interested in amateur theatre as well as speech and drama. There were other teachers, however, who were more interested in advancing a developmental theory of drama. Their interest was in relating the natural expression of play to the craft of theatre: "Drama would be in place as a school subject, mainly devoted to inventing dramatic scenes" (p. 75).

#### **2.3.2.4 Peter Slade.**

In conjunction with the work of the early innovators in drama education, these broad trends in drama, as delineated above, constituted a background of diverse drama activities against which Peter Slade began to develop his own unique theory and practice. Hornbrook (1998) considers that the origins of drama-in-education lie in the work of Peter Slade who, in 1943, was appointed as the first drama advisor to schools in England (p. 9). It was a newly created post "intended to bestow status on *amateur* drama" (p. 9). Slade's brief was that he should train leaders, advise on choice of plays and raise standards of production (Bolton, 1998, p. 119). However, Slade had his own ideas about classroom drama and "clearly saw in 'improvisation' the possibilities of unfettered personal expression" (p. 86).

While previous manifestations of drama instruction had included speech, mime, movement and acting plays, Slade was convinced that there was more value in spontaneous dramatic play by young children (Fleming, 2003, p. 17). Bolton (1998) suggests that "For the first time in Drama Education history the traditions of classroom acting based on amateur and professional theatre were openly challenged by a spokesman for a form of theatre based not on theatre but on play" (p. 85).

Slade's work was characterised by respect for the creative ability of children and minimum intervention by the teacher (Bolton, 1998, p. 17). He believed that, through drama, children learned things that "they might not learn in any other way – about space, self-expression, co-operation, movement and communication" (p. 137). For Slade it was a matter of "sincerity" by which he meant that it was an authentic expression for the children involved without awareness of it being a performance (p. 127). In 1954, Slade

published *Child Drama* in which he stressed his belief that child drama should not be measured by adult standards (p. 138):

Within each child, Slade claims, there is a Child Drama that intuitively seeks beauty of form, a form which, when expressed collectively, captures moments of theatre ... Slade invites teachers to re-examine what is going on when children play and see it as "art". (Bolton, 1998, p. 125)

Slade was not exactly "anti-theatre" but saw it as coming at the end of a developmental stage. He argued that if teachers' attempts to train their pupils for adult theatre occur too early in their development, instead of first allowing them to experiment with their own drama, "a great deal of harm can be done" (Bolton, 1998, p. 131).

When Slade was appointed to the City of Birmingham Education Committee in 1947 he was the first drama practitioner to achieve this prestigious position and became the leading authority on all matters to do with drama for children. Bolton (1998) suggests, however, that "A curious mixture of serious and non-serious, or rather 'tongue in cheek' serious and whimsy seems to characterise Slade's approach to content" and that, paradoxically, his lessons were often dependent on the whim of the teacher rather than the child (p. 140).

#### **2.3.2.5 Brian Way.**

Way was a protégé and close friend of Slade's and they shared an abiding interest in children's theatre. Bolton (1998) remarks that both Slade and Way were extremely able teachers. In time, however, Way moved away from Slade's doctrine of "a play-derived art form" (p. 147). Way's approach, though it shared the same theoretical origins as

Slade's work, placed more focus on individual, practical exercises (Fleming, 2003, p. 17).

Bolton (1998) observes that young people and adults alike responded to Way's "generous, gifted and inspired teaching" (p. 166). Bolton provides a detailed description of Way's theory of education noting that Way did not allude to "aims and intentions" but rather referred to the "function" of drama (p. 149). Way presented his diagram of the function of drama as a circular model, a deliberate contrast to the linear model normally associated with subjects in a traditional school curriculum:

While emphasising the notion of the "whole person", he develops a model dividing the personality into facets, relating to Speech; Physical self; Imagination; The senses; Concentration; Intellect; Emotion; and Intuition. The planned development of these interconnected faculties through carefully graded practice is to Way the central purpose of education. (p. 149)

When Brian Way published *Development Through Drama* in 1967, he convinced a new generation of teachers that child drama should not necessarily be viewed as art but as a means to personal development: "I think it can be claimed that Brian Way in his time had a broader influence on classroom drama than any other British exponent" (Bolton, 1998, p. 165). In time Way's theories, and the practices associated with them, became known as *creative drama*. Later, this expression was to become an umbrella term, covering a wide range of activities which had improvisational work at their centre.

An entire chapter of Way's book was devoted to the possibilities inherent in working with improvisation. The term *acting* was dropped. Bolton (1998) suggests that "A

drama/theatre dichotomy is clearly spelled out by Way" (p. 148). Way (1967) perceived theatre as largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience, and drama as largely concerned with experience by the participants irrespective of any function of communication to an audience (p. 2):

... but we must console ourselves that it is of them and from them and this is ultimately what is important. The imitation of another person's experience is never as deep as our own experience, even if, through lack of practice, our own experiences are on the shallow side in the early stages of the work. (p. 12)

This progressive philosophy of drama-in-education readily found its niche in the educational and political environment of the 1960s and 1970s (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 17). Abbs (1994) is critical of this approach to drama education arguing that it makes "the individual person the single, justifying centre of educational activity" and the teacher secondary (p. 130). In contrast, when Heathcote began her work with student drama in the 1970s, she was to insist that teachers could and should be part of the process.

#### **2.3.2.6 Dorothy Heathcote.**

Heathcote saw drama as a learning process which, by leading students towards an authentic experience, would allow them to discover essential truths about the human condition (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 17). Bolton (1998) suggests that she "raised the level of school learning from subject-bound parameters to 'a study of mankind'" (p. 177). Dorothy Heathcote was appointed as Staff Tutor at the University of Durham in 1951, four years before Slade's *Child Drama* appeared, and was already a practising drama educator in 1967 when Brian Way published *Development Through Drama*. She

was aware of the competing trends in drama education. Bolton suggests that "Her purpose seems to be to *disconnect* with even the best of that practice, choosing to alienate herself from the very vocabulary of her contemporaries and predecessors" (p. 175).

While Heathcote resisted articulating her practice and preferred to show rather than to explain, Heathcote's work is often referred to by others as "improvised play-making" (Bolton, 1998, p. 175). Bolton suggests that the essential nature of Heathcote's work lies in her assumption that dramatic action is subordinated to meaning (p. 177). In this respect her methodology contrasted with that of Slade and Way for whom the *doing* was all important. Heathcote's understanding of drama was that tension, or a sense of desperation, produces good drama; a belief which, when applied to her work, "became dubbed as 'Man in a Mess'" (p. 176). Inherent in this "state of desperation" was the possibility of finding meaning. The nature of this meaning was to be negotiated with the students, whoever they might be. The students, though aware that this was a make-believe situation and that, ultimately, they were free of any consequences, were continually reminded by Heathcote of the deeper implications of the action, not only in the context of the drama but in the wider context of society as a whole.

Heathcote's practice came to be defined as *living through* drama (Bolton, 1998, p. 178), a precept which suggests that the action is taking place in the present moment. From discussion with her students at the start of each project, the theme and context for their drama would emerge. Further negotiations during the action would clarify particulars. Bolton argues that the theatrical component of Heathcote's work is evident in this method, "This combination of 'theme, 'context' and 'action' represents the principal strands of

any play" (p. 178). Heathcote allows plot to emerge through the action, which has occasionally discomfited more traditional teachers for whom plot is the centrepiece of any drama: "Slade and Way stressed the importance of one action following another in story form; indeed many of Slade's lessons were based on this kind of stimulus" (p. 178). Heathcote, however, did not want students to be caught up in how a dramatic episode was planned to end; the pupils themselves chose the outcome (p. 179).

One of Heathcote's biggest contributions to drama-in-education is the concept of *teacher-in-role*. Heathcote saw it as the teacher's function to elevate the quality of the drama (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 17). In order to move the action along and create a structure for the pupils' themes and ideas, Heathcote, as teacher-in-role, could direct the action by playing a role in the drama such as a servant, messenger, or overseer etc. Heathcote's methods did not remain static, however. Over the course of her career she moved on from using "crisis" as a stimulus for her drama, such as in "man in a mess", to using authority in which students donned *the mantle of the expert*. Bolton (1998) provides an example of Heathcote's use of the mantle of the expert from one of her sessions. It demonstrates Heathcote's approach when dealing with three recalcitrant boys playing the three wise men in a story of the nativity:

Conscious that she must get these lads doing something, in fact *anything but acting*, she let the tasks dictate the meaning of the experience. So, examining genuine maps of the night sky; making wills; grooming camels; bartering for water; guarding the precious gifts became the dynamic of the work, which would still cater for the above named 'Man in a Mess' themes but the boys were now in control as 'experts'

not in the role as "suffering a crisis". (Bolton, 1998, p. 240)

Bolton observes that students were absorbed in the activity and, through the process, were able to move to much deeper levels of understanding. Heathcote was not much concerned about the audience for these dramas, nor did she consider her work to be theatre. Nevertheless, there was always an audience in attendance comprised of either her adult students, interested observers from around England and overseas or, frequently, film crews.

In his biography of Heathcote, Bolton (2003) attempts to define her philosophy but admits he cannot find a useful way of positioning Dorothy's "genius": "Dorothy's background, drawing as she does on received cultural inheritance, is seemingly traditional and positivistic, but her spontaneous, open-ended practice leans towards postmodernism ... we could go on listing conflicting tendencies" (p. 146).

One of Heathcote's students, Cecily O'Neill (1984), who, with Liz Johnson, co-edited a volume of Heathcote's writings, describes drama-in-education as "mode of learning" (Bolton, 1998, p. 228). O'Neill perceived drama as "a cumulative process of learning" in which each stage of a lesson should lead to wider perceptions of the possibilities inherent in the activity (Bolton, 1998, p. 228). O'Neill's methods became widely known as *process drama*. O'Neill was the first to identify the dimensions of a theatre form in drama-in-education and recognise parallels between the drama sequences which evolve during her process of making drama and the components of a play performance. Improvisation, however, remains the centre of process drama (p. 231).

Hornbrook (1998) argues that the emphasis that Heathcote (and Bolton) place on the interior process of the student



constitutes "the distinctive discourse" of drama-in-education (p. 17). Heathcote approached drama as a method of teaching rather than as a subject in its own right, hence the distinction between drama-*in*-education and drama education. Nor was Heathcote convinced that assessment in drama was necessary. Fleming (2003) observes that many teachers see drama "as a kind of instrument either to bring about ideological change or, more frequently, some form of adaptive behaviour in relation to social needs" (p. 19).

Heathcote was a teacher educator; her work with school pupils was, initially, a series of practical demonstrations for her adult students, usually qualified teachers. As she became well known for her work, initially through the portrayal of her work on a BBC documentary, she was invited to give master classes in her method around the world. Two of these tours, in 1978 and 1984, included New Zealand, with the result that several local teachers have experienced Heathcote's methods at first hand, rather than through the books or the many videos available.

Heathcote's tours of New Zealand were organised by Sunny Amey<sup>10</sup>, then Curriculum Officer for Drama for the New Zealand Department of Education. It was during Amey's time as Curriculum Officer that specialist drama rooms were constructed in schools around New Zealand. Amey actively fostered drama in schools and encouraged the methods espoused by the proponents of drama-in-education.

Amey, however, was not the first New Zealand educator to promote the progressive ideals of drama education. Margaret Walker had attempted to introduce the ideas of Slade and Way to New Zealand schools as far back as 1949. She had worked with Brian Way's experimental group, the West Country

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<sup>10</sup> See subsection 2.3.2

Children's Theatre Company and was encouraged by Fraser and Beeby to return to New Zealand to provide similar opportunities to New Zealand children (Alcorn, 1999, p. 196). Her appointment to the Wellington Teachers Training College ended, badly, however, and she was discredited. In the 1970s, however, Sunny Amey was to revive Walker's reputation and publicly recognise her contribution to drama education in New Zealand.

Education in New Zealand has experienced cycles in educational philosophy and the 1970s was a progressive era in education. The 70s were seen as a period of educational revolution in secondary schools or, what then Assistant Director of Education, W.L. Renwick, called a "restless exploratory phase" (O'Neill, 2004, p. 22). With the retreat from progressivism in education in the 1980s, however, drama began to be seen as peripheral to the real work of education (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 38). Reflecting on the introduction of the 1988 Education Act in Britain, Hornbrook argues that, "Unfortunately, a decade of dramatic hagiolatry was to leave many ordinary drama teachers dangerously ill-prepared for the demands it would make upon them" (p. 38). In Hornbrook's view the emphasis on the inner processes of drama and the dominance of improvisation in classroom practice at the expense of knowledge of the theatre was making drama irrelevant in a new era of educational philosophy.

In the 1980s, non-University Entrance Sixth Form Certificate was introduced to New Zealand schools (O'Neill, 2004, p. 28). Sixth Form Certificate was comprised of internally-assessed standards-based assessment specifically geared towards non-academic subjects. Drama, therefore, remained on the timetable as a Sixth Form Certificate option. By the 1990s, priorities had changed. O'Neill (2004) suggests that the "corporist" approach of "Tomorrow's Schools" was "picked

up and carefully repackaged by Dr Smith (then Minister of Education) in the 1990s in pursuit of National's New Right economic, social and economic agendas" (p. 31). The drama rooms, constructed in the 1970s, were converted to other uses. The school production, however, a showcase of talent and theatrical skill, endured as the face of drama in the secondary school.

O'Connor (2008) observes that drama has existed in "marginal spaces" for most of his working life, "For drama education has been seen as not theatrical enough to be real theatre, too playful to be real learning, and too ephemeral to be of real value" (p. 2). O'Connor was appointed National Facilitator for Drama with the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 2000 but resigned in 2005 after expressing dissatisfaction with the structure of the arts curriculum document: "What I did was to move drama from the margins to the centre, and in doing so I made a terrible mistake" (p. 5). For O'Connor, the demands and strictures required by the curriculum were anathema to the ideals and values of the early pioneers of drama education. For this reason, he chose to remain an independent drama educator. He is an associate professor at the University of Sydney and manages his own drama courses in Auckland.

The challenge for secondary school drama teachers today, who are working with the curriculum and NCEA assessment, is to resolve these competing discourses in their own classroom practice. The history of drama education includes innovators who, while working within an established system of education, experimented with new approaches to their teaching. In general it can be said that they encouraged individuality and student ownership of their work. Drama for performance to an audience was not their priority. The emphasis was on improvisation and freedom of expression. At

the same time, in New Zealand schools, the school production, with its emphasis on performance for an audience and the development of traditional performance skills, remains an important feature of drama education.

NCEA assessment in drama attempts to combine both these strands. NCEA achievement standards in drama cover not only improvisational work but also performance skills. In addition, the standards include an academic theatre history component. It is an attempt to synthesise the competing strands in drama education. The next subsection explores the possibility of a successful synthesis of these varied, and often contradictory, points of view.

### ***2.3.3 A Synthesis of Competing Discourses in Drama Education***

It is evident that drama education contains within itself some competing and contradictory discourses which have not been entirely resolved. Fleming (2003) maintains that this "central dichotomy" has a long legacy in art and drama education and is encapsulated in such contrasting notions as *subjectivity* and *objectivity*; *private* and *public* domains (p. 141). He explores the "major differences in emphasis which have been part of drama's history": drama/theatre; process/text; process/product; drama-in-education/drama education (p. 10).

An examination of the theories of the major exponents of drama education during the twentieth century demonstrates the philosophical basis of these dichotomies.<sup>11</sup> For example, in the early years of the century, the opposition between drama and theatre is presaged in the work of Harriet Finlay-Johnson who did not consider the drama work conducted in the classroom from the point of view of the audience and believed, in this context, that adult perceptions were

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

irrelevant. Later, Peter Slade was also to assert that child drama could not be measured by adult standards and that any attempt to train children too early for adult theatre would do them harm. Conversely, Frances McKenzie, whose interest lay in amateur theatre, did not consider performances by unskilled children as acting.<sup>12</sup> For Bolton (1998) the drama/theatre dichotomy was clearly spelled out by Way who saw theatre as communication between actors and an audience but drama as the work experienced by participants, regardless of any function (p. 148).

This contraposition of drama and theatre, apparent in the philosophies of some of the forerunners of contemporary drama, relates directly to the opposition between process and product. Traditionally, the product of drama is a performance, usually viewed by an audience, or a finished piece of work that can be evaluated. However, in improvisational drama, it is the process which counts. For Caldwell-Cook, for instance, it was about freeing the imagination; for Slade there was more value in spontaneous dramatic play than the acquisition of performance skills. In their study of arts education in England, Harland et al. (2000) noted that some drama pupils they interviewed conveyed "a feel for an emphasis for process over product" (p. 109).

In term of the opposition between process and text, and process, neither Heathcote nor Cecily O'Neill, for instance, would have considered using any form of written script in their work; in fact, it would have been anathema to them.

However, Fleming (2003) argues that, while Heathcote attracts scores of admirers and her own work is peerless,

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

many of her theories do not translate easily into the regular school environment (p. 19):

The best examples of drama in education practice which were often observed in demonstration lessons were difficult to sustain in the day-to-day reality of the classroom. Many teachers will recognise the force of that view. They were facing a tall order if they expected to sustain, week after week, improvised work of the high quality which they may have observed on video or on courses. (p. 19)

In his biography of Heathcote, Bolton (2003) admits that she was rarely cramped by the timetable:

One of her past students writes, however, "Her main weakness was the fact that she had never taught in a school ... she was always the honoured visiting teacher and time and facilities were put at her disposal in an unrealistic way." That she was mostly a stranger to the pupils must have also coloured her initial approach to them. Together, these circumstances add up to an unusual, some would say artificial, setting for her teaching. I have often heard despairing observers comment, 'It's all right for *her*'. (p. 35)

Hornbrook (1998) agrees that the tensions existent in drama teaching today spring from the historical development of drama-in-education, the aims and intentions of which were antithetical not only to the idea of theatrical performance, but any notion of assessment or prescribed objectives: "For them, issues about the relative quality of students' work in drama were only of marginal interest" (p. 22). Bolton (2003), however, argues that "It is strange that educationists, who would not expect to find objective evidence of what people have learnt from a theatre

experience, nevertheless pretend to themselves that such objectivity is somehow accessible in the classroom" (p. 99). Fleming (2003), on the other hand, suggests that the improvisational process can be evaluated:

The mistake made in the past was to assume that knowledge in the case of drama consists of theatre history, stagecraft or literary criticism and that the ability to devise and structure drama is somehow innate because dramatic playing seems to come naturally. (p. 33)

It would not be surprising if contemporary drama teachers were sometimes perplexed regarding the wider purpose of their subject. Harland et al. (2000) observed that, amongst teachers in the schools they studied, there was "a noticeable reticence about using the term 'theatrical skills'" when talking about their practice (p. 71). Even to unravel the complexities of the terminology used to describe drama in all its various guises is a challenge. For example, Fleming (2003) perceives the historical tension in drama as that between "theatre" and "drama" (pp. 17-19). Greenwood (2003) concurs but, at the same time, suggests that the word *drama* can be used to "signify an emphasis on participant involvement and process" while *theatre* may be applied to more commercial ventures (Grierson & Mansfield, 2003, p. 121).

Greenwood (2003) also explains, however, that the "participatory, play-making strategies that are collectively known as 'process drama'" (by O'Toole, 1992 and O'Neill, 1995), have also been described as "drama" (by O'Toole, 1992; Bolton, 1998 and the Ministry of Education, 2000); "performance" (by Schechner, 1998 and Handelman, 1990) and "theatre" (by Boal, 1995 and Grotowski, 1995. Burton (1991)

added a hyphen, calling it "drama-theatre". Greenwood herself regards these terms as "interchangeable" (p. 121).

Fleming (2003) proposes three ways of conceptualising drama; firstly as a "literary discipline" which concentrates on content (plays and playwrights); secondly as "theatre", with the focus on acting for an audience (including technical stagecraft); and thirdly as "dramatic play" which includes improvisation and drama games (p. 30).

For drama educators currently practising in New Zealand, it is important to develop a synthesis of these sometimes competing discourses. NCEA assessment in drama requires teachers to deliver programmes which use improvisational techniques but also to develop performance skills in the production of plays for an audience. New Zealand teachers, therefore, must integrate some diverse and dichotomous viewpoints. O'Connor (2008) has his doubts about the possible outcome of this endeavour, "Somehow making drama a subject takes the very artistry of teaching away and replaces it with the deadness, the technicality and dullness that pervades so much else of what we do in life" (p. 12).

The criticisms of drama-in-education by its most vocal critics include the claim that it relied on too few "gurus". Abbs (1994) argues that it was "four decades of practice determined by four individuals" (p. 120), namely Slade, Way, Heathcote and Bolton. Abbs refers to the "profound anti-intellectualism" of the progressive movement and claims that drama "cut off from any aesthetic field ... forfeited any sense of intrinsic identity" (p. 122). However, Fleming (2003) maintains that the work of Bolton and Heathcote never really stood still and that many of the criticisms of their approach failed to acknowledge the development in their thinking (p. 17): "Most drama in education practitioners



would argue that the whole history of the movement has actually been an attempt to reinstate art and aesthetic experience in drama work in schools" (p. 19). Fleming argues that if the mistake made in the early days of drama-in-education was placing too much faith in one method (spontaneous improvisation), "the reinstatement of scripted plays does not automatically guarantee engagement in art" (p. 19). What the proponents of drama-in-education were rejecting were the negative aspects of theatre when imposed prematurely on young people (p. 19).

Fleming (2003) asserts that these conflicting views of drama are moving closer together. He argues that, over time, the proponents of process drama have discovered a new appreciation of form and structure, while theatre practitioners are realising the benefits of fluid concepts of acting and rehearsal by using improvisation to explore role and situation (p. 19). Peter Brook (1968), a renowned British director and innovator, explains his view of the creative possibilities of "living theatre":

In a living theatre, we would each day approach the rehearsal putting yesterday's discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us. But the Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done ... There is a deadly element everywhere; in the cultural set-up, in our inherited artistic values, in the economic framework, in the actor's life, in the critic's function. As we examine these we will see that deceptively the opposite seems also true, for within the Deadly Theatre there are often tantalizing, abortive or even momentarily satisfying flickers of a real life. (pp. 14-17)

Fleming (2003) points out that the history of theatre has often included many highly creative and adventurous artists who have transformed theatre practice (p. 19). For example, Bertolt Brecht's theory of alienation and his rejection of naturalism in the theatre transformed ideas about performance whereas, as Bolton (1998) observes, Brian Way took the risk out of classroom acting by circumscribing acting behaviour into prosaic exercise (p. 164):

At a time when some professional theatre was taking risks, when professional actors were engaged in their own exploratory workshops led by people like Keith Johnstone and Joan Littlewood, Way was consolidating the idea of a dictated sequence of actions. When rehearsal rooms became hothouses for ensemble playing, Way kept his young actors working "in a space on their own". (p. 165)

Bolton (1998), however, also explains that Way had, in fact, formulated a set of objectives for his students:

Determining selected goals was not of course new to drama teachers – those following the Amateur Drama Route, the Speech route or even the English Lit. route tended to work to specific targets. What was new was that a non-performance orientated drama could be so explicitly purposeful. (p. 150)

Bolton (2003) admits that Heathcote was not always certain of the outcomes of her work and that it is pertinent to remember that "a few of her students did not see the relevance of her work to secondary teachers, dismissing it as therapy, as nothing to do with real education" (p. 100):

I think it is fair to say that Heathcote was pioneering a view of education the implications of which she

herself did not fully grasp. Attempting to review our view of knowledge led at times to ambiguity. In Heathcote's efforts to describe her position there appeared a constant slippage between the art of drama and learning outcomes, as though she was not always sure where she wanted to place the emphasis. (p. 177)

Heathcote's work has continued to develop, however. In August 2009, she presented a keynote address, by live feed via the internet, to delegates attending *Weaving Our Stories, the International Mantle of the Expert Conference*, held at the University of Waikato. In this address Heathcote discusses Mantle of the Expert as she currently understands it, although she admits that she is constantly reflecting upon and improving her practice. Essentially, the operation of Mantle of the Expert depends on the creation of a controllable domain. This is usually achieved by the students being given a commission. In the instance discussed in Heathcote's address, the students had been commissioned to construct a theme park based on the lives of the Romans in ancient Britain. Learning in Mantle of the Expert takes place through the tasks the students must perform in order to carry out this venture. It is an episodic process.

What is evident in Heathcote's address is the detailed planning involved in the preparation for this work. This included a background story of a Roman living in ancient Britain, interesting pictures and a variety of props including documents and a detailed map of a Roman villa and its attached barracks.

Heathcote emphasises, however, that the teacher is not the "holder of the power" but an enabler, a watchful guide. She reiterates that her aim is that the students should discover the pleasure in learning, in finding things out. She

describes the *mantle* not as a garment but as a quality of leadership and responsibility.

Contemporary commentators on drama education, such as Kempe and Ashwell (2000), suggest that instruction in drama fosters self-expression and self-confidence, encourages co-operation and enhances creativity (p. 1). Gallagher (2007) argues, however, that "the ever-elusive concept of creativity" has not been particularly well researched in respect to drama education (p. 1229). In his article *Drama Education and the Body: "I am, therefore I think"*, Osmond (2007) posits that, "To bring drama to education is to undo the split of thinking from being" (p. 1109) and, similarly, Deasy (2010) maintains that, through participation in the arts, mind, heart and body are challenged, "The human being is fully engaged" (p. 3).

Nevertheless, as Gallagher (2007) points out drama is divided with conflicting political opinions about its purpose (p. 1234). Indeed, O'Toole (2009), in his discussion of the competing discourses in the United Kingdom, which include concepts of drama as an art form, as a medium of learning, for self-expression and personal growth, argues that dichotomy became trichotomy, "And eventually 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" (p. 117).

The issue for drama educators in New Zealand is how to extract the best from this diverse background and put it into practice in the classroom. There is the potential for a synthesis of the competing ideologies which, while often contradictory, have consistently generated a quest for creativity and innovation in drama education. By its nature,

drama education is student-centred, collaborative and subjective.

For drama practitioners in New Zealand the challenge is to define and maintain their own principles of education while working within an educational structure that requires adherence to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and to the achievement objectives and assessable outcomes demanded by the NCEA assessment model.<sup>13</sup> Integral to the aim of my study is an examination of how teachers are managing their practice in the light of these contradictory discourses. Greenwood (2009) proposes that drama in New Zealand might be seen as a "group improvisation in which, through dramatic negotiation, participants evolve their goals, narrative and roles" (p. 246). This improvisation takes place within a framework that has a number of fixed but changing structures.

O'Toole & O'Mara (2007) suggest that drama and formal curriculum have always had a relationship of "mutual suspicion" in Western society (p. 203). They argue that curriculum is often viewed as having status and permanence while drama "exists in the moment" (p. 203). They posit a curriculum based on three paradigms of purpose, the cognitive/procedural; the expressive/developmental; and the social/pedagogical. These, combined with the functional, that is what people do in drama, would have the potential to unify the various concepts of drama education (p. 204). Kempe & Ashwell's (2000) suggestions for a drama curriculum can be seen to correspond with these broad paradigms. O'Toole and O'Mara (2007) acknowledge that the three competing paradigms have been unified in a new set of three dimensions, *making, presenting and responding* (p. 214).

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<sup>13</sup> A more detailed examination of the issues connected with curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in drama is presented in chapter 3

Broadly speaking *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* reflects these dimensions. However, both the curriculum and several NCEA achievement standards pay attention to the conventions of making drama. The bibliography accompanying the *Arts policy background documents* (2003) includes the first edition of *Structuring Drama Work: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama* (Neelands, 1990). In the second edition (Neelands and Goode, 2009), these conventions are explained and suggestions made for their application in the classroom. These conventions appear frequently in drama glossaries in New Zealand and are an essential feature of current practice.

In *Drama and Curriculum*, O'Toole et al. (2009) note that in a few places, such as New Zealand, Australia, Denmark and Taiwan, "drama has achieved at least a notional place among the standard subjects offered through all the years of schooling" (p. 24). For those still "Standing outside the door of the curriculum" (O'Toole et al, 2009), this is an enviable situation. For drama educators in New Zealand, it is an ongoing process of adaptation.

## **2.4 Summary**

The intention of this chapter has been to (a) review existing knowledge in the area of arts education, and more particularly drama; and (b) provide a framework to facilitate examination of the issues which arose out of the research study relating to the impact of NCEA assessment on drama teaching practice in New Zealand secondary schools.

As drama is an art form and subject to the same cultural concepts that influence attitudes to the arts as a whole, this investigation into the development of drama education included an examination of the function and features of the arts in general. The chapter was, therefore, presented in

two sections, the first comprising an exploration of the arts, society and creativity, and the second containing an examination of the nature and purpose of drama education in New Zealand.

The first section of this chapter examined the historical factors which have influenced cultural attitudes to the arts in education. It included a discussion of the nature of the creative process and the difficulties in defining the concept of creativity. There is a growing awareness that developing creative and innovative thinkers is essential in a postmodern environment and that education must discover ways to develop and nurture the creative facility in students. Traditionally, arts educators have demonstrated expertise in this area of education.

As drama is a discrete art form with specific issues concerning its development as a school subject, the second section of the chapter examined the nature and purpose of drama education. An exploration of the diverse nature of the subject included an examination of the various discourses surrounding drama education. In order to provide a context for the analysis of the reported experiences of drama teachers, this section contained an explanation of the history and ideology of drama education in schools, including an exposition of drama-in-education, and their influence on the course of drama education in New Zealand.

The next chapter examines the influence of curriculum and assessment models on pedagogical practice in drama. With the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), drama became a recognised secondary school subject; with the introduction of NCEA assessment senior assessment qualifications became available to students at Years 11, 12 and 13. It denoted a substantial

shift for drama practitioners; chapter 3 examines the pedagogical implications of this shift.



### **3. Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, consideration was given to the historical and cultural role of the arts in society and education, and drama's particular place within these. This provided a necessary introduction to the discussion of drama curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in the context of contemporary official curriculum and assessment frameworks, and the effects of these on teachers' work with students. Together, chapters two and three provide a conceptual framework within which to investigate the reported pedagogical experiences of senior secondary school teachers which are reported in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

This chapter examines the influence of curriculum and assessment models on drama pedagogy in New Zealand. With the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), as one of the essential learning areas of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993), drama became recognised as a senior secondary school subject. To understand the implications of this development and how it might have affected teaching and learning in drama, the chapter explores the relevant features of the arts curriculum and investigates the possible influences on its construction.

With the subsequent introduction of NCEA assessment, by the Ministry of Education in 2002, to replace the former qualifications system (School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate, University Entrance and Bursary), senior assessment qualifications became available to drama students at Years 11, 12 and 13.

The NCEA is a system of standards-based rather than norm-referenced assessment. It is a secondary school qualification available at three levels. Level 1 is a Year 11 qualification, Level 2 a Year 12 qualification and Level 3 a Year 13 qualification. In New Zealand, Year 13 is the final secondary year and students build upon NCEA Levels 1 and 2 to achieve NCEA Level 3. However, as Philips (2007) observes "Students do not necessarily complete the qualification in the Year level stated" (p. 176). All NCEA awards are attained by accumulating credits and it is possible to complete Year level qualifications over two or three years if required.

The NCEA results are gained through nationally registered unit standards and achievement standards, both of which have specified learning outcomes and achievement criteria. All standards are assigned a credit value which is awarded when the required level of attainment is achieved by the student. There is some variance in the means by which results are obtained from the two types of standard available. In the case of unit standards, students either achieve the standard or they do not, there are no gradations of performance, and all unit standards are internally assessed. Results for achievement standards, on the other hand, are graduated into three categories which measure performance as either *achieved*, *merit* or *excellence*. Assessment for achievement standards is both internal (school-based) and external. External assessment is conducted by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) through a national system of examinations. Generally, these are written examinations but, for some subjects, may be based on an evaluation of portfolios of student work.

Prior to the introduction of the NCEA, senior assessment in drama had been available only at sixth form level (Year 12).

As a Sixth Form Certificate subject drama was offered in several New Zealand secondary schools. Bushnell (1992) states that, by 1992, more than a third of New Zealand schools offered Sixth Form Certificate drama and notes that "this expansion had occurred over a relatively short period of six years" since the introduction of Sixth Form Certificate (p. 7). The Sixth Form Certificate was a nationally recognised internally-assessed qualification. At the same time as Sixth Form Certificate was available, however, schools were also offering University Entrance (UE) examinations to students. Alison (2007) argues that universities dominated the senior curriculum at this time and that "having the Sixth Form Certificate and UE side by side in the sixth form inevitably meant that UE had higher status" (p. 5).

With the introduction of the NCEA, however, drama became an approved subject for university entrance. This signalled a substantial shift for practitioners in their approaches to teaching and learning in drama. This chapter examines the pedagogical implications of this shift.

In section 3.2, "The Influence of Curricula on Pedagogy", the significance of curriculum design on teachers' approaches to teaching and learning is considered, with reference to contemporary drama teaching practice in New Zealand. In this discussion, use is made of the descriptors formulated by Bernstein (1996) to describe the relay of power and control in education.

In Bernstein's terms *classification* is the means by which power is transmitted and *framing* the means of control. In subsection 3.2.1, "The Framing of Arts Education", consideration is given to the influence of global events on education policies in New Zealand and the effect of these

policies in determining the options available to classroom teachers of drama. Subsection 3.2.2, "Classification in Secondary Schools", examines the organisation of secondary schools in New Zealand in relation to the position of drama education within these organisations.

Contemporary developments in drama education are the focus of section 3.3, "Curriculum and Assessment in Drama". This section contains three subsections. Subsection 3.3.1, "Exploring the Arts Curriculum", comprises an examination of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and its significance for drama educators. In subsection 3.3.2, "The Purpose and Function of Assessment", national assessment models are considered, with particular reference to the NCEA in New Zealand. Subsection 3.3.3, "The Influence of NCEA Assessment on Drama Pedagogy", focuses on the implications of NCEA assessment requirements for teaching and learning in secondary drama.

### **3.2 The Influence of Curricula on Pedagogy**

This section explores the implications of curriculum design on teachers' approaches to teaching and learning. It provides a context for an examination of the impact of NCEA assessment on contemporary drama teaching practice in New Zealand secondary schools. The principal role of curricula in national education systems is to delimit the teaching content, from which learning objectives are derived and against which any models of assessment measure achievement. As drama, prior to 1993, had not been included as a subject in the New Zealand curriculum, practitioners had not been required to work within a national framework of curriculum and assessment but had designed localised programmes based on their individual aims and experience. Clearly the introduction of nationally mandated curriculum and

assessment requirements denoted a substantial change for drama educators.

The launch of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* in 1993 had significance for arts educators. Through it the arts took their place as one of the seven essential learning areas and it included both drama and dance as compulsory. In 2000, with the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), drama teachers were presented with a set of national guidelines and expectations for their practice. As teachers must conform to the policy requirements of national curriculum and assessment strategies, the implications of the introduction the arts curriculum document are best understood in the context of those factors which influenced its development.

Codd (2005) points out that education policies define the provision of education and give objectives for practice but observes that these objectives are based on belief. Therefore, he argues, it is "not enough to simply analyse the mechanism by which policies are decided upon and implemented, the basic assumptions, beliefs and values underlying the policy process must themselves be brought to light" (p. xviii). On the other hand, Bernstein (1996) contends that it is also necessary to understand how these ideologies are transmitted, by educational institutions, through the "*discursive rules* of the pedagogy" (p. xiii).

Bernstein (1996) links educational discourse with the structure of educational institutions by analysing what he terms *collection codes* and *integrated codes* (p. xiii). The collection code refers to the mode of operation in the structure of traditional and hierarchical educational institutions which are a collection of *singularities* or subjects (p. 75). These institutions hold to a retrospective

view of what is considered worthwhile knowledge. Their emphasis is on establishing a reputation for traditional academic accomplishments and they are less likely to explore emerging pedagogical discourse. Bernstein maintains that state monitoring through the structures of public examinations supports this collection code. Schools which are less advantaged in terms of traditional status and income are more likely to exhibit an integrated code in their operations, with less emphasis on a hierarchy of knowledge and more concern with exploring diverse approaches to teaching and learning and "the possibilities of pedagogical discourse" (p. 74).

In schools with an integrated mode of operation there is evidence of weaker *classification* and *framing*. The terms classification and framing were created by Bernstein (1996) to describe the process of transmission, what he calls the *relay of power*, in pedagogical discourse. Bernstein's is a sociological theory of pedagogy and it is his belief that without specific descriptions "there is no way in which knowledge systems can become part of consciousness" (p. 17). In other words, if the means by which power is relayed through educational institutions remains unexamined, and is accepted as the natural course of events, it cannot be properly understood, challenged or changed.

Bernstein's (1996) descriptors provide an effective framework for analysis of transmission of power in education. As Bernstein sees it, power relations create and maintain boundaries between different groups; he uses the term *classification* to describe this separation of one group from another. The boundaries are maintained by *insulation*, "In other words, A can only be A if it can effectively insulate itself from B. In this sense, there is no A if there is no relationship between A and something else ...

What preserves the insulation is power" (p. 21). Whether classification is strong or weak depends on the degree of insulation between the different categories or groups. For example, in a secondary school each subject area may defend its boundaries vigorously, maintaining a strong sense of subject identity through strong classification.

To describe the mechanisms of control, Bernstein uses the term *framing*, "which regulates and legitimises communication in pedagogic relations: the nature of the talk and the kinds of spaces constructed" (p.25). Framing is about who controls what, "classification establishes voice and framing establishes the message" (p. 25). Where framing is strong, the centre of control (what Bernstein calls the *transmitter*) is explicit. Where framing is weak, the teacher, or a student, has more apparent control but it is only a superficial autonomy. For instance, in a senior secondary drama classroom the teacher is apparently free to use their own methods of instruction in order to elicit the appropriate progress in their students. However, the requirements of an NCEA achievement standard will require that certain concepts are covered, using a designated vocabulary, to be presented in a stipulated manner within a prescribed timeframe. This may limit the time the teachers and students have to spend on the process of learning towards the assessment. Further time spent in composing assessment tasks, providing sufficient resources and arranging the internal moderation of each assessment may further limit the teacher's ability to respond creatively to individual student needs.

