# Chapter Five
## The Laboratory of Drama

*In this chapter I investigate drama; I explore the theory behind practice, and the practice itself. My report is 'multi-layered', in the sense that the methodologies of drama education, literature review, data, and analysis, do not 'stand alone' they permeate through this chapter. They are embedded in my emergent practice and cannot be separated from each other.*

*I have divided the chapter into two sections. The first half begins with an overview of the methods used and theoretical discussions. In 'The players and the platform' I have investigated the contribution of the experts in the field of drama education, giving a broad outline on the works of pioneers who made a difference to my thinking. The disparity between process and product drama is discussed in 'The hullabaloo' and in 'Drama for understanding' I have considered theatre-in-education and educational drama. Assessment in drama education is additionally, a topic discussed in Section 1.*

*In Section 2, I move into my classroom. This section explores the integral part of my own professional learning, and highlights the action research strand of my thesis. It outlines the practical aspects of the implementation of my drama curriculum; it describes 'what I did', 'how I did' and 'why I did so'. It is in a chronological order, in which the events, feelings and perceptions were encountered through the research period as my intention are to enable the reader to get the feel of the action research cycle as they evolve.*

## Section One

### Questions and possibilities

It is obligatory for a researcher, opines O'Neill (1996), to survey the field as thoroughly as possible. Fresh understanding and a clear perspective can be gained which in turn can clarify and enlarge our thoughts. Given the paucity of books on drama/education/special education/life skills/action research in India, I immersed myself in different kind of literature, sometimes from a wider range of disciplines that were not

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directly concerned with my research topics (as per. O'Toole, 1996; Woods, 1999). These writings made me question my work, the work done in India and the work undertaken in the international field of drama education. Finding the central questions that would guide my study was probably the most difficult part of the endeavour as drama offers diverse topics and various potential lines of inquiry (O'Neill, 1996; O'Toole, 1996). Some of the questions to which I sought answers to were:

- Should my classes be focused on drama or theatre? (see p.92)
- Should I follow the techniques of 'process' drama or should I approach drama as a 'product'? (see p.94)
- How would I assess the change in learning both in drama and life-skills education? (see 96)

These questions instead of unnerving me were the driving force of my research. I chose to bank on 'Magic Hai To-Mumkin Hai' (translated it means 'If you have 'magic', then anything is possible'). It is an advertising slogan of a mobile phone in India that claims to make everything possible and attainable for the user. I knew I had the 'magic'- the passion to teach and I was determined to attain my aims (see Chapter 1, p.).

At the initial level of planning, I had carried out extensive fieldwork given that I did not want to follow any readymade formulae available in the books on drama education nor follow another teacher's agenda. I based my lesson plans on the theories of ages and stages of educational psychology (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1998; Bradmetz, 1999; Woolfolk, 2001). Fleming (1994) writes, *'Whether drama is taught as a separate subject or used as a pedagogical method, the need for firm theoretical footing is the same'* (p.11). I believe if drama in schools is not based on the child development theories, systematic assessment and reflections there is a danger of it being marginalized. Taking these views into consideration, I had outlined what became a highly structured design for my module and planned each class meticulously. This was done to ensure that my curriculum was broad, balanced and age appropriate.

Additionally, since my exposure to educational drama was limited to a single theatre-in-education (TIE) workshop and drama games, designing my module was a daunting task. I was very fastidious in view of the fact that I was concerned –'what if my

class broke down?' I had to have enough spare ammunition at all times. I had to also ensure that I had a fall back in case a 'what if I taught all I had to teach on a particular day and still had spare time?' situation came up.

Originally, my lesson plans were more like the ones used in game-oriented workshops. My response to a 'critical incident' altered my viewpoint and thus my teaching practice and my research. I stopped likening my lessons and research to 'war'. Importantly, I started reflecting more, learned more; gained confidence and my lessons became less structured and more flexible.

**<u>The players and the platform</u>**

Trying to get an historical perspective on drama in the classroom I investigated the contributions of the players in the field of drama education. In the following account I have given a broad outline of the works of pioneers that made a difference to my thinking. This is not to suggest that the contribution by notable drama teachers for example Finlay-Johnson, Cook, Needlands and Booth (in Bolton, 1998; Taylor, 2000) should be neglected. However to reiterate, it was the writings and philosophy of Spolin (1963, 1991) that set me on my journey and the methods used by Ward (1957), Way (1967) and Slade (2001) that gave me confidence to move on and most importantly the works of Heathcote (in Johnson and O'Neill, 1984; in Bolton, 1998; in Wagner, 1999), Bolton (1984, 1998) and O'Neill (1995; O'Neill and Lambert, 1982) that brought about transformation in my teaching.

India has a vibrant and deep-rooted cultural history in performing arts. However, drama is rarely applied to mainstream education, thus little information is available on the role of drama in education.

The 'Theatre-in-Education Company', was established in 1989 with a view to preparing plays and performing for children and adults in New Delhi and neighbouring areas (Times Internet Limited, 2002). However, TIE in India is in action primarily in New Delhi and the northern part of India and works under the premise of the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi. Besides NSD there are a few theatre companies in India that perform plays for children, they do so with the view to entertain. The only other exposure to drama with reference to education is for the elite school children that take the external examinations of Trinity College, London, in Speech and Drama.

A few Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) follow the practice of using drama/theatre in creative workshops designed to deal with social issues with children, in schools, in remand homes and living in the streets. For example the Centre for Education and Voluntary Action (CEVA) is involved in using innovations in Children's theatre, Street theatre, Community theatre and Environmental theatre (Express Newsline, 1999). Similarly, Experimental Theatre Foundation (Parkar, 2002) has married the two streams of social issues and drama as a tool to create a strategy that has been effective to give education another chance and get child labourers back into schools.

However, there are no pioneers in the field of drama educations in India. To fulfil the criteria of a pioneer, Bolton (1998) suggests that an exponent should have:

- *brought about a radical change in conception of classroom practise;*
- *introduced innovatory praxis, backing up new methods in their own skilled practice with a theoretical exposition;*
- *provided a published account from which a reader might base his/her understanding of the innovatory praxis;*
- *become a figure of sufficient interest, either contemporaneously or retrospectively, for others in the field to publish their accounts of that figure's contribution to drama education;*
- *devoted a career to promoting classroom drama.* (p. XVIII- XIX)

On the basis of these standards there is no groundbreaking work in India to discuss. I therefore fell back on the works of progressive drama educationists in the international field.

In the USA, Ward (1930, 1957) inspired the practice of creative drama combining elements of storytelling, creative playmaking and children's theatre. In Ward's view, the purpose of 'play' was to lead to artistic form, suggesting that children's spontaneous drama should be led from the teacher's knowledge of theatrical form (Courtney, 1989). Ward taught that the children develop plays out of their own thoughts, imaginations and emotions. Her lesson plans proceeded in a sequence from '*sensory/concentration activities to movement/pantomime, dialogues, characterisation and improvisation/story playing*' (Wright, 1985, p. 205). Importantly, Ward's interests lay in the ability of creative drama in

developing communication, concentration, tolerance, sensitivity and trust skills, at the same time emphasising on external dramatic skills (Taylor, 2000).

In the UK, Slade (1954) introduced the concept of child drama, stressing on the child's natural impulse to be creative, rather than emphasising on personal skills or sequencing activities (Taylor, 2000) as he believed that imaginative play was an art form and was central to a child's personal and social growth (Heston, 1994). Slade perceived the teacher as a 'loving ally' who would nurture and cultivate the children's play as opposed to Ward's leader who would direct and criticise their pupils' drama. Slade denounced the concept of training children to act, public performances by children and he was also critical of teacher's intervention of the children's play (Bolton, 1984). Drama, opined Slade, could be a therapeutic activity.

Way (1967) influenced drama practitioners laying emphasis on '*development of people over development of drama'*. His book is based on the exercise method of using drama, in which children might practise dramatic skills like movement and improvisation, prior to entering the dramatic situation. Bolton (1998) suggests that Way was probably the first teacher who introduced the idea of 'warm-up' and 'relaxation' into the teacher's repertoire. The author suggested that no drama class could start without a 'warm-up' activity and conclude without a 'relaxation' period. In Way's classes, the children worked firstly on their own, then in pairs, gradually moving on to small groups and in time to a whole-group drama.

Spolin's (1963) method of playing theatre games influenced the use of improvisation in the drama classroom. Games were focused on the inner workings of the dramatic medium: the 'as if' act. Spolin's aim was concerned with immediate action. The keys to understanding Spolin (1991) games are the terms:

- Physicalization -'*Show! Do not tell'* (p. 5)
- Spontaneity-'*a moment of explosion'* (p.25)
- Intuition- '*it bypasses the intellect, the mind, the memory, the known'* (p.4)
- Audience-'*must be in a "state of playing", not looker-onners'* (p. 21)
- Transformation- '*the heart of improvisation is transformation…creativity is not rearranging; it is transformation'* (p. 4)

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Though the games were primarily devised to help in the development of performance skills and facilitate an insight into the minds of performer, the games additionally assist in self-development (Spolin, 1991).

The influential contributors to the development of process drama, namely Heathcote (in Johnson and O'Neill, 1984), Bolton (1984) and O'Neill (1995) reinforced the role of drama in schools. These practitioners believed that drama in education is a learning medium and were mainly concerned in how drama as an art form could be utilised by educators to explore important issues, events and relationships (Wagner, 1999). Heathcote's classes were focused on moments in time where the group would 'devise' rather than 'dramatize', plot scenarios (Taylor, 2000).

Heathcote (in Johnson and O'Neill, 1984) asserted that the teacher should use her power to enable the students to create drama experiences to achieve educational aims and bring about some change in the students' understanding.  She saw the teacher as a facilitator, she accordingly wanted  '*...them*  [the students] *to take over her power ...not the power to control the quality of the experience (no teacher can abdicate from that) but the power to influence their own construct of the meaning in the event'*  (p.132).

She maintained that theatre was '*a game of elaboration within a strict framework of intent'* (p.71). Therefore she argued that the structure of the drama class must be flexible and the teacher's planning had to be in-depth yet retaining the necessary flexibility. The teacher's tools needed to be sufficiently universal in nature to be readily adaptable to the changing needs of the class. If there was a perceived change in the learning situation, the teacher must be prepared to abandon his/her original plan and assemble another one quickly.

 More interested in the process rather than the final product, she thought it was the responsibility of the teacher to construct the drama for experiences and reflection. Challenging the notion of uninterrupted free play she often stopped a play in progress ('stopping to consider') to find different solutions to the ideas presented during performance (Johnson and O'Neill, 1984; Heston, 1994; Taylor, 2000). This concept echoes Freire's (1970) views on learning as a dialectical moment, which ensues while reflecting on action and then acting on the reflections. Reflection was a way to ascertain that both the process and the learning objectives could be clarified and evaluated by the

teacher and the students in order to deepen the experience created during the lesson. Heathcote believed that it is only when students reflect that they create meanings for themselves and thereby construct their own understanding about the events in the drama (Bolton, 1998).

However, I think the most significant contribution Heathcote has made to drama education is the concept of teacher-in-role. While Ward (1930, 1957), Way (1967) and Slade (1954, 2001) recognized teachers as facilitators or guides they nevertheless lead from outside the drama experience; the teacher played a non-participatory role. Heathcote suggested that the teacher could structure the drama from inside. O'Neill (1989) elucidates the teacher-in-role effectively:

> *'When a teacher works in-role it is not an act of conscious self-presentation, but one, which invites the watcher -the student- to respond actively, to join, to oppose or to transform what is happening. The teacher-in-role unites the students, trades on their feelings of ambivalence and vulnerability and focuses their attention.'* (p. 535)

Bolton (1985) suggested drama is a mental state as it creates an opportunity of knowing from 'inside'. Bolton claimed that three layers of meaning existed in drama - the 'represented' meaning, the 'universal' meaning and the 'personal' meaning. He maintained that it was essentially reframing the knowledge a pupil already has and placing it in a new perspective. Bolton's unique contribution in education drama was his pursuit of making connections between classroom drama and make-believe play.

Building on the work of Heathcote and Bolton, O'Neill (1995) established the idea of 'pre-text' and 'process drama'. She suggested that working in-role, a teacher could lead the students into the imagined world of drama, a place of transformation where the rules and relationships of the classroom are suspended. The teacher, O'Neill and Lambert (1982) propose:

> *'...must be prepared to build on the knowledge and experience which pupils bring with them to the work and they must value their pupils contributions to the lesson more than their own. To some extent, they must be prepared to put themselves in their pupils' hands while retaining the functions, duties and responsibilities of the teacher.'* (p.21)

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Taylor (2000) observes that these innovative methods in drama education had their share of criticism, with commentators questioning; 'Is this drama?' Disagreeing strongly with the idea of negotiated learning, Hornbrook (1991) suggested that the teacher must '*ensure that they* [the students] *are taught what they need to make progress'* (p.22). He argued that using drama as a pedagogic medium has denied students access to the culture and the skill of theatre. In drama, as in other arts, even the most creative of students would find it hard to make progress if she/he did not have control over the medium (Hornbrook, 1998). Believing that the students engaged in a production process should not merely '*stumble upon'* (p.135) the suitable theatrical form for the expression of their ideas, Hornbrook suggests that like the teacher in visual arts develops the student's grasp of the medium, the drama educator should equip their pupils with tools of dramatic expression.

Notwithstanding the difference in methodologies, all '*the pioneering authors share a belief in the power of drama to transform human behaviour'* (Taylor, 2000: p. 107); all the visionaries agree that '*drama occupies a place at the very centre of the way in which we make sense of ourselves and order our lives'* (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 141). These multiple versions of an art that by its nature has multiple forms, add richness to the praxis (Taylor, 2000).

**The hullabaloo**

Even though exponents of drama education (Taylor, 1995; Fleming, 1999; Slade, 2001) agree that drama makes a vital contribution to children's education some practitioners see it as a learning medium whereas others view it as an art form (in Burgess and Guadry, 1985; Hornbrook, 1998; Clipson-Boyles, 1998; Fleming 1999;Taylor, 2000).  I believe these artificial divisions harm curricula dedicated to drama.

Fleming (1999) suggests that unless a teacher has understood and considered the nature of the argument between the different ideological divisions, her/his work will be at risk. It will be threatened by criticism suggesting that their work is not drama or that it is out of date or is indefensible on educational grounds. Here I would like to examine the natures of theatre and drama and process and product drama and critique the debate between theorists and practitioners represented here.

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*'...theatre is largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience: drama is largely concerned with experience by the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience'* (Way, 1967: p.2).

I believe this distinction, even though it seems to be a clear-cut definition, is not helpful. A group of students may not necessarily perform on stage; there may not be an overt sharing of work. However, the classmates and teachers who are watching a small-group play, for example, nevertheless form an audience. Similarly, from my experience I believe when an actor pauses in action and watches a fellow actor, she/he is performing the role of a spectator. I think what frees us from the argument is not whether an audience is present or absent, but the experience of the participants and the nature of the participants' engagement in drama.

Many writers in educational drama strongly oppose the idea of performance (in Hornbrook, 1998) suggesting that the ideal form of drama was the mode of 'living through' or improvisational activity. Hornbrook (1998) suggests that it is the responsibility of the drama specialist to equip the students with tools for dramatic expression and that the students should not simply '*stumble upon*' appropriate forms for expression of their ideas (p.135). This suggests that '*the guardians of drama-in-education*' (139) have denied students access to the culture and skills of theatre. However, Taylor (2000) suggests that drama is an art form that inspires process and 'living through' and O'Neill (2001) proposes that in educational drama both art and learning are active processes and that the children are enriched both aesthetically and in terms of curriculum learning. Therefore would it be accurate to argue that those teachers that use the 'living through' form are not interested in the art form?

This brings me to the division between process drama and product drama. Taylor (2000: p. 5) suggests that:

'*a most peculiar distinction of drama from theatre was made, where those who did drama claimed they were involved in process-oriented modes, whereas those who did theatre claimed they were interested in the product'*

However, taking the argument further he maintains that both the drama educators and the theatre workers were interested in the product and concerned about the process

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concurrently. Similarly Fleming (1994) proposes that for a dynamic discipline like drama '*every product contains a process within it and every process is in some sense a product'* (p. 17).

