Drama Education and the Standards-based Education Movement: Impacts and Implications within British Columbia

by

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B.F.A, University of Victoria, 1994
B.Ed., Queen's University, 1995
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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This dissertation outlines an interpretative inquiry that explores the impacts and implications for drama education as part of the standards-based education climate within British Columbia, Canada. It explores relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings, outlines a methodological framework informed by hermeneutic phenomenology as well as traditions from narrative and poetic inquiry, presents findings drawn from participants' narratives, explores emergent themes, as well as delineates associated implications. Findings of this inquiry suggest that drama education is being impacted by the standards-based education paradigm in several ways including (a) its use as a cross-disciplinary learning medium, (b) concern among participants about decreasing opportunities for its use as a result of perceived pressures to address 'high priority' areas such as literacy and numeracy, (c) concern among participants about the quality of drama practice in elementary and middle schools, (d) summative assessment and reporting-related difficulties, (e) shifts in classroom-based assessment perspectives and practices toward more formative and student-involved approaches, as well as (f) a strong interest among participants in greater systematic legitimacy for drama education and its practice. This

dissertation also explores how these impacts are fuelled by epistemological tensions manifesting from a lack of coherence between the interests and assumptions that support drama education and those that inform the standards-based education paradigm. In addition, implications for educators and policy makers regarding how such tensions might begin to be alleviated are explored.

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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the contributions made by the research participants who offered their precious time and deep consideration to this inquiry. Their thoughtful input can now support a wide audience in better understanding the realities of classroom teachers who navigate the powerful yet sometimes elusive tensions involved in practising drama amidst the standards-based education paradigm. The contributions of these participants provide a stepping stone for future inquiries focused on similar phenomena and serve as inspiration for other educators in exploring the richness of using drama in elementary and middle schools.

In addition, I am so very thankful to my doctoral co-supervisors, Dr. Kathy Sanford and Professor Carole Miller, who had the wisdom to guide me through my doctoral journey in directions I never expected it would take me. This journey indeed opened the door for me to discover more of myself.

And in honour of those drama educators, particularly Carole Miller and Juliana Saxton, whose support has guided me for many years. I hope this inquiry can help to pay forward all that you've given throughout your careers.

Dedications

For Jeff and Anna, who are the reasons this dissertation exists.

Your love and nurture,
your patience and sacrifice
made this possible.

And for Jones who – always – kept me warm while I wrote.

Epigraph

I'm sold on drama
It helps my students to see
themselves in new ways.

When I use drama
I keep the door closed so I
don't have to explain.

How can we go deep
when there's so much to cover?
My practice is stuck.

we do less drama
these days. "More time for 3 Rs",
say those who are scared.

teaching through drama…
i want to find my way back
too many pressures

I cannot stand by
anymore. Drama will be lost
Stand Up and Speak Out!

I am a bulldog.
I always use drama
My kids *really* learn

Introduction

The first doctoral course I took was taught by Dr. William Doll and was called *Curriculum Development*. Prior to the first day of session, I remember thinking that this would be an *easy* course for me because *developing curriculum* was something I often did as part of my job as a provincial curriculum coordinator. At that time, despite my background in drama education, I had little idea there were any other orientations toward curriculum than the ends-means and technical view I was accustomed to. Well…anyone who has read Doll's writing or worked with him in *any* capacity will know that a *how-to* course focused on the development of curriculum documents is not likely part of his agenda. As one might expect, within a few minutes of beginning the course, I was completely destabilized. I quickly learned that it was *not easy*, I *did not know*, and there were spectra of curriculum orientations and conceptions I had never considered. This was the beginning of my doctoral journey – one that was both exciting and intimidating.

My pre-doctoral experiences had taught me that when excitement and trepidation rendezvous and remain with me for a while, I'm on an important life journey. Engaging in doctoral studies indeed turned out to be a process of both destabilization and growth because it asked me to critically explore who I was as a professional, an educator, a drama practitioner, a researcher, and a parent of a school-aged child. Ultimately, I came to understand that what my doctoral journey offered was no different than what *any* student needs, regardless of age, grade, or program - that is, the opportunity to engage in challenging and authentic explorations of what it means to be human so that we might discover ourselves along the way.

Statement of Intent and Research Question

If we accept the arguments made by Eisner (1985, 1998, 2002) and Greene (1977, 1992, 1995a, 1995b) that a lack of coherence exists between the underlying interests and assumptions that support arts education and those that inform the standards-based education movement, and if we also consider Taylor's (1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2006a, 2006c) caution that drama practice is being compromised by outcomes-based orientations toward curriculum and assessment, then an important question arises for those concerned about drama education within British Columbia. This question is: How are drama education and the practice of teachers who use drama education being impacted by the standards-based education climate of British Columbia? The purpose of this inquiry is to explore the meaning of teachers' experiences and perceptions in relation to this question.

Operational Definitions and Points of Clarification

Prior to proceeding the following concepts must be clarified as each represents spectra of meanings across literature: *drama education*, *teacher practice*, and *standards-based education* (and its associated terms).

Drama education.

Due to a general lack of understanding about what drama education is, and what differentiates it from theatre education, it is necessary to provide clarification about how this term is used within this inquiry. Complicating matters is the issue that within the field of drama education, different orientations toward the concepts of curriculum and assessment exist. These orientations and the ways in which they relate to current education contexts are significant to this inquiry and are therefore detailed within the subsequent *Literature Review*. However, for the purpose of reader clarity, it should be

foretold that within this inquiry the term *drama education* holds a particular meaning that has evolved from the methodology of Dorothy Heathcote[1] and her contemporaries, most notably Gavin Bolton. Through this lens, drama education is an art form *and* mode of learning in which students explore relevant issues, events, and relationships within fictional contexts so they might come to make meaning about their own lives. The goal of drama education is to create a way *into* understanding by offering experiences in which students are "confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges" (Heathcote, 1967, p. 48).

The term *Heathcotean methodology* appears throughout this dissertation. While this term is not widely used in literature and could be considered problematic by some, Bolton (2007) suggests it has been used in reference to drama education grounded in an orientation that emerged as part of Heathcote's praxis in England during the 1950's and 1960's (p. 54-55). In Bolton's (2007) "attempt to untangle the confused strands of classroom drama" that exist as various "images of the mosaic of activities that have occurred in schools under the term "drama education"" (p. 45), he suggests Heathcotean methodology reflects Heathcote's notion of "living through" drama[2] (Heathcote, 1972, p. 157). For Heathcote, living through drama "is a means of learning, a means of widening experiences" (Heathcote, 1972, p. 158). It challenges students "not only to feel, but to organize [their] feelings into some kind of expression…to feel and comprehend, then to

[1] Dorothy Heathcote is considered one of pioneers of drama praxis concerned with using the dramatic art form to explore issues, events, and relationships so participants might gain insights into themselves and their "habitual orientation to the world" (O'Neill, 1990, p. 293).

[2] Heathcote (1972) suggests the term *to live through* is a translation of the Greek meaning for *drama* (p. 157).

make their knowledge clear to themselves" (p. 160). This view of drama education as a contextual and emergent learning encounter suggests that *Heathcotean-based praxis* is rooted in social constructivist epistemology. It is a praxis concerned with the co-construction of understanding through action-determined learning encounters and the exploration of unexamined perceptions.

In addition, several drama education practitioners have extended Heathcote's "living through" methodology into their own praxis. Bolton (2007) offers O'Neill's (1995) notion of *process drama*[3] - a label originally used to distinguish this view of drama education from the concept of *performance drama* - as well as Booth's story drama[4] praxis as examples (p. 55). Among other similarities, these strands of drama education all seek to generate meaning by and for their participants as well as use the teacher in role strategy as a way of engaging student learning and drawing out understanding. As a result, I use the terms *Heathcotean methodology* and *Heathcotean-based praxis* within this dissertation as umbrella terms for drama education praxis informed by the aforementioned interests and assumptions. These terms are not intended to suggest that teachers who understand drama education to be grounded such interests and assumptions

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[3] The term process drama may mean different things to different people however it is used here based on Cecily O'Neill's (1995) drama praxis. O'Neill describes process drama as a "complex drama encounter" that "evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence" (p. xiii).

[4] Booth (1994), defines story drama as "improvised roleplay based on story…[that] allows children to at once become the co-constructors of a story, the story itself, and the characters living within the story" (p. 12). Story acts as both the launching point for drama as well as a vehicle for exploring the tensions, ambiguities, and assumptions that exist within the subtexts of story.

necessarily practice in the same way as Heathcote but rather, they are informed by a similar epistemological lens.

A Heathcotean methodology is the orientation toward drama education inherently reflected within this inquiry. It is the orientation through which I, the researcher, understand drama education and have always studied and taught; it is my frame of reference for drama education. It is also the orientation that all participants of this inquiry, while not labelling it as such, described as central within their drama practice. (In fact, one participant found it important to confirm that I understood the concept of *process drama* and that her contributions would be interpreted through this lens.) There are, however, other orientations toward drama education. The most significant to this inquiry is labelled as an "outcomes-based orientation" (Taylor, 2006c, p. 111) because it reflects a close alignment with the interests and assumptions of the standards-based education paradigm in which objective outcomes, or standards, are a key characteristic. A deeper exploration into both of these orientations is presented in the following chapter.

Drama education differs from theatre education in that it does not have as its goals the development of performance skills/techniques or formal performances/productions designed for outside audiences. Instead drama education focuses on engaging students in explorative and reflective processes that support the widening and deepening of understanding; audiences external to those participating in the drama encounter are rarely invited into the experience. The experience is created *by* and *for* its participants. While drama education does not involve a formal audience, the use of *illustrative performance*

activities[5] and *components of theatre form*[6], constructs often associated with theatre, play an important role in its praxis. These constructs can help to actively engage students in drama experiences as well as bring aesthetic attention to their work so that "the meanings of what [students] are creating or watching resonate beyond the literal meanings of their actions and words" (p. 21).

Teacher practice and praxis.

While the term *teacher practice* is generally understood to represent the active and often integrated processes of planning, teaching, and assessing, this term does not necessarily include within its connotation, the elements of teacher practice involving reflective and/or reflexive thought and the folding into action of these thoughts (Taylor, 2000, p. 5). As Taylor (2006c) describes it, praxis is an interest in and ability to "reflect in and on action" (p. 111). Similarly, Taylor and Warner (2006) suggest it to be "a dynamic interplay between theory and practice, where the drama teacher is not merely implementing a predetermined sequence of activities but is constantly re-thinking ideas as participants experience the structure" (p. 1). The word *praxis*, therefore, is used within this inquiry to represent the practice of teachers who interweave aspects of theory,

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[5] *Illustrative performance activities* include those such as tableau in which "what things and people look like from the outside" is meaningful (Bolton, 1992, p. 23).

[6] Bolton (1992) uses the term *components of theatre form* to include aesthetic elements such imperative tension, constraint, and the breaking of constraint (Bolton, 1992). Within this dissertation I refer to these components as *dimensions of the dramatic art form*. In addition, drama forms such as time, space, and human presence can be exploited to generate meaning within drama education– just they are exploited in theatre.

reflexive thinking, and active practice together in order to inform their pedagogical choices and actions.

In addition, the term praxis can be reflective of critical pedagogy. For example, Freire (1972) describes praxis as a reflexive relationship in which theory and practice build upon each other through an active process of meaning-making (p. 54). In this view, one's praxis is concerned with reflecting upon practice, refining understanding, further exploring and acting upon such understanding, as well as potentially improving current circumstances (Taylor, 2000). Neelands (2006), a drama education scholar and practitioner, describes praxis as "reflexive in terms of the transparency of the processes of selection, reflection, and modification that underpin it" (p. 13). Classrooms in which such praxis unfolds can thus make space for the renegotiation of power dynamics between teachers and students as well as honour "lived and local knowledges" (Neelands, 2006, p. 20). This concept of critical praxis is widely supported in literature by both curriculum theorists and drama scholars (Britzman, 1991; Gallagher, 2006; Kincheloe, 2005; Lather, 1986; Neelands, 2006; Taylor & Warner 2006) and is therefore relevant to this inquiry.

Standards and standards-based education.

While used frequently within education rhetoric, the term *standards* takes on different meanings across literature. It connotes many things and reflects a range of views across education jurisdictions. However, among various descriptions of what education standards are, two characteristics appear to be consistent in most. Generally, in the field of education, the term standards refers to expectations outlining what *all* students within a particular education jurisdiction (e.g., British Columbia) "should know and be able to do"

(Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, 2006, p. v) in relation to specific disciplines and/or grade levels. This term also encompasses the notion of *how* such knowledge and skills should be demonstrated. Davies (2000) and Stiggins (2001) suggest that education standards comprise both specified statements of expected learning or learning expectations, descriptions of expected levels or degrees of proficiency, and/or performance in relation to associated learning expectations. Similarly, Eisner (2002) describes education standards as "a level of attainment needed to receive some form of…acknowledgement" for which "units of measure often enter into the process of determining if standards have been met" (p. 168). He goes on to state, "standards as a unit of measure are regarded as the most objective form of description" (p. 168). As Eisner notes, the term standard(s) suggests an interest in objective knowledge and the predictability of learning outcomes.

Associated with the concept of standards are several additional terms including *standards-based assessment*, *standards-based curriculum*, and *standards-based education systems*. Viewed through a similar lens of objectivity and predictability, standards-based assessment is assessment (e.g., large-scale and/or classroom based) that uses specific standards and criteria (defined prior to actual learning experiences) as the measure against which students' achievement is judged. The term standards-based curriculum refers to documents in which defined education standards are outlined. In addition, the term standards-based education systems represent climates in which education "authorities" (e.g., Ministries of Education, Boards of Education, school administration teams) prescribe the use education standards and standards-based assessment.

Three fundamental components make up standards-based education systems: (a) clear, specific, and assessable content standards (sometimes called *learning objectives*, or *learning outcomes*; (b) achievement standards (sometimes called *benchmarks*, *assessment criteria*, *performance indicators* or *exemplars*; and (c) an *accountability framework* or systematic means of monitoring performance in relation to the defined education standards (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 5). Additionally, although the term *accountability* is an ambiguous one, not often defined by jurisdictions that use it, it is frequently used, I suggest, with reference to the system-based monitoring of student performance and achievement levels through large-scale testing. The reader will note that phrases such as *standards-based education paradigm*, *standards-based education*, *movement*, and *standards-based education climate* are all used within this inquiry to represent the notion of standards-based education systems.

Chapter One - Literature Review

Introduction: Epistemological Underpinnings within this Inquiry

Within the descriptions of drama education and the standards-based education movement outlined above, we begin to see two divergent epistemological perspectives emerging: social constructivism in relation to drama education, and positivism in relation to standards-based education. In the most general sense constructivism is the view that all acts of knowing and understanding are generated by knowers themselves and social constructivism is concerned with knowledge as it is socially and culturally constructed through human relationships and interactions. Social constructivism posits that humans actively create their own understandings as part of interpersonal relationships and experiences with others. This perspective is rooted in the theories of Dewey (1921), Piaget (1955, 1972), Vygotsky (1978), and Bruner (1986, 1990) and emphasizes the significance of social contexts and culture in knowledge construction. In this view, understanding is inter-subjective and socially constructed; multiple understandings exist. Understanding is co-constructed, contextual, and emergent.

Drama education is reflective of a social constructivist epistemology because it engages students in learning encounters that rely on their collective contributions to create meaning. We know from Vygotsky (1979) that the capacity to learn from others is fundamental to human intelligence and meaning making. Based on this view, Wagner (1998) describes such a capacity in relation to drama education. She says, "Although young children often role-play alone…when they start playing with other children, they are engaging in a social event. Then they face a new challenge, one clearly in their [zone

of proximal development][7]: the pressure to negotiate together a single vision of what the drama is about, what the setting looks like, who takes which roles and so on" (p. 28). Drawing from Bruner (1983), she goes on to suggest that drama education provides opportunities for students to *scaffold* (p. 60) for each other – that is, provide a framework on which others "can stand as they build new understanding" (Wagner, 1998, p. 29). The encounter is thus dependent on collective engagement and exploration.

On the other hand, the standards-based education movement is concerned with a different view of knowledge – one in which objectivism is valued and social contexts are irrelevant (Kincheloe, 2005; Giroux, 1981; Grundy, 1987; Taylor, 2006c). Here "a culture of positivism" (Giroux, 1981, p. 52) is reflected; knowledge construction is objective and unambiguous. In this view, one's understanding of the world can be verified through direct experience and observation. Giroux (1981) describes this view in the following way.

> Knowledge is objective, 'bounded' and 'out there'. Classroom knowledge is often treated as an external body of information, the production of which appears to be independent of human beings. From this perspective, human knowledge is viewed as being independent of time and place; it becomes universalized ahistorical knowledge. Moreover it is expressed in a language which is basically technical and allegedly value free. ...Knowledge, then, becomes impersonal. Teaching in this pedagogical

[7] As part of her discussion on the social constructivist nature of drama education, Wagner (1998) describes Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development as the "the level a bit beyond the child's development level" (p. 19). It is the gap between what a student already understands and any additional understanding that might further unfold given the opportunity to explore.

> paradigm is usually discipline-specific and treats subject matter in a compartmentalized and atomized fashion. (p. 52-53)

This view of knowledge construction aligns with the standards-based education paradigm in that this paradigm is concerned with identification, prediction, efficiency, and understanding in terms of facts and demonstrated learning responses. Such concerns are represented by pre-determined education standards (i.e., contained in static curriculum documents), large-scale and standards-based testing systems, and accountability frameworks designed for monitoring system-based performance. In addition, the use of education standards as criteria by which to define and measure all students' learning assumes that such learning can be controlled by predicting homogenized outcomes, assessing students' ability to achieve them, and then implementing accountability measures.

Ultimately, the epistemological interests and assumptions that support drama education and those that inform the standards-based education movement are incongruent. This lack of alignment represents a significant tension that manifests throughout this inquiry's data, findings, underlying themes, and its implications.

Literature and Discourses

This literature review draws from several areas of discourse including (a) curriculum inquiry and critical theory, (b) drama education, and (c) standards-based education. Within each of these focal areas various orientations exist, often reflective of different epistemological views.

Curriculum inquiry and critical theory.

Curriculum inquiry.

Various spectra of curriculum conceptualizations exist. While navigating such a vast landscape is much too massive an undertaking for this inquiry, the following literature review highlights those theorists whose work has particular significance. I draw on Aoki (1984, 2005e), one of Canada's prominent curriculum theorists, to introduce this review because his work continually reminds us that several curriculum orientations exist and it is the underlying epistemological interests and assumptions of the paradigm one is informed by that influences the orientation reflected in their work. His broad conceptualizations of curriculum as well as his three key orientations toward curriculum and assessment are used as starting points because they support the reader with an understanding of the various lenses through which curriculum scholarship is approached.

Across Aoki's publications (1984, 1996, 200a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d, 2005e) his broad conceptualizations of curriculum are aligned with associated interests and assumptions about knowledge construction and the role of teachers and students. These conceptualizations are (a) *curriculum-as-plan*, and (b) *curriculum-as-lived* (Aoki, 2005d). Curriculum-as-plan is discernable in many physical forms including curriculum documents, lesson plans, unit plans, and outlines for programs of study. It is often represented by a defined set of learning expectations, or "standards" that are determined prior to actual learning experiences and intended to direct and/or guide learning processes. Aoki states, "curriculum-as-plan is an abstraction yearning to come alive in the presence of teachers and students…what it lacks is situatedness" (p. 231). Aoki argues that this concept of curriculum "is the predominant paradigm in curriculum

literature" (2005e, p. 90) and he frequently challenges readers to re-envision its influences in relation to teaching and learning. A situated curriculum, in contrast, is a curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2005d, p. 231). It is "curriculum in the presence of people and their meanings…it is the experienced curriculum" (p. 231). He suggests that curriculum-as-lived is a complex and contextual curriculum milieu that cannot be pre-determined. In support, Neelands (2000) suggests curriculum-as-lived "recognises the multiplicity of the living experiences shared differently in different classrooms, by different students and different teachers – it is not quantifiable; it cannot be bound in ring binders; it is lived" (p. 54). Throughout this dissertation, the terms curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived are used to provide clarity of concept for the reader.

In addition, Aoki (1984, 2005e) draws on Habermas' (1972) theory of knowledge constitutive human interests and presents three key orientations toward curriculum and assessment in order to align them with underlying epistemological influences. These orientations include (a) *ends-means (technical)* through which "empirical knowing" (Aoki, 1984, p. 8) is emphasized, underlying interests include control and predictability, and assessment is "goal-based" and "criterion referenced" (p. 8), (b) *situational interpretative* through which meaning-making is contextual and inter-subjective, and assessment is concerned with "the quality of meaning people living in a situation give to their lived situation" (p. 10), and (c) *critical* through which biases and agendas are exposed and explored, and assessment is concerned with critical reflection about, and action to improve, human conditions. These three orientations toward curriculum and assessment are outlined here, prior to a review of work by other curriculum theorists (and

including additional work by Aoki), as a way to support readers in better making sense of the underlying orientations reflected in this inquiry.

The curriculum theories of Bobbitt (1918, 1924), Tyler (1949, 1950), Aoki (2005a, 2005e), Pinar (1975, 2004, 2005), Eisner (1985, 2000, 2002), and Greene (1977, 1991, 1992, 1995a, 1995b) as well as the curriculum-related critical theories of Freire (1972, 1998), Habermas (1972, 1974), and Kincheloe (2001, 2004, 2005) are highlighted in the following section of this literature review. I chose these particular theorists because they either reinforce or challenge the currently dominant notion of curriculum and assessment as being ends-means and technical.

Franklin Bobbitt and Ralph Tyler.

Since the birth of the scientific movement, the study of curriculum has included a dominant view that education can be approached in a rational manner. The early curriculum work of Bobbitt (1918) and Tyler (1949, 1950) not only legitimated this view, it shaped the evolution of standards-based curriculum into its present day context. Bobbitt (1918) argues that education should prepare one for adult life and therefore "the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and forms of knowledge that men need" (p. 42) should be defined and become the objectives of the curriculum. In this view, curriculum takes the form of a set of education objectives that clearly state expected learning goals. It is developed through a scientific set of procedures aimed at formulating these educational goals so they can be objectively assessed.

Similarly, Tyler's (1949, 1950) approach to curriculum development is based on the view of education as a means of changing behaviour in order to prepare students for everyday life. Tyler suggests that by studying students' current knowledge, gaps can be

identified, compared against a norm and then addressed through curriculum development. Tyler's curriculum development model (1949, 1950), often referred to as *the Tyler rationale,* outlines a framework for producing ends-means and technical curriculum materials. It is a logical step-by-step curriculum model for development, evaluation and implementation. The four principles of this model include identifying appropriate learning objectives for students, defining learning experiences through which students can meet the stated learning objectives, organising these experiences in order to maximize learning opportunities, and evaluating the extent to which students are able to meet the defined learning objectives.

Inherent in Tyler's model are assumptions about power and voice in the development of curriculum-as-plan. For example, the power to decide what students need to know ultimately rests with those responsible for producing the curriculum-as-plan. Teachers and students thus have little control in determining their own learning goals and how such goals might be realized. As a result, several researchers (Giroux, 1981, 1994; Grundy, 1987; Kincheloe, 2005; Pinar, 2004) claim that a Tylerian-style curriculum-as-plan casts teachers into the role of education managers rather than active participants in the construction of understanding. This is a significant issue in education because Tyler's model appears to be one of the most unrelenting in curriculum history. Considered "the most persistent theoretical formulation in the field of curriculum" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 10), its interests and assumptions are clearly reflected in curriculum-as-plan representative of the standards-based education paradigm.

Ted Aoki.

As outlined earlier Aoki (1984, 1996, 2005e) consistently challenges the underlying interests and assumptions represented in dominant curriculum traditions. In addition to continually drawing readers' attention to "epistemological limit-situation in which current curriculum research in encased" (2005e, p. 94) and challenging them to think beyond dominant notions, he aligns his own view with that often reflected in arts education (Beittel, 1973; Eisner & Vallance, 1974). Interwoven throughout his work is a gentle insistence that curriculum exists in multiplicity, and that educators [sometimes represented in his discussions by "Miss O*"* (Aoki, 1996, 2005b, 2005c)] are wise and skilled in their praxis. Without fail, Aoki's writing honours the role of teachers and students as co-creators of lived curriculum thus landing him at a far distance from Bobbitt and Tyler on the curriculum landscape.

Aoki (1984, 2005a, 2005e) suggests that the dominant curriculum implementation approach is embedded in a business interest where producers of curriculum-as-plan provide standards for non-expert consumers (i.e., teachers and students). Drawing again from Habermas' (1972), Aoki aligns this approach with empirical thought (i.e., thought based in a belief that knowledge is derived only from sensory experience) and technical interests (e.g., control, predictability). He then advocates for an alternative view of curriculum implementation as "situational praxis" (2005a, p. 116) in which curriculum is locally interpreted, critically reflected upon together by teachers and students, and then refined based on the contextual constructs that inform that particular learning encounter. As a result, curriculum becomes an emergent and lived experience manifested within a particular place and time by those involved in the actual encounter.

William Doll.

Akin to Aoki, Doll (1993) views curriculum as lived experience; a multiplicity of realties created through acts of being. He describes such curriculum as post-modern and argues it is "generated, not predefined", "indeterminate yet bounded" (p. 176) and comprised of four "Rs": *richness*, *recursion*, *relationship*, and *rigour*. From Doll's perspective, a rich curriculum is one that makes space for several layers of meaning and interpretation to be revealed and explored. Recursion, in his view, refers to the importance of re-visiting content and explorations so students can reflect, build on their experiences, and open themselves to new insights that can be folded into lived experience. The notion of reflection is central here as Doll stresses its importance of supporting students to consider their thoughts and actions and have opportunities to "look back on themselves" (Doll, 1993, p. 177). Doll differentiates between the concepts of recursion and repetition, making clear that recursion allows for reflexive and critical thought, dialogue and investigation whereas repetition "is designed to improve set performance" (p. 178). He views knowledge not as that which is defined and "waiting to be discovered" but as "continually expanding" and "generated by our reflective actions" (1993, p. 102). His idea that relationships are integral elements of post-modern curriculum also supports this view of knowledge construction. Relationships represent the interconnectedness of concepts, ideas, and experience as part of meaning making.

In addition Doll (1993) urges teachers to draw on "qualities foreign to a modernist frame – interpretation and indeterminacy" (p. 182) and be rigorous about supporting students to become aware of, and critically reflect on, the underlying assumptions they may hold. Ultimately, Doll argues that curriculum should generate some disequilibrium

so that knowledge construction becomes the lived process of "seeking balance and order for ourselves as individuals as a community of learners" (as cited in Miller & Saxton, 2009, p. 547). I believe Doll would support the notion that drama education praxis is fuelled by post-modern notions of curriculum because teachers who use drama education ultimately aim to facilitate the co-construction of understanding through what Doll (2008) calls "orderly disorder" (p. 78) so that questions and disequilibrium can be generated and explored.

William Pinar.