Framing also regulates pedagogic discourse and Bernstein (1996) describes the two ways in which this occurs as the *social order* and the *discursive order* (p. 31). The discursive order pertains to the *instructional* discourse in

education, that is what will be taught, when, and to what end. The social order, on the other hand, is *regulative*; essentially it regulates the behaviour of the adults and students working in educational institutions. Specifically, the social order refers to expectations of behaviour in a hierarchical situation. These rules of behaviour are frequently unspoken but are tacitly understood. In this way pedagogic discourse in school is constrained to be in accord with the dominant conventions.

While the discursive order is important in that it involves the construction of curricula and assessment models, according to Bernstein (1996) it is the regulative discourse which is dominant, in all aspects of framing. In educational institutions, correct conduct is paramount. Teachers (*acquirers*) are expected to recognise the rules contained in classification (what Bernstein refers to as the *recognition rule*) and to realise them through working within the frames (the *realisation rule*). Only then do all acquirers work from the same text. Often these rules, sometimes covert, will prevent open debate in educational institutions, "Members not sharing this common pedagogic communication may well remain silent or offer what other members consider inappropriate talk and conduct" (p. 31). For instance, should a drama teacher attempt to verbalise personal and, perhaps, unconventional views on the importance of creativity and self-expression in education, in contrast to the more structured approaches of their secondary school colleagues, they might well undermine their credibility as competent educators.

Official curriculum and assessment models are clear examples of classification and framing as they are the means by which education can be controlled on a national scale. Curricula are a means of classification; through them, subjects are



defined and accorded relative importance. The aims and objectives of each subject area are articulated in terms of national educational policy. National assessment models are a means of framing in that they establish the rules of discourse in each subject.

With the introduction of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and NCEA assessment, drama became a mainstream subject in secondary schools. In some measure the benefits of inclusion were tempered by a loss of autonomy for drama teachers and their students. Central to the aim of this thesis is to examine the extent of this impact on classroom practice through the reported experience of drama teachers. The next subsection examines how the politics of the framing of education has contributed to this effect.

### **3.2.1 The Framing of Arts Education**

In this subsection, contemporary developments in arts education are examined in order to explore the extent to which external influences delimit the options available to classroom teachers of drama. In *The Hope of Radical Education* (1988), Giroux argues that, "pedagogical questions are political questions" (p. 94), and that there is a link between the global context of change and educational policy in New Zealand.

This global context is one in which many of the certainties of modernism are being superseded by a diverse, fast-paced and seemingly endless transmutation of reality. Hargreaves (1994) suggests that it is a time of "accelerating change, intense compression of time and space, cultural diversity, technological complexity, national insecurity and scientific uncertainty" (p. 3). Hartley (2006) suggests that in the new economy which is emerging from this vortex of change, the

expressive has become viewed as necessary to maximising production and consumption and, therefore, "seems set to be instrumentalized", as a means to economic gain (p. 61). Hartley observes that, while the past two decades have seen a search for certainty and standards in education, there has now emerged "a quest for creativity within both government and business" (p. 62). He argues, however, that "The increased curricular emphases on the emotions and creativity are more fundamentally concerned with meeting changing demands of national and global 'high-tech' and 'high-touch' economics" (p. 60). This hypothesis would appear to be confirmed by the *Robinson Report's* list of Britain's *creative industries*, employment in which has grown by 34% in a decade (NACCCE, 1999, p. 19).

Clearly, this has had an influence on educational policy decisions. In New Zealand, in 2000, a newly-elected Labour government under the leadership of Helen Clark introduced a "Cultural Recovery Package" as part of its Cultural Policy. The Ministry of Education was charged with the responsibility for cultural education and training (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2007, p. 13) and was considered to have "an important cultural role through the development and implementation of curriculum statements" (p. 7). In 2003 the Ministry of Education published the first of its arts strategies. This was later replaced by *The Arts Strategy 2006–2008*, which summarised Ministry initiatives "to support the teaching of the Arts in New Zealand schools" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 1). In the section entitled "The Arts – Strategic Plan" (p. 2), it is suggested that the provision of quality "arts learning opportunities" would allow students to develop their full potential by providing the opportunity for them to participate and engage in quality arts education in all four disciplines. It also recognises

that "arts learning provides pathways to a range of career opportunities in creative industries" (p. 3). In section 5.5 of the *Cultural Policy of New Zealand* (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2007), which deals with the cinema and film industry, figures quoted indicate that the "major growth in New Zealand's screen industry sector" resulted in a doubling of the numbers employed in film and video production in the five years from 1996 to 2001 (p. 23).

However, Grierson and Mansfield (2003) question the potential impact on individual and national identities if the arts are reframed as *knowledge industries* or as a resource for a global economy, particularly if the arts, as a form of cultural production and consumption, also have a role to play in defining cultural values (p. 29). Grierson and Mansfield posit that the "rhetoric of the 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy'" has led to knowledge, as a resource, being equated with economic prosperity, and that this "intersection of knowledge and capital" has influenced how the arts are framed "by and within this newly language political framework" (p. 29). Grierson and Gibbs (2008) argue that objectifying the arts in this way separates them from the personal creative experience, "the arts and aesthetic experience are universalised and thus necessarily separated from the particular personal, cultural and historical experiences of those who make or experience them" (p. 17).

Hartley (2006) suggests that the postmodern culture is one of "fast capitalism" (p. 62) or, as Gilbert (2005) describes it, "hyper-modernity" (p. 42). It is an era where the market "spawns choice" and even culture becomes commodified. The "high-touch" and "high-tech" services required in fast capitalist economies demand "emotional labour and ever more innovations which can be patented and turned into products"

(Hartley, 2006, p. 62). It is apparent, then, that the introduction of the arts into the curriculum was as much an economic decision as a pedagogical one. As Hartley says, "schools transmit messages"; in a postmodern world these messages serve production and consumption but "production messages prevail" (p. 68).

Thus, as Lyotard (1984) predicted, knowledge has become a commodity, defined by whether it produces something that can be sold. Lyotard expected that the very idea of knowledge as training for the mind would become obsolete, as would the concept of knowledge as a set of universal truths; rather its importance would derive from its *performativity* – its ability to enable things to be done. Grierson and Mansfield (2003) argue that performativity in the arts may threaten the cultural value of the arts:

If the arts are claimed as performative sites for knowledge exchange, will identity too become a matter of performativity in the networks of a global information society? At what point do the arts translate to informational commodity and, in the process, do they erase or bypass what might be understood as "cultural knowledge"? (p. 30)

In the case of drama education, this places the emphasis of knowledge on students' measurable achievements; on the visible advantages of the skills gained; and on what can be utilised as a viable product of drama. For teachers, the necessity of demonstrating what drama *does* may detract from the attention paid to the more personal, intellectual benefits garnered through the drama process. As part of the enquiry contained in this thesis, it is necessary to ascertain how far this is true of teachers' current

experience in the drama classroom; and, if so, the means by which they manage the contradictory demands of the subject.

Many commentators concur that we are living in a *knowledge society* (Codd & Sullivan, 2005; Gilbert, 2005; Grierson & Mansfield, 2003) but that the meaning of the term *knowledge*, when used as part of terms like *knowledge society* and *knowledge economy*, "means something quite different from what educators and philosophers of knowledge (and ordinary people) might mean when they use this term" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 10). Gilbert argues that knowledge is no longer an object but a series of networks, a verb rather than a noun, a process rather than a product. However, the education system itself appears rooted in the past; Hargreaves (1994), for instance, argues that schools remain modernist institutions (p. 9). In many educational institutions knowledge is still considered a product rather than a means of learning.

If, as Bernstein (1996) suggests, framing is about the control of the message relayed through education (p. 25), the tension for drama practitioners lies in how best to interpret the message. On the one hand, drama education functions to nurture the creative process; on the other hand, drama educators are expected to comply with the requirements of a national assessment schedule. While these two aspects of contemporary drama education are not, necessarily, mutually exclusive, in practice negotiating an appropriate balance between two, sometimes competing, demands can prove challenging.

In this subsection Basil Bernstein's concept of framing as a description of the operation of control in education was examined in relation to the influence of political and economic factors in determining educational priorities. The impact of global events on national policies in education

was discussed and the situation of arts education was considered within the context of global change.

The following subsection discusses the concept of classification in education. While framing, or control, pertains to the message relayed through pedagogical discourse, classification concerns the relay of power, or the voice, implicit in that discourse (Bernstein, 1996, p. 25). The next subsection examines the issue of classification in the secondary school in relation to its impact on drama education in New Zealand.

### ***3.2.2 Classification in Secondary Schools***

In this subsection Bernstein's (1996) concept of classification is applied to an examination of the organisation of secondary schools in New Zealand. Hargreaves (1994) considers secondary schools the "prime symbols and symptoms of modernity" (p.9). He describes modernity as a social condition driven and sustained by Enlightenment beliefs in rational scientific progress and the triumph of technology over nature. According to Hargreaves, modernity begins with the separation of family and work and culminates in systems of mass production; "In modernist economies expansion is essential to survival" (p. 8). Politically, modernity concentrates control at the centre which is reflected in "large, complex and often cumbersome bureaucracies arranged into hierarchies, and segmented into specialisations of expertise" (p. 8). Hargreaves argues that secondary schools, in their scale, specialisations and bureaucratic complexity reflect the values and processes of modernity (p. 9).

In *Doing Cultural Studies: Youth and the Challenge of Pedagogy* (1994), Giroux maintains that "narrow, technocratic models dominate educational reform" (p. 94). The problem, as

he sees it, lies in the relationship between pedagogy and power. Those who hold the power control the discourse around education and so shape pedagogical practice. Gilbert (2005) suggests that modern Western education systems are directly descended from the philosophy of Plato and are, therefore "elitist, hierarchical, conservative and closed"<sup>14</sup> (p. 49). She argues that the education system uses traditional curriculum subjects for two different purposes: to prepare future ruling classes, and to decide who will enter that class. Gilbert cites Bourdieu's hypothesis which posits that *cultural capital*<sup>15</sup> is not taught directly but picked up through immersion and so is not easily accessible to another social group (p.61):

The educational institution, which plays a critical role in the reproduction of the distribution of cultural capital and thus in the reproduction of the structure of social space, has become a central stake in the struggle for the monopoly on dominant positions. (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 33)

The social hierarchy is maintained through access to the education available to the elite, by which a student gains not only academic rewards but is immersed in the social mores of the dominant caste. Moore (2006) posits that school curricula often reflect this dominance:

It is argued that, though school curricula are often presented and understood in terms of selections from the knowledge and culture of a nation, what is typically selected continues to draw almost exclusively on the cultural skills and preferences of already privileged social groups. (p. 87)

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<sup>14</sup> See also chapter 2 for information on Plato's attitude to the arts in general

<sup>15</sup> Cultural capital is the knowledge acquired through birth or social position

The point, though, is not that these intrinsic ideological processes exist in school curricula but how they are transmitted. Traditionally, secondary school subjects have been what Bernstein (1996) terms *singularities*. Where classification is strong, each department in a school will have strong insulation, "its unique identity, its unique voice, its own specialised rules of internal relations" (p. 21). When classification is weak the school may take a more integrated approach to teaching and learning but Bernstein argues that "classifications, strong or weak, always carry power relations" (p.21). In the case of drama education, the historic marginalisation of drama in schools, and the relative novelty of having it included as a mainstream subject, means that it still often carries less status than the more traditional subjects.<sup>16</sup> The sense of identity of the academic subjects has evolved over time and, even in more integrated schools, they remain well insulated. By its nature, drama education has a less firm insulation, partly because it was traditionally taught as part of English but also because the evolution of the subject fostered a sense of openness and experimentation.

If, as Hargreaves (1994) states, secondary schools remain modernist institutions, the practical reality is that all school managers and teachers understand the recognition rules of regulative discourse, which is why they will endeavour to work within the bounds of curriculum and assessment models despite any personal misgivings they may have. They may also be hesitant in naming their misgivings, especially in schools where classification and/or framing are particularly strong. There is a hierarchy of power in education which, over time, has become integral to the very

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<sup>16</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3



concept of schools so that those within the education system generally take it for granted:

The arbitrary nature of these power relations is disguised, hidden by the principle of classification, for the principle of the classification comes to have the force of the natural order, and the identities that it constructs are taken as real, as authentic, as integral, as the source of integrity. (Bernstein, 1996, p. 21)

This would suggest that if drama is to forge its identity as an established academic subject in the secondary school it has no option but to strengthen its insulation by constructing a singular vocabulary and specialised rules. The tensions inherent in approaching drama education in this way, and the impact of this approach on drama practitioners in New Zealand, is of significance to the examination of teachers' perceptions of the impact of the NCEA contained in this thesis.

In this subsection Bernstein's (1996) concept of classification is applied to an examination of secondary schools in New Zealand. It discusses the hierarchical nature of schools and the relationship between pedagogy and power. The conformation of secondary schools into subjects or singularities, insulated by a specialised language and procedures, is considered in relation to the relay of power in education. The situation of drama as one of the newer academic subjects is examined in this context.

The means of maintaining this power through the control of educational process lies in the establishment of national curricula and assessment schedules. For arts teachers, the curriculum in question is *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). The following

section, therefore, examines the structure of the arts curriculum document and the subsequent introduction of NCEA assessment, in regard to their significance for drama educators.

### **3.3 Curriculum and Assessment in Drama**

In this section, the position of drama education in relation to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) is discussed. It also examines the implications for drama pedagogy of the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama. To facilitate this discussion the section is divided into three subsections: 3.3.1, "Exploring the Arts Curriculum"; 3.3.2, "The Purpose and Function of Assessment"; and 3.3.3, "The Influence of NCEA Assessment on Drama Pedagogy".

#### **3.3.1 Exploring the Arts Curriculum**

In this subsection, *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) is examined in light of its implications for drama educators. Subsection 3.2.2 explored issues connected with the transmission of power in education through school curricula and it is apparent from these readings that school curricula can never be neutral, forging, as they do, a link between culture and value:

Curricula, almost by definition, are always part of *selective traditions*, which means that curriculum reflects, implicitly or explicitly, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge. Curricula reflect cultural or political forces and are the negotiated outcome of the tensions and compromises among stakeholders, each with their own set of values and concerns. (Peters, 2003, p. 21)

Peters (2003) argues that any appraisal of an arts curriculum document must take into account *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and its orientation to the "knowledge economy" and emphasis on transferable "essential skills" (Peters, 2003, p. 21). Harland et al. (2000) define transferable skills as "the perceived transfer, in terms of skills and knowledge, from the arts in school to the world of work" (p. 221). Peters maintains that "Forcing the arts into this national framework is open to question, for the arts do not fit comfortably into a perspective that is anchored in a view of knowledge as instrumental in serving the needs of a national economy" (p. 21).

In his foreword to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), Howard Fancy, then Secretary for Education, wrote that the document "emphasises that the arts disciplines offer students unique opportunities for imaginative and innovative thought and action, for emotional growth, and for deeper understanding of cultural traditions and practices in New Zealand and overseas" (p. 5). Grierson and Mansfield (2003) have questioned whether the structure of the arts curriculum will in fact, impede these developments; they suggest that "the jury is still out" (p. 28). At the time of the publication of this critique by Grierson and Mansfield, the arts curriculum was a relatively new document and the full impact of its introduction, on teaching and learning in the classroom, was not yet evident.

In terms of drama education, the growing acceptance of drama as a secondary school subject has arisen, partly, from the international commercial success of film in New Zealand<sup>17</sup>. While *The Arts Strategy* (Ministry of Education, 2006) asserts that the arts disciplines offer students the

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<sup>17</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

opportunities to develop creativity, identity, and emotional and cognitive growth (p. 1) it also recognises that the arts provide opportunities for careers in *the creative industries* (p. 3). For drama practitioners, these two objectives may not always easily coalesce.

*The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) takes a generic approach to arts education, based on the concept of the arts as sharing "related, yet autonomous practices" (Abbs, 2003, p. 57). The curriculum identifies four "interrelated" learning strands: *Developing Practical Knowledge; Developing Ideas; Communicating; and Interpreting and Understanding in Context*. However, separate sets of achievement objectives are provided for each of the four arts disciplines for, as the introduction to the document asserts, "developing skills, knowledge, attitudes and understanding in one discipline does not imply a similar development in another" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 7).

Nevertheless, the arts share in the four *literacies* which have been adopted as a "central and unifying idea" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 7). Students are said to develop literacy in each discipline as they: explore and use its elements, conventions, processes, techniques and technologies; draw on a variety of sources of motivation to develop ideas and make art works; present and respond to art works, develop skills in conveying and interpreting meaning; investigate the discipline and art works in relation to their social and cultural contexts (p. 10).

Mansfield (2003) is critical of the conceptual assumption that underpins the arts curriculum in that it appeals to a language-based model which implies that there is an arts *grammar* that can be learned (p. 67). She also argues that the expressed intention of the curriculum to develop

cognitive skills implies a certain account of knowing, an accent on thinking and the outcomes of thinking. It is, in her view, overly rationalistic (p. 64). Mansfield criticises the use of the term “disciplines” as a Eurocentric concept which manoeuvres the arts educator into “identification with order, rationality, linear development and control” (p. 64) and contributes to “hierarchical notions of culture” (p. 67). Peters (2003) maintains that the use of terms such as *literacies in the arts* demonstrate the enduring influence of the traditional view of education and the “unproblematised cultural relativism underlying the curriculum” (p. 23).

Mansfield (2000, 2003) positions herself within a postmodernist discourse and believes that the *grand narratives* of Western society are confirmed and upheld in the official arts curriculum. These grand narratives favour rational scientism and, by implication, the traditional approaches to education<sup>18</sup>. In these environments, drama has consistently found itself marginalised and minimised. The arts curriculum, then, appears to be attempting to fit a *round peg* (drama) into a *square hole* (the national curriculum). In this situation, drama practitioners themselves must make sense of conflicting curriculum document messages.

Pragmatic approaches to curriculum design would seem to imply that a curriculum is simply a product of official policy development process to be disseminated to and by teachers. A curriculum grounded in practice, however, is one which is shared. Grundy (1987) maintains that the idea of structure, as regards curriculum, is often confused with the concept of foundations. Whereas aims, objectives, content, implementation and evaluation are structural, the foundation of a curriculum remains its philosophical core (p. 1).

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

In the *Policy Framework for Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999), the authors acknowledge that *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) does not specify its "philosophical underpinnings" (p. 2). They assert that within its principles "can be seen the influence of a range of philosophic approaches, key amongst which are modernism, postpositivism and postmodernism". However, they admit that "The analysis of consistency from curriculum framework to draft arts statement identifies the influence of postmodernism as occurring *after* the publication of the Curriculum Framework document" (p. 2). The philosophical base of the New Zealand arts curriculum, therefore, remains fairly opaque and open to a variety of interpretations.

Doll (1993) argues that he would make "a conscious attempt to define curriculum not in terms of content (a 'course-to-be-run') but in terms of process – a process of development, dialogue, inquiry, transformation" (p. 13). Historically, the process of discovery was a fundamental feature of drama education<sup>19</sup>. Greenwood (2003) suggests that when the curriculum appeared drama teachers "were grateful that it was a document that allows, even demands drama teaching that is challenging, relevant and liberating" (p. 119). Although the arts curriculum document appears to allow for flexibility in approaches to pedagogy, its essential focus, however, remains on the prescribed objectives as stipulated by the overarching *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993).

These prescribed objectives are what must be assessed when gauging students' progress through the levels of the curriculum. Bolstad (2006) questions whether the assessment standards are, in practice, the new "de facto" national

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<sup>19</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

curricula (p. 117). She suggests that since the 1990s many decisions about the New Zealand secondary curriculum have been “*implicit* decisions made in the context of *explicit* decisions about assessment and qualifications” (p. 121). In the case of secondary drama, the structure of the NCEA assessment system has become the definitive interpretation of the arts curriculum. The following subsection explores aspects of assessment and its influence on drama education.

### **3.3.2 The Purpose and Function of Assessment**

The New Zealand Ministry of Education describes assessment as “the process of gathering, analysing, interpreting and using information about students’ progress and achievement to improve teaching and learning” (Ministry of Education, 2009a). In Bernstein’s (1996) terms assessment is an instrument of framing; that is, of control of pedagogical processes. It has been noted that teachers may be held accountable for the results of national assessment, especially when their schools aim to present an image of academic success to the community. Codd (2005) suggests that “The professional culture of education is now based upon externally imposed low-trust forms of accountability” (p. xvi).

Since 2002, national secondary school assessment policy in New Zealand has been implemented through the NCEA, a standards-based assessment model. NCEA accredits student achievement through a combination of internally assessed unit standards and achievement standards, and externally assessed achievement standards. For each standard, specifications are provided in terms of level, learning outcomes and credit value.

The achievement standards in drama cover a range of approaches from devised performance through to scripted

plays and the literary interpretation of theatre forms. The theory component involves theatre arts, the cultural and social issues surrounding play texts, and theatre technology. Approved assessment methods include observation, portfolio work, and image recording.

The impact of this approach to drama education is best understood in the context of drama tradition. The intention, when designing the achievement standards in drama, was that they be based on teachers' existing practice. Brook (1968) states that, in theatre, "Perpetual elements do recur and certain fundamental issues underlie all dramatic activity" (p. 16). It is these "perpetual elements" that the NCEA achievement standards attempt to address. However, Brook also considers the comparison between "living theatre" and "deadly theatre" and reflects that "Deadliness always brings us back to repetition: the deadly director uses old formulae, old methods" (p. 39). In a living theatre, on the other hand, "we would each day approach the rehearsal putting yesterday's discoveries to the test" (p. 14).

The range of NCEA achievement standards and unit standards in drama offer some scope for living theatre including some process and improvisational work in their criteria. At all three levels there are internal assessments which require both written and practical evidence of the use of performance techniques, or an understanding of drama elements and conventions, or research into traditional theatre forms or sometimes a combination of the above. The externally assessed written paper tests the students' understanding of techniques, elements and conventions, and the genres studied during the year. These requirements necessarily direct the teacher towards repetition and formulaic approaches. Brook (1968) explains the underlying



dilemma of balancing the demands of form against the creativity of process:

Unfortunately, the moment a lover speaks, or a king utters, we rush to give them a label: the lover is "romantic", the king is "noble" – and before we know it we are speaking of romantic love and kingly nobility or princeliness as though they are things we can hold in our hands and expect the actors to observe. But these are not substances and they do not exist. (p. 13)

The formulation of assessment criteria for drama has necessitated the categorising of the essential features of the subject. It is difficult, however, to define the creative process<sup>20</sup>. Taylor (2006) argues that a sole focus on outcomes does not help teachers "trust their own voices", to probe with their students, to review, to try out and experiment (p. 112).

Hall (2005) considers that some of the problems with NCEA lie in tensions between what he terms outcomes-based education as it is implemented, and other philosophies and goals which are present in the education system such as *lifelong learning* and *knowledge creation* (p. 240). He argues that outcomes-based education is a system of *educational management* and that the restrictive requirements and frequent monitoring of schools has limited their freedom to design delivery:

The number of legislative, administrative, curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements placed on institutions has reached a point when too much available time is going into compliance with administration of education reforms than into teaching and learning. (p. 243)

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2

It is not surprising that the introduction of new assessment models, such as NCEA assessment, should have had an impact on approaches to teaching and learning in the secondary school. In the case of drama education, which previously had existed on the fringe of the national examination system, it heralded a significant adjustment. The impact of NCEA assessment on drama pedagogy is the subject of the following subsection.

### ***3.3.3 The Influence of NCEA Assessment on Drama Pedagogy***

In some ways it has been easier for drama educators to encompass the introduction of NCEA unit standards and achievement standards simply because they had little attachment to previous assessment models. However, drama also lacked the scaffolding that a history of experience in the examination system provides upon which to construct the new standards.

There is a pressure for drama teachers to prove the academic credibility of the subject within the NCEA model, given the traditional bias in secondary schools towards *high-status* knowledge. Hipkins, Vaughan, Beals and Ferral (2004) suggest that the arts have tended to be seen as an "easy option" at school and that "Academically high-achieving students have tended to be discouraged from taking arts subjects except where the subject has been associated with 'high culture' (especially for subjects such as art history)" (p. 135). They argue, however, that the arts have never fitted neatly into the "academic/vocational division that has traditionally been an organising principle of the New Zealand school curriculum" (p. 135). Goodson and Marsh (1996) maintain that a process of pervasive *academic drift* has taken place, "Hence subjects as diverse as woodwork and metalwork, physical education, art, technical studies,

bookkeeping, needlework and domestic science have pursued status improvements by arguing for enhanced academic examinations and qualifications" (p. 13). In drama, one result of this tendency has been the increasing attention paid to the more literary aspects of the subject, in designing the NCEA achievement standards. This aspect of drama, however, requires a more formal teaching style than that previously associated with drama pedagogy<sup>21</sup>. In the classroom, teachers are responsible for finding the appropriate balance between these facets of drama education:

In our view there is a balance in all good teaching between formal instruction of content and skills, and giving young people the freedom to inquire, question, experiment and to express their own thoughts and ideas ... formal instruction alone will not encourage creativity and may even stifle it. (NACCCE, 1999, p.89)

Contemporary NCEA assessment requirements constitute a substantial shift from the drama-in-education model<sup>22</sup>, prevalent prior to 2002, when a teacher's assessment log might show categories for evaluation which included "Expression of feeling", "Level of personal engagement" and "Energy applied appropriately" (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 25). The criteria for NCEA standards in drama are more likely to contain words such as *participate*, *sustain*, *explain*, *describe* and *record*. The power of language to shape our concepts and reproduce ideologies has been well documented since de Saussure described semiotics as a system of signs that communicate meaning. In language the *sign* is the word and the *signified* the idea being conveyed (Miller, 1998, p. 34). In my Master's thesis (Miller, 1998), I cited Silverman (1983) who noted that Barthes had argued that the signified

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

always carries connotations, additional meanings, which will express the dominant values of the time (p. 26). In order to construct NCEA standards in drama, a language had to be employed to describe a range of processes that were previously understood tacitly by practitioners, and drama teachers have needed to become familiar with a shared ideology of drama teaching<sup>23</sup>.

Prior to the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and the introduction by the Ministry of Education in 2002 of NCEA assessment in drama, most drama teachers utilised a variety of vocabularies to explain their work. In a national system of assessment, however, the language of the assessment criteria became standardised through NCEA. Grierson and Mansfield (2003) posit that these “easy to inscribe registers have the effect of confining, over-rationalising, self-limiting and ‘disciplining’ the arts and those who educate in the arts” (p. 32). Teaching effectively to assessment specifications demands a comprehension of the implications of the terms used. Language, then, has become an instrument of framing, a means of control.

In order to teach to the criteria, drama teachers had to ensure that they understood the exact meaning of the vocabulary used. However, no definitive glossary of the vocabulary used in drama assessment had been developed by the time of the fieldwork for this study, and language has become the site of tension. Sometimes the function of a word has altered from year to year or new words have been introduced with no prior warning. Abbs (2003) explains that the reality of “having to use old words with a new set of connotations can cause confusion and suspicion” (p. 48). Hargreaves (1994) suggests that teachers’ work is becoming

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<sup>23</sup> See chapter 6

increasingly intensified as pressures accumulate and innovations multiply (p. 4).

For drama practitioners, the problem remains that teachers are accountable to the government, the school, the parents and, not least, their students, and the priorities for each group may differ. Hargreaves (1994) argues, it is a struggle "to define and defend their worthwhile selves in the face of all these demands" (p. 30). Abbs (2003) contends that teachers are too busy and beset by needs which are only indirectly associated with teaching but rather relate to assessment and record-keeping:

Teachers (and schools) have targets – all of which are set instrumentally, and most of which have to do with "results". These results are, allegedly, measurable and result in school tables of achievement. Thus teachers are driven by the needs of assessment to the extent that assessment itself now preponderantly drives education. (p. 59)

Ball (2003) defines the "culture and mode of recognition that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)" as *performativity* (p. 249). Codd (2005) maintains that, in a culture of performativity, "good practice is defined in terms of pre-defined skills and competencies with very little or no acknowledgement given to the moral dimension of teaching" (p. xv). He suggests that a culture of teaching, on the other hand, tends to emphasise "process more than products" (p. xvi). Taylor (2006) comments on the fear generated by "dreaded accountability" (p. xi) and observes that it is difficult for teachers to realise their aesthetic vision when they are challenged daily with large classes and

an “ever-increasing administration trail” (p. 108). Remarking upon accountability in education, Ball (2003) asks who it is that determines what is to count as “valuable, effective or satisfactory performance and what measures or indicators are considered valid” (p. 249). In their second report of the Learning Curves project to the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), Hipkins et al. (2004) point out that in the case of NCEA, “The use of qualifications data to make comparisons between schools and to infer ‘quality’ of courses from these comparisons is not a straightforward matter” (p. 58).

The Learning Curves project was a three year longitudinal research study “Documenting changes in the subject and assessment choices to senior students in 6 New Zealand secondary schools as the NQF [National Qualifications Framework]/NCEA qualifications reforms are progressively implemented” (Hipkins et al., 2004, p. xv). The findings of this study were published in a series of three reports: *From Cabbages to Kings: A First Report* (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002); *Shared Pathways and Multiple Tracks: A Second Report* (Hipkins et al., 2004); and *Shaping Our Futures: Final Report of the Learning Curves Project* (Hipkins, Vaughan, Beals, Ferral, & Gardiner, 2005). This final report explored students’ experiences and perceptions of NCEA, after working within the NCEA model for the final three years of senior secondary schooling.

The first report of the Learning Curves project addresses student choices and examines whether course structures and the NCEA assessment regime meet the requirements of the curriculum for flexibility in designing programmes appropriate to the learning needs of the students (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002). It considers the ways in which NCEA reforms are designed to break down the distinctions between

"cabbage"<sup>24</sup> subjects and academic subjects and to provide alternative pathways for students to meet their individual learning needs. Hipkins and Vaughan (2002) report that, despite some reservations, teachers were mostly supportive of the benefits of NCEA for meeting students' learning needs, especially the needs of less able or underachieving students (p. xxi).

In the second report, *Shared Pathways and Multiple Tracks*, four NCEA issues, identified in the first report, are explored from the perspectives of both teachers and principals, namely: reducing the number of credits offered per course; the potential uses of qualifications data; parents' understanding of the qualifications; and the increasing teacher workloads (Hipkins et al., 2004, p. xv). In all the six schools studied for this project, teachers "continued to express concern about the heavy workload generated by NCEA implementation" (p. 60) and felt that the NCEA initiative had been "made to work at our expense" (p. xxi). This was particularly pertinent in regards to curriculum leaders:

Many HODs [Heads of Department] identified a range of NCEA-related administration and record keeping pressures, for example, the challenges of sorting and storing students' work to meet moderation requirements, and coping with the huge increase in data on student achievement. Two HODs and 2 principals mentioned spiralling photocopying costs. (p. 61)

In reference to the arts these challenges were intensified. Hipkins et al. (2004) note that, "The arts HODs were developing their understandings of a newly organised

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<sup>24</sup> Students often refer to subject courses designed for the less academically able students as "cabbage" subjects.

curriculum at the same time as they were implementing the NCEA" (p. xxi).

That teachers and curriculum will consistently attempt to meet increasing demands is, according to Hargreaves (1994), a feature of *teacher guilt*. Hargreaves contends that guilt is a "central emotional preoccupation for teachers" who sometimes feel guilty even sitting down. The more important care is to a teacher, he maintains, the more upsetting it is to fail to provide it; "Guilt traps are social and motivational patterns which delineate and determine teacher guilt; patterns which impel many teachers towards and imprison them within emotional states which can be both personally unrewarding and professionally unproductive" (p. 142).

To a large extent, teachers are powerless to effect change in their working conditions when the terms of their employment require an understanding of what Bernstein (1996) calls the recognition rules of the social order. Grundy (1987) maintains that there is little opportunity for teachers to find meaning, "to come into contact with ideas that could transform their work ... to help understand the contradictions and frustrations" (p. 2).

In the face of this pressure, then, how do teachers maintain the "integrity of their praxis" (Steiner, Krank, McLaren, & Bahruth, 2000, p. 220)? This is particularly pertinent in drama when the culture of teaching had previously been notable for its explorative nature<sup>25</sup>. Ultimately, drama practitioners in New Zealand will be responsible for the extent to which the impact of curriculum and assessment models will be realised in their pedagogy.

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<sup>25</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3



### 3.4 Summary

In this chapter, the influence of curriculum and assessment models on drama pedagogy in New Zealand was considered. With the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) drama became recognised for the first time as a senior secondary school subject at Years 11, 12 and 13. This chapter explored the relevant features of the arts curriculum and investigated the possible influences on its construction. In 2002, the introduction by the Ministry of Education of NCEA assessment gave students the opportunity to gain senior qualifications in drama. This chapter examined the pedagogical significance of these changes for drama educators.

The chapter was divided into two sections: 3.2, "The Influence of Curricula on Pedagogy" and 3.3, "Curriculum and Assessment in Drama". In section 3.2, "The Influence of Curricula on Pedagogy", the influence of curriculum design on pedagogy was explored, with reference to teaching and learning in the contemporary drama classroom. Use was made of the descriptors *classification* and *framing* formulated by Bernstein (1996) to describe the transmission of power (classification) and control (framing) in educational settings.

Subsection 3.2.1, "The Framing of Arts Education", examined the impact of global events on education policies in New Zealand. It explored the ways in which national policies can delimit the options available to classroom teachers of drama. In subsection 3.2.2, "Classification in Secondary Schools", the situation of drama in New Zealand education was discussed within the context of the organisational structure of secondary schools.

Section 3.3, "Curriculum and Assessment in Drama", focused on contemporary developments in drama education. This section contained three subsections: 3.3.1, "Exploring the Arts Curriculum", which examined the significance of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) with particular reference to drama education; subsection 3.3.2, "The Purpose and Function of Assessment" in which national assessment models were considered, particularly in relation to the NCEA in New Zealand; and subsection 3.3.3, "The Influence of NCEA Assessment on Drama Pedagogy", which examined the potential impact of NCEA assessment requirements on teaching and learning in secondary drama.

In chapter 2 of the review of the literature pertaining to drama education, existing knowledge in the area of arts was examined with particular reference to drama as one of the four art forms included in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). The intention was to provide a context in which issues concerning the impact of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in drama, which had arisen out of the research study, could be examined.

As an art form, drama is subject to the same cultural concepts that have influenced attitudes to the arts as a whole. These attitudes were examined in section 2.2 of this chapter, entitled "The Arts in Society", in which the historic marginalisation of the arts was discussed in reference to precepts regarding the arts and cognition. This section included an exploration of the nature of creativity and a discussion of the position of the arts in education.

In section 2.3, "The Nature and Purpose of Drama Education", the various discourses surrounding drama education were discussed in order to provide a context for the analysis of

the reported experiences of drama teachers interviewed for this study. It included an examination of contemporary developments in drama education in New Zealand. This section explored the particular qualities of drama education and examined historical events which were to influence drama's development in education. The diverse ideologies which exist in drama education have had a significant impact on its pedagogies, which include those which emphasise explorative process rather than results. This chapter examined the challenges associated with integrating conflicting discourses in drama education, in order to deliver effective drama programmes in the senior secondary school within the NCEA model of assessment.

The traditional model of education and the requirements of curriculum and assessment are sometimes at odds with the creative and explorative aspects of arts education. Historical concepts of cognition and the nature of intelligence have contributed to the marginalisation of the arts in education in the past. The introduction of the arts curriculum document did not necessarily constitute a full recognition of the nature of creativity and the contribution of the arts to its development. In a system of assessment such as NCEA the composition of criteria may limit the potential for exploration, particularly in drama which is structuring the subject in this way for the first time. An emphasis on assessment results and the expectation that teachers are accountable for these results may hinder the explorative process inherent in drama education. As teachers become increasingly busy through the implementation of NCEA, the question is how they manage the pressure of balancing the diverse challenges of drama.

This study of the impact of NCEA on teaching and learning in the secondary classroom aims to explore the attitudes of

drama educators to contemporary developments in drama education. The following chapter provides a detailed explanation of the methodology of this research study in which drama practitioners were interviewed to document and analyse their experiences of NCEA assessment in drama.

## **4. To Hear the Teachers Speak: A Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that, "The aim of methodology is to help us understand in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry, but the process itself" (p. 39). The aim of this chapter is to describe the processes, approaches and methods employed in this study to explore the responses of drama educators to the introduction of NCEA drama. Taylor (1996) argues that it is the work of teachers which determines if a national agenda will be achieved (p. 3). In this study, through the reported experiences of drama practitioners, the impact of the introduction of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in drama is examined from the perspective of its implementation in the secondary school drama classroom.

Examination of the relevant literature indicates two distinct areas for investigation: firstly, an exploration of drama education, its features, history and development; and secondly, the nature and function of curricula and assessment in education, particularly in relation to contemporary developments in New Zealand. The complexity of the information gathered from the literature necessitated the presentation of a review in two separate chapters: Chapter 2, "The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand", which explored the literature pertinent to the arts and drama education; and chapter 3, "Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy", which examined the influence of senior secondary school curriculum and assessment models on drama pedagogy in New Zealand.

Secondary teachers work in a classroom context that is defined by longstanding subject traditions in secondary

schools and current curriculum and assessment policy. In the case of drama, however, there are potential sites of tension in working within these parameters. The traditional model of secondary education and the requirements of curriculum and assessment are sometimes at odds with the ethos of drama education, as evident in an exploration of its historical development. At the same time, whilst drama encompasses features that are particular to the subject itself, it also shares many of the challenges associated with arts education in general, particularly in relation to historical attitudes to the arts and the creative aspects of the arts.

Taylor (1996) maintains that it is through conducting a *conversation* with practitioners that the pedagogical efficacy of educational initiatives can perhaps best be examined, but also argues that stories of classroom teachers "at work with their kids are often savagely discounted by those outside of the practical classroom context" (p.13). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest that "Conversations not only constitute an important source of data but might also be regarded as a method of research in their own right" (p. 163). My intention was to facilitate these conversations with practitioners in order to report their responses to the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama.

In formulating a series of overarching questions for this research I determined, from the examination of the literature, that the previous experience of drama practitioners, prior to the introduction of NCEA, was an essential element of this study. The philosophical or aesthetic views developed through experience of drama education would have a bearing on their responses to the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama. In addition, the exploration of drama educators' responses to the implementation of NCEA assessment in drama should also

include their views on the potential impact of NCEA on the future development of the subject. In consideration of these factors the following three questions emerged:

1. What are the previous experiences of current drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching this subject?
2. How have they responded, as secondary drama educators, to the challenge of NCEA drama?
3. On the basis of their experience to date, how do they think NCEA will affect the future teaching and learning of drama?