I think process plays an important role in any dramatic activity, even one that aims towards a product. Stanislavski (1981, 1981a, 1981b) pioneered an approach which laid great emphasis on process. In his writing he accents the importance of the process in building a character and creating a role.

At the same time there is always a finished entity, a product in any activity in which children engage. In a drama class pupils are always working towards a product. There is a presentation whether there is an 'outsider' audience or whether the performance is watched by fellow classmates or even just a teacher.

When drama is used in education, it would be incorrect to lay emphasis on just one concept. If we deny the notion of product, summative evaluation would be denied to the teacher. If we deny the role of process we would be relinquishing the possibility of experiential or formative learning. Additionally, it would be imprudent to maintain that process drama denies an interest in artistic products as it would fail to explain '*the dynamic interplay between participants and spectator, player and audience, watcher and watched and creator and created'* (Taylor, 2000: p.37). I think it would be an error to perceive a disparity between 'process' and 'product', '*for they are interdependent, not polar concepts'* (Bolton, 1998: p. 261).

**<u>Drama for understanding</u>**

Drama-in-education (DIE) is termed as theatre-in-education (TIE) by some practitioners (Somers, 1996). However there is a distinction between both the terms even though both are concerned with drama, pedagogy and have the conviction that drama has the power to transform human behaviour. DIE where a teacher plays a role and TIE in which a team of actors perform, both engage in a change of understanding through drama. I think that is where the similarity ends. My commitment to teacher-inquiry necessitated a query into TIE, DIE, drama education and educational drama.

TIE originated when people in professional theatre took an initiative and supported the needs of school education. TIE aims to provide children with an alternative style of

education that is more creative and child friendly. TIE deals with subjects in the curriculum like history, geography, science and literature and presented them through a theatrical experience. A TIE team consists of enlightened members of a repertory company who present theatrical performances and conduct participatory workshops. Though TIE is an educational resource its roots are derived from theatre and not school as it operates from outside the school system. In India TIE is run by professional actors and social activists and regrettably does not involve schoolteachers.

TIE team can and ideally should work from within and without the action of the play. I believe that reflection on the action of the performance, that is when they work 'without', is when more understanding is achieved. However, TIE teams usually find it difficult to negotiate from outside because they are visitors working with children who are strangers to them. Additionally, children discern the team as actors and are usually troubled that their performance would not bear comparison.

The TIE approach did not fulfil my requirement as I was concerned with the role a teacher can play in working through drama. I was interested in using drama is a tool for active and experiential learning through collaboration, mutual decision-making and problem-solving. I was interested in concept of 'living through' drama and 'active role taking' (Chapter 4, p.83-4). Consequently, my focus shifted from TIE to educational drama or DIE.

The distinguishing factor between drama education/dramatic art and educational drama is the emphasis of the curriculum, whether the children are learning the art or learning through the art. Life skills education is the core subject of my drama class. Thus learning life skills was the primary objective or the hard objective and the art form, drama, was used as a pedagogic method to further learning.

Educational drama (Heathcote, 1984):

> *'...involves persons in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters are the chief concern, lived at life-rate and obeying the natural law of the medium.'* (p.61)

I see a place for performance and the importance of learning to operate effectively through the medium in educational drama. Moreover, I believe it is difficult to conceive a drama lesson without attention to drama skills. Educational drama has the potential to achieve a

change in understanding and at the same time achieve drama skills and an understanding in theatre. It marries two objectives; pedagogic objectives and artist objectives, which I believe are interdependent.

Role-play and improvisation are the essential features of educational drama. However, educational drama or DIE rejects the restrictive model of drama in schools where authoritarian teachers working with automaton students paying little interest to understanding the contents. This I believe encourages exhibitionist tendencies. The participants in educational drama do not know the outcome of the drama before hand. Importantly, improvisation does not mean making it up as you go along but making it up with a known outcome. Participants make real and spontaneous decisions as the work progresses and that I believe is the ideal form of educational drama.

The essential feature of the process of educational drama is negotiating and re-negotiating the elements of the dramatic form in terms of the issues and intention of the participants. This introduces an ongoing act of reflection into drama. In drama, participants draw on their knowledge and experience in order to create a make-believe world. However, the make-believe may stay at a superficial level unless it is aided by reflection which supports forward thinking (Bolton, 1993). Reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) can enable the participants', students' and teacher's, growth in understanding and insight. In turn this enables understanding human behaviour and its consequences (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982).

**<u>Assessment</u>**

Finally I seek to answer the question 'How would I assess the change in learning both in drama and life-skills education' (p.86). Fundamental to the notion of assessment is to understand what is being assessed (Peter, 1995; Clipson-Boyles, 1998). Thus I shift the focus back to my research question (Chapter1, p. 1): How can drama be used as an educational tool to enhance life skills in children with specific learning disabilities? and the question: How can I improve my practice as a drama teacher?

The two element of my drama research in life skills enhancement are:

1.  The children's learning.
2.  The development of the teacher.

**1. The children's learning.**

Learning in drama takes place on several levels (Bolton, 1992; Peter, 1995; Fleming, 1999) they are:

- The content of the drama: What the drama was about and whether it explored the issues raised during lesson.
- The drama form: How the content was explored in relation to the dramatic convention employed.
- Personal and social skills: co-operation, commitment and effort in class, attendance
- Dramatic craft: Presentation skills, for example, language, movement and physical expressions.

Although I anticipated the students' learning in all aspects of drama, I was specifically interested in life skill augmentation and the role played by drama in the enhancement, as these facets are germane to my research question. Hence evaluating drama skills in the objectives: content and personal and social skills were my hard or principal objectives. Presentation skills such as language, movement and background knowledge in theatre were a secondary objective or subsidiary learning.

This implies that my students learning would take place on many different levels. Additionally, the challenge was to plan for progress, monitor and evaluate learning by the: individual, group and teacher. Moreover, in drama, the external indicators like behaviour, expressions and selected communication by the student guide teacher evaluation (O'Neill, 1982). I devised a framework for assessing the learning on Bolton's (1998) proposal: something understood implies ownership of that knowledge.

Learning in drama needs to be considered in small attainable steps (Peter, 1995) first by establishing the children's existing level, which is described in 'Cycle 1', then gradually moving to the level to which they should advance. However, progression in 'drama' is not linear. It does not proceed logically from one point to the next, but is constantly returning to earlier work, the basic theme or source material, in order to deepen, refine and clarify the work that lies ahead (Fleming, 1999). Progression in 'drama' therefore is never easy to measure or test, as a mode of learning. At a particular moment in the children's progress, a child may seem to be going backwards, reverting to an earlier

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stage. This may be necessary in order to reinforce understanding vital for initiation into subsequent stages of development (Fleming, 1999).

Additionally, change in drama is evolutionary, moving in a spiral (Heston, 1994). Learning in drama is not a question of learning A and then B and then C and so on in isolated steps. When drama moves from A to B it incorporates learning from A, which indicates that the second level would not merely be B but becomes AB. Moving further the next step to C becomes ABC. This suggests that none of the stages are regarded a new stage. Instead, something is learnt at each stage, which is then included in the next stage, which in turn strengthen the next stage.

However, the question 'how do we find out what has been learnt?' remains unanswered. Bolton (1992) accurately notes: '*What if the pupils have began to understand, they may be unable to articulate and yet a shift in the direction of new understanding may have occurred?'*(p. 137-8). O'Neill and Lambert (1982) suggest that the teacher's judgement could be determined by the atmosphere in the class and the students':

- Level of commitment to work.
- Willingness to work with the group.
- Ability to reflect on and evaluate their own work.
- Capacity to see a wider implication to the issues that arose in class and to be able draws parallels in the real world.
- Ability to transform the drama experience into other expressive modes (e.g. draw a picture afterwards, act out the drama at home, write a poem).

## 2. The development of the teacher

Approaching the aim of improving my education in the teaching field of my research or teacher development, I quote Greene (1978):

> '*Professional growth is located in the teachers' ability to revisit their work with renewed eyes and possibly transform themselves through deliberate and critical self-examination of their own fallible pedagogy.*' (p.198-199)

As it is the teacher who selects the activity, communicates knowledge, enforces behaviour standards and encourages growth, it is she/he who must accept responsibility for what takes place in the class (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). Unlike the way subjects like mathematics,

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science, history and geography are taught in India (cf. Chapter 2, p.33), a drama teacher's role is not to merely instruct children or pass on knowledge, the teacher has to create a situation to encourage creative responses in the children. Thus the learning in drama should arise not only from the input of new information by the teacher but also from the students' understanding, association and growth. Students have to generate their own association with the topic and express it by their personal responses. The teacher stance of 'the one who knows' is irrelevant in the drama class as in a drama class a teacher must be able build on the knowledge, experience and understanding, which the students exhibit in the classroom. The teacher is a facilitator, someone who creates a potential learning situation in which a pupil can participate (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982).

Teacher effectiveness can be demonstrated (Peter, 1995) through:

- Structuring of drama: that concerns the teaching the strategies selected and the suitability of the strategies in achieving the intentions of the lesson.
- Developing a learning area and responding to development: that concerns the implementation of planned strategies and being able to forge learning experiences.
- Teaching context: that concern class management, control and boundaries.
- Teaching decisions: that concern how choices of activities were made during class time with respect to the class's requests and moods and strategies selected to keep children focused and on task.

Effective teaching entails more than building up a repertoire of information, skills and techniques. I believe that to achieve professional competence we must make a commitment to reflecting on our teaching and the learning environment that we create. We must poise intuitive and tacit understanding with the analytic process associated with reflection. I see reflective process as cyclic (Ross, 1987) that begins with; 1) recognizing the educational dilemma, 2) recognizing the similarities to other educational situations, 3) reframing the problem, 4) considering various consequences of the various alternatives proposes and 5) arriving at a judgment to act upon.

I link teacher effectiveness with reflective practice seeing that reflective practice is a systematic, deliberate process of framing and re-framing classroom practice in relation to the consequences of our actions, democratic principles, educational values and preferred visions teachers bring to the teaching-learning event (Serafini, 2002). All of these I have

tried to illustrate in the subsequent text that outlines my action research project in detail. Each cycle of the research is highlighted to indicate the various aspects of my development through which I elucidate my students' and my progress in the drama class.

## Section Two

## In the Classroom

> *'...all that happens, only happens because there is a struggle'*
>
> (Boal, 2000: p.3)

*In drama, Heathcote (1984) suggests we use life and understanding of life through an examination of particular moments of life. While teaching and researching one has to particularize and isolate. In this part of the chapter, I wish to present what my drama classes offered in particular. I wish to isolate experiences in the drama class and bring them to attention. I have highlighted my action research project wherein I seek to answer my research question 'How can I improve my practice as a drama educator?'*

*Following McNiff (2002) I initiated Cycle 1 by reviewing my current practice and identifying an aspect I want to improve. I imagined a way forward in 'The beginning', tried it out in 'Games and tableaux'. I took stock of what happens in 'Reflection time' and 'Stepping stones'.*

*'Stepping stones' in this chapter are the presentation of data analysis and the post learning level of the children at the end of each cycle. The post learning level in each cycle exemplifies the progress the children made in drama learning and additionally served as a starting point of the following cycle of learning.*

*Starting from Cycle-1 to Cycle-6, I describe and critique the stages of development in my practice. With each cycle of action, observation, reflection, planning and back to action and observation (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) I developed a better understanding of drama leading to an augmentation in my practice as I progressed from 'novice' to 'proficient'.*

### Cycle 1 As the story goes

Formatting the curriculum in life skills education and using drama effectively had been two major concerns when I started teaching. By experiencing uneasiness with my own teaching, questioning some aspect of my current practice and professional concerns (Ghaye,

1999), I had already reached the first step of an action research project- 'identifying the initial idea' (Elliott, 1991).

I wondered 'How could I improve my practice'. This query had potential as an action research project because it was something needing further investigation, it was something that I would like to change about my own practice and it was a self-motivated change. I sought to incorporate drama in a life skills enhancement program but lacked the skills and confidence to do it meaningfully. I decided to undertake an action research project, not only because I did not want to be a recipient of other people's curriculum but also because I was looking at a long-term change in my teaching skills.

The second step of an action research project is the reconnaissance phase. Elliott (1991) advocated 'reconnaissance' to make sense of the monitoring, before implementing a further action step. The three aims of my 'reconnaissance phase' were:

 To assess the current situation

- In Chapter 3, I presented a review of the problems faced by children with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and the current situation of special education in India. It also contains the rationale for a study in life skills education for children with SpLD.
- In Chapter 4, I introduced the concept of life skills education, the reasons for its indispensability in today's world and validated the need of an interactive educational programme for life skills enhancement using drama as a method.
- In Chapter 5 section 1, I presented my investigation of educational drama.

To gain a better understanding of the intended change

The first step in this direction was completed as a review of literature in life skills management and drama education. The second step was designing questionnaires and worksheets to be filled by the parents, teachers, SENCO and the students (Appendix, 6-8). Their responses were used to gain knowledge about the children and thereby assess the students' needs. This in turn enabled me to design the module. Additionally, the responses served as a pre-teaching assessment of the children.

<u>To prepare the way for a more precise action research plan</u>

In the first cycle of my research project I planned to:

- Learn more about the children and establish their pre-learning level.
- Prepare the way for an effective life skills enhancement module.
- Set the rules the class would follow in the ensuing year.
- Introduce the children to drama using theatre games and tableaux.

Cycle 1 was planned with the intention of introducing the students to drama. The Children's Worksheets (in Appendix 8) designed to enable me to gain knowledge of their world as they see it and assess the pre-teaching level of the students were completed in Cycle 1. Additionally, while they answered the worksheets it enabled me to observe them in a school-like activity of sitting down and writing and drawing.

Initially, I had planned to base each cycle of my action research on a separate life skill and only employ theatre games, tableaux and improvisations. Even though I was methodical in my planning it was nevertheless limited, as at that stage I merely knew how to use theatre games, tableaux and improvisations. Although I had extensively studied the WHO life skills manuals (1993, 1994), I naively thought that each life skill could be learnt in isolation. In Cycle 1 I planned to teach my students:

- How to concentrate
- How to communicate
- How to identify feelings
- How to identify a stressful situation and deal with it
- How to build confidence and enhance self-image
- How to enhance social abilities

**Setting the rules**

As drama making is and should be, a partnership between the teacher and the children (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982; Heathcote, 1984; Bolton, 1998), mutually deciding the rules the class would respect was very important. 'Negotiated learning' (Peter, 1995, p. 9; Forman and Fyfe, 1998, p. 240) is a term I wanted to put into practice not just pay lip service to. It was important that the children should genuinely be involved in the decision-making. I believe this equalises the power imbalance between teachers and students.

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Rules are necessary for the smooth working of the class; creative freedom does not mean doing away with discipline. They depend on the aims of the teacher with respect to what she/he seeks to do, how she/he plans to achieve her/his objectives and how much behavioural control of the class she/he wishes to retain. It is important to understand that sometimes what teachers' term as conflicts and behaviour problems in the drama class arise because of the nature of the medium that encourages expression through talk and movement. What may be termed as disorder in a normal class may arise in a drama class because of the positive attitude and enthusiasm of the pupils.

In drama, activities depend on group effort therefore I believe that it was important to reach a group agreement on issues like punctuality, noise, and conduct during class hours. It was important that the children did not see the drama class as a period of recreation, at the same time I did not want to reduce rules to disciplinary controls. I did not want to force the children to be orderly. I wanted them to choose order which I believe would occur as soon as they were intrinsically motivated. Additionally, I wanted to ensure that no one was ridiculed when expressing his/her opinion, decision-making was not taken over by the bolder students and that everyone had the freedom to participate to the extent of his/her capacity.

I used reflection time at the end of the first day to negotiate the rules which were requisite to ensure the smooth functioning of our class. We sat en masse on the floor in a circle with the tape-recorder on. The children were fascinated by the concept of taping the conversation and I had to stop intermittently and re-wind the tape for them to hear their voices.

What follows is taken from the transcript of Class 1- 5.1.2002; the bold fonts are my reflections and the rules formed. The original flow of the conversation is retained hence the rules made are not organized in the order of their importance.