Pinar is another influential curriculum theorist whose work spans a number of decades. His early work exposes technical interests and assumptions as those that legitimate dominant notions of ends-means curriculum (Pinar & Grumet, 1981). His later work overtly challenges contemporary standards-based education systems as being "dominated by business thinking" (Pinar, 2004, p. 16). Pinar (2004) suggests that while more liberal than the "factory-model" of schooling characterising earlier decades, the standards-based education climate is representative of a corporate model of education in which achieving the pre-determined "basics" is the goal of schooling, and the role of teachers is that of "managers" (p. 28). In his view this model is the acquisition of "knowledge and the cultivation of those skills deemed necessary for productivity in a postindustrial economy" (Pinar, 2004, p. 28). In a corporate education climate, suggests Pinar, "intelligence is viewed as a means to an end" (p. 28). He suggests that while this view may be useful in a market-driven economy, it is ultimately too narrow to consider questions of human experience where understanding is "not necessarily known in advance" (p. 29).

Elliot Eisner.

Eisner (1985) argues that the underlying interests represented in ends-means and technical views of curriculum (i.e., control, predictability, transmittable knowledge) constrain the contextual and emergent understandings fostered in arts education. He identifies the assumptions underlying assumptions ends-means curriculum as: (a) learning is homogenized and the same results can be expected from all students; (b) learning is value-neutral; and (c) developers of curriculum-as-plan have the ability to predict outcomes of instruction. He then contrasts these assumptions with considerations about what *ought* to be considered as part of arts education curriculum. These include (a) the ways in which the assumptions and values of individual teachers and students contribute to contextually-based learning processes, (b) the idea that results cannot be pre-determined when creative, imaginative and contextualized responses are desired, and (c) the power of human qualitative judgement to inform assessment processes.

Eisner (2002) traces the evolution of education objectives into their current form of education standards, highlights the resulting tensions, and submits that, from a lay person's perspective, the concept of standards may appear to be a promising solution to policy makers' desired improvements for students' achievement. He suggests that system-wide learning expectations, a homogenized curriculum, and the associated ability for education authorities to identify, monitor, and improve student achievement levels (a concept often associated with a jurisdiction's accountability framework), might seem appealing only if the following assumptions are *ignored:*

- The diversity represented among students, teachers, learning styles and teaching styles inherently creates multiplicities of knowledge, understanding and experience.

- Teachers and students are the co-creators of knowledge.
- Linguistic descriptions of artistic performance (in the form of standards-based curriculum-as-plan) cannot capture the contextual and emergent nature of learning through the arts (p. 163-165).

Eisner (1985, 2000, 2002) calls for the re-envisioning of standards-based education systems and structures so they can make space for the needs of arts education disciplines. Examples include curriculum frameworks that can be adaptive to local character and circumstances; alternative forms of standards and criteria that can be used as aids for debate; and planning as opposed to pre-determined prescriptions of learning end-points. Eisner's vision is particularly significant to this inquiry because similar suggestions regarding the re-envisioning of curriculum-as-plan appear throughout participants' narratives.

Maxine Greene.

Greene's (1977, 1991, 1992, 1995a, 1995b) writing highlights the importance of contextual, emergent and imaginative qualities within lived curriculum. As a result, her perspective of curriculum as a "means of providing opportunities for the seizing of a range of meanings by persons open to the world" (1977, p. 284) has gained the attention of drama education scholars and practitioners. Greene (1977) argues that art is one of those "provinces of meaning" (p. 284) in which students should be continually immersed. She believes that students must have on-going opportunities to encounter the arts so they might be inspired to see through the eyes of others and be challenged to consider different perspectives. Highlighting the role of arts curriculum to "move us into spaces where we can create visions of other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to

realize them" (1995b, p. 112), Greene challenges school communities to find ways of honouring the multiplicity of learning and school experience. Consistent with Eisner (2000) she argues that the public often demands educational improvement, guarantees, stability, and predictability. She then points out that the implementation and legitimization of the standards-based education movement designed to produce such results, continues to create critical deliberation among education stakeholders (Greene, 1995a, p. 170-171).

Critical theory.

In general, critical theory presupposes that positivism seeks to fit human problems into a technical framework which then legitimizes the powerful and maintains the powerlessness of the powerless (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 86). In education, critical theory challenges the underlying assumption that problematic situations can be treated "scientifically as if they were naturalistic phenomena rather than…social-political constructions" (Neelands, 2006, p. 23). It confronts the view that an objective reality exists over which the individual has no control, and attempts to illuminate "the capacity of individuals to reflect upon their own situations and change them through their own action" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 130). Critical theory calls attention to the inherent inequalities present in dominant orientations toward curriculum and are shaped around the notion that knowledge and its selection are neither neutral nor innocent (Habermas, 1972). The work of Habermas (1972, 1974), Freire (1972, 1998), and Kincheloe (2005), critical theorists who support this view, is highlighted below.

Paulo Freire.

The Brazilian educator, Freire, is a pioneer of critical theory. His ideas inform contemporary curriculum scholarship and have recently begun manifesting through the work of some drama education scholars and practitioners (Neelands, 2006; Taylor, 2006b, 2006c; Gallagher, 2006; Winston, 2006; Zatzman, 2006). Freire's (1972, 1998) praxis uses education as a medium for dispossessed people to find their voices and take action against their own oppression. Freire (1998) challenges his students to consider the unseen forces and "the culture of silence" (p.14) that seek to maintain dominance and societal control. His ultimate goal is liberation from oppressive forces through shifts toward critical consciousness and ongoing action. At the heart of his praxis is the idea that teaching is a political act; never neutral of agenda or intent. Freire's praxis also rejects the typical authoritarian dynamic between teachers and students and replaces it with a view that teachers and students co-create understanding to be used in seeking alternative perspectives, exploring identities, and enabling change to occur.

Curriculum, from a Freirian perspective, draws its meaning not from its ends, as does standards-based curriculum, but from its beginnings. It emerges from the "reflections of those involved in the pedagogical act" (Grundy, 1987, p. 103). Drawing on Freire (1998), Neelands suggests that "reflection-on-practice and reflexivity-in-practice" reflects "an active commitment to articulating and making visible the essential dialectic within teaching and learning processes and within/between the experiences of teachers and learners (p. 19). This view of praxis is inherently congruent with that of drama education, a concept evident in a later section of this literature review.

Jurgen Habermas.

As noted earlier, Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (1972, 1974) has greatly influenced the curriculum theory of Aoki as well as other scholars whose views are significant to this inquiry (Grundy, 1987; Neelands, 2006). Habermas proposes that "school knowledge and knowledge about schooling based on research are essentially problematic and serve three different cognitive and social interests" (Neelands, 2006, p. 24). He labels these interests as *technical*, *practical,* and *emancipatory*. A technical interest, suggests Habermas, emphasizes positivist methods, control, and pre-determinations while practical interests represent those that seek to make meaning from human interaction and situations. Emancipatory interests subsume practical interests and are also concerned with research and praxis that serve emancipatory aims (Neelands, 2006, p. 24).

A technical knowledge-constitutive interest is concerned with definable knowledge, lesson planning, classroom management and objective assessment in relation to pre-determined and fixed standards. This emphasis is represented in Tylerian-style curriculum-as-plan. The pre-determined and specific nature of standards, as well as the use of such standards as criteria by which to evaluate student learning, assumes the role of teachers to be that of knowledge reproducers as opposed to co-creators of understanding. In addition, it assumes the role of students to be passive receptacles that accumulate external knowledge. On the other hand, curriculum and classroom practice informed by a practical interest is concerned with understanding, meaning-making, and interpretation. This interest is evident in curriculum and learning encounters that generate subjective, rather than objective, understanding and assumes such understanding

to be contextually co-constructed by teachers and students. Additionally, an emancipatory interest in curriculum subsumes the interests and assumptions of practical interests while also representing a concern for autonomy and liberation from constraining forces such as pre-determined learning outcomes and prescriptive teaching frameworks. Curriculum that is concerned with "not only what knowledge is important…but also whose knowledge, and what and whose interests such knowledge serves" (Neelands, 2006, p. 27) reflects emancipatory interests.

Joe Kincheloe.

Kincheloe (2001, 2004, 2005) draws on the work of Freire (1972, 1998) and Habermas (1972, 1974) to address issues of critical pedagogy. His writing is threaded with the belief that dominant technical interests place teachers in the role of "deskilled messengers who uncritically pass along a canned curriculum" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 108). Kincheloe (2005) argues that "every dimension of schooling from the curriculum to interpersonal relationships" (p. 12) is shaped by power dynamics. In particular, he focuses on the politicized nature of curriculum and assessment practices within standards-based education systems and urges teachers to use their classrooms as sites for critically exposing dominant discourses that seek to maintain the status quo (Kincheloe & Weil, 2001; Kincheloe, 2005). In Kincheloe's view, the role of critical educators is to challenge their students' assumptions in order to raise awareness about the ideological, political and societal undercurrents that legitimate inequitable power relationships. He urges teachers to "develop a course of study that understands subject matter and academic skills in relation to where their students come from and the needs they bring to school" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 108).

The aforementioned curriculum scholars and critical theorists are significant to the following discussion of drama education and the various epistemological orientations that influence its practice. They provide a lens through which the historical and present-day contexts of drama education can be considered. The following section of this literature review explores these contexts.

Drama education.

Curriculum is a complex topic within the field of drama education due, in part, to the divergent views of its scholars and practitioners. Consequently, it is important to consider the historical significance of how these views have evolved into different present-day orientations and how these orientations relate to the interests and assumptions of the current standards-based education paradigm. Making sense of the various historical perspectives on drama education has been attempted by a few drama education scholars, in particular Gavin Bolton (1979, 1984, 1985, 2007) who attempts to "untangle the confused strands of classroom drama" (2007, p. 45) as he describes the foremost practitioners and orientations that characterise its evolution. The subsequent sections draw on his and others' scholarship to explore these strands and how they relate to current education contexts.

A history of drama education and its divergent orientations.

In reviewing the contributions of early drama educators (i.e., those practicing during the first half of the twentieth century), there appears to be some pendulum-swinging "tension between what might be called formal and informal approaches" (Bolton, 1985, p. 153) – a tension, I argue, that is not unfamiliar today. For example, at about the time Dewey (1916, 1921) was promoting the concept of democratic (1916) and child-centred

education in America, two school teachers in England, Harriet Finlay-Johnson (1911) and Henry Caldwell-Cook (1917), were independently experimenting with drama as a medium for teaching subject area content. This was a departure from the dominant British government-endorsed view which reflected an interest in drama for skill development and training (i.e., elocution, speech, movement, acting skills) – a focus that "offered some sense of standard" (Bolton, 1985, p. 153). A clear distinction should be noted here between the use of drama for skill development and drama as a "way of illuminating knowledge" where "the subject matter, or content, of the drama was all important" (p. 153).

In the practice of Finlay-Johnson and Cook, we see the beginnings of drama where performance for external audiences is less important than the development of performance skills; it is the learning *experience* of students that is central. However, despite the work of these two practitioners, as well as the practices of other British drama educators such as Peter Slade (1954) and Brain Way (1967) who focused on child-centered play and the development of the individual rather than on performance and production, the stronghold of the government-endorsed drama/speech skills movement dominated mainstream practice in England. This changed during the late 1950's and 1960's when the revolutionary praxis of Dorothy Heathcote at Newcastle-upon-Tyne University initiated a growing shift in understanding about drama education – a shift that involved using drama as a way into content so that new understanding about human experience could be explored. This is significant because Heathcote's praxis ran counter to mainstream understanding of drama yet gained enough grassroots support to

eventually lay the foundation for one of the predominant orientations toward drama education today.

During the 1960's Heathcote's praxis redefined drama education in England from a skill development enterprise to a collective and collaborative process; a content rich learning medium in which the role of teacher was recast into co-artist and co-constructor of knowledge. Heathcote was, and still is, concerned with what happens when teachers and students operate simultaneously in both the fictional and real worlds to face dilemmas and navigate the "mess"[8] in which they find themselves. Her praxis was centered on "what we discover for ourselves and the group when we place ourselves in a human situation containing some element of desperation" (Heathcote, 1967, p. 44). This approach invited students to build collective and embodied belief as they explored multiple courses of action, the social and emotional subtext of encounters, and reflected on - and possibly re-envisioned - their own assumptions and perspectives. Ultimately, Heathcote was concerned with structuring learning encounters so participants could discover more about themselves through roles that destabilized them from their unexamined biases and assumptions. She believed drama praxis to be a partnership between teachers and students so that real-life understanding could be co-constructed. It is through this lens that all participants of this inquiry and I understand the nature and purpose of drama education. As a result, an in-depth review of the theory underpinning this view of drama education is presented in a following section.

[8] This concept is often referred to as Heathcote's "man in a mess" praxis. According to Bolton (2007) "Heathcote took this label from Kenneth Tynan's 'Theatre and Living", in Declaration (1957) by Tom Maschler" (p. 58).

During the time Heathcote's praxis was "catching on" in England, a form of drama called *creative dramatics* and practiced by Winifred Ward (1930, 1957) of Northwestern University's School of Speech [and her contemporary Nellie McCaslin (1984, 2005) of New York University] was gaining popularity in America. In its most general sense, creative dramatics involved the dramatisation of stories. The objectives of creative dramatics included student opportunities for "controlled emotional outlet" (Ward, 1957, p. 5), "self-expression" (p. 5), creativity and "imaginative thinking" (p. 6), "social understanding and cooperation" (p. 7), as well as "thinking on their feet and expressing ideas fearlessly" (p. 8). The process of doing creative dramatics was guided by a story's plot which may have been known to students in advance. These experiences involved plot re-enactment, characterisation, plot development, as well as development of voice and movement skills. While the focus of creative dramatics often involved the child-centered process of "playmaking" (Ward, 1957, p. 2) rather than performances for external audiences, its emphasis rested in the *enactment* of stories, and *not* the *exploration* of its underlying issues, events, and relationships. This view of creative dramatics is described by Bolton (1985) below.

> Pupils were encouraged to see drama as a story line, teachers were encouraged to train children through a shopping list of exercises in life skills such as sensitivity and concentration, and the importance of individual activity and self-expression was stressed in the name of progressive education. Drama as a symbolic art form was ignored and replaced by an emphasis on direct sensory experience. The content or subject matter of the drama was seen as irrelevant. (p. 154)

Here Bolton describes an orientation toward drama education that is dissimilar and incongruent with the Heathcotean methodology that was emerging in England. Creative dramatics focused on the factual level of story lines while Heathcote and her contemporaries explored the social and emotional nuances that lay *beneath* the story or context.

The use of story in creative dramatics was, and still is, informed by very different interests and assumptions. For instance, in America the notion of skill-based creative dramatics was extremely well-received in the 1950s and 1960s. This popularity, I suggest, was likely due to its focus on linear narrative and skill development at a time when the standards-based education movement was gaining increasing momentum – a movement informed by values congruent with those of creative dramatics (i.e., objectivity, linear progression of learning and skill development). Tyler's (1949, 1950) curriculum development model outlining a logical framework for producing objective-based curriculum-as-plan was growing increasingly popular. In addition, the Russian launching of Sputnik in 1957 spurred Americans into realizing their education system was lacking in comparison to other countries. Demonstrations of public dissatisfaction were prompting American policy makers to invest in systematic education change offering predictability, reassurance and control. As a result, the rise of the objectives/standards-based education movement was extremely influential during this time and creative dramatics became encompassed within this movement.

Popular interest in objective education standards also directly influenced the arts education movement; notions of discipline-based education emerged as a popular topic at arts education conferences and seminars. For example, the 1965 *Penn State Seminar in*

Art Education resulted in a call for increased clarity in what was taught and assessed in individual arts disciplines (Hausman, 1991, p. 2). Additionally, Shaw's (1970) study of behavioural objectives for creative dramatics, influenced by Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of education objectives, stressed the need to quantify learning encounters into observable terms such as discipline-specific checklists outlining defined learning end-points. More recently, an interest in arts education standards was again ignited when arts education was omitted from Goal Number 3[9] of the education goals set out by the National Governors Association and the White House in 1990. Mitchell (1994) suggests this omission became a catalyst for widespread mobilization from arts educators to "lock [arts education] standards and assessment into place so that budget cutters [could not] chop the arts out of the curriculum" (p. 6). Many arts educators and advocates "united forces behind the adoption of national standards for the teaching of the arts" (Mitchell, 1994, p. 6). As a result, the second half of the twentieth century is where, historically, we see the strong emergence of an aims and objectives/outcomes-based curriculum for drama education in America. This tradition, I suggest, ultimately laid the foundation for outcomes-oriented drama education to be subsumed into today's standards-based education movement.

The present context.

As suggested earlier an outcomes-based orientation toward curriculum and assessment values empirical knowing, control, and predictability (Aoki, 1984 p. 8). This

[9] In 1990 Goal Number 3 of the American National Governors Association specified that it was expected that American students would demonstrate competence in language arts, math, history, geography and science by the end of Grade 4, 8, and 12.

orientation is generally represented by discipline-specific and skill-based standards used to define and measure student learning as part of the current standards-based education paradigm – a paradigm that has maintained its dominance in North America and Britain (among other nations world wide) for the past several decades. Drama education is entangled with the influences of this paradigm. Yet, as the above historical review suggests, drama education often manifests through divergent orientations, not simply that of the dominant paradigm. A strong belief in Heathcotean methodology continues. For example, with regard to England, Bolton (2007) suggests that despite "a deadening hand, political as well as philosophical, [that] lay temporarily on the development of drama in UK schools for the final decade of the twentieth century" (p. 54) seminal scholars and practitioners "in British Universities, such as Judith Ackroyd, Mike Fleming, Andy Kemp, Jonothan Neelands, Helen Nicholson and Joe Winston have raised the standard of drama teaching once more, their courses attracting world interest" (p. 58). While these leading figures would not necessarily label their praxis as *Heathcotean-based*, they would, I believe, acknowledge the influence of Heathcote's methodology in their thinking[10].

However, Taylor (2006c) takes a different view on the current state of drama education in England. He argues that an outcomes-based orientation is prevalent and suggests that while England was once "the inspiration for countries worldwide, known

[10] In a recently published collection of Neelands' writings (O'Connor, 2010), Neelands credits Heathcote's (1984) article, *Signs and Portents*, as significant in the development of his own praxis (p. xvii-xviii). Neelands (2000) distinguishes his praxis as a *conventions approach* and describes it as employing "a wide range of 'means' drawn from both the presentational and representational traditions" of performance (p. 48).

for its transformative process drama work" and innovative practitioners (i.e., with Heathcote, Bolton, and Neelands as seminal figures in this movement), a current emphasis on "conservative teaching instruction in classic script-based study, with conventional lessons on play production, semiotic analysis of text, and theatre history and development" (p. 119) is common. This orientation toward drama education is clearly reflected in the writing of Hornbrook (1991, 1998), which is addressed in a following section.

Notwithstanding their differing perspectives on England's current situation, Bolton and Taylor hold similar views in relation to the situation in America. Each suggests that an outcomes-based orientation toward drama education is clearly evident as part of the standards-based education movement (although Heathcotean-based praxis continues to exist). For example, Bolton (2007) suggests that for several decades creative dramatics has been considered a "school subject in its own right" (p. 48) and many American studies (as cited throughout Wagner, 1998) that have researched drama in the curriculum show it to be the prevailing drama education methodology of American teachers. Bolton contends that offshoot genres of Ward's creative dramatics have found "a pathway in schools that have paralleled professional theatre" (p. 49) – that is, a focus on performance-based skill development. Bolton suggests this pathway has permitted drama to be considered a subject area that is "taught" rather than "used" thus giving "classes freedom to invent their own plays with all that implied of acting skills" (p. 48). Similarly Taylor (2006c) suggests that the standards-based education paradigm "has meant that curriculum programs are now neatly divided into generalized competencies, or What

every American needs to know and be able to do in the arts" (p. 122) and this is resulting in "lockstep and cookie cutter" (p. 123) lesson planning.

Considering the views of Bolton (2007) and Taylor (2006c), it is useful to explore more fully how an outcomes-based orientation toward drama education is reflected in current literature and curriculum-as-plans documents. While many drama education publications espouse less technical interests and assumptions, an outcomes-based orientation is indeed represented in some (Hornbrook, 1991, 1998; Kelin, 2005). One example is Kelin's (2005) practice focused on using both known stories and stories of students' personal histories for the development of drama skills. This practice, suggests Bolton (2007), is grounded in the creative dramatics movement and represents "a genre that continues to spread worldwide today" (p. 49). And while many of the available resources on creative dramatics (Crosscup, 1966; McCaslin, 1984; Siks, 1983; Ward 1930, 1957) also reflect a skill and outcomes-based orientation, it is Hornbrook (1991, 1998) that provides the most poignant example of an outcomes-based orientation toward drama education. Hornbrook (1998) advocates for the development and use of specific and skill-based drama standards arguing that they assist in creating legitimacy for the discipline. Aligned with the above, he also advocates for "attainment targets" (p. 18) suggesting that the specificity of such targets (i.e., standards) outlining the expected knowledge and skills in areas such as characterization, plot development, movement and voice help to demonstrate the importance of drama in schools. Therefore, in Hornbrook's view, drama education ought to be concerned with *training* students in the development of skills. Knowledge is seen to exist outside students' understanding of themselves; once

a student acquires a specified level of skill attainment, this accomplishment can then be "checked off" because its achievement is observable to an outside eye.

An outcomes-based orientation toward drama education is also reflected in much of the current standards-based curriculum-as-plan, often produced by education authorities for use by teachers. A quick survey of jurisdictionally-produced kindergarten to grade twelve drama (sometimes called *theatre*) curriculum-as-plan in England and North America reveals it to be, for the most part, discipline-based and comprising lists of performance and/or production skills to be acquired by students. It would appear, I suspect, to a layperson (e.g., school administrator, parent, or teacher inexperienced in using drama) who reads these documents that the primary aim of drama education is student achievement of observable and measurable skills, for the purposes of performance and production. As Bolton (1992) argues, there is a tendency "to want to make theatre knowledge and techniques the basis of classroom drama" (p. 123).

On the other hand, a review of recent drama education scholarship (Bolton, 2007; Gibson & Ewing, 2006; Miller & Saxton, 2009; O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor, O'Connor & Welsh-Morris, 2007; Saxton & Miller, 2009) generally reflects praxis that, in the very least, has roots in Heathcotean methodology. It seems to me, therefore, and I suggest this in the broad sense, that an outcomes-based orientation is frequently reflected in jurisdictionally produced standards-based curriculum-as-plan *documents* while the scholarship and *lived praxis* of many prominent scholars, practitioners, and teacher educators is often grounded in Heathcotean methodology. Hence, Bolton's (1985) reference to the historical tension between "formal and informal approaches" (p. 153) toward drama education is also relevant to a present-day context –

though, considering the significance of Heathcotean-based praxis, I would hardly characterise it as "informal".

Bolton (2007) suggests that a variety of strands and genres of drama education now exist worldwide, many having found their beginnings in Heathcotean methodology. Indeed when asked to describe their drama practice, all participants of this inquiry described assumptions, interests, and/or concerns reflective of this methodology. This is not surprising considering that Heathcote herself has continually modelled this praxis throughout North America since she first addressed American students at Northwestern University in 1969 (home of Ward's creative dramatics tradition). In fact, she recently worked with teacher education and applied theatre students at the University of Victoria in May 2009. Moreover, her contemporaries and friends, particularly Bolton (1992), O'Neill (1995) and Taylor (2000, 2006a, 2006c), have continued to theorise her praxis while British Columbian teacher educators such as Carole Miller, Juliana Saxton, and Warwick Dobson continue to extend it within their own praxis. Certainly, the essence of Heathcotean-based praxis lives on despite the prevalence of the current standards-based education paradigm.

A theory of Heathcotean-based drama education.

While an earlier chapter describes the characteristics, interests, and assumptions of a Heathcotean-based orientation toward drama education, it is also important to underpin this orientation in drama education theory. Heathcote is often credited as being the pioneer in using drama as a way *into* understanding; however it is her colleague, Gavin Bolton, who has been seminal in deconstructing this praxis to outline its theory. As a

result, I have drawn predominantly from Bolton's writing to present the following theory of drama education.

As a basis for this discussion, it is useful to outline Bolton's (1992) argument that there are two forms of dramatic activity in drama education, both of which are important within drama education. He labels these forms as *illustrative performance activity* and *dramatic playing activity.* Illustrative performance activity reflects "the intention to show an idea" (p. 23) and is manifested through strategies such as tableau, mime, chamber theatre, and placing students in role as directors and sculptors (e.g., guiding and sculpting other students into a desired state that expresses an intention). Bolton maintains that while illustrative performance activity is an important form of expression as well as a stimulus for ideas, it should be used sparingly because it "relies on what things and people look like *from the outside*" and "has an overdependence on imitation" (p. 23). "Too much emphasis on credibility, repeatability, and communicability to an audience" cautions Bolton (p. 23) "can be damaging" in that it denies students the experience of dramatic playing activity. Nevertheless "if handled properly" (p. 23), illustrative performance activity can be "powerfully moving and entertaining" (p. 23) as part of dramatic activity.

While Bolton (1992) likens illustrative performance activity to "instant coffee" (p. 23), he suggests that dramatic playing activity often begins "as 'instant coffee' and merges into 'real coffee'" (p. 23). In dramatic play students draw on their understanding of social context-making (explored below) to engage within the fictional world *as if* this world was real. This mode of engagement relies on students' commitment to functioning in both the real life context of the classroom (i.e., as themselves working together with

others) as well as within the fictional world they are creating and exploring. This duality of experience engages students in "spontaneous interaction which is minimally dependent on mimesis" and "is newly created existentially from moment to moment" (p. 12). Bolton suggests that students engaged in the dramatic playing activity mode are "freed from the need to see the creation as repeatable" (p. 12) thus they can "give themselves" (p. 20) to the experience of it.

Quoting Norman's (1981) assertion that drama education is about "making meaning and sense of universal, abstract, social, moral, and ethical concepts through the concrete experience of the drama" (p. 50), Bolton (1985) suggests drama education praxis is ultimately supported by the following four constructs: (a) metaxis; (b) aesthetic attention; (c) subsidiary awareness [a term he borrows from Polanyi (1985)]; and (d) natural understanding. Drawing from across Bolton's writing, I suggest three additional constructs that help to theorise Heathcotean methodology and differentiate it from an outcomes-based orientation toward drama education. These include (a) content-centered, (b) social context, and (c) teacher as co-artist. The following sub-sections explore all of the above constructs though I have combined Bolton's third and forth construct into one called "emergent understanding". In addition, it should be noted that these are not stand-alone constructs; rather they act as interwoven and enmeshed threads within one's praxis.

Content-centered.

Bolton (1992) reminds us that drama education "is a way into knowledge; it opens up new ways of looking at things" (p. 115). "Drama relies on the world for its material. If you like, 'the world' is the dramatist's *curriculum*" (p. 111). For Bolton, what happens in drama is always about something. Rather than focusing on skill development for the

purpose of presentation to an external audience, Heathcotean-based praxis uses role and fictional contexts to explore what it means to be human – that is, human experience through the lens of issues, events, and relationships. Heathcotean methodology is concerned with how people respond to the human dilemmas arising as students work in role within fictional contexts. Drama encounters are structured so the subtexts of these responses can be explored and reflected upon. Students create, and temporarily exist within, fictional worlds in which they face "a problem, a mystery, a journey, a search, or a crisis of mankind" (Bolton, 2007, p. 53). The issues, events, and relationships they discover along the way represent the content of their drama experience. Heathcote (1983) describes it in the following way:

> You have a whole energy of knowledge, all the affairs of mankind "over there". Drama filters it to us "here" through a tiny fissure. That fissure is the event, the episode, and those who *are*, not were, but *are* present at that one moment. We are going forward to induct knew knowledge, but to face that moment we have to draw upon previous, well-understood knowledge. (p. 695)

When in role within fictional contexts, students operate in the *here and now*, or as Clark, Dobson, Goode, and Neelands (1997) describe it, the "virtual present" (p. 27). This mode is alive, dynamic, and fluid; a non-linear narrative. Time and place can be manipulated so that students explore this virtual present from a variety of time periods and perspectives. For example, something that occurred in a character's past could be explored by asking the student to go back to the *here and now* of *that* time in the character's life. Other examples include time being placed "on pause" so the group, in role, can further explore an issue from a variety of perspectives, as well as time being

fast-forwarded so that insights from a character's future can be considered as part of a reflective process. However, whether exploring the past, present, or future *here and nows* of their role, it is always experienced by the student as the virtual present. This provides "a first order, heightened experience" (Clark et al., 1997, p. 27); the type of experience Bolton suggests ignites engagement and ownership in the encounter.