In describing the approaches and strategies employed in investigating practitioner responses to these questions, this chapter has been divided into the following sections: section 4.2, "The Context of the Research", defines the methodological context of this study; section 4.3, "Making Conversation: The Research Strategies", details the process of data collection; section 4.4, "Getting to the Truth About Drama Education", discusses the ethical considerations of this study; and section 4.5, "Understanding the Voices", details the processes and procedures employed in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The following section, 4.2, examines the methodological framework of this research.

## **4.2 The Context of the Research**

Mutch (2005) observes that the focus of most educational research is on people, organisations and interactions (p. 18). Central to this study of the impact of NCEA on drama pedagogy are the responses of drama educators to the implementation of NCEA in the secondary classroom. Integral

to the aim of this research is an exploration of the interface between the personal and professional priorities of teachers and the educational structures in which they work.

The methodological approach to this research is located within an interpretive paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that the principles and beliefs that a researcher brings to a study constitute "a paradigm or interpretive framework" (p. 31) for qualitative research. Considering what Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe as the "endlessly creative and interpretive" aspects of qualitative research (p. 14), I have endeavoured, in the course of this study, to avoid the "slavish attachment to method" that Janesick (2003) terms "methadolatry" (p. 215). A term comprising a combination of *method* and *idolatry*, it is used to describe "a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to exclusion of actual substance of story" (p. 215). My intention was to focus on what is required by the task rather than what Ball (1994) refers to as a modernist preoccupation with "grand narratives" which bind social research into "a single grand theoretical perspective" (p. 2).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the multiple methodologies of qualitative research can be viewed as "bricolage" and the researcher as "bricoleur" (p. 2). In *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2008) Denzin and Lincoln explain that the interpretive bricoleur "produces a bricolage that is a pieced together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 5). In the methods of data collection and analysis in this study, I am piecing together teacher responses in order to represent a complex situation.



Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that there are "multiple" realities and that the knower and known are interactive and inseparable (p. 37). In order to capture this multiplicity of reality in my study of teachers' experiences, an interactive approach was required. For this reason I determined that the use of surveys, and the quantitative analysis of the ensuing results, would not necessarily meet the aims of this study. Of those interactive research instruments available, which include case studies and a range of interview strategies, I considered the interview format would best suit the purpose of the research. The in-depth examination required by the implementation of a schedule of case studies limits the number of participants in a research study and my intention was to engage a wider range of participants. The interviews for this study were conducted with New Zealand drama educators from a wide geographical area. They included teachers from large urban schools and smaller provincial schools, and both state and private schools.

As most of the interviewees were professional colleagues, I did not consider it reasonable to assume the stance of "researcher as expert". Instead I elected to explore *realities* with others who shared similar experiences. Bourdieu (1996) suggests that by choosing respondents from among people personally known to them and by demonstrating knowledge of their subject (p. 21-23), the researcher can facilitate some of the conditions that need to be met to reduce the "symbolic violence" engendered by an unequal power relationship between the researcher and the interviewee.

Given the focus of this study and my own immersion in the field of NCEA drama teaching, and the limitation of the study to a snapshot in time of a particular period following

the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama (January 2002–December 2005), I appreciate that my research is *context-bound*. I acknowledge that I have a *native's* understanding of the context of the study. The following subsection, therefore, examines the significance of the *native's* eye view in qualitative research.

#### **4.2.1 Exploring a Native's Eye View**

In this subsection, I examine the relevance of what Geertz (1993) describes as a "native's eye view" to particular qualitative research studies. As a drama practitioner myself, I bring to my research of contemporary drama education in New Zealand the perspective of a participant in the subject. Geertz' main interest is in ethnography and he has used the terms *experience-near* and *experience-distant* to explain two differing approaches to social science research. He asserts that specialists employ a distant approach when they wish to forward their scientific and philosophical aims and that there is a sense of stratification and an objectification of the research subject. *Experience-near*, however, refers to a description of life in the concrete, rather than in the abstract or scholarly as studied. In this case, researchers "naturally and effortlessly" define what people are feeling and thinking (Geertz, 1993, p. 57).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest that it is of benefit for an interviewer "to have a familiarity with the life-history, outlook, customs and lifestyle in order to relate more fully" (p. 159), and Eisner (1991) affirms that it is important for a researcher to "know the scene" (p. 2). Eisner suggests that "Detachment and distance are no virtues when one wants to improve complex social organisations or so delicate a performance as teaching" (p.2). He argues that organisations such as schools are a mixture of interacting

factors and what teachers and students do is influenced by their location within a system:

Works of art – like classrooms, schools, and teaching – participate in history and are part of a tradition. They reflect a genre of practice and an ideology. Those who know the tradition, understand the history, are familiar with those genres, and can see what those settings and practices consist of are most likely to have something useful to say about them (Eisner, 1991, p. 3).

Denzin (2002) posits that hermeneutic research consists of two circles, one with the participants at the centre and one which contains the researcher. Where these circles overlap, he suggests, the researcher is able to “live his or her own way into the subject’s personal experience” (p. 354).

My approach to this study was an inductive one in the sense of the term as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I did not commence the research with a hypothesis that I intended to prove. As Oakley (2003) remarks, a balance must be struck between rapport and detachment (p. 245). The aim of this study was to explore other teachers’ responses to the introduction of NCEA drama. The semi-structured format of the interviews with participants was designed to facilitate open responses. In addition, Creswell (2002) suggests that when studying in one’s “own backyard” it is essential to use multiple strategies of validity to ensure confidence in the accuracy of the findings (p. 184).

However, it is a reality that all research is ideologically driven to a greater or lesser extent. Janesick (2003), for instance, suggests that “There is no value-free or bias-free design” (p. 215). The question of subjectivity and

objectivity in the conduct of this research study is examined in more detail in the following subsection.

#### **4.2.2 Examining Subjectivity and Objectivity in Research**

In this subsection the validity of a qualitative research study which uses subjective and interpretive methods of data collection and presentation is discussed and evaluated. While some social scientists still emphasise the importance of neutralising voice in the writing of research reports because "The presence of voice is thought to be a liability" (Eisner, 1991, p. 29), the search for objectivity remains "an elusive ideal" (p. 43).

Dewey (1934) maintains that objectivity is not possible (p. 10). He suggests that an individual does not *have* social experience; the individual *is* social, and experiences internal and existential conditions simultaneously (Dewey, 1934, p. 10). Eisner (1991) observes, however, that subjectivity is "such a troublesome notion in the educational research community that we have created language norms to reduce its presence" by formalizing our language as much as possible in order to depersonalize our work (p. 45). He explains two definitions of objectivity and suggests that *ontological objectivity* is seeing things the way they appear to the physical senses, and *procedural objectivity* is the method of enquiry that aspires to eliminate the scope for personal judgement (p. 44). He argues that the problem with both procedural and ontological objectivity is that it can lead us to avoid studying what we cannot measure (p. 45) and, therefore, to present a consensus rather than reality (p. 46).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) maintain that reality is predicated by the situation and belief systems of the protagonists rather than by some objective measure: "There

are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of the observer and the observed" (p. 12). Similarly, Bourdieu (1996) suggests that the search for neutrality through the elimination of the observer is an illusion (p. 28). In terms of my study, although I realise that I share some common interests and experiences with the interviewees and that my interpretation of the data is likely to be influenced by these shared experiences, I am aware that quantitative researchers are also subject to influences which shape their interpretation of data. All have experiences and beliefs which have an impact on their discussion of their findings. Opie (1994) asserts that:

The well-established conventions ... imply that research is carried out objectively and progresses in a purposive and ordered fashion by means of a series of consistent steps within the bounds of a pre-established theoretical orientation. Yet over the last two decades some researchers, especially feminists and anthropologists, have highlighted the ideological implications of this paradigm and questioned its theoretical and experiential adequacy to explain the processes of (qualitative) research. (p. 60)

Opie's position on the established conventions governing research indicates that teleological and objective approaches to research reflect the embedded ideologies of scientific rationalism, the grand narratives of modern society which contain within them implied assumptions of the superiority of certain kinds of knowledge. The modern attachment to objective, quantitative research has its origins in the Platonic ideal. Flyvbjerg (2001) observes that Plato believed it was possible to establish "entire systems of theoretically objective principles" and his

teachings became the conventional scientific wisdom (p. 70). Knowledge, therefore, was not context-dependent.

The arts, however, exist within the context of the creative process which, by its nature, cannot be explained by purely rational means. Taylor (1996) argues that it is difficult for arts education to achieve its "artistic-aesthetic mandate within a climate of scientism" (p. 4) if the education system itself is embedded in a positivist ideology. An inherent tension exists when arts education must function within the aims and structures of that system. Gilbert (2005) suggests, however, that the meaning of knowledge is changing. She argues that the concept of knowledge as an object is a metaphor, a mental model that we use to scaffold our thinking (p. 75) and it is one which is "no longer helpful in educational thinking" (p. 74). In approaching research into creative and sometimes subjective subjects like drama or, indeed, when exploring facets of a creative occupation such as teaching, the "well-established conventions", as described by Opie (1994, p. 60) are not appropriate for investigating *multiple realities* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37).

This subsection has examined the issue of objectivity and subjectivity in research projects. It has presented a selection of discussions on the nature of objectivity and subjectivity in research and examined developments in qualitative research. Qualitative research is a process which can only be fully explained in the context of each particular study and an entirely objective approach is not necessarily useful in all situations. In relation to this study, my knowledge of drama education and my ability to relate to the concerns of the participants in the study was a key factor in eliciting clear and open responses. The next section provides a more detailed account of the methods

employed in conducting this research and the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees in qualitative research.

### **4.3 Making Conversation: The Research Strategies**

In this section the approaches employed in this research study are explained in reference to the particular nature of the subject and the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Subsection 4.3.1, "The Approaches", details the rationale behind the approaches used in this research, and subsections 4.3.2, "Structuring the Interviews"; 4.3.3, "Asking the Questions", 4.3.4, "Recruitment of Participants", and 4.3.5, "The Rationale for Telephone Interviews", provide an account of the processes used in the collection of data for this study.

#### **4.3.1 The Approaches**

This subsection provides an explanation of the approaches employed in conducting this study of NCEA drama teaching and assessment. It is intended to be a hermeneutic study. Janesick (1994) maintains that "the qualitative researcher is very much like an artist at various stages of the design process, in terms of situating and recontextualising the research project within the shaped experience of the researcher and the participants in the study" (p. 210). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest that qualitative research is "endlessly creative and interpretive" (p. 14) and it is this creative aspect of interpretive research that suggests that it is a suitable approach to the examination of drama education<sup>26</sup>. The creative process involves the shaping of raw material into a new and meaningful structure. The hermeneutic researcher uncovers the raw material,

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<sup>26</sup> See chapter 2

defines the context and constructs a new interpretation of those materials.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that "Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic" (p. 37). Meanings can occur on a number of levels: conscious, unconscious, personal, social, cultural and socio-political (Hayes, 2000). In terms of the experiences of secondary school drama teachers, the response to pedagogic innovations is influenced not only by the demands of daily practice, the needs of students and the necessity of performing effectively in the secondary school environment, but also by their personal, social and cultural belief systems. These require interpretation rather than enumeration.

The interpretive researcher is in the position to present a new view on an existing situation. While decisions made about education are, essentially, political decisions, Eisner (1991) argues that "It does not seem particularly revolutionary to say that it is important to try to understand how teachers and classrooms function before handing out recommendations for change" (p. 11). What matters most to teachers, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest, are the stories of children and classroom events (p. 13). They argue that there is a sense of autonomy about teachers in their classrooms and a sense of ownership; the classroom is "a safe place, free from scrutiny where teachers are free to live stories of practice" (p. 13). In this study, the aim was to access teachers' stories about their practice in relation to the introduction of NCEA in drama. It is the interpretation of these stories which is presented, in chapters 5, 6 and 7, from data collected through interviews with practitioners. The details of the structure of these interviews are contained in the following subsection.



### **4.3.2 Structuring the Interviews**

Given the need to provide a safe space to access teachers' narrative knowledge and to seek a hermeneutic understanding of their experience as teachers, it became apparent that open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview format would prove the most effective method of data gathering for this study. A structured interview format, on the other hand, lacks the required flexibility. Burns (2000) suggests that the structured interview provides the interviewee with only a limited set of responses and, at times, some of their feelings and beliefs might "not fit into pre-ordained response categories" (p. 424). Furthermore, a detached impersonal approach could "prevent trust and rapport" (Burns, 2000, p. 424). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) observe, however, that an entirely non-directive interviewing approach may be inappropriate and suggest that it is preferable that there be some structure in an interview being conducted for the purposes of research (p. 162). They suggest that the semi-structured interview "has distinct advantages for the teacher-researcher working within a known culture with fellow professionals ... Indeed the teacher-researcher using unstructured interviews will quickly see how these often merge into a conversation" (p. 163).

The semi-structured interview format provides a guide for both the interviewer and the interviewees; it gives direction to the interview while allowing the content to focus on the crucial issues of the study. However, it does not limit the participants' responses. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest that the overall aim of the semi-structured interview is "to create an atmosphere where the individual feels able to relate subjective, and often highly personal, materials to the researcher" while, at the same time, providing scope for the interviewer to introduce new

material into the discussion which had not been thought of beforehand but arose only during the course of the interview (p.163). They argue that the semi-structured interview is often favoured by educational researchers:

Qualitative researchers point towards the importance of establishing trust and rapport, empathy, and understanding between interviewer and interviewee. They point out that it is not always possible to specify in advance what questions are appropriate or even important to any given social grouping before involvement with that group. They offer the observation that people do not always say what they mean in so many words, suggesting that social meanings are complex and not unequivocally revealed by a dictionary-like translation of *responses* to pre-arranged *questions* which can then be mechanically *coded* to reveal patterns for subsequent analysis and generation of theory. (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p. 159)

Burns (2000) maintains that the semi-structured interview is "the making public of private interpretations of reality" (p. 424). The possible disadvantages of this situation lie in the potential for the researcher to lead the interview or to engineer the desired responses through familiarity. Similarly, the interviewees are in the position to manipulate the interview situation for their own purposes. In avoiding the open interview format my intention was to allow the interviewees the freedom to move away from questions if necessary but also to allow myself, as interviewer, the opportunity to improvise new questions in response. Bourdieu (1996) suggests that improvising on the spot, "in the pressing situation of the interview" (p. 30), may facilitate "strategies of self-presentation and adaptive responses, encouragement and opportune questions, etc., in

such a manner as to help the research respondent give up her truth or, rather, to be delivered of her truth" (p. 30).

Of the three main research questions which were formulated for this study, the first explored the experience, and philosophical and aesthetic motivation, of the participants. My intention was to engage participants on a personal level so they would feel free to express their own ideas on the nature and purpose of drama education without a sense that these opinions would be judged in the context of their professional environment. In the second question, my aim was to discover how they had responded to the challenge of NCEA from the point of view of these self-expressed personal and pedagogical beliefs. The third question was intended to encourage the interviewees to share their views on future teaching and learning in drama. As the interviewees had been assured of confidentiality and were encouraged to speak freely, their truth was able to emerge without the constraints of presenting an exclusively professional persona to the interviewer.

In this subsection, the decision to make use of semi-structured interviews was discussed with reference to the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. The importance of creating trust and rapport in the interview situation was examined in relation to the interviewer's familiarity with the concerns of the participants. The following subsection describes the formulation of the actual interview questions which provided the basis for the collection of data for this study.

#### ***4.3.3 Asking the Questions***

The interview questions, which formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews for this study on the impact of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in secondary drama,

arose out of my reading of the available literature on drama education, and curriculum and assessment. This examination of the literature, as reported in chapters two and three, and the realisation that experience is socially constructed and takes place in historically and culturally located contexts, led me to conclude that the interview questions should first examine the previous experience of drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching the subject, in order to gauge the impact of the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama. This would provide a context for their responses to the challenges of NCEA drama and their consideration of school and community attitudes to their subject. Finally, given the recent innovations in drama education, participants would be given the opportunity to express their prognosis for the future of the subject in New Zealand secondary schools.

Therefore, from the three main research questions that had previously emerged from my reading of the literature, I formulated 10 open-ended questions which would form the basis of the semi-structured interviews. However, it was made clear to the participants that during the course of the interview they could explore any issues that were relevant to their experience of teaching secondary drama.

The three overarching questions for this research were:

1. What are the previous experiences of current drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching this subject?
2. How have they responded, as secondary drama educators, to the challenge of NCEA drama?

3. On the basis of their experience to date, how do they think NCEA will affect the future teaching and learning of drama?

The 10 interview questions formulated to provide the data for this research study were as follows:

1. How did you come to start teaching drama? When did you begin to teach drama?
2. Did you have any strong philosophical or artistic motivation to do this line of work? Has your viewpoint changed over time?
3. What do you consider to be the priority for successful drama practice?

These three questions relate to the first main research question and examine the interviewees' previous experiences of teaching drama, and their philosophical or aesthetic views on drama education.

4. Has NCEA affected your work in the classroom? Have you needed to alter your programmes significantly? Why/Why not?
5. Would you suggest any changes to NCEA drama?
6. Did you make any contribution to formulating policy/preparing the curriculum document/writing achievement standards etc.?
7. What do you find is the biggest challenge in the teaching of drama?

These four interview questions relate to the second main research question concerning interviewees' experiences of the implementation of NCEA assessment in drama.

8. What is your school's and/or local community's attitude to the performing arts?

9. How do you see the future for drama in New Zealand schools?

These two questions relate to the third main research question regarding the interviewees' perceptions of the future of drama education in New Zealand.

10. Are there any other comments you wish to make?

This final question is included to allow the interviewees the opportunity to express views which may not have been covered by the interview questions or which may have been triggered through the interview process.

Prior to the commencement of the series of interviews for this study, participants were informed of the purpose of the study but they were not provided with an interview schedule detailing the 10 questions, listed above, as the intention of the research study was to elicit spontaneous and free responses at the moment of the interview. The following subsection explains the process of recruitment of participants including the information they received before consenting to be interviewed.

#### ***4.3.4 Recruitment of Participants***

The participants in this study were employed either as teachers in a variety of New Zealand secondary schools, were tertiary educators, or were employed in drama advisory positions. Participants were drawn from several regions of both the North Island and South Island of New Zealand. My choice of cohort was based on participants' knowledge and experience of NCEA assessment and included a number of practitioners with experience of drama education prior to

the introduction of NCEA so that comparisons could be drawn. In the initial stages of the data collection, I aimed for a sample of 30 participants. However, interviews indicated a consistency in teachers' experiences of drama teaching, and after 22 interviews there were few new themes emerging from the data gathered.

The initial approach to potential participants was made through the auspices of a professional association, Drama New Zealand, who granted permission for me to advertise in their newsletter and then to send me the names of any respondents. Once potential participants had been identified, each received an information sheet, by post, detailing the aims and methods of the research, an outline of the commitment involved and the consent form. Ethical considerations were discussed and arrangements regarding the safety of data explained. Participants were assured that pseudonyms would be used in any presentation of the data collected from their interviews and that they would receive a copy of the data presentation chapters for comment prior to the submission of the thesis.

This letter to participants was followed by a phone call, or e-mail, to confirm receipt of the information and to determine availability. Once consent had been received, contact details were confirmed and an interview time arranged. Interviews were conducted from November 2005 to January 2006. At this time the implementation of NCEA assessment in drama was in its third year and the impact of this change was still an immediate issue for secondary drama educators.

The following subsection examines the means by which the interviews with participants were conducted with particular reference to the use of telephone interviews.

#### ***4.3.5 The Rationale for Telephone Interviews***

A pertinent issue concerning the interview situation is the potential for intrusion into the personal or working space of the participants. The value of recording interviews by telephone includes the ease of scheduling interviews and greater flexibility for the interviewee in choosing a location for the interview. Interviews for this study were scheduled at least a month in advance. Given the option of a telephone interview all the participants in the study chose to be interviewed at home and out of work hours, which allowed both participant and researcher a more open timeframe for the interview. Bourdieu (1996) suggests that an interview is disadvantaged by "hurried investigators" (p. 24). By utilising telephone interviews, I attempted to offer "an exceptional situation for communication, devoid of the normal constraints (particularly of time) which weigh down the most everyday exchanges" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 24).

Conducting interviews at a distance also ensured that I did not influence the dialogue with any unconscious and non-verbal reactions to the responses. However, the disadvantage of this approach was that I was also unable to share in the personal, non-verbal experiences of the interviewees which may have added depth to the data. On the whole, however, the advantages of telephone interviews compensated for the lack of visible responses. I was able to gather data from practitioners throughout New Zealand, unconstrained by the limitations of time and travel. In addition, I was able to listen to the recordings while reading the transcripts of the interviews when later coding the data for analysis.

In this section the approaches and strategies used for the collection of data for this study have been explained and discussed in reference to the particular nature and purpose



of the research topic. In the following section, issues concerning the validation of these methods of data collection, and the systems of analysis of this data, are examined in the context of hermeneutic research studies.

#### **4.4 Getting to the Truth About Drama Education**

This section examines the question of validity in qualitative research, particularly in the absence of any quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. My research was based on interviews with teachers, and the thematic analysis of the data collected from these interviews. For the purposes of this study I made the decision not to design a survey which would encompass a large number of respondents. Nor did I carry out classroom observations or gather data from students or colleagues of the teachers in this study. The aim of the research was not to make my own observations or to report other observers' responses to contemporary practice in drama. Rather it was to represent the drama practitioners themselves in reporting their personal and professional responses to the introduction of NCEA drama. To this end I provided the opportunity, through semi-structured interviews, for teachers to express their own thoughts and feelings about the impact of NCEA on their practice, and relied on them to provide a clear representation of their situation. I was aware however, that the research sample should contain a diversity of ages, experience and geographical location among the participants if it was to provide an authentic range of data. I consider that the sample of participants for this study met these criteria.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that in some qualitative research studies, the term *credibility* is a more relevant description of the process of verifying the interpretation of data than *internal validity* (p. 218). The following

subsection continues this discussion of the establishment of validity in qualitative research by examining the criteria for credibility in relation to the research strategies used in this study.

#### **4.4.1 Issues of Credibility**

This subsection examines the possible criteria for what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term *trustworthiness* in qualitative research, particularly when "reality is assumed to be multiple and intangible" (p. 218), and the chief instrument of inquiry is "the inquirer him- or herself" (p. 219). Lincoln and Guba suggest that, rather than attempting to evince an objective viewpoint, the aim of the researcher is to achieve a neutral stance. This is achieved by not placing emphasis on the investigator's characteristics, but on the data. It is important, therefore, that the data are "confirmable" (p. 300).

On the whole, due to the nature of their subject, drama teachers are articulate and expressive. In this respect, they provided rich conversations from which to collect, analyse and present the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that "thick description" allows for "similarity judgements" or *transferability* of the findings (p. 300). Through the semi-structured interviews, where participants had the opportunity to tell their own stories, a sufficient depth of material was gathered to provide descriptive accounts of their experiences.

John O'Neill (2001) argues that "In constructing our portrayals of practice, it is important both that the elements we select for analysis, and the words we use to describe them provide a representative, empathetic picture of what is going on and why" (p. 148). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that one of the means to ensure the

trustworthiness of the selection and interpretation of data is to allow participants the opportunity to examine the findings or the presentation of the data and thereby have them "approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied" (p. 296). Creswell (2002) concurs that the researcher can determine the accuracy of their findings by sending appropriate sections of the report to participants for checking and feedback (p. 195). For the purposes of my study, all participants received copies of the data presentation before the completion of the thesis (as had been assured in the initial information provided to them prior to the data collection interviews) to allow them time to comment on the presentation. During this process, each participant was informed of only their individual pseudonym. Names of institutions or locations which might identify participants were omitted from any data cited in the presentation chapters. Each of the participants who responded to the draft of the data presentation was satisfied that the representation was a truthful account of our interview.

As it was my intention to reflect practitioner responses to the introduction of NCEA drama in secondary schools, I was aware of the necessity to provide a supplementary source of data to ensure the credibility of the study. Cohen and Manion (1994), for instance, suggest that "triangulation is used in interpretive research to investigate different actor's viewpoints" (p. 234). In the process of data collection for this study I observed that many of the postings on the Dramanet website reflected similar themes to those emerging from the interview data.

Dramanet is a discussion forum which allows teachers to seek assistance from their peers, or clarification on details of assessment from others who have had the necessary

experience. It comprises a sub-group of Arts Online which was established by the Ministry of Education to provide information and assistance to arts teachers. Dramanet includes information for drama teachers on current curriculum developments and also features a resource exchange bank and the discussion group.

In discussions on this site, teachers will often express their personal views concerning the assessment process and its impact on teaching and learning in the drama classroom. As these postings encompass a range of opinions from a wide cohort of teachers I have included summaries of selected extracts, where appropriate, in the presentation of the data in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Opie (1994) remarks that it is important that research be non-exploitive and "should benefit participants not just the researcher" (p. 70). Central to the principles underlying the conduct of my research was an overarching respect for the participants involved, consistent with the ethical code under which the research was conducted. In the following subsection some of the principles which define this code are examined in more detail.

#### **4.4.2 Ethical Considerations**

This subsection comprises an examination of the ethical principles underlying the design and conduct of this research into the impact of the introduction of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in secondary drama. After discussion with my research supervisor, the research proposal for this study was regarded as low risk and, therefore, I submitted a Low Risk Notification rather than a full ethics application.

The study adheres to the principles of ethical research as set out in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation Involving Human Participants. Of these principles, the first is respect for persons, which involves the personal dignity, beliefs, privacy and autonomy of individuals who have the right to decide whether to participate in research and are at liberty to withdraw at any time. To ensure that the process of recruitment for my study was free from personal coercion, the initial approach to potential participants was made through the auspices of a professional association, Drama New Zealand, who granted permission for me to advertise in their newsletter and offered to send me the names of any respondents. Potential participants were then informed of the aims and methods of the research and provided written consent before interviews commenced.

In terms of the supplementary data to be sourced from Dramanet, Dramanet is a public website and readily accessible therefore I did not foresee any ethical difficulties in using the information it contained. However, prior to utilising the forum for the purpose of this study, I discussed my intentions with the managers of the site. They were supportive of the purpose of my research. Since the identities of subscribers were to remain confidential in the thesis, and the data were to be used only to identify emergent themes and supplement the findings of the interviews rather than report identifiable personal opinions, the managers of the Dramanet site were positive about my making use of the postings in this way. While the postings from Dramanet used in this study date from 2005-2008, no exact dates appear in the presentation of data chapters. Only a broad indication is given of the month and year a topic appeared on the website. This ensures that the

entire discussion on a particular issue can be viewed in the context of an open forum rather than a specific instance.

The interviews with participants were conducted from November 2005 to January 2006. At this time the implementation of NCEA assessment in drama was in its third year and the impact of this change was still an immediate issue for secondary drama educators. To protect the confidentiality of interviewees, pseudonyms were used in the labelling of the recorded interviews and the transcribers of these recordings were required to sign a confidentiality agreement. These pseudonyms have been used in the presentation of any data collected from these interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to read and respond to the presentation of data but each was informed only of their own personal pseudonym. As far as possible, in an attempt to minimise the risk of harm to the persons or institutions involved, all effort was made to exclude any information which might suggest the exact locations or institutions at which the participants either lived or worked.

The following section provides further detail concerning the process of transcribing and analysing the data collected through these interviews with participants.

#### **4.5 Understanding the Voices**

In this section the transcription of data and its subsequent analysis and interpretation is discussed in relation to the presentation of data in chapters 5, 6 and 7. The following subsection describes the process of transcribing the original interviews from cassette tapes to the hard copies used for the purpose of analysis.

#### **4.5.1 The Transcription of Interviews**

Prior to any analysis of data, I ensured that the content of every interview was transcribed in full in order to have as complete a picture of the data as a whole. Seidman (1998) explains that while it is possible to listen to tapes a number of times and then choose to transcribe only those sections that seem relevant, this could "impose the researcher's frame of reference on the interview data one step too early" (p. 98). Opie (1994) observes that working from complete transcripts allowed her to substantially extend her theoretical framework "in a way that would have been impossible had I been working from notes or had transcribed only sections that seemed relevant at the point of transcription" (p. 81).

However, the mere act of transcription produces a subtle transformation of the data. A recorded interview contains pauses, sudden changes in direction, hesitations and emotional responses and while a transcriber may endeavour to stay true to the tenor of an interview, "It is clear that even the most literal form of writing-up (the simplest punctuation, the placing of a comma, for example, can dictate the whole sense of a phrase) represents a *translation* or even an interpretation" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 30).

Opie (1994) maintains that in her work she endeavours to retain the original transcripts of the quotations used in her presentation of data in order to convey the full emotional context of what was being said which, she argues, is in contrast to the conventional approach where "the characteristics of the spoken word are edited out in quotations presented in sociological literature" (p. 82). On consideration, I opted for the conventional approach to a

certain extent. In conversation, people are often unaware of their idiosyncrasies and although participants were willing to converse with me in an informal and unconstructed manner, it might have proved an embarrassment to view all their hesitations and asides in print. Bourdieu (1996) maintains:

It is therefore in the name of the respect due to the author that, paradoxically we have sometimes to disembarass the transcribed text of certain parasitic developments, certain confused phrases, verbal expletives or linguistic tics (the "rights" and the "ers" etc.), which, even if they give their particular colour to the oral discourse and fulfil an important function in communication (by permitting a statement to be sustained during a moment of breathlessness or when the interlocutor is called on to support a point), nevertheless have the effect of confusing and obscuring the transcription. (p. 31)

Aware that there was a risk, however, that I might impose on the participants' statements and misinterpret their intentions, it was only certain asides or frequent hesitations which were omitted when quoting from the data in the presentation. For example, the following extracts demonstrate, firstly, an original transcription from an interview, during which a participant is reflecting on her past experiences, and, secondly, the edited version. The alteration is underlined:

**Original:** By 1990, I think, I had - you were able to have drama classes in the sixth form - which is when you're 12 you know. And you could do it for, what the hell did they call it, a Sixth Form Certificate.



**Edited version:** By 1990, I think, I had - you were able to have drama classes in the sixth form - which is Year 12. And you could do it for Sixth Form Certificate.

In most instances, however, when including quotations in the data presentations the transcripts remained intact. The following subsection details the approaches used to interpret the data gathered from the interview transcripts and the process of the analysis of this data.

#### ***4.5.2 Interpretation and Analysis***

It is important to acknowledge, at the outset, "the diverse interpretations that can be brought to bear on data" (Opie, 1994, p. 68). Opie uses the phrase "unruly experiences" to describe the often contradictory information that a researcher may have access to during the course of a project. Saldana (2009) maintains that the analysis and interpretation of data will reflect the concepts and theories that structured a study in the first place (p. 7).

In the case of this study, the rationale for the use of a semi-structured interview format is indicative of the interpretive nature of the analysis. Hayes (2000) suggests that different types of interviews require different types of analysis. A semi-structured interview demands analysis appropriate to the open nature of the questions (p. 168). For this reason I determined that a thematic analysis would best suit the data I had collected from the interviews with the participants in this study rather than examining the data in relation to each research question or interview question. By coding thematically I was able to analyse and present the data in a way that most empathetically represented what the teachers were saying about their experiences.

Eisner (1991) defines a theme as a pervasive quality that tends to permeate and unify, "The formulation of themes *within* an educational criticism means identifying the recurring messages that pervade the situation" (Eisner, 1991, p. 104). In an inductive thematic analysis these themes emerge from the data, the analysis is not hypothesis-led.

Although there is a difference between analysis and interpretation, each informs the other. Analysis refers to the process of putting the data into some form of order under titles of categories. This immediately demands an element of interpretation. At the same time, the interpretation or discussion of the data only becomes evident through the process of analysis (Hayes, 2000, p. 167). Denzin (2002) suggests that the steps towards the analysis and interpretation of data include, firstly, *bracketing the phenomenon*; secondly, putting it back together constructively; and, thirdly, contextualising or relocating the phenomenon. (p. 350).

The initial bracketing of data as defined by Denzin (2002) relates to what Coffey and Atkinson (1996) refer to as *data reduction* (p. 7) through coding. Coffey and Atkinson suggest that coding is one of the analytic strategies available to the *bricoleur* (p. 6). When seeking to reduce the mass of data collected from the interviews in my study, I therefore began the process of coding.

#### **4.5.2.1 Coding.**

There are many methods of coding, from the physical manipulation of pieces of paper through to sophisticated computer programmes. In my case, I selected a method which borrowed from both these approaches. Although I did not manipulate physical pieces of paper, neither did I use a

specialised computer programme. Rather, I chose to cut and paste extracts into labelled folders on the computer.

Saldana (2009) refers to coding as a "judgement call" (p. 7) in which categories and themes are decided on examining the raw data. Saldana considers this initial coding to be *open coding* in that no final decisions about the shape of the analysis have yet been made. There are no specific formulas to follow; it is "an exploratory problem-solving technique" (p. 8). When I examined the data collected for my study, I did not decide the categories in advance but allowed the themes to emerge in the course of the coding. Initially this led to some fairly idiosyncratic labels for the various folders, such as "Passion for Subject" and "Adapting to NCEA". By personalising the codes in this way I allowed room for intuition to operate.

Saldana (2009) maintains that coding is not merely labelling, rather it is the linking of "data to idea; idea back to data" (p. 8). As I worked through the interview transcripts, I soon found it necessary to add subtitles to each category. I was aware that, in the eventual presentation of the data, the labels I had assigned to each of the themes emerging from the data would necessarily be changed to accommodate the several interlocking themes evident in the data. The titles and subtitles of each category went through several alterations during the coding as I reconsidered the most meaningful way to report on the drama teachers' responses. Saldana (2009) refers to this stage of coding as "second cycle coding" (p. 149).

This method proved to be an effective way of making meaning from the data. Eventually each folder contained quotations from interviews around aspects of a single theme. If some of the extracts also contained comments appropriate to other

folders, I also included them in those folders. Each folder was then printed as a hard copy giving me a full and detailed picture of each theme under discussion. With all the information at hand, I could present any negative or discrepant information which, as Creswell (2002) suggests, is necessary to provide a balanced account (p. 196).

#### ***4.5.2.2 Presenting the analysis.***

In presenting the data, I began by grouping coded material under the broad themes suggested by the original interview questions; namely, past experience, philosophical and pedagogical motivation, the challenges and benefits of NCEA assessment, school and community attitudes, and future projections. As the sorting and refining progressed the interrelationship of many of the themes became evident. After several rounds of sorting and analysis, I decided on the three themes that best made sense of what the teachers were telling me as a whole, in interviews and via Dramanet postings. The eventual presentation of data contained three main sections; "Philosophy and Pedagogy", "Curriculum and Assessment", and "NCEA Drama in Schools", which encompassed the major themes emerging from the data. These three sections comprised the three chapters, 5, 6 and 7, of the data presentation.

In the discussion chapters, 8 and 9, the data are discussed in relation to the research questions generated by the review of the literature (respectively) in chapters 3 and 2.

### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter provided a justification for and details of the methodology chosen to conduct this research study. It began by identifying the research questions that had been generated by the literature review and then defined both the context of this study and the strategies employed in

conducting the research, including the operationalisation of the research questions as an interview schedule. The selection of the cohort of participants was then explained and the ethical considerations examined. The chapter also discussed the process of conducting the interviews with participants and the procedures employed in the analysis of the data obtained from these interviews, and included information on the selection of Dramanet postings to support the themes emerging from the interview data.

Overall, an inductive approach was taken to the conduct of this research, in the sense of the term as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In accordance with the aim of the research, which was to explore teachers' perceptions regarding contemporary developments in the secondary drama classroom, the intention of this approach was to facilitate "conversations" with practitioners in order to discover their perceptions of the effect of the introduction of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in the drama classroom. The study is located within an interpretive paradigm and draws on Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) concept of the qualitative researcher as *bricoleur* by piecing together a "set of representations" (p. 5) to present the multiple realities of a complex situation. I acknowledged the "native's eye view" (Geertz, 1993) that I brought to this study and considered the position of subjectivity and objectivity in the conduct of research.

The interview questions which formed the basis of this research study examined interviewees' previous experience of drama education, their responses to the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama and their perceptions of its possible future development. To allow the participants sufficient opportunity to express their personal perceptions of the contemporary situation of drama education in New Zealand

secondary schools, a semi-structured interview format was devised which, while providing sufficient structure to the interview, did not limit the interviewees' responses. Credibility of the ensuing data was verified through allowing participants the opportunity to read the data presentation prior to publication. In addition, emerging themes were endorsed through references to postings on the Dramanet online discussion forum. A process of thematic analysis, through a system of coding, was applied to the resulting data.

The following chapters, 5, 6 and 7, contain a presentation of the research data (interview and Dramanet postings) organised under the three inductive themes outlined above: "Philosophy and Pedagogy", "Curriculum and Assessment", and "NCEA Drama in Schools".

## **5. Philosophy and Pedagogy**

### **5.1 Introduction**

A study of contemporary drama practice and the impact of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in drama, through an exploration of the attitudes and responses of drama practitioners throughout New Zealand, must necessarily include an examination of the situation in drama education prior to the introduction of NCEA. At that time, drama was not considered a mainstream subject in New Zealand secondary schools and there were few national guidelines for its implementation. Drama teachers experienced an autonomy of practice in which the aims and methods they employed in the classroom were built upon their individual pedagogical philosophies. These perceptions of the nature and function of drama education were rooted in the particular development of the subject which, traditionally, had operated outside of mainstream secondary education. By examining historical practices in drama education it is possible to isolate the possible sites of discordance in the implementation of NCEA assessment in drama and to comprehend practitioners' responses to these challenges.

A review of the literature presented three possible sites of contestation. The first related to the traditional view of the arts in society and their marginalised status in education. Given that many drama practitioners had previously functioned from a marginalised position in schools this was pertinent to their adaptation to NCEA assessment in drama. This examination of the arts in education included an exploration of the various discourses pertaining to creativity, an important concept for most drama teachers, and to definitions of intelligence which

were not limited only to mathematical and/or linguistic paradigms.

Secondly, the literature signalled the presence of a number of competing discourses around drama education itself in secondary schools. An exploration of these differing positions served to identify possible reactions of practitioners to the demands of the curriculum and NCEA assessment requirements.