Swaroop:      …We are going to talk about a few rules we will make together…

**I let them digest that, as children in Indian schools are not familiar with an activity of this nature. They are not included in rule making at school.**

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Swaroop:      Ok? Now tell me about a few rules we should make for our class?

Manini:        We will not laugh at each other when we make mistakes.

**This was a promising start because: 1. Someone started speaking immediately. 2. It was an important rule, as I wanted them to be comfortable even when they did the craziest of activities and said silly things or said something that was personal. It would not be of any help if a child was laughed at for expressing his/her opinion.**

Swaroop:      Yes, nobody will laugh at each other when we make mistakes. There may be times when we do something very silly…we will not worry…'Oh! My friends are going to laugh me'. What is another rule we should make?

Chandani:    We must not make noise.

Swaroop:      Ok. Let's put it this way.  We may play some noisy game then … we play and make noise …But  (*pause*) we should not make unnecessary noise.

**The quality of noise that causes discomfort to others was negotiated well. Additionally I wanted to introduce an instruction concerning rowdy behaviour.**
 **My previous experience in teaching drama, prepared me for unruly behaviour. Sometimes in past classes I had seen children becoming too boisterous in the 'free' atmosphere of the drama class and even hurt their friends by falling on each other or bumping into each other (cf. Snehal's enthusiasm during the walk activity on the same day, p.110). This was something I wanted to avoid.**

Swaroop:      Let me ask you something…when we were walking around, just a while back what happened?

Manini:        When we were walking around we banged into each other.

Swaroop:      Yes …and…?

Manini:        We should not bang into each other when we walk.

Swaroop:      Ok. What other rule should we make?

Manini:        We should not fight.

Swaroop:      Definitely. We should not fight with each other. Disorderly behaviour is

undesirable.

**Coming late to class was something we (Snehal, Manini and I) wanted to talk about from the beginning of the class as we waited for the latecomers to arrive. I had promised them I would explain to others how frustrating it was to wait for others and that we would make it a rule in our class to start on time.**

Swaroop:    There is no recess…so…

Snehal:      …Only one hour.

Swaroop:    Yes, [the length of our class is] only one hour. Then what rule should we make? What about coming late?

Manini:      We should not come late. We should come sharp at nine thirty.

**I was glad they realized that since we would be working for just an hour it was important for all the children to assemble in time, so as to not waste not only their time but somebody else's time as well.**

Swaroop:    What else?

Children:    (*thinking silently, however not getting any additional points.*)

**I now wanted to introduce, what I felt would be the most important rule …the rule, which endorses –'I Pass'. This was a rule that I appreciated I would have to introduce myself, as it is not an ordinary, 'run of the mill' rule. The children probably never had an option of not answering in class. Moreover, if they had not answered, they were probably looked down on for not answering the teacher's question. Additionally, it was linked with my research ethics (see reference to Freire on p.33) allowing the children autonomy to decide what they wanted to express**.

Swaroop:    We should make a rule… that everybody should try participate in all the games…. But…if we feel uncomfortable and we feel…Oh, no! I do not think I can do this. Then we should say…'Miss, I do not think I can do this' …or…

'Miss, I do not think I can say that.' So we are not forced to do or say anything we do not want to … Do you understand what that means?

Manini:       Yes …uhh…

Swaroop:      We should try but we are not forced to do anything …

Manini:       We should try …

Swaroop:      Yes…?

Sarla:        We should try to do…everything….

Swaroop:      Yes.

Manini:       Try, try and you will succeed.

**I was trying to get the idea of saying 'I Pass' understood. My rationale was that the children would be more comfortable if they realized that they are not compelled to speak or do anything against their wish. It would make them feel more at ease, for example a non-verbal child should not be placed under verbal pressure which is too large to cope. I decided to explain further as it was extremely important that they appreciate the value of 'I Pass'.**

Swaroop:      Suppose we are playing a game in which we have to …

Manini:       Kho-Kho [Kho-Kho is an outdoor game played by children in India]

Swaroop:      No, not Kho-Kho.

Chandani:     Passing the parcel …

Swaroop:      No. Not Passing the Parcel…Suppose we are playing a difficult Game…we are playing … 'Telling a Story' …and …Pratik feels …that he does not want contribute. He can say I do not want to do this …Supposing I ask …Samir to tell me what he ate last night. And supposing he does not want to tell me what he ate. Then he will say so …And that's allowed. We must try to participate but we are not <u>forced</u> to participate. Do you understand?

Snehal:       Supposing everyone has to tell a joke…

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**I was glad they were giving examples of their own. It meant they were actually trying to comprehend what I was explaining and moreover I was glad that somebody came up with an appropriate example.**

Swaroop       Ok, supposing everyone has to tell a joke and Sarla feels she does not want to tell a joke. She will say 'Pass', and does not tell a joke. Now do you know what pass means?

Manini:        [It means] I do not want to.

Swaroop:      Yes, [it means] I can tell a joke, but I <u>do not want to</u> tell a joke. Is that fair?

Snehal:        No Miss, you have to try.

Swaroop:      Yes, you can try but supposing you do not want to, it is ok. Is there anything you do not understand…is everything clear?

Children:      Yes.

<div align="right">Transcript: Class 1- 5.1.2002</div>

**Drama games**

In the first few classes I followed my tried and tested lesson plan. In other words, I depended on my warm-ups to begin, drama games in-between and cool downs to end the class as I had done in my classes with other groups. I used games in the drama class as prescribed drama activities. Prescribed drama activities enable development of *'language of drama'* (Peter, 1995, p. 67) and assist specific skills acquisitions. I use the term prescribed drama activities to distinguish games used by me from the kind of drama games used at a relatively superficial level like the ones used for warm-up and cool-down.

Although drama practitioners frown upon games (Fleming, 1999), I started off with games as they have their advantage when working with novices as:

- They have pre-determined structures with very definite objectives (Fleming, 1999), they allow the task and the goal to be seen clearly.

- They help with specific skill acquisition, in drama and in life skills (Spolin, 1991).

- They allow a problem to be scrutinized, as it is possible to side-step during the playing of it (Heathcote, 1984).

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- They provide a structured method of initiating drama (Fleming, 1999). Games would help my students, who had little or no experience in drama, to get their footing in drama. I therefore used games as a teaching tool to introduce the children to drama
- They allow the teacher to assess the response and social cohesion of the group (Fleming, 1999). I used games as a form of pre-learning tests and to assess and uncover information about the children's level of learning and their needs. I relied on games to determine the pre-teaching level seeing that it would be unfair to do any kind of assessment through role-play or a dramatic piece due to the lack of my students' exposure to drama.

Learning has not so much to do with the activity as it has to do with the quality of the experience for the group and the significance of the activity to the ultimate aim of the teacher (Heathcote, 1984). Reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) after the children engaged in playing helped the children and me move beyond the superficial level. It facilitated a dialectic process which implies that discussion and logical argument are means to investigate understanding.

The following paragraphs are a part of my journal entry of Class 1-5.1.2002. I have illustrated how games were used in the drama class. These paragraphs also include my reflections and explanations on how the class proceeded and how the games could help in the development of the skill aimed at. The detail of my approach to reflection is written in following section titled Reflection time.

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…Then we made a circle and played –'I am_____, and I Like_____'. In this game a child says his/her name and then names something he/she likes, it could be a simple thing like chocolates or strawberries. This game serves as an introduction and later on helps in expressing personal views. This was a straightforward activity, however sometimes a child just repeated what the previous child said. I did not dwell excessively on this issue at this stage, as I knew from experience that gradually, as they got familiar with the class and the group, they would stop

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imitating each other. The next game was–'Passing the Sound'. This is a game like 'Passing the parcel' only a sound is passed instead of a parcel; it could be a simple sound like 'Aaa'. This the students caught on fast. To pass the sound chaotically was easy; to perform this game accurately was tricky, especially when done at a faster speed, which meant:

*look at the child on your right,

*receive the sound (hear),

*look at the child on your left and

*deliver the sound (speak).

Chandani was one child who could not co-ordinate both the sound and the look. Either she forgot to look or she looked in the wrong direction when she uttered the sound.

The Walk-about came next. Walk-about or 'walk' was an activity were the children walked in a manner according to the given instructions, e.g. Walking on a hot surface, on pebbles, in the garden, like an old man, and so on. This time the activity was performed chaotically; the children merely ran around wildly, e.g. Snehal banged into me very roughly, and I got a broad, red bruise on my arm. I had to 'sidecoach' (see Glossary) them all through this activity as they were absolutely out of control. I accepted this positively, as I think a class with docile and passive children would be very unchallenging. Without further ado I understood I would not be able to sit back and relax in this class. At the same time it was a bit alarming. I was afraid I would loose control of the class; in those circumstances what was I to do? Would the class on such day be squandered? Would I be able to 'get my class back' from those children who suddenly become uncontrolled? Some of the children did not follow instructions even in the simple 'Walk-about' activity.

Later we sat on the floor to play 'Passing the Sound' -first time we had played it standing however now the children were a tired from doing the 'walk'. This time the game progressed very smoothly. Bearing in mind that the teacher in the drama class has to be aware of the level of energy and interest (Heathcote, 1984), in a short while I was ready to change the game. With the more controlled children I could carry on this game for a longer time, but once a child like Samir joined in the energy level of the class suddenly went up. He was not actually boisterous; nevertheless, he as acted like a catalyst and suddenly the children who were bold started opening up…

**Tableaux**

One of the slightly advanced techniques of drama I used is 'tableaux', 'freeze frames' or 'statues'. I usually used the word statue because it is a simpler word. Additionally, the children in India play a game called 'Statue' therefore my students could correlate the concept of creating statues with that of freeze frames. Fleming (1999) suggests that tableaux should be used judiciously as the over-use of this method, like the drama-games could be detrimental to progress. In this exercise pupils do not have to engage in dialogue during the performance. As discussions only take place in the planning stage this task culminates in silent, concentrated and focused work. It demands and often promotes group cohesion and allows everyone to participate at the level they are capable of. This is a valuable exercise and when looked at in-depth is not straightforward and its skills need to be acquired.

A tableau is a term used when participants are asked to create still images with their bodies, to capture a moment in time, to depict an idea or to isolate a moment in drama. Tableaux are a good form of drama to use with beginners (Fleming, 1999) as they:

- Freeze a moment in time.
- Teach how to condense meaning into a single moment and to read the full significance of a single moment.
- Encourage children to focus on the way meaning is conveyed by subtle changes in expression, gestures and position.
- Protect the participants by distancing themselves from moments that are emotionally difficult, for example instead of enacting a funeral the group could depict the moments in the form of tableaux. Thus tableaux support presentations, which could be made in an unthreatening context.
- Are 'silent', no dialogues are necessary.

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**Reflection time**

> '*First you must bring your eyes together in front of you so you can see each droplet of rain on the grass, so you can see the smoke rising from the anthill in the sunrise. Nothing should escape your notice. But you must learn to look again, with your eyes at the very edge of what is visible... You must learn to look at the world twice if you wish to see all that there is to see.'*
>
> -unnamed Native American (in Peshkin, 2001: p. 238)

Reflection time played a significant role in my research. A wide-ranging, deep and rich array of learning took place. It enriched the students' learning, shaped the data collection and most importantly through it I honed my skills as a teacher. Through reflection I learnt about my pupils, about what the children would like to like to learn I learnt more about the quality of my teaching and in turn the children learnt about what they were doing and about each other.

Here again I have followed the format used previously in the section titled 'Setting the rules', where my reflections are in the bold fonts.

• What I learnt about the children:

Swaroop:   What do you think about 'I Pass'

Snehal:       Bad

Swaroop:    This idea is bad? Why is it bad?

**I did not expect any child to say 'bad'…actually I did not expect them to voice a strong opinion so early. I soon realized he was pulling my leg. This surprised me, as I did not expect any of them to become so friendly so quickly.**

Snehal:       No nice. Where I tell bad? Hah, hah

Transcript: Class 2-19.1.2002

**Reflecting further I realize he was not trying to act familiar, he was comfortable, sitting in a class in which he was relaxed. I think that it speaks well of my class atmosphere.**

Nihar:     Miss, I like to draw.
Swaroop:  I have noticed you draw very well

<div align="right">Transcript: Class 4-2.2.2002</div>

**Nihar had drawn excellent figures in the worksheets. Neither his mother nor the SENCO told me he could draw so well or that he liked drawing. This was a talent I was going to encourage**.

•       I learnt about what the children would like to do in drama class:

Swaroop:    Now tell me what did you think of today's class…and if you did not like anything each one of you must tell me. Ok?

**I wanted to build up our relationship making it easy for them to talk to me. As the first few classes were planned with the intention of getting to know one another, (student and student, student and teacher). In addition they were planned to initiate self-expression, which would in turn be valuable during reflection time and later on when the students performed improvisations. I wanted my drama class to relate *to 'negotiated learning',* with a strong overtone of *'ownership of material'* by the students (Peter, 1995: p.37).**

Swaroop:    You have to tell me what you thought of today's class, whether you liked it, or you got bored. And what you liked and did not like… Why I am asking [these questions] …It's because if I know, I can change and we can do what you like? How about that?

<div align="right">Transcript: Class 2 -19.1.2002</div>

**This was to be the beginning of '*empowering pupils to have ideas and working with their initiative*' (Peter, 1995: p. 37) I realize this may generate eccentric or peculiar responses, however I was prepared to deal with whatever the results of this conversation were.**

- And in another class I learnt:

Lali:      I... did not like to write about the teacher.

Swaroop:   Why did not you like to write?

Lali:      Because it was difficult to write.

Swaroop:   Do you mean it difficult to tell what you feel?

Lali:      No.

Swaroop:   Were the questions difficult?

Lali:       No.  Drawing…

Swaroop:    Oh! Drawing a teacher is very difficult, isn't it? But remember
            I had told you, this is just fun.

<div align="right">Transcript: Class 4- 2.2.2002</div>

**Lali did not have a problem in drawing her friend but drawing a teacher was difficult. She thought she would be disrespectful if she did not draw the teacher well. Here I learnt how their minds worked. In India, teachers hold an extremely exalted position therefore students are usually formal and cautious when they communicate with them. They cannot be 'free' with a teacher. However I soon found that I was not categorized as a 'teacher'. That was probably because I was the drama teacher and not a 'regular' class teacher.**

Drama facilitated my entry into the children's world which can be perceived in the following text written as a journal entry dated 2.3.2002. The reflections of this text were written on 10.8. 2002 and are in the bold font.

'The miracle of relationships'

This is the third work sheet I gave the children to do. Most of them enjoy doing worksheets; however I always have my 'regulars' near me. Nihar does his work sheets but has to sit somewhere near me. Mukul as usual will only do the sheet if I write his answers, and today even Sarla would only do it if I wrote for her. The rest had spread themselves all over the class.

 I had nearly finished Mukul's sheet when he noticed that the other boys were having fun drawing in their worksheets and went off with his sheet to draw. That is when Lali came and sat next to me. Just her sitting next to me was so special, something warm like a friendship. We were in the Senior Kindergarten classroom, which had two big, low, oval tables, and plenty of low chairs. Sitting on the low table somehow made the setting more relaxed. Unlike the formality of a 'proper' classroom in this room we felt a sense of ease, a kind of relaxed feeling.

Lali sat next to me and gave me her sheet. She just sat silently at first, however I could feel she was connecting with me, she wanted to say something or may be just sit next to me. Sarla's sheet was answered and as she wanted to draw she ran off to the opposite end of the class, where the crayons were.

Lali looked at me and said her mother works too. Yes? I said. She then told me how clever her mother was, how she made hair oil, how she supplied this oil to salons. I could see that Lali loved her mother a lot. She then told me about her brother (who is mentally challenged) of how her mother does so much for him. She talked a little about her father, but mostly about her mother and brother. All this was said in a soft, confidential tone, as if she was taking me to her 'secret garden' (Burnett, 1998).

Then Nihar said he could not answer a particular question, Lali asked me if she could help him. To which I said she could. She sat next to him; both of them sitting on the tiny pre-primary class chairs, all the previous tension of working with the opposite sex forgotten (see p.30).