This is a very different type of content than that which is represented by "the received knowledge of the school disciplines" (Bolton, 1985, p. 156), including outcomes-based drama or theatre education which might, for example, be more concerned with the skills involved with building a character, such as concentration and the ability to maintain focus while in role, in order to create a more believable context for an audience. Heathcotean methodology rather seeks to *engage* students with the content of fictional worlds so that ambiguities and complexities can be revealed. In essence, it is concerned with the engagement of participating students, not the engagement of an external audience.

Social context.

For Heathcote, drama education is first and foremost a "collective enterprise" (Bolton, 2007, p. 53), concerned with students coming together to create, explore, and reflect on their experiences within a fictional world so that new ways of seeing the real world can be opened. "Of all the arts" argues Bolton (1985), "drama is a collective experiencing, celebrating, or commenting" (p. 154). This collective experience is powered by the input and responses of a group of students (while being guided by a teacher). It is socially constructed and unfolds in contextual ways.

The collective experience is only possible, however, if students are willing to invest themselves in the social context of both the classroom environment and the fictional

context. Bolton (1992) describes such willingness as the students' commitment to *working at* the social contexts of the learning experience. He uses the term "work at" (p. 2) because the social contexts of drama are not unlike the social contexts of real life in which those present *work at* (either consciously or unconsciously) playing by the "mutually agreed but unspoken rules that give meaning to the context" (p. 2). For example, in real life the behaviour implicitly expected of those attending a formal business meeting is quite different from that expected at a soccer game. Bolton labels the behaviour, or signals, demonstrated at the onset of such social experiences as "descriptive" (p. 4). Descriptive behaviours occur initially as we work to uphold the unspoken behavioural codes of the particular social context. When we relax into the social context, confident we understand the implicitly expected behaviour appropriate to it; we can submit ourselves to collective experience. Bolton states:

> Only when you 'give yourself' to an event can you be said to be experiencing it. You 'let it happen' to you so that you can continue to 'make it happen'. It is both active and passive…You live spontaneously in the 'here and now' of the social event. There is an existential quality to the experiencing, where you are engaging with the social event from *inside* it. *This concept is also critical to an understanding of classroom drama.* (p. 4)

Existential experiences - whether in the real or fictional world - are fragile. In real life, when the implicit behavioural codes are broken (e.g., something goes wrong such as a medical emergency, or when someone's behaviour is disruptive), collective belief in the experience becomes more "descriptive" because again we have to work at re-establishing the social environment to fit its social context.

This is not unlike what happens in drama. However in drama there are *two* social contexts at play simultaneously: (a) the one of real life involves the students in a collective willingness to participate in the drama experience – the social context is the classroom and its particular group of students, and (b) that of the fictional world being created and explored by the students. One of the differences between the two contexts lies in the notion that "in 'real life' we may only be conscious of 'working at' a social context when something goes wrong, whereas in dramatic playing one is constantly aware of the effort required" (p. 11). Another difference is that as part of drama education something will *always* go wrong in the fictional world – the human dilemma will arise, deliberately and carefully structured by the teacher. In this context, instead of requiring students to *work harder* at re-establishing the implicit social context so they can move past the disturbance (as would be necessary with a disturbance in a real life social context), the dilemma of the fictional world aims to *engage* students in the *here and now* of their responses to the disturbance.

Metaxis.

"Metaxis" is a term interpreted by Boal[11] (1979), and adopted by Bolton (1985, 1992), to represent the notion of simultaneously seeing from two worlds, the real and the fictional. This is a powerful state of being because the concreteness of drama as an expressive and embodied medium helps students feel the realness of the fictional world yet "any raw emotion of reality is also tempered by a duality of feeling" (Bolton, 1985, p. 155). Bolton (1992) suggests that it is in the interplay between these two worlds, the real and the fictional, which provides drama with much of its potency. He states:

[11] Augusto Boal was a drama practitioner who used Forum Theatre to give voice to oppressed people in Brazil.

> We have many ways of moving towards [ownership]: through listening, talking through it, reading about it, directly experiencing it, reflecting upon it, applying it and reapplying it. Being 'in role' combines a number of these without being identical to any of them; it is more than listening and talking because 'in context' carries the extra dimension of responsibility; it is a different kind of reading, the symbolic medium being a social interaction rather than print; it is less than direct experience, lacking the power of actuality, yet it can be more than direct experience because of 'metaxis' (seeing from two worlds at the same time) giving a reflective edge to the role-play which direct experience often lacks; it has a sense of applying knowledge, but lacks the consequences of real application. Because it combines these characteristics it moves the learner towards 'ownership' in a dynamic way, affecting the quality of the learning. (p. 33)

Building enough ownership and collective belief so that the existential mode is achieved and students have opportunities to explore, provides access to complex human dimensions such as love, fear, death, and belonging (to name a few). Thus exploration and expression as part of drama education permits authentic yet safely distanced access to such dimensions.

Aesthetic attention.

According to Bolton (1992), the aesthetic dimensions of an art form are present when "*the meaning of the event is, a least partially, encapsulated in its form*" (p. 19). Attention to the aesthetic thus uses dimensions of form to suggest the significance of an event or experience as well as generate meaning. For instance, while dimensions such as "space, time, sequence, uniformity, colour, and hierarchy" (p. 19) have particular aesthetic

significance as part of various art forms, they can be used in drama to generate meanings that resonate beyond the actions and words of students within fictional world. To illustrate, Bolton offers examples of how space can be used to convey meaning: "the positioning of a judge's chair, a monarch's throne, a chieftain's tepee or a church altar" (p. 19) can imply specific meaning, for example, about power and status.

Meanings also resonate with symbolic actions within the fictional world brought to awareness by the skilful use of dimensions of the dramatic art form including "imperative tension", "ritual", "constraint", and the "breaking of constraint or ritual" (Bolton, 1992, p. 114)[12]. When these dimensions are infused into drama experiences through structural decisions made by the teacher as s/he guides the work, fictional contexts can act as a metaphor for the real world. Bolton argues that one of teachers' primary responsibilities is to foster a sense of the aesthetic through such dimensions. The following sub-sections explain ways this might be facilitated.

Imperative tension.

Imperative tension is created as teachers structure activities so that students, in role, begin to sense "that something *must* happen" (Bolton, 1992, p. 114); tension is mounting. Imperative tension can be infused into the drama experience once belief and ownership in the fictional world have been established (often through a *pre-text*[13] and a teacher's

[12] While Bolton labels these dimensions as *components of theatre form*, I use the phrase *dimensions of the dramatic art form* in order to maintain a distinction between drama education and theatre education.

[13] The term "pre-text" was originally used by Cecily O'Neill (1995) though it is now a common term in drama education publications. Pre-texts act as launching strategies for dramatic play and are designed to raise interest, prompt questions, and leave students wanting to know more (e.g., the first three pages of a story, a photograph, a journal entry, a prop representing a bottle of potion).

deliberate use of context-building strategies). Bolton (1992) suggests imperative tension can be infused so that the complexity and urgency of the *something that must happen* is what alerts students' attention and concern. Examples of such tension could include a group of students working in role as factory workers who decide they must speak to their employer because working conditions have become intolerable, or members of a community council deciding what to do about the arrival of an unwanted stranger to their small town. Morgan and Saxton (1987) also provide examples of how teachers can inject imperative tension into the social context of the fictional world. Statements spoken by the teacher in role can build such tension. For example: "The guards change at midnight, so we must all be in place by then", or "But he's a Commandant! What makes you think he would listen to us?" (p. 3). Seemingly simple statements such as these can act as powerful prompts that can engage students more deeply in the dilemma in which they find themselves.

While Bolton labels this aesthetic dimension as imperative tension, Heathcote describes this concept as a process of generating attention and concern. She says: "I must first attract their attention. If I have their attention, I can gain their involvement. Then I have a chance for their investment and from that, their concern. If I have their concern, I have hope for obsession" (as cited in Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 22). One of the key ways Heathcote does this is through her innovative approach called "mantle of the expert", which has become a cornerstone of drama education methodology.

Mantle of the expert engages students in role as experts, permitting them to be *the ones who know* because they have particular information and expertise valuable in confronting the dilemma. Heathcote and Bolton (1995) describe the main features of

mantle of the expert as involving "agreement between teacher and students to take on a functional role (i.e., someone who is expert in running something" (p. 23); the teacher working in role as "someone who is dependent on the students' role for advice and guidance about immediate tasks but who nevertheless has a strong sense…of past history and how things should be done" (p. 24); and the continual pursuit "of raising the students' awareness of how responsibility arising from the particular expertise is part of a value system (p. 24). Bolton (1992) stresses that a true mantle of the expert approach requires much time to develop, often "several days or spread over several weeks" (p. 48) so that students' *involvement in*, and *concern for*, the social context can be firmly established. Fostering such investment permits students in role to "see themselves as experts rather than 'pretending to be' experts". (p. 48). In order to build such engagement, Heathcote typically structures the initial phases of the drama experience around the creation of "an agency"[14] (p. 38) within the fictional world where people who know about, or need to know about, a particular context might come together. Imperative tension can be then be infused because students are invested and feel a sense of ownership toward the issues, events, and relationships involved with the agency. Hence students might "find themselves engaged at a level that goes beyond 'This is interesting' to 'This *must* be dealt with' (Bolton, 1992, p. 32). The reader will note that the mantle of the expert strategy involves the teacher working together with students *inside* the fictional

[14] Heathcote and Bolton (1995) provide several examples of such agencies including (a) a service agency such as a bank or hotel; (b) a manufacturing agency such as a factory, mill or publishing house; (c) a charitable organisation such as the Salvation Army; (d) a regulatory agency such as police station or prison; and (e) an agency of skilled artisans such as stonemasons, plumbers and electricians (p. 38).

context, another revolutionary approach, called *teacher in role* (subsequently explored), that characterises Heathcotean methodology.

Ritual, constraint, and their breaking.

Additional dimensions of the dramatic art form include the use of ritual, constraint (i.e., additional types of tension), as well as the fostering of "temporary chaos" (Bolton, 1992, p. 114) which can be invoked by breaking ritual and constraint. Using ritual, ceremony or procedure can add a formal dimension into the social context of the fictional world, thus infusing an aesthetic dimension. Bolton's (1992) examples include a "courtroom procedure, soldiers on guard, a 'swearing in' ceremony, graduation, school assembly, a wedding, reading a will, standing at a grave-side, interview procedure, proposing a toast, or any event where there is a proper way of *ordering* things" (p. 21). Tension is created when the proper *order* of the ritual (i.e., social context of the fictional world) is disrupted. The sense that something is about to happen, must happen, or must be expressed or revealed, coupled with the sense that this something will disrupt the proper order of the ritual adds a powerful dimension to the experience.

It is sometimes assumed that tension is the heart of most engaging drama and yet, as Bolton argues, *constraining*, and then *breaking* this tension can be even more powerful as a meaning making construct. Constraints, for example, on the expression of conflict and love are among the most powerful in both drama and theatre. We clearly see the dimension of constraint used to build tension in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Other forms of constraint involve concealment, disguise, mistaken identity, and deception, such as in *Twelve Night*. Like theatre, drama can gain its meaning making

power from exploiting such constraint. Unlike theatre drama offers opportunities for students to explore the tension of constraint, not for an audience, but for themselves.

Examples of how the dimension of constraint can be interwoven into drama praxis include the use of (a) physical restraint where a barrier such as a locked door prevents one from expressing love, (b) psychological restraint where feelings are controlled and doled out selectively in order to keep peace among family members, and (c) societal constraint where social pressure prevents one from standing up for someone who is being bullied (Bolton, 1992, p. 55). These constraints can attune students to the subtext of the events, issues, and relationships explored in fictional contexts and permits, argues Bolton (1992), a "sub-focal or tactic" focus on what otherwise might be considered too intense (e.g., death, grief, love) to explore in a direct manner.

The breaking of constraint can also allow for expression, exploration, and reflection – if a teacher chooses to use this dimension. Decisions about how to structure the encounter so that constraint can be broken is the responsibility of the teacher as s/he reads the intrinsic signals coming from the group. When the time is right - for constrained tension can only be held for so long yet must be held long enough to generate investment and commitment - a teacher might structure an event, within the fictional context, that requires one's true expression to *break through*. S/he might do this by using a strategy such as improvisation, hot-seating, or tableaux with captions that allows someone in role to finally lose their temper or permits love to be expressed through a hand-written note. As in real life social contexts, the breaking of constraint does not necessarily *solve* dilemmas; rather it provides a vehicle for expression. Through reflective structures (both

inside and outside fictional contexts), a teacher can then use this experience to support students in making connections between what happens in the fictional and real worlds.

Teacher as co-artist.

As part of Heathcotean methodology teachers play along with their students, often guiding the experience in role as a participant of the fictional world. This way of working *inside* the drama is said by some to have transformed drama education praxis entirely (Bolton, 1992, Taylor, 2000). Prior to Heathcote's work, drama educators, not wanting to intrude on students' creative explorations, largely viewed their role as non-participatory. Heathcotean-based praxis offers an alternative view represented by a powerful strategy called *teacher in role.*

Bolton (1992) argues that teacher in role "is the most important strategy in a Drama teacher's repertoire" (p. 31) as it engages teachers in the action of the fictional world yet permits them to also act as structural operators of the experience. The teacher in role strategy "places the interaction in the present, a present characterised by imperative tension" (p. 33). Teachers can use their role to engage and challenge students, develop the narrative of the drama, infuse tension and constraint, break constraint when needed, as well as infuse reflective processes. Heathcotean methodology views the teacher's use of role as fluid, where coming in and out of role is natural and appropriate for furthering the drama.

Teacher in role requires the teacher to be open and flexible with regard to how student input can steer the drama work. Teachers must structure, negotiate, and co-create the experience as it unfolds. Facilitation decisions about how the drama encounter might further evolve are often made by the teacher *in the moment* during the action of the

drama. One might perceive the responsibility of using the teacher in role strategy as challenging because teachers must simultaneously view the encounter through two sets of eyes – that of teacher, whose responsibility it is to guide the action of the drama, and that of teacher in role, as a participant within the fictional context who is playing alongside of the students. O'Neill (1995) suggests that the teacher in role strategy asks teachers to "tolerate their own spontaneity" while bringing a "quality of mind, the ability to think afresh, to balance impulse and restraint, and to integrate imagination, reason and intuition" (p. 62). Indeed using the teacher in role strategy requires skill and practice yet, as Bolton (1992) reminds us, it has a very similar agenda to that of a teacher's everyday purpose – to ask questions that engage students in their own learning. The difference is that teacher in role offers something that everyday practice does not – that is, dimensions of the dramatic art form. Bolton (1992) states:

> There is a critical difference between a teacher asking a pupil 'If you were the managing director of a chemical firm, would you feel guilty about the chemical waste poured into the ocean?, and as if 'in role, addressing the pupil, 'As managing director of a chemical firm, do you feel any guilt at all the chemical waste your have poured into the ocean?' (p. 33)

The strength of the teacher in role strategy rests in asking genuine questions[15] as they work as co-artists, co-collaborators, and co-creators. In doing so, traditional classroom power dynamics can be defused, student ownership over the learning can be fostered, and metaphorical access to explorations into the human condition can be offered.

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[15] O'Connor (2009) describes a genuine question as one that the teacher doesn't already know the answer to. In response students understand "there is no right or wrong answer, whatever [they] say is right (p. 10).

Emergent understanding.

Much of the knowledge and skills listed in current standards-based curriculum-as-plan documents reflect an underlying assumption that new information can be "acquired and stored by the pupil (Bolton, 1985, p. 156). This information is predetermined by *experts* prior to actual learning experiences, ingested by teachers, and then transmitted to students. This assumption suggests that teachers' and students' readings of the world are irrelevant to the knowledge being imparted; contrary to the interests that underpin a Heathcotean-based view of drama praxis which ultimately seek a reframing of what students already know – a reframing prompted by experiences within fictional worlds. Bolton (1992) maintains that such reframing is related to "values, principles, implications and responsibility – what skills and facts *amount to*" (p. 116). To *know* something is not the same as *understanding* something. As Bolton contends, "understanding can only come from direct experience or from the mediated experience of an art form" such as drama (p. 116). Understanding is thus "bound up with self" and in drama education, self is "affected reflexively by content/form" (p. 119).

The intangible, contextual, and individual nature of such understanding makes it difficult for teachers to *know* what students *understand*. However, Bolton (1992) suggests that knowing exactly what students understand is unimportant as part of drama education because the primary goal is for students to "engage with something that matters" (p. 138) so they might extend their current understanding by interacting with dimensions of the dramatic art form. Engagement and expansion of one's individual understanding is central. This kind of understanding cannot be pre-determined for it is ever changing.

In Heathcotean-based praxis, a teacher's role in supporting the development of such understanding is not to pre-define the ways in which it should unfold and then steer the encounter accordingly, but to foster its *emergence* through his/her role as structural operator of the drama experience. One of the key ways of doing so involves opportunities for individual and collective student reflection. Bolton (1979) reminds us "experience itself is neither productive not unproductive; it is how you reflect on it that makes it significant or not" (p. 126). He suggests there to be three general levels of reflection in drama: personal reflection, universal reflection, and analogous reflection (p. 126). Personal reflection "involves a change in self-awareness of attitude, as when students consciously connect their feelings in a drama with events in their real life" (Wagner, 1998, p. 80). Universal reflection helps students make connections between the "particular" and "a generalized theory" (Bolton, 1979, p. 126) while analogous reflection supports students in making connections between the concepts explored in fictional worlds and other, often societal, contexts – such as those represented in current media stories or literature. Ultimately, all three types of reflection act as ways into understanding and represent an inherently subjective, contextual, and emergent process.

The above sections attempt to articulate a theory of drama education grounded in Heathcotean methodology; however no attempt has been made to describe this praxis in a *step-by-step* manner. This is because drama education continually responds to the "contextual circumstances and the social health of any given classroom" (Taylor, 2006a, p. xv) and unfolds *in the moment*, comprised of a series of contextual and emergent choices made by teacher. Perhaps Bolton (2007) describes it best when he says:

> Experienced practitioners in the art know that its application requires meticulous judgement in: choice of subtext, choice of entry, choice of dramatic form, choice of conventions, choice of texts, degree of persistence, pace of working, degree of student responsibility, extent and style of leader's input, and modes of reflection...[and] selection of the right degree of distancing". (p. 58)

Because such choices are responsive to live input, they cannot be too tightly planned in advance. This lack of rigidity is contrary to the underlying interests and assumptions of the standards-based education paradigm which seems to suggest that curriculum, assessment, and teacher practice must reflect a one size fits all approach. The following section of this literature explores this notion.

Standards-based education.

Standards-based education, known in some jurisdictions as *standards-based reform*, has become commonplace in countless jurisdictions worldwide including those in England and North America. As outlined earlier, the foundational pillars of the standards-based education movement are education standards (i.e., contained in curriculum-as-plan documents) and accountability frameworks that are often linked with large-scale test results and graduation rates. The epistemological underpinnings informing these pillars can be aligned with the "form of knowing driven by the empirical sciences to the movement of positivism, which articulated that there were objective and unambiguous readings of the world" (Taylor, 2006c. p. 116). The standards-based education paradigm is concerned with identification, prediction, efficiency, and knowledge construction in terms of facts and homogenized learning responses. In order to achieve such responses, it is assumed that teachers will act as observers in order to

determine the extent to which standards are met by students. Assessment, as part of this paradigm, is conducted by measuring evidence of student learning against these pre-determined standards. In this view, the authority to determine what teachers and students should know and do resides with those who define the education standards. As a result, learning is viewed as a product; students are viewed as objects and the role of teachers becomes mechanistic.

There is a wide spectrum of opinions relating to the impacts and implications of standards-based education for teachers and students. In general, supporters of the standards-based education movement argue that system-based standards and accountability frameworks can effectively measure system performance levels by collecting data - derived largely from large-scale test results - to inform system-based decision making (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Porter, 2000). This practice is based on the assumption that "setting clear and sufficiently high performance standards for schools, teachers and students will necessarily improve the quality of outcomes" (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 150). However, the National Conference of State Legislature (2005) argues that standards-based education systems can improve learning only when teachers and students have access to structures that significantly support teaching and learning. Others (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2004; McNeil, 2000) voice strong concern for vulnerable students who, they maintain, are at increasing risk of marginalization as a result of standards-based mandates and "test-based accountability schemes" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 9). For example, Darling-Hammond (1994, 2004) consistently urges policy makers to consider issues of student diversity and equity as they continue to entrench education systems in the standards-based education movement. In addition, critical

researchers (Hillard, 2000; Kincheloe, 2005) argue that standards-based and accountability-related measures reduce teacher professionalism so that teachers are no longer active co-producers of knowledge but, instead, transmitters of predetermined content in which a "pristine interpretation" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 286) is inherently assumed.

Darling-Hammond (2004) outlines two different approaches to standards-based education that jurisdictional education authorities might choose to take. She suggests that some jurisdictions approach standards-based education as a refinement of what students should know and be able to do within frameworks where "more resources for student learning, including high quality curriculum frameworks, materials, and assessments tied to the standards" are available, while for others the "notions of standards and accountability have become synonymous with mandates for student testing which may have little connection to policy initiatives that directly address the quality of teaching, the allocation of resources, or the nature of schooling" (p. 1048). Additionally, Sahlberg (2007) suggests accountability frameworks that rely on largely "test-based" measures are often "consequential" in nature and thus "closely tied to processes of accrediting, promoting, inspecting, and ultimately rewarding or punishing schools" (p. 151).

Darling-Hammond (2010) advocates for "intelligent accountability" in which accountability frameworks do not act as monitoring systems but rather reciprocal and shared constructs that include "*standards of learning*, which focus the system's efforts on meaningful goals, ...*standards of practice* that can guide professional training, development, teaching, and management at the school level", and "*opportunity to learn standards* that ensure appropriate resources to achieve desired outcomes" (p. 9). Shared

system accountability would see jurisdictions, schools, and teachers all playing significant roles in supporting "the competence of teachers and leaders, the quality of instruction, and the adequacy of resources, as well as the capacity of the system to trigger improvement" (p. 9). Darling-Hammond (2010) argues that conceptualising accountability in this way can help foster the paradigm shift necessary to "support powerful learning for all students" (p. 13).

British Columbia's standards-based education climate.

Jurisdictional standards-based policies and structures have direct and indirect implications relating to what is taught in classrooms, board/school decision-making about course scheduling systems, and teacher hiring/placements. Moreover, the education climate in which one practices inherently influences teacher experiences and perceptions. Thus, prior to presenting the findings of this inquiry, it is important that British Columbia's education climate be briefly described. This will help the reader to better understand the lens through which participants of this inquiry make sense of the phenomenon being explored.

In general, the British Columbian education system is informed by ends-means and technical interests and assumptions about knowledge construction. These interests and assumptions are reflected in the design of its curriculum-as-plan documents, its accountability framework, and its use of large-scale testing. Education standards in British Columbia currently comprise two types: (a) *prescribed learning outcomes* (PLOs) contained in provincial curriculum documents, and (b) *aspects* contained in BC

Performance Standards documents[16]. The British Columbia Ministry of Education is responsible for producing both forms of education standards. The only *mandated* education standards in British Columbia are prescribed learning outcomes. Decisions about *how* the prescribed learning outcomes are addressed in classrooms, as well as the learning resources used by teachers, are made by local Boards of Education[17], school administrators and teachers.

British Columbia's accountability framework comprises Achievement Contracts, Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements and system-based large-scale testing. Current policy requires each individual Board of Education to create an Achievement Contract and an Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement addressing their priorities for improving student achievement levels as well as graduate rates. The completed contracts/agreements act as accords between boards and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education also collects data based on the results of provincial, international large-scale tests including FSA (Foundation Skills Assessment focusing on reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy), TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics

[16] The BC Performance Standards are four-column formative assessment rubrics outlining broad aspects (i.e., standards) in the cross-curricular areas of reading, writing, numeracy, social responsibility, healthy living, and ICT integration. Aspects outline key concepts in these areas and are accompanied by four-column rubrics. Samples of student work are also included. Aspects differ from prescribed learning outcomes in that they are designed to support teacher practice and student learning through classroom-based formative assessment as opposed to mandate specific content standards.

[17] The term *Board of Education* refers to an education authority responsible for schools within a particular regional district while the term *school district* represents the geographical region in which the schools reside.

and Sciences Study) and PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). Based on the results of these tests, student achievement levels are calculated and policy decisions are informed. Results are also available to schools and families for local decision making. School and district-based results are available to the public and are often reported in the media.

Drama education within this climate.

As outlined within a Ministerial Order (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Governance and Legislation Branch, 2008a, p. E-89-90), "fine arts" (including all four disciplines - dance, drama, music, and visual arts) is listed as a "required area of study" for all students from kindergarten to grade 7. A choice of only one fine art discipline is required for students in grade 8 and 9, although many middle schools offer several as part of their timetable. Readers should note that although drama education is a *mandated* component of every student's education program, according to participants' narratives, it is not always used or taught. There are no large-scale tests for any of the fine arts disciplines, nor has drama education ever appeared in an Achievement Contract and/or Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement as a priority to support student achievement within a particular school district.

Summary of Literature Review

Throughout this literature review, the epistemological tension between the interests and assumptions of a Heathcotean-based orientation toward drama education and the standards-based education paradigm is clear. This lack of congruency is problematic because it suggests that those teachers concerned with drama education who practice within a standards-based education climate are inherently practicing amidst powerful

epistemological tension – a tension that manifests, as this inquiry's findings show, in several significant ways. These findings are explored in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two - Methodology

Methodological Framework

This inquiry is concerned with the experiences and perceptions of British Columbian teachers in relation to how drama education is being impacted by the current standards-based education climate. What was required, therefore, was a methodological lens that honoured the contextual, holistic, and narrative accounts of participants within a framework that permitted reflexive meaning making based on these accounts. As a result, I chose an interpretative interview methodology and approached it from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective as well as drew on traditions from narrative and poetic inquiry to support data collection and analysis. This blended methodological framework permitted an emphasis on subjective understanding and meaning sought through a process of discovery and interpretation, privileged participants' narratives as data, as well as recognised the contextual nature of experience, including my own, as inherent within the meaning making process.

Five classroom teachers from three different British Columbian school districts participated in this inquiry. The meaning that arose from their accounts of lived experience and the interpretative processes involved in creating such meaning, are central to the chosen methodological framework. This inquiry's methodological aim was to explore participants' interpretations of their experiences by collecting, analysing, and reflecting on their narratives. The term *narratives* is used broadly here to describe participants' orally generated stories and perceptions of experience which were transcribed by me, the researcher, into written texts for analysis [i.e., "textualized" (Van

Maanen, 1988, p. 95)]. These narratives were reflected on by the participants and me in order to generate new understanding about the phenomenon.