Finally, it was evident from my initial reading and personal experience that there was a frequent discordance between the pedagogical philosophy of many drama practitioners and the expectations of a national system of assessment. An examination of relevant literature on pedagogy, curriculum and assessment presented a clear indication of likely tensions or fractures between the concerns of classroom teachers in this study and those of administrators of curriculum and assessment models.

Given the complexity of the information contained in the literature, the literature review was presented in two chapters: Chapter 2, "The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand"; and chapter 3, "Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy". Three overarching research questions emerged from this examination of the literature:

1. What are the previous experiences of current drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching this subject?
2. How have they, as secondary drama educators, responded to the challenge of NCEA drama?
3. On the basis of their experience to date, how do they think NCEA will affect the future teaching and learning of drama?



In order to operationalise these overarching research questions, an interview schedule was developed and data were gathered through a series of interviews with 22 secondary drama practitioners throughout New Zealand. Interview questions focused on teachers' experience and motivations for teaching drama, the effect of NCEA on their teaching of drama, and the challenges of classroom drama. In addition they were asked their views on the evolving status of drama in schools and to give a prognosis for its future development<sup>27</sup>.

The data gathered from these interviews revealed that there is a fundamental interconnectedness between the various aspects of drama education. While the drama practitioner's pedagogical philosophy will inform their experience of classroom practice, at the same time, an educator's experience of teaching and learning will influence the evolution of their pedagogical assumptions.

Three interlocking themes emerged from the systematic analysis of participants' responses to the interview questions: (a) Philosophy and pedagogy; (b) Curriculum and assessment; and (c) NCEA drama in schools. These themes were also consistent with the discourses which had emerged from the research literature.

Once this analysis had clarified the main themes emerging from the interview data, I observed that similar threads were evident in the postings on Dramanet, a discussion forum for teachers. Dramanet is an internet site, established by the Ministry of Education and managed by Arts Online, in which secondary school drama practitioners in New Zealand discuss issues relevant to their practice. An examination of the postings from January 2005 to November 2008 supported

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<sup>27</sup> See chapter 4

the interview data and, therefore, extracts of these postings were also analysed and included in the data presentation.

The data presentation in this thesis has been organised, in accord with the three main themes that emerged from the analysis, into three separate chapters: Chapter 5, "Philosophy and Pedagogy"; chapter 6, "Curriculum and Assessment"; and chapter 7, "NCEA Drama in Schools". In this chapter, 5, the data relates to interview questions 1-3:

1. How did you come to start teaching drama? When did you begin to teach drama?
2. Did you have any strong philosophical or artistic motivation to do this line of work? Has your viewpoint changed over time?
3. What do you consider to be the priority for successful drama practice?

The rest of this chapter is divided into two sections: 5.2, "Philosophy"; and 5.3, "Pedagogy". The following section examines teachers' perceptions of the philosophical motivation for their approaches to teaching and learning in drama.

## **5.2 Philosophy**

The essential tension in drama education is one of philosophy. A practitioner's ideology, experience and personal pedagogy are central to all their responses and are evident in the most fundamental and pragmatic decisions about drama practice. The interviews conducted for this study, and postings on Dramanet, consistently demonstrated that teachers judge the effectiveness of NCEA assessments against their beliefs about the purpose of drama education

and the needs of the students<sup>28</sup>. This section explores the nature of those beliefs and their implications in relation to classroom practice.

These data concerning the philosophical foundations of teachers' practice are presented in four subsections: 5.2.1, "Diversity of Participants"; 5.2.2, "Intrinsic Commitment"; 5.2.3, "Creativity"; and 5.2.4, "Exploring Process".

Secondary drama teachers have come to the subject from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience which have a bearing on their approaches and attitudes to drama education; the following subsection explores aspects of this diversity among the participants in the study.

### **5.2.1 Diversity of Participants**

A notable aspect of this study was the diversity of its participants, not only in relation to their route into drama teaching but also in the variety of cultural milieux they had experienced. Denise<sup>29</sup>, for instance, started teaching in the seventies in the Seychelles which was a one-party socialist state. The students in her extracurricular theatre group, who were 17 to 19 years old, enjoyed the freedom of expression drama offered to such an extent that they decided to stage a show which Denise recalled was "wonderfully subversive".

Many of the participants had come to classroom drama by fairly circuitous routes. Gaynor's training, for example, was originally intended for developing performance skills capacity:

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<sup>28</sup> Dramanet, Aug 2007-Nov 2007

<sup>29</sup> All individual names have been changed to pseudonyms to preserve participant confidentiality

GAYNOR: When I left school I went to drama school in England. And then I went on a scholarship to America where I did a B.A. and an M.A. degree in theatre arts. We came to New Zealand in 1972. I got a job with the theatre federation – the New Zealand Theatre Federation – they hold an amateur festival here. I've also taught privately ... they did New Zealand speech board exams. I worked at [name of school] for quite a long time, and I did the school productions and things like that as well – then I worked at [name of school] for a short time and I was actually teaching some junior music which was wildly entertaining.

And I also taught some senior things in sort of self-esteem, and some of those sort of things that you do with senior classes before they go out into the world which have become transition classes now. And then I, I taught some drama to at [name of school] And then in 1998 I was invited to go to [name of school] to do the production for their new auditorium and I've been connected with [name of school] ever since. Then I managed to get fourth form drama. I guess it was all building up here. And gradually, then I got third form drama, and I still had the sixth form and the seventh form together, and the only class I wasn't teaching was the fifth form. And then unit standards came in and I was like all drama teachers. I was on panels because we were all on panels and things to try and make drama into a legitimate subject. And so then we had unit standards and I remember using that as a leader to our Board of Trustees so that I could get fifth form drama. And with unit standards that was quite important from a drama point of view because suddenly now it was being

looked as a real subject from which you could get qualifications.

Deborah spoke of her experiences in South Africa where she had worked in rural areas from a satellite campus of an established college of education. In an attempt to provide an alternative education to the usual "chalk and talk stuff", they based their practice on the theories of Paulo Freire<sup>30</sup>. Through this experience Deborah became "well versed in the whole co-operative learning, working, learning, discovery, and then using theatre as a means of teaching other subjects as well". She also became involved in teaching drama from a community development perspective rather than as an academic subject; for example, using drama to teach people how to vote and in AIDS education. It resulted in a fundamental change in Deborah's approach to drama education. She admitted that when she first arrived in New Zealand she felt she was going back to a previous era and that she was a "lone voice trying to make drama more relevant":

DEBORAH: There's always been those who feel that drama's primary purpose is performance on a stage in front of an audience. Other people have felt very strongly that drama is not only that but part of a much wider purpose in the whole community and so on. I feel that I can see both perspectives and I've enjoyed teaching drama in different ways; even though what I teach now may lead to performance by developing performance skills and seeing it from that perspective, I haven't let go of my awareness of the broader field.

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<sup>30</sup> The most widely known work of Paulo Freire is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) which examines the struggle for justice and equity within the educational system. See Steiner, Krank, McLaren & Bahruth (2000) for a detailed analysis of Freirean pedagogy.

Several of the participants in this study had moved into drama while teaching secondary English, for example Hugh, Wanda, Stephen, Sara, Diane, Faith, Brenda, Moira and Waverly. For some English teachers, prior to the release of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* document (Ministry of Education, 2000), drama was seen as a way to counter the restrictions of the English curriculum. For teachers, such as Stephen, the impulse to teach practical drama in their programmes arose from a personal knowledge and interest in the subject:

STEPHEN: I suppose it was quite late in life. I was 40. And I'd become interested in a local amateur theatre group that I got dragged into more and more and there was no drama in my school so I got brave – I was head of English then – and I got brave and asked the principal if we could have a – what was third form then – drama class. It was just an option for a year and then it sort of went from there. The next year it was Year 9 – third and fourth form – and so it went on.

Not all drama teachers, however, emerged from a background in education. Milly, for example, began her professional life as a social worker and was moved to establish a performing arts class for her clients. This led to further training in drama and, eventually, a position in a high school.

For all of the participants, however, regardless of background, the impetus to teach drama was rooted in a personal passion and an intrinsic commitment to the educational possibilities of the subject. The following subsection contains an exploration of teachers' observations about their commitment to drama.

### **5.2.2 Intrinsic Commitment**

A distinctive and prevalent strand emerging from the data was an individual and intrinsic commitment to drama itself. Given the marginalised status of the subject prior to the introduction of NCEA drama, some practitioners had originally committed themselves to teaching drama without any expectation of professional or financial advancement. For instance, when Denise began work in The Seychelles "there was no tradition of drama". She began a theatre club after school and the students, who were in their late teens, "absolutely lapped it up". Wendy evinced an early interest in theatre while still at school and used to put on shows at bible class:

WENDY: I started as a commercial teacher but I started doing things and the English department picked up on that and got me to continue ... must be 40 years, way before anyone was doing anything really.

Most of the interviewees expressed a personal passion for the subject; Faith, for instance, remarked:

FAITH: I love performing myself and I love the creativity that it offers kids, or the chance to be creative that it offers kids, in a performance context. It certainly has become much more theory based, as the kids get through senior school, where my strength certainly is in the performance aspect of it.

Many interviewees spoke of their love of theatre and indicated that they had experienced some tension between their aspirations and the demands of theory and curriculum. For example, Geraldine, who stated that she tended "to prefer the actual practical performance aspect of it rather than all the theory that goes with it". Although they

acknowledged the place of drama theory in the practice of drama, several participants considered practical, experiential learning to be their priority:

KATRINA: Engagement. Knowing that the students are involved completely in the process. That for me is an indicator that what I'm doing I'm doing well, and I don't mean engagement on a superficial level, like let's all play a game now, but everybody is kind of playing the same game metaphorically speaking, you know, on the same wavelength. I suppose not just engagement but also engaged in a creative process. I can hear the voices bubbling over going, "yeah, let's try this let's try that". That for me is the most exciting point of it.

Dramanet postings for November 2007 demonstrate the frustrations some teachers have felt when attempting to balance what they consider best drama teaching and learning against the requirements of NCEA drama assessment. One teacher suggested that students with a natural ability should be provided with a course that allows them to thrive rather than "crushing their spirit under a deluge of pointless paperwork". This teacher contended that that there was no connection between producing a stunning performance and being good at class work. As Gaynor expressed it in our interview:

GAYNOR: But the truth of the matter is that you very often have good drama kids who are not good on paper. I mean the two do not have to go together.

Drama is immediate, the results are visible and students experience a strong sense of shared ownership in their work. In her interview, Brenda postulated that "successful practice is handing it over, is empowering people to



investigate, to explore, to practise the elements of drama and to become as self-directed as possible". Georgia spoke of producing the New Zealand play, *Foreskin's Lament* by Greg McGee, at a high school in 1982:

GEORGIA: I put a copy of the finalised script on the principal's desk, he read it and had a minor heart attack. He said, "You can't use these swear words in a school production". I talked to the class first, "Look, we can still do this, but we've got to cut all the swear words." And, you know *Foreskin's Lament* eh? It's got a few. So I said that we'd keep the passion, we'd do everything we just wouldn't use those words. But my senior boys said they were going to talk to him and what I gather they said was, "You can't do this, because of the integrity of the script, blah, blah, blah." Then the principal came to see a rehearsal and, after seeing the commitment of the kids, said we could go for it. And I think he sat in real dread until the newspaper review came out and said what a wonderful performance it had been. It was wonderful; it was the kids who went and fought for it. I guess if we're talking about what I think is important in teaching now, it's to recapture that passion.

Denise expressed students' ownership of their work in terms of their self-motivation:

DENISE: Well, first of all, the motivation levels are high for the students. That's an intrinsic process rather than an external from the teacher. That they have clear goals that they want to achieve, that they demand of me information, that they are actually in charge of their own learning.

This personal sense of motivation to produce rewarding drama work was a recurring theme of the conversations with participants, particularly those teachers who began teaching drama prior to the introduction of NCEA assessment. The historically marginalised status of drama education offered teachers few extrinsic professional rewards; their incentive was intrinsic to their personal values and philosophy.

Most drama practitioners began their careers employed in other disciplines, a large proportion as English teachers. Some emphasised the difference, in practice, between drama and English in the classroom:

WANDA: But, but I don't think any of that's any use unless you know what it is you're talking about and you can structure learning opportunities, you know, for kids to be doing drama and not social studies or English or whatever; otherwise, there's no point in it being a subject.

Early interest in the theatre was frequently mentioned by participants as the incentive to introduce drama into their classroom activities and many had followed this up with further training in drama, sometimes travelling overseas to access the appropriate courses, usually at their own expense:

HUGH: Well through an interest in theatre basically as a young person, amateur theatre, and an interest in going to the theatre, attending theatre; so when I did my teacher training, drama was an option that was associated with English teaching but it was still discretely offered as a module, and then I went to Britain and did a postgraduate diploma in drama and education before there was anything like that around here.

Brenda realised the need to pursue her interest in improvisational drama and also travelled to England to access the necessary training:

BRENDA: I realised I needed to go to work with Dorothy Heathcote ... I applied for a performing arts grant which I got and got supported through that, salary-wise, and went off to England and was there for a year learning all about drama education and how to use drama to teach other subjects, which was more of my thing than just doing musical after musical.

A personal commitment to explorative drama practice was also a key factor in making professional choices. Brenda, for instance, deliberately chose to apply to a comparatively isolated high school for her first position as she believed it would offer her more freedom of choice and scope for innovative practice in drama.

Prior to the establishment of drama as a mainstream secondary subject, teachers' motives for teaching drama stemmed from a personal passion for the subject and an intrinsic commitment to its worth in education. Much of this was based on their own creative impulse and the desire to foster the rewards of creative expression in their students. Gaynor, for example, expressed it in this way: "So yes, I do believe in it as a subject. I believe in encouraging creativity". In their discussions about their practice, teachers interviewed for this study made frequent references to the centrality of creativity in their practice. The following subsection explores the perceptions of teachers regarding the manifestation of creativity in the drama classroom.

### **5.2.3 Creativity**

In this subsection, the views of drama teachers on the importance and nature of creativity in the drama classroom are examined. Amy, for instance, who became interested in the work of Dorothy Heathcote in the early 1980s, talked of "moments of illumination", observing that Heathcote had referred to this process as "spiritual" in terms of the emotional connection to the work. It was clear from the responses of many teachers in interviews that the attention paid to creativity in a drama classroom was not viewed as an adjunct to teaching and learning but as an essential element of drama pedagogy. For many teachers, such as Deborah, the creative experience was at the core of their motivation to focus on drama:

DEBORAH: When I see the students having "ah ha" moments when they discover something, and when I see them enjoying what they're doing and some learning coming out of that ... And I suppose, also, the fact that drama is so creative. Last year I took a year out of drama teaching and did school management and became a deputy principal for a year, in an acting position. And as much as that was really interesting in all sorts of ways, and I got to use my skills as a drama teacher - which I don't think we always realise we have - facilitating groups and that kind of thing, moving people along and getting them to do what you want them to do without them realising it. I enjoyed that and I was fairly successful at it but I missed the creativity of drama teaching terribly, so I gave it up and went back to being a drama teacher and that's what I'll do now I think forever.

For these teachers, drama was more than putting on a performance for an audience using a shallow range of skills merely for effect but was a means of deepening students' understanding of the concepts being taught:

DIANE: Initially it was more that I just really liked performance myself and I know it sounds selfish but people always say teachers are failed actors. I wasn't a failed actor - I would have liked to become a professional actor but I knew I wasn't particularly good at it; I'm alright but I'm not outstanding. But I still loved it with a passion and I felt I was quite good at it ... That was initially. Now because I see the value of the skills to it, I emphasise that. I don't produce stars, I'm not interested - some of them might do that and some of them have gone on to things at Toi Whakaari and so on which is fantastic - but, mostly, they go on to do the things they want to do and drama helps to give them the skills and confidence in communicating. They work well to solve problems; they learn how to co-operate; they learn how to work under pressure better than other students probably.

Finding the balance between creativity, curriculum and assessment was an ongoing challenge for some practitioners. While creativity implies the making of something new, curriculum and assessment define drama in terms of boundaries and outcomes. Georgia, a teacher educator, expressed this view of the inherent tension:

GEORGIA: I'm not very interested in art that's reproductive. It doesn't all have to be group-improvised, new work, you know - I don't have a problem with working with a canon as long as we make it new.

Many interviewees expressed the view that creative exploration was central to learning in drama, believing this process to be at the core of drama education. The following subsection explores drama teachers' concepts of the term *process* when used in the context of teaching and learning in drama.

#### **5.2.4 Exploring Process**

This subsection examines the meaning of the term *process* when applied to drama education. *Process drama* uses improvisational methods of working as a core tenet of practice and is directly linked to Dorothy Heathcote and her most influential followers, Gavin Bolton and Cecily O'Neill. The influence of Dorothy Heathcote and the drama-in-education movement<sup>31</sup> was evident in many of the participants' responses in interviews, especially those of teachers who had been involved in drama education for over 20 years (for example Amy, Brenda, Wanda, Wendy, Geraldine and Stephen):

WANDA: I was focused on drama as theatre but it was probably devised theatre rather than scripted theatre, although we did both. But very soon it was for me – whilst I was still using those mechanisms – it seemed to me to be as much about relationships and development and those kinds of things, so sort of social behaviour through drama I guess. And then in 1985 I did a teacher refresher course on drama as a learning medium – Dorothy Heathcote – so that added a whole other dimension as well. So I suppose those three things went side by side for the next, you know, 15, 20 years really.

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<sup>31</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

Among those drama teachers whose experience dates from the 1970s or 1980s, when the influence of process drama was widespread, there was a strong awareness of the social benefits of drama education such as developing communication and interpersonal skills, confidence and self-esteem and enhancing creative approaches to problem-solving:

GAYNOR: I like being able to support people in exploring and finding their own thing and expressing themselves; their own creativity if you like. I think that, through drama, even the weakest one - in fact, very often the weakest one - can gain so much more self-esteem and confidence and that will really help them in their life. And you never know what people have got in front of them; it doesn't always turn out to be easy and it surely must help if one has a bit of self-esteem and can communicate with other people and express one's ideas. I do think that drama is a very important subject to teach, which is probably why I'm a drama teacher, isn't it?

One contributor to Dramanet (August, 2007) contended that the drama classroom has a place in the development of critical pedagogy. Referring to the work of Boal and Habermas, the contributor observed that s/he was attracted to drama education because it appeared to embody the principles of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The concern with drama as an agent for change involves not only those aspects of process and devised drama but, for some practitioners, it is also integral to performance work. Julia, who, at the time of the interview, was working in pre-service teacher education, emphasised the importance of finding one's "voice" and the political potential of

theatre. Also, as Georgia noted, in the New Zealand context the politics of theatre extends to bi-culturalism:

GEORGIA: Partly because of circumstances, and the fact that I work in New Zealand, a strong bi-cultural focus has become a part of my philosophy. That's not the icing on the cake, it's part of it, because I believe it's about the relationship between us and community.

Some of the interviewees expressed concerns that the contemporary curriculum was eroding the freedom to explore ideas in this way:

DENISE: I think education should be about freedom to learn and I think an awful lot of curriculum these days seems to repress this. The one wonderful thing about drama is you can't. It's freedom to learn and it's freedom to learn together. You don't have to be the expert. The kids bring as much as you do. Also the performance at the end - it's the self-confidence, articulation, opinion that comes out of it - and the huge teamwork, that to me is the big thing. When you say you're doing a degree in theatre, it's the same as when your kids say they're studying drama. People think it's a soft option. What I learnt very quickly was that it is certainly not a soft option; not only are you doing the practical stuff but you also have a really dense theoretical base. I am offended by their opinion, but I also feel quite excited by the idea of marrying of the practical and the theoretical. I could see how, when you have that theoretical base, it actually makes you a better practitioner in whatever area you chose. And of course not everyone's going to be an actor are they?



For Denise and several other participants it was in the freedom which drama affords that students were motivated to learn. The co-operative learning that took place and the students' experience of personal validation made the lessons a success. The fact that the students enjoyed the classes made them look deceptively simple. Some teachers were excited by the challenge of combining the pedagogical advantages of practical drama work with the academic breadth of theory required by NCEA assessment:

DEBORAH: I feel OK about it because I feel that it's flexible enough to make the context what you like, and it's challenging enough.

Several interviewees expressed the opinion that drama's status as a secondary subject was still viewed as suspect because it was difficult to define, in a traditional, academic sense, what the students had achieved:

MILLY: [A woman] brought her daughter in from another school; she's coming in at Year 12 and we do an entry interview because it's really important. I do know that at some schools, it's still a soft option and that they don't have qualified drama teachers and it's a tag-on. It's a tag-on to English. And she said, "I'm a bit anxious because my daughter is really academic, how will she get on with the other students?" And like, she's typical of five or six at least, maybe 10 parents, every year who express concerns about their child taking on a subject that is not going to allow them to stretch their minds. Philosophically, I think I've become more staunch about it and maybe a bit bad tempered at times.

As many of the respondents pointed out, drama is a kinaesthetic subject. Students do not usually sit behind

desks but move into active groups to manipulate and manage symbols and texts in order to produce visible and immediate results:

DENISE: I think we have such kinaesthetically intelligent children. They're just wonderful and they're so open, and they love it, and you know, it fills that criteria for a successful subject; it's immediate, it's challenging, it's fun.

The challenge for teachers, as they saw it, was to incorporate the more cerebral aspects of theory into the programme without hindering the creative momentum. At the same time, as several of the participants (for example, Barry, Diane, Sara, Thea and Wendy) maintained, a totally improvisational approach to drama education sometimes lacked the impetus to build a specifically identified skill base; learning outcomes could be unclear as a consequence:

WENDY: I was doing unit standards and I had been before that, trying to get units of work, so that I didn't get diverted and just wander all over the place, because I felt that a lot of teachers were ... had some things that they liked doing and that's all they were doing with their kids. That was another of my bugs, teachers used to spend so much time playing games that they never got around to teaching, and I think you can't do that anymore ... No well you couldn't do it and meet the requirements because games are fine, but often they didn't even know why they were playing. That's what I used to find with students, well that's lovely, but why were you doing it, what purpose does it serve, and they didn't know. That didn't help its reputation I expect.

On occasion, teachers have been co-opted from other subject areas, due to the sudden demand for more drama classes and a

lack of qualified staff to teach them, and approached drama teaching pragmatically, leaving little room for explorative approaches to the subject. Barry, for example, became a drama teacher "by default"; he had been asked to teach a senior drama class when their teacher resigned. He recalled that it was only through the experience of teaching drama that he had discovered the advantages of process work when well managed and directed. Initially, however, accustomed to a structured and disciplined approach to his other teaching, he struggled to establish a more regimented programme with his students:

BARRY: It was not a happy experience. It just about put me off drama teaching forever ... they'd be playing naked tag and all these sort of way-off things. I think I had six weeks of teaching to go and had to get through about 60 percent of the internal curriculum which they hadn't really addressed and I was totally the opposite to the teacher who had taken them. I'm not really a theatre-sports person by nature; I'm getting a lot more confident at using it - my experience has been through script work - and I'm starting to see the results of using improvisation in devised situations to extend their understanding. Certainly with Shakespeare and Elizabethan this year we were doing small group stuff and they said that they were really starting to get to know their characters an awful lot better than they ever did before.

Essentially drama is a creative process; the challenge for drama teachers is to maintain this approach to their work while working within the boundaries and expectations of a nationally mandated assessment schedule.

In this section, the personal philosophies of the drama educators interviewed for this study have been presented in reference to their influence on their approaches to teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom.

The interviewees presented a diverse range of backgrounds and experience which had influenced their attitudes to drama education and their judgements on the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama in relation to these beliefs. Most of the participants, however, evinced a personal and intrinsic commitment to the subject which many had pursued, initially, without the prospect of extrinsic or professional reward. For many of the interviewees, the expression of their own creativity in the classroom and the communication to their students of the rewards of the creative experience were pivotal to their approaches to teaching and learning in drama. Several of the interviewees viewed the nurturing of creativity to be an explorative process and some questioned the possibility of maintaining an explorative approach under the strictures of managing curriculum and assessment requirements. In conversations about their process, several interviewees referred specifically to *process drama* and the work of Dorothy Heathcote in establishing drama-in-education in the 1970s and 1980s, as an early inspiration for explorative practice.

The personal ideologies of the interviewees had a direct influence on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. The following section, therefore, examines the participants' reflections on drama pedagogy.

### **5.3 Pedagogy**

This section relates to drama teachers' reflections on their pedagogy. The concept of drama as having a social as well as an educational function is an enduring aspect of drama

pedagogy, the roots of which can be found in an examination of its historical development.<sup>32</sup> One of the participants interviewed for this research study had been active in drama education for over 25 years and was involved in the initial drafting of the arts curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2000). Hugh was able to provide facets of historical detail that I had previously been unable to locate. I questioned him specifically about the specialist drama rooms which, constructed and equipped in the 1970s, still existed in many schools although, by the late 1980s, most had been co-opted as teaching spaces for other subjects. The existence of these facilities suggested an earlier period of growth in drama education:

HUGH: I imagine it was the appointment of the drama curriculum officer - it was under Bill Renwick ... [Director General of Education]. The appointment was a recognition that drama was an area that had an educational purpose, but it was before the days when it was recognised as something that could really take a discrete place on the timetable. She was the only drama curriculum officer who was ever appointed. She was appointed in the 70s and went through until she retired in 1988.

Her focus had not been on drama as part of the English curriculum or drama for performance by and large. She really did drive the process drama approach, almost as a kind of methodology which went across the whole range of curriculum areas. There were people who, like me really, were probably English teachers but who had a specialist interest in drama - and had enough knowledge and skills to be able to make up those courses, which were all individually developed, without any kind of

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<sup>32</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

curriculum. It just took off. That was around about the period when there were drama rooms and the development of the S68 auditoriums. When they got into the building codes for secondary schools, it made a big difference. So there was that kind of climate - and the Sixth Form Certificate was the one area where it could be accommodated.

The 1970s were a time of experimentation in many fields and drama benefitted from an environment of exploration into new ideas and new ways of approaching social behaviour. As a country, New Zealand was still economically robust enough to invest in explorative educational initiatives. Political changes in the 1980s saw the restructuring of education to focus on more conservative economic outcomes.

It is important, when exploring current pedagogical philosophies, to acknowledge that, until the 1990s, the development of drama education in New Zealand was inextricably linked to the British experience. The development of child-centred drama education through the work of Slade<sup>33</sup> and Way which emphasised spontaneous play as a route to learning, and the impact of Heathcote, Bolton and O'Neill on drama practitioners throughout the Commonwealth had a profound influence on many teachers in New Zealand. Through postgraduate courses in drama, offered by some universities in the 1970s and early 1980s, New Zealand practitioners were introduced to the theories and practice of process drama. Wendy spoke of setting out to educate herself and reading everything she could, then "got involved in the Heathcote thing" which, although she did not pursue completely, gave her "another avenue". Amy, whose "intuitive realisation" about drama was that it "was another way of learning and communication", began to "tune into Dorothy

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<sup>33</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

Heathcote's work" and began to "to explore ways of using story as ways to develop process".

For Stephen, Heathcote's work transformed his teaching:

STEPHEN: It was very much teaching acting or teaching for performance and then gradually I got interested in the therapeutic side of drama in the sense of confidence and social adaption and stuff like that. And then, in the 90s, I quite by chance met up with Peter O'Connor and we, my wife and I, did a postgraduate diploma called Drama in Education with him at Waikato. It went on for about six years and we learnt process drama there. And that really changed my whole outlook on drama teaching. I mean I've changed direction. I've learned a bit of history about Brian Way and moved away from that to more Heathcote, Bolton, [Cecily O'] Neill.

These theories of student-centred education, learning through play and the use of process drama in education<sup>34</sup> have not always sat comfortably with the traditional face of drama in New Zealand schools. Historically, the school production has been the public or community face of drama in schools. This meant that it was script-based and focused on performance to an audience; as Sara, a drama advisor, pointed out:

SARA: I don't think so at secondary school in New Zealand. I think that it was very script-based and in reading plays. I don't think it was supposed to be process. I wouldn't say that.

Carmella, a teacher educator, reflected that for many of the students who enrol in drama at colleges of education, the theories and practice of process drama are a revelation:

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<sup>34</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

CARMELLA: I would say, without a doubt, the production, the school production, doing productions. When they get to T. Coll [Teachers College], they start looking at process drama. They are totally amazed.

For Brenda, these varying facets of drama education all have a part to play in effective drama pedagogy:

BRENDA: My grounding, really, was to understand that, in the New Zealand context, drama was about three things. It could be about any of these three things or a mixture of them: self-expression, theatre arts, and what's become known as process drama. Those were the three cornerstones, and they were there for a very good reason. They were there because people came from those three traditions. They came from the Slade and Brian Way tradition or they came from a very strong theatre-based tradition, theatre art-based tradition, or they came from using drama as a tool for learning, investigation for unwrapping ideas. And I never saw those things as mutually exclusive. I saw them as completely interrelated.

Contemporary practice in the senior secondary school, in which NCEA assessment has a pivotal role, requires drama practitioners to have an understanding of the range of drama approaches and to facilitate learning through the use of a variety of methods. Those involved in the drafting of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) considered the polarisation between the performance and process modes of drama education a feature of past rather than current practice (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 36). Nevertheless, the notion of drama being mostly concerned with productions still lingers. As Hugh pointed out, experienced drama teachers had the skills and knowledge of the various drama



pedagogies to combine the differing approaches to drama education into an inclusive pedagogy.<sup>35</sup> New or inexperienced teachers of drama, however, often still presumed that drama was solely about directing productions for the stage:

HUGH: By the time we were writing the curriculum, which was in the late 90s, that sort of polarisation – which really occurred in the early to mid 80s really – had moved on I think. It came through very strongly as a result of the two visits from Dorothy Heathcote, in the late 70s and early 80s, and the people who went to Britain and studied in that approach and so on. I think that that had modified by the time we got to the period when the curriculum was being written. I think people who had skills and knowledge and experience of drama did have, by and large, a concept of both approaches if you like. But the average classroom teacher who was going to be compelled to teach drama expected that they were going to be directing productions ... I'm saying they didn't have any real concept of there being anything else. I think much the same was true of dance as well; that they thought they were going to be choreographers.

The data demonstrated that, for most practitioners, effective pedagogy was viewed from three perspectives: student participation and enjoyment of learning (e.g. Denise, Katrina, Waverly, Georgia, Brenda, Deborah, Faith, Gaynor, Amy); theatre performance (e.g. Deborah, Diane, Faith, Geraldine, Julia); and academic results (Diane, Thea, Sara, Barry, Milly). For many practitioners, the juggling of these priorities was an ongoing conundrum:

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<sup>35</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

GERALDINE: Yes. Because the requirements for more written work and I have found that that's particularly difficult. Particularly with boys, and for the last three years I've had a predominant male class that's gone through the levels. Which is good and they're good actors, some of the best work; but the written component – I still haven't figured out how to make that a natural part of the whole thing. Rather than being an imposed exercise that I have to do.

Resolution of these difficulties rested on the skills and experience of the teacher. As many of the participants pointed out, secondary schools, in general, are concerned with academic results, therefore they had to find effective strategies for teaching drama theory to students who were more kinaesthetic in their approach to learning. For example, Milly, who taught in a decile 10, urban, co-educational school, suggested that offering students challenging practical work might motivate them to understand the academic basis for what they were doing.

Dramanet postings of November 2007 and February 2008 indicate that several teachers were concerned that the emphasis on written work in NCEA drama could detract from the positive experience that drama can provide for students. They maintained that knowledge and skills can be demonstrated in ways other than the written word and that NCEA was intended to create opportunities for students with different learning styles. The kinaesthetic student, for example, learns through physical activity but may have difficulty translating that experience into a written reflection which they think adequately describes their work.

For teachers, effective pedagogy, in practice, translates into successful classrooms. When interviewees were asked

what they considered to be the priority for successful drama practice, their responses provided a clear demonstration of their pedagogy in action. In the majority of the responses, student engagement was considered the arbiter of a successful lesson. Many interviewees also emphasised the growth in self-determination of the students and considered that the outcome of self-motivation was focus and productivity:

GAYNOR: When ERO [Education Review Office] came this year they watched the fourth form class and every single kid, every single fourth former, was focused - they were either on the stage rehearsing or they had their scripts out and they were learning lines. And he said to me afterwards, "That was a real pleasure, I saw some of those students in other classes and here they were involved, they were engaged". You know that was an ideal class. That was an *ideal* class.

Many teachers considered that one of the most significant aspects of work in the drama classroom was the particular relationship that drama teachers build with the students. Students enjoy drama. Prior to the introduction of NCEA, when drama offered few pathways to academic qualifications, students often found ways to attend classes, sometimes sacrificing their own free time to do so:

STEPHEN: Certainly the kids liked the drama that was happening in the school. If I can tell you a little anecdote about the Year 13 kids in the last years I was there. This is before NCEA. There were good kids who used to like to do four Bursary subjects and then they'd take drama as their sort of release valve. Or they used to do five subjects and they'd have a free period each day - and a lot of kids would use that free

period; if drama coincided with that free period, they would come to drama off their own bat. It got so that the school legislated against that, said they weren't allowed to do it. If they were doing three Bursary subjects, they were not allowed to do drama. I have to say there were kids who still turned up and I never sent them away. So, the kids in the school voted for it. They see a value in it. I think, in drama, they're allowed to move and talk and encouraged to have an opinion and we deal in areas closer to their core being, their lives. Whereas, often, other subjects are dealing around the peripheries or not at all - that abstract stuff that may be of use some day. That's my theory anyway.

Several of the participants (e.g. Amy, Julia, Wendy, Sara, Deborah) commented that this softening of the conventional role boundaries between teacher and student, and amongst the students themselves, was facilitated by the physical nature of a drama space:

DEBORAH: There is something about drama that is more so though, because students are not just sitting in their desks or going home and doing their work on their own and writing it on paper and nobody else sees it except you the teacher; because they've got to stand up and perform in front of each other it's our job to make sure that environment is one in which they feel they can do that.

In a drama classroom, there are few desks, the teacher moves around the room, often speaking individually to students and the students themselves are allowed to talk and communicate with each other:

SARA: Because there are no desks. So you are sitting with them. When you are working in them, moving around the classroom you're up close to them. Physically, you're not sort of shouting at them from the front of the room.

Teachers in this study deliberately endeavoured to construct those relationships within the class so that students could work together; drama involves group work and demands the development of trust and respect. In this environment, bonds are created. Many of the interviewees endeavoured to find the balance between the self-direction of the students and effective classroom management; they believed that the successful drama teacher learns to communicate in a much more personal way (e.g. Deborah, Denise, Wanda, Wendy, Georgia, Brenda, Gaynor, Julia, Milly, Stephen):

DEBORAH: A lot of it has to do with how we interact with our students so that they see us as somebody that they can trust but also somebody that they respect. So there's got to be that firmness as well as a certain degree of openness to their opinions; an understanding of what they're thinking and feeling; knowing when they're feeling threatened and why they are reacting in a particular way - that it's not because they're trying to be naughty but because they are feeling shy. You know all that stuff. You have to be aware of all those group dynamics, and make students aware that you are, but not put them down. Make them feel OK about how they feel. It's very, very important.

Most participants agreed that the success of a drama classroom depends on the relationships established, not only those between students in the course of their group work but also that between the teachers and students. They indicated

that student motivation is high in drama and that it appeared to be an intrinsic process rather than one solely promoted by the teacher. It appears that an essential element in drama pedagogy is that of trust and co-operation in the process of creating the work, and the nature of the drama classroom provides the space, both physically and creatively, for this to take place.

#### **5.4 Summary**

In this chapter, the data were presented in relation to interview questions 1, 2 and 3 and focused on the participants' personal philosophies in relation to drama education. The influence of the personal ideologies of the interviewees had a direct influence on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom; it appears that the view of drama as having a social as well as an educational function is an enduring aspect of drama pedagogy, the roots of which can be found in an examination of its historical development. In conversations about their process, several interviewees referred specifically to process drama and the work of Dorothy Heathcote in establishing drama-in-education in the 1970s and 1980s, as an early inspiration for explorative practice.

The interviewees presented a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences and influences against which they considered the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama. Most of the participants evinced a personal and intrinsic commitment to the subject as a tool for nurturing student creativity through participation and communication. Several of the interviewees considered this to be an explorative process and some questioned the possibility of maintaining an explorative approach under the strictures of managing curriculum and assessment requirements.

Most of the teachers interviewed considered effective pedagogy in the context of "the successful classroom". When interviewees were asked what they consider to be the priority for successful drama practice, their responses provided a clear demonstration of their pedagogy in action. In the majority of the responses, student engagement was considered the arbiter of a successful lesson where students were focused on the tasks and demonstrated high levels of self-motivation. It appears that most drama students enjoy the subject; many of the interviewees suggested that, in order to find the balance between the self-direction of the students and effective classroom management, the successful drama teacher learns to communicate in a more personal way.

Several of the interviewees expressed the view that one of the most significant aspects of work in the drama classroom was the particular nature of the relationship that drama teachers built with their students and endeavoured to construct within their classes. They suggested that, as drama involves group work, the development of trust and respect was essential to effective pedagogy. In this respect the physical environment in which the work took place was important to fostering success in the drama classroom.

It was apparent from many of the responses that the personal investment that some drama teachers appeared to have made to their subject and its ideals had sometimes exacerbated the stress they experienced when dealing with the conflicting values and demands of secondary school drama within an NCEA assessment framework. The following chapter, 6, "Curriculum and Assessment", explores interviewees' attitudes to and concerns about NCEA drama assessment, presenting data in relation to interview questions 4, 5, 6 and 7<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> See chapter 4

## 6. Curriculum and Assessment

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines drama educators' perceptions of the influence of curriculum and assessment models on contemporary drama pedagogy in the secondary school. For the purposes of this discussion, a useful distinction may be made between the *curriculum* requirements and the *assessment* requirements. The curriculum requirements are those stated in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and associated learning area documents for the arts; the assessment requirements are those devised for the purpose of assessment (NCEA) and administered by NZQA. While the curriculum contains a broad outline of national objectives, assessment criteria are more specific and prescriptive, and adherence to its requirements are scrutinised to ensure a national standard is maintained.

The data presented in this chapter relate to research questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the interview schedule:

4. Has NCEA affected your work in the classroom? Have you needed to alter your programmes significantly? Why/Why not?
5. Would you suggest any changes to NCEA drama?
6. Did you make any contribution to formulating policy/preparing the curriculum document/writing achievement standards etc.?
7. What do you find is the biggest challenge in the teaching of drama?