**What was it that made us connect? I comprehend that Lali let me enter her 'secret garden' (Burnett, 1998), a secret place where only 'friends' were allowed in. Was it the work sheet? Was it time? Was it the setting? I know it was partly due to her growing confidence in me as this was the seventh class. However I also know the setting of the class supported propinquity. One experiences a positive feeling when one can sit next to one's teacher, practically shoulder to shoulder. It is as if the teacher is your friend, someone you can trust and confide in. You do not have to feel uneasy in her presence and can share your thoughts and feelings with her. Sharing how she felt; having a brother who is mentally challenged, a father who drinks and does not help much in the house, the fact that mother needs to 'work' to supplement the income, was a big step Lali took.... This brought her close to me. This act of strengthening of our relationship also helped her in her relationship with her SENCO and counsellor, as they told me later on**.

<div align="right">Journal: 10.8. 2002</div>

- What the children learnt about themselves and each other through reflection:

During reflection time I asked them why they did not work well with each other specially the opposite sex. Pratik said the girls are shy and do not think like them. At first that sentence was understood, as 'the girls do not think'. Obviously, the girls did not agree and all of them started quarrelling with the boy. Chandani said that, girls have brothers and the boys have sisters, so we are not different from each other. Manini said that she plays with her brother and he is a boy. When it was Samir's turn, he justified Pratik's reasoning. Samir explained that Pratik implied that the girls can think, but their approach was different from the boys. Pratik agreed saying that is precisely what he meant. The way the two boys conducted the argument and expressed their thoughts was a pleasant surprise to

me. They did not cow down or just give up the argument. They stuck to their position and defended it well.

**This conversation was enlightening as I noticed that the children could understand and explain a complex thought. I observed that Pratik was not degrading the girls. He was only stating that he thought they were different and that is why boys have a problem working with them. The girls, on their part were not offended and did not have an altercation with the boys but tried to rationalise why working with the opposite sex was not a problem. I also appreciated the fact that they were not having an argument with the view of merely disagreeing, but supporting their views with valid examples.**

- What they learnt about emotional understanding and naming emotions and to look deeper into what they were doing in the drama class and vocalise:

| | |
|---|---|
| Swaroop: | Now tell me what have you have learnt so far in these classes? |
| Samir: | Miss, Miss, I have done statue. |
| Swaroop: | Yes. |
| Samir | Pose, Statue of old man. |
| Manini: | Miss, statue of tree. |
| Swaroop: | Something more…? |
| Sarla: | We have … We have learn many things like old man …statue of old man and then we have learnt when we are <u>happy</u>, when we are <u>sad.</u> |

**The children were slowly but at a steady pace learning to look deeper into what they were doing in the drama class.**

**Stepping stones**

By reading and re-reading my transcripts and 'interpreting' them I gained a comprehensive knowledge about the children. Writing my reflection in my journal and reflecting in class helped the process of analysis too. At the end of the Cycle 1, I met the parents again to learn if they had any observations to make about their children after three months. I met the class teachers and the SENCO and noted their observations too.

The children assessed their own learning by means of a self-assessment questionnaire (Appendix 9). I appreciate that the children could not yet understand this new method of assessing their own learning thoroughly. However, these sheets were administered as an introduction; I anticipated that as the classes progressed they would slowly start looking at themselves and start reflecting on what they were doing in class and why they were doing those things.

Data analysis in Cycle 1, equally as it did throughout the research, began during data collection (Ezzy, 2002). The results of the parent interviews, the SENCO interview and the class-teachers multiple-choice questionnaire were analysed even before the drama class commenced. Analysis was carried out simultaneously during the drama class (reflection-in-action) so as to not miss any valuable opportunity that could be taken on the spot. Data analysis was also done after each class so as to facilitate the planning of the following class.

Echoes of the inadequate teacher training (see Chapter 3, p.64-5) were reflected during the data collection of my research. The following tables exemplify how the SENCO failed to recognise many factors in the students' emotional make-up in spite of meeting them on a daily basis, in a one-to-one remedial teaching situation.

**Table 6: The SENCO report (December, 2001).**

|  | Total children =10 |
|---|---|
| Shy | 5 |
| Perceptual problems | 1 |
| Limited ability to abstract and generalise |  |
| Difficulties with memory | 1 |
| Slow speech and language development | 4 |
| Limited social skills |  |
| Inappropriate or immature personal behaviour | 1 |
| Limited attention span and poor retention ability | 4 |
| Decreased motivation | 1 |
| Poor self-concept |  |
| Low self-esteem |  |
| Lack of confidence | 1 |
| Lack of coordination and of gross and fine motor skills |  |
| Emotional disturbance |  |
| General clumsiness |  |

**Table 7: My report at the end of Cycle 1.**

| | Mukul | Samir | Chandani | Lali | Manni | Kanha | Snehal | Pratik | Sarla | Nihar | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceptual problem | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y=5 N=5 |
| Limited ability to abstract and generalise | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y=5 N=5 |
| Difficulties with memory | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | Y | N | Y=1 N=9 |
| Slow speech and language development | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y=9 N=1 |
| Limited social skills | Y | Y | M | Y | N | M | N | Y | Y | Y | Y=5 N=5 |
| Inappropriate or immature personal behaviour | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y=5 N=5 |
| Limited attention span and poor retention ability | Y | Y | Y | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y=8 N=2 |
| Decreased motivation | Y | Y | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y=6 N=4 |
| Poor self-concept | Y | M | Y | Y | M | Y | Y | M | Y | Y | Y=7 M=3 |
| Low self-esteem | Y | Y | Y | Y | M | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y=8 N=1 M=1 |
| General clumsiness | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N | N | Y | Y | Y=5 N=5 |
| Lack of coordination and of gross and fine motor skills | Y | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y=3 N=7 |
| Emotional disturbance | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N | Y=6 N=4 |
| Comprehension problem | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y=7 N=3 |

N= Not Applicable
Y=Applicable
M=Moderate

My report (Table 7), which was compiled after working with the children for three months and meeting their parents and class teachers, suggests that the SENCO (Table 6) had overlooked many signs of behavioural and emotional problems as they were not obviously displayed. Here I am trying to illustrate how children's problems can be hidden or manifested in a different way. Moreover, children with SpLD adopt various coping strategies and thus hid their problems. Therefore if the teacher or SENCO has inadequate training he/she can overlook or misinterpret a problem. For example, a child with SpLD can hid the signs of scholastic scars and torments in a private and introverted sign of misery which could be interpreted by the teacher as moodiness, irritability, lack of communication, and self-doubt (Edwards, 1994).

Furthermore, I am trying to demonstrate how a 'personal' approach and the use of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973; also see Chapter 2, p 4) is necessary to form a comprehensive picture of children in need. Denzin (1989) suggest that thick descriptions go *'beyond mere fact and surface appearances'* as they present '*detail, context and emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another'* (p.83).

Mukul, Samir, Manni, Sarla, Chandani and Lali experienced a fear of failure and the obvious strategy adopted by them was avoidance. Miles (1996) suggests that fear of being 'different', fear of failure, fear of words and social 'gaffes' put considerable on the children with SpLD. The SENCO suggested that none of the children had behavioural or emotional disturbances, however, I noted that at least 6/10 children in my group had concealed behavioural or emotional disturbances.

- Mukul had a separation anxiety disorder. His school attendance was irregular, especially after he was detained in the Std. V.
  His behaviour in the home environment was totally different from his behaviour at school. Mukul's parents felt he was a confident child who was daring and independent and who argued with a positive spirit (Parent interview on 19.12.2001, Appendix 7). However, his teachers thought he was a timid boy who hardly ever opened his mouth (Appendix 6, in December 2001), and the SENCO reported (SENCO interview January 2002) that he was a very shy child who was not confident.
- Samir played with children younger than him and was constantly seeking his parents' attention. Additionally, he did not like to go to school (Parent interview, dated

19.12.2001) and in class he constantly broke things and tore books (the class-teachers multiple-choice questionnaire, Appendix 6, in December 2001).

- Manni experienced stress due to failure and invariably answered only a part of the exam papers (Appendix 5, p.34). She feared she would to get poor marks even after trying her best and thus she answered just enough questions to obtain a passing grade. By leaving most of the questions unanswered her behaviour suggested that if she got poor marks it was because she did not try her best.

  Her mother called her manipulative, arrogant said '*her behaviour pattern*---[was as if] *that she give two hoots'* (Parent Interview-April 2002) and that she often told lies. Manni sometimes took money from her mother's purse without informing her.

- Chandani was an extremely nervous child which was demonstrated by her nail biting habit.

- Sarla always left a large part of her examination paper unanswered in spite of knowing the answers as she did not have confidence in herself and in her ability to answer correctly.

  Her mother said her behaviour was extremely childish and usually behaved below her age level of ten years (Appendix 9, Parent Interview - April 2002). The SENCO seconded this opinion. In the drama class she never left my side (Appendix 3,p.12-3, Journal Class-4) and could not begin writing in her worksheets without an eraser in hand.

- Lali constantly held onto her mother's palav [end of the sari] and followed her mother room to room (Appendix 4, Parent interview, 19.12.2001).

The SENCO report suggested that none of the children had low esteem or low self-concepts and only one child, Mukul had 'no confidence' (sic). However, the teachers' report and my observations showed that the number was much larger than reported by the SENCO; in that 7/10 students had poor self-concept and low self-esteem.

After studying all the collected information, I established that at the end of the Cycle 1- the children:

- Were highly motivated to working in the drama class (with the exception of Mukul and Nihar).
- Could share ideas with a partner when supervised

- Could offer ideas in a group.
- Could express disagreement in my presence.
- Participated in brainstorming.
- Could discuss why they liked an activity or a piece of performance and why.

However, I also realised that most:

- Had little or no knowledge about drama.
- Had weak dramatic skills
- Were weak at phonetics.
- Could not present appropriate voice modulation.
- Were weak at story telling, and could not introduce ideas to a story.
- Were awkward in organizing the spoken language. (All except Manini had some degree of Disorder of Spoken Language (Houck, 1984, p.40).
- Could not plan a presentation in tableaux.
- Had no conception of the visual perspective of the audience.
- Had problem of working in groups of 3 and 4 (and especially with the opposite sex).
- Could not usually reach an agreement and exchange ideas in a group.
- Could present confidently in the class, however, could not do a presentation in front of an outsider (the SENCO was invited to the class once) or on a stage area.
- Were impulsive.
- Lacked confidence in doing and completing tasks that they knew.
- Were distracted easily.

To recapitulate Cycle 1, I maintain that I:

- Administered interview schedule with parents, teachers and SENCO.
- Analysed the data
- Gained an understanding of the children from the point of view of significant others.
- Subsequently designed a module for life skills enhancement.
- Started teaching.
- Collected data in the form of tape-recordings, photographs, class observation and children's work-sheets
- Administered a post-learning interview schedule with parents, teachers and SENCO following the implementation of the teaching plan of Cycle 1.

- Analysed data of each class to gain understanding of children and progress of class.
- Analysed final data

**<u>A series of shocks</u>**

*In 'A series of shocks' I confront my fallible pedagogy and in 'Imagination' I envisage a way forward. These step are the fifth and the sixth steps of action research suggested by McNiff (2002, also see Chapter 2, p.15), in which I took 'stock of what happens and modify my plan in the light of what I found, and continue with the 'action'.'*

Professional development or teacher education concerns with what happens with the teacher suggests Greene (2000). Reading the kaleidoscope-like ideas presented by Edwards, Gandini and Forman (1998) and Woods (1993) proved to be the turning point of my teaching. These vibrant colours gave me:

> *'...a series of shocks… The shock of confronting* [my fallible pedagogy] *in the face of a simple, irrefutable challenge. The shock of catching sight* [of my] *evasions, tricks and clichés. The shock of sensing something of my vast and untapped resources. The shock of questioning why…*[and realising] *the time had come when* [the questions] *must be faced.'* (Brook, 1988: p.38)

This critical incident revealed that there was a gap between what I believed about my 'espoused' beliefs (Newman, 1998a) and what my actions were conveying. I was forced to reappraise my assumptions. Newman suggests that the change over into a researcher occurs when we are forced to see a familiar situation with new eyes. Even though Cycle 1 had been executed well, seeing that it operated as I had planned and essentially nothing unexpected occurred, I realised I was still tricking myself into believing I was following a unique agenda and not copying some expert's plan. The sentence that reverberated in my mind, 'I did not want to become a recipient of somebody else's curriculum' (see Chapter 1, p.12) was just a cliché. As I was still playing with games and tableaux, I had as yet not gained control over my pedagogy and curriculum.

Simultaneously, I realised I was coming down hard on my work given that the children had progressed well and that my research was following a smooth path. Additionally, the worksheets I had designed to learn about the children were well-organised

and effective resource material so much so that a psychiatrist involved with the WHO-Mental Health project, India asked for permission to photocopy them for later use. Nevertheless, I think the 'wow' factor (Chapter 1, p.12) was missing.

Schon (1987) brackets unique cases, uncertain problematic situations and situations of conflict among values, collectively he refers to them as '*indeterminate zones of practice*' (p. 6). He suggests that when practitioners respond to the indeterminate zone of practice, they remake a part of their practice world by a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing. When teachers reflects in action they do not see themselves as experts but liberate themselves as active fallible inquirers who recognise error and work towards improvement. This critical incident or Schon's 'indeterminate zone of practice' compelled me to reflect on my drama curriculum and my students' preparedness to enter the world of drama.

I conceded I was being too cautious about my students' preparedness to enter the world of drama. This critical incident helped me promote my children's education and development and my teaching in an accelerated way (Woods, 1993). Drawing on Elliott's (1991) observations on the action research, I viewed my drama module in life skills with a new eye. Elliott advises that an effective way of approaching issues in schools is:

> '*When one is faced with a practical problem, it is better to take the calculated risk of getting it wrong, and adjusting one's action strategy retrospectively, than that of not doing anything about the problem until one has fully understood it.*' (p. 24)

## Imagination

| |
|---|
| *'The Possible's slow fuse is lit* |
| *By the Imagination'* |
| (Dickinson, 1960, XXVII) |

Greene (2003) suggests that imagination allows people to think of things as if they could be otherwise; it is the capacity that allows a looking for alternative realities. At the same time Dewey (1916) warns that imagination does not mean building castles in the air, that it is not a substitute for clear and in-depth thinking. I went back to where my

imagination and intuition's javelin (Chapter 2, p.29) had landed and followed it up intellectually.

'The power of reflective practice' and action research, suggests Taylor (1995: p. 41) can re-charge and at the same time inform lacklustre and inert pedagogic practices. Teachers should be encouraged to think for themselves and thereby would be in a better position to implement change in their classroom than just stumbling on an approach to teaching.

I believe in-depth planning is essential to good teaching. The first change I considered was in the process of learning I altered the emphasis from external structures in drama to the internal processes. I revisited the list of assurances I had made to the Principal in our first meeting, (Chapter 2, p.46) to: improve the children's social and emotional health and clarify values, enable them to identify feelings and understand how they affect our day to day life, help the children to see the real world by using what they learn through their experience in drama, help them to reflect on experience, enhance their empathetic awareness and learn to be more tolerant and work within a group.

I conceded it was an extensive list and therefore I had to find a starting point. By systematically studying life skills (Fontana, 1995; Birell Weisen and Orley, 1996; WHO, 1994, 2001,2001a) and then breaking them down into segments, I narrowed down to understanding emotions (Chapter 4, p.78; Appendix 10). I re-planned Cycle 2 and based it on learning emotions and building up emotional literacy. Identifying and naming emotions, recognizing and understanding situations and reactions that produce an emotional state were the topics dealt with making use of walk-about, tableaux, role-play and reflections.

Regarding my learning skills I adapted and included some of Heathcote's goals in progression (in Wagner, 1999). As a teacher I aspired to:

- Move from taking limited decisions to taking greater risks.
- Gain proficiency in both drama and life skills education.
- Master unfamiliar skills and submit to various art forms.
- Enhance the children's ability to take autonomous decisions in class by facilitating a shift from reliance to independence.