Three interconnected influences.

Laverty (2003) and Madison (1988) suggest that qualitative methodologies emphasizing discovery and meaning offer *guidelines* for using responsible principles and transparent judgement in *generating understanding* rather than setting out prescriptive rules and methods that researchers must follow. This is an important notion within this inquiry because three interconnected methodological influences are reflected here, each offering relevant elements and an interpretative world view. These influences are: (a) hermeneutic phenomenology, (b) narrative inquiry, and (c) poetic inquiry. They are briefly discussed below as well as subsequently highlighted in relation to specific data collection and analysis processes.

Hermeneutic phenomenology.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as rooted in the theories of Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975), is the study of human experience with a focus on the interpretative processes influencing the construction of meaning made from texts (e.g., written or verbal communication, transcriptions, works of art, music). While both phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology are concerned with the meaning of human experience, a hermeneutic view sees a strong interrelationship between one's continually emerging frame of reference and meaning making processes. For example, a purely phenomenological perspective would ask the researcher to bracket his/her presuppositions (Husserl, 1964) so that the phenomenon can be explored without bias, while a hermeneutic perspective would consider the constructivist nature of knowledge

construction as central to discovery and reject the notion that one could explore a phenomenon without bias.

Heidegger (1962) argues that all human encounters are influenced by one's personal experience, or "historicality" (p. 336). He suggests that one's understanding and expectation are inevitably reciprocal. Therefore interpretation is connected to a set of forestructures (i.e., assumptions and beliefs). These interpretative influences on the construction of meaning must be made explicit as part of research processes. Drawing on Heidegger, Polkinghorne (1983) suggests such accounting should be addressed through a reflexive process, sometimes called a *hermeneutic circle*, in which one moves from individual elements to common elements of experience recursively in order to discover meaning.

Building on Heidegger's theory, Gadamer (1975) argues that understanding occurs through an interpretative process involving a "fusion of horizons" (i.e., concurrent past and present frames of reference) through which the "historical horizon is projected" and simultaneously superseded" (p. 306) by the present horizon. He also argues that language and understanding are ultimately interwoven and therefore interpretation is continuously emerging. In other words, the construction of knowledge is ever unfolding. Gadamer's view recognises that one's frame of reference, influenced by both past and present viewpoints, is central in the search for meaning. This tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology is strongly coherent with this inquiry because both are concerned with understanding as it unfolds through the reflexive, reciprocal, and recursive interpretations of those involved in the meaning making process.

***Narrative as a way knowing*.**

This inquiry is concerned with honouring personal narrative and story as data. Bruner (1986, 1990) provides a theoretical foundation from which much of the methodological literature involving narrative and story has emerged. He suggests that narrative and the creation of stories are fundamental in the way many people create meaning. In this view, story making is a mode of understanding – a way of knowing. Bruner argues that narrative understanding is more complex than emotive expression; it is a legitimate form for reasoned knowing and, as such, is a natural part of our cognitive repertoire. According to Bruner (1990), people do not understand the world "event by event or with text sentence by sentence" (p. 64); instead they frame their experiences in larger narrative structures such as plot, time, and point of view. Story, therefore, is a common means of interpreting, reflecting on, and communicating ideas about, one's experience. It is a way of organizing and reflecting on our thoughts and experiences. "Storying" suggests Booth (1992), "is our constant attempt at exchanging identities and remaking the past, a mode of looking back in order to go forward" (p. 31).

A natural human tendency to construct meaning through story is also evident in the narratives of this inquiry's participants. As part of our interview conversations, all five participants communicated several of their experiences by telling me stories about events and/or interactions that occurred within their classroom or school. Their predispositions toward using story during their interviews in order to interpret and communicate their experiences is not surprising, particularly considering they frequently use drama, a medium that draws heavily on story (Booth, 1994, 1995; Booth & Barton, 2000; Miller &

Saxton, 2004). The inter-relatedness of story and drama is described by Booth (1994) in the following quote:

> Drama allows us to tell stories, to engage in the art of narrative. The simplest retelling of yesterday's events is an act of imagination, as we have the option of reinventing the characters, experiences, circumstances, motivations, and outcomes. Fictional storytelling, like drama, encompasses, and extends the possibilities of human experience…Drama may be one of the few language situations that opens up story possibilities, that allows spontaneous narrative to enter naturally into the flow of talk…so that narrative mode can be an integral part of the school curriculum. (p. 39)

Four out of this inquiry's five participants made note of specific story drama structures[18] which they had used, or were planning on using, as part of their practice. Considering Bruner's (1986) assertion that narrative is a "way of knowing" (p. 11) and also taking into account participants' frequent use of story drama structures as part of their practice, participants tendency to seamlessly *cross into story* during their interviews reflects, I suggest, a natural congruency between the phenomenon and methodology of this inquiry.

Poetic inquiry.

Another way in which this inquiry reflects a natural human inclination to construct meaning through narrative is represented by my choice, as researcher, to use poetic representation as an explorative and interpretative medium. Poetic representation

[18] The term *story drama structures* is used by Miller and Saxton (2004) to describe outlined story dramas presented in a format to support teachers in exploring stories with their students. Several participants independently named specific story drama structures available within Miller and Saxton's (2004) resource called *Into the Story*.

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involves researchers in creating poems from "field notes, journal entries or reflective/creative/autobiographical/autoethnographical writing" (Prendergast, Leggo, Sameshima, 2009, p. xxii) in order to explore and express meaning. These poems are "framed in a research context" and represent the "re-searching of experience and sorting into expression and communication through language" (xxii). My interest in using this medium emerged during the data collection and analysis processes because common elements across participants' narratives were extremely strong and I sought a means to explore individual essences. Drawing on the tradition of *poetic representation* within poetic inquiry methodology offered a congruent medium for meeting this need.

While poetic inquiry is a relatively recent phenomenon on the methodological landscape, the process of creating haikus within education research is theoretically grounded. Sparkes, Nilges, Swan and Downing (2003) argue that poetic representation can act as a powerful form of data analysis offering researchers "a different lens through which to view the same scenery, and thereby understand data, and themselves in different and more complex ways" (p. 155). In addition, Glesne (1997) provides an account of her analysis process involving poetic representation. Her study uses poetic representation to compliment typical qualitative analysis procedures involving coding and organising data into themes by creating poetry inspired from interview transcripts. Similarly, Neilsen (2004) offers a rationale for using poetic representation in interpretative education research. Among other observations of its merit, she suggests that poetic representation requires researchers to become aware of participants' subtext, language, rhythms, and subtleties, as well as choose representative language carefully because each word, line break, and space can have deep meaning (p. 42). Indeed, within this inquiry the

sparseness of haiku format obliged me to excavate each narrative, re-examine my field notes, and revisit my reflective writing so that I could interpret the meaning of what participants were trying to tell me, but in some cases may not have been able to clearly articulate.

Data Sources, Collection and Analysis

Data sources.

The primary source of data for this inquiry is participants' narratives – that is, transcripts from interviews with five teachers working at either an elementary or middle school in British Columbia. Narratives about how their classroom drama practice unfolds as part of the overarching standards-based education system reflect their interpretations of experience as communicated in conversations with me. Transcripts from two loosely semi-structured interviews with each participant provide "textualized" data (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 95). Interviews were transcribed by me from audio taped interviews. In addition, field notes made by me at the time of transcription, haikus created by me to explore the essences of each participant's narrative, as well as my own reflective writing can be considered complimentary sources of data that were used to inform the findings and implications of this inquiry.

Selection of research participants.

Not all elementary and middle school teachers have expertise in drama education - a concept highlighted as part of participants' narratives. As a result, a "network selection" process (deMarrais, 2004, p. 60) was used to identify a list of potential research participants for this inquiry. Network selection involves the researcher in soliciting the advice of one or more key people who can refer her/him to potential research participants

fitting the researcher's selection criteria. In my case, one of my doctoral co-supervisors is knowledgeable about drama education programs and practitioners within British Columbia school districts. She and I brainstormed a list of potential research participants known to use drama as part of their regular classroom practice and who might meet the criteria for selection. The criteria used to identify potential research participants during the initial brainstorming process included (a) practising teachers within the British Columbian education system, (b) teachers working at a public or independent elementary or middle school, (c) teachers known to use drama education as part of their classroom practice, and (d) teachers collectively representing a range professional teaching experience. It should also be noted that criteria did not include a need for participants to be considered drama education specialists. Miller and Saxton (2004) remind us "it is not uncommon to find drama strategies suggested as curriculum pedagogy for a variety of subject areas" because drama education has "become an accepted means of integrating learning experiences" (p. 1) within today's classrooms.

Having established the criteria, I then made contact with the identified teachers and those interested became research participants. Five teachers participated in this inquiry, interestingly all of which were women[19]. A brief description of each participant follows:

Sarah: Sarah has been teaching in British Columbian schools for more than ten years. Her past post-secondary teacher education and graduate studies include a strong focus on drama education. She currently teaches at a middle school where she integrates drama

[19] While gender is noteworthy as an inherent influence and lens within this inquiry, a theoretical and methodological exploration of gender issues is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

education into her general practice as well as teaches drama *exploratory/FAAS* courses. (FAAS refers to "fine arts/applied skills"; the concept is subsequently explored.)

Judy: Judy has been teaching in British Columbian schools for less than five years. Her past post-secondary teacher education and graduate studies include a strong focus on drama education. She currently uses drama education strategies as part of her general practice at a middle school. She is not currently teaching a drama exploratory/FAAS course but has done so in recent years.

Isabella: Isabella has been teaching for approximately twenty years. She currently teaches at an elementary school. She is somewhat new to using drama education as part of her practice but recently "fell in love with it" when a drama teacher educator visited her school to model drama education with teachers and students. Isabella recently completed a graduate studies program.

Maxine: Maxine has been teaching in British Columbia for more than fifteen years and has always used drama education as part of her general practice. She currently works in an elementary school and integrates drama education strategies when teaching almost everything.

Emily: Emily has been teaching in British Columbia for less than five years. She has taught in both elementary and middle schools but prefers middle school where she is currently located. As part of her teacher education program she took a drama education methodology course. Emily uses drama education has part of her general practice as well as teaches drama exploratory/FAAS courses.

Data collection.

Prior to the first round of interviews, all participants were sent an identical "interview guide" (deMarrais, 2004, p. 53) outlining several questions they were invited to consider (see Appendix A). Several questions were designed to be open-ended so that participants could be prompted if needed (i.e., "Describe a situation in which…", "Tell me about a time in which…") yet could also take the interview in individual directions based their experience. During the interviews, these questions often functioned only as flexible guideposts because each conversation evolved in very different ways based on participants' individual stories and interests.

The last question of the first interview with each participant provided the most structure within the interview guide. This question asked participants to consider their own teaching practice in relation to attached descriptions about what it might mean to be an artist teacher (Miller, Saxton & Morgan, 2001) within the current education paradigm. This question provided an additional frame through which participants could reflect on the phenomenon as well as offered insights into how they understand their experience as practitioners.

The second interview with each participant occurred several weeks after the first and was approached as a follow-up conversation. The time frame between interviews offered participants reflective space to further consider the inquiry topic in relation to their own teaching practice as well as permitted time for me to transcribe the first interview and consider focal points based on concepts from the first interview that required deeper excavation. The second interview then probed further into each participant's particular experience. In addition, I used several strategies throughout the interview and

transcription processes to explore and interpret my own emerging responses as researcher. Field notes, reflective writing, and the creation of haikus all acted as explorative media for me and I was able to discuss many of these emerging interpretations with participants during the second interview. Participants also shared their emerging thoughts and insights. As a result, this two-interview research design contributed to a reciprocal and reflexive process through which meaning was explored and co-constructed.

Researcher's lens as inherent and interwoven.

With any qualitative inquiry rooted within interpretative methodology, the researcher is inherently implicated in the construction of meaning. My own understanding of drama education as grounded in Heathcotean methodology, as well as my life experiences as a mother of a school age child, and a provincial curriculum coordinator, naturally framed the way I made meaning from this inquiry's data. As consistent with Gadamer's (1975) argument that understanding is constantly unfolding, this inquiry prompted my own understanding of the phenomenon to continually expand in response to participants' narratives, interview conversations, and my own doctoral research journey. I believe my presence as researcher within this inquiry is implicated in the following ways:

- Early in my doctoral program, I became alarmed by Taylor's (1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2006a, 2006b) cautions that the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education are eroding as a result of the positivist influences of the standards-based education paradigm. My concern prompted me toward this particular inquiry.
- My orientation toward drama education was transparent to participants throughout the inquiry process.

- Early in the data collection process, I carried an assumption that participants would likely not be comfortable with *any* type of standards (e.g., prescribed learning outcomes and/or aspects) relating to drama education. I believe I held this view because much of the literature I reviewed prior to conducting the interviews was largely critical of the standards-based education movement (Giroux, 1981, 1994; Grundy, 1987; Kincheloe, 2005; Pinar, 2004) and its impact on arts education (Eisner, 2000; Greene, 1995a; Taylor, 2006a, 2006c). Once I began interviewing participants, my assumption quickly became apparent to me as I realised participants' drama practice often incorporated the BC Performance Standards (particularly those for writing, reading, and social responsibility). Recognising this assumption confirmed my understanding that the relationship between drama education and standards is complex. Indeed, participants' perceptions of it are highly dynamic and in some cases, emergent as part of their participation in this inquiry.
- My sense of advocacy for drama education grew increasingly charged throughout the inquiry process. As the findings and implications became clearer, so did my interest in seeking ways to preserve drama education within schools.
- I became increasingly disturbed to hear participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the lack of understanding and value of drama in their schools. I was disheartened by the struggles of participants who strive to use drama education within an overarching system that does not make it easy to do so.

While I believe my interpretative frame did not *overpower* the understanding generated by this inquiry, it did inherently interweave with and influence the process. Thus is the nature of an interpretative inquiry, particularly one concerned with the

meaning of experience, where personal narratives function as the primary source of data, and reflective processes guide the construction of understanding.

Data analysis.

While several narratives in this inquiry were offered in storied form, *all* offered personal, contextual, and interpreted accounts of experience. An analysis framework that honoured the individual and contextual nature of each participant's narrative yet allowed common themes to be illuminated was needed. A paradigmatic framework was therefore used so analysis could be conducted through both a hermeneutic phenomenological lens concerned with "working toward meaning through a structured process that is pre-determined yet influenced by data" (Laverty, 2003, p. 20) as well as a narrative inquiry lens concerned with both the unique and common elements within stories of experience (Kramp, 2004). Paradigmatic analysis, suggests Polkinghorne (1995), is often used in the analysis of narratives seeking to "uncover the commonalities that exist across the stories" (p. 14). In other words, this analytic framework focuses the researcher in analysing individual narratives as well as identifying any patterns and commonalities among the narratives. This permits reciprocal movement between stories and common elements, thus making space for hermeneutic exploration and interpretation.

Analysis through a hermeneutic lens asks those involved to be self-reflexive because it demands reflective discourse about experience while simultaneously constructing interpretations of such experience and exploring how those interpretations emerged - a process sometimes referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1962). Within this inquiry hermeneutic circles were engaged in several ways: (a) two reciprocal conversations with each research participant spaced by opportunities for reflection,

transcript review, and reflective writing; (b) my own process for exploring and interpreting narratives through field notes, reflective writing, poetic representation, and transcription; and (c) several conversations with my doctoral co-supervisors and other educators about the emerging meaning of the data. By recursively and reflexively engaging in these processes throughout data collection and analysis, I was able to (often in conversation with participants) make meaning from participants' experiences in relation to how drama education is being impacted by the current standards-based paradigm.

Data organisation based on individual participants.

Once two interviews had been conducted with each participant, an organisational structure for the data was required to further support interpretation and analysis. I decided the data would be organised by individual participant narratives, as opposed to grouped by interview rounds or pre-defined concepts derived from theory. This was an easy decision to make because this structure unfolded naturally during the data collection process throughout which I wrote participant-specific field notes and reflective responses.

Creation of haikus.

Kramp (2004), a narrative inquiry scholar, discusses the importance of honouring the individual and contextual essences of each participant's message by first analysing individual narratives and then exploring the convergence of common elements across the narratives. Within this inquiry, while participant-specific field notes and reflective writing supported analysis of each narrative, the strong common elements from across all interviews made it challenging for me to isolate each participant's messages. I wrote haikus in order to developer deeper understanding of the essence of each narrative. In

doing so I was able to honour the emotions, subtexts, ambiguities, confusion, and tensions that characterise their experiences and perceptions. These haikus appear as poetic representations throughout a subsequent chapter.

Reflective writing.

Writing reflectively throughout the inquiry process served as a vehicle to interpret emerging concepts, make connections between theory and data, as well as explore my own responses to the findings. In essence, this writing evolved into a reflective research journal through which I could explore the ways in which this inquiry was illuminating insight. The writing was the medium through which I came to explore my continually emerging perspectives and my own unexamined assumptions that were coming to the surface through my involvement. Such "awakening", as Greene (1992, p. 13) calls it, represents the *seeing of self*. It is exactly the type of destabilization that drama educators often hope their students will engage in through their encounters with drama. Much in the way that contextual and emergent understanding as part of drama education cannot be pre-determined, I never anticipated the nature of my own associated awakenings and their power to challenge my personal and professional understandings (see *Endpiece*).

Quality and Credibility

The use of conventional "validity" procedures associated with qualitative research (e.g., multiple sources of data, acknowledging researcher lenses, and member checking) are generally well established practices within interview studies (deMarris, 2004). In addition, "reliability" practices such as conducting more than one interview with each participant, finding patterns among multiple sources of data, and maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 2003), can also represent quality within such studies. It should be noted

that while this inquiry intrinsically incorporated all of the above listed procedures, my interest here lies in a more critical exploration of coherence between inquiry topic and issues of quality and credibility.

The terms *validity* and *reliability* connote a sense of objectivity within an inquiry; a reassurance to the reader that data findings are not contaminated with bias or subjectivity. These terms suggest that an inquiry has been conducted with both *rigour* and *system* (Taylor, 1998b, p. 83) – two attributes that are, essentially, at odds with the interpretative nature of this research. Unlike Doll's (1993) post-modern view of rigour as "interpretation and indeterminacy" (p. 182), the term rigour in methodology related discourse is often used in a modernist sense, implying strictness, and rigidity. In addition, the notion of *system* or *systematic process* denotes a sense of order and predetermination based upon a set of stringently agreed upon principles (Taylor, 1998b, p. 83). Conversely, this inquiry is grounded in subjectivity and contextuality. Its findings and implications are informed by, and situated within, the British Columbian standards-based climate, the classroom-based realities of five participants employed by three different Boards of Education, the use of personal narratives as data, as well as an authentic exploration of my own lenses as an inherently implicated researcher. These interpretative dimensions must therefore be honoured as central to this inquiry's methodology within any discussion of quality and credibility.

In response to the incongruency reflected between the nature of this inquiry and the connotations associated with the terms validity and reliability, issues of quality and credibility are instead grounded in Eisner's (1998) concepts of *structural corroboration*,

consensus and *instrumental utility*. This view of what it means to produce quality research better resonates with the interpretative nature of this inquiry.

Structural corroboration, consensus, and instrumental utility.

Structural corroboration is Eisner's (1998) term for "the confluence of multiple sources of evidence for the recurrence of instances that support a conclusion" (p. 55). Within this inquiry, participants' narratives reflect strong common elements. So much so that I found it necessary to introduce poetic representation to the methodological framework as a means of exploring, interpreting, and honouring individual essences. While subjective and contextual lenses definitely influenced participants' experiences and perceptions, themes involving legitimacy, assessment, and tension were consistent across all narratives; structural corroboration is clearly reflected.

Eisner uses the term *consensus* (1998, p. 57) to describe an additional strategy for ensuring an inquiry's credibility. He suggests consensus is "a form of multiplicative corroboration" and is represented by "concurrence as a result of evidence deemed relevant to the description, interpretation, and evaluation of some state of affairs" (p. 57). Not only does this inquiry represent the notion of consensus through the common elements across individual participant narratives, it is also reflected in a situation specific to the configuration of my own doctoral program. I have two doctoral co-supervisors, each with different areas of specialization. Due to busy schedules, I often met with them individually to discuss emerging findings and their responses to my draft writing about the inquiry topics. Their feedback, although often offered separately, resonated with that of the other supervisor. In general, both supervisors individually identified similar concepts within writing that required further deliberation as well as offered somewhat

consistent feedback. I believe the nature of their individual yet analogous feedback reflects the type of consensus that Eisner outlines.

Eisner's (1998) third criterion for assessing the credibility of an inquiry is instrumental utility (p. 59), the *usefulness* of the inquiry. If an inquiry is useful, its findings will act as a guide that "deepens and broadens our experience and helps us understand what we are looking at" (p. 59). In this inquiry, the findings and their implications act as stepping stones in the construction of understanding about the meaning of current impacts on drama education as a result of the standards-based paradigm. Its associated implications for curriculum, assessment, teacher practice, education policy, and continued scholarship are illuminated. Not only does this inquiry contribute to our understanding of these constructs, it provides direction for future inquires. I urge that continued inquiry is vital because, as evident in this inquiry's findings, the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education – the very reasons for using it – are at risk if a critical examination of several current education structures does not take place in the very near future.

The issue of generalizability.

Considering the interpretative nature of this inquiry as well as the fact that education policy makers are one of the intended audiences of its findings, the issue of generalizability must be addressed. While the concept of generalizability is not entirely relevant here because it denies the contextual nature of individual experience, my concern lies primarily in making the findings accessible to this particular audience. I believe policy makers would gain tremendous insight from the findings and implications yet I am concerned that qualitative research may not be viewed as highly credible by

those making systematic policy decisions through, what I suspect may be, an positivist lens.

Researchers (Norris, 1990; Simons, 1996; Stake, 1987; Winston 2006) suggest that a similar paradox, relating to the generalizability of results is often represented in case study findings. In Winston's (2006) words, "the relationship between the uniqueness of its terms of reference and the generalizability of its results" (p. 43) may discourage policy makers from seriously considering results as relevant for system-based decision making (Simons, 1996). Simons also urges policy makers to acknowledge the uniqueness of such contextual research as a "means of understanding complex human situations and human encounters" (p. 226) because it is these situations and encounters that ultimately inform teaching and learning.

Education policy makers, while often in the business of devising systematic jurisdictional policies, must understand that contextual and multiple realities are the basis of experience in classrooms and school communities. These realities represent the diversity reflected in students' lives. Acknowledgement and space for such diversity should, in my opinion, act as the fundamental interest supporting curriculum, assessment, and praxis. Policy making, as a result, should be informed by research inquiries that highlight the contextual nature of teaching and learning. For example, curriculum-as-plan developed through a positivist lens results in a much different construct than that designed to support locally-relevant and constructivist approaches.

The subsequent findings of this inquiry have much more to offer than perhaps education policy makers might give them credit. Convincing them of such, however, will depend on their willingness to view curriculum, assessment, and praxis through a non-

technical lens. The *Implications* chapter of this dissertation also outlines suggestions with regard to how such re-envisioning might be focused.

Chapter Three - Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect the experiences and perceptions of the research participants with regard to the phenomenon being explored. Data are organised and presented in relation to this inquiry's guiding question: How are drama education and the practice of teachers who use drama education being impacted by the standards-based education climate of British Columbia? In exploring this question, many tensions are highlighted. These tensions represent the fundamental undercurrents of this inquiry and are explored in the following chapter.

Making Sense of Drama Education and the Standards-based Education Movement

The ways in which participants make sense of drama education as well as the standards-based education movement influences their perceptions of these constructs and, as a result, how they frame their narratives.

Perceptions of drama education.

Participants were invited to contribute to this inquiry because they use drama education as part of their practice. Given that different orientations to drama exist, it was important, early in the first interview, to ask each participant *why* and *how* they use drama. Without labelling their praxis as such, all responded by describing a Heathcotean-based orientation toward drama education. In their own words, they provided reasons such as "it builds relationships", "it helps to explore big ideas", it develops "empathy", "it wakes up students' brains …and gets them thinking about other perspectives", "it helps them think deeper about things that matter", it provides "authentic

experiences" and opportunities for "honest reflection", it helps "them to be thinkers…and gets them excited", as well as it "builds trust".

It became clear to me throughout the interviews that while some participants had strong expertise in using drama, others had only recently discovered it. These participants, while not experts in drama education, had a strong sense of *commitment* to it. I believe this commitment was present because they often observe their students making connections, uncovering new insights, and expressing what they know in embodied and engaged ways. In essence, I am suggesting that participants of this inquiry are *invested* in and *concerned* about drama education – enough so that they are *committed* to regularly infusing it into their practice. As a result, I found participants' varying amounts of drama expertise to be an insignificant factor within this inquiry because all have a passion for using it regularly.

Another perception about drama education apparent in all narratives is that drama education is often undervalued, misunderstood, or ignored by their school administrators and/or teaching colleagues. Several spoke of colleagues who lack understanding about drama education and/or school administrators who view drama expertise as unimportant when hiring and/or assigning teachers to courses within middle school timetables. Participants' perceptions that drama education is generally undervalued inform the lenses through which they respond to many of the interview questions. As a result, issues of value and legitimacy act as undercurrents in this inquiry.

It should also be noted that participants' narratives deal with two different yet interconnected drama education contexts within schools. As a result, the following distinctions are made throughout this inquiry's findings:

- *Drama education*: participants refer to many situations in which they use drama as an integrated and cross-disciplinary learning medium. They often use this term in reference to drama practice with their homeroom and/or regular classes in elementary and middle school environments. Within their narratives, some participants interchange the term "drama education" with "process drama".
- *Drama courses*: participants who work in middle schools sometimes refer to their drama practice in relation to a scheduled drama course within their school's exploratory or FAAS course scheduling system.

Perceptions of the standards-based education movement.

Early in the interviews I asked each participant how she makes sense of the standards-based education movement. While all participants inherently responded through their own personal and professional frames of reference, there are common undercurrents reflected in these responses. They are listed below and detailed subsequently.

- Among participants there is a strong association between the standards-based education movement and large-scale testing. During interviews, this association often prompted participants to ensure that I understood their dislike for such testing as well as how it confines their general teaching practice.
- All participants expressed frustration with either the "required" report card template or general summative reporting policies determined by their Boards of Education.

In addition to participants' strong association of the standards-based education movement with large scale testing and reporting issues, another commonality emerged in relation to how they made sense of the standards-based education movement in relation

to the BC Performance Standards. Interestingly four out of five their individual conversations with me often unfolded in similar manner:

1. After immediately expressing frustration with large-scale testing and confining reporting requirements, participants sought clarification about how the BC Performance Standards relate to the standards-based education movement. In my view, this reflected their need to clarify what I meant by the term "standards-based education movement" as part of the interview questions.
2. Typically, after this question was raised, I discussed my earlier literature review findings in which two consistent characteristics of standards-based education systems are revealed: the use of standards to define and measure learning outcomes, and accountability frameworks that monitor system performance.
3. Following my response, participants each clarified one of two things: they find the BC Performance Standards useful and don't associate them with the standards-based education movement; or (b) they had been thinking about the *American* version of standards in their initial response to the question.

The narratives below offer further insights into how participants make sense of the standards-based education movement as a phenomenon.