There are two sections in this chapter: 6.2, "NCEA Drama", which examines teachers' responses to the curriculum and the



structure of NCEA assessment in drama; and 6.3, "The Challenges", which explores the processes required for the implementation of NCEA drama.

## 6.2 NCEA drama

This section of chapter 6 is divided into four subsections. The first, 6.2.1, "Background", provides a general view of NCEA drama as reported by participants in this study. The second, 6.2.2, "Curriculum", explores teachers' responses to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). The third subsection, 6.2.3, "Unit Standards and Achievement Standards", examines the assessment models available for the NCEA; and, finally, 6.2.4, "External Assessment", reflects teachers' responses to the implementation of NCEA external assessments.

The following subsection provides a general overview of drama educators' responses to NCEA assessment in order to provide a context for the particular issues discussed by participants in further subsections.

### 6.2.1 Background

It is apparent from the interviews with drama practitioners in New Zealand that the introduction of NCEA assessment has had a profound effect, not only in the areas of pedagogy and teaching and learning in secondary drama education but also on its administration and management:

MOIRA: Also it's made a huge difference because, although we have NCEA, we're still behind in terms of the building. So I have pushed for things but it's still not quite what I need ... NCEA demands a lot more resourcing of the kids – not for all years but enough – and if you're trying to teach lighting and make-up and lights. And photocopying – you can't get the kids to

write on the books - I mean you're not supposed to photocopy that book so it's real fraught thing this copyright. Any time we perform outside of the classroom we have to pay a photocopy fee.

... I mean I've got kids who want to do the one-act play festival but I just can't afford that because that's coming out of my budget. It is expensive because you have to join Drama Federation and pay the copyright fees on top of that. I think that would take out a lot from what else I need to do ... And then taking the kids on trips to go and see theatre. I've got six trips at the moment ... very demanding as a subject; and resourcing is just not easy. It's not as if you can just go and order them from a book or whatever. You can't get them from a catalogue and what you can get is too expensive so you're finding other ways to get what you need and you're op-shopping and you're asking for donations and you're going to the pub charities. That's a huge problem: 1: the budget is not enough; 2: it's a huge time commitment to try and find costumes that would be right for *The Importance of Being Earnest* or Shakespeare ... Incredibly time-consuming and we don't have the help to go and do that for us. We're also running departments. And doing the basic teaching and things like that.

Responses from the teachers in this study and postings on Dramanet, the online drama-teachers' forum, indicated that the change in status of the subject had put pressure on school administrators to provide appropriate resourcing, in both staffing and subject-specific facilities, to meet the growing demand from students. Prior to the introduction of standards-based assessment in 1998, drama operated in secondary schools only as a Sixth Form Certificate subject

or as a subset of English. Some schools, with a particular interest in drama, had offered junior classes and extra-curricular drama activities but drama had not been offered at Years 11 and 13, when students were expected to focus on the subjects required for School Certificate, Bursary and University Entrance. In some schools the introduction of NCEA drama required a substantial shift in attitude towards the performing arts:

STEPHEN: No. There's a lot of lip service paid to it but it's still low in the pecking order in my experience. A technology block is far more important and science is far more important. And I mean, that goes right up to ministry level. You look at it. What was the last curriculum thing or what were the last curriculum things to be done by a long chalk. So let's face it, we still don't figure high on the priority list. I mean, there are exceptions, there are some schools who do value it very highly, and the rich schools of course have got the equipment, but the schools up north are depressing, some of them. They've got nothing.

Teachers in charge of drama, such as Moira, Waverley, Stephen, Faith and Geraldine, spoke of having to become proactive in promoting the interests of their subject in the new environment once they realised that they could not meet the expectations of students, parents, management, NZQA or Ministry of Education on the slim resources that had once sufficed:

WAVERLEY: Well, when we sort of ... I pushed and pushed and we eventually we did get a television and then we got a camera eventually, and then by the last year before I left they had drawn up a performing arts, new

performing arts block and promised that that would be something on the agenda for this year. K and I went out to other schools and looked at performing arts units and we were consulted every step of the way with the design of it and everything. And then when we left, both of us left at the same time ... but they just now didn't get the performing arts centre ... I don't think they will for a while now, I imagine, because we had to push for so long to get that even in the wings, sort of ...

Drama's status as an academic subject is such a recent development that it raises questions about the reasons behind the decision to include it in the national curriculum. The success of New Zealand films and music has demonstrated that the arts can generate productivity and one interviewee suggested that economic pragmatism appeared to be an overriding factor in the decision to include drama as a mainstream academic subject:

BRENDA: And the reason I say that is the government has a target. It has three areas of growth that it's identified and one of the three is the leisure industry. So when you look at their economic strategies and targets, who is going to be actually working in the leisure industry and what does this mean? It means everything from cultural tourism, to theatre performance, to community events, staged events, to you know, entertaining, making films. It's a whole range of things. Then the next question is: How are these people trained who are going to work in the leisure industry and what is the leisure industry worth? We know that the leisure industry is actually worth more than farming. And then you say, so whose intellectual capital is going to create this? And how is that

intellectual capital currently being pooled and gathered together? And this is the woeful bit, because the government itself and education authorities have not made the leap about what drama, the relationship between drama and media studies. So, the only reason that media was left out of the curriculum in the first place ... It's in every other curriculum in the world. The only reason that it was left out was for economic reasons and I know that, because I was there when they did it, when they talked about what the actual strands of the curriculum were going to be.

Drama's new academic status had generated obvious advantages in terms of staffing and resources but many practitioners felt a pressure to continue proving its academic credentials. An entry on Dramanet, in November 2007, asked the question: "Why are we still trying to prove we are as good as everyone else?" This view was shared by several of the interview participants:

DENISE: One thing I think we're very lucky that the government supports it. I'm concerned because it still seems to be trying to justify itself as a degree subject and I don't think it should. I think it needs to stand proud and I think it needs to be left alone. I think it's paid its dues in education. Politicians should leave it alone and recognise that this is not - they tend to think of it as an add-on luxury subject and that we need to do the 3 Rs. I have had greater degrees of success in literacy and writing; think of the numeracy involved in plugging in lights. Contextual learning is higher in drama and that needs to be recognised.

At the same time, many secondary teachers of drama were still confronted by attitudes which reflected the historic marginalisation of the subject:

FAITH: So I think that we still struggle to be seen as a valid alternative. It's not even an alternative; a valid course to take. But I think that's probably wider, much wider than schools - still probably happening - "but arty people are sort of slightly imbalanced eccentric people and fancy being an artist for a living".

Several teachers asserted that, although drama is pedagogically sound, its value as a subject also lies beyond the confines of traditional academic values. Most of the practitioners in this study welcomed the validation that NCEA has conferred on drama education in New Zealand but concurred that it has demanded new approaches to planning and assessment. Unlike Sixth Form Certificate, NCEA provides more guidance concerning expected outcomes and details of assessment requirements. Many mentioned that it had required effort on their part to learn the subject anew. Added to this, they noted that the lack of a previously established model of curriculum and assessment had sometimes resulted in general confusion and teachers had felt perplexed by a plethora of unexpected detail. Many drama teachers reported that NCEA had required familiarisation with a new, and still evolving, vocabulary and, for most, it had resulted in an escalating workload.

In this subsection, a general overview of the presentation data in relation to interview questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 has been provided to serve as an introduction to the ensuing subsections concerning teachers' reported experiences of the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama. In the following

subsection 6.2.2 the presentation of the data focuses on teachers' perceptions of the arts curriculum document.

### **6.2.2 Curriculum**

In this subsection, data pertaining to the development of the arts curriculum and interviewee responses to the document are explored. Between 1991 and 1993, when *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) was being developed, it was the first time that the curriculum had included all four arts: music, visual art, dance and drama. At that time, whereas art and music already had nationally approved syllabi, drama and dance did not. The learning area document, *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), which emerged from *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, included all four arts and utilised a shared language of four interrelated strands, namely "Developing Practical Knowledge in the Arts"; "Developing Ideas in the Arts"; "Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts"; and "Understanding the Arts in Context", to link the forms.

Only one participant provided detail about the writing of the arts curriculum document and it appears that New Zealand drama specialists were employed in drafting the drama component of the curriculum. As Hugh describes it, it was a complex and challenging process; many different ideas were trialled before the initial draft was published and distributed for consultation. The final document was published in 2000:

HUGH: I think the arts was just kind of put in there, and there quite probably was, and I'm really speculating in a sense, that it was a way of putting together music and art, visual art, whereas they'd been two separate subjects prior to that. Maybe it wasn't

quite like that, maybe it was just a way of grouping them in the same way that English and other languages were grouped under the language area, you know, and the sciences were grouped under science. Maybe that was what happened, but anyway that's how it happened that somebody was strong-minded enough that if you were developing a curriculum framework, arts had to be there; and I think at that stage the curriculum, that page in the curriculum framework is very non-specific about what the arts actually are and when the policy was being developed. The arts ... it would have been quite possible to develop an arts curriculum that doesn't have drama in it at all, you know, on the basis that it is arguably catered to under English. When we began ... the policy hadn't been completed so we had to go back and complete the policy and in fact it wasn't signed off until quite some time after the actual writing of it had begun.

So anyway, we had a policy statement and we knew that there would be this curriculum area and that it would include music, and art, and drama and dance in some form were still there ... they were combined into one strand, and we set out from there and basically contracted a writing team from *[name of institution]*.

Anyway, when the draft was published and that went out for consultation, then there was a second writing phase and in the second writing phase, which led up to the publication of the final document, the ministry retained the ownership of the writing. So the draft was a product of *[name of institution]*; the final document was a product of the ministry.



With two exceptions, none of the interviewees for this study expressed any concerns about *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). They considered that it offered sufficient guidelines on which to bring their practice into line with the curriculum while allowing teachers the flexibility to choose the methods they would employ in order to implement original and creative programmes. Amy, however, although expressing her approval of the document, had a reservation about its usefulness to new teachers:

AMY: I think that we were lucky with our curriculum. I think of all that work we did on the draft curriculum ... I think it might be harder for first year teachers who are trying to understand and who are trying to interpret it. I think, in the end, it's best that it's not too cut and dried because it gives room for creativity and for melding work thematically.

Brenda expressed a concern that the writing of the NCEA drama standards began before the curriculum was completed:

BRENDA: So when you got to the beginnings of NCEA, at that stage the curriculum hadn't been written. The curriculum lagged behind, the art curriculum lagged behind, the creation of NCEA framework. It hadn't been gazetted it was still in development stage. They wrote standards ahead of the curriculum.

It is apparent from the data that although the participants were mostly satisfied with the curriculum, the assessment models, namely unit standards and achievement standards, caused more concern. The following subsection, 6.2.3, examines these responses as reported by the teachers in this study.

### **6.2.3 Unit Standards and Achievement Standards**

In this subsection interviewee responses in relation to the two national assessment models available in secondary drama are considered. There are two types of assessment models available to senior secondary drama teachers in New Zealand, unit standards and achievement standards, and both are standards-based assessments.

Drama unit standards were the first national senior assessments ever to be introduced in New Zealand secondary schools. One of the participants interviewed for this study (Brenda) considered that unit standards had proved to be the harbinger of a new era of prescription in drama education:

BRENDA: When we looked into unit standards I started to see a pixilation of these ideas, a distillation, and - by proxy - a prescriptive aspect coming into drama. I could see that for some people that was a good crutch for their teaching; there was a purpose, but ultimately a lot of it was not helpful. I don't believe it was ... I think it was limiting.

Unit standards appeared in 1998; NCEA achievement standards followed in 2002. Both unit standards and achievement standards offer the opportunity to gain NCEA credits at all three levels. The essential difference between the two assessment models is that unit standard assessment is not graduated; students either pass or fail the standard. Achievement standards, on the other hand, provide the opportunity to achieve the standard with an achieved, merit or excellence grade. Also, whereas external assessments form part of the matrix for achievement standards, there are no externally assessed unit standards.

One of the interviewees (Wanda) was able to explain the process by which the original standards were devised. The intention had been to make it possible for teachers to maintain the existing methods and approaches of their practice but to be provided with recognised assessment models which could provide a way to demonstrate evidence of student achievements in drama. The initiators of this process believed that it was through recognisable assessment models that drama would be recognised and valued as a secondary subject:

WANDA: Well that actually started in 1991 when I was invited to do some work with NZQA on standards-based assessment; sort of a precursor to the unit standards. Yeah, so it just grew from there, and I was heavily involved in developing unit standards in drama ...

I think it was always about finding a place where drama would be recognised. Where, if there were some so-called respectable assessment things, then perhaps principals and parents might take it seriously. I think that was our rationale for wanting to do that really ...

I think for me it was about trying to find the right balance of what drama is and to not ... to describe things that you could teach in drama, in whatever way you were used to teaching it - but the achievement standards would still be able to be used to assess whatever drama you were teaching. So that was one of the key aims. I think that another one was, feeling that a lot of people teaching drama were there by default, English default, and probably didn't know very much about drama, whatever kind of drama you're talking about - and we wanted to write them [the standards] in such a way that they couldn't be taught by people like

that. You know, that you had to understand drama as a discipline and as a subject. We also we wanted very much that that particular body of knowledge, and skills and understanding about drama which made it different and distinct from English or dance or media was there. And we felt, yeah, we felt that there were whole lots of skills and knowledge that kids had to learn before you could really do drama properly. So it was about that. I think we felt strongly that there were lots of kids coming in at Year 11 who would have never done drama with a sort of qualified teacher before, so that those were pretty basic we thought, those level ones, but that's because we assumed that for many kids it was the beginning of learning drama properly; and we did think that Level 3 needed to be hugely more demanding.

However, in Brenda's view neither unit standards nor achievement standards reflected the nature of the drama process as she understood it:

BRENDA: I just didn't like the way it was split up and I felt the distinctions between these areas – in some areas – is incredibly artificial ... if it had just been that you are working with the achieved, merit and excellence and you were writing judgement statements I could have lived with that, but it wasn't. That wasn't the end of the picture. It was all of the detail that they chucked in underneath all of that which was also part of the assessment. So there'd be a whole lot of add-ons, for want of a better word, which would be highly prescriptive. The implication was, that if you didn't include these things and didn't observe these add-ons, the actual achieved, merit, excellence descriptors, if you didn't observe these add-ons, then you were in deep trouble.

For Brenda the holistic and explorative nature of drama had been compromised in favour of creating a language and criteria solely for assessment purposes. However, several of the teachers in this study considered the introduction of unit standards in 1998 a positive development, in that it had allowed them to expand the assessment opportunities available to their students:

GERALDINE: Once the unit standards came in and once the curriculum came in, in some ways I was pleased because it verified or made me re-think my programme. Originally, it was all sort of a draft and I kind of went along with that but I was picking at bits rather than getting an overall concept. So the curriculum and NCEA gave the overall concept really nicely. So I went to work on that.

Others considered that the unit standards had served as an introduction to the skills that both teachers and students needed to develop in order to manage the introduction of NCEA achievement standards:

SARA: I think schools that had done unit standards were well ahead of others and other teachers, because they were used to a system of being accountable, because they were used to having to dot the I's cross the T's, to actually, think about what the students would have to provide in terms of evidence, which seems a chore initially, but when you do write examples of students' responses, it focuses you on what the students are going to actually do. I think it must make you a much better teacher, because you know where students have got to get to.

Several of the practitioners in the study noted that the differences between the two types of assessment influenced

their decisions concerning their classroom programmes. Some teachers remarked that they were beginning to consider unit standards again as a viable alternative to achievement standards because they could provide a greater range of options when constructing a teaching programme:

MOIRA: I suppose it's a personal thing and we've got round it anyway – I think it would be nice to have a little bit more reinforcement of some of the unit standards. I think that, originally, the unit standards were going to disappear but there are good things in the unit standards and they're doing quite different things to the achievement standards so to have more of them as exemplars. We had exemplars for *all* the achievement standards but we have got exemplars for only some of the unit standards. In particular, the backstage jobs – there are no exemplars that I can find for them. I would like them there for those kids who want to go into that area. You see I have at my school kids who might direct whole plays as an extra-curricular activity – they put it on as a Drama Badge holder – I'd like them to be able to get something from that. But it's hard if you haven't got the unit and I don't have the time to sit down and write them.

However, there are few exemplars available for unit standard tasks and little support available from NZQA to those teachers who prefer to use unit standards because they appreciate the simplicity of a particular standard or wish to focus more on practical accomplishment. While the specifications and explanatory notes for both achievement standards and unit standards are available from NZQA, and exemplars are written based on these criteria, the Ministry of Education website, TKI (Te Kete Ipurangi: The Online Learning Centre), offers exemplars only for internally-

assessed achievement standards. Some participants suggested that, since the introduction of achievement standards in drama, the unit standards had been less widely used; achievement standards are more fully resourced and carry more academic status. However, because several of the unit standards require less written work or academic knowledge from the students, or are based on the practical tasks required in staging a drama work, they can often prove to be a more appropriate option for some students:

DEBORAH: There's a couple of unit standards that I use really just because there's some costume design, and you're always going to get students who want to do that. And I think at Level 3 also that there's no real ... unless you do unit standards which is doable but not always good for all. I mean I had to really fight at *[name of school]* to get them to allow me to do unit standards. People are sort of a bit snobbish about it, you know. The kind of student who's not an actor but who is brilliant in terms of directing and designing and being a stage manager and who loves theatre, but is not a performer. There are not enough choices for that person.

At the same time, it is apparent from the interviewee responses that many of the exemplars available on the TKI website for achievement standards have proved to be problematic for teachers. NZQA requires that all students be supplied with course outlines, details of the assessment schedule and a copy of student instructions for each task. It is the exemplars of these tasks, written for each achievement standard, that are available on the TKI website. However, when teachers have made use of them, as these exemplars are often not pre-moderated, they have frequently been rejected by the moderators as inadequate:

BRENDA: Even more worrying is that whenever I went to the in-service days, I would ask, "OK, so we are assuming that these exemplars are ready to go?" You know that you can download them and use them. You presume of course that they have been pre-moderated and they will be kosher. But this is not the case and we were told, "No, you can't assume that". So then I said, "Well, can you make sure the ones on the internet, from the ministry, that if there's anything wrong with them they are identified as such'. But they wouldn't do that either. People were, and not just myself, but other teachers too, were very worried. So I went back to thinking that I would do my own thing as much as possible, but I would use the format, the approach that they had taken and I would adapt the exemplars. It was always about eight pages of writing at least, which was another difficulty, before you got to the text or whatever it was you were working on but [I thought] they will have this as a security blanket and then we'll know that we're doing the right thing, but that didn't work either. Quite often you got told "No, no, no that's not the right way to go".

Teachers, therefore, were in the position of being required to write their own tasks and assessment schedules for each achievement standard they wished to assess. This, in turn, demanded that they successfully interpret the criteria for each standard:

GERALDINE: The things that I have found really difficult are figuring out a kind of marking schedule. It's very subjective. Unit standards are very prescribed and you knew exactly what the kids had to do to say "I have achieved". Now I tend to find that



achievement standards, you know "sustain" – what does sustain mean?

There were frequent complaints from participants about the assessment resources offered by NZQA. A few participants also mentioned difficulties in preparing students for the scholarship examinations which are mostly practical but involve an external examiner:

STEPHEN: And then there's the debacle about the past exemplars on TKI; that you use them and the moderator says they're no good. And we have nothing in student exemplars. And then there's – did you go to the scholarship day? They had all those exemplars and no results. And it would have been lovely to have seen whole answers – followed one student right through their whole thing and then told they got this, this and this. You're still guessing in the dark; not a lot of information out there. And they (the students) expect you to know. Of course, they're quite right to expect you to know; it's just the fact that you've tried but you cannot find out.

It was apparent from the teachers' responses that New Zealand drama assessment models are a site of some tension for teachers. Little assistance is offered to those who wish to use unit standards for the purposes of NCEA assessment, and the achievement standard resources available from the Ministry of Education are often inadequate.

These issues, as discussed in this subsection, appear to be compounded when teachers approach the preparation of students for external written assessment. The following subsection, therefore, examines the data specific to teachers' discussions of these challenges when working with externally-assessed drama achievement standards.

#### **6.2.4 External Assessment**

This subsection presents interviewees' considerations of the efficacy of drama external assessments as they discuss the impact of the external assessments on teaching and learning in the drama classroom.

Students studying NCEA drama are offered 24 credits at each Year level and most of these credits can be gained through internally assessed standards. However, one externally assessed standard, worth five credits, is offered at both Years 11 and 12. At Year 13, two external standards are offered which are worth four credits each. Achievement in external assessments depends on the students' knowledge of various facets of drama and their ability to express this knowledge in writing. To prepare students for external assessments, teachers must use the specifications available from NZQA or the NZQA website.

The lack of a prior examination system in drama resulted in a process of trial and error when it came to the introduction of NCEA achievement standards, particularly in the case of external assessments, and specifications have had to be altered after teachers experienced difficulties in preparing students for the assessments. At times, perceived flaws in external assessment papers have generated a great deal of correspondence on Dramanet when specifications have failed to correspond with the actual assessment paper. Dramanet postings<sup>37</sup> indicate that difficulties with the external assessments were occupying teachers' minds during the course of this research. One of the teachers interviewed for this study had elected not to offer her students one of the Level 3 external assessments:

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<sup>37</sup> Dramanet, January 2005, November 2005, January 2006, March 2006, October 2007

THEA: We do the externals. I didn't do the last one, 3.6, and that was partly because the marking was just so dismal last year I couldn't send my kids off to the slaughter again; and the fact that they've re-jigged the schedule this year. I still feel that our teaching and learning is not really being honoured by the assessment processes yet. And it's not so much the standards, you know the actual standards base that I have an issue with. I could see that that could work, but it's the pedantry of some of the application, and the inaccuracy of an exam process.

For teachers it appeared that the examiners had not been flexible enough in their marking of the standard while, at the same time, NZQA failed to provide teachers with specific guidance on what was required. Many of the teachers interviewed were not confident that they really knew what they were expected to teach to prepare students for the external assessments:

STEPHEN: I think the exams need to be more straightforward. This is meant to be achievement level. I don't see that there's any need to be tricky in exams. The idea is that if the kids can do it, they need to get the credits. So the exam should be quite transparent for the kids and I am afraid that it is not quite. It is even less clear to the teachers.

Several of the participants mentioned that the inconsistencies in the language used in the achievement standards as devised by NZQA, and the assessment tasks written to assess student progress in meeting these standards, were a frequent cause of confusion for both teachers and students:

MOIRA: Well I think they need to really clarify what they mean by the terminology and not use a mixture of terminologies. In science oxygen is oxygen. They don't say oxygen is oxygen but sometimes we call oxygen something different and it's still oxygen. It's just confusing the kids and it's confusing the teachers. We need to have very clear language that has a definite meaning and a process should be a process. And I still don't know what a component is. They said elements and conventions and techniques; we taught that to our kids so let's use those words. If they say look at these conventions and techniques, the kids will say, oh yeah I know what those are. It's hard enough that people have conventions that they call all different names. It's not as if you can go and look up the periodic table.

In some instances, the vocabulary used in the specifications for the external standards have not correlated with the examination questions, and this has undermined the students' ability to understand what the assessment is actually required of them:

DEBORAH: I didn't have a huge issue personally but it certainly became an issue for my students, and it's something I raised on the Dramanet website about the literacy issue. And, again it's that age old question, are you testing a child's literacy, the ability to read English, or are you actually testing them on drama skills ... I felt, certainly with mine - I have some kids who have very high non-verbal reasoning skills but are not particularly articulate and fear the exam paper. We went through it and broke down the words and what they meant. Then the Level 2 paper came out with different words, and I knew immediately that that would

throw them and that concerned me because then we are setting children up to fail and that's not our job.

These difficulties in comprehending the requirements of external assessment were an ongoing issue for students and teachers. Comprehending the criteria, however, was not the only difficulty facing some New Zealand teachers. One of the least acknowledged challenges for drama departments, and one which remains inequitable in respect to external assessment, concerns the matter of school trips. One of the requirements of the external assessments is that students at Years 11 (Level 1 NCEA) and 12 (Level 2 NCEA) view at least one stage production of a professional standard. For Level 3, two theatre visits are required. For urban schools, or for those near a main centre, this is not a major problem although it might demand considerable time in its organisation. For high decile schools in provincial centres, the expense of travelling to a production may not be onerous for parents. However, for teachers working in rural or isolated schools, this requirement poses significant difficulties:

STEPHEN: In Kaitaia – there's nothing in Kaitaia in the way of being able to see drama, live theatre – to take the kids to a theatre involves a \$900 bus fee to Whangarei. And they get back at three in the morning. And it's a small school – where do you get the \$900? So there are huge inequalities.

It was apparent that, for a number of reasons, many teachers were dissatisfied and often frustrated with the external assessments. One of the contributors to Dramanet<sup>38</sup> suggested that external assessment was not necessary in a practical subject such as drama and had only been included in the drama matrix to appease groups such as the The New Zealand

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<sup>38</sup> Dramanet, February 2008

Business Roundtable who could not accept the validity of subjects which relied solely on internally assessed standards. However, several contributors to Dramanet supported the concept of external assessment;<sup>39</sup> they asserted that it affirms drama's credibility and offers students the opportunity to experience a variety of learning experiences.

Written external assessments in drama have conferred academic credibility on drama, a subject which once existed on the fringe of mainstream education. However, with no previous models on which to draw to compose the assessment tasks for secondary drama, the process has been a challenging one, not least for classroom teachers. This subsection, 6.2.4, has discussed the nature of and the responses to these challenges as reported by drama educators.

The following section, 6.3, further details aspects of the demands on teachers in the implementation of NCEA in drama. This section covers three main areas of concern expressed by the participants in this study: 6.3.1, "A New Language"; 6.3.2, "Finding a Balance"; and 6.3.3, "Moderation of Student Work".

### **6.3 The Challenges**

When questioned about the challenges of the implementation of NCEA, certain themes recurred frequently. The following subsections examine these issues in some detail. An evident site of tension for classroom teachers was that of the language used in the creation of the assessment standards. The following subsection explores the issues for teachers concerning the formalisation of a subject-specific language in drama.

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<sup>39</sup> Dramanet, February 2008

### 6.3.1 A New Language

In order to develop assessment criteria for senior drama, it became necessary to define and name the facets and processes of drama already in use to ensure that all teachers could understand and work towards the same standards. Many teachers, however, not only used a variety of terms for the same processes but the authors of the standards themselves used several terms to define certain aspects of drama. The introduction of NCEA drama, therefore, caused some consternation concerning the language used; and the glossary included in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) was inadequate for the purpose.

Most of the participants in this study observed that the internally-assessed achievement standards had undergone several revisions since they were introduced, and the vocabulary used in the writing of the standards had often displayed inconsistencies, especially in the first two or three years of their implementation:

STEPHEN: A word that sticks in my gullet is the word *process* and I've had lots of arguments. I have trouble seeing lighting as a process in a professional performance I go to see – I see the product of lighting rather than the process. And kids in exams have real trouble; they see the process of lighting as how it's put together, how decisions are made and how it's set up – that's what process means to me; it's a journey; it's doing something. But when I'm talking about the lighting in *Equus*, I'm talking about the end result. And I'm struggling. Other people argue vehemently that it's still a process I'm looking at. And I can see that in terms of, I suppose, in terms of how the lighting connects with the themes but it's quite subtle for

kids. When they see a professional performance they don't know what the process was, they make good guesses but they don't know what the process was.

Teachers could not take for granted that they understood the language used in the assessment standard criteria. Terms such as *perceptive*, *credible* and *intention* carry a different connotation in drama in the context of practical drama performance and it was in interpreting the meanings of these terms that teachers experienced the most uncertainty:

AMY: I went through the dictionary looking up for all those key words of the assessment so that I could get all of the reverberations or the connotations of each word, whether it is *compelling* or whether it's *credible*. What *realise* means when linked with *intention*. By the time you get to excellence, students want to know why they haven't got an excellence and it has got to do with that word *perceptive*. It's hard to teach what being *perceptive* is about, and even though perception has got links with beyond even the immediate, it is being able to make associations so that there's a method of cognition about the work and connecting it to other experiences, other theatre works or social situations or psychological truths I think.

The fact that teachers were confused about the terminology used in the assessments, and were aware that they were responsible for providing the instruction and guidance to students, was a cause of much of the stress experienced in relation to NCEA assessment. Classroom teachers felt accountable for the progress of their students and did not want to let them down but were not always confident that they understood the requirements. Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the existing glossary of



terms contained in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000):

STEPHEN: One of my aims, if I die in the attempt, is going to be to sort some of that stuff out; the components, processes, all that stuff that's going on. What is the list of elements? I, all the time, half of my emails deal with this. And I think I've got it sussed and then ... I was asked yesterday what resources we'd like for drama. But one of the things I said was a senior drama handbook that has a glossary that sorts out what the terminology is. The curriculum glossary is not complete. It needs to be a lot bigger.

Some of the practitioners who work in an advisory capacity, such as Sara or Diane, were more positive about the language used in the design of assessments. They believed that once teachers were more experienced with NCEA assessment, they would feel more secure about variations in the jargon:

SARA: It frustrates me, because English teachers don't stress about the word *genre* or the word *style* and demand the definition of it that is going to be the one and only and unchanging definition. And I think it's symptomatic of our insecurity, our feeling of not understanding, that we want sheets and we're waiting for answers.

It is interesting to note that those teachers (such as Gaynor, Denise and Deborah) who, though now working in New Zealand, had trained or worked overseas, had a more pragmatic attitude to the language of the standards having had previous experience of adapting to a variety of teaching environments. Deborah, for instance, suggested that terminology should be considered a means to an end:

DEBORAH: I think people get themselves worked up about this whole business of the language. And I don't know whether it's because I started drama in a system where we were borrowing language from England and America and everything, so there were lots of different words for things. Then I came here and there were more again. And you just kind of go with the flow and it all more or less means the same thing.

However, the data demonstrates that, for many of the teachers, the defining of a language for drama had been an ongoing site of tension and confusion due in some part to the fact that this type of formalised assessment was a new phenomenon in secondary drama in New Zealand.

The introduction of new assessment models is a challenge for teachers. In the case of drama, it is not only the terminology that has created a sense of uncertainty; the challenge for drama teachers has been in adjusting their practice to fit within the parameters of the new assessment schedule. In the following subsection, 6.3.2, teachers discuss their responses to working within a new assessment model and in finding the balance between the demands of assessment and their personal pedagogy.

### ***6.3.2 Finding the Balance***

In this subsection the interviewees discuss the ways in which they balance their own aims and intentions in the drama classroom with the requirements of a national assessment schedule. Most of the teachers interviewed found that the provision of standardised rules and guidelines for assessment within NCEA had invigorated their work but it was sometimes difficult, they said, to find a balance between the practical and theoretical aspects of drama in teaching for internally assessed standards.

Each of the internally assessed drama achievement standards requires a practical performance, which is recorded on video, accompanied by a written record of the process towards the production of the performance. These written portfolios are pivotal when it comes to assessment. The moderators require that the students demonstrate they have participated in all the steps leading to a practical performance, including some research into historical factors, location or background to the piece they are performing. They must also demonstrate that they had a conscious intention for their performance and be able to reflect meaningfully on the work. This constitutes the written component of the drama standards by which external moderators can verify the grades apportioned by the teacher. However, the actual process, as it occurs in the classroom, is seldom clear cut. Most teachers in this study reported that they had altered their practice to meet the requirements of NCEA assessment and admitted that this still posed a variety of challenges:

GERALDINE: I've altered my style of teaching. Before I would start with a warm-up game, get the kids warmed up, talk about what their goal was, tell them what we were focusing on and get them started on activities which would end up in a showcase situation. And at the end of it, we'd probably just sit round and talk about what the things were that were good, what we liked about other people's performances, what we thought we might use. Now, particularly with my senior classes - and I should probably introduce it to my junior classes when the kids are coming in - instead of sitting around in a circle getting ready to start, they have to sit down at a desk and write down what the goals are, what the focus is for the day into their journals ... And

you know, the usual thing, somebody comes in just as you about as you're all going to sit in a circle. I mean one can say to those kids, OK come and sit in the circle now, we're ready to start, write it down in your own time. And then they don't and that affects records later.

For Geraldine, working within the framework of a national assessment schedule had altered her style of teaching and created extra responsibility in monitoring compliance with the written requirements. Her freedom to facilitate practical activities followed by free-ranging discussion on the performances had been compromised by the need to record the activity and be accountable for the results.

Some teachers, such as Thea for instance, believed that the demands in relation to the provision of evidence of achievement had become excessive and that teachers were no longer trusted to make appropriate judgements. Teachers had the responsibility for assessment but little control over the process and this limited creativity in the classroom:

THEA: I think the evidence collecting is ridiculous. I think that we spend a lot of our time double checking ourselves and checking our students instead of trusting that we know the learning happened, and then allowing the assessment to stand. The amount of portfolio work that's expected now, you know, you can be clever about that in terms of giving kids kind of templates and things that make it easier for them to hand it in the way that's going to get the mark. But at the same time, that's not necessarily better learning, it's just learning to work the assessment better. I still sort of resent that really, that the kids are not allowed to learn in their own way and to present it in their own

way. That it's not a free thing because we know that this, this, and this must be there for a merit. This, this, and this must be there for an excellent. The sort of anomalies that can happen sometimes when a kid who's been hugely responsible for a piece of work, and the creative process, and has performed it really well but can't write about it for nuts, is not allowed to achieve the same way. And that's frustrating at points, when in fact, if you're measuring creativity, they had it and the rote learner tick-a-box type kid can get the better mark. Whereas it feels to me like we're being asked to accept responsibility for all this assessment, but we can't assess the way we'd like to. You know, the assessment has to be this particular way. It's really limiting in creativity.

Other teachers interviewed had also noticed that the shifting of emphasis in drama education has curtailed some of the freedoms they once enjoyed when drama was on the fringe of mainstream secondary education. They spoke of feeling less willing to take the risks they had previously allowed when facilitating creative exploration and experimentation in their classrooms:

DEBORAH: I think that's definitely made a difference because we were on the margin we kind of got away with a lot. And also we took more risks and we could do all sorts of free and wonderful things and if it didn't work out it didn't matter so much. Now that we're in the centre with everybody else, the spotlight is on us so we probably do take fewer chances. It depends actually, I think those of us who are fairly experienced teachers will still take risks here and there but for young teachers - they can't take risks; it's too scary for them.

Some of the participants considered that an emphasis on assessment outcomes in NCEA assessment had had an impact on their ability to nurture student creativity. Some teachers referred specifically to the written requirements of assessment as a deterrent to the adventurous and open nature of the subject:

STEPHEN: I suppose one of the things that first comes to mind is the way writing has crept into the assessment and I think that needs to come under control a bit. I don't think we should throw it out entirely but I think that it needs to be formalised a bit more; what's required where. I would love to see process drama get in there somehow. I feel really sad that the emphasis on performance is there rather than the emphasis on learning. It's learning about drama rather than learning in and through drama all the time.

Several of the interview respondents were concerned that for the more kinaesthetic students who enjoy and create performance work of a high standard, the esoteric language of the subject could be a struggle. Geraldine found that this was particularly true of her male students:

GERALDINE: Particularly with boys and for the last three years I've had a predominant male class that's gone through the levels. Which is good and they're good actors, some of the best work, but the written component – I still haven't figured out how to make that a natural part of the whole thing rather than being an imposed exercise.

Many of the postings on Dramanet<sup>40</sup> expressed the concern that an insistence on written work could disadvantage students who, though highly talented performers, were not

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<sup>40</sup> Dramanet, November 2007, January 2008, February 2008

confident writers; one posting contended that there was no correlation between being good at assignments and delivering an excellent performance. A contributor admitted that when she was part of the group writing for Sixth Form Certificate they were intent on proving that drama was as good as any other subject and it was then that the written journal assumed importance. However, the writer believed the emphasis on journal writing did little for teaching and learning in drama. One of the teachers interviewed for this study expressed a similar sentiment:

BRENDA: The second one was this notion that you could assess people's use of stage conventions ... without looking at the acting ... If they did not actually write at length about what they had done then you could not give them the standard. This is nonsense.

Several correspondents on Dramanet have recommended that teachers use interviews or video conferencing as a way to demonstrate student understanding rather than relying solely on written portfolios, and a number of the postings have suggested that the reliance on written evidence is based solely on the fact that it is simpler to assess work using concrete, traditional and familiar methods. Others have argued that this is entirely appropriate in an educational environment. However, as one contributor to Dramanet pointed out, the students of the visual arts, for example, are able to be assessed on their practical work alone; the written component is separate. Several of the participants interviewed echoed these sentiments.

One of the interview respondents considered that the pressure of NCEA assessment had led teachers to over-assess in an effort to ensure they were meeting requirements:

BARRY: I think the NCEA assessment system encourages teachers to over assess. If there's one thing I've driven in the last two years it's been the simplification of how we get students to respond, very clear lines of how we expect them to respond. It can be quite stressful if you have two or three groups working and you're thinking, Jeez I'm meant to be taking notes about little Johnny over there. Bang Bang Bang Bang. You can actually end up when it comes to final assessment with this huge amount of stuff to go through to try and work out a grade. At the end of last year, I re-wrote everything. I've gone very much towards the "keep it simple" philosophy. Sure, you take the notes and what-have-you, but I'm trying to avoid getting the kids to write the same thing down three things in three different ways. That has been a concern, particularly for newer teachers. That's something they could get bogged down in really easy especially, in smaller schools where they haven't got the support and what-have-you.

It is important to acknowledge that NCEA assessment was new ground for New Zealand drama educators and while the original intention was to base assessment on teachers' existing practice, the pressures of a national system and the need to prove the validity of judgements led to fairly complex solutions. Teachers have had to find simple and manageable methods, through a system of trial and error, in their attempts to accommodate NCEA in the drama classroom. At the same time, their desire to foster creativity has had to be balanced against the necessity of providing sufficient evidence of student progress.

This progress is measured through a system of national moderation which, in itself, has been a further site of



tension for drama educators. The following subsection, 6.3.3, examines teachers' experiences of moderation through the reported experiences of the participants in this study.

### **6.3.3 Moderation of Student Work**

This subsection explores drama teachers' concerns in relation to the moderation of internal assessments in drama. External moderation of a selection of student work is a requirement of NCEA assessment. As the majority of NCEA drama assessments are internal achievement standards, administrators consider external moderation a key element in ensuring that standards achieved are consistent across the country. In addition, prior to submission for national moderation, teachers are expected to have work moderated by another teacher; this is referred to as *internal moderation*. Both forms of moderation are discussed in this subsection.