Peter (1995: p. 57) draws on four mental capacities identified by Dreyfus (1981), to understand and estimate competence in drama teaching:

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- *Component recognition*  (understanding of the drama process and elements of educational drama)
- *Salience recognition* (identifying learning area)
- *Whole–situation recognition* (grasping contextual factors affecting the teaching situation like availability of time and space, group dynamism, strengths, interests and needs of students and their social development)
- *Decision making* (choosing appropriate courses of action- strategies)

**Table 8: Levels of competence and expertise from the Dreyfus (1981) model of skill acquisition (Adapted from Lester, 2001)**

| *Stage* | *Component recognition (How knowledge is treated)* | *Salience recognition (Recognition of relevance)* | *Whole situation recognition (How context is assessed)* | *Decision-making* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Novice** | Without reference to context- non-situational | None | Analytically | Rational |
| **Advanced beginner** | In context- Situational | None | Analytically | Rational |
| **Competent** | In context- Situational | Present | Analytically | Rational |
| **Proficient** | In context- Situational | Present | Holistically | Rational |
| **Expert** | In context- Situational | Present | Holistically | Intuitive |

Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition (Dreyfus 1981, see Table 8) uses five qualitative levels of competence, with progression from 'novice' to 'expert'. In each stage there is a change in one key area. Each stage characterizes how knowledge is treated, the ability to recognise significant learning areas, appraise teaching circumstances and decision-making. In the novice stage there is rigid adherence to taught rules or plans in drama with limited theoretical awareness progressing to gradually appraising the situation theoretically, usually

after prior experience as an advanced beginner. Later on there is a shift towards clearer theoretical knowledge to a sound grasp of theory and practice and an intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding.

My learning in drama is a living form as I reflect on my experience in the classroom and modify my teaching methods. In my opinion such learning does not always follow an anticipated direction and progress. There were moments in my practice when I experienced contradictions in my practice or dealt with educational surprises which were unique to my classroom and practice. These situations and the learning therein did not follow the steps described in the model.

For example, I believe I was at the novice stage when I began my research seeing that I had limited theoretical awareness in educational drama. However, I had a clear understanding of drama practice and was an experienced teacher of children with SpLD which could place me in the stage of advanced beginner. Likewise, in the case of life skills education I believe I started as a novice and skipped the stages of advanced beginner and competency and went onto proficiency seeing that I had a comprehensive understanding of theory and practice, simultaneously I had an intuitive grasp of situations in life skill enhancement.

In the following text I have described and critiqued each stage from advanced beginner to proficient plus, continuing with Cycle 2 through to Cycle 6.

## Cycle 2 An unshaped hunch

> *'...when I begin on a play, I start with a deep, formless hunch ... I have no structure for doing a play, because I work from that amorphous, non-formed feeling...Until gradually, out of this comes the form,... a form that's emerging.'*
>
> (Brook, 1988: p. 3-4)

*Cycle 2 of my research started in July, the beginning of the academic year 2002-03. By this time, the children and I had worked together for three months. Furthermore, I had revisited my initial plans on life skill education and drama and made changes in the module.*

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*As life skills education is the focus of my research, 'Emotional Understanding' which was the focus of the life skills learning in Cycle 2 is presented separately in Chapter 7.*
*In this section, I present:*

- *my theoretical appreciation of drama as an educational tool and my growth as a drama teacher.*
- *the change in my students' knowledge in drama the level of the children at the beginning of the Cycle 2 and compare it with their post-learning level at the end of Cycle 2*

There is a range of contextual factors which can influence a teacher's decisions over which approach to drama to use suggests Fleming (1994). He maintains broad decisions need to be made with respect to:

- Techniques: Tableau, teacher-in-role, hot seating
- Modes: planned and spontaneous improvisation
- Organisation: Pair work, small group, whole group
- Performance orientation: making, performing, and responding to drama

O'Neill and Lambert (1982) on the other hand, do not differentiate between the above-mentioned contexts in the flexible framework developed by them. They have presented different kinds of structures, in which they incorporate tableaux, pair work, small group and whole group work using planned and spontaneous improvisations. Additionally, they move from whole group work to small group work to statues, reflection and back and forth thus involving a whole range of drama activities in one lesson.

Even though I found the structures described by O'Neill and Lambert (1982) instructive, I chose to develop a distinct outline for my drama module. I elected to design my own structure as I found the plots of O'Neill and Lambert's (1982) drama lesson too far removed from my students' exposure in school and life in general. Additionally, at this point in my research I was not convinced my students could work in drama and as a group. I was still insecure about my abilities to successfully administer a structure in such varying modes. Moreover, I was not confident enough to plan a plot relevant to life skills management and carry that one plot through a series of classes like the ones described by O'Neill and Lambert (1982).

Consequently I designed a safe framework to work with my students. I did this because I felt that they could yet not function without my constant support for three reasons:

- They lacked drama skills.

  Theatre skills are not absolutely necessary before a group begins to work in drama. I understood that theatre skills would grow inside the work and by working in drama these skills would develop. However, it was necessary for the children to be willing to be able to enter the world of 'make believe'. Children who are unfamiliar with this kind of play may be reluctant or unable to 'make believe' (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). Peter (1995) suggests that some children with SpLD may face a problem with handling 'make-believe' because of developmental reasons. They may be slow at comprehending and may face with a struggle to make connections. They may also struggle with drawing on their own resources and experience to create a drama.

- They were weak at storytelling.

  The children should be able to maintain the make-believe verbally suggest O'Neill and Lambert (1982). My students faced difficulty in storytelling. Bergert (2000) suggests that these are problems a child with SpLD might face. I had often tried playing 'continue the story' game with them and had failed. In the first term they struggled with drawing on their own resources and experience to create a tableau and faced with a difficulty in retelling a story in sequence.

- They could not function in a 'whole group' activity.

  Drama is a social activity (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). Meaning in drama is built from the contribution of individuals offered to a group and involves communication and negotiation. In Indian schools, however, sharing activities are unusual where children are encouraged to work as individuals and taught to be competitive. Furthermore, sharing work is regularly not tolerated. It was not surprising then that my students were unable to work as a group.

  Moreover, children with SpLD face a problem with social interaction skills demanded for a group interaction. Ramanujan (2001) suggests that children with SpLD often experience difficulty in joining a group conversation and seeing how her/his behaviour could affect the group.

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Additionally, children with SpLD are vulnerable to paralysing self-doubt and often avoid learning in order to withdraw from further failure, a type of behaviour often displayed by Mukul, Sarla and Nihar (see p.122) Moreover, some children were assertive and the self-chosen leaders like Manni (e.g. p.105, Appendix 5, p.34).

Consequently, I decided to start with a simple concept: improvisation in a small group or a small group role-play. Improvisation or role-playing is like walking in another's shoes exploring feelings and thoughts of another person by responding and behaving as that person would in a familiar story. Heathcote (1984) suggests that in an improvisation we use personal experience to appreciate another's point of view thereby learning more than we did when we started. Improvisation is a way of '*discovering by trail and error and testing'* (Heathcote, 1984, p. 44). In an act of improvisation the children are required to draw upon their natural resources of thinking, story telling and communicating ideas. The intention in improvisation is to utilise drama to gain insight into a problem and the end product of improvisation is the experience of it.

Small group role-play or pair work was aimed at encouraging the students' participation gradually so as to preserve the participants' sense of security (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). We learn for the group and ourselves when we place ourselves in a human situation through:

> '*the spontaneous response to unfolding of an unexpected situation, and the ingenuity called on to deal with the situation…Wherever understanding of human behaviour, feelings, hopes and attitudes is required it* [improvisation] *will function speedily and effectively'* (Hodgson and Richards, 1981: p. 2).

From the beginning the children enjoyed working in small groups of pairs and trios, and then presenting their play to their classmates. O'Neill and Lambert (1982) and Fleming (1999) recommend that a teacher setting up a small-group work be careful to:

• Encourage pupils to work with different partners and vary friendship groups.
  I did not give my students an opportunity to choose their partners and varied the grouping so that friendship groups would not always work together (Peter, 1995; Fleming, 1999). This was accomplished with the intention to avoid any child from being isolated. I initially divided the class into groups of twos or threes and usually

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single gender groups as there was a gender split in the class (see p.116-7). However, it was a provisional action as by class 16-31.8.2003, the children were comfortable working with the opposite sex and then in the subsequent classes the whole group willing worked with each other (see e.g. photograph 'a.' on page 136).

- Restrict the focus of the play.

  This concept of restriction was appealing to my work as the focus of Cycle 2 was 'understanding emotions' (discussed in Chapter 6). I could therefore deal with naming emotions and understanding them, cues to recognise emotions, understanding simultaneous feelings and changing feelings, individually and in a cumulative process.

  Moreover it imposes constraints such as time limits for preparation, use of physical space, or an oral restriction like a silent scene completed without words or speaking in gibberish.

- Invites groups to show different endings or different groups to interpret and enact the same scene akin to an action-replay (Peter, 1995).

  This proposal played an important role in Cycle 2 as the children performed short scenes, after reflecting on the performance I sometimes asked each group to perform the same scene as they understood it. An opportunity to repeat an episode is comparable to an opportunity to repeat a learning point. It is an opportunity to consolidate the student's belief by reflecting on the action and refocusing.

I did not face great difficulty in the small groups work because I was working with children who were highly motivated and wanted to attend the drama class. When one group performed the other children sat on the mat with me and watched. After a group had completed a performance, the whole group reflected on the performance. More than merely watching the other groups perform it was reflections and discussions on the immediately watched performance which motivated the children to watch, as they gradually understood that if they had not observed the performance they would be unable to take part in the discussions.

The problem of monitoring progress of each group was effectively handled likewise. At the planning stage of each role-play the children usually sat with their group in different

corners of the room. To suggest that there was no problem would be false, for example whenever Nihar and Samir were working together they both would usually be up to mischief and that group would usually not have a presentation planned when the others did.

Deepening the children's work and moving away from stereotyping was dealt with during reflection time. Unlike in Cycle 1, in Cycle 2 reflection time was not necessarily held only at the end of the class. I instinctively used a technique used by Heathcote, *'stopping to consider'*. I write 'instinctively' because when I used that technique I had yet not read about Heathcote's method. I cultivate this technique from a method used by Spolin (1991) called '*sidecoaching'* (p. 25).

Sidecoaching is a method of calling out one word or phrase or a sentence that helps the players in a drama game keep focus. Additionally, it motivates interaction, movement and transformation. Spolin (1991) suggests the use of short phrases such as *'Show! Don't tell', 'Listen to my voice but keep right on going'* (p.33). Sidecoaching can be used in drama games to make the playing of them more effective. However, *'stopping to consider'* goes beyond sidecoaching, in that a teacher can stop work to show enthusiasm or challenge an action and demand more. Moreover, it is only the teacher who sidecoaches, but in 'stopping to consider' the ensuing discussion involves the whole class.

I believe 'stopping to consider' is linked with salience recognition-the ability to recognize and identify potential learning areas that arise in process and bringing them to focus (Peter, 1995). 'Stopping to consider' enables a teacher to generate significance into the ensuing drama and enable the students to respond by:

- *'slowing down'* actions and narratives so as to focus on significant moments;
- *'filling in'* so as to provide information and contribute ideas to enable a drama to move forward;
- *'building volume'* to deepen the students' involvement and understanding in the narrative and internal aspect of the drama;
- *'unifying'* viewpoints to achieve a consensus and common purpose.

(Morgan and Saxon in Peter, 1995: p. 50)

**Stepping stones**

I reject the suggestion that in a small group role-play children merely demonstrate their existing understanding rather than learning something new (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). The children's education progressed from the post-teaching level in Cycle 1 to a higher level in Cycle 2.

- The children had little or no knowledge about drama in Cycle 1 (p.122) and moved on to doing small plays effectively in Cycle 2.

Chandani and Kanha performed a delightful scene in which they showed simultaneous feelings effectively. They portrayed two children who are best friends playing in school and then going to the teacher to get their report cards. Chandani stands first in class however, Kanha fairs badly. "So", explained Chandani "I am feeling very happy as I have done so well, but I am feeling bad because my best friend, Kanha has done badly. At the same time Kanha is feeling sad, but he is happy for me."

Journal: Class 20- 22.10.2002

- Often in the beginning of Cycle 2 the observers i.e. the rest of the class and me, faced a difficulty in getting a clear idea as to what the actors were trying to convey (Chapter 2, p.52). However, the students who were performing usually knew exactly what they were doing and could readily explain in response to questions asked about the play.

**Students' huddled in the back, their performance ambiguous to the rest of the class.**

For example when Manni, Chandani and Sarla did a role-play with their backs to the class, they not only whispered all through but also huddled in the corner. They could explain exactly what they had performed and why, however, their play made no sense to the rest of the students.

In the following class when I showed the children the photographs, the three girls could understand what their play looked like from our point of view.

By the end of Cycle 2 the students could convey their ideas directly through their performance.

- Their improvisation in the beginning of Cycle 2 did not have a proper beginning, middle and end. Particularly the end of play, which sometimes merely dwindled away or stopped suddenly. By the end of Cycle 2 their improvisations had a suitable beginning, middle and end. Additionally, they could explain the theme, story or plot and the reason for their particular choice.

- They still were awkward in organizing the spoken language and in their presentation used minimum dialogues. Moreover, their speech sometimes faltered and the children were unclear to all except the actual participants of the play. However, their reflective skills had enhanced and could discuss complex issues with regarding emotions (discussed in Chapter 6, p.203-5).

- In Cycle 1, they were weak at story telling (see e.g. p.243; p.252-254), and could not introduced ideas to a story. In Cycle 2 they had improved in their storytelling skills. In Class 16-31.8.2002, we accomplished an interesting storytelling session (see Chapter

9, p.255-6). Later on the same day, they moved away from plays following stereotype themes of children, which they normally performed and depicted stories of animals. They performed a scene about two dogs and two cats, and a story of camel and farmer.

- Whilst, in Cycle 1 they could not plan a presentation as tableaux, in Cycle 2 they could plan and present imaginative tableaux effortlessly. They also present short plays of two - three minutes.

a. 

b. 

**Tableaux formed to depict caring behaviour.**

- They continued to have a problem with conception of the visual perspective of the audience; however they advanced to planning a visual setting.

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Chandani, Lali and Sarla planned a play in which took place in a nursery... Around the acting area the girls had strewn toys to 'give the feel of a nursery' (Chandani's words).

Snehal and Manni performed a role-play depicting a home tutorial, in which a SENCO visits a child's home to give tuition. They organized the acting area to represent a child's room. Snehal used a table and placed four chairs opposite each other. Manni used my journal as the teacher's logbook and my handbag so she could 'feel like a teacher'. The children had begun to use whatever they found in the classroom as props.



**Manni and Snehal.**

Journal: Class 13- 10.8.2002

On the 31.8.2002, after a successful storytelling session- Mira and the cat (Chapter 9, p.255) they were inspired and performed a play about two cats and two dogs. Moreover they used the whole classroom as an acting area.

- As discussed in Cycle 1, my students had a problem of working in groups of threes and fours. In Cycle 2 they were comfortable working in threes and fours, in Class 16- 31.8.2002, six children worked together to present a play. The gender split no longer existed and they could now reach an agreement and exchange ideas in a group. The photograph on p.136 shows five children, both boys and girls presenting a tableau.

- They gained in confidence and could complete tasks that they knew they could handle. Additionally they began to express their opinions as individuals (Chapter 6, p.201-5).

In Cycle 2 the children:

- Were highly motivated to working in the drama class (with the exception of Mukul)
- Could share ideas with a partner.
- Usually could reach an agreement and exchange ideas in a group.
- Could express disagreement in my presence.
- Participate in brainstorming.
- Could discuss why they liked an activity or a piece of performance and why.
- Began to understand drama. Could plan a presentation in tableaux and small plays lasting two- three minutes effectively.
- Could present appropriate voice modulation.
- Improved in the area of story telling skills. They could introduce ideas to a story and dramatise it.
- Could plan visual settings and could use real objects within the drama.
- Had no problem of working in groups of 3 and 4.
- Could work with the opposite sex.
- Could present confidently in the class, however were shy to perform in front of an outsider.
- Gained confidence in doing and completing tasks that they knew.

However they continued to:

- Be weak in dramatic skills.
- Have problems with conception of the visual perspective of the audience.
- Be weak at phonetics.
- Be awkward in organizing the spoken language.
- Be distracted easily.