> **Maxine**: I'm a Performance Standards person way more than a standards-based person. ...I think of standards as those for schools where the government takes them over basically – where on September first, you teach page one, on September second, you teach page two.
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> ***

Isabella: I'm…going to qualify. ...When I've been using the term standards, I've been thinking of American education and I translate it into the PLOs in BC. I haven't looked at the concept more widely in the literature. But what a good question…"*What are standards*?" Because I tend to think of American standards-based education.

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Judy: I actually felt that they [prescribed learning outcomes] were really helpful to me at first…and they still are. I don't go back to them so much now for ideas…basically I'll plan my unit and then I'll go and check "*Am I fulfilling these learning outcomes?*" And then sometimes I'll think "*Oh, that learning outcome, I haven't done that and it gives me an idea to do this*". I don't really see them as the enemy. I see them as a support - as a new teacher - to…guide me through. I find...the Performance Standards have really helped me when it comes to marking, especially in writing and reading comprehension. That's been really helpful.

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Emily: I really like them. I print them off and I have them in the front of my mark book…the IRPs, the Performance Standards…anything…everything is in the front of my mark book.

The above narratives reveal participants' varied reactions to the concept of standards-based education. In general I found their narratives to expose much ambiguity, contradiction, and uncertainty. It became increasingly clear to me that strong and sometimes elusive tensions influence participants' unfolding understanding of the

phenomenon. The BC Performance Standards thread - which is strong throughout this inquiry - is a clear example. Aspects included in the BC Performance Standards are one type of education standard in British Columbia; however these aspects are a broad, open-ended form of education standards so participants often don't associate them with the specific, discipline-specific, and mandated nature of prescribed learning outcomes.

Moreover, some participants completely disassociate their use of the BC Performance Standards with the overarching standards-based paradigm suggesting that BC Performance Standards are not at all similar to the specific education standards and prescribed instructional methods they associate with American standards-based education climates. The question that emerges therefore is: What is it about the BC Performance Standards that cause participants to distinguish them from the notion of standards-based education. This question is explored in greater detail throughout following chapters.

Six Findings: An Exploration

Participants' narratives about how drama education, and their practice of it, is being impacted by the standards-based education paradigm reveal several findings:

1. Participants use drama education as an integrated learning medium to address many disciplines. For those working in a middle school, this occurs in addition to teaching scheduled drama courses.
2. Participants are concerned that perceived standards-based priorities and pressures leave little opportunity to address drama (outside scheduled drama courses that occur in some middle schools).

3. Due to tensions manifested by the standards-based education paradigm, participants are concerned about the general state of drama practice in elementary and middle schools.
4. Participants experience summative assessment and reporting requirements to be problematic in relation to drama education.
5. Participants' assessment-related perspectives and practices are shifting toward more formative and student-involved processes.
6. There is a strong interest among participants in greater systematic legitimacy for drama education. For all participants, this interest prompted a hesitant consideration of how increased standards and accountability for drama education might serve this need.

Finding 1: Drama education as a cross-disciplinary learning medium.

Narrative data from across interviews indicates that all participants, whether teaching at an elementary or middle school, use drama education as an integrated cross-disciplinary learning medium. Participants who work in an elementary school use drama *solely* as a learning medium while those who work in a middle school often teach scheduled drama courses *as well as* use drama as a cross-disciplinary learning medium with their homeroom/regular class. This is an important finding because it suggests that teachers tend to use drama as a cross-disciplinary learning medium rather than a compartmentalized area of study. In fact, for those participants who teach scheduled drama courses within a middle school, integrating concepts from across disciplines is also often part of their drama practice within these courses. Participants talk about using drama in order to integrate several disciplines such as mathematics, science, health and

career education, as well as cross-disciplinary literacies such as reading, writing, and social responsibility. Drama education, in this sense, functions as a classroom *methodology.* The following narratives provide examples of how two participants, each working within an elementary school, use drama as a cross-disciplinary learning medium.

> **Isabella:** There are lots of writing outcomes, lots of social responsibility outcomes that fit with it [drama]. …And also the PLOs around drama. I think you can hit a lot of PLOs by using drama. That's kind of how I teach. I think about how many PLOs – or standards – I can hit with each activity.
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> **Maxine**: I do drama when I'm doing things in math or science. I go into role doing the pizza house…and I come up to kids that are a little nervous about math and I hear their thinking and they are participating. ... As a teacher, you're not putting up a wall, or closing the door on them like you might do with a test. "*You're wrong*". No, how about "*You show me what you know; show me how you came up with that answer. Why do you think that is the answer?"* …The Performance Standards help [drama education and standards-based education] to naturally fit together. That's how I survive in math.
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> **Maxine:** I look at the grade 5 PLOs and think, "*Okay, I have to teach mapping"* – you know, social studies. I think "*How can I get at that? How can I make it as interesting and as fun as possible*? And immigration…why should I read from the text book and answer questions – paper-pencil, paper-pencil…why can't the kids do social studies through role?

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Isabella: I basically look for the experiences I want the kids to have and then I look for the standards from all the different subject areas that fit with it.

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Maxine: The coolest experience was when I did *Riding the Tiger* with [focus on] social responsibility. ...We did a social responsibility drama – and they loved it! We went through the process of creating Danny's life through tableaux. ...They said "*We don't know who Danny's parents are*". "*Well, who do think Danny parents can be…based on what we know from this picture? What do you think*?" It was amazing. Each group came up with something different about what Danny's problem is…they really got into it. At the end, I put up the social responsibility Performance Standard Scale and I said "*Where would you put Danny on this scale*?" It was the first time that I actually saw my class with some of the little bad boys, if you want to call them that, actually participating. I didn't have one problem.

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Maxine: I don't teach drama units but I have a little bit of that at the back of my mind. I do a lot of brain breaks with drama. …To be honest with you, my teaching is mostly all integrated because, even when I did *Riding the Tiger*, to me that was reading, writing, responding to literature and yet they made tableaux and they used the social responsibility Performance Standards. I think in any job you can try to integrate it so school is not so factory like. …We're

doing drama in the morning and drama after recess and calling it math. Then it's time for social studies and we're doing drama again.

The above narratives represent participants who work in elementary schools. Those who teach in middle schools, where scheduled drama courses are part of the school timetable, also talk about how they integrate drama education in their general practice. The narratives below reflect this choice.

Sarah: This past year in grade 8 I actually did quite a bit of drama in with my class. I also did drama in with my regular class.

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Sarah: One of the things that I want to explore this year in my humanities course is the First Nations renaissance that is happening right now - drama is a great place for that.

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Sarah: Grade 8 social studies is so much about the white European explorers. It is…European history. I would like to do something that is a step removed from what is happening on the west coast…a story drama or something with the book *Encounter*, by Jane Yolen, would be great.

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Judy: I do drama, especially using literature and language arts. I find that they really do know how to become another person. When they're reading a story…they can put themselves in that character's shoes…becoming another person and writing about how it must feel to be that person. …In grade 7, I think it's really important to continue teaching empathy because students get a lot

more egocentric. That's why I like teaching social studies so much. It's about stories and imagining others' lives.

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In the following narratives, another participant who also teaches in a middle school suggests that working in partnership with a colleague can help support teachers with cross-disciplinary drama practice.

Emily: Drama is a great way to integrate things into one. You could do a great language arts and social studies drama if you are not limited by the block schedule. Although even with the block schedule, you can still collaborate with somebody and say "*Hey, could we do this, could we team teach for a month?"* If you have a great partner that you could do that.

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Emily: I'm really excited and passionate so what I do is…look at them [prescribed learning outcomes and aspects], figure out what I want to do and then figure out how what I want to do fits with what I have to do. It always fits; there's always a way. There is never a problem. And if something isn't there, I can make it work. It's just never a problem. I don't find that I am limited – ever.

Below, a participant talks about attending a Board of Education-facilitated literacy workshop and quickly realises that many of the approaches and strategies being modelled have clear similarities to those used in drama education. She states,

Judy: The district is teaching a lot of workshops – getting teachers to do the *Smartreading* framework. …I took three two hour courses on it and as I'm

sitting through it, I just kept saying "*This is drama, this is drama*". We've been doing this in drama for thirty years.

The above narratives suggest that the pedagogical approaches often used in drama education, such as small group sharing, exploration through movement, body, and voice, fostering student ownership over what and how concepts are explored, actively engaging students through opportunities for them to express their ideas, as well as reflective de-briefing, are those that can support students to engage in authentic learning experiences – regardless of associated discipline. Despite drama's richness as a learning medium, the following findings and subsequent chapters reveal that it continues to suffer from a general systemic lack of understanding about its value in student learning.

Finding 2: Opportunity for drama education.

Participants' narratives suggest that drama taught as a discrete discipline does not widely occur outside scheduled drama courses in middle schools because teachers generally have little expertise with it and/or few opportunities to develop confidence in, and commitment to, using it. Participants base this notion on their own classroom experiences as well as their perceptions about the practice of their colleagues. Four out of the five participants independently talked about how perceived standards-based system priorities and perceived pressures are limiting classroom opportunities to teach drama. According to participants' narratives, this constraint is resulting from:

- Pressure from parents and/or school administrators for students to perform well on Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)[20], District Assessment of Reading Team

[20] *FSA* refers to Foundation Skills Assessment; annual provincial large scale assessments focused on reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy for students in grades 4, 7 and 9.

(DART)[21], School-wide Writes; teachers feel pressure to prepare students for these tests thus spending much time in doing so.

- Pressure for teachers to address an overwhelming number of prescribed learning outcomes from across many required disciplines within a given school year.

The following narratives reflect participants' perceptions of how drama is being constrained by the standards-based education climate.

> **Isabella:** I think having a really highly structured standards-based focus doesn't encourage that [the trusting of oneself to follow the direction of the learning] naturally. I know a teacher who teaches grade 4 – where they do the FSA testing. She feels extremely strong that her responsibility is to prepare those kids for that test. So her kids do really well…because they practise the tests all year; that's their focus. This is an impact of standards-based education. There's no reflection other than how better to prepare the students; not how better to inspire them.
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> **Emily**: In elementary schools, because of the pressure from standardized testing and…the fact that there is so much to cover, I think drama gets lost…and pushed to the side. I think in some classrooms, it just doesn't exist. And in some teachers' minds, it doesn't exist. I would bet that they don't look at the PLOs. ...I would bet that there isn't enough time in the day to do drama. I think most people would say "*Just let it fall off the side"*.

[21] *DART* refers to District Assessment of Reading Team; a large-scale assessment administered at the discretion of boards of education.

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Maxine: I've had to explain myself to parents because most parents I deal with are the FSA types. They want to know the FSA marks and talk only about that. They say, "*I want to see my child's marks based solely on tests*". That's it. They don't want to hear about tableaux and they don't want to hear about participation or anything else. All they want to hear about are the tests.

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Emily: In today's newspaper there's the *Elementary School Report Card* and all the schools are ranked. It's all there…the FSA results. …But it's one test and it's one day and something like drama isn't even reflected in those results. Something that like can be very hurtful for drama. I know of teachers that teach in the States and they have so much pressure to teach to the test…when that pressure is there, it becomes so important that the test results dictate everything. The funding, the jobs…everything. That's damaging. I see that large-scale tests can be damaging. It's really detrimental when things like FSA and DART are more important than what we do every day in our classrooms. When numbers become more important than the teachers' feedback or feeling of what's happening. …I think that's really damaging and really scary.

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Isabella: I don't think the standards-based education movement is interested in drama. I don't think that is one of their goals. They are interested in "the core subjects".

In addition, the following narratives represent participants' views about the large number of prescribed learning outcomes within the provincial curriculum-as-plan for each required discipline.

Maxine: There are too many learning outcomes. …If they seriously think at the Ministry of Education that you actually cover all of them, they have got to be kidding. I deal more with behaviour in a day than I do with anything else.

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Emily: Too many, too much. My colleagues say there are too many outcomes. "*I can't do it all, I can't do it*". When things change - if something has been updated - somebody who has been doing things their own way for ten or fifteen years…begrudgingly looks at the new curriculum and thinks, "*Oh no, now I have to start from square one"*. Or "*Why can't I do what I've always been doing? Why isn't that good enough?*"

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Judy: There is always that feeling of *"*not enough time". I do know that drama wasn't being done ten years ago anymore then than it's being done today. But maybe that was just because of the feeling of fear around it and maybe today it is the concern that they can't fit in all the PLOs from all the subject areas.

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Isabella: I think my mentor in this area is Alfie Kohn. He says that the more numerous and the more prescriptive the PLOs are…the worse your teaching becomes. There is an inverse kind of correlation there. I believe him. I think that…the PLOs, or standards, cause people to skim the surface and do coverage

rather than in depth teaching. I think - you know the old thing - they are a mile wide and an inch deep. I think they actually prevent many teachers from going deep and creating meaningful learning with kids.

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Isabella: The grade 6 social studies PLOs…you practically need a PhD if you were really going to meet them all. They are all higher level thinking skills. …You are not just going to learn about something; you are going to interpret it, analyse it, and apply it in a new situation. There is no way in one year you can do it all. You could take one of those and spend all year with it if you were really going to do the higher level thinking piece. You could maybe do one.

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Isabella: I find the Fine Arts IRP[22] so difficult to use because there is too much in it. …We are generalist teachers so we have to look at the IRPs for every subject. I only use them to pluck out a couple of PLOs to put on report cards and to guide me. …I have to say…I really don't use them very much to be honest.

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Judy: The amount of outcomes in general has a negative impact on drama because there are so many outcomes for reading and writing; there is so much to do. Because teachers are not seeing the connections between drama, reading and writing, they can't take the time to do drama because they have to do all

[22] *IRP* refers to Integrate Resource Package; the label for curriculum-as-plan documents in British Columbia.

these others. They only have time to teach the PLOs in a way that they are already comfortable.

It is clear from the above narratives that the large number of prescribed learning outcomes, coupled with pressure from parents and/or school administrators for teachers to support their students in producing high large-scale test results in seemingly high priority areas such as literacy and numeracy, are significant factors in teachers having little opportunity to teach drama. Participants' concerns are echoed by research (Tucker & Coding, 1998) suggesting that in many jurisdictions a narrow focus on improving literacy and numeracy has eroded opportunities for teachers to address aesthetic and moral education as well as social sciences in their classrooms. In addition, the Center for Education Policy (2006) asserts that American school districts have reported a reduction in time spent by teachers in addressing a least one other discipline due to increased system-wide attention on those subject areas for which large-scale tests are associated.

In my opinion, an interesting paradox arises with this finding because the concept of drama as a discrete discipline aligns with an outcomes-based orientation toward drama education – an orientation underpinned by very different interests and assumptions than Heathcotean methodology. Participants of this inquiry draws content from cross-disciplinary concepts - yet are also concerned there is little time for their colleagues to teach drama as a discrete discipline. I wonder if the underlying concern here is essentially about teacher expertise – those colleagues who have little or no drama expertise simply don't use it at all. Perhaps, in the minds of participants, *some* discipline-specific drama as a starting point in developing an integrated drama practice would be better than none at all.

Finding 3: Drama practice in schools.

Finding 2 indicates that perceived priorities and pressures representative of the standards-based education paradigm are impacting teachers' opportunity to use drama. Several participants suggest that such impacts function as barriers for teachers with little drama expertise to gain interest or confidence in using drama into their general practice.

For participants of this inquiry drama is a part of their integrated classroom practice. Four out of five, however, express clear concerns about the drama practice (or lack thereof) of their colleagues. In general, they perceive some colleagues to have either little or no interest or expertise in using drama. Therefore, they perceive that drama, as a discrete discipline and/or cross-disciplinary learning medium, is generally not being practised. In addition, some participants suggest that colleagues may be using improvisation games inappropriately as time fillers or rewards for attentive behaviour while focusing on other disciplines. The underlying concern is that these games may represent the *only* drama experiences encountered by students in classes. Such improvisation games, or *theatre sports* as they are sometimes called, often rely on descriptive modes of being in role and have little resemblance to Heathcotean-based praxis. In fact, Bolton (1992) says "I wish 'Theatre Games' had never been invented, and as for 'Theatre Sports'…! Neither of these false trails are likely to give a grounding in good Theatre or good classroom practice (p. 122).

Expertise and artistry.

Participants' narratives, particularly those of Maxine and Judy**,** highlight concepts of fear, control, risk taking, and pressure from parents in relation their colleagues' drama practice. The following narratives illuminate these concepts.

Maxine: Drama scares them…they don't do much drama. They are terrified that there are no written responses, there's not the whole A, B, C thing. It scares them, even though you have guidelines, even though you have outcomes, even though you know you want to take kids on this journey. As the teacher, I am going to go on the journey with them…and we might not end up exactly where I thought we were headed, but we are going on this journey anyway. They are scared because they can't check off the right answer at the end of the journey…they wouldn't be in control.

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Judy: I think there's fear of losing control of the kids but also the fear of having to perform. …When you have a scripted drama structure, there is a lot to follow - in the beginning. Eventually you see how similar they are and it becomes easier. You learn you can come up with the language yourself. …It's like me with my math textbook, I have to keep checking it see what to do next. But to make drama feel natural, the teacher doesn't necessarily want to have that on their arm…they don't want to have to memorize lines. …That's the fear around it.

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Maxine: I despise those teachers who are afraid to - I know this is judgemental on my part - they just want to use tests so they can show the parents. "*Here's your daughter; we read a story and here are the ten questions I gave your child and she regurgitated the answers. She knew the setting, she knew the…whatever*". That's just surface stuff; the setting, the main characters.

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Maxine: There is a still a gamut of teachers out there that just use paperwork and the tests. They think they are servicing these kids. Eighty five percent of my class came from a teacher that - she's lovely, don't get me wrong, she does some neat things with the kids - but she's very focused on "fill in the blank". "*Here's a booklet to take home with you for the weekend and that's your homework*." And that's how she teaches. She might do readers' theatre but then there will be a test at the end of it based on the characters and the setting. …She is really comfortable with that style. She can easily justify by showing parents the test marks.

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Maxine: They just don't do drama. …I saw that with my colleagues. They do lots of cut and paste…they don't take the "polar express", pretend they are the conductor, and blow a whistle and say "*Come on aboard, we're riding to the North Pole – did you see that deer*?" They don't play with the kids. They are afraid to play. They're afraid that if they pretend and go into role - and I've seen this - they are going to lose control.

Maxine and Judy raise important issues relating to colleagues/other teachers' fears of being too afraid to play because play results in learning that is not easily observable or assessable based on specific and pre-determined learning outcomes. Fear of multiple and unanticipated learning results (if, in fact, learning results can be known at all) may result in these teachers feeling "out of control". Perhaps such teachers have a false impression. Drama praxis does not involve teachers in releasing control of the learning encounter or

environment. Indeed, the contrary is true as drama praxis involves attentive facilitation that takes into account, and folds into action, student responses as they emerge. Teachers act as structural operators of the experience and in doing so they make space for emergent and co-constructed understanding to unfold.

Obvious tension surfaces for teachers who do use drama because the overarching standards-based education paradigm is predicated on them acting as competent technicians in directing students toward pre-determined learning outcomes, as opposed to co-artists. Within this standards-based paradigm, teachers are expected to steer student learning toward the meeting of predetermined learning end-points. However, when a group of students explore issues and relationships within a fictional world, the understandings that arise are often unpredictable. The root of this tension ultimately lies in the epistemological clash between the interests and assumptions that support drama education (i.e., contextual, emergent, and co-constructed understanding; exploration of unexamined perceptions and bias) and those that inform the standards-based education movement (i.e., control, predictability, transmittable knowledge).

Despite the perceived hesitancy of their colleagues in using drama, all participants of this inquiry choose to use drama as an integral part of their practice *despite* drama's fundamental lack of coherence with the interests of the overarching standards-based education paradigm. As several participants suggest, they have experienced the learning possibilities of drama as a cross-disciplinary learning medium; a medium they now understand as too powerful to be underutilized. As one participant said when describing how she used a story drama structure to support her students' writing skills, "it was very powerful…I'm sold now". Two questions then emerge: How do the participants of this

inquiry – that is, participants who are *not* "afraid to play" and who *do* have a commitment to using drama – see themselves as practitioners of drama within British Columbia's standards-based education system, and how might their experiences be different from those of the colleagues they describe? The following section explores these questions.

Attached to the guiding questions participants received prior to their first interview with me was a summary of Miller, Saxton, and Morgan (2001) views on artist teachers and how attributes of artist teachers might emerge through continued teaching practice/praxis. Drawing on Barron's classification of the characteristics of creativity (1988), the authors categorize teacher practice/praxis as being that of the *novice*, *crafter*, *effective,* and/or *artist teacher* and associate each with increasing amounts of teaching experience. Each participant described how they relate their own practice to the following categories.

Novice Teacher

Miller et al. (2001) suggest that teachers (hopefully) emerge from teacher education programs with the ability to use their accrued pedagogical knowledge to reflect on their practice in order to continually improve and feel more comfortable in their role as teacher.

Crafter Teacher

The authors suggest that crafter teachers evolve their practice to incorporate attributes such as open-mindedness and responsiveness as well as commitment to reciprocal relationships with students so that new spaces for understanding can unfold.

Effective Teacher

Miller et al. suggest that effective teachers are "present at the rendezvous between student and curriculum" (Barone, 1998, as cited in Miller et al., 2001, p. 99) and can work with "live" (Miller et al, 2001, p. 100) input by responding to the dynamic "needs and narratives" (p. 100) of those involved. Effective teachers, they suggest, embrace the idea that there are multiple ways of understanding and seek out the possibilities associated with "not knowing" (p. 100). In other words, they are comfortable trusting the flow of learning as it unfolds based on student input.

Artist Teacher

Miller et al. (2001) describe the artist teacher (p. 101) as reflexive (reflection about how teaching informs their practice and vice versa) and responsive in her/his praxis as well as responsive to emergent student learning needs as they arise. The artist teacher also possesses an easy ability to defamiliarize and decenter students (e.g., by exploring unfamiliar perspectives and unexamined assumptions) so that students can create new awareness and unearth new meaning (p. 103-104).

Each participant individually indicated that their practice is representative of a *combination* of the above categories. Each also suggested their practice to be dynamic across categories. None of the participants firmly identify themselves with one particular category. They often see themselves in different categories depending on their experience and expertise in particular areas or situations. For example, two participants talk about their novice tendencies in relation to teaching situations and disciplines with

which they have little expertise and also discuss their confidence in using drama and how they associate this confidence with artistic teaching qualities. In addition, participants' narratives suggest an interest in shifting their classroom practice from a controlling stance to one where understanding is generated through facilitation and questioning so that students' responses can inform the learning process. In others words, they are interested in *drawing out* emergent understanding, rather than *imparting* it. The following narratives provide examples of such practice-based shifts.

> **Sarah:** In my main role as a classroom teacher, I would say that I am generally going back and forth between an effective teacher and an artist teacher. To me the artist teacher is…when you can say "*Now, wasn't that magic, wasn't that wonderful!"* You know that you have responded to a potential…you have made the learning possible in really meaningful ways for the kids. …I think generally I'm an effective teacher and there are times where I am an artist teacher - when we all know that we've had a great learning experience together. As a teacher, you bring the artistry because you are thinking on your feet. You can have the scripted story drama in front of you…but to take it to the next level…and be able to…think of a myriad of possibilities and then make the best choice - that's what an artist does. …They [a teacher's pedagogical choices] come out of the moment, the flow, and the students. Sometimes you get it and sometimes you miss it. …To recognise when you've missed it, I think is just as important. "*Oh, it wasn't quite the right way to go so maybe next time I'll be watching for that opportunity*."
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Judy: I see myself in and out of all three; novice teacher, crafter teacher, and effective teacher…because I'm so new to the public school system. I feel that I'm a novice teacher in some ways but I also feel that my general…confidence …can put me into these other areas very quickly. …When it comes to the nuts and bolts of teaching math, I feel like a novice but when it comes to the intuition of relating to children, I feel that I'm more of an effective teacher.

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Isabella: I think - in my brilliant moments - I'm the artist teacher…that's what I strive to be. When people ask about my creativity, I say, "*Well, I'm creative in the classroom. I don't sing, I don't dance – my creativity is in the classroom*." Teaching becomes effortless. It's…magic. …And of course you go back and forth among the categories…depending on what you are teaching and how comfortable you are with it.

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Maxine: Where would I put myself? I think between effective and artistic. I bounce between the two. But more towards the artistic because we could be talking about one thing and all of a sudden we go in this new direction because of the students. For example, all of a sudden we went off in the direction of nuclear physics because one of the kids was really interested in nuclear physics. We starting talking about…how long we have left on Earth and for how long the planet might exist…and what we could do about it. …It was very cool and I just kind of went with it. It's amazing when that happens. All these doors get opened up.

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Emily: I certainly see aspects of how I would *like* to see myself as a teacher. …I like how the novice teacher description says "reflect on their practice in order to continually improve" because that's something that's really important to me. I also like what it says about the crafter teacher. I like the "open-mindedness", the "responsiveness", and the "reciprocal relationships" because reciprocal relationships are really important to me. The effective teacher – that's where I would like to see myself as a teacher because of the "live" teaching – that's me. I love that! I love it when you can get right in and you're going somewhere totally different than where you planned ongoing…but it's totally working. That's a good day.

The importance of contextual and emergent understanding is a concept represented throughout most of the above narratives. Participants suggest they are comfortable, and at times enthused, by the idea of student responses powering the learning. Several participants talk about how using these responses to inform the work can result in "magic" and unexpected destinations. Their willingness to trust, I suggest, is reflective of their fundamental rejection of an ends-means and technical orientation toward curriculum and assessment. As Dorothy Heathcote reminds us, it is the rich learning explorations prompted by the *not knowing* that helps "takes away the drudgery" associated with always knowing where you're going and how you'll get there (D. Heathcote, personal communication, June 2, 2009).

Course scheduling systems and teacher placements.

In addition to expertise and artistry, other factors emerge in the data that help to unpack participants' concerns about the state of drama education in schools. These factors involve middle school course scheduling systems and associated teacher placement decisions. Those participants teaching at a middle school are employed by Boards of Education that have implemented either an *exploratory* or *FAAS* course scheduling system. While labelled differently by different boards, these systems are similarly structured so that a particular class of students will take a variety of scheduled, short-term, and consecutive courses or modules. Each course is roughly six to ten weeks in duration and is designed to address one of the fine arts or applied skills disciplines including, but not limited to, drama, visual arts, dance, music, home economics, information technology, and wood working. A class of students might take the drama course for several weeks and the move onto a visual arts or wood working course during a concentrated period during the school year. Each fine art and applied skill discipline is addressed only once per school year for each class of students. For example, if a grade 6 class is scheduled to take the drama exploratory course from September to mid-October; these students will not take another drama course until the following school year.

Participants also express strong sentiments about how teachers are assigned to exploratory/FAAS courses as well as the implications related to associated teacher drama practice.

> **Sarah**: The sense in our district is that anybody can teach drama – basically anybody can teach anything. …For instance, I'm teaching computers. ...Another colleague of mine who teaches more computer classes has a…vested interest.

He is more knowledgeable and knows what he's doing – he should be teaching my [computer] class. But I am basically…filling the position because it's a timetable issue. I see that same situation with drama. I am the one person who really knows what's going on but we have a whole range of teachers who are plunked into drama courses based on the needs of the timetable.