The external moderation of student work in drama entails the submission of practical work, recorded on to a CD or DVD, accompanied by the relevant written portfolios. Not all students are moderated but are selected at random by the moderator. Teachers have no prior knowledge of which standards will be moderated.

The interview data indicated that there was a great deal of trepidation among teachers concerning the external moderation of student work. Some of the teachers interviewed were aware that school managers paid attention to moderators' comments and that their performance might be judged accordingly. They expressed concern about the moderators viewing their work out of the context of the classroom and expressed a lack of confidence about the standard of assessment tasks:

AMY: I think why there was so much distress last year is that the previous achievement standard often had it's task number nine, portfolio, whereas, in fact, this has to be task number one, ongoing. That's the big shift in how one now has to write NCEA achievement standards, because if you don't we have this great disparity with what a moderator might have in their criteria, not seeing the whole theatre work, or the process ... There's been a lot of distress about moderation in terms of how it is affecting teachers, and management are responsive to what teachers might be achieving. So there's other ways of thinking that could be useful, because what is very important, this come through from our facilitator, is that more and more the problems, the woes of teachers, are to do with moderation. So you can see that there are ... schools are, sometimes ... there's some unkindness is happening in relation to what feedback has come, and I think you'll find that a lot of teachers are suffering because of the way management uses the information that is returned.

Teachers spent many hours preparing material for moderation purposes and felt both deflated and insecure should the moderator find defects in their assessment practice. The moderation of internally assessed achievement standards demands the recording of student work on camera, a sizeable amount of paperwork and a large investment in resourcing, particularly photocopying:

KATRINA: Huge, and I think a lot other subjects don't actually realise what the process entails. I mean I tried last year ... the end of this year to record and file everything as if it was going off to moderation because you never know what you're going to get asked

next year, but after having put the students log work, the video or DVD, my comments, the other sheets, I had a packed folder and that was only eight people, and I thought wouldn't it be nice to be an economic teacher and have two pieces of paper for that assessment. You know, I know I'm exaggerating but I just think our documentation process is not consistent, and I just think the moderators or the powers-that-be need to actually realise that that ours is a multi-faceted approach. To expect everyone to have this recording system we need to have some more guidelines, we need to make it consistent across schools.

Several of the teachers in this study felt that they had no control over the assessment and moderation processes and would benefit from a forum where teachers' opinions could be heard and discussed. It was apparent from many of the practitioners' comments that there were few opportunities for teachers to discuss work for moderation and achieve some clarity on the assessment requirements. Many respondents also commented on the lack of professional development opportunities especially for those teaching in more isolated areas:

SARA: I think that there needs to be more structured opportunities for sharing of samples of work. I think that there needs to be regional professional development opportunities to share moderated samples of work. There's no point in having the moderation system if people aren't going to share and learn something. Unless they see work that's eight out of eight they can't see why their own students work is not at standard.

In some of the more populated regions, teachers had collaborated in writing and moderation of assessment work and, through this co-operation, had gained a greater sense of competence in their approach to assessment:

DIANE: I mean the thing I've really noticed moving up here was that there's not much moderation between schools here. It's much better in *[name of region]* And that's because of the Drama NZ group. We've had a strong group for – well I've been teaching for 10 years – so as soon as I started teaching at *[name of institution]* I joined that group and I went to every meeting. And it was because they were so helpful. They were kind of like gurus to me and here – obviously it's been around and there's been strong periods – but that's one of the reasons why I want to get it started. And it's a very different sort of region because it's very spread out. Even just thinking of trying to get two teachers buddied up together to work to moderate for each other – even that's better than nothing. I had a chance to moderate some work for some people and that was really helpful. Hopefully, for them. And I mean, people are teaching to the standard but I think they need – the confidence needs to be boosted; they need to be reassured. Because it's also an accountability thing as well isn't it? They got to be accountable for the marks that they give students if students question that. They've got to be able to say, well I can take the list to this person to check and she knows the standard because...

The issue of consistency in setting and marking the standards is one which occurred repeatedly in interviews. Some participants considered that internal moderation was

helpful in ensuring that they were marking to an appropriate level:

MILLY: It keeps me honest. I'm not saying that I'm not honest, but I think that one of the things that's really easy to do is that when you look at your class you see the levels that exist within the class and so your lowest person can become a not achieved and your highest person becomes your excellence. When the reality is that your lowest person might be another school's merit and excellence. Like, just because this person's good doesn't mean the person below them isn't excellent as well. It means that this person is, you know, is hitting the roof really. Or vice a versa, it might be that my excellence is actually an achieve because I've got a group of lower achievers. Which is what is happening to me next year as my Year 13s this year has been like the school's academics. They've been incredibly bright. For some of them the level that they've achieved has been really, really high, but next year's not going to be the same. So already at Year 12 the highest marks that they got in 3.3 I think, yeah 3.3, was a merit. Whereas, Year 13 last year there was about eight excellences, you know. So these kids are coming up, and so like within the group there's not going to be that range.

For teachers in smaller towns or rural areas, however, the problems associated with consistency in the grading of student work were exacerbated by the unavailability of a colleague to assist in internal moderation and the lack of local models by which to compare their students' achievement. Teachers in isolated areas often form close relationships with students throughout their schooling and

it is sometimes difficult to remain objective when assessing their performance:

SARA: I think people are often working on their own, except in big cities, and they work with the same kids for five years. You get quite attached and it's very difficult; you have professional judgment, but if you're not seeing other students' work you haven't got a really good idea of where your students sit in the spectrum, and I think that is a problem for drama teachers.

While internal moderation is a relatively simple operation in larger drama departments - although teachers might have to be relieved of classes if they are to moderate a colleague's students - for most of the teachers interviewed for this study it was necessary to work with a teacher from a neighbouring school. In that instance, the colleague had to request relief from their school or view the video, rather than a live performance, in their own time:

GERALDINE: No. It's not that easy. If someone comes from another school and you're assessing during a school day, they've got to get relief to come. You can take them a video but it's not quite the same. And next year there's no advisor.

If a teacher elected to moderate student work out of school hours, it was an extremely time-consuming operation, particularly if all student work was to be moderated:

MILLY: We always have; every single assessment that we do, and we're fortunate because we live in a large city; we have somebody external from another school come in. So there's two of us in our school and we have somebody external ... It's quite a few hours. 3.2 took

us from 3:30 at night to 10:30 at night to assess because we had 45 students. That's a lot of hours. 3.3 took four nights. We did it over four nights. And I do it for the other person as well.

Both internal and external moderation presented a range of challenges for the teachers in this study. External moderation often created anxiety. Teachers expressed a lack of confidence, not only in their capacity to assess to the standard, but also in their ability to compose an appropriate task for assessment. They were aware that they were accountable to students and management for results but often felt they had little control of the process. For this reason most teachers saw the value of internal moderation but the organisation of moderation meetings posed real challenges, particularly in isolated areas. Even for those teachers working in the more populated areas, internal moderation was time-consuming. Both internal and external moderation added to the teachers' workload.

## 6.4 Summary

In this chapter the presentation of data related to research questions 4, 5, 6 and 7. These focused on the impact of NCEA assessment on teaching and learning in secondary drama education in New Zealand.

The data was presented in two sections, 6.2 and 6.3. Section 6.2 provided, firstly, an overview of the background to the topic followed by examinations of curriculum and assessment models. Section 6.3 considered the challenges reported by teachers in the implementation of NCEA assessment models.

Responses to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) were generally positive and many respondents considered that it gave them enough

flexibility to work creatively within its guidelines. Teachers' attitudes to assessment models, however, appeared more mixed and the externally-assessed achievement standards were a site of some tension for drama teachers.

Difficulties with the consistency between the terminology used in the assessment specifications and the assessment papers presented to students had caused a great deal of concern. As drama was a new subject, in terms of external assessment, the terminology had been defined by the writers of external assessments but there did not appear to be an adequate glossary of terms available to assist teachers in comprehending these definitions.

While some teachers were satisfied with the terminology used for NCEA assessments in drama and considered their practice to be more effective when working within set guidelines, others reported having issues, particularly with internally-assessed achievement standards. In particular, the lack of moderated exemplars and the difficulties in writing their own student assessment tasks which would meet the moderator's requirements, presented a range of challenges. Teachers reported that they were often unsure of their expertise in designing tasks which would fit the criteria of the standards. They also noted that the writing of tasks for all standards at all levels was a time-consuming exercise.

Some teachers were concerned that the emphasis on a written portfolio to accompany practical work prepared for moderation militated against success for some students and that certain unit standards, with their practical emphasis, were sometimes a more appropriate choice. Teachers mentioned that, since the introduction of NCEA achievement standards, less attention had been paid to unit standards and there were few exemplars available for these standards. Some



interviewees suggested that unit standards had been superseded by achievement standards because they were perceived to have more academic credibility.

It appeared that the moderation of internal achievement standards had also created a good deal of concern for drama teachers. The internal moderation of student work was time-consuming both in its organisation and implementation and the gathering and storing of work for external moderation was also stressful, particularly as teachers were aware that the school administrators placed some importance on the feedback from national moderators.

According to the participants of this study, the writing of tasks for NCEA assessment, the logistics of managing assessment, the organisation of moderation opportunities and the management of growing departments had increased teacher workload to a noticeable degree. In the following chapter, 7, the issues connected with the increasing workload engendered by the introduction of NCEA in drama are examined in more detail.

## **7. NCEA Drama in Schools**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, teachers' reported experiences of the implementation of NCEA drama in the secondary school and their views on the future of drama education are examined. The data presented in this chapter relates to questions 7, 8 and 9 of the interview schedule:

7. What do you find is the biggest challenge in the teaching of drama?
8. What is your school's and/or local community's attitude to the performing arts?
9. How do you see the future for drama in New Zealand schools?

The chapter is divided into two sections: 7.2, "Working with NCEA", which considers issues relating to teachers' work in schools; and 7.3, "Changing Status", which examines the implications, for teachers, of the evolving status of drama in the secondary school. Section 7.4 provides a summary of the findings presented in the chapter.

The following section, 7.2, explores the impact of the introduction of NCEA on the professional life of drama teachers.

### **7.2 Working with NCEA**

This section examines teachers' responses to questions concerning their daily practice in schools. It is presented in three subsections: 7.2.1, "Workload Issues"; 7.2.2, "Compliance to Confidence"; and 7.2.3, "Resources".

Workload issues were one of the greatest challenges of NCEA drama according to the teachers interviewed for this study. In the following subsection, 7.2.1, the presentation focuses on teachers' experiences of the increasing workload generated by the implementation of NCEA.

### **7.2.1 Workload Issues**

In this subsection, the data reflects teachers' responses to the question concerning the challenges associated with the introduction of NCEA drama (question 7). When asked to discuss their greatest challenge in introducing NCEA into the drama classroom most of the interviewees cited workload their most pressing and immediate issue. They reported that it had had an appreciable impact on their personal lives and general wellbeing:

MILLY: With NCEA my workload is massive. It's always been massive in drama but it's absolutely beyond pale really. And I don't know what you do about that. As I said, when you've got a large class and you're doing monologues, you have to do one on ones. So that means every single free period, and weekend, and after school are taken up ... there's been a huge turnover in [name of city] of drama teachers and I think NCEA is probably responsible for that. Because it's demanding. Man it's demanding of your time.

For me, that means that because I'm passionate, I get tired and a bit grumpy. Actually, I get really grumpy. I notice at the end of the year, like at the moment, I'm so blissfully laid back, and I'm a laid back person by nature, but I'm really chilled at the moment. I think that for some people that has an impact on their lives, on their homes. I'm fortunate and that my children are ... my youngest child is 16 now. But, if

you tried to juggle home, and children, and school ... which I did when I first started. When I first started I had five children at school. It's really hard, and I think that people go, "look I love this and I'm passionate about it but that's not enough". I actually need to have quality of life as well. People say, "well don't do it. Don't do the extra work."

The onus on teachers to modify, or even rewrite their own tasks for internal assessments, arrange for a system of internal moderation to verify their validity and ensure the consistency of their grading, has contributed to the teacher workload. At the same time, drama is also a physical subject and demands a high degree of personal involvement in performance opportunities for the students:

DIANE: So workload is massive. It's the most stressful subject to teach in the school because of the performance. And it doesn't matter if that's even just for the class or for an audience of whatever, it's still very stressful. And so you are there long hours working to make sure it's going to go well. You're there setting up the video camera, organising costumes, lights – thank goodness for my arts co-ordinator and my art teacher and the dance teacher and the trainee teachers who are there to help you. I learnt to pull people in and I also learnt to hire people to do things for me because I simply couldn't do it all. And, of course, you've got the constant marking because it's internally assessed. So it is bigger, it's huge. And I don't know if there's any way to address that. Apart from drama teachers getting help – more ancillary help. Standing up and saying I can't do all of this. Well, I can do all of this but at what cost to my personal health and personal life? I went for an interview three

years ago at a private school in *[name of city]* and I came out of it feeling that I would end up divorced. And that my dogs would die of starvation because I would never have been home. I think the workload is the biggest thing. It's not just the drama teachers who do a production – you usually expect other staff to come in and help and get involved – but now they've got NCEA as well. So their time's more limited than it has ever been. I think teachers are becoming greedier about saving precious time and using it for other things. It is very, very difficult now. You have to have ancillary help or pay someone to do it.

The workload for teachers of drama was an accumulation of several factors. Preparing work for public performance was an assessment requirement and a function of classroom drama familiar to most teachers. It was an exercise in logistics to ensure that all the facets of a successful piece of theatre were in place; it was stressful and time consuming. When it is part of an NCEA assessment, the director had to also ensure that all written portfolios were completed and had to organise for the production to be filmed and internally moderated. The personal commitment required of drama teachers appeared to exceed that expected of teachers of other practical subjects. Drama teachers were required to carry out all of the basic functions required to deliver their programmes including maintaining the wardrobe, managing the video equipment, setting up the stage lights, assisting with properties, composing a programme to distribute to the audience, marking the portfolios and burning a DVD of the performance for the purpose of external moderation. Whereas most departments offering practical classes received ancillary help, drama teachers had to seek assistance from outside the department. The hours available

from the arts co-ordinator might assist with some of these functions but the arts co-ordinator was required to aid all the arts departments in the school; as a result, only a few hours were available to each department. Budget constraints in some schools meant that not all drama departments could afford to hire the help they needed:

MOIRA: I think because the NCEA has demanded so much of drama departments, Heads of Drama and their people, it's really, really important that the resourcing and the support hours are there. I have no ancillary hours within my own school. We had an arts co-ordinator but she was for trips and things like that, not someone who would actually just help me with other things I needed to do. The English department has an ancillary with them for so many hours and the art department has an ancillary person for so many hours - and science has one. And they have them because they've got all this stuff they have got to get ready and set up. Well so do I. And yet there isn't anyone to do that. I had an arts co-ordinator for four hours a week last year to help distribute planning details for trips and set up trip databases and things like that. But that's where it went. There was nothing else.

A reading of Dramanet contributions indicated that there had been several discussions on the hours spent directing school productions<sup>41</sup>. In some schools teachers were given time in lieu or other incentives but, in the majority of cases, direction of the school production was considered integral to their employment. Similarly, some of the correspondents on Dramanet stated that they were permitted to use some school time for rehearsals whereas, in other schools, this

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<sup>41</sup> Dramanet, May 2008

was not an option. In the interviews, Geraldine echoed these comments:

GERALDINE: It's improving. It's becoming better but we don't like to hold rehearsals during school time, it really doesn't fit into the school programme. Generally speaking, it was not easy. If you wanted to have a really successful programme, you did it off your own bat, in your own time.

The extra-curricular aspect of drama in schools was also mentioned by other participants interviewed for this study. Sara, who worked as a drama advisor, considered that the demands for more performance opportunities from students, parents and school administrators added considerably to teacher stress:

SARA: I think it's the extra-curricular expectation coupled with the fact that there are quite demanding performance expectations on the senior classes because of NCEA. I think that students are more aware and interested in the opportunities that are out there. Kids want to do Stage Challenge, they want to do Sheilah Winn, they want to do a school production, they want to do the playwright competition and one-act play festivals or they want to audition for this film and that film. And often there are not many staff in a drama department, and the school production is enormous. After all, people do those jobs for a living and that's all they do. Yet we're often doing those things as well as teaching our full-time teaching load. I think that's what burns people out. They love doing those things, but they're very demanding; very, very demanding of people's time and energy. And I think that is the greatest challenge, to meet your nine-to-five

job requirements and cope with the extra-curricular part. Even co-ordinating a team of other teachers who've all got other priorities; that, in itself, is extremely stressful. Without even dealing with the kids, we've got to cajole, beg or bribe other teachers to do their part. You know, the sewing person or someone from the English department, or the office lady to sell the tickets. So I think that's the biggest challenge.

Many teachers felt the pressure of time but there were some teachers who were less concerned about time considerations. They remarked that they enjoyed having very clear objectives and working within established guidelines:

BARRY: Yeah I guess I don't find time too much of a problem. We have to do all 24 credits so we haven't got a lot of time to spare and we have two sets of internal exams. Some ways I actually think with boys, yeah I think with boys, it's actually easier when you're going bang, bang, bang through the year. It's clear what you're aiming for. Our least effective periods in drama are when we give them too long to do something.

The considerations of time might be ameliorated by the division of labour within a drama department. Waverley, for instance, is employed in a private school where the curriculum manager and the performance director are separate functions. The curriculum manager, therefore, writes assessments, manages moderation requirements and teaches drama classes but does not also deal with producing the school's public staged performances. Similarly the director of these productions, who is also the Head of Drama, is not involved with issues connected to assessment:



WAVERLY: What's happened is I've been taken on curriculum manager; I manage the curriculum from Year 7 to 13. My HOD is a drama teacher, she's not teaching at all next year and her position's been boosted to director of performing arts, and so she's just full-time directing. So she directs the shows and that will take up her entire year, because it's not only one show. The school is divided into three schools so it has the junior school, the middle school, and the senior school. Then we have the Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival and we have lots of assemblies and performances. It's really busy. We are doing *The Crucible* in term one as well. I actually wouldn't want to direct anything at this school until I ... because the standard's so high I wouldn't know where to begin.

Most state secondary drama teachers, however, fulfilled both the functions of curriculum manager and theatre director. The workload entailed in these functions was burdensome and required a high level of commitment. At the same time, teachers were concerned with issues of developing competency in implementing NCEA. The following subsection focuses on the processes of teachers' adaptation to working with NCEA in the classroom.

### **7.2.2 Compliance to Confidence**

In this subsection the development of teachers' competency in managing NCEA is explored through the reflections of teachers on working within NCEA requirements. It was apparent from the interview responses that drama teachers were often uncertain when introducing NCEA into the drama classroom and their initial response was to follow the assessment tasks closely and build their teaching programmes accordingly. Much of their uncertainty appeared to have

arisen from the lack of an assessment structure prior to NCEA. Several teachers remarked that they had had to learn "on the job". Stephen, previously a teacher and now a drama advisor, suggested that this had resulted in many teachers allowing the assessment requirements to dominate their classroom programmes:

STEPHEN: NCEA? It affected the work in the classroom in that I changed tack, and like so many teachers – in fact they almost all of them in those early years – and the assessment system became the curriculum, if you know what I mean. We taught 1.1, 1.2 then 1.4 and then maybe 1.3 and I never got past that while I was still teaching. I'm advocating now that teachers design a programme and then work out where the assessments will fit. You should see them ... I suggest it and there's a look of horror and incomprehension on their face. And then I talk through it a bit longer and we go through they would *like* to teach, what they think is important and then I say but you can put this assessment here and that assessment there. And if there's assessment you can't do, then maybe your programme is missing something and you need to readjust your programme. But only do that after you've decided what you want to do ... it was lovely flying under the radar for all those years. It meant that there was no exam; I wasn't accountable to anybody. And all of a sudden I had to have these assessment points. And I'm now helping teachers work smarter because you can link them together. You don't have to be a slave to NCEA.

Compliance with an unfamiliar system was a predictable outcome of uncertainty. Stephen's view was that familiarity with the standards, and an increase in teacher confidence, would encourage drama teachers to become more individual in

their approach and move forward from mere compliance. Julia, a teacher educator, shared this view:

JULIA: In terms of the stages that I think we go through from compliance to confidence to courage and that I've seen teachers go through, and the first year was all compliance, absolutely and completely, and I think it didn't matter how much background we had we were all going to be compliant. So, yes of course, I totally changed my ... (laughs) I didn't have to change everything ... I'd try to choose things that would fit in to the way that I'd worked before.

The lack of previous experience with a national system of assessment at all three levels of the senior secondary school gave teachers little guidance on how to adapt NCEA to their existing practice. Rather, they adapted the teaching and learning in the classroom to the assessment tasks. Becoming confident enough to mould NCEA into a vehicle rather than let it drive classroom programmes was a learning experience for drama teachers.

Some teachers were concerned that NCEA created a tendency towards over-assessment and that it would take experience and confidence before they would be able to determine the optimum programmes for themselves:

STEPHEN: I suppose one of the changes I'd like to see for NCEA is it's being less swallowing up of the whole year but this is perhaps not intrinsic in NCEA itself. I'm also preaching the message very strongly that there are 24 credits in a NCEA year's course. For a kid doing five subjects they only need 18 for the subject to be pulling its weight. So why do them all? Less is more sometimes. Do a bit less and do it more fully. Do a bit less and do something different that you want to do.

The sometimes tentative approach to the introduction of NCEA was a result of implementing a new and untried system. Similarly the administration of drama in schools sometimes demonstrated a lack of understanding of what the programme might involve, particularly in relation to adequate resourcing to meet the requirements of assessment. In the following subsection, 7.2.3, teachers report on their experience of resourcing expanding drama departments.

### **7.2.3 Resources**

This subsection examines the challenges drama teachers faced when resourcing drama in order to meet the requirements of a moderated assessment programme. The rapid growth of drama had created the pressure to access subject-specific resources and for some there was a sense of urgency: NCEA had commenced and the assessment tasks demanded a certain level of resourcing. Those who had begun extended drama programmes in the early 1990s with the introduction of unit standards were at an advantage. However, many teachers were still struggling to equip their classrooms sufficiently to run effective NCEA programmes:

BRENDA: I've been into a drama classroom in [name of city] recently and I was absolutely horrified because there was no proper lighting in the studio or in their main space. It was just a classroom, an empty classroom, and I just think, they don't even have any drapes. So I think they tried to do this thing on the cheap ... is it fair that in most cases in these schools there would be one person who is responsible for this subject who is expected to be able to lobby for, to know what to buy in the first place, when there is actually no designated list that you'd see in the 1970s.

Even in mid-decile schools, resourcing is a constant source of stress for Heads of Department and Teachers-in-Charge:

FAITH: Resourcing, physical resourcing ... we've got a very good auditorium but the departments compete for it. I've pretty much managed to gain control over it this year but there are other things; like there's this longstanding tradition that the exams are always held in there or the blood donor service, for instance. In the auditorium, because we don't have a school hall, we've got a gymnasium. I think that last year's drama teacher, the first person to bring in Level 1, found that very difficult. She was new to the school and didn't have the confidence to demand things; whereas I had more luck. It's been luck in many cases that someone else hasn't wanted it before me. So space, space space space ... And next year for the first time, we'll have two drama teachers and we'll have a Year 11 and 12 drama class on at the same time. It will be taught - much to my disgust really - in the school cafeteria or classroom based. I was even a little reluctant to employ a second drama teacher unless something was promised, but we've got the kids coming through and we have to cope with them; we have to do something with them. Oh, it's uncharted territory for me. I've never taken any kids either out of my classroom, the practice room or the auditorium. The cafe is all windows, big open windows, so no chance for any lighting work although there is natural lighting in there. But it's all tables and chairs.

That drama had not yet acquired the status of traditional subjects was often reflected in the apportioning of resources. Many of those teachers, who had been given the appropriate space, still spoke of difficulties accessing the

necessary technical resources for NCEA courses such as a department moving image recorder, lighting equipment and even sufficient texts. There were also other costs associated with drama education which were consistently under resourced. Although those teachers working in private schools did not find resourcing to be an issue, for most drama practitioners it remained a problem. Meeting the requirements of NCEA assessments in drama - particularly the staging of productions, which require the provision of sets, costumes, make-up, lighting and sound effects as well as copyright fees and publicity costs - must be managed on small budgets. Drama departments usually have only one to three teachers at the most and their budgets usually reflect the size of the department rather than the costs of their assessment requirements.

STEPHEN: There's a lot of lip service paid to it but it's still low in the pecking order in my experience. A technology block is far more important and science is far more important. And I mean, that goes right up to Ministry level. You look at it. What were the last curriculum things to be done, by a long chalk. Let's face it, we still don't figure high on the priority list. I mean, there are exceptions. There are some schools who do value it very highly and the wealthy schools, of course, have got the equipment but the schools up north are depressing, some of them. They've got nothing ... One teacher I saw was very excited - she's going to get a camera next year. She has no access to a camera. I mean we see these moderators pontificating and sending stuff back and my heart just goes out to these poor sods who have got nothing.

For several of the Heads of Department or Teachers-in Charge involved in this study the only recourse had been to apply

to Pub Charities for specific resources. The effort to secure these essential resources in order to manage a successful NCEA programme was significant in some teachers' workloads. Even those schools which were well resourced in terms of buildings failed to supply the necessary technical equipment. Also, despite the technical demands of the subject, most drama departments functioned without the assistance of ancillary staff.

The data reflect that the new status of drama brought about by the introduction of NCEA initiated a multiplicity of changes for teachers of drama in New Zealand. The next section examines the changing status of drama in relation to its situation in the secondary school.

### **7.3 Changing Status**

This section of chapter 7 pertains to teachers' perceptions of the evolving status of drama in the secondary school. It is presented in two subsections. The first, 7.3.1, "Drama as a Secondary School Subject", examines the situation of drama in the school and community since the introduction of NCEA assessment, and the second, 7.3.2, "Perspectives on the Future of Drama Education", reflects drama educators' views of possible future developments in drama.

#### ***7.3.1 Drama as a Secondary School Subject***

This subsection focuses on issues connected with drama's emergence as a mainstream secondary school subject. The appearance of drama as a fully fledged subject is a new phenomenon. This subsection examines the implication for teachers of this development.

Most of the participants in this study had begun their professional careers as English teachers and acknowledged that, traditionally, drama had been taught as a subset of

English. In many cases, this situation continued after the introduction of NCEA drama. Several participants in this study suggested that, initially, this had created a range of problems for some drama teachers. Waverley, for instance, found that the English Head of Department at her previous school had had little practical knowledge of the drama classroom, or the resourcing required. Essential information about NCEA assessment from NZQA, workshops and professional development opportunities had been either late in reaching her or had not arrived at all. She had become adept at using online resources and had been self-motivated in her search for information. Many of the participants shared this reliance on online sources of information from the NZQA and Ministry of Education websites.

Most of the teachers interviewed, however, noted that the attitudes of school administrators and colleagues were changing and that there is a growing awareness of drama as a subject in its own right:

SARA: I would generally say that in my work as an advisor, even though people moaned and groaned, I think schools were generally very positive about performing arts and recognised them more and more as subjects in their own right. And I think people no longer dispute the fact that drama's different from English, you know, in the way that they used to.

The burgeoning status of drama as an NCEA subject is evident in many schools though many participants believed that it is still often viewed by some staff and parents as an extra-curricular activity rather than an academic option. They maintained that the emphasis on sporting activities in New Zealand schools had a negative impact on the status of arts subjects such as drama, which is seldom considered of equal



value. From the interviews it was apparent that these attitudes to drama, as reportedly expressed through school and community, had a direct influence on the environment in which drama teachers practise their craft. Several teachers mentioned that the historic marginalisation of the subject had meant that the public face of drama in schools had been confined to the performance of the school production, with little recognition of the wider applications of drama education or the skills base necessary to improve and enhance student work:

DIANE: "Stand around being tree". It is still there. "Oh you did the Shakespeare". There are still stereotypes; I think there needs to be more work on perception, what people understand drama to be, if you like.

Several of the participants considered that the stereotypical view of drama as having little academic merit had often led to it being viewed as a "dumping ground" for less academic students. A surfeit of students with low motivation and little interest in the subject presented major pedagogical challenges for their teachers:

STEPHEN: And this goes back before NCEA. Sometimes I think it was because they thought that there was no writing. Other times I think they thought they would be left alone a bit – rude shock for them. I saw and see kids who are choosing to take the subject as a line of least resistance. It's really up to the teacher to disabuse the kids of that notion. NCEA drama is not an easy option, not at all.

If you opt for art and music there's a perception that a bit of expert knowledge is needed in those subjects; I think that is a bit lacking in drama. One of my

principals was once heard to say in the corridor, "Oh anybody can teach drama", that was his attitude to it. The soft option, you know, and I think there is still some of that.

Most of the participants in this study agreed that, while the introduction of NCEA had begun to improve attitudes to drama education, the development was gradual and past prejudices continued to linger. They asserted that some schools had been slow to adjust to the new era in arts education, and drama in particular had been consistently underrated. Although schools were pleased to have a drama showcase on open nights and special events, they seldom considered rehearsals as a valid use of student time and teachers were compelled to use many hours of their own time in preparation for these events:

GERALDINE: Very convenient showcase when you want to use it for enrolment week, the rest of the time a pain in the neck ... Oh it was wonderful having all these kids going out, like the Theatresports team, and doing warm-ups at conferences and things, "Oh, aren't they wonderful?" But, hey, can I have a couple of periods for their rehearsals, oh no, no, you do it after school.

Several teachers remarked that they were often frustrated by a lack of understanding of what public performance entailed in terms of time and workload. There was no evidence that there had been a shift in understanding in this regard. The attitude of management made a profound difference to the professional experience of drama teachers:

MOIRA: It has not been very good at all. In the past it was not good. We are on to our fourth principal now. One of the first I worked with was interested in the

arts, she liked to attend them. She didn't always understand them because she'd say things like "Well I know you haven't got the time to put on a major production but I'd like to see a production put on with a small group of juniors." Is that all? It actually takes more time to work with juniors, who might not have any stage experience, and you still need lights and you still need someone spending their time directing it. They honestly think that if you're doing something with juniors it is less work. No understanding at all. They have never had to do it. Or people who think that if you are directing a play it is like you are a manager for a sports team. But it is not, I am everything. Someone will say, "Oh, I'll do publicity for you", but then later they say, "It's probably easier for you to just do the publicity because you've had to tell me everything anyway". No, it is not easier for me to do it, it is easier for you.

I think that there is general liking for performance but they think that you can put on a play the way someone can stand up and sing a song. You know, if a student has prepared a song, they can sing it for five years and everyone says, "Oh isn't that lovely!" But it is still the same song. Whereas if they have seen a play once they want to see something different and they have no idea how much longer it takes to prepare a play compared to learning to sing a song - or the number of people who have to contribute to it. Once, our principal said that she liked plays. That was her attitude to the performing arts, she liked to go to plays and we had quite a few because we had Year 11, Year 12, Year 13 and even, for the first time, Year 10 performances in the evening for parents, plus a

student-led production by the badge-holder. And I can tell you how many of these she went to and that was none.

The continued marginalisation of drama in some schools may be due, in part, to the historic perception that it is merely play, despite the fact that it now carries some academic status. As stated in an earlier chapter<sup>42</sup>, many drama teachers work from a sense of personal passion and are familiar with working in schools which do not fully appreciate the various facets of drama education:

MILLY: We're in an area where we're primarily fuelled by passion. People say, "Well don't do it, don't do the extra work." You tell me how you can do a production without doing the extra work.

Several of the teachers interviewed asserted that, in many schools, management failed to recognise the importance of the junior programmes in preparing students for the demands of a senior NCEA programme. As a result, junior programmes were often curtailed and drama teachers had to campaign on issues of timetabling and working space. Several postings on Dramanet from August 2006 to September 2006 indicated that timetabling decisions had had a negative impact on junior drama programmes.

Many of the drama teachers interviewed for this study also attested that, whilst principals acknowledged the school production as the public face of school drama, the daily logistical and time considerations which preoccupy drama teachers were minimised and little support was offered.

A few participants pointed out that in smaller urban centres, where there were fewer theatrical opportunities,

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<sup>42</sup> See chapter 5

school productions were often the focus of community attention and depended on audience attendance to be financially viable. In larger communities, the school production often competed with amateur and professional theatre productions; the audience was more likely to be comprised of people connected to the school or occasional visitors from other schools. This placed pressure on teachers when financing their productions.

It was apparent in the interviews that community and school attitudes differed according to the decile rating of the school and the interests of the parents. Waverly, for instance, moved from a suburban state school to a prestigious private school:

WAVERLY: It is amazing. I think they glean most of their prestige from the productions and they are just so professional and the principal is the producer for the show. I was used to working with the kids and having 50 people come and see the show and having a 500 dollar budget or something. At my present school, we did *[name of production]* this year and we sold out an 800 seat auditorium for four nights in a row. People come from the community to see the show. It is just phenomenal, it is two very different worlds - just different socio-economic groups I guess.

Several of the participants suggested, however, that in higher decile schools, the main priority was successful results, particularly in external assessments, which would demonstrate academic achievement. In this environment, a drama programme could become so centred on outcomes that the process was marginalised:

THEA: So teaching in an academic school. It was very much about how do we get good results out of this

thing. So we teach for excellence. We're looking at getting really great marks, and very much the programme was written to go from standard to standard to standard to standard, leading into the next year with a kind of stepping stone. I feel that the tail wags the dog quite often ... I have started to adjust to that in terms of how do I make sure that I'm still teaching what I want to teach the way I want to teach.

A few participants considered that one of the difficulties in schools was that while the introduction of NCEA drama had led to a rejuvenation of the subject and given drama a place in schools as a valid subject in its own right, there was still little understanding among other subject teachers of what drama is actually about. Most drama practitioners were hopeful that time and familiarity would improve this situation.

The introduction of NCEA assessment in drama gave it the status of a mainstream academic subject; in this subsection the effect of this change in status is discussed. Most of the respondents in this study referred to the rising status of drama and the resulting increase in the number of students opting into the subject. They reported that, previously, the more academic students had been discouraged from studying drama because it provided no pathway to tertiary education and was viewed, by school administrators and deans, as merely a frill or a stop-gap in the timetable. This had been a recurring challenge for teachers-in-charge or heads of drama departments:

JULIA: The students were regularly counselled out of taking drama – regularly for years by the deans and the careers people. But it didn't stop students taking it.

There are more drama classes now than there were when I was there and that's because it seems respectable. For example, when I was teaching unit standards, when they published what the students had got the previous year, they never remembered to put drama unit standards up. Every time the senior curriculum book went out, I had to remind them there was a different formula for unit standards. The report system was another one; I had to remind them that they needed another system. So the school didn't rank unit standards, basically; I think that would be a fair way of looking at it.

With the introduction of NCEA assessment school administrators and parents were more convinced that drama could provide a pathway to tertiary education or contribute to future career choices. One interview suggested that the emergence of drama as a valid academic subject in secondary schools was due to the international recognition of New Zealand drama and its potential as a career path:

SARA: I think it's very positive. I think that the cultural climate of movie successes, theatre successes, arts festivals is certainly showing the students that if they want work in the arts that there are opportunities that there weren't ever before. I think that there's a real recognition of the importance of being able to present and communicate with others. That's increasingly recognised in a number of fields. So a student taking drama doesn't look as silly as it used to, and I think that that's the bigger pathway in schools.

However, NCEA had introduced an era of accountability into drama education. Its growing profile in secondary schools had created expectations and, as a result, there was more

pressure from school administrators regarding assessment results:

STEPHEN: There are schools that insist that the 24 [credits] are done and there are schools that insist that the external exam is done. I feel very sad when I come across that. These are – sorry I'm going to sound really controversial – but sometimes these are ignorant management decisions, looking for status through performance, stuff like that. And huge mistrust of internal assessment – things like that.

For teachers like Amy the renaissance in performing arts in schools had not always been a positive experience. Amy had enjoyed a freedom in her practice which was ultimately compromised by the success of drama in the school. The awareness of drama as a public representation of the school had impinged on Amy's ability to make decisions concerning her use of the teaching space:

AMY: I started teaching in a tiny little prefab and at first I had all of my quotes about age and poems and photographs right over the walls of prefab. By the time I'd moved into the performing arts centre I was allowed to have nothing on the walls and I had to leave everything there because it was used for other classes in the evening. So I lost that sense of ownership when everything got posh. And there was more tension about voices being heard. Nobody was allowed anymore to go and work outside because the school ... because the performing arts school didn't like to have anyone outside the door when important people might be walking through. So in other words the constraints of having a fabulous new theatre building made it difficult. Everybody used to go outside in the early days but we



weren't allowed to go outside anymore because it looked messy.

Many of the teachers interviewed for this study spoke about the challenge of regaining the sense of excitement and discovery in drama which can be consumed by a day-to-day sense of accountability for delivering the programme:

GEORGIA: Generally I want to see it shake itself a bit, loosen up, take off its whalebone petticoat and slip into something more comfortable, maybe a tracksuit or leotard; rediscover the body, rediscover risks, and discovery and excitement. I'm not sure I argue with the standards that much, but the idea of a standard still worries me to some extent.

The introduction of NCEA and the changes to drama's status in schools has presented teachers with a range of challenges and adjustments made to teaching and learning in the drama classroom. The impact of these changes on the continuing development of drama education is discussed in the following subsection.

### ***7.3.2 Perspectives on the Future of Drama Education***

For the most part, the participants in this study were positive about the future of the subject but some warned that they could not afford to be complacent. Rapid growth could not continue indefinitely; drama would always be a niche subject and the numbers of students would level off:

DEBORAH: We are already starting to experience a bit of a backlash and I am afraid that this is going to get worse in that literacy and numeracy is now perceived to be more important than anything else, which is a very narrow view of education. We had kind of a brief heyday, but people are feeling nervous about it ... I

think we need to say it's important for a child to be creative as well as literate. It's important for a child to be able to express themselves physically as well as being literate on paper and anyway kids love it. That's our biggest weapon. Our biggest weapon is that kids actually want it and once they realise they can have it they're going to ask for it more and more.