To Review Cycle 2

- I experienced 'I' as a living contradiction for the first time after I recorded the proceedings of Cycle 1 and when I re-analysed my practice in terms of what I had accomplished. A critical incident (p.124) enabled me confront myself and realise that

in spite of wanting to devise my own curriculum I was as yet only following the books on theatre games. My drama practice had only superficially touched the internal dimension required by drama. This was because in Cycle 1 games dominated my curriculum.

I aspired to use process drama. However, nowhere in my work in Cycle 1 did my agenda show that I was moving in the direction of process drama.

I negated both these contradiction by incorporating small group improvisations in pairs and trios, by which the students' change in understanding in life skills could be facilitated through dramatic experiences. This enabled me to move towards process drama and at the same time enabled me to work towards improving the students' skills in drama. Eames (1995) suggests that '*When we do something about a contradiction, in order to move our practice closer to what we want it to be, we are, … negating that contradiction*' (Chapter 8: p. 15).

- A further contradiction was experienced in my practice in the field of life skill enhancement. I was merely preparing activities for my life skills lesson and touching the subject in an ad hoc manner, which can be seen in what I planned to do in Cycle 1 (p.101). Whereas life skills lessons need to be planned as a part of a sequential and unified programme, later life skills activities should be built on skills taught/learnt earlier in the programme.

  I tried to negate this contradiction by reviewing literature on life skills and gaining a more comprehensive understanding of each of the core life skills. Subsequently, I re-designed my life skills programme to teach life skills in a sequential manner (Chapter 4, p.78-9).

- Reframed the module continuing on with the original inquiry question and drew a revised plan in which my life skills enhancement programme would begin with 'Understanding Emotions' progress to 'Understanding Self' and move on to 'Empathy', using games, tableaux and improvisation.

- Started lessons on 'Understanding Emotions'.

- The concept of dialogue was used in Cycle 1 and the example is illustrated in the section 'Setting the rules' (p.103) and during reflection time (p.112-17) however, I had been unable to incorporate it into the core activities of the drama class. In Cycle 2

discussions following each performance, 'stopping to consider' and question-answer format used to understand emotions (e.g. Chapter 6, p.176) incorporated an improved dialectical relationship into the drama class.

- In Cycle 1, my research followed an interpretive paradigm, in which I was 'outside' the class actions as I interpreted, understood and described my students' behaviour. In Cycle 2 a transformative element was included into the research, as I entered into a dialogue with the students.
- Collected data in class and analysed data.
- Administered interview schedule with parents, teachers and SENCO following implementation of teaching plan of Cycle 2.
- Analysed data of each class to gain understanding of children learning in emotions and progress of class.
- Analysed final data.
- Planned Cycle 3 to teach 'Understanding Self' using Puppets and Mask.

## Cycle 3 Using a pre-text

> *'...I am making it happen.'*
>
> (Bolton 1998, p.214)

*With the view that art can bring individuals in touch with what lies submerged (Greene, 1989) and to make the students see, feel and understand something different; the artist in me collaborated with the teacher in me to design a puppet show based on the poems from Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats (Eliot, 1938). The design was based on the celebration of the individuality of each cat. In this section I discuss how I used poems and puppets as a pre-text to launch the lessons on self and how I moved onto transforming the pre-text.*

*The details of the 'life skills accomplishment' of Cycle 3 are described in the Chapter 7- 'Understanding Self'.*

**Pre-text**

To teach the concept of 'self' was an intimidating task (Chapter 7, p.210). Setting up a drama, which can engage the children both intellectually and emotionally, is not an easy task (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). I persistently pondered over the problem of teaching self-understanding and the questions: 'where would I start?' 'how would I teach an abstract concept such as 'self'?' were never far from me. This challenge takes me back to my discussions concerning the difference between an 'outside' researcher and a teacher-researcher who researches from 'inside' (Chapter 2, p.20). My questions and dilemmas stayed with me in my day-to-day life, while I was cooking, while I was gardening and while I was driving to work.

A photograph, a gesture, a title or a classic text may be used as an effective pre-text (Taylor, 2000). The launching strategy or pre-text in process drama is fundamental to its development suggests O'Neill (in Taylor, 1995 a). *'Playwrights use dramatic form when crafting opening scenes… which usually contain the seed of the forthcoming action'* (Taylor, 2000: p. 25) I literally emulated this concept by using Eliot's poems to launch the lesson on 'self'. This launching theme acted as a stimulus, in that even though it was not a re-enactment of the poems, the children did begin by acting as cats. However, a pre-text unlike a stimulus is not an isolated activity, '*it contains the germ of action'* (Taylor, 2000: p. 26) and the seed of inquiry (O'Neill in Taylor, 1995 a). Equally, my theme progressed further than a mere stimulus and achieved the objectives of a pre-text as I drew on it to deal with issues; it focused on the concept of uniqueness and similarity, particular and universal.

**Launching the pre-text**

I structured the first lesson using the songs from 'Cats, The Musical', using finger puppets (Chapter 7, p.210-11). Fleming (1994) maintains that variety is helpful in providing energy to a lesson. Additionally, it has a deep educational implication in varying the students' experience in drama, as '*providing alternative methodologies or using different dramatic conventions with respect to a particular issue can deepen understanding*' (p.145). Introducing puppetry to the drama class can be rewarding (Spolin, 1991), as puppets are an extremely useful resource material and can be used to encourage improvisation (Clipson-Boyle, 1998). Slade (2001) suggests that puppets provide an effective incentive to a

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difficult theme. Additionally, they stimulate imagination and provide half-living visual aid to educational subjects in a loving way.

Heathcote (1984) suggests that when words and spoken language are efficiently and imaginatively put to use, it can open up feelings and understanding. However, keeping in mind that my students, Sarla, Nihar, Mukul, Samir and Pratik, were not fluent in receptive language skills and weak at processing oral language (see Chapter 9, p.261), following the recital of each song I also recounted the poems.

Swaroop:    There is this cat, her name is Jennyanydot …her coat is of the tabby kind. Do you know what tabby means?  A tabby cat is a grey or brownish cat with dark stripes. Jennyanydot has tiger like stripes and leopard spots. She sits and sits and sits…that would make all of us think that she is lazy. Do you think she is lazy? Noooooo ... because when our day is nearly over her day begins... What do you think she does? …

<div align="right">Transcript: 23.10.2002</div>

Greene (in Taylor, 2000) suggests that an effective lesson is when a tutor enables students to attend well and additionally notice what might not be noticed in straightforward reading. In this instance, had I merely performed the musical puppet show the children would have missed not only the descriptions of the cats' mysterious, exciting, unpredictable and elegant personalities, but also missed the central idea that although they were all cats, they were nevertheless unique.

**Transforming the pre-text**

The first step taken in '*transforming the pre-text*' (Taylor, 2000: p. 28) was to present walk and tableaux using identical cat masks. Clipson-Boyle (1998) suggests that the learning process using masks is similar to that of puppets. Additionally, it goes further as mask enable children to use movements and gestures as well as voice.  Puppets and masks are central to some of the oldest forms of performance (Proschan, 1983; Bell, 1999). Masks, suggest Smith and Sprito (1996) be they designed for theatrical or ritual purposes, help convey us to another world, kindling our powers of imagination in the pursuit of self-knowledge. Using images of gods, humans, animals or spirits in the dramatic performance is indigenous to theatre in India.

This step in Cycle 3 also served as the beginning of whole group work as I did not divide the children in twos or threes, but the class in union experimented with cat like movements, all looking and moving in a similar fashion.



**Identical cat masks.**

The second step was making individual masks that would express their characters. The children were delighted to take part in an activity of arts and crafts and made reasonably fine masks. However, as described in the story: 'A flicker of colour' (Chapter 7, p.214) they continued to copy each other and were not confident enough to assert individuality.



**Individual masks.**

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Review of Cycle 3

- This was the first time I could develop an extended piece of activity which progressed through five classes 22nd, 23rd, 25th October and 16th, 23rd November 2002 (discussed in Chapter 7, p.214).
- I progressed from enabling the children to dramatise in small groups to whole group dramatisations.
- Additionally, I incorporated a new technique of using a pre-text.
- I narrated and dramatised the poems, the children then performed as cats, following which they made individual cat masks. The dramatisation by the children in this cycle was limited to this. However, I did not experience a sense of contradiction here as I believe this was the children's introduction to process drama seeing that a sense of continuity of the subject was maintained throughout the work done for five days. Moreover, a dialogic element was engaged in the way the puppet class, mask lessons and the classes in which they discovered their personal metaphors (Chapter 7) were conducted.
- There was total student involvement in all the five classes. Performing as similar cats was easy for them. However, they experienced difficulty in making individual cats mask. I concede that it was an extremely complex demand; but it served as an introduction to the concept of individuality. Thus the results were not disheartening, as I had planned to delve further on the concept of individuality in the lesson of finding the personal metaphor.
- Collected data in the form of audio-recordings, photographs, children's art work and class observation.
- Analysed data of each class to gain an understanding of the children's development and progress of class.
- Data analysis was accomplished at the end of Cycle 4 because my research moved in an unplanned and unforeseen direction in the middle of my lesson plan to facilitate understanding of 'self'.
  The Principal of the school requested me to direct a play for the school annual day (see below, p.145) in which my students would perform. This was not included in the plan of my research cycles nor was it in my curriculum to teach 'Understanding Self'.

However, I perceived it as an opportunity for the students to perform for their peers and took a risk and consented to put together a play.

**<u>Cycle 4 A critical event</u>**

*The dance–drama performed by my students for the schools annual programme was a critical event in their lives. A critical event is a planned event; it influences personal change and development.  In* Cycle 4 A critical event*, I unfold and examine the stages of a critical event.*

*The dance–drama was a 'product play'. However it followed a 'process-oriented mode'. The process that was an important facet of it has been described in details in the Chapter 7, p.217. This cycle exemplifies Fleming's (1994, p. 17) viewpoint in which he suggests that 'every product contains a process within it and every process is in some sense a product' (see* **'***The hullabaloo' p.92).*

*The pupil's learning level subsequent to the critical event is reported in the text titled 'Stepping stones'.*

A critical event takes the shape of a planned occasion, such as a school drama, and exhibition, a concert, a film or a book (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985, Woods, 1993). These events are consciously planned and are intentional. Critical incidents and critical events have a common thread of learning running through them. Both focus on '*highly charged moments or episodes that have enormous consequence for personal change and development'* (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985: p.230). Woods (1993) places emphasis on the role of particular occasions in shaping the way people understand their world, rather than teaching learning process as a steady accumulation of knowledge or experience at a steady pace. The 'critical' nature of the event for learning is not so much a product of what actually happened but as a product of what was perceived to have happened and the meaning that is credited in retrospect to such a perceived event (Wood, 1993).

The dance–drama performed for the school annual programme (see Chapter 7, p.217-22) was a critical event in the children's learning. It promoted the students' '*education and development in an uncommonly accelerated way'* (Woods, 1993: p. 2). Such

events enable children to make great leaps forward, discover new things about the self and are thus changed radically.

**Romance, precision and generalization**

Whitehead (1929) contends that students learn in three steps. 'Romance'- a stage of experience, experiment and discovery, 'precision'- the next stage as teachers train them in skills and make comprehensive knowledge available to them and ultimately to the 'generalization' stage wherein new knowledge is applied. Similarly critical events in a student's learning follow regular, well-defined stages.

The children had attended the drama classes for a year when the Principal of the school proposed that my students should take part in the school's annual programme. For schools in Mumbai, it is a routine practise to organise an annual programme in January, after the half yearly examinations and the sports day are through. It is an event which consists of the Principal's yearly report, the school trustee's speech and a variety of items performed by the students for an audience that consists of the students and their parents and family members. It is an event that is usually looked forward to by the students and the school has an air of excitement during days of preparation.

I was both excited and nervous at the thought of directing a play with my students. I believe I took a calculated risk when I accepted the proposal, as I was not yet completely sure my students would be able to present a polished performance. Woods (1993) suggests that a critical event although largely planned and intended has an element of the unforeseen and is therefore unpredictable as the teacher and students undertake a course whose consequences are not exactly known.

In the following section I have described the stages of a critical event in my research. The details of the play are described in Chapter 7, p.217-22.

**Conceptualisation**

Two weeks before my students and I started the preparation for the annual programme I was requested by the Principal of the school to help another group of children who were to represent the school for a street theatre competition. I had taken my students to the rehearsal where they watched me work with their older school friends. I was inspired by the idea of doing a play similar to a street play with my children. Though this play was to

be preformed on a proscenium stage, I was fascinated by the idea of a play with a social message that could be conveyed through dialogue, song and dance. This idea took me back to Class1 -5 .1.2002, when during reflection time the children had suggested:

Swaroop:	Tell me, what would you like to do in this class?

Sarla:	Dance.

Swaroop:	Ok. Dance

**I wonder whether they really wanted to dance and whether I will be able to incorporate dancing and singing meaningfully in the class**.

Manni:	Sing

Snehal:	Craft

Pratik:	Drawing

<div align="right">Transcript: Class1- 5.1.2002</div>

## Preparation and Planning

The aims in this stage are to plan and resource (see Chapter 7, p.217-19). As the director of the play, I planned the form of the play and accomplished the blocking (see Glossary). However, planning and resourcing the script actually took place after the class on 7.1.2003, in which I continued the role of a 'teacher as a facilitator' and provided opportunities for the children to create the internal situation for themselves. I merely started with a central theme on the premise of: what is amiss in our country? The children then interpreted the sentence as they understood it and the dialogues were then written. Additionally, after our conversation on the first day, I searched for the music I wanted to use for the play and requested a friend, who played the role of a 'critical other' to help me choreograph the dance.

## Divergence

Woods (1993, p. 8) describes this stage as an '*explosion stage*' in which the children are encouraged to be creative, explore opportunities and experiment with different media and forms of expression. Additionally, they learn to work with others and develop relationships.

Serendipity in this stage facilitates developing a central theme and unforeseen learning and teaching opportunities arise. During the discussion (Chapter 7, p.219-20) on how Mumbai was affected by terrorism, Manni unexpectedly introduced a new topic i.e.

how we should keep our surroundings clean. This laid the ground for the second part of the play: How I would like my country to be.

When I suggested that our play have a strong message, Manni referred to the statue of three monkeys Gandhiji owned (see Glossary; Chapter 7, p.220-21). Additionally, Sarla suggested that as Hindus and Muslims are siblings of 'Mother India' thus the hostility due to religious ideals is inappropriate. Manni's reference to Mahatma Gandhi and Sarla's views on religious unity gave me a clue as to where I should look to find the opening song of the play (Chapter 7, p.221).

**Convergence**

Convergence is the stage of assembling ideas and blending them together. A stage where all the ideas are tried out and incorporated into the production or discarded. 'How I would like my country to be' was something I had asked the children to think of at home and write down their thoughts.

I found some of them had taken extensive help from their parents and therefore they sounded didactic. During class time I addressed the issue, 'making our country better', again and edited most of the speeches and asked them to do a rewrite so their dialogues could be honest and heartfelt.

**Consolidation**

Rehearse, refine, smooth out is how I perceive this stage.

**a.**

**a. Rehearsing in the narrow Geography room.**

**b.**

**b. Rehearsing in a normal classroom.**

**Celebration**

     The critical event culminates at this stage as a performance. The celebration is exhilarating and special. The sense of working towards a goal is fulfilled (Chapter 7, p.224-26).

**Stepping stones**

     In drama the children had progressed in leaps and bounds. The children's creativity level showed an increase in the positive direction (Chapter 9, p.226-27). I judged the progress made by the children according to criteria discussed on p.13.

- My students were totally committed to their work in the drama class. Even Samir who was sometimes distracted and would try to sidetrack other students failed in doing so. Usually the children would turn around and tell him to stop what he is doing and join in the activity. This validated my stand that the pupils should seek order not be imposed to maintain orderly behaviour (see p.104).

  Additionally, I understand that control problems occur in drama when the pupils are presented with a task which is too difficult for them, when they are insufficiently challenged, when the students do not perceive the value or purpose of the work or when they are not motivated. I believe the content of lessons in this cycle was appropriate to their skills and experiences; they understood the purpose of the class and were evenly challenged. Moreover, I believe that as a teacher I had structured the lessons effectively, was able to give correct instructions and was able to motivate the children to work effectively.