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Emily: The wood shop teacher…needs massive qualifications and certifications to be a wood shop teacher. I could never [teach] wood shop without these qualifications and certifications – and he is teaching drama! He hates it and doesn't want to be teaching drama. He's doing it to make up the time and almost doesn't have a choice. …He's trying to get out of it.

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Judy: I taught [drama to] six hundred kids over the course of last year. ...It was like a drama factory.

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Sarah: One of the things that I'm going to do this summer…is to set out some guidelines for the people who are going to be teaching the grade 6 and 7 drama courses so that my school has some consistent progression from grade to grade in drama courses. That way we are not repeating things and there can be some development of skills and ideas. This would help us to actually have a school drama program – because currently we don't. Drama courses are just teachers doing their own thing…a whole bunch of different people teaching it. I would say that we probably have about six people teaching drama next year. I'm

> teaching all the grade 8 drama courses but grade 6 and 7 drama will be taught by between six and eight different people - none of whom with any background in drama.

As implied in the above narratives, a teacher who is assigned a drama exploratory or FAAS course may or may not have an understanding of, commitment to, or expertise in, teaching drama. While this reality is surely not unique to drama education, it is indeed a clear concern for participants of this inquiry.

The implementation of exploratory and FAAS course scheduling systems appear to represent an attempt by Boards of Education to establish school timetables that include a variety of disciplines and ensure students receive a sampling of each, hence the term *exploratory*. I believe these systems require reconsideration because they create timetable constraints that result in teachers being assigned to courses arbitrarily and raise serious concerns about the general quality of teacher drama practice in middle schools. As a result, misunderstanding about the value of drama education as a legitimate component of the overarching system is perpetuated. Teachers with little expertise in or commitment to drama are, I suggest, not likely fostering contextual and emergent understanding through drama education.

One participant also reminds us that when expertise and/or commitment is lacking, improvisation games might act as the main focus of a drama program. She suggests that in such cases "drama programs could end up being a lot of games: *Let's play Octopus again*." Other participants reflect similar concerns.

> **Emily**: I would never want to see the drama content [within curriculum-as-plan] shrink below what it is right now. I have seen from administrators - more than

any other subject - a downplaying of drama qualifications. …I think they think that anybody can teach drama. In order to give our kids a good experience, you have to have someone who is passionate about it teaching it. [Drama is] being de-valued more and more. In the schools there is this attitude: "*If you teach cooking, you can teach drama. If you teach physical education, I'm sure you could teach drama.*" They say, "*We'll just throw so and so in there and it will be fine*". Once you are hired by the school system it doesn't matter what your qualifications are, you can teach anything.

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Sarah: Yes, drama is left up to the professional autonomy of each teacher who is assigned the course within the timetable - with absolutely no guidance; no guidance what so ever. Except that fact that we [teachers] are very collegial and we help each other out.

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Emily: If new PLOs for drama had content that was really strong and specialized, I think that would keep this from happening more [teachers with little drama experience being placed into drama courses]. So the content needs to be specialised, strong, and detailed to help with that.

The above narratives illuminate some of the tensions generated by exploratory and FAAS course scheduling systems and their associated teacher placement realities for drama education. Tensions, however, occur when epistemological ideas and influences clash and manifest as part of school-based realities. As illuminated in participants' narratives, such tensions include:

- A perception among participants that school administrators undervalue drama education. This is reflected in hiring practices that may not include "expertise with drama education" as a job requirement and/or, due to timetabling pressures, the placement of in-service teachers with little expertise in or commitment to drama education, into drama exploratory or FAAS courses. This can result in poor quality drama practice.
- Unmotivated or non-confident teachers assigned to teach drama courses. This can result in a lack of student access to "dramatic playing activity" (Bolton, 1992, p. 11).
- Short-term student exposure to drama education that may not expose them (or their parents) to the rich learning possibilities available through drama.

The overarching impact of these tensions is that drama education may continue to be misunderstood and undervalued because few students are exposed to the rich and authentic learning experiences it can provide. As a result, I suggest that exploratory and FAAS course scheduling systems likely do not support drama education in becoming better valued as part of the larger system.

Finding 4: Summative assessment and reporting requirements.

While only one guiding question touched on the concept of assessment, participants' narratives are saturated with commentary on this issue. One of the most common assessment-related concepts to emerge is an unmistakable frustration with summative assessment requirements for drama. All participants express frustration in having to produce summative marks/grades for either fine arts or drama. There are two focal points for this frustration: (a) their difficulties in representing the contextual and emergent nature of student learning through drama as part of one final summative mark/grade/pre-

defined comment; and (b) reporting requirements/templates that call for *one* final mark/grade to represent a student's learning across *all four* arts disciplines combined (i.e., dance, drama, music, visual arts).

Transforming formative judgments into summative results.

Transforming on-going formative judgements that can result from assessment-as-learning[23] approaches into one summative representation of a student's learning is a difficult task for all participants and, as some suggested, a somewhat arbitrary one. Participants are frustrated with system-based reporting requirements such as filling in digital report card templates and choosing generic statements about student learning from drop-down menus because their reporting mechanisms simply do not have the capacity to represent authentic student learning. The following narratives attest to participants' frustrations.

> **Sarah**: Giving students a mark is quite challenging. For instance, I have always had the kids keep a drama journal and I give them specific questions I want them to respond to. I ask them to write about their experience in drama work. Last year we did more writing-in-role and some self-evaluation. But this year I did very little individual assessment I have to say…very little individual. …I really think self-evaluation is important in drama and a little bit of peer evaluation based on group work they had done. In my district, we have quite an archaic reporting program. Teachers have to look for pre-written comments that

[23] Earl and Katz (2006) describe *assessment-as-learning* as formative classroom-based assessment that "focuses on students and emphasizes…as a process of metacognition (knowledge of one's own thought processes for students" (p. 41).

match the student. It happens every year…the person who runs the reporting program will say, "*Okay you have until this date to get any new comments in*". I always seem to either miss the date or can't quite think of what I want to say. So I always end up re-using the same comments and they are very generic. The assessment for drama…has been really weak. Trying to figure out what final mark a child should get is very difficult.

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Maxine: I find report cards extremely dreadful.

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Judy: A big part of me wishes that drama was graded at middle schools because it needs to be taken more seriously as a subject. But I know that opens up a huge Pandora's Box because then you have the issue of: *What is an A in drama?*

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Isabella: I have to give letter grades.

Kristin (researcher): How do you decide what those letter grades will be particularly when you have used drama education in an integrated medium?

Isabella: I look at the BC Performance Standards and I use my professional judgement - which is a valid way. …I don't have any numbers really. [Later in the interview] I think the one area we struggle with is how to translate [experience] into letter grades. If a child is "not meeting" in one area, "exceeding" in another, and "fully meeting" in another – how do you translate that into a letter grade? You can do anecdotal reporting really easily with the Performance Standards but that's part of our problem; letter grades don't reflect

ideal teaching. …You would have to give…500 letter grades…one for every standard because kids don't do everything the same way. …That's the frustration - how do you translate those into a letter grade?

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Maxine: I like giving descriptions, I'm flexible. I look at the whole child - the family life, how much sleep are they getting each night, what they are eating at lunch, how much exercise…I just do…I think in an elementary school, we should.

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Emily: For each report card, we have to report on a different [exploratory/FAAS]. Students might take cooking one term, woodworking in the next term, and then drama. There's a comment bank and then students get a percentage – which is hard in drama…but that's how it works in my school - they get a percentage and that translates into a grade. Teachers are responsible for updating the comment bank once a year. If you are new to a subject area or school and you miss the deadline in September…your comments aren't there when it comes time to create report cards. So then you have to plug in your automatic "*1, 5, and 4*" which might say "*So and so did a great job in drama*" - which isn't very meaningful. It doesn't really say what you want it to say.

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Sarah: The problem for fine arts teachers is summative assessment. They have always fought against it – the difficulty they face when they are looking at creative projects or creative work and then they have to put this label on it. A

label of what's good and what's bad - that's really hard to do because creative work is so subjective.

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Emily: What's really important – especially for drama – is to be able to keep really good notes and evidence to share with parents or administrators or…the students themselves. Drama is more difficult to assess because you don't necessarily have something to tangible to show. You can't say, "*Well look at this essay, or look at this DART mark, or look at this FSA result, or… whatever*". …In drama, you can't really go back to anything like that – once it's done, it's over.

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Maxine: Maybe on the day they wrote the test, they weren't feeling well. Or maybe they didn't understand the instructions, or maybe there were certain words they couldn't read. Maybe if I actually read it out loud, they would have scored 100%. To me, it's just an arbitrary number. …I think about each child a lot and how they are in class...and then I have their daily work – what I've seen them doing, drawing, and producing. I watch and I listen. I actually physically move in and watch kids solve and talk with each other. Maybe I've been in role as the pizza person and focus on those kids who I know are struggling with the concepts. …I ask, "*What do you think*?" And I ask them to create their own questions. …I say, "*You write your own problem, you write your own question, you write your own addition algorithm – story problem. …*For some of the kids who have difficulty with writing, I'll say, "*Draw a picture and write the*

> *algorithm to go with the picture and then explain in your own words*". So I kind of mess it all together. …Thank God I don't have to come up with a percent!

The above narratives illuminate one of the fundamental tensions that underpin this inquiry – that is the lack of coherence between the interests and assumptions that support drama education and those that inform the standards-based education paradigm; assessment is a key factor in this tension. Within standards-based paradigms, curriculum takes the form of specific and pre-determined outcomes outlining what student learning should encompass. Assessment is then based on a process of matching evidence of student learning with the preconceived determinations of what it should look like. In contrast to the objective view of standards-based assessment, drama education utilizes assessment practices that support teachers and students in making their own judgements about learning. Assessment in this view is concerned with awakening students to "pose the kinds of questions that move them to wonder, to ponder, to go in search" (Greene, 1992, p. 13). Given the lack of coherence between the two paradigms, it is not surprising that participants experience much frustration with assessment issues.

One final mark/grade for all fine arts disciplines.

A strong yet sometimes elusive impact of the standards-based education climate involves a systemic undervaluing of drama education within the British Columbian education system. One of the many factors perpetuating this view is, I suggest, a general misunderstanding about the fact that fine arts in British Columbia are not *one* discipline, but *four* disciplines, each very different from each other. Reporting requirements and report card templates often require teachers to produce one

summative mark/grade for all fine arts learning. Two participants clearly articulate this frustration in the narratives below.

Kristin (researcher): When you have to give one fine arts mark on the report card because that's what the report card template requires, how do you do this?

Isabella: Well, what I do is try to pick really general PLOs. One for music - which usually focuses on *appreciating* - very general PLOs. One for drama - about *participating* and *respecting* others' drama work. But exactly, how do you give only one letter grade? …The fine arts are so different! You might have the kid who loves drawing and art; but music – forget it – or vice versa. …You know what I think most people do? They give a very generic mark. …I suspect that most kids get a B or an A. Somebody said to me the other day - a very experienced teacher - she said, "*Well, I give everybody a B because I'm not going to damage somebody's artistic or creative spirit*". So I think that's what people do. They give a B or give an A if there is somebody who is outstanding in all areas.

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Maxine: What's important for drama? Okay, please stop asking us to give a letter grade. …And please understand that the fine arts are four different subject areas!

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Maxine: All four of these fine arts are really different subjects but I have to report on them like they are one. Because visual arts is a whole different ball of wax than playing the cello – and that is completely different than working in

> role. On my report cards, I have to give one fine arts mark – one mark for all those subject areas! And it kills me. …I am a very frustrated teacher actually.
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> **Maxine**: I would want to go down the Ministry of Education and say, "*These are ten year old children! Why are you making us slap on a letter grade"?* Letter grades have so much power – too much! Power beyond what they should have. And…the teacher next door doesn't do any drama, or any music, just a visual arts assignment – and then gives all the kids As and Bs.

I believe participants' aggravation with this issue stems from a systemic undervaluing and subsequent erosion of, the unique nature of each fine art discipline. I share participants' frustrations. Too often in my work as a curriculum coordinator, I encounter this misconception in conversations with some educators, administrators, policy makers, parents, students, post-secondary students, and teacher educators, confirming for me that this misconception is, indeed, systemic. As for the classroom-based realities of participants, this misconception and subsequent undervaluing is perpetuated by required report card templates, the perceptions of parents and school administrators, course scheduling systems of boards and schools, as well as the design and packaging of curriculum-as-plan. Such systemic misunderstanding has serious implications for the value and legitimacy of drama education, a concept explored in greater detail within the following chapter.

Finding 5: Shifting assessment-related perspectives and practices.

Readers will have noted that formative assessment concepts are threaded through participants' narratives relating to summative assessment and reporting requirements.

Formative assessment plays a significant role in their shifting assessment-related perspectives and practices. These shifts are occurring away from ends-means and technical approaches and toward those that attempt to make space for contextual and emergent understanding. This trend is extremely significant, complex, and somewhat paradoxical, because it is occurring *within* the overarching standards-based education climate. A question then emerges: How is it that assessment practices are shifting toward more formative approaches while existing within an overarching system informed by contrary interests and assumptions? The answer to this question – if indeed there is one – involves participants' struggles to make sense of, and navigate their practice amidst the underlying tensions resulting form the clash of two contrary sets of interests and assumptions within one overarching system. The following sections begin to explore this question as well as provide examples of participants' shifting assessment practices and some of the challenges they face as part of this shift.

Also interwoven into all participants' narratives on shifting assessment practice is the notion of BC Performance Standards (or similar formative assessment rubrics). This tendency is significant because the purpose and design of BC Performance Standards appears to represent a departure from the ends-means and technical orientations toward curriculum and assessment represented by the standards-based education paradigm. The BC Performance Standards, while outlining pre-determined standards and assessment criteria, do so in the form of flexible and broadly stated aspects as well as descriptions of what teachers might observe as students come to understand the concepts outlined in the aspects. Aspects are broad and flexible enough to be adapted to suit local contexts.

Interestingly, while participants' narratives reflect clear intentionality about co-constructing contextual and emergent understanding as opposed to steering the learning toward predetermined outcomes, several suggest that learning end-points are also needed to act as guideposts. I suggest this paradox is representative of assessment practice in the *midst* of a shift. Clear intentionality is present while actual practice is slower to shift. Such a lag may be due the standards-based related pressures and requirements they perceive as barriers to effective drama practice.

In the narratives that follow, two participants talk about their assessment practice and how they are shifting it toward formative and reflective processes. The reader will note their interests in both using pre-determined learning outcomes as learning goals as well as a focus on the importance of reflection as an inherent element of assessment.

> **Sarah**: This past year, I took an assessment course. One of the things that stuck out for me was about sharing the outcomes with the students at the beginning of the course. …This is good to do with whatever you are teaching. …I think this has…changed a lot. When I think back to my early teaching years, I don't remember assessment being so transparent. Back then the role of the teacher was to have the kids meet standards or outcomes but we never really talked to them about what those outcomes were. I'm way past that now. This assessment course made me think how important it is for the kids to know where they are going and what you expect. What has also changed are the different ways we know that kids can get to that same outcome. …Next year…I'm going to share the outcomes with the kids at the beginning and then talk to them about where we are going: "*This is where we are going and we are going to get to it in lots*

of different ways but this is what I would like you to know by the end of this exploration. Of course you can't meet all the outcomes but the ones that I'm teaching are the ones that I'm going to post in the classroom as guidelines.

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Isabella: I think another part of my philosophy is the importance of authentic experiences…my own authentic experiences and then giving kids as much genuinely authentic experience as I can…having authentic relationships with them too. To me, process drama does that. I mean, we are not living in that day and time [fictional world of the drama] but it's as close as we can get to being there and experiencing it. I find that process drama is as close to being authentic as I've managed – if I can't actually be there. I think the *experience* is authentic. …When I've asked kids do their reflections it's been really insightful for me - really insightful. I've learned a lot about the kids and what they're learning. …And it's pretty easy to assess if they have the big ideas or not.

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Isabella: I think that over the last couple of years I've learned more about using Performance Standards and this has improved my teaching. I'm more intentional, therefore they know what it is that they need to be learning and why we are doing an activity. I think that's where they are valuable. They make your teaching intentions more explicit.

The above narratives suggest that assessment, particularly that which is embedded in drama, is indeed shifting toward more formative and student-involved approaches. However, pre-determined learning outcomes, albeit open-ended and broad, continue to

play a significant role in this practice. Also reflective of shifting assessment practice is participants' frequent use of four-column assessment rubrics, such as the BC Performance Standards. In the following narratives, one participant discusses how she develops her own rubrics based on prescribed learning outcomes and another discusses using the BC Performance Standards as part of her participation in the Network of Performance Based Schools.

> **Emily**: I would start with a PLO…for grade 6 drama, and then for most of the things that I mark, I create the "not meeting", "meeting" "fully meeting" and "exceeding expectations" description for that particular PLO. …I might do that PLO…about three or four different times with different activities. The kids are really familiar with that particular style.
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> **Kristin (researcher)**: How does using the Performance Standards impact the way that you assess your students?
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> **Isabella**: Our school joined the Network of Performance Based Schools, so we did a cross-grade inquiry on writing using a story drama structure with grades 2/3 and 5/6 all together. We used the Performance Standards to assess students' writing before the story drama – we did the highlighting [on the 4-column Quick Scales[24] in the BC Performance Standards] with our curriculum people from the district. Then we did this [assessed student writing using 4-column Quick

[24] *Quick scales* are features within BC Performance Standards. They summarize descriptions of four levels of achievement in relation to broad aspects (i.e., standards). Quick scales are designed as easy-to-use tools that can be shared with students and parents as part of formative assessment.

Scales in the BC Performance Standards] again after the story drama as well.

I'm sold now. I'm using the Performance Standards for assessment.

Isabella's involvement with the Network of Performance Based Schools is an important concept within this inquiry. The Network of Performance Based Schools is a community of practice that supports action research inquiries focused on the improvement of student learning within British Columbian schools. Research inquiries use the BC Performance Standards as tools for supporting school-based reflective practice as well as formative and student-centered assessment approaches. In order to become a "Network school", those interested must be willing to create a school-based inquiry team (teams must include at least two teachers and a principal), develop an inquiry question focused on improving learning in one of the areas addressed by BC Performance Standards (e.g., social responsibility, reading, writing, numeracy, healthy living), use student centered teaching/learning strategies as part of the inquiry process, assess student learning by using the BC Performance Standards, and share their story with other teachers and Network members. Kaser and Halbert, leaders of the Network of Performance Based Schools, believe "there is a difference in approaching school improvement with a spirit of inquiry rather than through the adoption of a specific program or strategy" and "that the thinking involved in identifying a powerful improvement question creates curiosity and builds commitment in learners of all ages" (Kaser & Halbert, 2010). The work of this Network is significant to this inquiry because it is informed by epistemological interests and assumptions similar to those supporting drama education as well as uses the BC Performance Standards as a basis for deepening student learning – a common element reflected in all participants' narratives. As a result,

the Network of Performance Based Schools and its possibilities for supporting drama practice are explored in the subsequent *Implications* chapter.

In addition to the above examples, one participant provides a particularly poignant illustration of shifts in assessment practice. Her narrative requires some context setting because it emerged in response to a situation that did not occur with other participants in this inquiry. The following section outlines this situation.

During Sarah's first interview, she discussed her interest in creating humanities courses for grades 6, 7, and 8 that would draw on concepts from social studies, drama, and English language arts. She was unsure, though, of the specific prescribed learning outcomes for these disciplines and how she might fit them all together to create these new courses. After transcribing her first interview, I offered to assist in planning the humanities courses by brainstorming with her how the broad concepts within the curriculum-as-plan for these disciplines might be brought together through drama. She happily accepted the offer. Consequently, a few weeks later and prior to conducting her second interview, we met to review the prescribed learning outcomes for grade 6, 7, and 8 social studies, English language arts, and drama. We also brainstormed a variety of drama strategies[25] as well as reviewed published *process drama structures*[26], and *story*

[25] Drama strategies are activity frames or means by which students can explore the dramatic focus (Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 107). Examples include improvisation, tableaux, choral speaking, readers' theatre and mime.

[26] The phrase *process drama structures* is used here in a general manner with reference to drama resources that offer a collection of drama strategies designed to support teachers in facilitating drama experiences focused on particular themes (e.g., immigration, social belonging, homelessness).

drama structures[27] that would support exploration of the broad concepts outlined in the prescribed learning outcomes. We then designed an outline for three humanities courses (i.e. one for each grade) by identifying the grade-appropriate drama strategies, process dramas, and story drama structures that address the broad concepts in the prescribed learning outcomes.

The excerpt below is taken from Sarah's second interview conducted immediately following our process of mapping the new humanities courses. She talks about her classroom assessment practice as being more formative and transparent than in her previous years of teaching as well as explores her emerging thoughts on the relationship between drama education and standards (i.e., prescribed learning outcomes).

> **Sarah**: I haven't really been looking at any sort of standards for drama. I set my own standards for what should be happening based on what I understand about drama education and my own skill level. I have felt confident in this area. I haven't been…paying attention to the PLOs and the curriculum or what I'm supposed to be doing. …And as we have been looking today at the grade 6, 7, and 8 outcomes for drama in the curriculum, I found they are very open-ended and not very specific. …It's easy to feel confident that I am covering all that I'm supposed to. One of the things that I am much more aware of is that standards and assessment are an integral part of learning for the kids…and for the teacher to be aware of giving really authentic feedback to the kids. In the past, I have been aware of that in my language arts teaching but have…turned a blind eye to

[27] The phrase *story drama structures* is taken from Miller & Saxton (2004) and used here in a general manner in relation to process drama structures that use story as the vehicle for exploring a dramatic focus.

> it with drama. …Now I feel ready that I want to be more standards-based in drama because the standards are so open-ended and they help with assessment. …In drama, we've always asked kids to self-assess and offer peer feedback. And with assessment-for-learning, teachers are thinking about how they would do something differently next time. This is so important too. …I think what we are realising now is that we can have standards…to strive towards and…represent a continuum.

What is particularly important about Sarah's narrative is that she describes her shifting assessment practice *as well as* reflects this shift in relation to using prescribed learning outcomes as broad learning goals for drama. The concept of learning goals as "open-ended and not very specific" as well as supportive of formative and participant-involved assessment is a significant thread within this inquiry. It can perhaps suggest a possible pathway forward for supporting teachers in their drama practice.

Navigating toward more formative and participant-involved assessment practices within an overarching system informed by ends-means and technical orientations, generates significant tension. Two participants discuss how their shifting assessment practice meets resistance from parents and school administrators who expect teacher practices to reflect an emphasis on control and predictability. In the following narratives, one participant relays a story about interacting with a parent who requests justification for the use of formative assessment while another talks about assessment-related pressures she experiences from her vice principal.

> **Isabella**: She [a parent] didn't understand the Performance Standards or how I arrived at letter grades without giving a lot of tests and things. And we didn't

have spelling tests and things like that. She was fairly aggressive. She wrote a letter to the principal – a two page letter. At first I thought, "*Ah, somebody is calling me on it, can I really justify it"?* But I sat down and I thought it all through. Then I met with the parents for about two hours and explained everything. I showed them how their child's Performance Standards for writing was filled in with the highlighter - that really helped. …By the end of it they were just so impressed with what teachers are doing – the teachers who aren't keeping scores. …Their child had come from a teacher the previous year where everything was percentages and letter grades. So the interview with parents was really informative for me, a really good learning experience.

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Maxine: I have to tell you, this has been a difficult year. I've had to answer for myself a few times throughout my career, but this particular year…"*Document, document, document*" – that's what I'm supposed to be doing - according to my V.P. today. "*Excuse me, but I am not a police officer*."

In addition to the struggles of Isabella and Maxine, Judy talks about protecting herself from professional criticism by ensuring that her formative assessment practice is based on, at least in part, prescribed learning outcomes. In the following narrative, concepts such as broad learning goals, four-column rubrics, self-assessment, formative, and transparent assessment as well as scrutiny from her school principal intertwine, again reminding us of the tensions and complexities generated when contradictory epistemological interests and assumptions collide.

> **Judy**: I went to the drama learning outcomes website and I looked at what I was supposed to be teaching. …I took a learning outcome and I wrote the four descriptive columns…what exceeding would involve and so on. I wrote examples for each column. The learning outcomes were in government language which was a bit hard for the students to understand, but they could understand my examples. …I think I put between six and eight learning outcomes on each one and showed what the kids were doing that term. I showed it to my principal and she was very happy with it. …With more teaching experience, I might not have done it that way, but I was feeling a little insecure and I wanted to make sure I covered my butt and no one could say I hadn't been following the outcomes, but I did it in a way that I was comfortable with.

While participants do not clearly articulate the fundamental motivations for their shifting assessment practice, I wonder if the student engagement they see as a result of their own risk taking in drama is changing who they are as teachers – changing what they believe in, what they trust, and influencing the amount of vulnerability they are willing to tolerate in order to bring authentic learning experiences to their students. The fact that this inquiry, focused on drama education and the standards-based climate in British Columbia, yields several individually solicited narratives that are heavily weighted with formative assessment concepts is reflective, I suggest, of a general culture shift occurring in assessment pedagogy. It is a rejection of the ends-means and technical orientations that characterize large-scale testing systems within standards-based education systems and an acceptance of the action-determined approaches through which students are the beneficiaries.

I see evidence of this shift manifesting within many contexts including current literature (Earl, 2003; Earl & Katz, 2008; Popham, 2009). In addition I have recently noticed assessment-for-learning posters hanging in the hallways of elementary and middle schools hallways, read school newsletters for parents that explain the benefits of formative assessment, participated in teacher education methodology classes that integrate assessment-as-learning concepts, witnessed the expansion in membership of the Network of Performance Based Schools[28], as well as talked with this inquiry's participants, all of whom suggest their assessment practice to be shifting toward more formative and student-centered approaches. I believe that this shift is occurring because teachers are increasingly interested in facilitating rich learning experiences for their students, experiences that support their students in creating shared meanings and authentic experiences. Despite standards-based pressures and requirements, this interest is persistent and strong. Current assessment-related research, as well as the findings of this inquiry, supports this shift.

In recent years, Earl (2003), a Canadian researcher aligned with the Network of Performance Based Schools, has expanded our understanding about the importance of an assessment approach called *assessment-as-learning*, which designed to support student metacognition. Earl reminds us that "[students] need to be taught skills of self-assessment, have routine and challenging opportunities to practise, and develop internal feedback or self-monitoring mechanisms to validate and call into question their own

[28] As of June 2009, there were 276 schools represented in the Network of Performance Based Schools; an increase in membership has continually grown since its inception in 2001 with 60 schools (D. Weaving, personal communication, April 2, 2009).

judgments" (p.105). She stresses that assessment-as-learning supports students to become "critical analysts of their own learning" and "develop capacity to evaluate and adapt their own learning" (p. 7). "Going deeper", Earl states, "comes from ensuring that students are not only learning but thinking about their learning by reviewing their experiences (i.e., by asking themselves questions such as: What made sense to me and what didn't?, How does this fit with what I already know or think I know?)" (p. 8).

Assessment-as-learning approaches are inherently informed by similar interests and assumptions about knowledge construction to those that support drama education. Both are grounded in the theories of Vygotsky's (1978), who argues that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition, and both can act as a medium for generating new understanding through critical and constructive decision making and reflective judgement (Earl & Katz, 2008). Participants' narratives also reflect intentionality about using assessment-as-learning approaches as part of their drama education practice. A natural congruency is reflected here because drama education inherently provides opportunities for student ownership, reflection, critical explorations, and the development of fresh perspectives – the same opportunities offered through assessment-as-learning approaches. And while participants struggle at times to transform this intentionality into practice, their practice is indeed shifting.