Several participants suggested that one of the most pressing problems in relation to the rapidly increasing drama roll in secondary schools is the lack of qualified staff to teach the subject at NCEA level. Those teachers who had become involved in drama education more recently often lacked specific training or experience in teaching drama:

WAVERLY: I've noticed in my brief time teaching drama just at training days and things like that, it sort of surprises me some of the types of people who are teaching drama who, kind of - I want to be honest - decided they'd do it because they'd never really had anything to do with performance themselves but thought they'd pick it up.

While academic drama courses are offered at Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Waikato and Massey Universities, which can provide prospective teachers with the appropriate theoretical background, drama is also a practical subject. Some of the participants who were, at the time of the interviews, employed in tertiary institutions confirmed that Colleges of Education at the aforementioned universities offered short courses in practical drama teaching; they were not certain that these courses offered the depth and range necessary for secondary practice. Georgia, who is a teacher educator, commented:

GEORGIA: But anyway, we're strapped for cash so badly like we're disastrously underfunded. I think secondary teacher education is disastrously underfunded. There is no room to do ... there is no room for any luxuries and there's barely room to do what we're doing. We've got performing arts major which is drama, and a bit of dance really ... It is a huge gap, and I guess that, if we want to do it, if we want to have drama as a respectable subject, we have got to provide teacher education courses. And it is not that there's been tons of money. I think there has been, relatively, tons of money poured into developing the arts in New Zealand, but not tons of money into developing expertise in teachers.

Many of the practitioners in this study mentioned that the lack of subject-specific training for drama teachers had led, in some instances, to the subject being taught by teachers from other disciplines whose knowledge of drama and, more specifically, the teaching of drama, could be limited. They pointed out that most secondary teachers are required to have a degree in their discipline. They did not consider that studying drama as part of English was sufficient.

On the other hand, those with performance experience sometimes lacked the qualifications to teach. Milly, a teacher in a city school, suggested that in the major centres, Wellington and Auckland for example, some students trained for professional performance were beginning to move on to teacher training. These graduates had ample knowledge of theatre practice and improvisation techniques and some had adjusted successfully to the particular pressures of classroom teaching, namely working with students of mixed

ability and low motivation, workload issues and new assessment systems:

MILLY: At the moment, the College of Education has got ... a whole lot of our professional actors are now doing teacher training. Most of them will be teaching something else as well because at College of Education you have to take two options. Yeah, but they're people who have gone in with that strength already. That's just great. They're teachers and they're just great.

The evidence suggested that there was a broad continuum of expertise and experience amongst drama teachers and those practitioners involved in the development of the arts curriculum and NCEA assessment were becoming aware that, in many regions, the standard of teaching had not kept pace with the implementation of new assessment models:

SARA: There's actually no depth of work. I think that the problem with some of the work I've seen as an advisor is that the teacher has not had much experience so they read a text book, they go along to one workshop and they do it. And you know, they do it pretty well, they carry it off, but it's a meringue; you walk on the top and you might fall through the cracks. There's no depth. I know that's how some of my own work was initially. I'd read a unit standard that someone had written in the NZADIE [now Drama New Zealand] journal and off I'd go and give it a go whether it was a process drama or whatever. And the kids had a good time, you know, we got something out of it, but it's nothing like the work that I would do now, which I'd like to think is far richer and is connected to other things that I would teach. Before, it would have stood

alone; I don't think I would have been able to make the connections.

It is this "lack of depth" which creates the problem of teaching to assessment rather than making the assessment part of a well-balanced teaching programme:

SARA: I think that is all about how the teacher perceives the assessment. If the teacher is unskilled or inexperienced the assessment is all. They actually teach the assessment activity instead of teaching the unit of work. I mean kids should do the assessment activity with facilitation. I don't think that's what's happening. I think people are teaching the assessment activities for learning. To be quite honest I would say that, generally, the standard of drama teaching is – oh this is going to be quite controversial – I would say that it's inadequate. It's inadequate for the qualification students are given. Almost certainly at Level 3 ... absolutely at Level 3; even in Level 1. There are people out there that are doing a really good job, they are great, but I think that I can confidently stand by my comments. The future is bright but I think that there's a need for professional development, in-service and pre-service.

PD [Professional Development] days are really successful. I think they would only take half a day twice a year. And that's only one day out of the school year. It could happen for all subjects – when exemplars are presented and discussed. I think it would be really beneficial.

Many of the practitioners in this study affirmed that the difficulties many teachers had experienced with the language of achievement standards stemmed from this lack of training.

Opportunities for teachers to update their skills and knowledge were very limited and not many could afford to take time out of paid employment to pursue further training. Most agreed that if drama was to continue to develop as a senior high school subject, its teachers had to be trained to the same standard as the teachers of other subjects.

#### **7.4 Summary**

In this chapter, "NCEA Drama in Schools", the data related to interview questions 7, 8 and 9 were presented in two sections: 7.2, "Working with NCEA"; and 7.3, "Changing Status". The introduction of NCEA drama was a challenge for drama teachers to learn a new way of approaching their subject and carried with it both the rewards and disadvantages of implementing a new and untried model of teaching and learning in the drama classroom.

Workload issues associated with the implementation of NCEA in drama were examined in section 7.2. Interviewees expressed the view that the question of escalating workload was the most pressing issue for drama teachers particularly in terms of preparing standards and managing classroom activities to meet NCEA requirements. Some teachers noted that preconceptions still existed about drama's credibility as an academic subject and that some schools were reluctant to provide sufficient resources for its effective implementation as an NCEA subject. This added to the stresses of the classroom and exacerbated teacher workload.

On the strategies involved in balancing a new system of assessment with existing approaches to teaching and learning in drama, some participants discussed the process of developing confidence in implementing NCEA achievement standards. This shift from a situation of mere compliance with the suggested NCEA schedule of assessments might enable

them to establish their own choice of programmes in the classroom.

Section 7.3 explored the changing status of drama in New Zealand secondary schools. Participants in the study noted that attitudes to drama in schools had shifted since the introduction of NCEA drama. They remarked on the impact of drama's status as an NCEA subject on their position in schools as drama educators. Some interviewees indicated that the influence of NCEA on teaching and learning in the classroom had its disadvantages, not least of which was the impact on historical approaches to the teaching of drama.

When considering the future possibilities for drama education, the teachers were generally positive about its growth as a secondary school subject. However, they suggested that drama educators must ensure that the explorative nature of the subject was preserved. Also of concern to many of the interviewees was the position of pre-service teacher education in drama. Their perception was that it is inadequate to the task of preparing teachers to meet the future needs of the subject.

In chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis, data have been presented to reflect three major themes which emerged from interviews with drama educators, with reference to comments made on the Dramanet website. These themes are as follows: (a) Philosophy and pedagogy; (b) Curriculum and assessment; and (c) Working with NCEA. It is apparent from the data that NCEA has had a significant impact on teaching and learning in drama in New Zealand secondary schools. As drama practitioners continue to work with emerging practices in drama, they are in the process of establishing a new stage in the development of drama education.

## 8. Discussion: Drama and NCEA

### 8.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to investigate drama educators' responses to the introduction of NCEA drama and their perceptions of its impact on teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom. The introduction of NCEA assessment in drama in 2002 signalled a significant change for secondary drama educators in New Zealand. In 1993, with the publication of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) drama was recognised as one of the essential learning areas in New Zealand schools and, with the introduction of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), drama was included with music, visual art and dance as one of the four major art forms. With the subsequent introduction of NCEA assessment, for the first time, senior assessment qualifications became available to drama students at Years 11, 12 and 13. It is axiomatic that change of this significance would have an effect on drama pedagogy.

In chapter 3, "Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy", the foundations of curriculum and assessment design, and their impact on pedagogy, were examined, and contemporary developments in drama education discussed in reference to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and NCEA assessment. Consideration was given to the impact of global events on education policies in New Zealand which, in turn, have influenced national approaches to teaching and learning in the drama classroom. In this examination of the effects of curriculum and assessment on pedagogy, use was made of the descriptors, *classification* and *framing*, formulated by



Bernstein (1996) to describe the transmission of power and control in educational settings.

Based on this exploration of the effects of curriculum and assessment on teaching and learning, the following research question emerged: How have they, as secondary drama educators, responded to the challenge of NCEA drama? In the interviews with participants in this study, this overarching question was contained in questions 4-7 of the interview schedule:

4. Has NCEA affected your work in the classroom? Have you needed to alter your programmes significantly? Why/Why not?
5. Would you suggest any changes to NCEA drama?
6. Did you make any contribution to formulating policy/preparing the curriculum document/writing achievement standards etc.?
7. What do you find is the biggest challenge in the teaching of drama?

The data generated by these questions are presented in chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. The following section discusses the implications for drama teachers of working within the parameters of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and NCEA assessment.

## **8.2 Working with Curriculum and Assessment**

A major role of official curricula in national education systems is to prescribe the objectives against which any models of assessment design must measure achievement. Codd (2005) avers that education policies define the provision of education by delineating national objectives for classroom

practice but points out that, because these objectives are based on belief, the values and assumptions underlying the process of deciding policy should be examined (p. xviii).

Bernstein (1996), argues, however, that the focus should centre not only on the ideological bias of curriculum content but also on investigation of the "discursive rules of the pedagogy that generate practices of inclusion and exclusion"; that is, inclusion of what is considered a useful subject and what is not (xiii).

As drama had not been included as a subject in the New Zealand curriculum prior to the introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993), the implications of these *discursive rules* might usefully be examined in relation to drama pedagogy in New Zealand. Previously, drama practitioners had not been required to work within a national framework of curriculum and assessment but had designed localised programmes based on their individual aims and experience. These may, or may not, have included Sixth Form Certificate drama. If drama was now to be included as a senior subject offering NCEA assessment credits, it would inevitably not only alter the relationship of the subject to other subjects contained in the curriculum, but also have an impact on expectations for classroom practice in drama. The data collected for this study gave clear indications that the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama had a profound effect on teachers' experience of working with drama in the secondary school. An overview of the responses gathered from the interviews with drama practitioners suggested that pressure had been experienced not only in the area of pedagogy, and teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom, but also in the management and administration of the subject itself. As a new subject, with little history of senior assessment,

drama was reportedly under-resourced in some schools, and department budgets were stretched in the effort to meet the requirements of NCEA assessment. Teachers spoke of becoming proactive in pushing for adequate resourcing.

In exploring the range of issues connected with the implementation of NCEA, the discussion in this section is presented in four subsections: 8.2.1, "Drama in the Mainstream" 8.2.2, "Examining the Curriculum"; 8.2.3, "Assessment Issues"; and 8.2.4, "Workload Matters". The following subsection examines the effects of the evolving status of drama in the secondary school on teaching and learning in the drama classroom.

#### **8.2.1 Drama in the Mainstream**

At the time of this study, drama was a relatively new curriculum subject and some teachers reported that they were still confronted by attitudes which reflected the historic marginalisation of the subject rather than the current reality. There was an expressed belief that drama was still having to prove its validity as a secondary subject; in many institutions it remained "low on the pecking order" (Stephen), subjects such as science or technology being deemed more worthwhile. Bernstein (1996) refers to secondary subjects as *singularities* which, he suggests, are the central mode of operation for traditional and hierarchical educational institutions (p. 75), and integral to the "discursive rules of the pedagogy that generate practices of inclusion and exclusion" (p. xiii). His term for this insulation of one group from another is *classification* and he considers it to be the means of the relay of power in education. Any changes to the status of a subject, then, would denote a shift in the transmission of power. In terms of classification, a new subject proves its validity by

defining those qualities which separate it from other subjects.

Although most of the participants in this study welcomed the validation that the arts curriculum and the introduction of NCEA assessment had conferred on secondary drama, some interviewees considered that the imperative to define drama in ways that would prove its validity as an academic subject could undermine those qualities inherent in drama education which lay beyond the confines of traditional academic values. The implementation of NCEA required teachers to learn new approaches to teaching and learning in the drama classroom in adherence to new regulations regarding planning and assessment in drama (the discursive order). As secondary drama teachers attempted to comply with both the social and discursive rules inherent in the introduction of a nationally mandated assessment model, the lack of a prior model for senior assessment in drama created some difficulties, particularly in regard to the new vocabulary of the achievement standards.

In *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), the arts were framed in a generic language that was applied to all four arts (dance, drama, music and the visual arts) by means of four interrelated strands: "Developing Practical Knowledge in the Arts"; "Developing Ideas in the Arts"; "Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts"; and "Understanding the Arts in Context". Achievement objectives were defined in the context of each of these strands for Levels 1-8 of the curriculum. With the publication of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) drama was recognised as an independent secondary school subject for

the first time. The reasons for this shift to the mainstream from a marginalised position in education are varied.

In *The Hope of Radical Education*, Giroux (1988) maintains that "pedagogical questions are political questions" (p. 94); education is driven by the political and economic aims of government. In the context of developments in the United Kingdom, Hartley (2006) observes that the "quest for creativity within both government and business" (p. 62), which has emerged in education, sits in contrast to the policy priorities of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw a search for certainty and standards in education. Hartley suggests that the "increased curricular emphases on the emotions and creativity" (p. 62) have been prompted by the swiftly changing demands of post-industrial economics which, as Robinson observes, require adaptation and innovation (NACCCE, 1999, p. 20).

Moore (2006) contends that while school curricula are often presented as selections from the knowledge and culture of a nation, these selections are based on "the cultural skills and preferences of already privileged social groups" (p. 87). Similarly, Grierson and Mansfield (2003) argue that curricula, by definition, "are always part of selective traditions" (p. 21). Through the transmission of power by way of classification and framing (Bernstein, 1996), these preferences become the basis of a nation's education system.

Hartley (2006) suggests that "schools transmit messages" and in a postmodern world these messages serve production (p. 68). In New Zealand, for example, the success of the film industry signalled renewed interest in the performing arts as a marketable product. *The Cultural Policy of New Zealand* (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2007) notes the major growth in the "film industry sector" (p. 23), and in *The*

*Arts Strategy 2006-2008* (Ministry of Education, 2006) it was recognised that learning in the arts could provide pathways to a "range of career choices in the creative industries" (p. 3). One of the interviewees for this study remarked that "the cultural climate of movie successes, theatre successes, arts festivals" is showing students that if they want to work in the arts there are now opportunities that did not previously exist. She suggested that there was a growing recognition of the importance of being able to communicate effectively with others and that a student taking drama was being taken more seriously.

Clearly, then, in the framing of drama as a subject in the curriculum, a major emphasis was on the attainment of transferable knowledge and skills and the measurement of that attainment. An interviewee in the study noted that the inclusion of drama in the national curriculum had coincided with the growth in the leisure industry in New Zealand and suggested that the interest in drama was motivated by the need to develop *intellectual capital* in this area.

The concept of intellectual capital was foreseen by Lyotard (1984) who predicted that knowledge would become a commodity, the importance of which would derive from its *performativity*. Grierson and Mansfield (2003) argue that if the arts were "claimed as performative sites for knowledge exchange" and an "informational commodity" there was a danger that it would "erase or bypass what might be understood as 'cultural knowledge'" (p. 30). They posit that the equating of knowledge as a resource with economic prosperity has influenced how the arts are framed in "this newly-languaged political framework" (p. 29). The following subsection examines the arts curriculum in relation to its framing of arts education.

### 8.2.2 Examining the Curriculum

The stated aims of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) are: "to enable students to develop literacies in dance, drama, music and the visual arts; to assist students to participate in and develop a lifelong interest in the arts; to broaden understanding of and involvement in the arts in New Zealand" (p. 12). Mansfield (2003) is critical of the curriculum in that, in her view, it appeals to a language-based model which implies that there is a grammar that can be learned (p. 67). She also argues that the expressed intention of the curriculum to develop cognitive skills places an emphasis on thinking and the outcomes of thinking. Even the use of the word *disciplines* connotes an "identification with order, rationality, linear development and control" (Mansfield, 2003, p. 67). Similarly, Grundy (1987) argues that, in curriculum design, the idea of structure is often confused with the concept of foundations and suggests that the foundations of a curriculum are its philosophical core; when technical interest is dominant in the design, then control is the main objective of the curriculum design. A curriculum grounded in practice, however, is one which is shared (p. 2).

An examination of the *Policy Framework for Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) and, particularly, the background paper prepared by Smith, *The Arts Within a National State Curriculum* (1998) indicates that, initially, the arts curriculum was intended to be based on existing drama practice. The paper demonstrates an approach that was focused on the creative, cultural and social aspects of arts education.

In their interview for this study, one of the authors of the drama section of the arts curriculum remarked that, when they began writing the curriculum, the policy for the arts had not been completed and was not, in fact, signed off until after the writing of the curriculum had begun. They pointed out that the page in the curriculum framework concerning the arts (page 15 of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, Ministry of Education, 1993) "is very non-specific about what arts actually are". This might help to explain the disjunction between the flexible and open nature of the policy documents, with their references to postmodern curriculum theorists such as William Doll, and the linear and literary construction of the arts curriculum document.

In the *Policy Framework for Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) the authors acknowledge that *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) does not specify its philosophical underpinnings. They assert that within its principles a range of philosophic approaches can be seen, including "modernism, postpositivism and postmodernism" but admit that "The analysis of consistency from Curriculum Framework to draft arts statement identifies the influence of postmodernism as occurring after the publication of the Curriculum Framework document" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 2). This would indicate that the philosophical basis of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) remains opaque and so permits diverse approaches to teaching and learning in the arts in order to reach its prescribed objectives.

One interviewee who had been involved in the planning of the curriculum suggested that, initially, the arts curriculum had not been intended to include drama or dance and that it would have been quite possible to develop a curriculum that



excluded drama on the basis that it was already catered for in English. That *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) included drama as an independent subject and elevated its status in the secondary school system was regarded by most interviewees as a fortunate development for drama specialists working in secondary schools. Greenwood (2003) observes that when the curriculum appeared "We were grateful that it was a document that allows, even demands drama teaching that is challenging, relevant and liberating" (p. 119).

Only two interviewees in this study expressed any reservations about working within the parameters of the arts curriculum. For the most part, participants considered that the arts curriculum document offered sufficient flexibility for teachers to be creative in their approaches to classroom practice. It was in the area of assessment that drama teachers reported experiencing the most difficulty with what Hargreaves (1994) has elsewhere described as "the sheer cumulative impact of multiple, complex, non-negotiable innovations on teachers' time, energy, motivation, opportunities to reflect, and their very capacity to cope" (p. 6).

For many drama teachers in this study, the structure of the NCEA assessment model had become the definitive interpretation of the curriculum in secondary schools. Their pedagogy was based on the assessment requirements rather than on an interpretation of the curriculum itself: "the assessment system became the curriculum, if you know what I mean" (Stephen). Bolstad (2006) suggests that the assessment standards are, in practice, the new de facto national curricula (p. 117).

Given the centrality of the assessment system in teachers' decisions concerning their approaches to teaching and learning in the drama classroom, the following subsection examines the issues reportedly confronting teachers in their implementation of NCEA assessment.

### **8.2.3 Assessment Issues**

The function of assessment is to ensure that the objectives of the curriculum are met and can be moderated. One of the interviewees contended, however, that work began on the NCEA framework and the achievement standards while the curriculum was still in development. This sense of work in process was to affect teachers when they came to implement the standards.

Unit standards in drama were introduced into secondary schools in 1998. Level 1 NCEA achievement standards were introduced at Year 11 in 2002, with Levels 2 and 3 being introduced in 2003 and 2004 respectively. According to an interviewee who had been involved in developing unit standards, the original intention had been to reflect, in the assessment schedules, existing methods and approaches to teaching and learning in drama. One of the key aims of the writers of the unit standards was to define the particular body of knowledge, skills and understandings that distinguished drama from English, media studies or dance. The presumption was that if there were nationally mandated assessments available in drama, then parents and schools might "take it seriously".

Geraldine reported that once the unit standards and curriculum were introduced she was pleased in some ways because "it verified or made me rethink my programme". She noted that, originally, when unit standards were newly introduced and the arts curriculum was still in the draft

stage, she was still able to choose the bits she wanted to use in her programme.

Hall (2005) suggests that one of the intended purposes of the NCEA assessment model was "to involve teachers more in the assessment process" (p. 237). However, the reforms did not eventuate in diminished central control and the subsequent monitoring of schools limited their freedom to design delivery because the requirements were too restrictive (p. 243).

In Brenda's view, the unit standards became a harbinger of "a prescriptive element coming into drama" and neither unit standards nor achievement standards had reflected the nature of drama processes as she understood them. She felt the way drama had been divided into separate areas of study was artificial and that a great deal of extra detail had been included in the standards; if you did not "observe these add-ons you were in trouble".

Assessment is an instrument of control of pedagogical processes (framing). Teachers are generally held accountable for students' results particularly if their school's reputation in the community is dependent on those results. Codd (2005) argues that "The professional culture of education is now based upon externally imposed low-trust forms of accountability" and that in a culture of management "performativity replaces the critical reflection and professional judgement of the autonomous professional" (p. xvi). Codd suggests that, in a culture of performativity, "good practice is defined in terms of pre-defined skills and competencies with very little or no acknowledgement given to the moral dimension of teaching" (Codd, 2005, p. xv).

The introduction of unit standards served to acclimatise teachers of drama to this climate of accountability. As Sara

expressed it they became "used to having to dot the I's and cross the T's in terms of evidence". In her opinion, this "must make you a better teacher because you know where your students have to get to". Taylor (2006), however, argues that a sole focus on outcomes does not help teachers to "trust their own voices", to probe with their students, to review, to try out and experiment (p. 112). Codd (2005) suggests that a culture of teaching, on the other hand, rather than performativity, tends to emphasise "process more than products" (p. xvi).

The use of unit standards became less prevalent when achievement standards in drama were introduced in 2002, the latter being perceived as carrying more academic weight. Deborah recalled having to "fight" for permission to use unit standards. Several teachers expressed a preference for combining both unit standards and achievement standards in their programmes, particularly for tasks relating to theatre technologies, but noted that while exemplars for achievement standards were available on the NZQA website, very few were available for unit standards.

There is some pressure for drama to prove its academic credibility given the traditional bias towards high-status knowledge and the process "of pervasive 'academic drift'" (Goodson & Marsh, 1996, p. 13). In terms of NCEA achievement standards this has led to an increasing emphasis on written evidence to support practical assessments. Thea, for instance, expressed the view that the evidence collecting required for internal assessments was "ridiculous" and that teachers spent a lot of time double checking instead of trusting that "learning has happened". She considered the amount of portfolio work required to be excessive and suggested that it was not "necessarily better learning; it's just learning to work the assessment better".

Several of the participants in this study questioned the value of emphasising English literacy in practical drama assessments. They suggested that the written requirements of NCEA assessment in drama may ultimately discourage the very students that drama used to serve so well, those with substantial bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, whose achievement in drama improved their performance in all aspects of their lives. For the more kinaesthetic student, who achieves a high standard of performance work, the esoteric language of the subject is often a struggle. The idea that a written commentary on performance work could be considered of equal (or greater) value than the actual acting was considered, by Brenda for example, to be "nonsense". Some participants suggested that it also limited student creativity.

The control of personal pedagogies through the domination of national assessment models in drama, and the pursuit of academic credibility, is in contrast to the essential ethos of drama where the most satisfying learning experiences operate "when the teachers are flexible, imaginative, able to think on their feet and take a risk" (Taylor, 2006, p. 115). A number of interviewees suggested that when drama existed on the margins of the education system, the potential arose to be more creative in the classroom because, with less focus on results, they felt free to take risks with their classroom programmes. Taylor (2006) argues that it is difficult for teachers to realise their aesthetic vision when they are challenged daily with large classes and an "ever-increasing administration trail" (p. 108).

In her interview, Amy recalled a sense of loss of ownership when, after teaching in a small pre-fab for many years, with photographs and poems on the walls, she moved into the new performing arts centre. There, she was no longer permitted

to decorate the walls because the space was used for classes in the evening. Nor were her students permitted to work outside any longer because "it looked messy". As Hargreaves (1994) suggests, teachers have had "to struggle hard to define and defend their worthwhile selves in the face of all these demands" (p. 30).

NCEA assessment is a substantial shift from previous models of assessment in drama when the criteria might have included such categories as "Expression of Feeling" and "Level of Personal Engagement". The current presentation of the arts as skills and technologies, Grierson and Mansfield (2003) suggest, has been predicated by the assumption that these are "easy to inscribe registers", but, they argue, they are also limiting (p.32). Drama teachers spoke of having to change their style of teaching to encompass the requirements of the assessment schedule.

The criteria for each achievement standard are available from NZQA. An achievement standard also contains explanatory notes and gives recommendations for resourcing. Student tasks are composed using these guidelines. The TKI website includes exemplars of these tasks as a resource for teachers and, initially, the use of these exemplars appeared a viable option for teachers, on which to base their practice. However, many of the exemplars which appeared on the website had not been moderated and, on submitting work for moderation based on these published tasks, teachers discovered that the task they had used was inadequate. As a result, despite the time involved in writing their own tasks, many teachers are attempting to compose assessment tasks which will meet both the needs of their students and those of the moderator.

In his interview, Barry suggested that NCEA encourages teachers to over-assess and observed that he had rewritten and simplified all the assessment tasks he presented to students. This shift from rigorous compliance with the demands of assessment to confidence in one's personal professionalism was seen as the way forward for drama teachers. However, some teachers in this study found this difficult. The framing of pedagogical discourse, as delineated by Bernstein (1996), often militates against independent actions by teachers, and Hargreaves (1994) concurs that teachers' professionalism is not always respected (p. xiv).

An interviewee suggested that it would be beneficial for teachers to offer less NCEA credits each year and allow themselves time to explore drama more fully. Some schools, however, insist that all 24 internal credits are offered in addition to the external assessments. Stephen observed that these school managers were "looking for status through performance". He remarked that sometimes management make "ignorant" decisions and demonstrate "a huge mistrust of internal assessments". Teachers were also aware that their assessment decisions were monitored.

In an assessment model that includes internally assessed, standards-based assessment such as NCEA, the existence of systems for the moderation of results is axiomatic. Most of the teachers interviewed for this study were convinced of the necessity for moderation of assessments, not only to ensure that personal bias was not influencing their grading of students but also to set a standard based on comparisons with a wider group of students. Nevertheless, for most teachers, the requirements for the moderation of assessment resulted in a significant increase in workload.

The interview data indicated that a good deal of trepidation was experienced by teachers in relation to external moderation. Their sense of accountability for the results achieved, and the knowledge that school administrators paid attention to moderators' comments, was a source of some anxiety. Hargreaves (1994) maintains that the more responsible a teacher feels, the more they will be subject to feelings of guilt; he argues that guilt is the "central emotional preoccupation for teachers" (p. 142).

In addition to the external moderation of internal achievement standards, teachers of NCEA subjects are also expected to establish systems of internal moderation whereby a second teacher moderates not only the work produced by the students but also the task the class teacher is accessing to meet the criteria of the particular achievement standard. In drama departments with only a single teacher, arrangements must be made with colleagues from other schools to facilitate internal moderation. This is not always a simple task. It requires either relief for the visiting teacher during school hours or time after school for both teachers. Milly observed that she was fortunate to have two drama teachers working at her school and to be situated in a large city so that it was a simpler operation for her to access outside assistance with moderation. However, with 45 students enrolled in senior drama, completing moderation had demanded many extra hours after school.

In addition to the internal achievement standards, externally assessed achievement standards and the assessment for scholarship drama are also included in the assessment schedule. The assessment for scholarship includes mostly practical work which is performed in front of an outside invigilator and filmed. It is assessed by an external examiner based on this filmed performance. The written



external assessments, on the other hand, do not include a performance. They have a more traditional format, requiring written answers to questions concerning genres and theatre styles, performance techniques and the elements and conventions of drama.

External assessments were frequently mentioned as a site of tension for teachers, particularly when the specifications for the assessment published by NZQA failed to coalesce with the questions asked in the actual assessment. Many of the teachers interviewed were not confident that they really knew what they were expected to teach to prepare students for the external assessments. One of the interviewees had elected to offer her Year 13 students only one of the external assessments available at Level 3 because she considered the marking of the assessments to be "dismal". She criticised both the pedantry of the application of the criteria and the inaccuracy of the examination process.

A significant issue concerning external assessments related to the vocabulary used in the papers which, some participants believed, had "set children up to fail". Reflecting on the language used in external assessments in drama, Moira contrasted the vagaries of the drama vocabulary to the transparency evident in a more traditional subject such as science: "In science oxygen is oxygen. They don't say oxygen is oxygen but sometimes we call oxygen something different and it's still oxygen". The language used in the drama achievement standards was intended to provide some uniformity when describing the range of drama processes that had previously been tacitly understood by practitioners. Prior to the publication of the arts curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2000) and the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama, there was a variety of descriptions used by drama teachers to explain their work. In a national

system of assessment, however, the language of the assessment criteria was standardised and drama teachers were required to become familiar with a shared ideology of teaching and learning in drama.

The power of language to shape our concepts and reproduce ideologies has been well documented since de Saussure described semiotics as a system of signs that communicate meaning. In language the *sign* is the word and the *signified* is the idea being conveyed (Miller, 1998, p. 34). In *The Subject of Semiotics*, Silverman (1983) discussed Barthes' argument that the signified always carries connotations, additional meanings, which will express the dominant values of the time (p. 26). One of the interviewees in this study commented that she had to use a dictionary to look up the key words in the assessments to ensure that she understood the connotations of each word.

A drama advisor interviewed for the study considered the reaction of teachers to the vagaries of language was symptomatic of their insecurity. Abbs (2003) explains that the reality of "having to use old words with a new set of connotations can cause confusion and suspicion" (p. 48). However those drama teachers who had trained and worked overseas, had a pragmatic attitude towards the inconsistencies of the language used for assessments, being accustomed to localised variations in vocabulary.

Abbs (2003) maintains that teachers are driven by the needs of assessment and cited Edwin Webb as saying that teachers are "beset by needs which are only indirectly associated with teaching" (Abbs, 2003, p. 59). It is apparent from teachers' responses in this study that the implementation of NCEA has come at a cost. The following subsection discusses

the various causes of teacher stress, particularly the workload pressures, in introducing NCEA assessment in drama.

#### **8.2.4 Workload Matters**

When interviewees were asked about the impact of NCEA in the classroom, most cited increasing workload as the most pressing issue faced by teachers on a daily basis. In their research on the effects of NCEA, Hipkins and her colleagues cited as evidence the "heavy workload generated by NCEA implementation, particularly for curriculum leaders" (Hipkins et al., 2004, p. 56). More than one interviewee in this study described their workload as "massive" and talked of the impact on their energy, time and personal lives.

Some interviewees considered that it was the extra-curricular activities expected of drama teachers that "burns people out". These extra-curricular activities can include school productions, Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival, One-Act Play Festival, drama clubs, theatre trips and public performances for assessment purposes. Few of the interviewees received ancillary assistance in running their programmes despite having technical requirements equal to the demands in other subjects such as science, for example.

The issue was one of effective resourcing for assessment purposes. The lack of resourcing most frequently mentioned by teachers in this study included no appropriate spaces in which to conduct practical drama classes (particularly when there was an influx of students enrolling in senior drama); the difficulties in acquiring a video camera for the exclusive use of drama teachers, even though the recording of practical assessments is mandatory; and no lighting or sound equipment available for the staging of performances for assessment. Two interviewees recalled visiting drama

classrooms in areas such as South Auckland which had no subject-specific resources at all.

The allocation of resources reflects the perceived importance of a subject in a school. The status of drama as a mainstream secondary subject is a new national and institutional phenomenon and often there is a "dislocation between the culture of pedagogic discourse and the management culture" as the school holds to a retrospective view of what is considered worthwhile knowledge (Bernstein, 1996, p. 74).

It was apparent from the data that, for teachers, the implementation of NCEA in drama incurred some personal cost in terms of the time and energy spent in maintaining effective delivery of the assessments. No practising teacher interviewed for this study, however, questioned the necessity of doing so. Teachers considered it their obligation to conform to the requirements of national curriculum and assessment strategies. In this regard they are constituents of the discourses of power and control which underlie a national system of education. Bernstein (1996) describes the mechanisms of control in education as framing which, he maintains, regulates pedagogic discourse (p.25). Framing (control) operates in two ways: firstly, through the *discursive order* which comprises the construction of curricula and assessment (what will be taught when and to what end) and, secondly, by means of the *social order* which refers to the expectations of behaviour of the adults working in educational institutions (p. 31).

While Bernstein (1996) acknowledges the importance of the discursive order in educational discourse, it is his contention that it is the regulative discourse of the social order that is dominant in all aspects of framing, in that it

is the mechanism for the control of educators' behaviour. Teachers are expected to recognise what is required of them, (what Bernstein terms the *recognition rule*) and to realise these requirements through working within the frames (the *realisation rule*). These mechanisms of control achieved through a regulative discourse are sometimes covert, unspoken, but will influence a teacher's sense of freedom to speak out against the accepted social order: "Members not sharing this common pedagogic communication may well remain silent or offer what other members consider inappropriate talk or conduct" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 31).

### 8.3 Summary

Though many of the interviewees in this study were positive about the inclusion of drama in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and recognised that the introduction of NCEA assessment had affirmed drama's status as a senior secondary subject, they reported experiencing difficulties in the implementation of NCEA in drama. The position of drama as a mainstream secondary subject was not completely established and a subject-specific vocabulary had yet to be satisfactorily differentiated. At the time of this study, due to drama's inchoate situation in the wake of the introduction of NCEA assessment, teachers were in the process of redefining the subject.

In their interviews, teachers expressed a range of concerns about assessment processes and the management of an escalating workload. There were also apparent dilemmas, for some teachers in the study, in melding their view of drama education with a mandated, and accountable, system of assessment. Historic approaches to drama education had not generally placed an emphasis on assessment criteria.

In considering the effects of NCEA on teaching and learning in drama, an examination of the historical development of drama education can provide a context in which to situate approaches to drama pedagogy which were prevalent prior to the introduction of NCEA assessment. The following chapter, therefore, discusses the historical and cultural factors which have influenced the evolution of drama education and its pedagogical precepts.

## 9. Discussion: Drama Education

### 9.1 Introduction

In chapter 8, "Discussion: Drama and NCEA", the significance, to drama educators, of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) and the successive introduction of NCEA assessment was considered. In this chapter the impact of these developments is viewed from the perspective of the historical development of the arts and drama education.

In chapter 2, "The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand", the evolution of drama education was described, firstly, in relation to the arts in society and the marginalisation of the arts in education, and, secondly, through an exploration of the nature and purpose of drama education, with reference to the progressive pedagogies which shaped its development. Examination of the literature suggests that historical attitudes to the arts in society, and conflicting ideologies concerning the nature and function of education in the arts, have had a substantive influence on contemporary attitudes to drama education.

The paucity of research into drama education in New Zealand is symptomatic of its historically marginalised position in New Zealand schools. As a result, much of the available literature reflects the experience of drama and arts educators in Britain and, to a lesser degree, Australia. However, since New Zealand has a record of "borrowing from the UK" (Thrupp, 2005, p. 101) it has relevance for this study. The influence of British drama educators, such as Slade, Way and Heathcote was crucial to the development of drama education in New Zealand<sup>43</sup> and several of the

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<sup>43</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.3

participants in this study were influenced by their work, most notably that of Dorothy Heathcote.

The significance of these historical approaches to drama and their possible influence on contemporary practice in New Zealand was the subject of the first research question for this study: "What are the previous experiences of current drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching this subject"; and the third research question: "On the basis of their experience to date, how do they think NCEA will affect the future teaching and learning of drama?" These overarching questions, in turn, formed the basis of questions 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9 of the interview schedule:

1. How did you come to start teaching drama? When did you begin to teach drama?
2. Did you have any strong philosophical or artistic motivation to do this line of work? Has your viewpoint changed over time?
3. What do you consider to be the priority for successful drama practice?
8. What is your school's and/or local community's attitude to the performing arts?
9. How do you see the future for drama in New Zealand schools?

The data generated by these questions are presented in chapter 5 and in chapter 7, section 7.3, "Changing Status". In the following section the development of drama education is examined with reference to historical attitudes to the arts and early initiatives in drama education. Teachers' apprehension of the significance of the changing status of



drama education is discussed and future developments considered.

## **9.2 The Development of Drama Education**

Over the past decade drama education has moved from a position of marginalisation in New Zealand education towards becoming established as a mainstream subject. The discussion in this section explores the factors influencing these developments in drama education and is presented in four subsections: 9.2.1, "A Marginalised Position", which examines historical influences on attitudes to the arts; 9.2.2, "Intelligence and Creativity", which discusses ideas relating to cognition and the nature of creativity; 9.2.3, "Features of Drama Education", which considers the development of drama in schools with reference to its history in education; and 9.2.4, "Future Developments", which considers priorities for the next stage for drama in schools.

An examination of the historical marginalisation of drama as an art form was included in chapter 2, which explored the ideological influences which shaped traditional approaches to education and resulted in the exclusion of certain fields of knowledge<sup>44</sup>. The following subsection discusses this marginalised position of the arts in education with particular reference to the experiences of New Zealand drama educators.

### **9.2.1 A Marginalised Position**

Despite Smith's (1998) assertion that the arts are an intrinsic part of the total culture of society and "a fundamental and significant dimension of human life, work and understanding" (p. 5), they have usually been perceived

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<sup>44</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2

as peripheral to the *real* work of society, an idea which has been reflected by their historically marginalised position in education.

The philosophies which shaped Western thought emphasised deductive reasoning through which nature and the physical senses could be disciplined. From this point of view the arts, which apply both sensory as well as intellectual knowledge, can appear irrational and ephemeral. The modern academic curriculum is descended from the philosophy of Plato (Gilbert, 2005, p. 49; Eisner, 1998, p.4) whose mistrust of the senses, and conviction that truth could only be discovered through reason, resulted in the separation of mind from body, a concept which was to have a lasting influence on Western philosophy and religion. Plato considered that the arts led to delusion and were, therefore, "dangerous" (Eisner, 1998, p. 4) and "far removed from the truth" (Weiner, 2000, p. 35).

Later, the Enlightenment scholars, notably Descartes and Newton, would indelibly link reason with science and mathematics. In education, mathematics became "the new Latin – the subject that would train the mind" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 54). Descartes' belief was that learning was the discovery of what already existed (Doll, 1993, p. 31). The creative nature of the arts, therefore, was not considered of much value to the progress of humanity.