- The students worked effectively as a group during the planning, rehearsals and the annual programme (Chapter 7, p.217-22).
- The children artistic competence increased as they discussed, planned, and rehearsed the dance-drama. The skills that they had learnt and developed were reflected in the presentations. Sharing their work with an audience raised the status of the play and students visibly gained in confidence and self-esteem.
- Their ability to reflect on and evaluate their own work was also demonstrated in Cycle 4 (Chapter 7, p.22-24). The dialogic element that was maintained throughout the process drama increased the students' competence to critically reflect on others' and their own performances. Additionally, the process of performing during the grand rehearsal and the annual programme made the students aware of different aspects of a theatrical production and some basic details of the staging. Thus in light of their own experiences they were empowered to critique others' performances.
- They steadily began to see a wider implication to the issues that arose in class and started drawing parallels in the real world. Their imagination was set in motion in a social context. The process of fostering social imagination influences solidarity, cooperation and community and enables students to imagine the world in new ways.
- The children had begun to transform their experience in the class into other expressive modes. I had encouraged all the children to write in their diaries when we were discussing emotions (Chapter 6, p.181-84) in Cycle 2.The children took this concept of writing further by sticking pictures and drawing in their diaries (Chapter 6, p.184). However, a significant progress was experienced when the children learnt about self and the annual program helped them to become more confident (Chapter 7, p.225-26).
  - Chandani performed the dance at a children's party she attended following the annual program. She performed this dance as a forfeit while playing 'passing the parcel'.
  - Sarla directed the same play at her residential housing society, working with children none of whom had attended our drama class or even seen the play; additionally they were of different age groups.
  - Lali wrote a poem for a friend in the drama class after she experienced the solidarity of working together for the annual programme.

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   A friend is a joy forever,
Friendship never fails
        True friendship lasts forever
 Friendship grows stronger as the
years go by...


                         Lali's Diary
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In Cycle 3 and 4 the children:

- Were extremely enthused in the drama class (with the exception of Mukul and Samir).
- Could share ideas with a partner.
- Could offer ideas in a group.
- Could express disagreement in my presence.
- Participated in brainstorming wholeheartedly.
- Could discuss what they liked about an activity or a piece of performance and why.
- Could complete the self-assessment form competently.
- Could assess their peers' performance and behaviour candidly.
- Exhibited sound dramatic skills.
- Could present appropriate voice modulation.
-  Demonstrated sound storytelling skills and could introduce ideas to a story.
- Could plan a presentation in tableaux and role-play.
- Understood the conception of the visual perspective of the audience.
- Had no problem of working in groups of 3 and 4.
- Could work with the opposite sex.
- Could exchange ideas in a group and usually reached an agreement.
- Could present confidently in the class and in front of an audience.
- Gained confidence in doing and completing tasks that they knew.
- Were not distracted easily.

However, they continued to be weak at phonetics and were awkward in organizing the spoken language.

   To review Cycle 4:

- I believe I was able to negate the negation I expressed in the review of Cycle 2 effectively in this cycle, seeing that the children and I participated in an extended process drama of seven days. At the end of the week the children presented a performance combining dance and drama for the annual programme. For the first time in my drama practice I experienced a sense of 'this is what I believe in, this is what I want to do and am indeed doing it'.
- I could realise my philosophy of supporting the students' learning by 'scaffolding' but importantly not leaving the children 'scaffolded' and thus unable to function independently. I believe during the process of creating the dance-drama I gradually handed over control of learning to the students, the hand-over was completely realised when my students performed in the annual programme. Their ability to transform their class experience into other expressive modes like performing at a social function, directing the dance-drama and writing a poem suggested their capability to function independently.
- The proceeding of the class became genuinely inclusive and there was increasing '*ownership of the material*' (Peter, 1995: p.37; also see p.113) by the students as the dance-drama developed. Additionally, this confirmed my philosophy of a dialectic form of education.
- The children filled in two assessment sheets after the annual program (Appendix 11,13). One was a self and peer assessment sheet and the second sheet concerned, reactions of their friends and significant others and how the children felt on receiving the feedback.
- Conducted unstructured interviews with the significant others and documented their remarks.
- Analysed data, which consisted of class transcript, children's self-assessment sheets and interviews of significant others.
- Planned Cycle 5

**Cycle 5 Teacher–in-role**

A play is '*an ordered sequence of events that brings one or more of the people in it to a desperate condition which it must always explain and should, if possible, resolve*'

(Tynan in Heathcote, 1984, p. 80)

*By the time we entered the Cycle 5 of my research, the children were capable of participating in a whole group play. In the beginning of this section I have illustrated a whole group play and commented on the concept of 'stopping to consider'. Additionally, I have reflected on the concept of teacher-in-role. I begin with the concept of 'stopping to consider' as it was through my understanding of it that I progressed to the next level of my practice, which was teacher-in-role.*

With the introduction to whole group drama that was performed for the annual program (described in Cycle 4), the perspective of my lessons had changed. I was now confident to move on. My students' approach in classroom drama advanced to a mature level and was based on a shared perspective in which they took on a role as 'we', the children in 'this' situation. The children could reflect in and on actions, express their opinions and transform actions. They were becoming aware of their ability to manipulate the dramatic form while 'living through' drama and were in a position to '*disclose the extraordinary in an ordinary situation*' (Greene, 1989: p. 216).

In the first lesson (Class 34-1.2.2003) after the annual programme, I introduced the children to the concept of a whole group play. I requested two students to begin and then led in new characters, one by one.

Snehal and Pratik started the play in the role of two children playing in a park and amusing themselves with an imaginary ball. After a while Snehal, in character, got bored and nonchalantly started kicking things in the garden. Samir joined in as a watchman. Nihar joined in next and continued the action by playing with Snehal and Pratik; he then proceeded to fight with them. A huge quarrel ensued; Snehal and Pratik stayed on one side and isolated Nihar. All the characters in the play bickered with each, nevertheless the play was not moving in any direction. That is when I sent in Manni. She decided by herself to

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take on the role as a troublemaker and set to create a fight between two friends, Snehal and Pratik. Soon Lali joined in, however Mukul on his part refused to join in the play.

'Stopping to consider' (see p.133), I often interrupted the action to give cues or ask questions about the play. The play continued for a while, however soon it disintegrated into chaos with the children falling into an argument, which merely consisted of one group saying, "Yes…yes…yes", and the other group saying "No…no…no". Much to Snehal's disappointment I had to stop the play to sit and reflect.

After reflection-on-action we started the play again with the same two characters beginning the play. However, this time when Manni joined in, Snehal, in character, remembered Manni as a troublemaker and refused to include her in the game. After a while of wandering around in character, she left the scene.

Aside, I told her I would send her back into the play. In the mean while, Snehal and Pratik quarrelled and stopped playing with each other. Both the children continued playing separately in the same park with a desolate expression.

I asked Sarla if she would join in, she agreed, nevertheless saying she would not play the role of a mother. It was not my intention to introduce a mother; however, Lali overheard the idea and expressed a desire to be the mother.

In the role of the mother, Lali tried to get her child, Snehal, to cheer-up. Nevertheless she remained unsuccessful. At the same time Manni tried to cheer-up her son, Pratik.

This fruitless action prompted the two mothers to plan together. They changed the scene to a market place, where they went and bought two books as presents. According to their plan their children would exchange gifts with their friends so as to make up.

**Manni and Lai as 'mothers'-setting up a market scene**

'Stopping to consider' played an important role in the progress of the play. Now the children were not surprised when I asked them to stop and think or when I stopped to give a clue. However, I continued to be 'outside' the action and Snehal and Pratik, who began the play, experienced a sense of loss of ownership due to my interruptions. Reflecting-in-action to this reaction, to the teacher who is an 'outsider' in the play, enabled me to realise that according to the actors I was interfering in the progress of the play. I comprehended that if I wanted to make a meaningful difference and at the same time take into consideration the position of the 'actors' I had to move into the drama by transforming into an 'insider'.

**Teacher-in-role**

The technique of 'teacher-in-role' suggests Neelands (1984: p.47) is:

> '*a particularly effective one for allowing the teacher to stand out of the children's way in order to give them a more direct view of the learning material through the lens of the dramatic context they are all involved in*'

The teacher, through her role, provides opportunity in a play that at first seem difficult to realize. O'Neill and Lambert (1982) point out that '*the particular force of this teaching strategy lies in the qualities of immediacy and spontaneity which it can generate*' (p.139). Whether a teacher walks, slides or dives into a drama 'in role', she/he has the power to encourage greater expression, exploration and risk-taking.

Even though teacher-in-role is not to show the teacher's acting skills as she/he is definitely not 'acting', it unnerves most new drama teachers (Edwards and Cooper, 1996; Fleming, 1999). Teachers without a theatre background, assume that they are 'not actors'

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and that performing a role depends on actor training that they had not acquired. However, I believe that the purpose of teacher-in-role is not to display the teacher's acting skills but to offer the students a script (Bolton, 1998) and to deepen the quality of the students' experience in the drama class. It a powerful technique (Fleming, 1994), using it the teacher can make the drama more real for the students, deepen and challenge the pupils understanding from within the drama and *'thus pursue educational objectives without stopping the flow of work'* (p.99).

Teacher-in-role is an explorative and experiential process. Since collaboration with the students and mutual decision-making are central to its progression, I believe it could be threatening to many teachers. A teacher may fear that his/her authority would be undermined. However, I do not see it as a threat or a loss of power; the teacher still retains the power to question, the power to challenge and the power to guide the students. What is changed is that the teacher operates 'within' the drama.



a.                                    b.

**a. Before I entered the play as teacher in role.   b. Teacher in role.**

**Stepping stones**

At the end of Cycle 5 the children:

- Were highly motivated to working in the drama class (with the exception of Mukul).
- Could share ideas with a partner and the larger group.
- Could reach an agreement, participate in brainstorming, work creatively and exchange ideas in a group without adult prompting.
- Could discuss what they liked about an activity or a piece of performance and why after the performance. However, they took an exception to the act of 'stopping to consider'.
- Showed awareness of and accepted teacher-in-role.
- Could participate in a sustained dramatic activity lasting the whole lesson that was an hour long.
- Could present appropriate voice modulation.

However they continued to:

o Be weak at phonetics.
o Be awkward in organizing the spoken language.

In Cycle 5:

- I started teaching 'Empathy and Communication Skills'.
- I realised my aspirations to work in a process drama with my students. Process drama is defined by Wilhelm and Edmiston (1997) as drama in the classroom in which there is no external audience, no prepared script and in which the teacher frequently takes on roles with the students or acts as a playwright as she/he sequences tasks and shapes the drama. The entire group is engaged in the same enterprise.

  In Cycle 5, I started a whole group play in which the story was completely in the children's control. This demonstrated a huge leap in the children's learning. In Cycle 1 they faced difficulty in a simple game of 'continuing the story' whereas in Cycle 5 they choose the topic of the story and dramatised it to its end. Their stories had a proper beginning, middle and end (e.g. p.153-55).

  The children had begun to imaginatively use all the spaces available in the classroom. As can be seen in the above photograph a., they are performing a 'market scene'.

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Kanha seen sitting on the table as would a greengrocer who owns a stall Sarla used some slates to demarcate her personal area, she was in the role of a poorer 'bhajiwalli' [female greengrocer] who has no stall and Nihar was 'playing' a hawker carrying his vegetables on his head. The slate he has used represents a basket.

The children were however, uncomfortable with the concept of 'stopping to considered' and felt that it interfered with their thought process. Additionally, students saw me as an 'outsider' and felt by stopping the actions I, the teacher, was being manipulative.

To negate this contradiction I entered into the drama as a teacher-in-role.

- I believe teacher-in-role is an advanced technique of drama teaching. Working in-role is a democratising agent where the teacher shares the power with the students while still maintains responsibility for the overall curriculum. Sharing power, which usually makes teachers uncomfortable with respect to the traditional perception of the role of teachers in school, was not an issue for me seeing that I valued democratic classrooms. On the contrary, the concept of sharing power was in sync with my views of negotiated learning and democratic classroom.

- Collected data, transcripts and class observation.

- Administered self-assessment questionnaires to the students.

- Administered a post-learning interview schedule with parents, teachers and SENCO following implementation of teaching plan of Cycle 5.

- Analysed data which consisted of class transcript to gain understanding progress of class.

- Administered a test to estimate the maintenance of 'understanding and coping with emotions' in the children.

- Analysed final data.

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<u>**Cycle 6 Teaching at risk**</u>

*'I am watching this happening to me, and I am making it happen '*

(O'Neill, 1995: p. 125)

*This section describes a critical incident, which led to my taking a huge jump in my teaching practice. I have described the lesson in which the children choose to interview each other and proceeded to interview me. This section illustrates how by reflecting-in-action skilfully a teacher can transform her practice. Subsequently I have reflected on the concept of 'teaching at risk'.*

My at-risk class developed by a stroke of luck and was a result of the students' ability to 'hot seat' me.  Hot seating, at its simplest level involves a student or the teacher being questioned in-role about their motives or character. Hot seating or interviewing in-role can be used within a subject like, a detective game (Brandes, 1982; O'Neill and Lambert, 1982; Fleming, 1994) or like in the imaginative use of interviewing within process drama as in Mystery Pictures (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982: p. 154-162), and Young Offenders (p. 171-179).

Interviewing featured in my class as a one-off method and did not move into a play, as it was equivalent to a research interview. The most important role played by the interviewer was to acquire knowledge about the interviewee. The respondent's purpose was to reveal an account about him/her self or narrate a meaningful incident. Both the interviewer and the respondent under no circumstances were in-role.

On the 16th of August 2003, I started the forty-fifth class by first recording the date, as a practise each child announced the date and his/her name. Listening to their own voice has been very fascinating for them from day one. They were fond of listening to their recorded voices and wanted to listen to the recording today.

 Nihar was the first one to say he wanted to hear what we have recorded, thus I asked him to say something which I could record and subsequently we could listen to the recording (see Chapter 9,p.268). A year back he would have hesitated. Samir who is confident in his drama skills would have demonstrated how to accomplish the task. Nihar

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on his part would have smiled but definitely not carried the action further (Appendix 2, p 4-6). However, in this forty-fifth class, he started telling us about a soldier [Sachin] whose first death anniversary they were commemorating in their building.

> This started the ball rolling after he finished his story (Chapter 9- 'Nihar's Story'
>  p. 268) the rest of the children also wanted to record their voices. Samir told everyone a joke and when I asked if anyone else wanted to tell a joke, Nihar was ready again! It was then that I decided to let them all uses the tape-recorder, which they were longing to handle all these days. Instead of letting them merely prattle, I used the concept of interviewing; I let them decided which of their friends they wanted to interview instead of pairing them off.
>
> Journal 16.8.2003

Swaroop: Who is going to start?

Nihar: *waving his hand all set to start.*

Swaroop: …but you will have to ask questions. Did you notice how I asked questions when Nihar said he [Sachin] was in the army? Like ...how he...

Nihar: Died?

Swaroop: Correct. What else did I ask you?

Nihar: What is [was his] name?

Swaroop: Very good, Nihar.

Nihar: Where he lived.

Transcript: Class 45- 16.8.2003

I was surprised when Nihar said he wanted to interview Mukul. Nihar is a quiet boy and so is Mukul. Nihar wanted to interview Mukul; Mukul on his part did not decline the invitation. Their amelioration from quiet children who were nearly inactive and stayed in the background to children who took the first step in class was like a dream come true for me (see Appendix 2, p.3-5, Chapter 7, p.222).

I prepared him for a difficult task, telling him how interviewing Mukul would be difficult, as Mukul was an introvert (without actually using the word introvert, a word which none in my class would have understood) and it would really test his communication skills to drawn Mukul out of his shell. However Nihar was ready for the task, in fact he was all set to ask questions. It pleased me, as Nihar was prepared to try his best.

The class progressed favourably the children conducted their interviews with total concentration and also enjoyed themselves.

Swaroop:    Ok Sarla, who will you interview? You decide.
Sarla:        Miss, you.