Finding 6: Standards and accountability for drama education.

Participants are hesitant yet interested in the concept of standards for drama education – that is, if the standards are broad and open-ended. Standards, they suggest, can both support teachers' formative assessment practice by providing broad learning goals as well

as offer systemic value and legitimacy for drama education. In addition to participants' openness to the notion of broad standards, several use the term *accountability* with regard to an interest system-wide effective drama education practice. I suspect, however, they use this term in reaction to their frustration about a perceived lack of priority from school administrators in relation to hiring and assigning teachers who have expertise in drama education – and not in response to an interest in systematic accountability frameworks involving large-scale testing. I wonder if participants perceive other areas, such as reading, writing, and numeracy, areas they strongly associate with the standards-based education movement, to be benefiting from focused efforts by school administrators. Perhaps they see, as I do, such focus manifesting in various forms such as board-sponsored teacher support workshops as well as attention and support from parents about what is being taught and why. These areas, however, also have associated large-scale, standardized testing – a construct informed by epistemological interests and assumptions that are incongruent with Heathcotean-based praxis. Participants may perceive that such systematic focus on drama would ultimately reduce the amount of resistance they experience from parents and school administrators and represent drama as a valued and legitimate learning methodology. Such a compromise, as Taylor (2006c) reminds us, would defeat the very reason for using drama in the first place.

In essence, the underlying theme that emerges as participants contemplate what it might mean should *standards* and *accountability* for drama education become system-based priorities involves a deep rooted interest in greater value and legitimacy for drama education. As participants explore this issue ambiguity and uncertainty is revealed.

Judy: Prescribed learning outcomes are quite broad…that was nice. But in a way I was a little disappointed in them because they were so broad and then – this sounds bad – they didn't force teachers to use more drama. Teachers could have covered the same outcomes and just done improvisation. …I guess…that…is a flaw in the learning outcomes.

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Emily: I would not want it so prescribed that basically someone would say, "*Here's the manual on teaching drama, there's what you have to do, day one, day two, day three*". This wouldn't happen anyway, but I would definitely not want to see it go that way. …Also, I would not want it so that anybody could teach it – it would be so watered down so that anyone could do it. I think that's what I would not want to happen.

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Judy: No one has ever said, "*Make sure you do your drama outcomes"*. Whenever I was a teacher-on-call I would always say, "*I can teach some drama to your class*" and the teacher was always really relieved because they hadn't done any drama that year and they knew it was part of their learning outcomes. …So the outcomes are there but there's no enforcement; there's no accountability. I mean you don't really want it to be that way – because it's drama and that defeats the purpose – if teachers were forced to do all the outcomes. …Drama definitely has those learning outcomes that you just don't get to. No one is going to try to force teachers to teach drama.

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Sarah: I guess the potential problem with drama standards would be that you leave the kids behind. The outcomes…could become too much of the focus. The other thing I think about is that you can't be too airy fairy about it because people need something to hold onto because not everyone is a drama expert.

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Sarah: The benefit of having drama standards would be communicating with colleagues, parents, and kids effectively - before, during, and after, about what we are doing. …I think that having standards just helps to communicate with the students and their parents better.

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Sarah: I think there needs to be more accountability to raise the profile of drama. This would put some accountability on teachers and on administrators to make sure they have people teaching the drama courses who feel confident and who have the desire to put the time into it.

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Judy: I think that the biggest thing for me is that the standards-based movement has helped me back up what I'm doing - to parents…and I guess to administrators as well. I can point to the standards and say, "*This is why I'm doing what I'm doing – this is why all my children are yelling right now*" (laughing).

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Kristin (researcher): What might be problematic about standards for drama education?

Sarah: The first thing that comes to mind is that standards can be too prescriptive…teachers would need to be aware of this. A teacher should try not to get too locked up in the "prescriptive" and always stay true to the group that they are working with. …What is good for one group may not be good for another group. They should also know that they are not going to meet all the outcomes and to not let them be the "be all and end all" of the work they are doing. I would say the concern - the danger - is the standards becoming the focus rather than the learning. …In drama education, we could do a story drama and there could be one idea in it that the group really wants to explore more deeply…to be stuck having a whole bunch of prescriptive outcomes. …"*Oh, we have to cover all these things and we have to do it a certain way*". I would say that could be a real problem because you could be locked in.

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Sarah: You could get stuck in a box where the outcomes become more important than the work. …Drama, by its very nature, is evolving and changing; it depends on the participants. If you do a process drama or a story drama with one group – you are going to go in different directions with it with another group – based on the group, based on the time of day, based on everything.

As apparent in the above narratives, participants' interests in standards and accountability for drama education are hesitant and tentative as they seem aware of the "danger" of aligning drama education with ends-means and technically-oriented curriculum and assessment constructs. What they are not hesitant or tentative about, however, are the *characteristics* that drama education standards should embody. These

characteristics include: (a) the flexibility to adapt the standards for contextual learning experiences and (b), integrated formative assessment support and a design similar to that of BC Performance Standards. When asked about the kind of curriculum and assessment frameworks that might be appropriate for drama education, all participants independently discussed constructs similar to the BC Performance Standards. The following narratives provide examples.

> **Isabella:** Performance Standards would be fabulous [for drama education]. A Quick Scale too. I think it would be great for me and also for other people. It would be something that they could go to because as I said, I don't think many people use the…fine arts IRP because it is too all encompassing and overwhelming. So a Quick Scale of the Performance Standards would be fabulous. …I see no problems with it. …People who were exposed to them [drama education Quick Scales] would make good use of them.
>
> ***
>
> **Judy**: This is another place where I want to the standards-based movement to get up to speed and get the oral language components [of the BC Performance Standards for reading and writing] developed so that teachers will give it [drama education] more credence. As a beginning teacher, I found the reading and writing ones [BC Performance Standards] really helpful. For teachers who are not so comfortable with the oral components and group work – oral language performance standards are going to be really helpful for drama education. They will help us say to the parent: "*This is a valid part of school".*
>
> ***

Emily: I think it would be great if drama standards mirrored the new physical education curriculum where there is a four-column scale and Performance Standards type language.

In an earlier chapter the question of what distinguishes the BC Performance Standards from other forms of education standards in British Columbia arose. Based on participants' narratives, it seems there are specific characteristics within the BC Performance Standards which participants suggest can support the development of contextual and emergent understanding in ways that prescribed learning outcomes cannot. Understanding specifically what it is about the design of the BC Performance Standards that participants appreciate, and why, is a key component of this inquiry. Summarized from across their narratives, the points below offer suggestions about why participants value the BC Performance Standards. According to participants, BC Performance Standards are valuable curriculum and assessment frameworks because they:

- support cross-disciplinary exploration and can be adapted to any context
- are guiding descriptors that don't *feel* prescriptive
- provide support in assessing *what really matters*
- support opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning
- help teachers talk with parents about pedagogical choices (e.g., to use drama, to use formative, student-centered assessment)
- are flexible guidelines open to interpretation so contextual and emergent understanding can be fostered
- help fit drama into the standards-based education movement.

The above points reflect participants' interest in curriculum frameworks that offer opportunities to balance intentionality and flexibility with regard to learning goals. These frameworks can make space for contextual and emergent encounters as well as offer some overarching aims, both of which participants believe to be important for drama education. Curriculum frameworks similar in design to the BC Performance Standards may also offer teachers opportunities to become connected with the Network of Performance Based Schools which relies heavily on these standards and provides opportunities for grassroots advocacy, reflexive practice, and legitimacy building though school-based communities of practice.

In addition, the last point listed above suggests that because the design of BC Performance Standards is valued as part of British Columbia's standards-based education paradigm, using drama in conjunction with BC Performance Standards can foster a stronger sense of systematic value for drama education without compromising drama education's contextual and emergent qualities.

Summary of Findings

Participants' narratives illuminate how strongly issues of value and legitimacy for drama education underpin the phenomenon being explored. Their narratives illuminate a tendency to associate areas such as reading, writing, and numeracy - areas they associate with the standards-based education movement (i.e., specific and detailed standards, large-scale testing, and systematic focus on improving student achievement results) - with legitimacy and value. As one participant suggests, if standards are "airy fairy", they are difficult to assess in objective ways and therefore are often perceived as unimportant to school administrators and parents. This perception is a serious concern because it reflects

an assumption that learning outcomes must be specific, rigid, and prescribed as learning end-points in order to have value within a school system.

Through participants' narratives, we also gain insight into the complexities associated with using drama education amidst the standards-based education climate of British Columbia. Findings caution us about notions of curriculum and assessment as well as schooling structures that constrain and erode the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education. Powerful tensions are enmeshed throughout all findings. The following chapter explores these tensions as the fundamental undercurrents of this inquiry.

Chapter Four - Making Meaning of the Findings: Exploring the Tensions

During the past several decades the standards-based education movement has become a dominant paradigm in education worldwide. Media discussions of curriculum and assessment generally focus on targeted student achievement levels and large-scale testing results. Rarely are issues relating to human experience deliberated by broad audiences. Public perception has, no doubt, been influenced by such a narrow discussion. Greene (1995a) cautions:

> Discussions of standards and curriculum frameworks and outcomes still have not touched seriously upon the matter of our purpose as a society: upon what it means to educate live persons, to empower the young not simply to make a living and contribute to the nation's economic welfare but to live and, along with others, remake their own worlds. (p. 170)

As evident throughout participants' narratives, tensions manifesting from this clash of epistemological perspectives impact teacher drama practice. This chapter explores these tensions and associates them with three interconnected themes including (a) participants' yearning for increased legitimacy for drama education, (b) participants' use of drama to support "democratic" (Morgan & Saxton, 2006) and "post-modern" (Doll, 1993) learning experiences within an overarching system informed by technical interests and assumptions, and (c) the lack of coherence between the underlying interests and assumptions that support drama education and those that inform the standards-based education paradigm. As discussed in the earlier *Methodology* chapter, I include haikus representing the essence of participants' perceptions as part of the subsequent discussion.

Theme 1: Legitimacy for Drama Education

Complexities are revealed as participants consider what it might mean should *standards* and *accountability* play an increased role in drama education. Influencing their deliberations on this topic is a persistent perception that drama education is generally undervalued as a part of British Columbia's education system. This section explores my interpretation of what participants are attempting to express but may not have been able to clearly articulate within the text of their narratives.

To practise drama
We must also justify.
Why isn't it valued?

For some participants the dominant nature of the standards-based education paradigm may carry the suggestion of value and legitimacy. For instance, several narratives suggest that value and legitimacy for drama education is a highly sought after reality and they equate such legitimacy with the strong currency of standards-based education. The lack of such legitimacy for drama - as they perceive this to be the reality within their school environments - is highly problematic for them. Difficulties arise due to perceived judgement from parents and school administrators about their pedagogical choices to support contextual and emergent learning. This can result in vulnerable situations as they feel they must continually justify their practice. As Maxine tells us, "…this particular year…has been really tough…because I've had to explain myself…it's hard and it's wearing".

No time for drama
Not important they say. More time to read and write.

Eisner (2002) acknowledges the lure of standards for arts educators and reminds us that they "do not want to be left off the political bandwagon that not only confers legitimization on fields that join in, but also provides financial support" (p. 167). Because the concept of education standards is so salient and the arts so often marginalized from the

core of education priorities, the motivation to "get on board" is especially cogent. I believe this motivation is particularly strong for teachers who are passionate about drama education because general misunderstandings about drama are pervasive in the public consciousness. In the most general sense, drama education is often perceived as unimportant or "airy fairy". As a result, it is frequently forgotten while areas such as reading, writing, and numeracy are perceived to be of high priority because they have associated standards-based curriculum and large-scale tests. The irony is that these areas would likely see increased student achievement levels if students could experience them as part of drama education and its embedded assessment-as-learning opportunities. Several drama scholar/practitioners (Ewing & Gibson, 2006; Gibson & Ewing, 2006; Fiske, 1999; Miller & Saxton, 2004) agree.

Standards can offer legitimacy yet they take choices away.

In addition, participants suggest that detailed and specific standards for these "high priority" areas are often complimented with teacher support resources and professional development opportunities as well as general systematic attention from parents and school administrators. I believe the lure of such focus and support as well as the general absence of such in drama education, is a key reason why several participants reflect an interest - albeit hesitant and tentative - in standards and accountability for drama education. The following narratives provide examples:

Tired and worn out
I must explain and explain
Could standards help me?

Emily: Curriculum content does need to be specialized, strong, and detailed so that qualified teachers are hired to teach it.

Judy: My only reason for wanting large-scale assessment for drama is validity for the subject. …Also…it would help middle school kids to realise drama is important,

not just a silly course.

Sarah: I think having the standards-based curriculum just helps to communicate with learners better – as well as their parents.

Isabella: Standards give teachers focus…they make the activities they do in drama more intentional.

However, in contrast to the above sentiments, participants also simultaneously reflect deep concern about detailed and specific learning targets being "too much of the focus", "leaving the kids behind", "defeating the purpose of drama" , "giving less flexibility", and "taking away…the discovery, exploration and imagination" of learning through drama. They want drama education to be valued by their colleagues, school administrators, students, and parents so that increased opportunity for rich learning experiences are more available and the continual need for teachers to justify their pedagogical choices becomes less gruelling. As a result, participants are willing to explore what it might mean if standards and accountability were to have stronger influences on drama education. This, however, is a complex, tentative, and ambiguous deliberation for participants because they also intuit that potential compromises to drama education's contextual and emergent qualities could occur, should the essences of drama education be compromised to better align with the interests and assumptions of the standards-based education paradigm. A willingness to even consider such a compromise, I suggest, is the result of a long yearned-for sense of validity and legitimacy for drama education.

Pressures and questions
From parents and principals.
They want standards met.

Students learn deeply
When they see from all angles
Role expands their view.

Participants are ultimately fighting against a pervasive systemic ignorance about the value and purpose of aesthetic learning experiences through drama education. This begs

the question of why such ignorance continues to exist despite research (Ewing & Gibson, 2006; Gibson & Ewing, 2006; Fiske, 1999) outlining its connection with student success. Taylor (2006b) argues that arts disciplines have "historically…operated from the fringes" (p. 129) of education systems. Perhaps this is because the very concept of "systems" in education is predicated on pre-definition and control. As Taylor reminds us, the term *system* "refers to an ordered, predetermined plan; a set of principles stringently agreed on; a formal, definite or established schedule or method (1998b, p. 83). It would seem, therefore, that systems allow little space for "the unpredictability, the spontaneity, and the improvisational" (p. 83) that is so central to exploration through artistic forms.

A decade ago Neelands (2000) reminded us that "we live in an age in which the 'curriculum-as-planned' has overshadowed the vitality of the 'curriculum-as-live(d) experience…an age of a state-centred education system, rather than the child-centred 'process-drama tradition'" (p. 53-54). He suggested that in many countries drama education is still in the midst of an "advocacy phase" where claims of its benefits have to be clearly demonstrated and its difference from "orthodox forms of theatre for entertainment" (p. 56) have to be established. Based on the narratives of this inquiry's participants, I argue that drama education in British Columbia continues to be in the midst of such an advocacy phase, where arguments of its value must be made and won despite pressures to succumb to dominant notions of curriculum and assessment.

Do I contradict myself when I say I think standards can help?

A powerful tension emerges as we consider what it might mean should the interests and assumptions that inform drama education (i.e., contextual, emergent, co-constructions of understanding, and exploration of unexamined perceptions and bias) be compromised

to better fit those of the standards-based education climate (i.e., control, predictability, and transmittable knowledge). This tension alerts us to the fact that something is amiss in our education landscape and that this tension is too strong to ignore; too strong to "allow us to be lulled into passivity and acceptance" (Morgan & Saxton, 2006, p. 9). While drama education scholars and practitioners (Dickinson & Neelands, 2006; Miller & Saxton, 2004; Morgan & Saxton, 2006; Taylor, 1998b, 2006a, 2006c) continue to critically analyse the impacts of positivist logic on drama education as well as reinvigorate a commitment to raising drama's profile, I urge classroom teachers to continue their praxis so that a secure and valued place for it might eventually be won.

Learners left behind
When outcomes are specific.
Drama needs freedom.

Theme 2: Democratic and Post-modern Curriculum within the Current Climate

Participants' narratives clearly espouse the benefits of using drama as a part of integrated classroom practice. Underpinning this support are notions of the inherently personal, interpersonal, and critical capacities that learning through drama can help students to develop. Participants reflect a fundamental interest in what Morgan and Saxton (2006) label *democratic* curriculum, and what Doll (1993) would suggest to be *post-modern* curriculum. The subsequent sections explore democratic and post-modern notions of curriculum as fundamental within drama education and contrast these concepts with current education systems and structures.

Democratic curriculum.

When we consider that in democratic societies, power rests with citizens and such power involves both rights and responsibilities, then we must also question whether our education system supports students in developing the skills and literacies for exercising

these rights and responsibilities. The term *literacies* is used here to encompass capacities that stretch far beyond reading and writing (Morgan & Saxton, 2006); capacities that help students develop dispositions for knowing themselves and interacting with local and global communities. Examples of such literacies, to name a few, include critical thinking and questioning, reflection, communication and expression, accessing and analysing information, aesthetic exploration and inquiry, as well as economic, civic, cultural, and ethical literacies. To engage as citizens of a democratic society is to think and act critically about the issues being faced by individuals and their communities. In other words, it is "to cut away the rhetoric and seductions of short term advantages and to understand the implications; to give expression to concern through constructive actions; and to be able to mediate individual concern within the collective vision" (Morgan & Saxton, 2006, p. 9).

Drama helps us dig below the surface and search for who we might be.

Saul (1995), a Canadian writer and speaker focused on citizenship and democracy, stresses that students require on-going opportunities for critical exploration and reflection so they can exercise their democratic rights – that is, as Morgan and Saxton (2006) suggest, their rights "to criticize, and to reject conformity, passivity and inevitability" (p. 10). For example, students require opportunities that challenge them to develop skills and literacies for critically analysing information by considering whose interests are being served, whose are benefiting, and whose is being silenced; as well as exploring information from alternative angles, being open to seeing anew, and negotiating new pathways forward as part of society. Negotiating such pathways often calls for risk taking and the courage to stand up and speak out against paradigms that serve the needs of a privileged few as opposed to the general population. Therefore, in order to expose and

give voice to societal injustices students require on-going opportunities to gain confidence in doing so. Drama education inherently creates these opportunities because it offers students the opportunity to explore issues and try out possible responses from inside a fictional world.

As evident in their narratives, participants strive to use drama as a medium for supporting students in developing the skills and literacies of democratic citizens. However, they are attempting to do so within an overarching system that values and legitimates an ends-means and technical orientation toward curriculum and assessment. Their attempts are frequently constrained by pressures and priorities appearing to serve system-based control and monitoring functions as opposed to the needs of students and teachers. What manifests as a result is the tension-filled power-struggle between locally-rooted interests in democratic notions of curriculum, and system-based interests in control, predictability, and the homogenization of learning results.

Post-modern curriculum.

Doll's (1993) notion of post-modern curriculum within which understanding is generated through rich, recursive, relational, and rigorous explorations into human experience aligns with many of the reasons participants give as to why they use drama.

> Drama can be like alchemy. Sometimes we all make gold together.

All participants offer a similar fundamental rationale – that is, an underlying interest in providing opportunities for critical reflection so students can develop the skills and literacies to think and act beyond *what is* and toward *what might be.* Such intention is congruent with Doll's concept of post-modern curriculum involving learning experiences that disperse ownership among all those involved, including students, so that individual and shared meaning can be created.

Participants of this inquiry often talk about their interest in facilitating explorations into the human experience. While not using terms such as disequilibrium or post-modern, they are essentially talking about the importance of making space for "rich pedagogy to unfold in the midst of chaos" (Miller & Saxton, 2009, p. 548). *Chaos*, in this sense, represents learning encounters in which understanding is generated through student ownership and authentic engagement. As Doll (1993) suggests "learning and understanding are made (not transmitted) as we dialogue with others and reflect on what we and they have said" (p. 156). Post-modern curriculum experiences, then, "help us negotiate these passages" (p. 156) to whatever unfamiliar destinations they might be taking us. Along this journey, students have opportunities to explore, question, and think deeply about themselves and their relationships with others.

I do not control student learning but I work hard to draw it out.

A fundamental tension is at play, however, as teachers attempt to facilitate such journeys. Such personalized and emergent understanding can often be stifled by notions of outcomes-based orientations, current schooling structures (e.g., timetabling systems, reporting requirements), as well as pressures from parents and school administrators.

Democratic and post-modern curriculum in tension with schooling structures.

While an earlier chapter outlines the limitations resulting from exploratory and FAAS course scheduling systems, an additional schooling structure emerges as a significant concern. This structure is represented by a system-based focus on knowledge construction as part of compartmentalized disciplines as opposed the development of cross-disciplinary literacies. Such compartmentalization is reflected in various ways as part of current schooling models including, to name a few, the design and packaging of curriculum-as-plan, the inflexible

Misunderstood and ignored. Drama's being lost. People just don't know.

design of report-card templates, and large-scale testing systems aimed at measuring student achievement of defined and discipline-specific learning end-points. The following section explores the reliance on compartmentalized disciplines as representative of positivist epistemology as well as the lack of coherence between this paradigm and drama education.

Cross-disciplinary literacies.

As suggested in the narratives, participants who teach drama as a discrete discipline within an exploratory or FAAS timetable also use drama as part of their integrated cross-disciplinary practice. This finding demonstrates the value of drama education as a rich pedagogy for explorations that deal with what it means to be human – a methodology or pedagogical approach that can span all school disciplines. As a result, this finding also exposes and generates critical questions about the underlying assumption that learning should be organised, monitored, timetabled, and reported in relation to individual disciplines.

I'm sold on drama
It opens us up and asks
us to see ourselves.

Greene (1995a), a long time advocate of aesthetic experience as a means of creating disequilibrium and inspiring "the young to look and listen, to overcome the taken-for-granted and the routine" (p. 36), suggests "there are…many kinds of literacy but as an object of hope and desire, any literacy will be associated with a yearning to make some sense" (p. 25). Greene's view of literacy aligns with notions of democratic and post-modern curriculum. Is it not time, in the face of global economic instability, health and environmental crises, as well as "the troubling fact that industrialized, technological societies have turned out to be fundamentally unequal ones" (Greene, 1995a, p. 170), to deliberate upon what's really

I struggle against
the artificial boxes
that block deep learning.

important in learning, who gets to decide, and how school structures, systems and timetables might be better organised to serve students in developing literacies as opposed to ingesting cannons of discipline-specific knowledge?

The human experience does not comprise a series of neatly packaged compartments so why do jurisdictions and schools structure their timetables, reporting templates, and testing systems as discrete boxes of content to be transmitted and ingested? The answer to this question, I suggest, ultimately involves issues of systematic control and monitoring. As Eisner (2000) reminds us, at times when public audiences and policy-makers are anxious about their youth, they retreat to "images of older times" (p. 351) such as educational prescription, control measures, and systematic comparisons. Improvements and guarantees are sought through promises of stability. It is at these times, suggests Greene (1995a) that people may "want the schools to repair cultural deficiencies" and secure their interests (p. 169). Unfortunately, systematic responses to public pressure often include "one-dimensional definitions of the common" (Greene, 1995a, p. 172) as opposed to those that encourage multiplicity of voice so that societal issues can be explored critically, creatively, and collaboratively. On the curricular landscape, such definitions often translate not to discussions of empowering students to "pose their own questions about what democratic education and democratic citizenship mean" (p. 172) but to uniformity, the identification of increasingly specific and common expectations, as well as the creation of school structures that systematically monitor students' achievement of these expectations.

Worried about loss
Of *real* learning through drama
When standards are tight.

To be literate, as we are reminded by Saxton and Miller (2009) goes well beyond

one's ability to read and write. It represents one's abilities "to function in the world as a participant in, contributor to, and shaper of democratic society – the critical capacity to be a reader and writer of the world – to have, in other words, literacies that shape us as much as they are shaped by us" (p. 35). Drama education is a medium for such experience because it makes space for exploration of the complexities hidden in the subtext of human experience. These complexities reflect our often unacknowledged and unexamined "ambiguities, assumptions, perspectives, attitudes, and biases" (Saxton & Miller, 2009, p. 37). Through drama, students are able to, for a short time be themselves as another and allow their own emergent selves to act upon the world.

Opposing forces.
Drama practice eroding.
Withered by tensions.

Drama education within British Columbia faces difficult challenges as the impacts of the current standards-based education paradigm become clearer. A standards-based curriculum-as-plan highlights "a single standard of achievement" (Greene, 1995a, p. 172) within compartmentalized disciplines and appears to be reassuring a public audience that associated schooling structures and timetabling systems serve our students well. And yet, as apparent in this inquiry, the curricular landscape of British Columbia needs to be expanded and deepened so that more opportunities are available for expressive and aesthetic modes of learning that do not fit into compartmentalized structures of the standards-based education paradigm.

How do we go deep
and still meet all the outcomes?
We cannot balance.

Theme 3: Tensions between Underlying Interests and Assumptions

The most fundamental and rhizomatic tension of this inquiry is reflected in the fact that drama education and the standards-based education paradigm are informed by

contrary epistemologies. Tensions exist because drama education is a medium that provides opportunities for relevant explorations about self within society. It offers participant-generated experiences that cannot be predicted or measured against pre-determined criteria. Such experiences, as well as their results, are contextual and subjective; unique to the time, place, and people of they occur within. Pre-determined learning outcomes, however, are the basis upon which the overarching standards-based education movement is predicated. This fundamental tension is perhaps best described by Taylor (2006c). He argues that because the essence of drama is "representative of complex subjective readings of one's place in [the world], too great an emphasis on objectivity and comparison seems to undermine the very reason for offering it" (Taylor, 2006c, p. 122).

Open your eyes; it's slipping away. Learn from the losses of others.

This tension has serious implications for teachers practising in its midst. Providing opportunities for contextual and emergent understanding while functioning within a framework that allows little space for such is very challenging. Therefore, it is not surprising that participants express significant concern about the state of drama education in British Columbia classrooms. They suggest its widespread undervaluing to be a serious barrier to teacher drama practice. Perceived pressures for teachers to assess against detailed and pre-determined learning outcomes in ways that clearly document for parents and school administrators how such determinations are formulated, as well as pressures to improve students' large-scale test results in areas such reading, writing, and numeracy undoubtedly contribute to teachers feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed. Such a climate does not naturally foster opportunities to build understanding and commitment in using drama. Participants'

Caught between system rules, pressures and learner needs. Safety or passion?

struggles act a warning sign that the epistemological clash between drama education and the standards-based education climate is not a problem faced solely by other jurisdictions. Indeed there is escalating tension within British Columbia. The need to seek alternative pathways to those previously taken by such jurisdictions is now paramount.

Counter-balancing tensions.

Participants of this inquiry appear able to navigate some of the aforementioned tensions because they each have expertise in and/or commitment to drama education. Clearly participants have a strong sense of advocacy for its practice. I believe it's their passion that is currently sustaining their drama practice despite the pressures that can erode the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education. As one participant suggests: "I'm a bulldog. I just keep on doing what I'm doing". I argue, however, that if drama education is to survive - without compromise - within the current climate, it requires more than advocacy and passion. The support of system-based structures such as flexible curriculum and assessment frameworks, supportive timetabling systems, as well as the wide-spread understanding and valuing of its significance as a rich learning methodology are also vital.