As an art form, therefore, drama has traditionally existed on the margins of education but, whereas music and visual art found a place as *manual* subjects in New Zealand secondary schools, drama existed, if at all, as a subset of English. In the 1940s, early attempts to introduce drama programmes in schools met with little success but in the more progressive environment of the 1970s, drama was to find

a niche in New Zealand schools when Sunny Amey was appointed as National Curriculum Advisor in Drama (Alcorn, 1999, p. 198). One of the interviewees in the study recalled the contribution that Amey had made to drama education in New Zealand during this time. The post of National Curriculum Advisor in Drama, however, ended in 1988 when Amey retired and another wave of change was to transform education in New Zealand.

It is salutary to observe that, through the 1980s and 1990s, drama educators continued to find opportunities to teach drama though there were few extrinsic rewards. Most of the interviewees in this study had come to drama from other disciplines, most notably English, although participants included teachers who had begun their careers in a range of other fields such as social work, community education and teaching commercial subjects.

The introduction of unit standards in drama in 1998 provided some recognition of drama in schools. However, teachers in this study spoke of students regularly being "counselled out of taking drama" (Julia). It was with the publication of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) and the introduction of NCEA assessment that drama finally became recognised as a senior secondary subject.

The data indicated that, despite the growth of drama in schools since it had become an NCEA subject, its acceptance as an academic option, rather than an extra-curricular activity, was a gradual process. The historic marginalisation of the subject had led to the school production being the only visible aspect of drama in schools. Teachers in the study also mentioned a lack of understanding by some school managers of the pressures entailed in mounting public performances which had now

become part of NCEA assessment criteria and were required at all three levels of the senior school, at Years 11, 12 and 13. Teachers also suggested that there was little understanding of the range of skills taught in the drama classroom or of their wider applications.

Central to the historic marginalisation of the arts in education is the modern concept of intelligence and cognition which acknowledges only scientific and rationalist ways of thinking. Gardner (2006) maintains that modern education has privileged the position of what he terms the "logical-mathematical" and "linguistic" intelligences (p. 6). In the following subsection the cognitive value of the arts and the concept of *multiple intelligences* (Gardner, 2006) are explored with particular reference to the aspect of creativity in the arts and its place in education.

### **9.2.2 Intelligence and Creativity**

Although many arts practitioners throughout the world acknowledge that "Education in and through the arts also stimulates cognitive development and can make how and what learners learn more relevant to the needs of the modern societies in which they live" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 2), the cognitive value of arts education has not always been recognised. The data collected for this study would suggest that drama educators were often in the position of having to validate their subject as an academic option.

Gardner (2006) suggests that the emphasis on logical-mathematical and linguistic forms of intelligence has narrowed the modern concept of intelligence (p. 6). Abbs (2003) argues, however, that the arts are "cognitive to the core" (p. 56) and, similarly, Eisner (1998) maintains that "When well-taught the arts develop complex and subtle forms of thinking" (p. 19).

Gardner (2006) proposes that there are at least eight types of intelligences, including bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence; spatial intelligence; interpersonal intelligence; and intrapersonal intelligence. Harland et al. (2000) note that, looked at from the perspective of multiple intelligences theory, the arts facilitate engagement in "Musical, bodily, kinaesthetic, spatial and active forms of linguistic intelligences" (p. 38).

One of the interviewees in this study (Denise) spoke of the "kinaesthetically intelligent children" who attend her drama classes. For the kinaesthetic student the physical nature of drama work can provide a means to learn which is not dependent on their ability to excel at written work. Greenwood (2003) argues, "For many of our students, book knowledge is sometimes alienating, or at least elusive. On the other hand, quite complex materials can be developed and remembered through physical enactment" (p. 131). Harland et al. (2000) consider this "coordination of thinking with 'action'" as one of the effects of drama education (p. 101).

As a group activity drama also encourages the use of interpersonal and spatial intelligence (Harland et al., 2000, p. 170). Csikzentmihalyi (1994) asserts that a creative individual is characterised by an unusual combination of intelligences (p. 72) and that there is "no correlation between traditional measures of intelligence and creative accomplishment" (p. 138). Interviewees in this study spoke of the engagement with learning generated through group work and the creativity engendered through this process. Examination of the data in this study suggests that the teachers considered creativity to be an essential element in their work.

Gilbert (2005) suggests that the "unashamedly elitist" tradition of education and the academic curriculum has sought to reproduce existing knowledge and the existing order (p. 49). The creative individual, on the other hand, seeks to refashion existing concepts into new ideas. Gardner (2006) suggests that there is always a tension between creativity and existing structures (p. 45) and argues that by placing the source of change outside the individual, both Plato and Aristotle "set the course of Western thought on creativity for more than 2000 years" (Gardner, 1994, p. 129).

It is apparent that creativity has not always been accorded any significant value in education. Gardner (2006) observes that "It has been quipped, more in sorrow than in joy, that it is easier to thwart gifted youngsters than it is to encourage their flowering" (p. 50). In *Our Obsession with Academic Ability*, Robinson (1999) notes that many highly successful people "harbour a sense of failure from their own education" (p. 1). Nevertheless, according to Robinson in *Creating Room for Creativity* (1999), creativity will be the key to achievement in the future (p. 1). He argues that the educational system is not designed to promote the innovative thinking that is needed (p. 1). The statement issued by The World Conference on Arts Education: Building Creative Capacities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (UNESCO, 2006), argues for the necessity of flexible, adaptable and innovative workforces to meet the demands of the twenty-first century (p.5).

It is apparent, however, that creativity is something of an enigma; the word itself was hardly known until the 1950s (Weiner, 2000, p. 5). Feldman et al. (1994) contend that that the central problem in understanding creativity is understanding change (p. 88). They point out that Jean

Piaget, whose model of cognitive development had a profound influence on modern pedagogical theory, was unable to account for the existence of creativity to his own satisfaction (p. 92). Piaget himself admitted that "The crux of my problem is to try to explain how novelties are possible and how they are formed" (Green, Ford, & Flamer, 1971, p. 194).

While several researchers have attempted to study aspects of creativity<sup>45</sup>, few have investigated the environments which might foster creativity in students. Amabile (1983) maintains that the emphasis on individual creativity, and the *external determinants* of creativity, has led to this lack of research into "creative situations" or the *internal determinants* (p. 5). Attention has been focused on the careers of individual artists or famous scientists, rather than on the potential of the majority to develop their own creative abilities. In schools, the nurturing of personal creativity has usually been the province of the arts.

Holland and O'Connor (2003) argue that quality learning in the arts has a positive impact on the educational, academic and social lives of students (p. 2). Harland et al. (2000) listed the effects of arts education as: enjoyment, excitement, fulfilment and therapeutic release of tensions; an increase in the knowledge and skills associated with particular art forms; enhanced knowledge of social and cultural issues; the development of creativity and thinking skills; the enrichment of communication and expressive skills; advances in personal and social development; effects that transfer to other contexts, such as learning in other subjects, the world of work and cultural activities outside of and beyond school; institutional effects on the culture of the school; effects on the local community (including

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter 2

parents and governors); and art itself as an outcome (p. 565).

However, studies have shown that teachers other than arts teachers are often ambivalent about creative students (Vernon, 1970) because they do not always conform to accepted expectations. Amabile (1983) maintains that, although they desire extrinsic rewards, creative individuals are more motivated by intrinsic satisfaction (p. 15). The same might also be said of arts teachers themselves as evident from the drama teachers' comments in this study about their own practice. It is also something they recognised and appreciated in their students. Barron (1968) asserts that the creative person is "original, independent, self-assertive and imaginative" and their needs are best served through flexible teaching practices (p. 164). *The Robinson Report* (NACCCE, 1999) suggests that traditional approaches in education have not been particularly successful in this regard (p. 126).

To examine the approaches used in a creative arts subject, such as drama, the following subsection provides a description of the features of drama education and discusses the influence of its historical evolution on contemporary developments.

### **9.2.3 Features of Drama Education**

Although drama is an art form and shares many of the qualities of the arts in general, it also has specific features which differentiate it from other art forms: "Drama is no longer considered simply as another branch of art education, but as a unique learning tool" (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p. 42).



One of the notable features of drama in the classroom is that it is often a group activity. Greenwood (2003) suggests that working in groups allows students to explore worlds and experiences not usually open to them and they therefore develop empathy and greater understanding. In their study of arts education in England, Harland et al. (2000) remark that, in regards to the development of interactive communication skills, drama received far more comments from participants in their study than any other arts area (p. 114).

Harland et al. (2000) observe, however, that enjoyment is a key factor in achieving learning outcomes in arts education (p. 37). It would appear from the data gathered for this study that most students enrolled in secondary drama enjoyed the classes and were challenged and motivated by drama activities. Fleming (2003) argues that the value of drama education is that it stimulates motivation, not only because it provides a break from established classroom routines but because it harnesses the inclination to play, which persists into adolescence and, arguably, into adult life (p. 34). He suggests that the association of play and learning has a long history within educational thinking.

Bolton (1998) maintains that Peter Slade, one of the pioneers of drama-in-education, was keen to establish that "Play and Drama are one and the same thing" (p. 123). Fleming (2003), citing Watkins (1981, p.14), observes that we preserve in the familiar theatrical expressions such as players, play-house and play, "the relationship of drama to the whole world of play and game" (p. 34). Greenwood (2003) suggests that there are connections between "having fun, ownership and that extension of awareness that we call learning" (p. 131).

Many students in the study conducted by Harland et al. (2000) also spoke of the self-confidence engendered by participation in drama (p. 120). Harland et al. compare the perceived gains in self-awareness and personal and social skills to Gardner's (2006) concepts of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence (Harland et al., p. 141). Teachers interviewed for this study expressed the view that the relationship of students with teachers was a significant factor in the experience of self-expression that drama students enjoy because there were no formal groupings of desks in a drama classroom and the teachers moved around the room conferring with individual students as the need arose.

There appear to be challenges, however, in integrating these features of drama into a system of curriculum and assessment<sup>46</sup>. The tenets of drama education, which have their roots in the historical development of the subject, are sometimes at odds with the very notion of assessment. Whereas most teachers agree it is preferable that there be some structure to drama in the classroom, they are not all convinced that the present assessment system is completely viable.

Prior to the introduction of NCEA assessment, drama education had two major aspects in schools. One was linked to the theatrical tradition - often the school's annual production was its public face - and the other had its origins in the early developments in drama education which emphasised the creative process rather than performance. The NCEA assessment model in drama attempts to integrate both these traditions, with the addition of an academic and theoretical component. Traditionally, when drama was part of English in schools, learning had often centred on these literary aspects of theatre.

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<sup>46</sup> See chapter 8

Several of the participants in this study, inspired by their experiences in the theatre, had begun teaching drama in order to share their enjoyment of the experience with their students. In the process, however, some had become interested in the social aspects of drama education and, inspired by the work of Dorothy Heathcote, for example, had begun working with improvisational techniques in their drama classes.

Heathcote (1926- ) is an innovator in the field of drama education and a proponent of drama-in-education. She is one of five major figures in the history of drama education, the others being Harriet Finlay-Johnson (1871-1956), Henry Caldwell-Cook (1886-1937), Peter Slade (1910-2004) and Brian Way (1923-2006) (Bolton, 1998, p. XIX). An examination of the work of these early pioneers was included in this study in order to explain the major influences on drama education prior to the introduction of NCEA assessment.

The trends evident in the work of the early innovators in drama are chronicled by both Bolton (1998) and Hornbrook (1998), who both wrote extensively on the subject of drama education. Though Bolton and Hornbrook have often evinced opposing views on drama education, they concur that the philosophies of drama-in-education had their genesis in the progressive education movement of the nineteenth century. The teachers in progressive schools saw themselves as facilitators, offering opportunities for growth rather than imposing knowledge from without. Here, Hornbrook (1998) suggests, "the radical spirit of drama-in-education has its source" (p. 6).

The innovations successively introduced by the early proponents of drama education such as Finlay-Johnson and Caldwell-Cook focused on student-centred learning and the

importance of play in engaging pupils in the classroom. Two world wars were to halt these developments and it was not until the 1940s that Slade began to develop his theories of drama education. Slade openly challenged the traditions of classroom acting, which was usually based on amateur and professional theatre, and proposed "a form of theatre based not on theatre but on play" (p. 85).

Brian Way, though he shared the same theoretical ideas as Slade, placed more focus on individual, practical exercises (Bolton, 1998, p. 147). Way contended that child drama should not necessarily be viewed as art but as a means to personal development through improvisational techniques. In time, Way's theories and the practices associated with them became known as *creative drama*. Later, this expression was to become an umbrella term, covering a wide range of activities which had improvisational work at their centre. Way (1967) was "largely concerned with experience by the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience" (p. 2). Bolton (1998) suggests that "A drama/theatre dichotomy" was clearly spelled out in Way's writing (p. 148).

The progressive philosophies of drama education readily found their niche in the educational and political environment of the 1960s and 1970s (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 17). Abbs (1994), however, is critical of the approach taken by the exponents of drama education at this time because, he suggests, it makes "the individual person the single, justifying centre of educational activity" and the teacher secondary (p. 130). Dorothy Heathcote was to insist that teachers could and should be part of the process of creating drama in the classroom.

Heathcote views drama as a learning process which, by leading students towards an authentic experience, will allow them to discover essential truths about the human condition (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 17). Bolton (1998) suggests that she "raised the level of school learning from subject-bound parameters to 'a study of mankind'" (p. 177). When Heathcote was appointed as Staff Tutor at the University of Durham in 1951, she was aware of the competing trends in drama education. However, Bolton (1998) suggests that she appeared to disconnect with even the best of that practice and chose to alienate herself "from the very vocabulary of her contemporaries and predecessors" (p. 175).

While Heathcote's student, Cecily O'Neill, offers guidelines to teachers and attempts to provide a theoretical basis for her argument, Heathcote has resisted articulating her practice. She prefers to show rather than explain. Bolton (1998) suggests that the essential nature of Heathcote's work lies in her assumption that dramatic action is subordinated to meaning (p. 177). Heathcote's practice came to be defined by others as *living through* drama (Bolton, 1998, p. 178), a precept which suggests that the action is taking place in the present moment. Heathcote allows the plot to emerge through the action, which has occasionally discomfited the more traditional teachers who are familiar with plot as the centrepiece of any drama. In this respect her methodology contrasts with that of Slade and Way who stressed the importance of one action following another in story form (p. 178). Heathcote approaches drama as a method of teaching rather than as a subject in its own right – hence the distinction between drama-*in*-education and drama education. Nor is Heathcote convinced that assessment in drama is necessary.

Hornbrook (1998) argues that the emphasis that Heathcote (and Bolton) place on the interior processes of the student constitutes "the distinctive discourse" of drama-in-education (p. 17). Fleming (2003) suggests that these particular developments in drama education have resulted in many teachers seeing drama as "a kind of instrument either to bring about ideological change or, more frequently, some form of adaptive behaviour in relation to social needs" (p. 19).

Heathcote was a teacher educator; her work with school pupils was, initially, a series of practical demonstrations for her adult students, usually qualified teachers. As she became well known for her work, initially through a BBC documentary on one of her classes, she was invited to give master classes in her method around the world. As two of these tours, in 1978 and 1984, included New Zealand, several local teachers have experienced Heathcote's methods first hand, rather than relying on the books or many videos available.

Heathcote's tours of New Zealand were organised by Sunny Amey, the Curriculum Officer for Drama, who was to have a substantial influence on drama education in New Zealand schools through her encouragement of the methods espoused by the proponents of drama-in-education. However, whilst Heathcote's visits had a profound effect on drama education in New Zealand, there was a second movement of equal importance in schools.

Although the outbreak of The First World War put an end to innovations in classroom drama education for over 30 years, involvement in theatre expanded in the period between the world wars. Small amateur drama societies (often known as Little Theatres) began to appear in the large, industrial

cities (Bolton, 1998, p. 71). Gradually, companies were established in towns and villages across England and the former Empire which, of course, included New Zealand at that time.

The amateur drama movement was to have some influence on drama in schools. To improve the standard of theatre performances, enthusiasts considered that training should begin at school. Among these enthusiasts, there were those who simply wanted better school plays and there were those who wanted to see drama in secondary schools as a timetabled subject taught "by an English teacher (or, possibly, the speech specialist or the trained actor)" (Bolton, 1998, p. 74). There were others, however, who were more interested in advancing a "developmental theory of Drama relating the natural expression of play to the craft of theatre" (Bolton, 1998, p. 75).

It is apparent from the interviews with educators in this study that the view of drama as having a social as well as an educational function is an enduring aspect of drama pedagogy. The influence of the personal ideologies of the interviewees had a direct influence on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. When talking about their process, several interviewees referred specifically to process drama, and the work of Dorothy Heathcote, as an early inspiration for implementing explorative practice in their classrooms.

Critics of drama-in-education claim that it relied on too few "gurus" and four decades of practice had been "determined by four individuals", namely Slade, Way, Heathcote and Bolton (Abbs, 1994, p. 120). Fleming (2003), however, maintains that the work of Bolton and Heathcote has continued to evolve and that many of the criticisms of their

approach have failed to acknowledge the development in their thinking (p. 19). Fleming (2003) asserts that the conflicting views of drama, particularly in regard to the theatre/drama divide, are moving closer together. He argues that, over time, the proponents of process drama have discovered a new appreciation of form and structure, whilst theatre practitioners are realising the benefits of fluid concepts of acting and rehearsal, using improvisation to explore role and situation (p. 19).

It was apparent, however, from the responses to the interviews for this study, that the personal investment that some drama teachers had made to their subject and its ideals had, at times, exacerbated the stress they experienced when dealing with the conflicting values and demands of secondary school drama within an NCEA assessment framework. In their study of arts education, Harland et al. (2000) remark that "of all the artforms, drama displayed the greatest variation in interpretation: different schools and teachers held contrasting views as to the nature of drama as a subject" (p. 219).

For drama educators currently practising in New Zealand, however, it is important to develop a synthesis of these sometimes competing discourses. NCEA assessment in drama requires teachers to deliver programmes which utilise improvisational techniques but they are also expected to develop their students' performance skills through the production of plays for an audience. At the same time, many of the teachers themselves, as reported in this study, are committed to the development and nurturing of creativity in their classrooms. New Zealand drama teachers, therefore, must integrate some diverse and dichotomous viewpoints. O'Connor (2008) has his doubts about the possible outcome of this endeavour: "Somehow making drama a subject takes the



very artistry of teaching away and replaces it with the deadness, the technicality and dullness that pervades so much else of what we do in life" (p. 12).

By its nature, drama education is a student-centred, collaborative and creative subject. For drama practitioners in New Zealand the challenge is to define and maintain their own principles of education while working within an educational structure that requires adherence to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000) and the achievement objectives and assessable outcomes demanded by the NCEA assessment model<sup>47</sup>. The following subsection discusses teachers' reported views on possible future developments in drama education.

#### **9.2.4 Future Developments**

Drama's shift to the mainstream has resulted in a rapid increase in the numbers of students enrolling in the subject at secondary schools. For the most part, the participants in this study were positive about the future of the subject but some warned against complacency. They considered that rapid growth could not continue indefinitely and suggested that, as drama would always be a niche subject, the number of students would inevitably level off.

Several participants also suggested that one of the most pressing problems in relation to the rapidly increasing drama roll in secondary schools is the lack of qualified staff to teach the subject at NCEA level. Those teachers who had become involved in drama education more recently often lacked specific training or experience in teaching drama. It was evident from the data that there was a broad continuum of expertise and experience amongst drama teachers, and those practitioners involved in the development of the arts

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<sup>47</sup> See chapter 8

curriculum and NCEA assessment were becoming aware that, in many regions, the standard of teaching had not kept pace with the implementation of new assessment models.

Many of the practitioners in this study mentioned that the lack of subject-specific training for drama teachers had led, in some instances, to the subject being taught by teachers from other disciplines whose knowledge of drama and, more specifically, the teaching of drama, could be limited. They pointed out that most secondary teachers are required to have a degree in their discipline. They did not consider that studying drama as part of English was sufficient.

Several of the interviewees suggested that the difficulties many teachers had experienced with the language of achievement standards had stemmed from this lack of training. Opportunities for teachers to update their skills and knowledge were very limited and it was difficult to take time out of paid employment to pursue further training. Most agreed that if drama was to continue to develop as a senior high school subject, its teachers had to be trained to the same standard as the teachers of other subjects.

While academic drama courses, which can provide prospective teachers with the appropriate theoretical background, are offered at Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Waikato and Massey universities, drama is also a practical subject. Some of the participants who were, at the time of the interviews, employed in tertiary institutions confirmed that, whilst Colleges of Education at the aforementioned universities offered short courses in practical drama teaching, they were not certain that these courses offered the depth and range necessary for secondary practice.

On the other hand, one of the interviewees observed that in the major centres, Wellington and Auckland for example, some students trained for professional performance were beginning to move on to teacher training. These graduates, she suggested, had ample knowledge of both theatre practice and improvisational techniques, and some had adjusted successfully to the particular pressures of classroom teaching, such as working with students of mixed ability, workload issues and new assessment systems.

### **9.3 Summary**

In this chapter the social and ideological background to the marginalisation of the arts in education and the development of drama education was discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 2, "The Arts and Drama Education in New Zealand", and the data collected through questions 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9 of the interview schedule for this study.

Historical influences on attitudes to the arts were examined and traditional views on the attributes of intelligence explained. The cognitive value of the arts was discussed from the perspective of Gardner's (1996) theory of multiple intelligences and the position of creativity in education was explored, with reference to research into the nature of creativity and the disposition of creative individuals.

The explorative features of drama education were explained and its historical development examined in order to delineate the pedagogical philosophies which shaped teaching and learning in drama. The competing discourses in drama education were discussed and the possibilities of a constructive synthesis of these positions explored.

In chapter 8, "Discussion: Drama and NCEA", the data collected through questions 4-7 of the interview schedule were discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 3, "Drama and the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy". It examined issues relating to the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama.

While interviewees reported being generally positive about the changing status of drama as a senior secondary subject, the lack of a prior model of senior drama assessment had created difficulties with the structure of NCEA assessment. These included the challenges associated with the management of the assessment process, workload issues and the lack of subject-specific resources.

One of the central sites of tension in the implementation of NCEA in drama appears to lie in the variance between the requirements of the assessment process and the creative nature of teaching and learning in drama. At the same time, within drama itself, there are a set of competing discourses which drama educators have worked to resolve.

Many of the issues apparent in contemporary drama practice appear to arise from the lack of a previous assessment model in drama from which to build a new assessment system. To maintain the student-centred and explorative nature of drama education, while retaining its position as a mainstream secondary subject, will require a creative synthesis of these competing discourses.

## 10. Conclusion

*There is a deadly element everywhere; in the cultural set-up, in our inherited artistic values, in the economic framework, in the actor's life, in the critic's function. As we examine these we will see that deceptively the opposite seems also true, for within the Deadly Theatre there are often tantalizing, abortive or even momentarily satisfying flickers of a real life.* (Brook, 1968, p. 17)

### 10.1 The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the introduction of NCEA drama on teaching and learning in the secondary drama classroom through the reported experiences of New Zealand drama educators.

The introduction of NCEA from 2002 afforded drama the status of a mainstream secondary school subject, instead of an existence on the margins of the education system as had occurred in earlier decades. Nevertheless, my own experience as a drama educator suggested that implementation of the highly structured NCEA assessment schedule and associated moderation and reporting requirements would present significant philosophical, pedagogical and practical challenges for secondary drama teachers.

A review of the literature on the historical development of drama education indicated that, in itself, drama education contains a central dichotomy between the emphasis on the creative process, as exemplified in the drama-in-education movement, and the theatrical aspects of staging productions for public performance. Although school productions have

traditionally been the public face of drama in schools, approaches to drama in the classroom have, historically, reflected the influence of improvisational and explorative drama pedagogies which have emphasised process over product.

Historically, assessment of student work was considered peripheral to the aims and intentions of work in the drama classroom. During the period of data-gathering for this study, however, it was clear that official curriculum and assessment requirements were causing teachers to rethink historical assumptions about teaching and learning in drama.

As was evident from the research conducted for this study, a third aspect of drama in the secondary school may also be found through the literary study of plays and playwrights in English. Unlike me, the majority of participants in this research had begun their careers as teachers of English, initially using drama to enliven their exploration of literature and to share their own enjoyment of theatre with their students.

Contemporary assessment for NCEA, then, requires a pedagogical repertoire that combines these three aspects of drama with knowledge of drama theory consistent with the curriculum requirements of the four drama strands in the official curriculum. In *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), these four drama strands include "Developing Ideas in Drama", which relates to the use of improvisational processes in the classroom, devising drama and the interpretation of existing drama texts; "Communicating and Interpreting in Drama", which pertains to drama performance; "Understanding Drama in Context", which studies theatre traditions; and "Developing Practical Knowledge in Drama", which relates to the theory of practical performance.

Without any prior tradition of assessment in drama, in order to communicate this theory of practical knowledge, the authors of the NCEA achievement standards had to develop a vocabulary which defines drama practice; teachers, therefore, have been required, to learn a new language. This language also became part of the competing discourses of drama (chapter 2, section 2.3) that teachers in this study had to negotiate. As Abbs (2003) points out, the reality of "having to use old words with a new set of connotations can cause confusion and suspicion" (p. 48).

Although *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) document appears to offer ample opportunity for individual agency in drama, in reality, formalised and structured assessment requirements have become the de facto curriculum in regards to the choices teachers make in the classroom (Bolstad, 2006, p. 117). That drama teachers were personally committed to the development of the subject was evident in the data collected for this study. However, what could be analysed as the stronger *classification* and *framing* (Bernstein, 1996) inherent in drama educational discourse delimited their options when working within a national system of assessment.

The review of the literature (chapters 2 and 3) demonstrated that drama is a creative subject, and regarded as such by educators. Moreover, the freedom to explore and experiment is what encourages students to enrol in the subject. Since drama became an approved subject for university entrance, enrolments in the subject have increased substantially in the senior secondary school. Contemporary commentators, such as Robinson (1998, 1999a and 1999b, 2001), have argued the importance of creativity in educating students for the future. Educational institutions, however, are pragmatic in their approaches to change. That drama has moved "From the

margins to the centre" (O'Connor, 2008, p. 5), is not necessarily an acknowledgement of the value of creativity itself but may relate to the range of career opportunities available in the creative industries (*The Arts Strategy 2006–2008*, Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3).

## 10.2 Approach and Methods

This was a qualitative research study situated in an interpretive paradigm. It applied a hermeneutic approach to the analysis of data gathered through interviews with 22 drama practitioners from around New Zealand, together with selected extracts from Dramanet. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that the interpretive researcher "produces a bricolage that is a pieced together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 5). In the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study, I have pieced together teacher responses to pedagogical challenges in order to represent a complex teaching and learning situation.

My approach to this study was an inductive one in the sense of the term, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), as I did not commence the research with a hypothesis that I intended to prove. The research was based on three overarching questions which had emerged from an examination of the relevant literature:

1. What are the previous experiences of current drama educators, and their philosophical or aesthetic motivation for teaching this subject?
2. How have they responded, as secondary drama educators, to the challenge of NCEA drama?



3. On the basis of their experience to date, how do they think NCEA will affect the future teaching and learning of drama?

From these three questions an interview schedule of 10 open-ended questions was compiled which formed the basis of a series of semi-structured interviews with 22 drama educators from around New Zealand.

My decision to use a semi-structured interview format was informed by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) contention that there are multiple realities and that the knower and known are interactive and inseparable (p. 37). The open-ended questions devised for the semi-structured interviews in this study facilitated an interactive approach and allowed participants some autonomy in directing the course of their interviews. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest that the overall aim of the semi-structured interview is "to create an atmosphere where the individual feels able to relate subjective, and often highly personal, materials to the researcher" (p. 163) while, at the same time, providing scope for the interviewer to introduce new material into the discussion which had not been thought of beforehand but arose only during the course of the interview.

The resulting data collected from these interviews were analysed thematically, according to the central preoccupations expressed by the interviewees in this study. In the process of data collection for this study I observed that many of the postings on the Dramanet website reflected similar themes to those emerging from the interview data. Where appropriate, selected postings from the Dramanet discussion forum (2005-2008) were included in the data presented for this study. Data were presented in three chapters: Chapter 5, "Philosophy and Pedagogy"; chapter 6,

"Curriculum and Assessment"; and chapter 7, "NCEA Drama in Schools".

### **10.3 The Main Findings of the Study**

In this exploration of teachers' perceptions of the effect of NCEA on teaching and learning in the secondary classroom, the analysis of the data collected for this study indicated that the personal ideologies of the interviewees had a direct influence on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. The perception of drama as having a social as well as an educational function emerged as an enduring aspect of drama pedagogy, the roots of which can be found in an examination of its historical development. The interviewees' definition of a successful classroom included an emphasis on student engagement. They reported that students became self-motivated when experiencing the autonomy of creating their own work.

Most of the interviewees evinced a personal and intrinsic commitment to the subject as a tool for nurturing student creativity and some questioned the viability of maintaining this explorative approach under the strictures of managing curriculum and assessment requirements. Whereas responses to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000) were generally positive, interviewees' attitudes to the assessment models were more mixed. Some suggested that a shift from mere compliance with the NCEA schedule of assessments might develop through familiarity with the standards.

It was noted that attitudes to drama in schools had shifted since the introduction of NCEA drama, and interviewees remarked upon the effect of this new status on their position in schools. Some teachers in the study expressed a concern, however, that the emphasis in achievement standards

on a *written* portfolio to accompany *practical* work prepared for moderation, militated against success for some students and that certain unit standards, with their practical emphasis, were sometimes a more appropriate choice. However, it appeared that unit standards had been superseded by achievement standards because the latter were perceived as having greater academic credibility.

In regards to internally-assessed achievement standards, the teachers in this study reported a lack of moderated exemplars and difficulties in writing their own assessment tasks. The moderation of student work was an area of some anxiety for teachers in terms of the importance that school administrators placed on the feedback from national moderators.

In relation to external assessments the terminology used in the composition of the examination papers was a site of some tension and there did not appear to be an adequate glossary of terms available to assist teachers in comprehending the new vocabulary.

By far the most pressing issue for teachers in this study, however, was the escalating workload associated with implementation of NCEA in drama. They also observed that the difficulties in resourcing the subject had exacerbated this situation.

When considering the future possibilities for drama education, the interviewees were generally positive about its growth as a secondary subject but suggested that drama educators must ensure that the creative nature of the subject was preserved.

In the discussion on these findings the social and ideological background to the marginalisation of the arts in

education and the development of drama education was discussed and the historical influences on attitudes to the arts were examined. Traditional views on the attributes of intelligence were explained and the cognitive value of the arts was discussed with reference to Gardner's (1996) theory of multiple intelligences.

The significance of creativity in education was explored in relation to the explorative features of drama education. The historical development of drama education was examined in order to explain the pedagogical philosophies which have shaped teaching and learning in drama.

One of the central sites of tension in the implementation of NCEA in drama appeared to lie in the variance between the requirements of the assessment process and the creative focus of drama pedagogy. At the same time, within drama itself, it was evident that there are competing discourses in drama which educators are working to resolve. Many of the issues apparent in contemporary drama practice appeared to arise from the lack of a prior assessment model in drama from which to build a new assessment system. To maintain the student-centred and explorative nature of drama education, while retaining its position as a mainstream secondary subject, would require a creative synthesis of these competing discourses.

#### **10.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

One of the strengths of this study lies in its contribution to a field that is rarely studied. Its limitations relate to the data collection, which is confined to teachers' reported experiences in interviews and on the Dramanet discussion board. Given constraints of time and scope, I did not conduct case studies which would have added depth and complexity to this research. Similarly, there was no

analysis of quantitative data which may have been obtained from a survey of all secondary drama educators nationally.

This research presents a picture of a certain period of time (2002–2008) following the introduction of NCEA in drama as evidenced in the reported experiences of a small self-selecting sample. The issues that these teachers reported, however, will influence future research and policy development on secondary school drama development.

### **10.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

Having conducted this study of drama education I am aware that the phenomenon of drama pedagogy is context-bound in a range of institutional and drama settings. Based on the findings of this exploratory study, there are several topics that could usefully be pursued in future empirical studies of drama education.

First, in-depth case studies in schools would provide a deeper analysis of contemporary developments in drama teaching and learning. Schools might be sampled on the basis of decile, size, "rurality" and/or extent of drama provision.

The findings from teachers' reported experiences in this study suggest that case studies might focus on the following aspects of teachers' pedagogical practice: Exploration of the significance of group work in the motivation and engagement of students and its contribution to interpersonal skills; an examination of the importance of positive student-teacher relationships in engaging students in learning; the use of physicalisation in promoting the understanding of theoretical concepts; the application of improvisational techniques in the development of drama skills; developing understanding of literary aspects of

drama through its practical application in performance; and the features of drama education which further the development of student creativity.

Since the data gathering for this study was completed, new developments have occurred which may also influence teaching and learning in secondary drama<sup>48</sup>. Specifically, the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2009d) from February 2010, with its emphasis on the five key competencies, will affect approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom.

The progressive implementation of a revised *Drama Matrix* (Ministry of Education, 2009c) is also scheduled for introduction in 2011. This will markedly alter teachers' approaches to classroom practice. Ideally this would also be the subject of research.

### **10.6 Implications for Policy**

In terms of policy, this study suggests that, in some measure, drama remains a marginalised subject particularly in the provision of subject-specific facilities. If drama is to be an effective mainstream subject in the secondary school it will require adequate resourcing for the management of NCEA assessment programmes.

Furthermore, although Dramanet and the subject association, Drama New Zealand, provide peer support and professional development opportunities for teachers, with the introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2009d) in 2010, and the revised *Drama Matrix* (Ministry of Education, 2009c) in 2011, it is to be expected that the Ministry of Education will consider the funding of

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<sup>48</sup> See section 10.9

appropriate professional development to ensure the effective implementation of these innovations.

### 10.7 Implications for Practice

The implications of this research for practice lie in the values and aspirations reflected in the responses of drama teachers in this study. It serves to remind those involved in drama education of the essential decisions which must be made regarding the purpose and value of an education in drama.

The shift of drama education from the margins to the mainstream of secondary education has reportedly presented drama teachers with a range of challenges, especially in the implementation of a national system of assessment in drama. The requirements of NCEA achievement standards in drama parallel what Fleming (2003) proposes are the three ways of conceptualising drama; firstly, as a *literary discipline* which concentrates on content (plays and playwrights); secondly, as *theatre*, with the focus on acting for an audience (including technical stagecraft); and thirdly, as *dramatic play* which includes improvisation and drama games (p. 30). The implications for practice which arise out of this research study include the necessity of discovering constructive ways to align these three, sometimes competing, aspects of drama education. Fleming asserts that these conflicting views of drama are moving closer together and that the proponents of process drama have discovered a new appreciation of form and structure, while theatre practitioners are realising the benefits of fluid concepts of acting and rehearsal by using improvisation to explore role and situation (p. 19). It is important that teachers consciously consider how best this synthesis can be achieved in the secondary drama classroom.

Finally, there are implications for secondary drama practice in the future implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2009d) in 2010, in terms of the significance of the five key competencies in relation to drama education, and in the introduction of a revised *Drama Matrix* (Ministry of Education, 2009c) in 2011. As the publication of these documents takes place after the completion of the research for this study, the innovations they comprise are discussed in the "Postscript" (section 10.9).

### 10.8 Final Words

In the process of this research, I have been both inspired and fearful. It was salutary to discover the extent of commitment and passion among these New Zealand drama educators. The creative, student-centred ethos of drama education continues to exert its influence on teaching and learning in the drama classroom.

It is clear that the introduction of NCEA in drama has provided drama with a novel position in the mainstream that has made it both visible and viable in the secondary school and thereby enhanced its status as an academic subject. However, the pressure of accountability and the sheer weight of the practical demands of assessment, as reported by this sample of teachers, is deflecting teacher energy into a steadily increasing round of administrative tasks.

Contemporary secondary drama educators are required constantly to juggle complex pressures of *process* and *product* in their pedagogy. Official curriculum and assessment requirements make the discourses of drama teaching more complex. Visibility, viability and credibility for the subject create opportunities and constraints for



teachers. This study has shown how one sample of teachers has attempted to negotiate these in the early years of NCEA.

Drama education has the potential to become a significant factor in New Zealand secondary education. The educators who participated in this study reflected the conviction that it remains a valuable approach to teaching and learning. As drama teachers continue to attempt to breathe life into the moribund and preserve the "living" aspects of their practice, they are in the position to direct the development of drama education in the future. This study provides some modest signposts to what is important in their efforts to do so.

### 10.9 Postscript

*The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2009d) becomes mandatory in February, 2010. It holds, as part its vision statement, the aspiration that young people will be "creative, energetic and enterprising" and, also, "confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners" (p. 8). There are some parallels between this concept of education and the approaches to teaching and learning in the drama classroom, as discussed in this thesis. The curriculum also identifies five competencies which are considered key to learning in every learning area: thinking; using language, symbols and texts; managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing. These key competencies are, according to the curriculum document, "more complex than skills" (p. 8). In reflecting on the data presented in this research study it is evident that these competencies are already a significant component of drama education and can continue to be developed further.

The revised *Drama Matrix* (Ministry of Education, 2009c), to be introduced from 2011, addresses some of the issues that

have been reported as areas of concern for secondary drama teachers. At Year 11, for example, the existing matrix (Ministry of Education, 2009b) includes five internal assessments and one external written paper. One of the internal practical assessments, AS 90008, "Demonstrate knowledge of a drama/theatre form through a practical presentation", is worth three credits but requires not only a practical performance for assessment but some written reflection on the theoretical and literary aspects of the theatre form being presented. The revised matrix, however, replaces the literary component of this internal achievement standard with a second external written exam, "Demonstrate understanding of the history and features of a drama/theatre form", and is worth four credits. The practical component is contained in an internal achievement standard, "Select and use features of a drama/theatre form in performance", which can also earn four credits.

The revision of the matrix in this way allows student choice. Although all students would receive instruction in the background and features of a selected theatre form, those whose kinaesthetic talents lie in performance rather than in linguistic intelligence would have the opportunity to focus on their areas of strength. Students, however, who demonstrate an interest in the academic aspects of drama, would be able to enjoy and achieve in both aspects of drama knowledge. The credit value accorded these standards is also a fair representation of the time and personal efforts required to achieve NCEA credits in this topic.

The introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the revised *Drama Matrix* will have an effect on approaches to teaching and learning in the drama classroom. Evidence from this study suggests that drama educators are committed to

ensuring that these effects will be positive, for both teachers and learners.

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