I was a rather taken back by that. *'Many teachers find dyslexics disturbing to teach'* suggests Edwards (1994):

> *'as they have an uncanny knack of reversing the roles so that you feel the instrument of analysis is suddenly turned on you who are supposed to be its master, instead of you using it purely to study them.'* (p.125)

However, if the teacher is alert and can use her skill on the spot (reflection-in-action) the direction of her class can change. The *'artistry'* of reflective practice according to Schon (1983) refers to the close link between expert action and understanding, which occurs whenever we deal sensitively and effectively with *'situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts'* (p. 50).

In class I reflected-in-action about my values regarding democratic classrooms and negotiated learning. I also reflected on the fact that an incident as simple as a child wanting to interview me could unsettle me. In a quick flash my thoughts went back to the beginning of my research when I had promised the children that I would give them am opportunity to decide what they wanted to do in class.  Would it not be an inconsistency on my part if I repealed Sarla's invitation to interview me? Consequently I decided to take the place of the respondent. However, before she could ask a question Nihar interrupted and asked Sarla:

Nihar:       What do [es] Swaroop Miss…work? (sic)
Sarla:        She teaches us drama... and teaches us about life-skills.

Sarla's answer surprised me. A student using the precise term 'life skills' to describe the proceedings of the drama class was beyond my expectations. In Cycle 1, I had explained to them in details about what I was hoping to accomplish in approximately the two years to come. However it was twenty months since and I had not expected them to remember. This was an opportunity I wanted to capitalise on, with one student interviewing another and both discussing the research. This is the line of questioning I planned for the conclusion of my research as an assessment of the students' learning, with the hope of ascertaining what and how much they learnt. I therefore let the conversation carry on in this direction.

Swaroop:    What are life-skills?
Sarla:        Life-skills means you want to improve us... in everything … and make us a... perfect man. [!]

**Sarla tried hard to express the complex concept of enhanced life skills. After struggling for words she said 'perfect man'.**

Samir:        How to concentrate and … I like the class...
Swaroop:    Why do you like to come to this class?
Mukul:        Like this only.
Nihar:        I like the way you teach.
Swaroop:    What do you like about the 'lessons'?
Nihar:        Miss, you say close your eyes and do inhale and exhale…teach us to relax ...
Kanha:        Miss, you teach about drama.
Samir:        Miss, the acting and all
Mukul:        ……and think…. I used to be shy and now….
Sarla:        Miss, the emotions and all you taught us…

Transcript: Class 45- 16.8.2003

**Teaching at risk**

Heathcote (in Bolton, 1986) encouraged the teacher to learn how to teach at-risk in the classroom. This is where a teacher enters a classroom and selects the lesson from the children's suggestions and then builds the curriculum needs and objectives around it. As the teaching process is an unknown territory, this notion is frightening to many teachers. However, problem solving and risk taking in teaching are at the centre of learning and maturation for the teacher using the at-risk methodology. I think a teacher can use the at-risk methodology only when she/he has matured as a teacher. She/he has to have enough confidence in her/his ability to teach and enough knowledge databases in the pertinent subject to allow a student to suggest the topic of the lesson.

When I met the class for the first time, I did not go in with a definite idea of what is going to happen and what exactly I was going to teach because I planned to first judge their level of understanding and use their ideas. That, however, was not 'teaching at-risk', as in the Cycle 1 I had planned all my lessons extensively.

The proceedings of class 45-16.8.2003 encouraged me to try something more experimental. In that class I had moved one step beyond teacher-in-role, wherein I was in control, to teaching a lesson that was not planned by me, instead letting the children decided the activity they wanted to do. It was a '*curriculum that is child originated and teacher framed'* (Forman and Fyfe, 1998: p. 240). This brought about a far-reaching transformation in my classroom practice. In spite of the form of the class not being designed by me, I could teach them communication skills, which was the subject of the day's lesson plan.

When Heathcote (1984) brings to mind the responsibility drama puts onto students she maintains:

> *'I want the children to recognize that I am putting the onus upon them to have ideas, that I am prepared to accept their ideas and to use them and make them work. This decision making, where children watch their own choices worked out in action, seems to me to be one of the important services which drama renders to education where we are trying to encourage children to think for themselves.'*(p. 209)

As the children truly understood the context of the research and our collective work in drama, I decided to 'hand the reins' over to them. Fleming (1994) suggests *'as the pupils gain in experience in the subject they should be able to use dramatic forms to create meaning independently of the teacher'* (p. 142). Fleming makes this suggestion referring to progression in drama, my students had progressed in drama and additionally now understood the meaning of life skill enhancement. They understood that when the class was dramatising the word 'sad', they were learning about the particular emotion. It was not merely an external portrayal of the feeling 'sad' but the portrayal of what they understood as the meaning of 'sad'. When they were doing the cool down exercise of inhaling and exhaling, it was not merely the act of breathing but that by doing so they could relax and cool down, so as to leave the activities and the excitement of the drama class behind and move on to another class, another subject on the time-table.

In the class I started by asking them what we would do in the next class.

Swaroop:   We will do a play next time? …

Just supposing you are the teacher, Kanha. That is, you have to decide what we will do in the next class. I am sure if Samir were here he would want to do 'abba dabba doo' [the gibberish class]. I will give everyone of you a chance to decide what you want to do. Remember we did the different warms-ups, we learnt about emotions; we did the puppet show, the blind-walk….

Sarla:      Miss, I want to do the Cats and the masks lesson (see Chapter 7 – 'In which Sarla becomes a magician' p.26).

Swaroop:  Ok. It is your decision…

<div align="right">Transcript: Class 45- 16.8.2003</div>

> *'We have to realise that if we are trying to release children to become what they are not yet, to be free, to explore, to discover, … we can't tell them where to go – we have to rejoice that they are alive …[then] a kind of wide-awakeness can develop through the partnership…so that children can see more, feel more, and hear more and reach further, and maybe become something more than what they call human resources for other people to mould.'*
>
> <div align="right">(Greene, 2000, Internet source without page no.)</div>

**Samir as the 'teacher of the day' explains the importance of facial expression to the group, during his communication class.**

**Stepping stones**

At the end of Cycle 6 the children:

- Were highly motivated to working in the drama class and took drama seriously.
- Accepted a peer as a leader/teacher of the day, without experiencing the loss of autonomy.
- Could reach an agreement, participate in brainstorming, work creatively and exchange ideas in a group without adult prompting.
- Could organise space, physical and human resources to explore issues in the drama.
- Showed sustained concentration and could momentarily stand outside the drama and then resume role.
- Could participate in a continuous dramatic activity progressing for successive drama lessons.
- Could present appropriate voice modulation.
- Displayed a growing fluency and confidence in spoken language.
- Showed understanding of issues explored during the class and reflection time and could recall and recount them at a later date.

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To sum up Cycle 6:

- I believe this is the confluence of my values, research philosophy and teaching philosophy. In this cycle I have maintained a reflective and dialectic critique, substantiated collaboration, risk and a plural structure and finally show the transformation and harmonious relationship between theory and practice.
- Concerning the idea of negotiated learning and democratic classrooms, I believe in Cycle 6 I have engaged in an interactive and democratic form of research by maintaining a dialogic relationship with the participants who collaborate in the research process. The students and I democratised the classroom on account of our reliance on co-creative input. This was achieved through a process, the transformation that was not sudden. In the first classes in Cycle 1 the children could not work as a group. In the analysis of Cycle 1 I had observed that the children:
  - Had problem of working in groups of 3 and 4 (and especially with the opposite sex).
  - Usually could not reach an agreement and exchange ideas in a group.

Gradually, in Cycle 3, with the initiation of whole group work the children started seeing themselves as a part of a group. As we created and rehearsed for the dance-drama in Cycle 4, the children developed mutual respect and trust for each other and worked effectively in collaboration with adult support. In Cycle 5 they accomplished a whole group drama with out my support. In Cycle 6, this sense of mutual respect and trust increased so much so that the children could now accept his/her peer to take a dominant position as the 'teacher of the day'.

I reason that this was possible because the children trusted me enough to be fair. Importantly, I believe the children were empowered through the dialogic process that was initiated and maintained all through this study. My inference is that they 'modelled' my democratic behaviour; seeing that I did not place any child above another and in fact I did not even place myself above them. They saw that I did not attempt to control their thinking and actions and no time did I inhibit the students' creative power.

Teamwork and shared decision-making were central to the approach of the drama class and it, in turn, encouraged respect, equality and empowerment. Such sharing of power in the classroom is analogous to Freire's (1970) dialogic education based on the assumption that everyone brings to the classroom experiential knowledge that can strengthen the learning environment. It also ensures that no student remains invisible in the classroom and contributes in a meaningful way to the class discourse which consequently, empowers all the students.

- Concerning taking a risk in research and in teaching I believe both are only possible when the researcher/teacher has enough knowledge and understanding of the tools at his/her disposal and has confidence in organising and exercising them in a new line of action. The lessons carried out on e.g. the 35th class-8.2.2003 (Chapter 8, p.236-41) to 39th class -16.4.2003 and the 48th class -18.10 2003 (Chapter 7, p.230-1.) was the coming together of the two levels of *'play for the pupils'* and *'play for the teacher'* (Peter, 1995: p. 31).

  Heathcote (1984) suggests that the teacher and the child make different journeys. To be an effective drama teacher means that the teacher sometimes has to abandon his/her original lesson plan. In this cycle the students and the teacher made the same journey and 'play for the pupils' and 'play for the teacher' were equivalent. This was possible given that I maintained a flexible approach while teaching at-risk and yet stayed true to my curriculum plan.

  I maintain that I could achieve this by predicting a viable learning opportunity in the students' request and my willingness to explore the learning area within it. Without a receptive open mind, teachers find it difficult to let go of their attachment to meticulously prepared lesson plans. O'Neill (1995) suggests that in drama work the:

    > '*essential qualities in a leader or teacher are the toleration of anxiety and ambiguity, as well as a willingness to take risks and court mystery, and the courage to confront disappointment and, on occasion, the possibility of failure*' (p.65).

- Teachers must be prepared to build on the knowledge and experience, which pupils bring with them to the work. They must value their pupils' contributions to the lesson more than their own and built their lessons on the already learnt skills of their

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students. I believe this can be seen in the way all the teaching at-risk lessons were held.

## **Summary**

Finally, I have summarised my development from Cycle 1 through to Cycle 6 in a tabular form (Table 9). I have added Taylor's model (in Peter, 1995, Fig 2) 'A Drama Continuum**'** to Dreyfus's (1981) model of skill acquisition (Table 8) to indicate the context by which development in process drama occurred.

Taylor suggests that a drama teacher starting with highly structured prescribed drama activities can gradually develop the lessons to process drama with an open-ended frame-work.
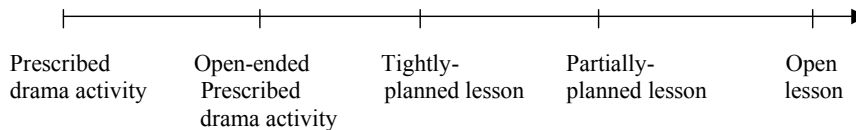
Process in Drama

| Prescribed drama activity | Open-ended Prescribed drama activity | Tightly-planned lesson | Partially-planned lesson | Open lesson |

**Fig 2: A Drama Continuum (adapted from Peter, 1995, p. 65)**

I believe this is a logical arrangement and though I had not premeditated to follow this structure the scheme of my practice ensued along this continuum. Therefore I have added this model (Fig.2) to the Dreyfus model (Table 8, p.127) to validate my development. I am presenting demonstrable evidence that the change in my practice has indeed occurred.

In Cycle 6 I was able to trust my own drama knowledge and could make decisions regarding the class impromptu. I could recognise viable learning opportunities within the suggestions given by the students and change their play into drama. All these stages are the levels that suggest progress from proficiency to expertise. However, the time frame of data collection and my research allowed no scope for tracking of teacher effectiveness post Cycle 6. Therefore, I would preferably term the level in Cycle 6 as 'proficient plus' and not 'expert'.

Action research and learning are analogous in that they are assiduous cycles of problem solving in which an '*answer is not the end phase of a previous question, but the beginning of a new question'* (McNiff, 1993: p. 29). Thus I am not claiming to be an expert, because such a term expresses finality. I believe there are yet so many avenues left unexplored, so

much more to learn. I believe learning is never static, '*what appears to be a new balanced state already contains within itself the potential for new tension that will enable it to continue evolving.*' (McNiff, 1993: p. 28)

**Table 9: Appraisal of progress from Cycle 1- 6 (p.169-171)**

|  |  | **Drama Structure** | **Component Recognition** | **Salience Recognition** | **Whole situation Recognition** | **Decision making** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Novice** | **Cycle 1** | *prescribed drama activity*<br><br>*Drama games and tableaux. | *non-situational*<br><br>*Limited theoretical awareness. | *limited*<br><br>*Dialogue restricted to Reflection time.<br>*Strengthened drama work by using basic side-coaching. | *analytic*<br><br>*Aware of institutional constraints and planning of time.<br>*Unsure how to improve practice.<br>*Could not resolve problems concerning group dynamics. | *rational*<br><br>*Could offer rationale for using teaching strategies. However used limited range of strategies. |

| | Drama Structure | Component Recognition | Salience Recognition | Whole situation Recognition | Decision making |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Advanced beginner Cycle 2** | *open-ended Prescribed drama activity*<br><br>Drama games tableaux and role play using it with a wider range. | *situational*<br><br>*Began with small group work.<br>*Conceived lessons as role play rather than drama. | *limited*<br><br>*Built up from side-coaching to 'stopping-to-consider'.<br>*Built dialogue into core activity. | *analytic*<br><br>*Poised towards exploring a wider range of options.<br><br>*Holistic*<br><br>*A clear understanding of value of drama in pupils' education. | *rational*<br><br>*Applied strategies from previous experience. |
| **Competent Cycle 3** | *tightly planned lesson*<br><br>*Awareness of wider range of options for structuring drama. Using different kind of strategies and conventions like pre-text, puppets and masks.<br>*Introduced the children to different forms of theatre. | *situational*<br><br>*Gained a comprehensive amount of theoretical knowledge.<br>*Planned lesson with clear ongoing structure.<br>*Practice becomes more rigorous. | *present*<br><br>*Identified learning opportunities and developed the lesson so the students could perceive significant aspects of the subject. | *holistic*<br><br>*A greater understanding of value of drama in pupils' education.<br>*Used varied techniques like music, arts and craft to reach pupils with different abilities. | *rational*<br><br>*Applied strategies from previous experience.<br>* Used substantial range of teaching strategies. |

|  |  | Drama Structure | Component Recognition | Salience Recognition | Whole situation Recognition | Decision making |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Proficient** **Cycle 4 and Cycle 5** | | *partially planned lesson*<br><br>*Able to synthesise the pupils' responses and apply principles learned through experiences in previous lessons.<br>*Able to give shape to drama in process and lead the children to explore relevant learning areas. | *situational*<br><br>*Gained a clear grasp in theoretical knowledge.<br>*Confident use of drama in lesson plan.<br>*Developed lesson as a whole group process drama.<br>*By Cycle 5 could apply techniques like teacher-in-role to enable students to bring focus to the drama. | *present*<br><br>*Used stopping-to-consider effectively in Cycle 4.<br><br>*Moved from enabling focus in drama as an 'outsider' as in 'stopping-to-consider' to enabling focus as 'insider' as in teacher-in role. | *holistic*<br><br>*Synthesised significant aspects of emerging drama.<br>* Could develop drama on children's initiative.<br>*Could develop effective drama work in life skills curriculum. | *rational*<br><br>*Could circumvent pupils' limitations to avoid difficulties while performing in front of an audience.<br>*Used previous introduction to street theatre to an advantage.<br>*Concept of teacher-in-role applied rationally in Cycle 5 on basis of recent information. |
| **Proficient Plus** | **Cycle 6** | *open lesson*<br><br>*Developed the ability to teach lessons that were not pre-planned that at the same reflected the needs and ability of the students and followed the curriculum. | *situational*<br><br>*Sound grasp of theory and drama education and could apply the same in practice. | *present*<br><br>*Predicted viable learning opportunities. | *holistic*<br><br>*Could recognise unpremeditated situation in drama and develop them into learning situations. | *intuitive*<br><br>*Automatically practiced strategies like teacher-in-role and 'teaching at risk' based on previous experience. |