Support with formative assessment.

Interest in formative and student-involved assessment is interwoven throughout participants' narratives and highlights that detailed curriculum-as-plan and large-scale testing structures do not align with the intentions and practices of a growing number of teachers. Instead teachers are interested in engaging students in the learning process – to be active participants in shaping it, not merely recipients of it. The increasing popularity of Network of Performance Based

My changing practice; more formative and open. Reflection is key.

Schools provides a concrete example of a mounting popular interest in democratic assessment approaches. Teachers are attracted to the Network because they are interested in reflective formative assessment practice and wish to shift their practice away from assessment-*of*-learning approaches that often characterise the standards-based paradigm. I believe Network members are the champions of a growing assessment paradigm shift occurring in numerous schools throughout the province. This grassroots shift is taking place in reaction to the dominant standards-based education paradigm so that a counter-balancing can occur. It is a shift brought about by teachers with the kind of "unease that wards off complacency and compliance, that awakens[s] people enough to move them to act" (Greene, 2006, p. 596). In fact, I suspect based on the findings of this inquiry, that drama education practitioners will find the Network of Performance Based Schools to be an increasingly supportive context within which their praxis can be shared, just as one participant did in her Network inquiry regarding the use of a story drama structure to support students in developing writing skills.

New in my teaching
I love Performance Standards.
They help us *all* learn

Loose rubrics and guides
ease tensions and build bridges.
They support my work.

Together the findings and themes of this inquiry open opportunities for new dialogues about drama education in British Columbia – dialogues I hope will be incorporated into the deliberations of all education professionals regardless of where they are situated within the education system. For example, teachers might consider how reflective practice can contribute to shifts within their local school communities while policy makers should reconceptualize curriculum and assessment frameworks that the aim of supporting constructivist and inquiry-based learning. The tensions revealed within the findings and themes of this inquiry leave us to consider how epistemological clashes

might be navigated in ways that do not compromise the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education. The following chapter initiates this dialogue as it explores the implications of these findings and themes.

Chapter Five - Implications of this Inquiry

When we consider that drama education and the standards-based paradigm are supported by contrary epistemological influences and take into account the dominance of the standards-based education paradigm, the current education landscape does not appear promising for the future of drama praxis in British Columbia. Unless prevailing orientations toward curriculum and assessment can be re-envisioned and the value of drama education becomes better understood within public perception, drama education could remain in an "advocacy phase" (Neelands, 2000, p. 56) for the foreseeable future, fighting to "win a stable, constant, and secure place" (p. 56) within the overarching system. And while advocacy can be a positive and powerful construct, the goal, in my opinion, is an overarching system in which the energy of educators is spent *doing* drama as opposed *defending* it.

I believe that change in the field education unfolds through the intentionality of educators. I suggest that *real* educational change - the kind that will result in better support for students to discover who they are and who they might become - is of a grassroots nature. It occurs as part of a multitude of interactions within classrooms and among colleagues as they support each other in school-based learning communities. And while the role of education policy makers can *support* change, policy makers cannot *create* change; they can merely create policies (e.g., curricular, financial) that support educators in creating such change. Both groups, I suggest, must play a fundamental role in supporting drama education to become better valued as part of British Columbia's education system as well as protecting the fundamental qualities of drama education from standards-based influences and pressures. The following sections explore these roles.

Educators as Champions of Change

Teachers, school principals, vice principals, and teacher educators are the champions of any significant shift that occurs in education. While some, such as the participants of this inquiry, are already passionate about using drama education, too few understand its capacity to support the development of cross-disciplinary literacies. Too few have the time or opportunity to develop commitment to using drama education as part of their practice because they are too busy navigating pressures associated with the current standards-based education climate. As a result, if drama education is to become better understood and valued, those educators who already have understanding of, expertise in, and commitment to drama education must now act as champions in modeling its value through their practice.

Elementary and middle school teachers.

Participants' narratives offer several examples of how drama can be integrated into everyday classroom practice including mentorship among colleagues and on-going communication with parents about the value of drama education. Other examples include drama-focused action-research studies with the Network of Performance Based Schools, knowledge sharing as part of professional development through district workshops, the school-based development of cross-disciplinary drama-based programs, such as the one that one participant and I mapped out for her school, as well as the publication of user-friendly drama education resources.

Modeling and mentoring, in these examples, is a matter of doing; seemingly small acts can make big differences. For example, sending a letter/email to parents outlining one's philosophy about using drama education as a medium for cross-disciplinary

learning, as well as perhaps inviting parents to observe these processes, can hold tremendous potential for increasing the perceived value of drama education, one parent group at a time. Another example shared independently by two participants includes co-teaching. One teacher models the facilitation of a story drama structure while the other provides additional support. Combining students from two classes to work in pairs while their teachers take turns facilitating provides opportunities for teachers to learn from and mentor each other. Reflective practice can then occur with the support and perspective of a trusted colleague. This requires little more than a willingness to share, learn, and make mistakes within a supportive school-based learning community.

In addition, intentional practice-based shifts are often supported by the Network of Performance Based Schools as well as other school-based support groups and initiatives. As discussed earlier, this Network is currently working to counter-balance the impact of ends-means and technical notions of curriculum and assessment through the creation of school-based learning communities. The Network encourages the use of local classrooms as sites for action research, reflective practice, and grassroots shifts towards assessment. I urge elementary and middle school teachers within British Columbian to engage in a Network-supported inquiry involving drama education. Using available process dramas and story drama structures (Burke & Malczewski, 1993, 2001; Miller & Saxton, 2004) as guidelines for exploring cross-disciplinary literacies based on the BC Performance Standards can provide tremendous support in designing such an inquiry. The authors cited here have created clear and flexible frameworks for teachers who wish to integrate drama into their practice. The accessible nature of these resources supports teachers who have little expertise or confidence using drama.

The first step toward practice-based shifts involves a willingness of teachers to take risks. In this sense, risk taking would involve confronting a "fear of playing" and establishing a sense of collaboration between themselves and their students. While teachers are the structural operators of drama encounters, they are also co-artists who foster opportunities for existential experience and reflection through careful *in the moment* choices. O'Connor (2009) articulates the richness of such risk taking in relation to using teacher-in-role as part of drama education. He states,

> The other great gift that teacher in role brings to the classroom is that it signals that the teacher is prepared to play alongside the students, they are willing to give it a go. Students love the sight of their teacher willing to engage in the most human art of all art forms. The willingness to play can be scary for some teachers who rely on the power of their status to engage students in learning. But if you relate to students on the basis of human beings rather than from a position of authority then the opportunities for real engagement and learning are boundless. (p. 14)

Similar to Bolton's (1992) claim that asking engaging and critical questions, both in and out of role, should be a primary concern of drama teachers, O'Conner (2009) argues that the "single most important thing we can do as teachers is to ask questions…build on the answers given and…play with the power of the genuine question well asked" (p. 13).

To offer students a fictional world, ask them to simultaneously function in role as themselves and as other, as well as scaffold this experience with genuine questions that touch on key issues of human experience, can indeed be considered courageous

and skilful praxis. Drama education involves educators in the creation of art; functioning as a co-artist takes continued practise. And practise involves a willingness to try and to *not know*. Once teachers' confidence in their own artistry increases and they begin to see, hear, and feel what *not knowing* has to offer, there is perhaps no going back to a more technical pedagogy. The medium of drama is simply too enticing for teachers who are interested in *developing* understanding rather than *imparting* it. Even as pressures related to the standards-based paradigm build, participants of this inquiry continue to practise drama. Immense challenges within British Columbia persist, however, because *all* students need access to learning offered through drama and participants require support as they evolve their practice. In addition, other teachers must be supported as they begin their own journeys with drama education. As stressed above, the Network of Performance Based Schools offers the support of a school-based community of practice (which includes a school administrator), as well as a provincial network of reflective practitioners - support that can help build understanding of, commitment to, and legitimacy for drama education in British Columbia one school community at a time.

Teacher educators.

Teacher educators also have a significant role to play in supporting drama education be to better understood and valued as part of British Columbia's education system. While I am certain that many drama education scholars/practitioners working within post-secondary institutions have long supported drama education, my focus here is on the potential of teacher education programs - elementary and middle school specializations - to emphasize the cross-disciplinary nature of drama education methodology. Indeed this

does occur within some drama education methodology courses in current teacher education programs, including those at the University of Victoria – the institution with which I am most familiar. Students in such courses learn how to use drama education to support their future students' development in social studies and language arts, for example. Often these pre-service students are experiencing, for the first time, the cross-disciplinary potential of drama education as a learning medium as many have not had such experiences during their own school years. Thus as new teachers they are simultaneously awakening to drama education's possibilities as well as building confidence and competence in facilitating it themselves.

In order to provide support for these teacher education students, I suggest organising teacher education programs to include additional opportunities, beyond drama education methodology courses, for integrating drama education into other methodology courses such as social studies, science, and language arts. The key aim would be to expose and awaken new teachers to the possibilities that drama education offers as part of disciplines that may seem, to a layperson, disconnected from drama. A practical starting point for such program organisation might be to schedule guest drama educators to engage students within other courses (e.g., social studies, language arts) in using drama to address aspects of their content focus. For instance, if teacher education students can embody, perhaps through tableaux and captioning, the experiences and perspectives of immigrant farmers in the Canadian prairies, not only would they be actively engaged in their own learning experience, they would also develop strategies to use within their own future classrooms to help students explore historical contexts more deeply.

Just as I suggest that elementary and middle school teachers are better equipped to take risks involved in drama education practice when they have the support of school-based learning communities, teacher educators would also undoubtedly benefit from this collegial support. Building understanding about the value of drama education ideally involves engagement of more than one committed faculty member. However limited or large such a community of drama practitioners may be, I believe that one small act of sharing can have a ripple effect. Examples could include being a guest drama educator for one language arts methodology class per semester, organizing a half-day opportunity for pre-service drama education students to work with a local grade 2 class (and any interested parents) where they can practise using story drama structures, as well as working with other faculty members to engage in a Network inquiry involving teacher education students. These are all possibilities that could have a strong and positive impact on drama education in British Columbia.

Simple demographics tell us that pre-service teachers are the ambassadors of future drama education; they are among those who must continue to advocate and create firm grounding for drama education as part of British Columbia's overarching system. They will ultimately help foster and sustain future shifts in classroom practice. Therefore, I hope teacher educators will continue to design programs and experiences that ask students to explore and reflect on the assumptions they bring with them from their own elementary and middle school experiences; experiences that challenge them to see anew and gain insights into themselves – as teachers and as learners.

Again, while I am not suggesting that current teacher education programs are void of destabilizing experiences, I am arguing here for the importance of continued foci on

critically engaging teacher education students in explorations into curriculum and assessment as integrated, contextual, and emergent constructs. Awakening them to the notion of democratic and post-modern curriculum indeed might create some disequilibrium for those who have not yet been asked to conceptualize curriculum and assessment issues in these ways. Such disequilibrium is the heart of what it means to be an "artist" teacher (Miller et al., 2001) – that is, the kind of teacher who is responsive in her/his praxis as well as concerned with "imagining possibilities and breathing life into experience" (p. 103).

Policy Makers as Supporters of Change

As suggested earlier, policy makers cannot create change in education culture. Educators create change; policy makers merely make change possible by providing policies and legislation to support it. On the other hand, education policies can also construct barriers to change by creating policies and legislation that result in challenges for educators interested in authentic teaching and learning. Yet policies and legislation in democratic societies are not static; they are dynamic, created in response to feedback from its members. Continued advocacy, modelling, and mentoring for drama education is essential if drama education is to become better valued within British Columbia.

Re-envisioning curriculum-as-plan for drama education.

In British Columbia, the creation of provincial curriculum-as-plan is the responsibility of policy makers. In general such curriculum reflects ends-means and technical orientations. However, it is clear from both literature (Dickinson & Neelands, 2006; Eisner, 1985; Neelands, 2000, 2006; Taylor, 2006a, 2006c) and participants' narratives that such curriculum-as-plan and its large-scale associated assessment practices

simply do not align with, or honour, the social constructivist interests and assumptions of drama education. As a result, such dominant orientations toward curriculum and assessment must shift if drama education is to continue offering opportunities for authentic learning. Over two decades ago, the British Columbia's Royal Commission on Education (Sullivan, 1988) determined that learning experiences within fine arts disciplines (including dance, drama, music, and visual arts) were equally as important as other strands such as humanities and sciences for the education of British Columbia's citizens. In theory, this assertion has not changed. All four fine arts disciplines continue to be "required areas of study" (Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Governance and Legislation Branch, 2008a, p. E-89-90). In practise, however, the effects of one-dimensional standards-based curriculum-as-plan and its associated large-scale assessment structures are slowly eroding what we know about the value of such disciplines – particularly that of drama education which has long suffered misunderstanding about its purpose (Taylor, 2000). In addition, despite the growing body of literature (Black & Wiliam, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Eisner, 2000; Soep, 2004) which supports the earlier findings of Black and Wiliam's (1998a, 1998b) seminal study on the ability of formative assessment to deepen student learning, dominant curriculum and assessment constructs do not yet reflect congruency with the interests and assumptions that inform contextual and emergent learning encounters. Based on the findings of this inquiry, I argue that British Columbia is now reaching a tipping point where it is imperative that flexibility be interwoven into such structures. Should such considerations be ignored, the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education will become further eroded due to competing standards-based pressures and priorities.

General understanding about the value of drama education as a cross-disciplinary learning medium will continue to weaken. This is a reality that simply cannot be ignored if we wish to foster a culture of authentic and personalized learning in British Columbia – the kind of learning needed for our young people to become citizens of twenty-first century democratic societies.

It would perhaps, be easy for me to suggest that provincial curriculum-as-plan for drama education should be discarded altogether because effective drama practice involves learning which simply cannot be pre-determined. However, such a suggestion would be in contradiction with the essence of participants' narratives. Participants *want* curriculum-as-plan for drama as well as better understanding in how to use it as a guideline so that contextual and emergent qualities of curriculum-as-lived can remain strong. From their perspectives, curriculum-as-plan can support teacher practice as well as legitimize drama as an important component of the overarching system. What they don't want, however, is an inflexible curriculum that limits opportunity for spontaneity. Their narratives provide a clear argument that curriculum should not overshadow, or become more important than, the lived experience of drama.

Just as Aoki (1984, 2005e) argues for a multiplicity of curriculum meanings and asks that we do not lock our view into one conception of it, participants ask for drama education curriculum that makes space for both the planned and lived. Hence, I am reminded of what Aoki (1996) calls "the third space of curriculum" (p. 11) – that is "a space of generative interplay between planned curriculum and lived curriculum… a site wherein the interplay is the creative production of newness, where newness can come

into being….an inspirited site of being and becoming" (p. 11). Neelands (2000) makes a similar association. He states:

> In order to make the most of the effective space given to drama we need a plan of where and when and why we are going with our students, but every drama teacher knows that the true art of teaching lies in the complex tempering of the planned and the lived. Whatever the plan, it is not complete until it meets with and is mediated by the different live(d) experiences of the students who enter the drama space. We recognize that these students do not come to us as 'human beings' but rather as 'human becomings' – we believe that what we do is planned to help them in this journey of becoming. We try, by all manner or means, deriving from art and deriving from other sources, to put living reality into the hands of living people. The curriculum is the necessary map, it is not the journey itself. (p. 54-55)

Indeed, it seems to me, that a third space of curriculum is exactly what participants of this inquiry suggest is needed for drama education.

Re-envisioning support for drama education.

All five participants relayed stories about the need for drama-focused teacher supports such as professional development opportunities and user-friendly learning resources. Several also stressed the important of engaging their colleagues in using drama education. Across their narratives, suggestions for serving these needs included the creation of school-based communities of practice, team teaching, mentoring, professional development monies for teachers to attend summer Drama Institutes, such as the one held annually at the University of Victoria, organising artist-in-residence

programs in schools, inviting guest drama practitioners into classrooms/schools to model effective drama practice, sharing expertise on provincial curriculum-as-plan development teams, working with post-secondary researchers to study drama practice, attending district workshops in which drama is used as a cross-disciplinary medium, as well as engaging in school-based inquiries as part of the Network of Performance Based Schools.

While past decades in British Columbia have benefited from government mandates and monies aimed at curriculum implementation and learning resources for teachers, the past several years have seen little in the way of such support. As a result, it is important to consider how drama-focused professional development and curriculum implementation might currently be made better available to classroom teachers. While it is not my intention to abdicate government of responsibility for implementation support, I am suggesting, and believe Aoki (2005a) would agree, that grassroots and local learning communities might ultimately be more influential in creating systematic shifts in teacher practice than past models that involved top-down curriculum presentations and train-the-trainer workshops. As with all forms of professional development and teacher support, funding is critical. I suggest, therefore, the role of policy makers might be shifted so their responsibility lies less is the *training* of teachers to use provincial curriculum-as-plan and more in the provision of monies and leadership aimed at the grassroots development of local learning communities, on-line communities of practice where teachers can connect with mentors and advocates, and school-based facilitation of teacher networks and support structures.

I have also suggested that a curriculum framework with characteristics similar to those of the BC Performance Standards (i.e., broad and flexible guidelines that can be

adapted for local learning contexts, four column rubrics designed to support assessment-assessment-as-learning) could honour the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education. This is a design advocated by the Network of Performance Based Schools because of its capacity to support teachers in embedding assessment-as-learning concepts into their practice. As a result, should drama education curriculum be designed to embody such characteristics, I suggest this Network might play a significant role in fostering systematic shifts toward better enabling drama education praxis in classrooms. Because the Network supports teachers in reflective practice and sustainable school improvement through school-based inquiry, the potential for lasting systematic shifts in teacher drama practice is entirely possible.

Summary of Implications

In the mid 1990's when the standards-based education movement was quickly gaining momentum in most North American jurisdictions, Greene warned us that our "discussions of standards and curriculum still have not touched seriously upon…what it means to educate live persons" (1995a, p. 170). She argued that it was "time our voices are heard…the voices of those who engage with the young" (p. 170) so that multiplicities could be honoured in the design of democratic curriculum. Today I suggest her urging to break "through into the public space" (p. 170) has only just begun. This inquiry supports the opening of such a dialogue. It privileges the voices of British Columbian teachers and provides us with a serious wake-up call about how drama education is being impacted by the standards-based education paradigm. I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure all such dialogues continue to occur. Without opportunities to authentically engage with these issues, I fear drama education might remain on the fringe

of British Columbia's education system eking out an existence behind the closed classroom doors of teachers who do not have widespread support for their chosen practices.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

At the end of her second interview one participant talks about the challenges of always having to be a "bulldog", to constantly justify her pedagogical choices to use drama as a cross-disciplinary learning medium as well as formative assessment practices. She also suggests that her participation in this inquiry prompted her to question more deeply her rights and responsibilities as a teacher. "It's funny that you have come into my life at this time and made me really think". This statement reflects a growing tension as she wrestles with the challenges of practising drama education within a standards-based education climate that seems to value only ends-means and technical constructs. Her sentiment is representative of *all* participants who seek space within their practice for the contextual and emergent qualities of drama education while simultaneously struggling against the resistance, pressures, ignorance, systematic structures, and seemingly contrary priorities of stakeholders such as parents, policy makers, and the general public.

This inquiry - the first to reflect the classroom-based experiences and perceptions of teachers attempting to practise drama within the current standards-based education climate of British Columbia - illuminates a need to reconceptualize notions of curriculum and assessment so they can support action-oriented and participant-determined learning. It also reminds us that education *systems* are made up entirely of individual and local realities. Countless unique, contextual, and emergent learning experiences occur every day. The ultimate tension highlighted by this inquiry is the problem of how such realities and experiences can be honoured within an overarching system predicated on control, prediction, and objectivity. If drama education is to survive into the next generation of

teaching and learning, systematic shifts are desperately needed. Much deliberation and inquiry by educators and policy makers is also necessary.

For me, in addition to the insights that emerged from participants' narratives, a clear and specific focus for continued inquiry is illuminate by this inquiry – a focus I never imagined, at the onset of my doctoral journey, would emerge. It is the need for school-based action research and reflective practice that attend to the connections among drama education as a methodology and formative assessment. When supported by a school-based community of practice as well as a broader community of practice such as the Network of Performance Based Schools, this type of inquiry not only contributes to scholarship within its field, but also generates local practice-based shifts. One participant's involvement in a Network-based inquiry, focused on the confluence of drama education, the development of students' writing skills, and student-involved formative assessment, offers a glimpse into the power of such research. Her engagement in this Network-based experience opened her to ways that drama education provides opportunity for cross-disciplinary learning experiences and prompted her to become a drama education mentor for her colleagues. In addition, because all Network inquiries are published each year, others can benefit and learn from such school-based inquiry.

Few Network-based inquiries with a similar focus have been conducted; yet so many more are needed. Such locally supported and contextual inquiry would not only deepen understanding about the rich potential of learning experiences that exist as part of drama education, it would also support teachers in developing communities of practice that can advocate as well as support teachers, parents, and school administrators in better understanding the value of drama as part of British Columbia's overarching education

system. Taylor (2006c) reminds teachers – in particular, those who continue to navigate their practice among the tensions present in current education climates - to take solace because when "the classroom door is closed, anything is possible, and students can be transported to imaginary worlds beyond the mechanistic tasks that handbooks offer" (p. 129). While I fully support Taylor's sentiment that drama practitioners must "press on" despite the barriers that face them, I suggest it is now time for classroom doors to open wide so that drama education can be exposed to "diverse publics" (Greene, 1995a, p. 169) as the valuable and legitimate cross-disciplinary learning medium that it is.

Endpiece

Early in my doctoral program I began to realize that what I was inquiring about as part of my studies and what my role as a provincial curriculum coordinator involves are informed by fundamentally divergent interests and assumptions. I navigated these percolating tensions by telling myself that through my research I would eventually find a way to bridge these two contradictory paradigms; my doctoral work would be the conduit. However, the critical questions I was encouraged to consider as part of my doctoral program continued to remind me that some ideologies cannot be compromised too greatly before they no longer reflect the essences they once embodied. I realized there is no single or easy solution to this inquiry because the power of drama rests in its multiplicity of context, choice, perspective, and emergent understanding.

In retrospect, I see that I had always disconnected what I knew and loved about drama education with what I understood about curriculum-as-plan. In my mind, the countless drama experiences had I participated in behind closed drama classroom doors (as both student and teacher) had always existed within a different dimension than what was written in provincial drama curriculum. For me, the lived experience - *the feeling of doing drama* - and the provincial curriculum-as-plan outlining what students *should know and do* were entirely two different realities. I also now see that, as part of my job, the reason I had always advocated so fiercely for drama education curriculum-as-plan was to prevent it from being forgotten or misunderstood when deliberations regarding *what knowledge counts* had occurred. Today, while I continue to stand guard for drama and arts education, I wonder if what is also needed is advocacy in a "in a new key", to borrow a term of Aoki (2005e). My doctoral inquiry showed me that this *new key* involves

flexible curricular frameworks, support for embedded assessment-as-learning approaches, cross-disciplinary pedagogy, as well as system-wide support for local and contextualized school-based inquiries into using drama education – inquiries that could occur through engagement with the Network of Performance Based Schools.

In addition, during the last few years of my doctoral program, a serendipitous professional experience occurred - an experience that invited me directly into the tension I was discovering within my doctoral findings. The revision of British Columbia's curriculum-as-plan for Drama Kindergarten to Grade 7, a Ministry of Education project that had begun years earlier (i.e., prior to my course with William Doll) but had been on hold for many months, resurfaced as a priority. The result was my participation in the revision of this drama curriculum *at the very same time* in my life that I was integrating new understandings of curriculum, making sense of my doctoral findings, and writing this dissertation. In other words, I was simultaneously participating in the development of an ends-means and technical curriculum-as-plan for drama education yet also critically unpacking, as a researcher, the epistemological conflict of interests and assumptions involved in doing so.

I chose to approach the revision process as a co-artist, acknowledging the complexities and inherent tensions involved. And...as the drama team and I deliberated and debated, we tolerated ambiguity as any drama practitioner would aim to do as s/he makes space for contextual and emergent encounters within his/her classroom. And yes, as part of this revision project we created learning outcomes that pre-determine what students should know and do in drama education. On the other hand, we gained insight from my research about the importance of broad and open-ended goals as guideposts.

We incorporated these characteristics in anticipation that teachers would find ways to bring this new curriculum to life in contextual and emergent ways. And yes, we also developed ends-means standards and associated descriptions of what students' achievement of them might involve. At the same time, however, we also heavily infused these descriptions with ideas and examples for new and generalist teachers so they might become more comfortable using drama in their classrooms. We designed these descriptions so that someday they could be transformed into a Performance Standards style of curriculum, a style advocated for by the participants of this inquiry.

Ultimately, as of June 2010, there is a new curriculum-as-plan for K to 7 drama education in British Columbia. It is my hope its contents will be used as guideposts as well as the basis for school-based inquiry into using drama education as a cross-disciplinary learning medium as part of the Network of Performance Based Schools. And even though this new drama curriculum isn't an entirely comfortable solution to drama's "legitimacy problem", I have already heard from a teacher who recently used it as justification for using drama in her classroom as the primary learning medium. She now uses drama as the centre of her class' curriculum-as-lived.

In peering simultaneously through the eyes of both researcher and provincial curriculum coordinator, there was indeed much ambiguity; no easy solutions were had. However, among other gifts, I complete this doctoral journey with a renewed love for drama education and a deeper sense of responsibility to protect its essences so that more young people can experience what it has to offer. I believe these dispositions are two of the countless other representations of advocacy and passion that will ultimately shift the

current education paradigm of British Columbia to one that makes space for *what really matters* in the lives of students and teachers.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide for the First Interview with Each Participant

Reminders for Research Participants:

- Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without explanation and with no negative consequences to you
- If you wish, you can choose not to answer any of the following questions without explanation

Introductory questions

1. How many years have you been a practicing teacher?

2. What is your philosophy about teaching?

3. Why do you choose to use drama education with your students?

4. How would you describe the way you practice/use drama education with your students?

5. In general, how do you make sense of the current standards-based education movement?

6. How would you describe the current standards-based education movement in relation to drama education and your own drama practice?

Participant's experiences

7. Describe a time when, in some way, the standards-based education movement might have impacted, (positively and/or negatively), your use of drama education, teaching practice, and/or the practice of other teachers who use drama education.

8. Describe a situation in which standards and/or reporting protocols or policies may have impacted (positively and/or negatively) your *planning process* for using drama education with your students (e.g., unit planning, planning for the year or semester).

9. Describe a situation in which standards and/or reporting protocols or policies may have impacted (positively and/or negatively) how you assess your students' learning in or through drama education?

10. Tell me about a time in which you may have found yourself balancing, or navigating between, the mandate to address and report on the pre-defined prescribed learning outcomes (curriculum standards), and the often individualized learning that occurs through drama education?

Participant's perceptions

11. In what ways do you think the standards-based education movement could be harmful and/or supportive of the drama education and the practice of teachers who drama education in schools today?

12. How would you describe general approaches and/or attitudes among your colleagues toward the standards-based movement in your school and/or district environment? How might these approaches and/or attitudes influence your practice, if at all?

13. As education jurisdictions continue creating standards for all subject areas (i.e., curriculum standards, accountability standards), what do you think are the important considerations for drama education? Why?

14. With which of these categories do you identify yourself (one or more)? Why? (*See attached descriptions)*